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OF JOHN DRYDEN'S MACFLECKNOE: A VARRONIAN
SATIRE.

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THE OCCASION, FORM, STRUCTURE, AND DESIGN
OF JOHN DRYDEN'S MACFLECKNOE:
A VARRONIAN SATIRE

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Joseph Eugene Mullin, A.B., M.A.

* * * * * *

The Ohio State University
1967

Approved by

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Field of Specialization

Restoration Literature. Professor John Harold Wilson
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INTRODUCTION

I have attempted to give a thorough reading of John Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* in this dissertation. I have described the occasion of this poem, trying to communicate the anger and frustration that both Dryden and Thomas Shadwell must have felt during their controversy. I have investigated the genre of Dryden's satire, giving a brief sketch of several Varronian satires and attempting to anatomize the genre, so that we can understand what Dryden meant when he called *MacFlecknoe* a Varronian satire. Next, I have tried to explain the structure and design of the satire, commenting on crucial metaphors, diction, and other stylistic devices. Finally, I have presented a thoroughly annotated text of *MacFlecknoe*, citing any earlier useful commentary and offering the results of my own research.

Any detailed study threatens to become long-winded and dull. In successive chapters I have endeavoured to reproduce the anger of controversy, the charm of Varronian satire, the satisfying complexity of *MacFlecknoe*'s design,
and the amusement of scholarly annotation. In any event, I have especially tried not to allow this study to become a monument to my own tediousness and dullness.
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND: THE OCCASION

The bitter controversy between John Dryden and Thomas Shadwell, which culminated in the devastating sarcasm and ridicule of *MacFlecknoe*, had an innocent and haphazard beginning in *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668). Dryden had praised Ben Jonson's comedy *The Silent Woman* at length and analyzed it in detail, but when he discussed Jonson's literary achievement, his praise was not unqualified.

I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself, as well as others. 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.¹

Dryden judges that for all Jonson's learning and observation, he had less wit than both Shakespeare and Fletcher: "Humour was his proper sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people." These judgments were secondary to Dryden's main interest in the essay, to discuss the comparative merits of ancient and modern drama, English and French theater, and rhymed and blank dramatic verse. But Thomas Shadwell, in the preface to his first play, chose to respond only to Dryden's comments on wit and evaluation of Jonson.

The Sullen Lovers (1668), a comedy of humors, had brought quick success to the fledgling playwright. His ridicule of Sir Robert Howard, in the character of Sir Positive At-all, insured the three-day run of the comedy in May 1668, and its revival four more times within the year. Shadwell, fed by his success, wrote an offensive and pompous preface that explained and justified his own comic technique and related it to the comedy of Ben Jonson. He begins by delineating the difference between intrigue and

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2 Essays, ed. Ker, I, 82.
humor comedy:

no man ought to expect such intrigues in the little actions of Comedy, as are requir'd in Playes of a higher Nature: but in Playes of Humours, where there are so many Characters as there are in this, there is yet less design to be expected: for, if after I had form'd three or four forward prating Fopps in the Play, I made it full of Plott, and Business; at the latter end, where the turns ought to be many, and suddenly following one another, I must have let fall the humour, which I thought wou'd be pleasanter then intrigues could have been without it; and it would have been easier to me to have made a Plott then to hold up the Humour.  

Shadwell explains that in this he is following the example of Ben Jonson, whom I think all Dramatick Poets ought to imitate, though none are like to come near; he being the onely person that appears to me to have made perfect Representations of Humane Life, most other Authors that I ever read, either have wilde Romantick Tales wherein they strein Love and Honour to that Ridiculous height, that it becomes Burlesque; or in their lower Comoedies content themselves with one or two Humours at most, and those not near so perfect Characters as the admirable Johnson always made, who never wrote Comedy without seven or eight excellent Humours.

These remarks touch Dryden only indirectly, by disagreeing with his opinion of Jonson and by devaluing the heroic drama in which he excelled. But lest Dryden not get

5 Ibid., p. 11.
the point, Shadwell assails his judgment of Jonson directly.

I have known some of late so Insolent to say, that Ben Johnson wrote his best Playes without Wit; imagining, that all the Wit in Playes 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 Humor, and Matter proper for it, then in all their smart reparties. 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 perfect Character, but the two chief persons are most commonly a Swearing, Drinking, Whoring, Ruffian for a Lover, and an impudent ill-bred tomrig 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 chok'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.6

Shadwell hits on the essential misunderstanding of the term "wit" here which was to plague Dryden and him throughout their controversy. To Shadwell, wit is comic conception, not merely word-play; but Dryden did not mean that wit was word-play either: it was proper disposition of words and verbal adornment as distinguished from observation of nature, which was the efficient cause of humor comedy and really an act of

6 Ibid.
judgment rather than of fancy. Further, Shadwell chose for ridicule two characters from Dryden's *Maiden Queen* (1667), Celadon and Florimel, as the ruffian and tomrig typical of these popular but not-so-witty comedies. But Shadwell does not content himself even with this attack on the foremost playwright of the age. He accuses Dryden of pompous and self-righteous literary tyranny:

I must confess it 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 Magisterially to impose upon our Understandings, against the Freedome of Mankind: these ought no more to be suffer'd amongst us, than 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.*

This is strong criticism indeed, and risky. It is as if young Shadwell, confident of his comic skills, decided to hurl a challenge at the champion as soon as he arrived on the dramatic scene. Offended by Dryden's qualified praise of Jonson, Shadwell rose to defend his literary father and, thus, adopted a self-assured if not a self-satisfied satiric

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tone. He suggests here that Dryden's criticism makes him a social enemy and, insofar as he will not recant, a "positive Foole." Moreover, Shadwell ridicules heroic drama again, in the prologue. We will find, he says,

No kinde Romantick Lovers in his Play,  
To sigh and whine out passion, such as may  
Charm Waiting women 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 [capping verses] for three hours at least:  
That Fight, and wooe, in Verse in the same breath,  
And make Similitudes, and Love in Death.  

Even though Shadwell's retort to An Essay of Dramatic Poesy is out of all proportions to Dryden's evaluation of Jonson, Dryden did not reply immediately to Shadwell. At the moment, he was engaged in an argument with Sir Robert Howard about the comparative appropriateness of blank and rhymed verse in tragedy. Howard had attacked Dramatic Poesy in his preface to The Duke of Lerma; Dryden replied sarcastically and personally in his Defence of the Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668). Strictly speaking, this defence is not part of Dryden's controversy with Shadwell, but, I think, it gives two hints about Shadwell's intent. First, Dryden had asserted that "delight is the chief, if not the only, end of

9 Ibid., p. 13.
poesy: instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights." Shadwell seized this admission as proof that Dryden wrote bawdy wit and cared nothing for true satiric and comic reform. Second, Dryden's handling of Howard is not so clever and expertly devastating as we later come to expect from Dryden the controversialist. Thus, if Shadwell, as I suspect, is consciously challenging "the champion" in order to stir up interest in himself as well as to defend Jonson, then he would not fear battling the Dryden who against Howard is careless of facts, unconvincing in argument, and embarrassingly personal in sarcasm.

When Shadwell next came before the public, his confidence was high. His *Royal Shepherdess* had had a successful run of six days, and in his preface (1669) he showed no fear of Dryden or of any other writer of wit comedy:

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,

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10 *Essays, ed. Ker, I, 113.*

and making them pass for fine Gentlemen, who openly profess Swearing, Drinking, Whoring, breaking Windows, beating Constables, &c. and that is esteem'd, among us, a Gentile gayety of Humour, which is contrary to the Customs and Laws of all civilized Nations.

Then, in direct reference to Dryden's Defence, Shadwell continues, "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 Rope-Dancer; who please more than he can do . . . ." And Shadwell does not let up. In his prologue he repeats those objections to contemporary comedy that he had voiced in this preface and in the preface to The Sullen Lovers.

It is a Vertuous Play, you will confess, Where Vicious men meet their deserv'd success. Not like our Modern ones, where still we find, Poets are onely to the Ruffian kind; And give them still the Ladies 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. —— But (what is better yet than all the rest) In all this Play, there's not one Baudy jest, To make the Ladies bite their Lips, and then To be applauseed by the Genilemen [sic].

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12 Works, I, 100.
13 Ibid.
Baudy, what e're in private 'tis, is here not fit,  
'Tis to Assemblies Sawciness, not Wit.¹⁴

Dryden responded to Shadwell in 1671. In the preface to  
An Evening's Love, first acted in 1668, he explained that he  
would like "to have shewn in what parts of Dramatic Poesy  
we were excelled by Ben Johnson, I mean, humour, and con­  
trivance of Comedy; and in what we may justly claim preced­  
ence of Shakespeare and Fletcher, namely in Heroic Plays,"¹⁵  
but he thought that the publication of The Conquest of  
Granada would be a more proper occasion. He also wished  
"to treat of the improvement of our language since Fletcher's  
and Johnson's days, and consequently of our refining the  
courtship, raillery, and conversation of plays,"¹⁶ but he  
explained that he had no time, that he did not want to draw  
upon himself the envy of "old opiniatre judges of the stage,"  
and that he preferred not to concern himself with comedy,  
an inferior dramatic form, except in his own defense.  
Dryden is, in effect, disclosing his entire arsenal as he  
prepares to battle Shadwell.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 101.  
¹⁵ Essays, ed. Ker, I, 134.  
¹⁶ Ibid., p. 135.
He goes immediately on the attack. He admits that he cannot write humors but insists that no one else can either. "Johnson 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 a crambe bis cocta [the mess served over again]; the same humours a little varied and written worse." Then, Dryden continues in defense of his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard, whom Shadwell had ridiculed in his first play. "Neither was it more allowable in him, than it is in our present poets, to represent the follies of particular persons; of which many have accused him. Parcere personis, dicere de vitiiis, is the rule of plays." In assessing Jonson's wit, Dryden is as reasonable as ever.

Ben Johnson is to be admired for many excellencies; and can be taxed with fewer failings than any English poet. I know I have been accused as an enemy of his writings; but without any other reason, than that I do not admire him blindly, and without looking into his imperfections. For why should he only be exempted from those frailties, from which Homer and Virgil are not free? . . . I admire and applaud him where I ought: those who do more do but value themselves in their admiration of him; and, by

17 Ibid., p. 137.
18 Ibid.
telling you they extol Ben Johnson's way, would insinuate to you that they can practice it.\footnote{19}

Dryden seems to appraise Shadwell's motivation accurately: in promoting Jonson Shadwell is busy promoting himself. And Dryden does not move from his position that Jonson lacked wit; he chooses to explain himself again.

To make men appear pleasantly ridiculous on the stage, was, as I have said, his talent; and in this he needed not the acumen of wit but that of judgment. For the characters and representations of folly are only the effects of observation; and observation is the effect of judgment. Some ingenious men [i.e. Shadwell], for whom I have a particular esteem, have thought I have much injured Ben Johnson, 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 Johnson'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. . . .

I would have more of the urbana, venusta, salsa,\footnote{19} faceta, and the rest which Quintilian reckons up as the ornaments of wit; and these are extremely wanting in Ben Johnson. As for repartie, in particular; as it is the very soul of conversation, so it is the greatest grace of Comedy . . . . Of one thing I am sure, that no man ever will decry wit, but he who despairs of it himself; and who has no other quarrel to it, but that which the fox had to the grapes [i.e., that he could not reach them and so pronounced them sour--Aesop, Fable 93].\footnote{20}
Finally, Dryden replies to the preface to *The Sullen Lovers* specifically and insists that wit is not easier to write than humors. The writer of humors only has to have his characters speak what is proper to them; the writer of wit finds many kinds of wit proper to a witty man. "However, if I should grant that there were a greater latitude in characters of wit than in those of humour, yet that latitude would be of small advantage to such poets, who have too narrow an imagination to write it. And to entertain an audience perpetually with humour, is to carry them from the conversation of gentlemen, and treat them with the follies and extravagancies of Bedlam."  

Dryden admits he has been "assaulting others" and turns to defending himself. He knows of no law of poetic justice which applies to comedy, and he cites examples of the vicious prospering in Plautus and Terence and in Jonson and Fletcher. He lingers over the "notorious" case of *The Alchemist*, in which Face is "enriched . . . with the spoils of those whom he had cheated."  

Dryden reaffirms that "the chief end of [comedy] is diverteisment and delight."  

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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." Since instruction is secondary in comedy, punishment of faults is not as central as in tragedy--

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. So Chaerea is made happy by Terence, in marrying her whom he had deflowered: and so are Wildblood and the Astrologer in this play. 24

Dryden next defends himself from the charge of plagiarism (a suggestion that Shadwell had made vaguely in the preface to The Sullen Lovers): "I am taxed with stealing all my plays, and that by some, who should be the last men from whom I would steal any part of 'em." 25

Whatever he stole, Dryden says, he adorned; and he cites

23 Ibid., pp. 142-43.
24 Ibid., pp. 143-44.
25 Ibid., p. 144.
precEDENTS FROM THE CLASSICAL AND ELIZABETHAN AUTHORS FOR BORROWING PLOT AND INCIDENT. THE REASON MEN LIKE SHADWELL COMPLAIN IS THAT

THese LITTLE CRITICS DO NOT WELL CONSIDER WHAT IS THE WORK OF A POET, AND WHAT THE GRACES OF A POEM: THE STORY IS THE LEAST PART OF EITHER . . . . ON THIS FOUNDATION OF THE STORY, THE CHARACTERS ARE RAISED: AND, SINCE NO STORY CAN AFFORD CHARACTERS ENOUGH FOR THE VARIETY OF THE ENGLISH STAGE, IT FOLLOWS, THAT IT IS TO BE ALTERED AND ENLARGED WITH NEW PERSONS, ACCIDENTS, AND DESIGNS, WHICH WILL ALMOST MAKE IT NEW. WHEN THIS IS DONE, THE FORMING IT INTO ACTS AND SCENES, DISPOSING OF ACTIONS AND PASSIONS INTO THEIR PROPER PLACES, AND BEAUTIFYING BOTH WITH DESCRIPTIONS, SIMILITUDES, AND PROPERTY OF LANGUAGE, IS THE PRINCIPAL EMPLOYMENT OF THE POET; AS BEING THE LARGEST FIELD OF FANCY, WHICH IS THE PRINCIPAL QUALITY REQUIRED IN HIM . . . . JUDGMENT, INDEED, IS NECESSARY IN HIM; BUT 'TIS FANCY THAT GIVES THE LIFE-TOUCHES, AND THE SECRET GRACES TO IT; ESPECIALLY IN SERIOUS PLAYS, WHICH DEPEND NOT MUCH ON OBSERVATION. FOR TO WRITE HUMOUR IN COMEDY (WHICH IS THE THEFT OF POETS FROM MANKIND), LITTLE OF FANCY IS REQUIRED; THE POET OBSERVES ONLY WHAT IS RIDICULOUS AND PLEASANT FOLLY, AND BY JUDGING EXACTLY WHAT IS SO, HE PLEASES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF IT.²⁶

DRYDEN ARGUES THAT SHADWELL IS NOT A GOOD IMITATOR OF JONSON, BUT HE DEFINES POETIC IMAGINATION, THAT IS, FANCY, IN A WAY THAT EXCLUDES A HIGH PLACE FOR EVEN A SUCCESSFUL WRITER OF HUMOR COMEDY. JONSON'S LEARNING, DECORUM, AND JUDGMENT GIVE HIM HIS PLACE IN ENGLISH DRAMA; SHADWELL HAS NONE OF

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 146-47.
these virtues. Dryden does not leave without a warning: he has been severe on Shadwell but he threatens worse.

I shall but laugh at them [referring really only to Shadwell] 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.27

One need not be a partisan of Dryden to realize that he was accused of condemning Jonson with very little reason. But even if a partisan, one must shudder at the particularity of this prophecy, which would be fulfilled within the decade.

Dryden, it seems, was genuinely trying to close the argument--now that he was certain he had the advantage. Perhaps Shadwell, having waited for Dryden to respond to the challenge, paid more attention to the fact of the response and, thus, to the advantage of a continuing controversy with the leading playwright, than to either Dryden's skill in argument or to his dire threat. In the preface to The Humorists (1671) Shadwell continued his assault. He again dissents "from those, who seem to insinuate that the ultimate end of a Poet is to delight, without correction

27 Ibid., p. 147.
or instruction."\textsuperscript{28} He claims that in drawing humors he attacks the follies of the world and not merely, like writers of wit comedy, the follies at court, where "they concern but a few." Again Shadwell assumes the tone of the satirist; he complains that the common rabble is pleased with farce,

and the higher sort of Rabble (as there may be a 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.

This is one reason why we put our Fopps into extravagant, and unnatural habits; it being a cheap way of conforming to the understanding of those brisk, gay sparks, that judge of Wit or Folly by the Habit; that being indeed the only measure they can take in judging of Mankind, who are Criticks in nothing but a Dress.\textsuperscript{29}

Shadwell then takes up the charge that he attacks particular men in his characters. He challenges his enemies to prove it and explains, anyway, that a particular man's humor "would be thought (for the singularity of it) wholly unnatural, and would be no jest to them neither."\textsuperscript{30} This charge Shadwell deftly disposes, but Dryden's charge that

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Works, I}, 183.
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 185.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 186.
Shadwell flatters himself to think that he could imitate Jonson has hit the mark, for Shadwell makes this apology:

Pardon me (Reader) that I name him [Jonson] in the same Page with my self; who pretend to nothing more, than to joyn with all men of sense and learning in admiration of him; which, I think, I do not out of a true understanding of him; and for this I would not value my self. Yet by extolling his way of writing, I cannot but insinuate to you that I can practise it; though I would if I could, a thousand times sooner than any mans. 31

Shadwell, next, addresses Dryden directly, but with more moderation than heretofore. He first explains why he pretends to imitate Jonson.

And here 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 . . . than any other Heroick Poet. And those who shall go about to imitate him, will be found to flutter, and make a noise, but never rise. 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

31 Ibid.
imitate him, that it would rather (in my opinion) seem impudence in me not to do it.\textsuperscript{32}

Shadwell seems puzzled that Dryden could call Jonson the most judicious of poets and still deny him great wit; he thinks that if Jonson's plays were correct then they must have had fire. "I think flat and dull things are as incorrect, and shew as little Judgment in the Author, nay less than sprightly and mettled Nonsense does.\textsuperscript{33}" Jonson had more wit than his contemporaries, Shadwell concludes, but because they were less correct and regular, their bursts of wit seemed more fiery and more showy than his. The source of Jonson's greatness was not his judgment and observation, but his very wit:

The reason given by some, why Johnson needed not wit in writing humor, is, because humor is the effect of observation, and observation the effect of judgment; but observation is as much necessary in all other Plays, as in Comedies of humor . . . .

If this argument (that the enemies of humor use) be meant in this sense, that a Poet, in the writing of a Fools Character, needs but have a man sit to him, and have his words and actions taken; in this case there is no need of wit. But 'tis most certain that if we should do so, no one fool (though the best about the Town) could appear pleasantly upon the Stage, he would be too dull a Fool, and must be helped out with a great deal of wit in the Author.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., pp. 186-87.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 187.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., pp. 187-88.
As Shadwell was to summarize in his epilogue to this play, Jonson

alone true Humors understood.
And with great Wit and Judgment made them good.
A Humor is the Byas of the Mind,
By which with violence 'tis one way inclin'd:
It makes our Actions lean on one side still,
And in all Changes that way bends the Will.
This
He only knew and represented right.\(^{35}\)

In short, the fact that Jonson possessed judgment proved that he had wit, and his plays proved that he had both.

The Humorists had opened on December 10, 1670; so, although its preface was not written until the following year, the epilogue in praise of Jonson and humor comedy would have been known to Dryden before his epilogue to the Second Part of The Conquest of Granada was performed, probably early in January 1670/71.\(^{36}\) Whether or not Dryden wished his critical war with Shadwell to come to an end, he was not trying to soften his presentation of those very critical notions which he knew would further annoy Shadwell. In this epilogue he asserted,

They, who have best succeeded on the stage,
Have still conform'd their Genius to their Age.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 254. Italics mine.

\(^{36}\) See The London Stage, pp. 177-79.
Thus Jonson did Mechanique humour show,  
When men were dull, and conversation low.  
Then, Comedy was faultless, but 'twas course  
But were they now to write when Critiques weigh  
Each Line, and ev'ry word, throughout a Play,  
None of 'em, no not Jonson, in his height  
Could pass, without allowing grains for weight.  
If Love and Honour now are higher rais'd,  
'Tis not the Poet, but the Age is prais'd.  
Wit's now arriv'd to a more high degree;  
Our native Language more refin'd and free.  
Our Ladies and our men now speak more wit  
In conversation, than those Poets writ.  

Dryden elaborated the theses of this epilogue in his  
"Defence of the Epilogue or An Essay on the Dramatic Poetry  
of the Last Age" (1672) by explaining that the language,  
wit, and conversation of the present age are improved and  
refined; thus, present plays "have received some part of  
those advantages." Concerning language, Dryden points  
to awkward and incorrect usage in Fletcher, Shakespeare, and  
Jonson and inevitably cites the refinement introduced by  
Waller and Suckling. Of wit, Dryden says-- "For Ben Johnson,  
the most judicious of poets, he always writ properly, and  
as the character required; and I will not contest farther

37 The Prologues and Epilogues of John Dryden, ed.  
W.B. Gardner (New York, 1951), p. 37; lines 1-5, 13-16,  
21-26.  
38 Essays, ed. Ker, I, 163.
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." Jonson deals so much with low characters that he had little opportunity to exercise "wit in the stricter sense, that is, sharpness of conceit", he either borrowed that from the ancients or, "when he trusted himself alone, often fell into meanness of expression," that is, into puns and silly wordplay.

Dryden concludes his "Defence" with a plea that great authors be judged critically and not praised blindly:

Let us ascribe to Johnson, 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. Gentlemen will now be entertained with the follies of each other; and, though they allow Cobb and Tib [low characters in Every Man in His Humour] to speak properly, yet they are not much pleased with their tankard or with their rags. . . .

To conclude all, let us render to our predecessors

39 Ibid., p. 172.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p. 173.
what is their due, without confining ourselves to a servile imitation of all they writ; and, without assuming to ourselves the title of better poets, let us ascribe to the gallantry and civility of our age the advantage which we have above them, and to our knowledge of the customs and manner of it the happiness we have to please beyond them.42

Dryden, in this summary, exhausts what he has to say on the subject of Jonson and wit. Shadwell returned to the offensive in the epilogue to The Miser (1672) by attacking heroic tragedy, the form that brought Dryden his greatest early success with The Indian Queen (1664), The Indian Emperour (1665), Tyrannick Love (1669), and the two-part Conquest of Granada (1670-71). But Dryden did not rise to the new bait. In fact, he took time in his dedication to The Assignation (1673) only to make an old assertion: "I am made a detractor from my predecessors, whom I confess to have been my masters in the art. But . . . I know I honour Ben Jonson more than my little critics, because without vanity I may own I understand him better."43 However, Dryden explains that he will not say more because he is not

42 Ibid., p. 177.
concerned enough about defense and is not interested in giving his enemies the pleasure of his engagement.

It must be clear by now that the controversy was not going anywhere. What was to be said had been said. They were not debating; they were merely arguing, with the result that their controversy is of more interest to their biographers than to any historian of criticism. Dryden appears wise to have retired from battle in 1671, with a further disclaimer in 1673; after this he remained silent--except, of course, for MacFlecknoe itself. How much of the satire he had in mind by this time, we can only guess. In the preface to An Evening's Love he threatened to laugh at Shadwell and make him ridiculous by celebrating his dullness. But since a greater part of Dryden's ridicule springs from his amusement at the stupidity of Psyche (1675) and The Virtuoso (1676), we must look there for the immediate causes of MacFlecknoe.

For almost three years after The Miser Shadwell did not engage in controversy with Dryden, but in 1675, when writing his first tragedy in rhyme, he returned to insulting him and to inflating his own reputation. In the preface to Psyche he says,
In a good natur'd Countrey, I doubt not but this my first Essay in Rhime would be at least forgiven; especially when I promise to offend no more in this kind: But I am sensible, that here I must encounter a great many Difficulties. In the first place (though I expect more Candor from the best Writers in Rhime) the more moderate of them (who have yet a numerous party, good Judges being very scarce) are very much offended with me, for leaving my own Province of Comedy, to invade their Dominion of Rhime: But methinks they might be satisfied, since I have made but a small incursion, and am resolv'd to retire. And were I never so powerful, they should escape me, as the Northern People did the Romans, their craggy barren Territories, being not worth the Conqu'ring. . . . 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.  

And these attitudes are reinforced by the prologue, which explains that Shadwell here foregoes comedy;

You must not here expect exalted Thought,  
Nor lofty Verse, nor Scenes with labor wrought:  
His Subject's humble, and his verse is so;  
This Theme no thund'ring Raptures would allow,  
Nor would he, if he could, that way pursue.  
He'd ride unruly Fancy with a Bit,  
And keep within the bounds of Sense and Wit,  
Those bounds no boisterous Fustian will admit.  
And did not gentle Hearers oft dispense  
With all the Sacred Rules of Wit and Sense;  
Such tearing Lines, as crack the Writers Brain,  
And the laborious Actors Lungs o'r-strain,  
Wou'd, on our Stages, be roar'd out in vain. 

44 Works. II, 279.  
Although both the preface and prologue are insulting to Dryden, that insult is compounded by the fact that *Psyche* enjoyed a great success, being acted eight days in February and March 1675, and revived in June and October of that year as well as in January 1675/76. The Dryden who took so poorly to Settle's success with *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), probably took as little pleasure at Shadwell's invasion of his heroic territory. In 1676 Shadwell turned on Dryden again, in his dedication and epilogue to *The Virtuoso*. In the epilogue the poet says,

> of those Ladiés he despairs to day,  
> Who love a dull Romantick whining Play;  
> Where poor frail Woman's made a Deity,  
> With senseless amorous Idolatry;  
> And snivelings 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 n'er saw Hero fit to drink with yet.  

Shadwell says simply that the kinds of characters that Dryden creates do not demonstrate the urbanity and gallantry that he has been busily lauding. But the dedication to *The Virtuoso* must have annoyed Dryden even more because it

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46 Ibid., III, 181.
misunderstands, once again, his evaluation of Jonson, accuses him and his plays of appealing chiefly to "Feminine understandings," and offends everyone with its self-satisfied praise and pomposity. Indeed, Settle had called the dedication Shadwell's "long Oration in praise of himself."47

Addressing himself to the Duke of Newcastle, Shadwell explains,

I have endeavoured, in this Play, at Humour, Wit, and Satyr, which are the three things (however I may have fallen short in my attempt) which your Grace has often told me are the life of a Comedy. Four of the Humors are entirely new; and (without vanity) I may say, I ne'er produc'd a Comedy that had not some natural Humour in it not represented before, nor I hope ever shall. 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. . . . A good Comical Humour . . . ought to be such an affectation, as misguides men in Knowledge, Art, or Science, or that causes defection in Manners, and Morality, or perverts their minds in the main Actions of their Lives. And this kind of Humour, I think, I have not improperly described in the Epilogue to the Humorists.48

Shadwell then closes his dedication with a familiar complaint, that the enemies of his comedy "like slight Plays onely, that

47 Preface to Ibrahim (1676).
represent a little tattle sort of Conversation, like their own; but true Humour is not liked or understood by them, and therefore even my attempt towards it is condemned by them. But the same people, to my great comfort, damn all Mr. Johnson's Plays . . . . "\(^{49}\) Well, one gets the impression that Shadwell could go on with this same polemic forever, undaunted by the arguments introduced in the controversy. I suspect that Dryden felt frustrated by Shadwell's single-minded dullness, and newly angered by his pompous self-assurance.

Dryden and Shadwell had not been continually at odds since 1668. They had joined together, with John Crowne, to attack Elkanah Settle in 1673, and Dryden contributed the prologue to Shadwell's True Widow in 1678. But their alliance must have been shaky. In their controversy, it seems to me, 1) Shadwell overreacted to Dryden's assessment of Jonson and never admitted the temperateness of Dryden's censure of Jonson's wit, 2) the two men used the term "wit" differently and refused to accommodate themselves to one another's definitions, 3) Dryden showed interest in ending their futile disagreement as early as 1671 but probably continued angry

\(^{49}\) Ibid., p. 102.
when Shadwell persisted in misunderstanding his point of view, and 4) Shadwell's success with *Psyche* and *The Virtuoso* and his new insults probably raised Dryden's ire again, and he responded with *MacFlecknoe*. The last play of Shadwell's that Dryden attacks in his lampoon is *The Virtuoso*, and while there may be a reference to *Timon* (1678), that allusion is not at all clear (see note to 1. 166). Unless Dryden chose not to ridicule *Timon* for some reason, it seems that part of the satire must have been composed before January 1678, when *Timon* was acted. He may have introduced Richard Flecknoe into the poem later in 1678, when Flecknoe died. Still, Flecknoe is alive in the poem; Dryden may have thought of using him in 1676 or 1677, while he was still alive but the old and declining prince of Poetasters. At any rate, Flecknoe did provide an occasion for the action in the poem, and, so, to him and his work we now turn.

In 1691 Gerard Langbaine reported that Richard 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 Riming, then a Genius to
Dryden's immortalizing of Flecknoe's silly if sincere muse primarily insured, of course, Flecknoe's fame as a booby rhymer, but Dryden was not the first to assail his poetic ineptitude; in fact, his unfortunate reputation seemed secure even before MacFlecknoe.

Around the spring of 1645 Andrew Marvell met Richard Flecknoe at the English College in Rome. Some time after that, he recorded his unusual visit in "Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome":

Straight without further information,
In hideous verse, he, and a dismal tone,
Begins to exercise; as if I were
Possest; and sure the Devil brought me there.
* * * * *
And now I, silent, turn'd my burning Ear -
Towards the Verse; and when that could not hear,
Held him the other; and unchanged yet,
Ask'd still for more, and pray'd him to repeat;
Till the Tyrant, weary to persecute,
Left off, and try'd t' allure me with his lute. 51

Marvell died in 1678; Dryden may very well have been perusing his works around this time.

In 1668 "The Session of the Poets" dismissed Flecknoe as one of the "small Poets" whom Apollo eventually "Whip'd

50 An Account of the English Dramatick Poets, p. 199.
out of the court." Soon after, John Oldham, in his "HORACE His Art of POETRY, Imitated in English" (c. 1670), remarked,

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

About the same time, the Earl of Dorset ridiculed Ned Howard by comparing him to Flecknoe:

Thou damn'd antipodes to common sense!  
Thou foil to Flecknoe! Prithee tell from whence  
Does all this mighty stock of dullness spring,  
Which in such loads thou to the stage dost bring?  

In the early summer of 1671, while on a holiday in Lancashire, Shadwell asked William Wycherley, in a poetic epistle, what was going on in the Town:

What Poets now with Plays or Farces:  
To whipping Criticks, turn up Arses;  
Criticks that Damn with little Wit  
As Ned, or Flecknoe ever writ?  

Clearly, even before Dryden's satire, Flecknoe's name was synonymous with bad verse.

53 The Works of Mr. John Oldham, together with his Remains (1710), p. 119.  
54 "On the Same Author upon his New Utopia" (c. 1671), POAS I (1963), 340.  
55 Works, V; 228.
About the time of *MacFlecknoe*'s composition, Dryden referred to Flecknoe in the dedication to *Limberham* (1678). He is addressing his old friend and patron, John, Lord Vaughan, and playfully pretends to be a vile rhymer:

> and if you can pardon my presumption in it, that a bad poet should address himself to so great a judge of wit, I may hope at least to escape with the excuse of Catullus, when he writ to Cicero . . . .

> I have seen an epistle of Flecknoe's to a nobleman, who was by some extraordinary chance a scholar (and you may please to take notice by the way how natural the connection of thought is betwixt a bad poet and Flecknoe), where he begins thus: *Quatuordecim jam elapsi sunt anni,* etc.; his Latin, it seems, not holding out to the end of the sentence: but he endeavoured to tell his patron betwixt two languages, which he understood alike, that it was fourteen years since he had the happiness to know him. It is just so long (and as happy be the omen of dulness to me, as it is to some clergymen and statesmen!) since your lordship has known that there is a worse poet remaining in the world, than he of scandalous memory, who left it last.\(^{56}\)

Dryden, without any apparent malice, judges Flecknoe worthy of his reputation. Thus, when Dryden attacked Shadwell in 1677 or 1678, the often-mocked and recently deceased Flecknoe was the perfect rhymer for Dryden to enshrine as the retiring King of Dullness.

\(^{56}\) *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. Sir Walter Scott, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury (Edinburgh, 1885), VI, 6.
I have been trying to prove that Dryden must have known and approved contemporary judgments of Flecknoe; the satire itself can tell us what else Dryden knew, or thought he knew, about him. He knows that Flecknoe was said to be Irish (11. 139, 202). He knows that Flecknoe was a Catholic priest, and he capitalizes on Flecknoe's priesthood to make him the anointer of his successor. Four times he mentions Flecknoe's lute. Finally, he is aware that Flecknoe had visited the Court of Portugal and had travelled later to the New World (11. 36, 139-40).

His judgments of Flecknoe's verse are, unfortunately for that poetaster, all too just. Dryden complains that Flecknoe's "gentle numbers feebly creep"—Love's Kingdom (1664), the play Dryden twice attacks by name, is full of weak meter:

Heaven is my witness I ne're think upon  
The joyes and pleasures of Elizium,  
Nor any joyes or pleasures whatsoe're  
But that of dying and suffering for her. (p. 74)

Similarly, it is plagued with doggerel:

Love is a union of all  
we happy and unhappy call;  
a mixture where together meet

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57 Marvell's satire says Flecknoe was a priest. Many writers report that he was a Jesuit, but the Catholic Record Society has no Flecknoe listed anywhere. He is not mentioned in the records of the English College in Rome.
both pleasing pain, and bitter sweet;  
the greatest joy and greatest woe  
a mortal breast can ever know.  

(pp. 17-18)

Much of Flecknoe's serious poetry is unconsciously funny.

"To His Highness COSMO Prince of Tuscany; On his Travels and coming into England" contains this unhappy panegyric:

Cosmo, a name that's all Cosmography,  
And Cart or Map, where all the world you see;  
Seeing what you do, and being what you are,  
You are the only great Cosmographer.  
If Princes then, like rowling Balls of Snow,  
By travelling the World, still greater grow  
How great must you be, who were great before,  
And now by travelling, grow more and more?  

In all, Flecknoe's poems are ample proof of Dryden's charges: Flecknoe was an incorrigible, prolific poetaster,  
whom Dryden, like everyone else, knew and ridiculed. Perhaps he erred in ever writing; but, perhaps his greatest mistake was in dying in 1678, when Dryden needed a dull predecessor for his real victim, Thomas Shadwell.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND: THE GENRE

Dryden's most interesting comment about MacFlecknoe, from the point-of-view of generic and, thus, critical analysis, appears in his Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire (1692), his preface to his translations of Persius and Juvenal. While describing the kinds of satire, Dryden comes briefly to a variety known as Varronian (or Menippean) satire, best identified as being dissimilar from verse satire. Initially this variety was characterized by its mixture of prose and verse, its parodistic intent, its variousness of subject, and its diffusiveness of approach. These distinctions are substantial but so general that they are not immediately suggestive. Dryden does come to our aid by naming "those authors who are acknowledged to have written Varronian satires" in imitation of Varro. Of these "the chief is Petronius Arbiter," Dryden tells us, and continues,

Many of Lucian's dialogues may also properly be call'd Varronian satires, particularly his True
History; and consequently the Golden Ass of Apuleius, which is taken from him. Of the same stamp is the mock deification of Claudius, by Seneca; and the Symposium or Caesars of Julian the Emperor. Amongst the moderns, we may reckon the Encomium Moriae of Erasmus, Barclay's Euphormio, and a volume of German authors, which my ingenious friend, Mr. Charles Killebrew, once lent me [Ker identifies it as the Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum]. In the English, I remember none which are mixed with prose, as Varro's were; but of the same kind is Mother Hubbard's Tale, in Spenser; and (if it be not too vain to mention anything of my own) the poems of Absalom and Mac Flecknoe.

Because we are used to classifying these works severally—

The Satyricon and The Golden Ass as novella, the Apotheosis of Claudius as lampoon, the Encomium Moriae as mock-oration, and Mother Hubbard's Tale as beast fable—when a critic like Dryden puts them in the same literary category, he provokes our attention. And when a poem like MacFlecknoe, which has always been a structural and generic puzzle, is thus categorized by its author, this whole process of classification ought to be studied and tested. I intend, therefore, to make a descriptive survey of those works which Dryden calls Varronian satire in order to discern their bases of organization, structure, metaphor, and satiric intent; afterwards, to anatomize this genre, inductively, in order

to corroborate Dryden's generalizations, to extend them whenever possible, and to discover what he meant when he called MacFlecknoe a Varronian satire.

Almost nothing is known of Menippus, the first practitioner of mixed satire. Strabo tells us that he was from Gadara in Syria and that he was a spoudogeloios, one who while laughing tells the truth. Diogenes Laertius reports that he was born a slave and espoused the philosophy of the Cynics; he adds this disconcerting biographical note:

Hermippus says that he [Menippus] lent out money by the day and got a nickname for doing so. For he used to make loans on bottomry and take security, thus accumulating a large fortune. At last, however, he fell victim to a plot, was robbed of all, and in despair ended his days by hanging himself.

If this be the real Menippus, the fictional one created by Lucian is more attractive, and since the latter is the image

known to Dryden, we are justified in reproducing it here.

Lucian introduces a Menippus who is a scoffer against all the pieties of his world. When he goes across the Styx, he refuses to pay Charon the toll, and he alone of all the passengers does not bemoan his fate; "laughing and railing at all the passengers, he was the only one singing while they were making lament."^4 In Icaromenippus, or The Sky-Man the Cynic travels to heaven, where above the world all things appear in a proper perspective. After characterizing the world as a vast stage, he turns his full wrath upon the philosophers.

There is a class of men which made its appearance in the world not long ago, lazy, disputatious, vainglorious, quick-tempered, gluttonous, doltish, addlepated, full of affrontery and to use the language of Homer, "a useless load to the soil." . . . they amass biting phrases and school themselves in novel terms of abuse . . . But if you were to ask the very man who is straining his lungs and accusing everybody else: "How about yourself? What do you really do, and what in Heaven's name do you contribute to the world?" he would say, if he were willing to say what was right and true: "I hold it unnecessary to be a merchant or a farmer or a soldier or to follow a trade; I shout, go dirty, take cold baths, walk about barefoot in winter, wear a filthy mantle and like Momus carp at everything the others do. If some rich man or other has made an

extravagant outlay on a dinner or keeps a mistress, I make it my affair and get hot about it; but if one of my friends or associates is ill abed and needs relief and attendance, I ignore it.  

Whatever its authenticity, this is the image we have of the father of the whole vein of mixed satire called Varronian.

Of the life and works of Varro himself, we know a good deal more. Called by Quintilian *vir Romanorum eruditissimus*, this universal scholar wrote nearly five hundred volumes on history, philosophy, physics, philology, and agriculture, including about one hundred and fifty books of *Menippean Satires*. Of his satires only six hundred lines remain and in fragments. They are just about sufficient to give us a glimpse of his free-ranging mockery and humor clothed by a language--in Gilbert Highet's judgment--rich in vulgarisms, archaisms, neologisms, and bold imagery. But Varro's intent was not merely to amuse; he wished to "introduce academic thought to the average reader."

Just a look at his fragments will demonstrate the satiric earnestness that accompanies Varro's ridicule. "Eumenides"

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describes a tour of the town in which Stoics and Cynics observe mad humanity at work and play. One Stoic argues that the rake, the effeminate debauchee, the gourmet, the miser are all mad; a Cynic retorts that so too are all philosophers with their wild dreams. They come upon a crowd chased by the furies, one of whom is Insania. The narrator, offering help, is proclaimed mad by the crowd and registered insane by the court. Truth saves him, though, remarking that to the insane everyone looks mad.9

"Anthropopolis" is about wasteful spending on dowries and weddings. Fathers borrow at outrageous interest rates; in short, "the god of Marriage is a purge that washes out the purse."10 "Sexagesis" presents a sixty-year-old man who, having been asleep for half a century, wakes to discover public and private corruption and the disappearance of respect, prudence, loyalty, and piety. The city's youth, so offended by his complaints, threaten to toss him into the Tiber.

It is clear that Varro was a voice for the old and

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10 Ibid., p. 199.
the rural values; perhaps this is to be expected from a man who lived through the political and cultural changes from Pompey to Augustus. Moses Hades notes of the Res Rusticae that "Varro praises agriculture over urban employments, and Italian agriculture over all other; it was part of his purpose to reawaken interest in country life."11

"Gerontodidaskalos," a controversy in dialogue form, pits an old man who stands for the coarseness but the simplicity and virtue (religion) of former times against a young man who mocks the rustic old ways while praising the barns, winepresses and arbors of the luxurious new country homes. "Manius" describes a well-ordered country household which performs its duties in house and field so carefully that Ceres guards the crops from damage. Here they obey the righteous laws and honor the gods with devotions and sacrifice. In all, Varro's fragments survey Roman foolishness with mockery and occasional contempt from the point-of-view of the conservative values of the Republic.

Although Petronius' Satyricon is also a fragment, only a tenth to a sixth of its apparent intended length, still we have enough to make some judgments about its

satiric tactics and intent. Here, at last, we begin
to encounter the encyclopedic potentialities of the Varronian
genre. In structure The Satyricon is parodistic: a roguish
picaresque which parodies the travels of the heroes of the
Greek romances and whose action is instigated by the wrath of
a god. Just as Odysseus was driven on his ten-year journey by
the fury of Poseidon, so Encolpius is an outcast, hounded by
the wrath of Priapus, a petty Roman god of Sexuality. As
nearly as we can make out from the text, Encolpius initially
stole some secret from the shrine to Priapus (sec. 17) and
at a later point kills a goose sacred to the god (sec. 137).
In retaliation, Priapus reappears often enough to keep
Encolpius on the run, among the low life, living by his wits.

The surviving text preserves five distinct adventures.
In "Puteoli" Encolpius mockingly discusses rhetoric with
Prof. Agamemnon, pauses to join his roguish friends in an
orgy, and escapes with them from former victims of their
thievery. "Dinner with Trimalchio," the most fully
realized satire of this novella, ridicules the pomposity
and poor taste of a new-rich entrepreneur and of his lavish
but preposterous feasts. "Eumolpus" is a romp of sexual and
farcical scenes in which Encolpius and his pal, Asclytus,
vie for the favors of the boy, Giton. Much of the humor of this section depends on episodic parodies of Homer and Virgil. For example, the rogues stow away on a ship of Lichas, which is specifically compared (sec. 101) to the Cyclops' Cave. When Lichas discovers them, Encolpius, whose face is blackened, is identified by his familiar privates (sec. 114), just as Odysseus had been identified by his distinguishing feature, his scar. The rogues head off to a new city, Croton, and on the way "The Road to Croton" is the occasion for telling a mock-Lucanesque epic (secs. 119-24) about the Roman Civil Wars. In the fifth section, "Croton," the rogues become legacy hunters, whose success depends on Encolpius' ability to satisfy the lusty Circe (secs. 126-36)—an episode that parodies the tenth book of the Odyssey. The wrath of Priapus prevents Encolpius from rising to this passionate occasion:

I directed the whole blaze of my anger on what had been the cause of all my troubles.
Three times I took the murd'rous axe in hand,
Three times I wavered like a wilting stalk
And curtsied from the blade, poor instrument
In trembling hands—I could not what I would.
From terror colder than the wintry frost,
It took asylum far within my crotch,
A thousand wrinkles deep.
How could I lift its head to punishment?
Cozened by its whoreson mortal fright
I fled for aid to words that deeper bite.
And so leaning on my elbow I made quite a speech, abusing it for its disobedience. "What have you
got to say?" I said, "you insult to mankind, you blot on the face of heaven--it's improper to give you your real name when talking seriously. Did I deserve this from you--that you should drag me down to earth when I was in heaven? That you should betray me in the prime of life and reduce me to the impotence of the last stages of decay? Go on, give me my death certificate."\textsuperscript{12}

In this sorrowful complaint--itself a parody of Ovid, \textit{Amores} 3.7\textsuperscript{13}--appear the bawdy, cynicism, mockery and hyperbole so characteristic of \textit{The Satyricon}.

The full joke of \textit{The Satyricon} is that instead of our following an epical hero or a romantic couple, wandering in exotic lands, through a series of frightening tests to their fidelity and courage, we travel with a trio of homosexual rogues, on the run in the mire and low life of Southern Italy, through a series of lusty, indecent, and cynical adventures in which they are successively the gulls and the gullers of one another and nearly everyone else they encounter. All this is ironically couched in inflated rhetoric, slang, and street Latin, peppered by occasional inclusions of bawdy tales (secs. 61, 85-87) and mock-heroic complaints and comparisons.


\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 16.
Lucian wrote, as we have already seen, satirical dialogues and, in his True History, a parody of fantastic adventure stories—all these can be called Varronian satires. Lucian's chief design, Dryden tells us, "was to disnest Heaven of so many immoral and debauched deities; his next, to expose the mock-philosophers; and his last, to give us examples of a good life in the persons of the true."14

In "Dialogues of the Gods" and "of the Sea-Gods" Lucian parodies and ridicules myths like the judgment of Paris and the birth of Athene; in "The Dead Come to Life" he has Plato bested in debate with Frankness; "The Parasite" contains a mock-Socratic inquiry as to whether sycophancy is an art. The parasite defines it, finally, as "that art which is concerned with food and drink and what must be said and done to obtain them, and its end is pleasure."15 The same zaniness characterizes the True History, which in pretending to be an historical account of a real voyage, outdoes Homeric hyperbole. The heroes sail to the moon where they observe the war between Phaeton and Endymion, fall into a whale's belly where they discover a lost island, and visit

14 Essays, ed. Watson, II, 211.
15 Lucian, III, 255.
Elysium and, later, the Island of the Damned where, appropriately, "the severest punishments of all fell to those who had written untrue histories, among whom were Ctesias of Cnidos [Persica—twenty three books of Persian history], Herodotus and many more."  

Classicists call Lucian a Stoic, and Dryden has called him a Skeptic. His satire is not deeply philosophical. In fact, he is often little more than a popularizer of common sense notions in a world of cant, but his ridicule could, nevertheless, be unnerving. In "The Descent into Hades" Tiresias, expressing the essential stoicism and skepticism of Lucian, gives this advice:

> the life of the common sort is best, and you will act more wisely if you stop speculating about heavenly bodies and discussing final causes and first causes, spit your scorn at those clever syllogisms, and counting all that sort of thing nonsense, make it always your sole object to put the present to good use and to hasten on your way, laughing a great deal and taking nothing seriously.

Apuleius is a good deal more intense. In his *Metamorphoses* he tells of the accidental transformation

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16 Ibid., I, 337.  
of Lucius into an ass through his own curiosity about the occult. Unable to get the antidote to his spell, the ass is stolen by robbers, beaten, humiliated and successively sold or bartered to soldiers, performers, bakers, and eunuch priests. Hounded by Fortune, Lucius, uttering heroic complaints, endures everything from mock litigations to comic indecencies. His delicacy is offended by his humiliation at having to lie with a lascivious noble woman. Interspersed throughout are tales of romance and surprise, including the famous story of Cupid and Psyche and the story of the robber-chief Lamachus who purposely severed his own arm in an escape, when the owner of the house he was looting nailed his hand to the door. The Golden Ass increases its tone of brutality and ecstatic sensuality until the closing book, in which Lucius is returned to his human form through the intercession of the goddess Isis.

Whether this religious conversion is satiric or signifies "the regeneration of sinful man through Isis and her mysteries"\(^ {19} \) is not really clear. Robert Graves thinks that The Golden Ass uses the parodistic and extravagant language of the tellers of Milesian Tales to present the transformations.

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of Lucius first into an ass, "which typified lust, cruelty, and wickedness," and later into a reborn self.  

The contrary point-of-view is summed up by Frances Norwood who, after describing the growth of the cult of Isis in the second century A.D. and after demonstrating the range of Apuleius' rhetorical and Asiatic style, argues that "a long purple patch about religious ecstasy was in keeping with the taste of the times and with his own avowed interests in the occult." Norwood also cites the authority of Macrobius who, in lumping the novels of Petronius and Apuleius together, dismisses them as "fiction designed solely for pleasing the ear, and therefore much less valuable than the myths of Plato or Cicero's Dream of Scipio." But whatever the intent of the tale's resolution, when Dryden called The Golden Ass a satire, he referred to the picaresque mockery, bawdy, parody, and facetiousness characteristic of Varronian satire, and here seasoned by

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22 Ibid., pp. 5-6; citing Somnium Scipionis, 1.2.8.
Apuleius' particular taste for asiatic prose, legal spectacle and occult mysteries.

When we turn to consider Seneca's *Apotheosis of Claudius*, we encounter a new kind of Varronian satire and one more like *MacFlecknoe*. Here we have, within the larger framework of a narrative, a literary lampoon ridiculing the moral and physical shortcomings of Claudius and satirizing the very notion of imperial apotheosis, while glossing over Nero's seizure of power. (There were rumors that Nero had poisoned Claudius; so, if Claudius could be shown to be well gone, then Nero's crimes might be easily forgotten.)

Seneca makes fun of the very weaknesses which both Suetonius and Dio Cassius chronicle: Claudius is impractical, absent-minded, eccentric, and cowardly; he is a glutton, a whore-master and a gambler, easily ruled by his freedmen; and he is weak, shaky, and speaks in a faltering and stammering voice. When Seneca introduces Claudius, he is on the verge of death, uttering his last words, "I think I've messed myself"! In heaven, a debate rages in the Senate

23 *Vita Claudii*, secs. 15, 29, 33, 39; *Roman History*, bk. 1v.
over whether or not Claudius should be deified. Amidst the
debate, Augustus rises to condemn Claudius roundly for
corrupting the laws, and for cruelly subverting justice in
the courts. Augustus forces a sentence which gives the
emperor no rest from adjudicating cases. As they all leave
the Senate, they encounter Claudius' elegant funeral. At
the news of Claudius' death the just lawyers come out of
hiding, and the long Saturnalia of his reign comes to an
end. In the anapestic dirge sung at the funeral, only the
gamblers, shysters, and booby poets mourn the dead emperor.
Claudius, then, is taken off to Hades where he is welcomed
and then tried by the people he murdered. He is condemned
without a defence, a practice first instituted by Claudius,
and sentenced to gamble forever with a bottomless dicebox.
But Caligula intervenes, claims him as a slave, and grants
him to a freedman, to be his lawclerk. With this burlesque
the Apotheosis concludes.

Besides the lampoon and mockery focused on Claudius,
Seneca also introduces a somewhat diffuse but effective
ridicule of the grand style in oratory and poetry. When he
begins his fable, Seneca tells us in circumlocutious verse
that the month is October; then, he clarifies,
I presume I shall be better understood if I say that the month was October and the day October thirteenth; the exact hour I cannot tell you—it's easier to get philosophers to agree than time-pieces—but it was between noon and one o'clock. "Too clumsily put!" you will say. "All the poets are unsatisfied to describe sunrises and sunsets, so that they are even tackling the middle of the day: are you going to neglect so good an hour?"

Phoebus already had passed the highest point of his circuit,
Wearily shaking the reins as his car drew nearer the evening,
Leading away the half-spent light on its down-dipping pathway.25

Seneca also includes in his skit a song of the Fates celebrating the coming glory of Nero's new imperial reign. In addition, like Lucian in his True History, Seneca gives us historical corroboration and presents witnesses of the narrative. This kind of comprehensive ridicule is, as we are coming to see, a predictable pattern in Varronian satire.

The Caesars of Julian the Emperor, another satirical lampoon, ridicules the weaknesses and tawdry motives of practically the whole race of imperial rulers and elevates Marcus Aurelius as the model for imperial motive and performance. The satire is a narrative, told by Julian, as he heard it from Hermes, containing a debate in heaven

25 Ibid., p. 133-34; sec 2.
between Greek and Roman heroes. During a banquet they begin
to discuss whether all the Romans could match the glorious
accomplishments of the one Greek, Alexander. Caesar,
insisting on speaking first, claims more victories, more
cities captured, and more trophies won than Alexander,
and insists that, unlike Alexander, he showed kindness to
both enemies and friends. Alexander retorts that, in
ridiculing him, Caesar makes fun of his own model. Alexander
claims his enemies were stronger than Caesar's and remarks
that for all his years trying, Caesar never could win
victories beyond the Tigris. Augustus cleverly claims not
only victories in war but also patience, wisdom, and love of
learning in peace. Trajan lauds his own mildness; Constantine
his service to pleasure. But Marcus Aurelius tells the gods
that they already know all about him; so, he will spare them
the tale.

The gods decide that they will hear about not only the
actions but the motives of these rivals. With the help
of Silenus, the skit's realists, the selfish motives of each
ruler are exposed. When Marcus Aurelius comes forth, he
explains that he had wished, in all his actions, "to imitate
the gods." Silenus with great suspicion questions him
further. Marcus Aurelius, pressed to define what he means, says that imitating the gods means "having the fewest possible needs and doing good to the greatest possible number." Silenus cannot reply; the gods decide in favor of Marcus Aurelius.

Like so many Varronian satires, The Caesars spoofs the gods and centers on a journey to heaven. Also, its brief "characters" of the ridiculous emperors, its blend of verse and prose, and its common speech and proverbial lore are all properties of the genre. Still, The Caesars is the least interesting of all the satires that Dryden names, because it is the most obviously and directly didactic. Julian is very intent; one does not sense in him the artistic joy and, even, playfulness that one encounters in the other Varronian satirists.

The first modern satire which Dryden mentions, Encomium Moriae by Erasmus, was written some eleven hundred years after Julian's Caesars; yet it is a work thoroughly in touch with classical satiric tradition. In his preface to Thomas More, Erasmus cites Lucian, Seneca, and Apuleius,

among others, as artistic precedents for his mock-oration. And he aims, unlike so many medieval satirists, to search out the ridiculous rather than the vicious.

The satire is an oration spoken by the goddess Folly in praise of herself and the extent of her domain. She begins by describing her lineage: she is the bastard daughter of Riches and Youth, and in her entourage Self-Love, Flattery, Pleasure, Wantonness, and Intemperance travel. Folly rules marriage and is the cause of procreation; she rules the extremes of man's life, his youth and his old age. Knowledge worries man, but Folly keeps him young, cheerful, and fat.

Folly asserts that Fame in war, government, and even the Arts springs from her, for industry, fortitude, and the hope of glory are all forms of madness. In fact, if the world were truly wise, it might collapse, being founded upon the folly of work and aspiration. Folly is worshiped everywhere, by everyone--not merely by the common people, who are indisputedly hers, but also by bullying grammarians, prattling logicians, nit-picking divines, pedantic monks, and the philosophers, who think they are "Nature's secretaries." Courtiers and cardinals, princes and Popes, all are filled
with deceit and self-love; the people look to the ecclesiastics and to the princes for an example, and these look back to the people—meanwhile, Duty is left to others.

Here, Folly promises to break off, but actually she begins a new tack in her oration. She cites authors, both classical and Christian, who have praised her, and along the way she decries the foolishness of the Cross and the folly of all Christians, who chase the greatest foolishness of all, the expectation of eternal life. Finally, requesting that her audience forget everything she has said, Folly retires.

Encomium Moriae praises two kinds of folly, the deluded wisdom that is really pure folly, and the salutary folly that is the true wisdom, because it leads to Christ and the foolish good man.27 The work is clearly satiric in the extent of its ironic vision of human endeavor; moreover, it is Varronian in its parody of oratory, its mockery of medieval preaching and logic-chopping, and its characters of silly pedants, sottish courtiers, and corrupt prelates.

John Barclay's Euphormio (1605), much more modern in

interest and much less artistic in form, is a Renaissance imitation of Petronius. Taking the whole race and wickedness of the world as the targets for his rage, the young Barclay hopes that "the younger generation may be discouraged by [his] story from making any further progress in crime, and be content to reproduce, without surpassing, the vices of their fathers." The naive hero, Euphormio, leaves his native Scotland for the continent where he meets and is hired by Callion, who secretly wants to drive him mad to use him as the Bishop at the Feast of Fools. Euphormio feigns a breakdown and madness, and then takes a medicine which Callion praises, and is cured. Callion is, thus, gulled into thinking he has a hot property in his medicine; so, he sends the hero off to the capital with the news. On the way, Euphormio falls in love, meets an obscene giant, and encounters Acignius (Ignatius) and his followers (Jesuits). The satire on the Society of Jesus is about the only artistic intention that holds the travels together, for Acignius keeps hounding Euphormio throughout. He travels on to the French court, to learn about intellectual and

artistic fads, and, then, on to Italy, where he gets caught up in a civil war. The pattern of events (of Barclay's picaresque) is not very logical, but the second part (1607) has a little more coherence. In it Euphormio escapes Acignius, who wants him to join his followers and who is even willing to kidnap him to that end. Across Europe Euphormio runs until he comes to the protection of the court of Tessaranactus (James I), where he takes up residence and accepts patronage.

Undoubtedly, Barclay's satire was meant to ingratiate him with James I, and, it seems to me, the picaresque deals with the choices open to an ambitious and worldly scholar in the early seventeenth century. But the work is also the vehicle whereby Barclay shows his wit and his learning. He satirizes the suspicion and lack of hospitality in Christian countries, the corruption of soldiers and magistrates everywhere, and vanity in everyone. Through the slave Percas, he ridicules the newly appointed aristocracy, who are "anxious to hush up their grandfathers. Nearly all of them have got a cobbler or a farm-hand somewhere in their family tree."\(^{29}\) Percas divulges that Callion's father

began as a chicken-keeper and legacy-hunter. Through graft he gained enough money to buy his eldest son a Cardinalate; when this son, who later sold it, died, young Callion inherited all the money from his father and his brother, whereupon he began to use his money at court "as a sort of lubricant."

Barclay was a young man, merely twenty-one, when he finished the first part of *Euphormio*. His reliance, therefore, upon the conventions of this satiric mode is predictably heavy. He attacks the pedantry of the Schoolmen and the slavish imitation of the Humanists; he continually cites classical and mock-epic parallels for the actions and experiences of his hero. But Barclay also showed his own strength occasionally; no example demonstrates this better than when Euphormio gets into trouble with University authorities in Italy; Euphormio confesses, "I can't think of a single historical parallel." 30

W.P. Ker has identified the "volume of German authors, which my ingenious friend, Mr. Charles Killegrew, once lent me" as *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, a collection which played a prominent part in the Humanist-Schoolman controversies in Germany in the early sixteenth century. In

30 Ibid., p. 128.
1507 a converted Jew, Johan Pfefferkorn, began a campaign against Jewish books and Jewish learning. This inevitably brought him into conflict with the Humanists and especially the scholars of Hebrew. When a prominent one of their number, Johan Reuchlin, attacked Pfefferkorn in print, a controversy ensued that, in short time, found the prestigious Theology faculties of Paris and Cologne and the mendicant orders, especially the Dominicans, siding with Pfefferkorn, and the Humanists, including Luther, joining Reuchlin. The controversy was taken through the ecclesiastical courts, and the case was tied up for years in the Vatican Chancery. Although Reuchlin was eventually vindicated, he wasted his fortune and his mature years in the litigations. In the meantime, a pamphlet war between the opposing sides grew more bitter and more oppressively serious. In 1514 a volume of letters to Reuchlin was published, from famous men who had lent their authority to his defence—a volume entitled *Clarorum Virorum Epistolae*. The following year, two humanist friends of Reuchlin, Crotus Rubianus and Ulrich von Hutten, penned *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum* to Ortwin Gratius, of Cologne, a principal defender of Pfefferkorn. The satirists chose
as their vehicle a friendly parody of the dedicatory volume
to Reuchlin; their tactic was to create *persona* whose,
in their opposition to the New Learning, would demonstrate
their own pedantry, stupidity, and immorality. They are
set free "to tell their own story, to wander round the narrow
circle of antiquated prejudices which they mistook for ideas,
display their grossness, their vulgarity, their absence of
aim, their laborious indolence, their lives unrelieved by
any touch of nobility." 31

The medievalists' pedantry demonstrates itself in
idiotic use of analogy: one letter-writer explains that he
took pains to rhyme a poem "in four parts." "Indeed I took
great pains to rhyme it the way it is rhymed--because songs
sound best in four parts, just as *Alexander's* Grammar is in
four parts." 32 Another correspondent, a student of Theology,
attends lectures on Poetics: "I already know by rote all the
Fables of *Ovid* in his *Metamorphoses*, and these I can expound
quadruply--to wit, naturally, literally, historically, and

31 Bishop Creighton, *History of the Papacy* (1897),
VI, 54; cited in *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, ed. Francis
Griffin (London, 1909), p. xlvi. I am especially in the
debt of Mr. Griffin for my historical summary of this
satire.
spiritually—and this is more than the secular poets can
do."  

This same correspondent ridicules a silly Humanist
who is unaware that the Nine Muses signify "the Seven
Quires of Angels."

Sometimes the letter-writers are just stupid. One
asks Ortwin Gratius whether his sin of saluting two Jews,
whom he mistook for Doctors of Divinity, "is mortal or
venial, and mine an ordinary, or an episcopal, or a papal
case?"  

Several epistles coyly refer to Gratius' success
with the ladies and, especially, with the wife of Johan
Pfefferkorn, and they ask him for advice in wooing since
he has "Ovid's 'Art of Love' by rote!"  

The writers quote scripture frequently and often inappropriately. One includes
a tract supposedly from Pfefferkorn which really parodies
that "eminent scholar." Another writer sends along a
zany recipe for cough and rheume—"eat therefore sugar-
plums, and peas mashed with thyme and pounded garlic;
lay a roasted onion on your navel, and be continent for
six days; wrap up your head and your loins, and you will be

33 Ibid. p. 343.
34 Ibid. p. 295.
cured."

Even in the smallest things the medievalists are superstitious, as in their learning. This kind of rampant nonsense is the target of Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum.

When Dryden turns to his native literature, he points to only three other Varronian satires besides MacFlecknoe. He lists Mother Hubberds Tale, Samuel Butler's Hudibras (which he mentions later on in his essay on satire\(^37\)), and his own Absalom and Achitophel. To these final three satires we now turn.

Edmund Spenser imitates Chaucer not only in composing a beast fable but also in writing rhymed couplets and in evoking a Chaucerian setting and idiom from the outset:

\[
\text{It was the month in which the righteous Maide,}
\]
\[
\text{That, for distaine of sinfull worlds upbraide,}
\]
\[
\text{Fled back to heaven, whence she was first conceived,}
\]
\[
\text{Into her silver bowre the Sunne received;}
\]
\[
\text{And the hot Syrian Dog on him awayting,}
\]
\[
\text{After the chafed Lyons cruell bayting,}
\]
\[
\text{Corrupted had th'ayre with his noysome breath,}
\]
\[
\text{And powr'd on th'earth plague, pestilence, and death.}\]

The tale ends abruptly too, since Mother Hubberd explains

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 367.
that her memory is weak and her story blunt; for these shortcomings she apologizes.

The tale itself is, as Neil Dodge has cogently said, "a kind of rogues' progress through the three estates to the crown. They [a Fox and an Ape] begin among the common people, rise from thence to the clergy and from thence to the court, among the nobility; in the end they cap the climax of their villainies by making themselves king and prime minister." The political satire has attracted most scholarly attention. E.A. Greenlaw has informed us that Queen Elizabeth gave animal names to her courtiers, and he sees in the first part of the poem (ll. 1-942), composed in 1579 or 1580, a more general satire than in the second part, written around 1591.

In the second story the ape is Simier, or possibly Simier plus Alençon; the fox is Burghley; the lion, or sovereign, is Elizabeth. The purpose of the allegory is to show how a combination between Burghley and the French favorites threatens the Queen, who is unconscious of her peril. If the combination succeeds, Burghley the fox, will really rule the weak king-consort who has no right to the throne, and who surrounds himself with Frenchmen, foreign beasts, while he and the fox plunder the country, subvert religion,

39 Ibid., p. 89.
virtually depose the rightfull sovereign, and despoil the native beasts.  

P.M. Buck thinks that the Ape is Burghley and the Lion is Leicester. And agreement is not even firm that there is specific political satire in the poem's second part: W.L. Renwick feels that contemporary concerns were of only secondary interest to Spenser and that the second part pictures a Fox who is of interest because of his generic weaknesses as a courtier and counselor. So, in commenting upon the political satire in the poem, we cannot say more than that there seems to be a strong political allegory.

Spenser does include other topics in his satire. We find him on the High Church side of the vestment controversy (11. 460-74). In the person of the Priest (11. 353-574) he ridicules ecclesiastical corruption; through the Mule's voice he outlines a kind of perverse handbook in the corrupt ways of the world (11. 575-654). Throughout the long first part (11. 1-942) he details the effects on society when

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41 "Spenser's Lost Poems," *PMLA*, XXIII (1908), 83-84.  
station is weakened and men are able to "wander free/ Where so us listeth, uncontrol'd of anie" (11. 168-69). Social change has made possible all these aberrations (11. 92, 101, 342, 355, 722-23). Further, Spenser attacks the vile verse of corrupted courtiers (11. 811-20) and the misery of the artist's state in court (11. 891-913). Finally, he includes a character of the common courtier (11. 693-710) and balances it with the famous character of the courtier whose mind is ever "on honour fixed" (11. 711-92).

Neil Dodge remarks upon "the strange succession of scenes and figures, all admirably alive, the variety of artistic effects ranging from grotesqueness to romantic beauty, the sudden eruptions of strong personal feeling from levels of cool satire, the fluctuations of the style from crudity to masterliness . . . . This is medieval satire at its best." Medieval satire may possess all these qualities, but we have seen them all in Varronian satire as well. The succession of scenes, the variety of effects, the shifts in style are all part of the Varronian mode, and while eruptions of personal feeling may be medieval, they have a firm counter-

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43 Spenser, p. 90.
part in the classical laments and mock-laments which intrude in the classical Varronian satires.

Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, published in three books over fifteen years (1662-1677), is a disjointed and diffusive satire on enthusiasm in its many guises. The hero, like Don Quixote, rides out with his faithful squire, Ralpho, to do battle against the evil of the world. He is equipped with pedantic grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and with mathematics, philosophy, and divinity. But his mind is cluttered, and his learning, wit, and religion are befuddled and contentious. Moreover, his person is repulsive, with filthy beard, mountainous belly, and broad-beamed seat. In mock-epic fashion Butler describes Hudibras' dagger and its illustrious "history":

> It was a serviceable dudgeon,  
> Either for fighting or for drudging:  
> When it had stabb'd, or broke a head,  
> It would scrape trenchers, or chip bread,  
> Toast cheese or bacon, though it were  
> To bait a mouse-trap, 'twould not care.  
> 'Twould make clean shoes, and in the earth  
> Set leeks and onions, and so forth:  
> It had been 'prentice to a brewer,  
> Where this, and more, it did endure;  
> But left the trade, as many more  
> Have lately done, on the same score.  

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Fully equipped, Hudibras goes off on his adventures with Ralphi, who, being an Evangelical, continually gets in arguments with his master as the travels continue. First they break up a bear-baiting, having decided by chop-logic that it is an anti-Christian game. This good-hearted endeavor raises them enemies, however, whom Butler presents in a series of "Characters": a fiddler, butcher, tinker, ostler, and cobbler turned preacher. Hudibras addresses his enemies in heroic style, and Talgol, their champion, who is a butcher, replies abusively. After an inconsequential but farcical battle the bear escapes, but, soon after, the enemies lay siege to the house that Hudibras has taken refuge in. Finally, Trulla, an Amazon of a local housewife, defeats Hudibras and drags him off to jail, where he engages Ralphi in a debate about ecclesiastical synods (I.iii.1201-20).

This sketch of the first book gives a sense of the rambling action and burlesque tone of the satire. In the next two books Hudibras is visited in prison by a lady, gets into a fearsome argument with Ralphi, and finally visits a "Rosy-crucian" medium to seek advice in winning his lady. After the pair of travelers go to the lady, Hudibras
tries to win her hand. The action breaks off here; the last two cantos consist of a burlesque chronicle of the troubles of the commonwealth shortly before the Restoration and a pair of conversations between Hudibras and a lawyer and a pair of verse epistles between Hudibras and his lady.

The attack upon religious Dissent centers upon a half dozen charges: Butler accuses the Dissenters of hypocrisy, greed, and lust, of intellectual narrowness, foolish mysticism, and low status. He shows the stupidity of the violence and upheaval caused by the emotionalism and ignorance of following one's "inner light." And, indeed, the work goes beyond this to ridicule all the blind possessions of the human mind and its proud intellection; as Ralpoho says to Hudibras,

Nothing but th'abuse
Of human learning you produce;
Learning, that cobweb of the brain,
Profane, erroneous, and vain;
A trade of knowledge as replete,
As others are with fraud and cheat. (I.iii.1337-42)

The satire parodies the romance in the bathos of Hudibras' quest, of his formal addresses to his enemies, and of his elaborate armings and battles. Moreover, there

are specific parodies of Spenser (I.iii.1-2) and Virgil (II.i.1-2), and, Ian Jack assures us, of Ariosto and Davenant. Adding to the bathos and parody are bawdy comparisons like the following:

Honour is, like a widow, won  
With brisk attempt, and putting on;  
With ent'ring manfully and urging;  
Not slow approaches, like a virgin.  (I.i.911-14)

But the strength of this comprehensive satire consists in the artistic conception which allows both a burlesque quest and all the interspersed speeches, debates, and controversies; here is a method "which in allowing folly to give a full description of herself," as Prof. Quintana has noted, "sets before us the fables, myths, and visions on which she thrives." But this sounds like a description of Varronian satire itself; however, our summary will have to wait until we have taken a brief look at Absalom and Achitophel.

In 1681 Dryden published his satire, while the issue of Exclusion--the attempt to outlaw the Catholic Duke of

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46 See notes to these lines in the Bohn edition, pp. 85, 135.
48 "Samuel Butler: A Restoration Figure in a Modern Light," *ELH*, XVIII (1951), 29.
York from succeeding Charles II--was still in doubt. The poem attempts to persuade the English people that Shaftesbury, the leader of the loyal Protestants in Parliament and chief advocate of the Exclusion Bill, was a rebel and a villain and to counsel the people that they still had time to reject this madman. Because the Duke of Monmouth, the Protestant candidate for succession, was a favorite of both the King and the people, Dryden had to be careful not to blame him too much for the incipient rebellion, but rather to picture him as victimized by the wily Shaftesbury. So Dryden portrays Monmouth as Absalom, the favorite son of King David, whom the crafty Achitophel persuaded to rebel. Dryden then constructs another parallel, begun in the preface to the satire, where he explains that he does not wish to harm Achitophel, for he hopes that even the Devil himself may be saved at the end of time. In the poem he compares the unwary Absalom to Adam, in whose ear Satan poured the poison of rebellion. And, of course, Dryden makes use of the Christian's understanding of David as a type of Christ.

The poem divides into three general sections: the narrative of the rebels, Dryden's reflections on rebellion, and the sketch of the King with his loyal followers. The
poem begins with the introduction of the principals, recalling the old wounds of the Civil War and the people's infidelity to their rulers. Next, we get a sketch of Achitophel's character followed by his dramatic persuasion of Absalom. This temptation scene details the satanic way in which Achitophel touches Absalom's ambition and persuades him to rebel in the name of public good. Achitophel is evil, but Absalom only deluded, and, Dryden says, Absalom's delusion is cause for lamentation not accusation. The poem then sketches the Whigs: in a series of "Characters" Dryden explains the principal motivations of the Whig lieutenants—Buckingham, Huntingdon, Bethel, Oates—who are gathered together like the devils in Pandemonium. Then Dryden describes Absalom's progress through the country; however ambitious he was, the mob still made its move to him, and Dryden castigates them for their infidelity once more.

In the second part of the satire, Dryden takes time out to ask what rights the people have in such a situation. They have none, really. The mob can be as easily and as terribly wrong as any king, and the social disruption consequent upon rebellion is very likely to be worse than the injustice it was meant to correct. In short, Dryden
argues that the preservation of order and the constitutional issue are more important than any religious question. He then, in the third part, sketches "Characters" of the small but stout-hearted band of royal defenders: Ormond, Mulgrave, Halifax, and assorted bishops. David, like Christ among his angels, then explains that he has tried to exercise patience with Absalom but his patience is running low; however, he assures all that he will accept Absalom back if he will but return to his father, the king. The heavens sound and God says "Amen," as Dryden prophesies that peace will be restored once more.

The poem was designed to persuade the people of Shaftesbury's madness and of the practical arguments against rebellion, without attacking Monmouth, their favorite. The poem was also designed to counsel a course of action to Charles, who also had a weakness for his prodigal son. The device which facilitates these designs, as I have noted, is the David-Absalom parallel; however, the spirit and tone of this parallel are unlike that of any other Varronian satire we have looked at, and, consequently, they threaten the categories we are beginning to frame of Varronian satire. Let me try to explain and solve this problem.
The satirists whom we have surveyed so far have used three techniques of mock comparison and parody. The Satyricon, for example, ridicules an already obviously silly and stupid collection of characters and episodes by comparing them, with stunning inappropriateness, to Homeric heroes and adventures. Petronius, thus, increases his ridicule of their stupidity to the point where we cannot take them at all seriously. Seneca, in a similar way, compares Claudius with the ancient heroes--partly because the state and Claudius himself would so compare him--to prove what a fool he is and not to enforce a realization we already have. The third technique we find in Mother Hubberds Tale, in which the beast comparisons reduce human desire of position, power, and fame to a lower and less pious perspective. But in Absalom and Achitophel the heroic comparisons raise our estimation of the significance of the action and our fear of the potential evil in the crafty Achitophel. This technique is especially salutary in an occasional poem that aspires to altering public opinion: in other words, Dryden chooses to convince the people of the seriousness of their infidelity and of the danger of Shaftesbury; he does not try to laugh the crisis into solution.
Although Dryden does name what he calls Varronian satires, he does not define that genre or distinguish it satisfactorily from formal satire, that is, from the verse of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal. Its form, he does say, is distinguished by its mixture of prose and verse and by its less severe and less correct style. Its tone, he implies is usually facetious and impudent and often obscene. However, Dryden does not attempt to contrast Varronian with formal satire on the basis of either subject matter or satiric intent. Here, I want to describe what those Varronian satires which Dryden listed have in common and explain how they differ from formal satire—that is, I want to analyze these satires on the basis first, of their form and intention and, second, of their subject matter and styles.

A number of motifs keep recurring in Varronian satire --variations on travel literature, visits to heaven and hell, mock-heroic comparisons, "Characters," and a fascination with rhetoric, controversy, and hyperbole of all sorts--and these are very often presented in a tone of humor and fantasy. Still, this genre takes no predictable (and, thus, potentially prescriptive) pattern. We cannot even assert
that these satires, unlike formal satires, all have a narrative basis, although it is perhaps possible to argue that the non-narratives, Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum and Encomium Moriae, do clearly imply a narrative context in their unfolding. Nevertheless, narrative does not seem essential to the form, nor do plot and unity of action. Samuel Johnson complained about Hudibras that "more is said than done" and that no matter how Butler may have tried to conclude his satire, "the action could not have been one." 49 Johnson would, I think, have had the same reservations about Varronian satire in general because this genre relishes the irrelevant aside and the long-winded debate, and because it intends no linear progress for its narrative. "Instead," as Alvin Kernan has noted, "we get collections of loosely related scenes and busyness which curls back on itself." 50 Or to put it another way, we get development by sustained satiric attitude and tone and not by logical plot. Usually satiric plots, if they go anywhere, go around in circles; 51 at any rate, they do

50 The Plot of Satire (New Haven, 1965), p. 100.
51 Ibid., pp. 66-80, 143-68.
not have "a beginning, a middle, and an end." Their texture is opulent, indeed, cluttered, but their logical and formal structure—except when they parody other genres—is relatively weak.

The most predictable quality of Varronian satire, however, and the one that most clearly distinguished it from the Horatian and Juvenalian mode, is its persistence in presenting itself as something other than satire. Lucian tells us the unlucky tale of his transformations into an ass. Folly speaks an encomium. Butler merely writes a romance. And even Barclay, who admits in his dedication that he intends to excoriate the whole wicked world, imitates *The Satyricon* and in so doing never admits to satire within the work itself.

Now this basic distinction suggests an essential difference in satiric stance. The writer of Varronian satire never plays the satirist, strictly speaking, either as narrator of his tale or as participant in its action. He is no didactic narrator, with or without interlocutor, who ridicules folly directly and who recommends a corresponding virtue. Unlike Horace, the Varronian satirist does not perform as the *vir bonus* or the public
defender; he usually goes along with the folly, either as distant narrator or naive participant, because he finds it sufficient to let the fools expose themselves. He does not teach by explicit dicta and, very often, even by implicit norms. Nowhere in Varronian satire do we find echoes of Juvenal's insistence that "It is difficult not to write satire" and "that if talent won't compose the verse, indignation will." Nowhere do we encounter an emotion comparable to Juvenal's outrage at the end of the Sixth Satire (l. 634)—since corruption is so rampant, "Satire has borrowed the high tragic buskin." The Varronian satirist is usually detached, amused, or oblivious in his formal tone and, of course, ironic in his pretense to be composing in another genre while he is writing in the satiric.

Because he is always writing a travel book, reporting a debate, or telling a story he has heard, his essential satiric technique is to let the fools alone, not to condemn them but to describe them, and to allow them to expose themselves. The Varronian satirist merely presides as his victims distort all value and virtue and celebrate their

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52 Elder Olson, "Rhetoric and the Appreciation of Pope," MP, XXXVII (1940), 13-35.
own folly and vice. He need not teach or instruct when, by careful selection of action and detail, he implies all the ridicule that the formal satirist must speak. And what is more, he seems to enjoy, perversely or otherwise, the whole, wrong-headed and obscene spectacle of a world choking on its own foolishness.

The recurrent subjects and the varied styles of Varronian satire are in keeping with its ironic, amused form and its free-wheeling, mocking intent. Parody is one of the predictable styles and subjects, and we can speak of two chief kinds of parody, formal and literary. Some Varronian satirists structure their works by parodying the form of a romance, an oration, or a chronicle. Petronius, Apuleius, Erasmus, and Lucian belong in this category; part of their intention is to mock the pretenses of those genres themselves. Other formal parodists ironically combine their unworthy subject with a serious literary form or a serious subject with a trivial form—but these authors do not seem especially interested in mocking the genres themselves. Butler in *Hudibras* and Spenser in *Mother Hubberds Tale* belong here. There is another kind of parody, less consistent and much less easy to describe critically, which
I shall call literary parody. Often Varro's titles parody the titles of Greek dramas; often Lucian misquotes Homer or Euripides; we find Dryden fitting some lines of Virgil or Cowley into a new context. These examples violate the context and spirit of the work parodied, pointing up, to be sure, an ironic contrast between subject and treatment. But this kind of parody is, in many ways, closely related to the classical idea of imitation: the author takes received literature and molds parts of it according to his own lights, with the purpose of surprising and pleasing his audience. When the parodist does this, he hopes to startle his audience, thus substantially contributing to the whole "game" quality of Varronian satire. Butler's endless parodies of romantic preparation for battle in Book One, Canto One (in which he describes the clothing, arms, and provisions that Hudibras takes along) not merely make fun of romantic arming, and not only treat the pompous Puritan in appropriate tone, but also create a funny list of concrete and low devices that in the context have a humorous appeal of their own.

This discussion of literary parody leads us to the function of mock-epic and mock-heroic. These serve, as we have already detailed, to cure pomposity and to insure
clarity of thought by forcibly altering perspective in order to contrast small minds with their fantastic hopes. Also they create a less serious tone of zaniness that just as fully contributes to the essential world of Varronian satire. When Encolpius laments his impotency in mock-heroic grandeur, the humor and point is not the gulf between Encolpius' petty hope and his crazed-glory expression, or in misplaced value on sexual calisthenics, but in the surprising contrast of tones and interests.

Farce is as predictably present in Varronian satire as mock-heroic. Seneca sends Claudius to an unseemly damnation, for example, as a slave to one of his own freedmen. In all these satires the gulf between fact and aspiration is underlined by disproportion of treatment and expression. Farce often follows mock-heroic just as judgment follows exposure. Longwinded speeches and narration, gratuitous inclusions of stories and advice, mock learning, rhetoric gone berserk—all recall Seneca's observation that "a lax style ... shows that the mind has lost its balance."53 And, indeed, the unbalanced mind is the central subject in Varronian satire.

because it is the mirror and the cause of a disordered world. Thus the form of Varronian satire is usually made to parody the idée fixe in its myriad human shapes. Lucian's Icaromenippus attacks the vanity of philosophy. Julian's Caesars shows the vanity of regal power and glory. Butler's Hudibras anatomizes intellectual and religious enthusiasm. All their characters are possessed. Dryden describes his Zimri, the changeable politician, and Achitophel. Spenser gives us the character of the evil courtier.

In all, this satiric vision centers on some single-mindedness, enthusiastic about its own learning, hypnotized by its own know-how, excited by its own ambitious and lurid fantasies, and crazed by its own hopes for glory. This lost mind, in its lost world, described and encircled by an unpredictable and encyclopedic style is the subject of Varronian satire, when in a detached, amused, ironic tone it parades as something other than satire.
CHAPTER III

MACFLECKNOE: THE STRUCTURE AND THE DESIGN

MacFlecknoe is the speaker's report of the passing of the scepter of Dullness from the aging monarch to his carefully chosen and worthy heir. It is not mock-epic as such because it has no consistent epic structure; it is mock-heroic in that it continually alludes to the heroes of ancient and Christian stories. But, insofar as the poem mixes these mock allusions with ironic panegyrics and parodies of Coronation rites and stage farces, the category of Varronian satire seems to fit it better. This is not to believe in word magic, to believe that if we have a category for some reality, we have control of it; rather, calling MacFlecknoe a Varronian satire makes us comfortable with its seemingly disrupted and incomplete action and with its highly selective and free-wheeling mockery, by placing it in its artistic tradition.
The speaker of the poem seems a simple reporter of an historical event, but he judges his material in the ironic way in which he disposes it, creating a realm of Nonsense, situating it in a low part of the City among the dregs of society, and choosing as his major spokesman the booby poet Richard Flecknoe, who blindly praises dullness in a heroic style, out of all proportion to his subject. Dryden then chooses incidents and styles to correspond to this artistic conception, but the incidents and styles must also tell the ironic, incongruous story by selectivity of detail and not by authorial commentary. My analysis is consistent with Dryden's description of the steps in designing an epic action:

The moral . . . is the first business of the poet, as being the groundwork of his instruction. This being formed, he contrives such a design, or fable, as may be most suitable to the moral; after this he begins to think of the persons whom he is to employ in carrying on his design; and gives them the manners which are most proper to their several characters. The thoughts and words are the last parts, which give beauty and colouring to the piece.

Dryden seems to have been forming the moral in his mind as early as 1671, when he threatened, in the preface to *An Evening's Love*, to laugh at his enemy, to condemn his dullness, and to make him ridiculous to future ages (see p. 17). The "moral" of *MacFlecknoe*, refined over the intervening five to seven years, is that Shadwell, fancying himself a wit and an imitator of Ben Jonson, is really a foolish writer of farce, limp rhyme, and dullness. The satire is essentially a lampoon and not, like *The Dunciad*, a vision of a disordered world. I make this assertion because the temptation to see in *MacFlecknoe* the seeds of the satiric values of *The Dunciad* is strong. The poem contains the implications of a parody of progress poetry and ridicule of false poetic inspiration, but these do not become themes in *MacFlecknoe*, as they most certainly do in *The Dunciad*. Centering on Shadwell, Dryden explains that that silly poet is a humorous character who belongs in one of his own comedies. Interestingly, Shadwell's literary father, Ben Jonson, had been similarly lampooned by his enemy, Thomas Dekker. In the dedication to *Satiro-mastix* (1602) Dekker had ridiculed Jonson's "mindes Deformitie": "if his Critical Lynx had with as narrow eyes, observ'd in himselfe, as it
did little spots upon others, without all disputation: Horace would not have left Horace out of Every man in's Humour."²

Shadwell fancies himself a witty writer of humor comedy; Dryden decides to make him into a humorous character, that is, one who has "some extravagant habit, passion, or affectation . . . by the oddness of which, he is immediately distinguished from the rest of men."³ And Shadwell's humor is dullness, a fact that did not escape Shadwell himself when, in 1687, he complained about Dryden's lampoon: "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, &c. over and over."⁴ Shadwell also sees Dryden's repetitive technique by which he labels Shadwell as dull and repeats this through a variety of incidents, creating a fable of the triumphant accession of Shadwell to the throne of Dullness. Central to this fable

² The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker (London, 1873), I, 182.
⁴ Dedication to The Tenth Satyr of Juvenal, English and Latin, Works, V, 292.
is the character of Flecknoe, renowned as a foolish poetaster, who is either declining into his last days or already dead. Flecknoe, relying on his reputation, can recommend Shadwell as his only worthy successor and can speed him on to his triumphant accession. The fable, then, can be heroic because it is one, complete and great\(^5\)--which is to say it is ironically great, horrifyingly significant in its implications. Through Flecknoe's choice of successor, selection of a royal seat, direction of the coronation, and final prophecy and panegyric, the poem finds its unity and maintains its "noble" tone. To these incidents, we now turn.

Dryden, in the 1684 edition, divided *MacFlecknoe* into four sections (ll. 1-63, 64-93, 94-138, 139-217), which correspond to four distinct actions in the poem. The poet begins by reminding his audience of human mutability and especially of its application to the mighty. It is, of course, Flecknoe's recognition of this truth that moves him to choose a successor. The opening couplet is universal and heroic; its mock applications do not become clear until Flecknoe's name is mentioned; yet even this first couplet has an ironic implication. On any reading after our first,

we are aware of the peculiarly applicable sense of these lines to the entire action of the poem—the decay of poetry in the hands of Shadwell, and the passage from an epical opening to a farcical conclusion: the Fate that finally summons Flecknoe (l. 212) is nothing more awesome than a trapdoor.

In the heroic comparison (ll. 3-10) between Flecknoe and Augustus, Dryden relies on the concept of *Imperator literatus*⁶ which Augustus so personified and which Restoration poetry tried to identify with Charles II. The king's own good-breeding, wit, and intelligence fructify the arts—an idea capitalized upon in Dryden's explanation of why the Restoration had brought more wit to comedy.⁷ Flecknoe reigns, on the other hand, amidst a great flowering of Stupidity.

The old king turns to the question of succession, and his choice and its justification form the subject of the first incident in the fable of MacFlecknoe. The joke

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⁷ Dryden makes this argument in the epilogue to The Second Part of *The Conquest of Granada* and in his "Defence of the Epilogue."
is that Flecknoe need not debate at all. His pondering takes no time. He resolves the succession immediately because Shadwell's choice is obvious. He sets out in 11. 13-14 the principle by which the heir is to be selected: likeness to himself. "Nature pleads" that the son should be just like the father, who is a 'natural' fool. As his judicial oration continues, Flecknoe's rhetorical problem is to show that Shadwell is the only son who perfectly resembles the father, and he demonstrates this thesis with five separate arguments. Shadwell alone possessed mature dullness from youth (11. 15-16). Shadwell alone is "confirm'd" in his dullness (11. 17-18--note the sacramental association of the verb, "dullness" being a state of perverse "grace"). Others occasionally make sense, but Shadwell never does (11. 19-20). Once in a while their wit sheds some light on their meaning, but Shadwell's dullness, like a fog, is an active power that obscures the sunlight around it (11. 21-24). What is more, Shadwell looks regal, the way he spreads out like some huge shade-tree. By his immovable bearing he seems "design'd" to be a royal dunce.

Having successfully distinguished Shadwell from the other contenders by his likeness to Flecknoe's own perfected
dullness, the old king picks up the hint of providential concern in the word "design'd" and shows that Shadwell's accession is bringing with it some prophetic fulfillment. Flecknoe's implicit argument is that now is "the fullness of time," when the one awaited has arrived. Describing Shadwell as the last prophet and full embodiment of the prophetic tradition, Flecknoe explains that the dullness of Heywood and Shirley merely prefigures that supreme stupidity which Shadwell is to perfect. Flecknoe, too, is merely a forerunner of Shadwell, his John the Baptist, who after anointing the new Messiah will drop from view (!) entirely.

Flecknoe supports this thesis by narration. He admits that his own triumphant performance before the King of Portugal was only a type or sign of the great pageant which Shadwell directed on the Thames, before the barge of Charles II. Flecknoe favorably compares this pageant, which apparently contained angels ("Celestial" and "Host"), with a roguish adventure of tossing a fiddler in a blanket. Of course, Shadwell's pageant must have been more impressive, but the bathos of the comparison, besides betraying the triviality of Flecknoe's mind, makes the pageant seem little more than a stupid prank. "Methinks I see the new Arion
"Sail," says Flecknoe enthusiastically. To him Shadwell is the greatest lyrist and poet-singer since the musician of the heavens himself. In the theological and typological context that Flecknoe has created, "new Arion" reminds us of the new Adam--Christ come in the fullness of time.

Shadwell, directing the pageant, can get only a "roar" and "squeaks" out of the Bases and Treble. Those watching shout their approval and the fish gather about his barge as they rush to the sewage when it appears. The scatology of these two couplets (ll. 47-50) further reduces the "significance" of Shadwell's pageant. Dryden chose, in his authorized edition of 1684, to alter the "Shad" of the 1682 printing to "Sh___." The scatological suggestion is compounded by his reduction of "Aston-Hall" to "A__-Hall." Ll. 47-48 then suggest that obscene echoes resound from "Pissing-Ally" to A[rse]hole! The fish themselves gather around Shadwell as they do the "Morning Toast"--the excrement of the daily sewage. Flecknoe is not aware, of course, of his inappropriate comparisons. In enthusiasm for Shadwell's triumphs he attempts heroic comparisons but ends in bathos; yet, no one in this City of Dullness understands. Flecknoe, carried away in search
of the ultimate metaphor to praise Shadwell's methodical direction of the pageant, hits on the predictable, sing-song beat of *Psyche's* verse. And his swift mind moves from singing to dancing and thence from dancing feet to metrical feet. On his associative way, he launches into an aside (ll. 55-59) on *Psyche*. The lines of that play have too many feet and the thought is muddled. John Singleton, the recitative singer, so envied Shadwell's performance that he swore to give up his dull, bombastic role in *The Siege of Rhodes*. With this ultimate tribute to Shadwell from another dullard, Flecknoe breaks down (l. 59), overcome by the prospect of Shadwell's promise.

The poet again presents Flecknoe and Shadwell in heroic dress, as the "good old *Syre*" and the "hopefull boy."¹ He then assures us that Flecknoe's arguments have been persuasive, but he says that Shadwell's plays themselves most convincingly prove his dullness. He "was made" for "anointed dullness" just as he had been "confirm'd in full stupidity" and had seemed "design'd for thoughtless Majesty." There is a perverse Providence at work leading

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¹ See Dryden's *Aeneid*, II, 948—Anchises is "the good old Man." Also see A.L. Korn, "*Mac Flecknoe* and Cowley's *Davideis,*" *MLQ*, XIV (1951), 116.
Shadwell to the priestly and regal office of king. Flecknoe has shown that no one else qualifies for the throne and that earlier dullards were but types of this last prophet. The narrator will continue this quasi-apologetical argument in the second section (11. 87-93) when he shows that Shadwell fulfills the prophecies made about the Messiah of Dullness and, further, proves his identity by his works, that is, his dull plays (as Christ, for example, proves His divinity by His works, His miracles). The argument that Dryden develops through Flecknoe and the narrator is in outline a simple apologetical one which proves that Shadwell is the promised one by his fulfilling the prophecies, by his completing the line of prophets, and by his performing appropriate works.

The second section of MacFlecknoe (11. 64-93) locates, describes, and justifies Flecknoe's choice of a site for Shadwell's throne. The opening two couplets, replete with archaic-heroic diction ("yore," "hight," "t'inform"), describe the history of this site. But Fate has decreed the decay of this place (recall 11. 1-2): the watchtower is now only a name. The narrator details the corruption, obscenity, and danger of the Barbican as if he were
introducing some elaborate and romantic locale in *The Faerie Queene* or some epical edifice like the House of Astragon in *Gondibert* or the Prophetic College in *The Davideis.*

His heroic diction—"Ruins," "Courts," "ancient fabrick," "Queens," and "Hero's"—underlines the contrast with the "lewd" and "polluted" district, presided over by "Mother-Strumpets" and unpatrolled by Watch. Shadwell finds his true level here at a theatrical Nursery among the "unfledg'd," "little," "infant," and "tender," where "Great Fletcher" and "greater Johnson" are never found. Shadwell, who aspires to follow Jonson, is relegated to the world of "Simkin" in the popular droll. This site is a place of farce and mere wordplay without salt and wit—a true monument to Shadwell's genius. This spot Flecknoe "Ambitiously" designs for the throne. Flecknoe is ambitious because, after all, Shadwell must live up to the grandeur of the place, but also because Flecknoe is consciously doing the right things to fulfill the prophecies. Dekker had said that in this spot a great fool would rise to "scourge" wit and "flayle" sense. Flecknoe is not forcing the prophecy

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9 See note to line 82. Also Korn, *HLQ*, XIV, 119, and Curtius, pp. 200-202 on epic landscape.
but acting, like Christ, "so that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Dekker promised that this prince would spawn a race of Misers, Hypocrites, etc.—a line of dullards. These fruits of his brain, his works, complete the proof of Shadwell's Messiahship. Now, assured of his right, we can approve of his coronation.

Shadwell is crowned in the third section of the poem (11. 94-138). The ceremony may be divided into nine recognizable parts: the procession of the vulgar (96-106), the arrival of the old and new kings (107-111), the oath (112-117), the anointing (118-119), and then the presentation of the orb (120-121), the scepter (122-125), and the crown (126-127). After recognizing the omens of his rule, the assembled crowd roars its approval of the new king (132-133) --he is, thus, truly accepted by them as well as chosen from on high. The priest-king Flecknoe then sprinkles the holy water of oblivion (134-136) upon the "hopefull boy."

Fame spreads the word of Shadwell's coronation, but the Fame that Dryden describes is really Rumor (see Aeneid.

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10 John uses this technique throughout his Gospel; see his account of the Passion and especially 19: 24, 36, 37.
IV, 173f.). It is as if he says that "the word has gotten out on Shadwell" and, consequently, all the underworld gathers to do him homage. Fame ridicules Shadwell on the one hand, yet also helps to spotlight the other, more significant part of Dryden's complaint. Shadwell is famous and thus constitutes a threat to wit, poetry, and sense. From l. 132 to the poem's end we come to the amazing discovery that a new empire—however opposed to common sense—is being established and that the people (theater audiences at Dorset Garden and Drury Lane) are applauding its founding. When Dryden makes Shadwell a king and his realm a city and world of prospering stupidity, his subject is low but extensive, and we are unnerved by the complex ethical as well as artistic incongruity involved; it suggests that a dangerous humor is loose in the land.

Dryden compares the procession, implicitly, with some kind of city pageant. Although he is not directly parodying any one kind of pageant,¹¹ he is trying to contrast our

expectations of these civic festivals and their allegorical figures, speeches, and excitement, with the reality of Shadwell's pathetic little entourage. The entire procession consists of citizens led by a Guard of booksellers, marching over a carpet of folio and quarto leaves from "neglected Authors." Just as Shadwell finds his element in the locale of the Nursery, now he finds his level among the hack-writers of the age. It is a mean, and, with the scatological associations in ll. 101 and 103, a smutty scene.

Poetry should be some sort of divine utterance. If this idea was thought to be an overstatement in Restoration times, at least it would be called a form of creation that affects spiritual matters. At its highest development, in epic poetry, it is an outpouring of the spirit.\(^{12}\) If we consider poetry in this way, we can understand how bad verse could be considered another kind of outpouring—excrement. In l. 103 Dryden catches this ambiguity: "loads of Sh—— almost choakt the way." Shadwell's plays are dung. This scatological equation is really a satiric topos in the Restoration. Buckingham libels Captain Julian, the peddler of lampoons, as

Thou common shore of this poetic town,
Where all our excrements of wit are thrown--
For sonnet, satire, bawdry, blasphemy
Are empti'd all on thee:
The choleric wight, untrussing in a rage,
Finds thee and leaves his load upon the page.13

And "A Session of the Poets" (1676) ridicules John Crowne for

Alleging that he had most right to the bays,
For writing romances and shiting of plays.14

This association of bad poetry and excrement (not fully
developed until Swift and The Dunciad, I think) helps create
the grime and smut of Shadwell's world and realm. This
image of a filth-choked world corresponds, we recall, to
a topos in Varronian satire: Petronius' and Apuleius' love
of bawdy, Barclay's preoccupation with smells and physical
indecency, Butler's compulsive lists of dirty food and filth.
The Varronian satirist begins by creating a world more
indecent than his target of ridicule, but in time, that
target finds himself inextricable from filth around him.

Then, Flecknoe and Shadwell appear enthroned. They

13 "A Familiar Epistle to Mr. Julian, Secretary to the
Muses" (1677), POAS I (1963), 388. See the Dorset quotation,
p. 32.
14 Ibid., p. 355. Also see "On the Same Author upon his
New Utopia" (c. 1671), lines 13-16; and Rochester's "My Lord
All-Pride" (1679), lines 7-12; both in POAS, pp. 341 and 414.
remind the narrator of Aeneas and Ascanius, and later of
Hamilcar and Hannibal. But the narrator undercuts each
heroic parallel by a couplet or two of ridicule. Shadwell
arrives like Ascanius, but with a "glow" of dullness around
his face (recall the active power of "fog" in 11. 21-24).
Like Hannibal he swears eternal enmity against a foe
(Livy, XXI.1), but his foes are wit and sense. Flecknoe
then anoints Shadwell, places a mug of ale instead of the
orb in his hand (see note to 11. 120-121), a recognition of
the source of his inspiration, a brain enflamed by booze.
The scepter, which is "the ensign of kingly power and jus-
tice,"15 is none other than Flecknoe's wretched pastoral
drama, Love's Kingdom, which Shadwell had studied from his
youth. Finally, Shadwell is crowned with poppies, alluding
to his opium addiction as well as to his sleep-inducing
talents. The poppies themselves sway, as if dozing off to
sleep, as they consecrate Shadwell's head to Dullness.
Dryden next citing the omens of Shadwell's future greatness.
Quintilian suggests that epideictic oratory should note any

15 *English Coronation Records*, ed. L.G. Wickham Legg
(Westminster, 1901), p. lii.
omens of good fortune; Virgil, for example, cites the omens that Anchises discerns as he and Aeneas leave the ruins of Troy. Unfortunately, no one seems to understand that the omens portend stupidity, or, more precisely, no one seems disturbed that a great age of dullness is about to begin.

Flecknoe had appeared first as a king, in sections one and two, and then as a priest, in section three. The fourth part of this satire (11. 139-217) presents him as prophet. Flecknoe begins his oration with a prayer (139-144). He asks that Shadwell be permitted to rule a vast empire, that his dominion know no end, and that he surpass even Flecknoe's greatest literary achievements. It is a noble, selfless prayer. The people enthusiastically agree, just as they acclaimed the omens of Shadwell's future reign (132-133).

Again with the people's approval, Flecknoe continues.

The long second part of his prophetic oration addresses Shadwell directly. Dryden has created in Flecknoe a character whose taste is utterly perverted, but he does call things by their real names. So, in this oration, Flecknoe specifically voices the charges that Dryden had brought

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16 *Institutio Oratoria*, III.vii.10.
17 Dryden's *Aeneid*, II, 930f.
against Shadwell earlier, ironically praising all his folly. Flecknoe, as the wise, retiring ruler, leaves Shadwell with a list of advices, six suggestions in all (145-210). First, he charges Shadwell to grow "in new Impudence, new Ignorance." Clearly, Shadwell should not be satisfied with his former stupidities, those which, Dryden would surely agree, he displayed in his pompous attacks on Dryden's definition of wit and his assessment of Jonson.

Second, Flecknoe advises Shadwell to follow his example and learn useless effort and toil; take five years to produce witless plays, he suggests (147-150). The false pregnancy metaphor in l. 148, "Pangs without birth," echoes a similar metaphor in ll. 40-41. The significance of these metaphors is felt when we consider poetic "conception" metaphorically, Flecknoe, at first, describes Shadwell pregnant with song; he later pictures himself in labor but being delivered of nothing.

Third (151-160), Flecknoe asserts that Sir George Etherege's fools demonstrate just how witty their creator is, but Shadwell's only prove how senseless he is. Still, Flecknoe says, Shadwell should use himself as a model for his fools so that future ages will know that they are "Not
Copies drawn" from Nature but the "Issue" of his own dull mind. Dryden's contrast between Etherege and Shadwell is simply a personification of that between wit and humor comedy (see note to l. 151).

Fourth (161-170), Flecknoe advises Shadwell not to let the wits help him with his plays. When he wants rhetorical flourish, Shadwell should trust Nature, which will summon forth his native dullness. If he does his best, inserts insults in place of wit and drinks enough (both are meanings of "top"), then pomposity will flow naturally. Shadwell had been told to pattern his fools after himself; now he is assured that if he acts himself, he will rant just like his own characterization, Sir Formal Trifle. For assurance, Flecknoe alludes to the bombast of Shadwell's dedications to the Duke of Newcastle.

Flecknoe's fifth suggestion (171-202) is the longest and most complicated. He warns Shadwell not to pretend foolishly and vainly that he belongs to the Tribe of Ben; he should become excited, rather, at the thought of emulating Flecknoe and Ogleby, his true literary fathers. Then Flecknoe enunciates a proposition that in capsule is Dryden's judgment of Shadwell--"Thou art my blood, where Johnson
has no part." At some length Flecknoe explains that Shadwell and Jonson have nothing in common (175-196). He says, in effect, "You think you resemble Jonson? Well, you're deluding yourself." Flecknoe asks when Jonson ever attacked learning, or wrote idiotic love scenes, or composed pastoral drama in laughable meter, or sprinkled his plays with stupid bawdy, or after announcing a comedy in the prologue, produced a farce on the stage. When did Jonson steal scenes from Fletcher as Shadwell lifted whole plots from Etherege? Shadwell's province is simply not the same as Jonson's because Shadwell "invents" humors for each play. Shadwell's trouble springs from his own creative stupidity, which turns everything he steals, invents, or conceives into dullness. No, Flecknoe concludes (193-196), Shadwell doesn't really even look like Jonson because his fat belly is only a tumor of sense, his huge body nearly empty of wit--and notice that in both cases his wit is compared, by those recurring metaphors, to false pregnancy and the effects of drink.

Flecknoe instructs Shadwell in his true lineage: "Thou art my blood," he says. He insists that Shadwell resemble him because he too writes miserable meter, foolish trage-
dies, dull comedies, and inoffensive and ineffective satires.

Finally, Flecknoe comes to his sixth suggestion (203-210). Just as Shadwell should "Trust Nature" and "not labour to be dull," so also he should follow the bent of his genius, giving up plays and satire completely. He should devote his time to false wit, to verse sleight-of-hand like anagrams, acrostics, and emblematic poetry. Curiously, this is just the opposite direction from that which Ben Jonson takes when he vows to give up the stage. In his "Ode to Himselfe" he promises to quit writing comedy for fools, to

> Leave things so prostitute,  
> And take th'Alcaike Lute;  
> Or thine owne Horace, or Anacreons Lyre:  
> Warme thee by Pindars fire:  
> And though thy Nerves be shrunke, and blood  
> be cold,  
> Ere years have made thee old,  
> Strike that disdainful heat  
> Throughout, to their defeat:  
> As curious fools, and envious of thy straine,  
> May blushing sweare, no Palsi's in thy braine.  

Shadwell's talents lie elsewhere. If he wants to make use of his musical talent, Flecknoe advises, then perhaps he could write songs and accompany himself on the lute.

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At this suggestion, the anxious and bored people send Flecknoe down through a trapdoor. The drugget robe, sign of poor, low poets, falls to Shadwell's broad and worthy shoulders. These last lines (211-217) put a farcical ending on what began heroically. Flecknoe, who began as Augustus, exits as Sir Formal Trifle; the judicial and panegyrical orator ends as a "florid coxcomb." Varronian satires occasionally reach an orderly resolution, but this often necessitates a deus ex machina: I am thinking of the resolutions of The Golden Ass, Mother Hubberds Tale, and Absalom and Achitophel. More often, these satires just stop, like The Satyricon, Euphormio, and Hudibras, or end anti-climactically, like The Apotheosis of Claudius, Encomium Moriae, and MacFlecknoe. The movement in MacFlecknoe is toward diminution. Shadwell and Flecknoe are placed in their proper setting and perspective first by showing how lost they are in a heroic world and then by letting that heroic world fade, replacing it with the world of stage farce. Flecknoe begins defining that world when he suggests Shadwell give up plays and satire, for he must conform to his own genius and environment, so well symbolized by the Nursery in the Barbican. Flecknoe always praises the wrong values, but his enthusiasm for
dullness in his final lines strips away Dryden's more subtle diminution of Shadwell until, at the end, Flecknoe directly places Shadwell among the lowest of pretenders to poetry. The only enlargement in the poem is Shadwell's dominion: the dullness that first floated on the Thames will soon span the entire Atlantic!

Dryden admitted in his essay on satire that lampoons are difficult to justify because "we have no moral right on the reputation of other men. 'Tis taking from them what we cannot restore to them." Perhaps they may be permitted as revenge, Dryden says, when a man has been affronted in the same manner, and also perhaps when a fool becomes "a public nuisance." While Dryden does argue that Shadwell's dullness mirrors a general decline in taste and sense, this argument is central neither to his satire's moral nor to his own wrath. MacFlecknoe is a lampoon of revenge, born partly of anger and partly of frustration at Shadwell's refusal to comprehend what Dryden was saying about Jonson and wit. It is difficult to argue, for all Shadwell's pomposity, that he had affronted Dryden in kind before Dryden

19 Essays, ed. Ker, II, 79.
20 Ibid., 79-80.
retaliated with MacFlecknoe. This is a tribute, perhaps, to Dryden's genius rather than a spot on his charity.

Ten times in the poem Dryden accuses Shadwell of dullness, nine times of nonsense and stupidity, and nine times of witlessness. By repetition Dryden hammers home the argument that Shadwell is a fool, a son of Flecknoe, and true heir to the throne of Nonsense. Shadwell was created for this; the people have crowned him; now, they can have him. And the last and best joke, the one easily overlooked, is that Shadwell never got to say a word in the entire proceeding. But Shadwell had been talking since 1668; so, why should Dryden allow him another word?
CHAPTER IV
MACFLECKNOE: THE TEXT AND ANNOTATIONS

I have chosen to reproduce for annotation the text from The Poems of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1958), I, 265-71. Kinsley has printed the 1684 edition, authorized by Dryden in his Miscellany Poems, having collated it with the pirated edition of 1682, and having made only occasional emendations (which I note in my annotations). The poem was written by 1678, at least, for it circulated in manuscript that year.\(^1\) G. Blakemore Evans has found seven manuscripts and has collated them with the editions of 1682 and 1684, with the octavo and quarto texts of 1694, and with the text in Poems on Various Occasions (1701). He concludes that "textually . . . 82

\(^1\) P.L. Babington, MLR, XIII (1918), 25-34; G. Thorn-Drury, MLR, XIII (1918), 276-81; and H.M. Belden, MLN, XXXIII (1918), 449-56; also MLN, XXXV (1920), 58. See also Mark Van Doren's summary of authorship and dates in John Dryden: A Study of His Poetry (1963), pp. 267-78.
has no more (and no less) authority than any of these five" most reliable and complete manuscripts "and may in effect be treated as simply another manuscript transcript which happened to escape into print." Further, he judges that establishing "any order of descent or even any temporal priority between the manuscripts and 82, or between these and 84, seems to me quite impossible." V.A. Dearing, objecting to Evans' latter conclusion, attempts a rationalization of the changes between the texts of 1682 (with the manuscripts) and of 1684, suggesting states of development in the manuscripts. He sees the manuscript from the Cambridge University Library as the earliest, the Lambeth Palace text also as early, and the Folger Library text as usually the latest and closest to the authorized edition of 1684. The textual editors do agree that the 1684 text is the most reliable and usually the most poetically satisfying.

All humane things are subject to decay,
And, when Fate summons, Monarchs must obey:
This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
Was call'd to Empire, and had govern'd long:
In Prose and Verse, was own'd, without dispute
Through all the Realms of Non-sense, absolute.
This aged Prince now flourishing in Peace,
And blest with issue of a large increase,
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the State:
And pond'ring which of all his Sons was fit
To Reign, and wage immortal War with Wit;
Cry'd, 'tis resolv'd; for Nature pleads that He
Should onely rule, who most resembles me:
Sh—— alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years.
Sh—— alone, of all my Sons, is he
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Sh—— never deviates into sense.
Some Beams of Wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through and make a lucid intervall;
But Sh——'s genuine night admits no ray,
His rising Fogs prevail upon the Day:
Besides his goodly Fabrick fills the eye,
And seems design'd for thoughtless Majesty:
Thoughtless as Monarch Oakes, that shade the plain,
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
Heywood and Shirley were but Types of thee,
Thou last great Prophet of Tautology:
Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
Was sent before but to prepare thy way;
And coursly clad in *Norwich* Drugget came
To teach the Nations in thy greater name.
My warbling Lute, the Lute I whilom strung
When to King *John* of *Portugal* I sung,
Was but the prelude to that glorious day,
When thou on silver *Thames* did'st cut thy way,
With well tim'd *Oars* before the Royal Barge,
Swell'd with the Pride of thy Celestial charge;
And big with Hymn, Commander of an Host,
The like was ne'er in *Epsom* Blankets tost.
Methinks I see the new *Arion* Sail,
The Lute still trembling underneath thy nail.
At thy well sharpened thumb from Shore to Shore
The Treble squeaks for fear, the Bases roar:
Echoes from *Pissing-Ally*, *Sh*— call,
And *Sh*— they resound from *A*— Hall.
About thy boat the little Fishes throng,
As at the Morning Toast, that Floats along.
Sometimes as Prince of thy Harmonious band
Thou wcheid'st thy Papers in thy threshing hand.
St. *Andre*'s feet ne'er kept more equal time,
Not ev'n the feet of thy own *Psyche*'s rhime:
Though they in number as in sense excell;
So just, so like tautology they fell,
That, pale with envy, *Singleton* forswore
The Lute and Sword which he in Triumph bore,
And vow'd he ne'er would act *Villerius* more.
Here stopt the good old *Syre*; and wept for joy
In silent raptures of the hopefull boy.
All arguments, but most his Plays, persuad,
That for anointed dullness he was made.

Close to the Walls which fair *Augusta* bind,
(The fair *Augusta* much to fears inclin'd)
An ancient fabrick, rais'd t'inform the sight,
There stood of yore, and *Barbican* it hight:
A watch Tower once; but now, so Fate ordains,
Of all the Pile an empty name remains.
From its old Ruins Brothel-houses rise,
Scenes of lewd loves, and of polluted joys.
Where their vast Courts the Mother-Strumpets keep,
And, undisturb'd by Watch, in silence sleep.
Near these a Nursery erects its head,
Where Queens are form'd, and future Hero's bred;
Where unfledg'd Actors learn to laugh and cry,
Where infant Punks their tender Voices try,  
And little Maximins the Gods defy.
Great Fletcher never treads in Buskins here,  
Nor greater Johnson dares in Socks appear.
But gentle Simkin just reception finds  
Amidst this Monument of vanish't minds:
Pure Clinches, the suburban Muse affords;  
And Panton waging harmless War with words.
Here Fleckno, as a place to Fame well known,  
Ambitiously design'd his Sh——'s Throne.
For ancient Decker prophesi'd long since,  
That in this Pile should Reign a mighty Prince,
Born for a scourge of Wit, and flayle 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.

Now Empress Fame had publish'd the Renown  
Of Sh——'s Coronation through the Town.
Rows'd by report of Fame, the Nations meet,  
From near Bun—Hill, and distant Watling—street.
No Persian Carpets spread th' Imperial way,  
But scatter'd Limbs of mangled Poets lay:
From dusty shops neglected Authors come,  
Martys of Pies, and Reliques of the Bum.
Much Heywood, Shirly, Ogleby there lay,  
But loads of Sh—— almost choak the way.
Bilk't Stationers for Yeomen stood prepar'd,  
And H—— was Captain of the Guard.
The hoary Prince in Majesty appear'd,  
High on a Throne of his own Labours rear'd.
At his right hand our young Ascanius sate  
Rome's other hope, and pillar of the State.
His Brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,  
And lambent dullness plaid arround his face.
As Hannibal did to the Altars come,  
Sworn by his Syre a mortal Foe to Rome;
So Sh—— swore, nor should his Vow bee vain,  
That he till Death true dullness would maintain;
And in his father's Right, and Realms defence,  
Ne'er to have peace with Wit, nor truce with Sense.
The King himself the sacred Unection made,  
As King by Office, and as Priest by Trade:
In his sinister hand, instead of Ball,
He plac'd a mighty Mug of potent Ale;
Love's Kingdom to his right he did convey,
At once his Sceptre and his rule of Sway;
Whose righteous Lore the Prince had practis'd young,
And from whose Loyns recorded Psyche sprung.
His Temples last with Poppies were o'erspread,
That nodding seem'd to consecrate his head:
Just at that point of time, if Fame not lye,
On his left hand twelve reverend Owls did fly.
So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tyber's Brook,
Presage of Sway from twice six Vultures took.
Th' admiring throng loud acclamations make,
And Omens of his future Empire take.
The Syre then shook the honours of his head,
And from his brows damps of oblivion shed
Full on the filial dullness: Long he stood,
Repelling from his Breast the raging God;
At length burst out in this prophetick mood:
Heavens bless my Son, from Ireland let him reign
To farr Barbadoes on the Western main;
Of his Dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his Father's be his Throne.
Beyond loves Kingdom let him stretch his Pen;
He paus'd, and all the people cry'd Amen.
Then thus, continu'd he, my Son advance
Still in new Impudence, new Ignorance.
Success let others teach, learn thou from me
Pangs without birth, and fruitless Industry.
Let Virtuoso's in five years be Writ;
Yet not one thought accuse thy toyl of wit.
Let gentle George in triumph tread the Stage,
Make Dorimant betray, and Loveit rage;
Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the Pit,
And in their folly shew the Writers wit.
Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy defence,
And justifie their Author's want of sense.
Let 'em be all by thy own model made
Of dullness, and desire no foreign aid:
That they to future ages may be known,
Not Copies drawn, but Issue of thy own.
Nay let thy men of wit too be the same,
All full of thee, and differing but in name;
But let no alien S—dl—y interpose
To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.
And when false flowers of **Rhetorick** thou would'st cull, 
Trust Nature, do not labour to be dull; 
But write thy best, and top; and in each line, 
Sir **Formal's** oratory will be thine. 
Sir **Formal**, though unsought, attends thy quill, 
And does thy **Northern Dedications** fill. 
Nor let false friends seduce thy mind to fame, 
By arrogating **Johnson's** Hostile name. 
Let Father **Fleckno** fire thy mind with praise, 
And Uncle **Ogleby** thy envy raise. 
Thou art my blood, where **Johnson** 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, 
Promis'd a Play and dwindled to a Farce? 
When did his Muse from **Fletcher** scenes purloin, 
As thou whole Eth'ridg dost transfuse to thine? 
But so transfus'd as Oyl on Waters flow, 
His always floats above, thine sinks below. 
This is thy Province, this thy wondrous way, 
New Humours to invent for each new Play: 
This is that boasted Byas of thy mind, 
By which one way, to dullness, 'tis inclin'd. 
Which makes thy writings lean on one side still, 
And in all changes that way bends thy will. 
Nor let thy mountain belly make pretence 
Of likeness; thine's a tympany of sense. 
A Tun of Man in thy Large bulk is writ, 
But sure thou'rt but a Kilderkin of wit. 
Like mine thy gentle numbers feebly creep, 
Thy Tragick Muse gives smiles, thy Comick sleep. 
With whate'er gall thou sett'st thy self to write, 
Thy inoffensive Satyrs never bite. 
In thy fellonious heart, though Venom lies, 
It does but touch thy **Irish** pen, and dyes. 
Thy Genius calls thee not to purchase fame 
In keen Iambicks, but mild Anagram: 
Leave writing Plays, and choose for thy command 
Some peacefull Province in Acrostick Land. 
There thou maist wings display and Altars raise, 
And torture one poor word Ten thousand ways.
Or if thou would'st thy diff'rent talents suit,
Set thy own Songs, and sing them to thy lute.
He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,
For Bruce and Longvil had a Trap prepar'd,
And down they sent the yet declaiming Bard.
Sinking he left his Drugget robe behind,
Born upwards by a subterranean wind.
The Mantle fell to the young Prophet's part,
With double portion of his Father's Art.
ANNOTATIONS

James Kinsley's annotations of *MacFlecknoe*, being among the most recent, are the most complete. He had the advantage of succeeding Scott, Saintsbury, and Noyes; I have the advantage of following him as well. I shall cite him often, but not uncritically, for I have checked each of his comments on the poem. Because I intend to gather together all the useful remarks upon the difficult poem, I shall refer to Kinsley and to the other commentators often, I shall include the results of my own research, and, wherever my research has proved fruitless, I shall detail the possible annotations which occur to me and the arguments for and against each possible reading.

**Title: MacFlecknoe.** "Mac" is an Irish prefix meaning "son of"; thus, MacFlecknoe literally means son of Flecknoe, an obvious insult to one who fancied himself a Son of Ben. "Mack" was also a slang term for an Irishman. Rochester in "Tunbridge Wells" (1675), exclaims,
Next after these, a fulsom Irish crew
Of silly Macks were offer'd to my view.

Marvell's "Britannia and Rawleigh" (1689), while ridiculing
the Duke of York's reliance on Irish support, asserts,

Mack James the Irish Pagod does Adore,
His French and Teagues [i.e., Irish] comand
on sea and shoar.

Scholars have claimed that Dryden chose this title
because Flecknoe was Irish. Unfortunately, I have not been
able to discover a more substantial reason. Why Dryden
should have associated Shadwell with the Irish is similarly
unclear. Shadwell himself, in his dedication to The Tenth
Satyr of Juvenal (1687), objected: "I never saw Ireland
till I was three and twenty years old, and was there but
four months." (Works, V, 292.) There seems to be no
contemporary literary reference: neither Harbage, Annals
of English Drama, nor the Wing Short-Title Catalogue shows
a book or play with Mac—— for its title (except for
Macbeth); no play by Jonson, Dryden, or Shadwell has a
prominent character with Mac for a name.

The pirated 1682 edition has this title: Mac Flecknoe,
or A Satyr upon the True-Blew-Protestant Poet, T.S. By the
Author of Absalom & Achitophel. The subtitle is almost
certainly not Dryden's because 1) all known manuscripts
omit the subtitle (Evans, HLB, p. 38), 2) the Tonson edition of 1684 did not reproduce it, and 3) it does not describe the point of Dryden's attack upon Shadwell anyway.

1-2. These opening lines proclaim two proverbs with a serious dynastic and moral concern. Dryden takes these proverbs, it is interesting to note, as a single philosophical proclamation, else how could he justify the singular pronoun beginning line three--"This Fleckno found"?

Augustus was given to proverbial pronouncements, Suetonius tells us: "His chief interest in the literature of both languages was the discovery of moral precepts, with suitable anecdotes attached, capable of public or private application." (The Twelve Caesars, ed. Robert Graves, London, 1963, p. 99.) So, whether he was aware of it or not, Dryden's citing of proverbs fits the spirit of Augustus' mind.

3-4. In 1626 Richard Flecknoe published his first work, Hierothalamium, which was little more than a collection of pious doggerel. For the next half century, until 1675, he produced a steady flow of wretched rhymes, with only an occasional flash of wit. Augustus ruled as emperor from
23 B.C. to A.D. 14; he ruled in effect from 31 B.C. to A.D. 14, a span of forty-five years. Each reigned for nearly half a century.

For additional comments on Flecknoe's literary reputation see pp. 30-33.

7: aged. From the length of his literary productivity, it appears that Flecknoe was over seventy in 1678, the apparent year of his death. Augustus was just shy of seventy-six at his death.

peace. The obvious reference is to the Peace of Augustus after the Roman Civil Wars. Denham, "Progress of Learning" (1668):

When Great Augustus made wars Tempests cease
His Halcion days brought forth the arts of Peace.

And Flecknoe, too, ruled in peace; as Scott neatly puts it, "He seems to have been fitted for an incorrigible scribbler, by a happy fund of self-satisfaction, upon which neither the censures of criticism, nor the united hisses of a whole nation, could make the slightest impression." (Works, X, 438.)

8. Note the similarity to Deut 16:15—"Because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase." (Korn, HLQ, p. 107.)
9: **business.** This word denotes 1) official state affairs, 2) stage action, in theater terminology (*The Rehearsal*, III, ii, 83f.), and 3) sexual intercourse. Since Flecknoe is blessed "with issue of a large increase," no wonder he is "Worn out with business"! For a discussion of bawdy in *MacFlecknoe* and of its satiric functions, see pp. 91, 97-98.

10: **succession of the State.** Because Augustus had no sons himself and because his adopted sons died in their youth, he too was forced to choose from his followers. He finally settled upon Tiberius, his stepson; but Tiberius in no way resembled Augustus.

12: **wage immortal War with Wit.** This line recalls Henry Savile's "Advice to a Painter to draw the Duke by" (circulating in MS. in 1673), lines 19-20:

*I have ould England know
That common sense is my eternal foe.*

(Marvell, *Poems*, ed. Margoliouth, I, 198.)

13f. Augustus, too, was well-known for his oratory.

"Even in his boyhood Augustus had studied rhetoric with great eagerness and industry . . . . He kept up his interest by
carefully drafting every address intended for delivery to
the Senate, the popular assembly, or the troops; though
gifted with quite a talent for extempore speech." (Suetonius,
The Twelve Caesars, p. 97.)

15-24. Kinsley notes the similar repetition of the name of
Abdon, Jonathan's squire, in Davideis, IV.

Abdon alone his gen'rous Purpose knew;
Abdon a bold, a brave, a comely Youth,
Well-born, well-bred, with Honour fill'd and Truth,
Abdon his faithful Squire, whom much he lov'd,
And oft with Grief his Worth in Dangers prov'd.
Abdon, whose Love to 'his Master did exceed
What Nature's Law, or Passion's Pow'r could breed,
Abdon alone did on him now attend;
His humblest Servant, and his dearest Friend.

21-24: Some Beams of Wit, etc. Kinsley also reminds us of
these similar lines from Davideis, I.

There is a place deep wondrous deep below,
Which genuine Night and Horrour does o'reflow;
*    *    *
Here no dear glimpse of the Sung lovely face,
Strikes through the Solid darkness of the place;
No dawning Morn does her kind reds display;
One slight weak beam would here be thought the Day.

See A.L. Korn on Dryden's parodies of Cowley in HLQ, XIV
(1951), 99-127.

23: genuine night. "Genuine" not only means "real" but also
"natural" or "proper to a person or thing" (OED a¹).
By arguing that Shadwell's night is natural, Dryden reminds us of lines 13-14--"Nature pleads that He/ Should onely rule, who most resembles me."

25-28. Montague Summers remarks, "Such was Shadwell's worship of Jonson that he set himself to imitate his idol in every respect, and Nature indeed seems to have done her part to help him, for, as he grew in years, he increased in bulk, until he almost rivalled the titanic girth of his mighty original." (The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, I, lxix.) Elkanah Settle, somewhat less kindly, recalls Shadwell's arrival at a first performance of a play: "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." (Preface to Ibrahim, 1676.)

29: Heywood and Shirley. Thomas Heywood (c. 1574-1641), although satirized here and in The Dunciad (I, 93-106), is not ridiculed in the libels and lampoons of the Restoration. Winstanley notes: "it is said, that he not only Acted himself almost every day, but also wrote each day a Sheet; and that he might lose no time, many of his Plays were composed
in the Tavern, on the back-side of Tavern Bills." (The Lives of the Most Famous English Poets, 1687.) Heywood claims to have written two hundred twenty plays, of which, mercifully, only a little more than a tenth have been preserved. Heywood was also a prominent City poet: he composed the Lord Mayor's Day Pageant for seven years during the 1630's. (Frederick W. Fairholt, Lord Mayors' Pageants, London, 1843 & 1844, pt. I, 54-57, 58-62.)

Heywood also is the author of an earlier version of the Psyche story, Loves Mistris (1636), which was revived in 1660, 1661, 1665, and again in 1668 and 1669. (The London Stage, I, 25, 26, 41, 88, 140, 162.) I have suggested possible causes for Dryden's linking Heywood with bad poets, since his reputation as such does not seem secure during the Restoration.

James Shirley (1596-1666), on the other hand, was frequently satirized. In "The Session of the Poets" (1668) (POAS I, 1963, 331),

Old Shirley stood up and made an excuse,
Because many young men before him were got,
He vow'd he had switch'd and spur-gall'd his muse,
But still the dull jade kept to her old trot.

Robert Gould, in "The Play-House, A Satyr" (1689) attacks Shirley thus:

Think, Ye vain Scribling Tribe, of Shirley's Fate,
You that Write Farce, and you that Farce Translate; Shirley! the Scandal of the Ancient Stage, Shirley! the very Drf--y of his Age.

(Reprinted in Montague Summers, The Restoration Theatre, London, 1934, pp. 297-321.) Apparently, during the time that MacFlecknoe was being composed, Shirley's reputation was taking a severe beating.

T.H. Towers suggests that since Shirley, Heywood, and Ogleby all wrote spectacles, Dryden must have been attacking Shadwell's use of spectacle in Psyche. The argument is not convincing because Towers defines the word "spectacle" so generally that it is almost useless, and because Dryden's objection is not so much to "spectacle" as bad poetry. ("The Lineage of Shadwell: An Approach to MacFlecknoe," SEL, III, 1963, 323-34.)

30: tautology. OED (sb, le) gives this additional meaning: "A mere repetition of acts, incidents, or experiences." The OED cites three uses in connection with the drama, in 1650, 1657, and 1687.


Norwich Drugget. This heavy, coarse cloth was made
for durable wear. John Evelyn, in writing from Norwich, in Norfolk (Oct. 17, 1671), remarks that "the fabric of stuffs brings a vast trade to this populous towne." Indeed, Macaulay reminds us (History of England, I, ch. iii.) that in 1685 Norwich "was the chief seat of the chief manufacture of the realm." Further, since Shadwell was from Norfolk, Dryden would be likely to include this adjective of location.

34: Nations. In terms of the Biblical metaphor, the reference is, obviously, to the Gentiles; however, the term also suggests the guilds or the companies of London, in short, mercantile London. See line 96 also.

35: warbling Lute. Marvell had described Flecknoe's lute and song; see p. 31 above.

36. Flecknoe tells these stories in his Relation Of ten Years Travells In Europe, Asia, Affrique, and America (1654).

37: that glorious day. Although this pageant could be imaginary, with Scott I must agree that it sounds real; unfortunately, I have not been able to identify it.

Kinsley notes that lines 38, 39-40, 43, 45-46, and 49 all echo lines from Waller's "Of the Danger His Majesty
(being Prince) Escaped in the Road at Saint Anderes" (1645):

On the smooth back of Silver Thames to ride

These mighty Peers plac'd in the gilded Barge,

Proud with the burden of so brave a charge

While to his Harp Divine Arion sings

The Loves, and Conquests, of our Albion Kings

Healths to both Kings, attended with the roar

Of Cannons eccho'd from th' affrighted shoar

With the sweet sound of this harmonious lay

About the Keel delighted Dolphins play.

For comments on parody in MacFlecknoe, see pp. 79-80.

42: Epsom Blankets tost. Tossing in a blanket was a practical joke used to humiliate a victim. Thus, Thomas Dekker in The Guls Horne-Book (1609):

Now Sir, if the writer be a fellow that hath either epigrammd you, or hath had a flirt at your mistris, or hath brought either your feather, or your red beard, or your little legs, etc. on the stage, you shall disgrace him worse then by tossing in a blancket, or giving him the bastinado in a Taverne, if, in the middle of his play ... you rise with a screwd and discontented face from your stoole to be gone; no matter whether the Scenes be good or no.

(The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, ed. A.B. Grossart, 1885, II, 253.) Similarly, Horace (i.e., Ben Jonson) was tossed in a blanket by the Poetasters at the end of Dekker's Satiro-mastix (1602).
Commentators have claimed that this refers to the fate of Sir Samuel Hearty in The Virtuoso (1676) and that the blankets are "Epsom Blankets" as a reference to Shadwell's Epsom-Wells (1672). If they are correct, what is the point of this combined allusion? David Vieth (Attribution in Restoration Poetry, 1963, pp. 143-44.) says the line may refer to the battle at Epsom between the Court wits and the watch, mentioned in the Hatton Correspondence (1878), I, 133-34; I think he is correct, but, unfortunately, he does not clinch his identification by explaining the point of the comparison made in ll. 38-42.

In Epsom, in June 1676, Rochester, Etherege, Captain Bridges, and a Mr. Downs instigated a riot when they "were tossing some fidlers in a blanket for refusing to play."

A barber, hearing the noise, came running but was seized by the rogues. In payment for his release, he agreed to tell them the house of the handsomest woman in Epsom, but, instead, he directed them to the constable's house. Unwarily, the rogues broke into his house and beat him; he got away, called the watch, and eventually caught up with them. The constable, however, dismissed the watch after Etherege had delivered a submissive oration. Rochester, nevertheless,
drew his sword; the watch returned and struck Mr. Downs, who had been holding back Rochester. The others escaped, but Downs soon died. There is an ambiguity in Dryden's comparison. If the antecedent of "like" is "Host" in line 41, then the whole pageant is demeaningly compared to the fidlers tossed in the blanket. If "like" refers to "thou" in line 38, then Shadwell is said to be so big a fool he has escaped the fate of the fidlers—however much he may have deserved it.

43-50. Earl R. Miner (N&Q, CCI, 335-37) notes the echo in lines 25-32 of Waller's "On St. James's Park":

Methinks I hear the music in the boats,
And the loud echo which returns the notes;
While overhead a flock of new-sprung fowl
Hangs in the air, and does the sun control,
Darkening the sky; they hover o'er, and shroud
The wanton sailors with a feathered cloud.
Beneath, a shoal of silver fishes glides,
And plays about the gilded barges' sides.

43: Arion. Like Orpheus, Arion is a proverbial mythic poet and singer. He was a skilled musician who won great riches with his exquisite singing. Returning from Sicily to Corinth, he was attached by sailors who wanted to steal his wealth. Singing a song, he gathered dolphins at ship-side, leaped on the back of one, and was carried safely to Corinth. Arion borne up by the dolphins appeared in Waller's "Of
the Danger . . . Escaped," as noted on p. 126, and was an occasional figure in city pageants (Fairholt, Lord Mayors' Pageants). This mock comparison of Shadwell with Arion is not completed until lines 49-50: Shadwell is escorted not by dolphins but by "little Fishes," and these fish throng to Shadwell the way they swim around the "Morning Toasts"--the sewage--in the Thames.

44: Lute. Shadwell prided himself on his musical ability. In his preface to Psyche (1675) he claims "some little knowledge" of music, "Having been bred, for many years of my Youth, to some performance in it." (Works, IV, 280.) Moreover, he actually played the lute. In 1687 he specifically replied to Dryden's ridicule on this point--Dryden "has another fling at me for playing upon the Lute. I must confess that that and all other Gentleman-like Exercises, which I was capable of Learning, my Father was at the charge of, and let the libeller make his best of it." (Works, V, 292.)

47: Pissing Ally. Kinsley, citing Hatton's New View of London, 1708, I, 64, identifies two Pissing Alleys: "a passage from the Strand into Hollywel str." and "a broad
and large passage betw Friday str. and Bread str." Another Pissinge Alley, leading from Paul's Church into Pater Noster Row, existed as early as 1574. (Eilert Ekwall, Street-Names of the City of London, 1961, p. 176.) Since all three alleys are near the river, I have not been able to determine which Dryden refers to or, more importantly, the significance of his reference.

48: A---- Hall. The 1682 edition has this variant reading, "Aston Hall." Four of the seven MSS. Evans collated have Aston or Ashton Hall. Lord (POAS, I, 1963, 380) suggests that Dryden's reference may be to Edmund Aston or Ashton, a friend of Shadwell. Vieth has a chapter on Ashton in Attribution: Summers describes Shadwell's visit to Ashton's home, Chadderton Hall in Lancaster and reprints an exchange of poetic epistles between Shadwell and Wycherley during Shadwell's visit there in 1671. (Works, I, lxxxv; V, 227-232.) However, Ashton's home is nowhere called Aston or Ashton Hall, and there seems no purpose to this reference anyway.

Pepys speaks of a visit to an Ashton Hall (Nov. 10, 1662) which is in Lancashire. The Victoria History of Lancashire (London, 1911, VIII, 51-55) describes an Ashton
to which Charles II repaired on his way south to Worcester in 1651. But I can find no reason for Dryden to refer to this hall in MacFlecknoe.

If, as 11. 45-48 suggest, the echo of his name sounds from shore to shore and if Pissing Alley is on the City side, then it would seem that "A--- Hall" would be found on the Surrey side. Evelyn mentions a visit to an Ashtead or Ashted Hall in his Diary (May 10, 1684); this manor was purchased by Sir Robert Howard in 1680, but after the poem was written. Ashted is a good distance from the river for any echo to sound, and, again, there seems no point to any reference to this building.

52: threshing hand. Shadwell here is beating time in the air; his hand is as regular as a metronome.

53: St. Andre. Summers and Kinsley both note this reference to the French dancing-master in Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson at Cologne, 1874, I, 179: "On 22 August, 1673, James Vernon, writing a letter from London . . . announces as a fine piece of news 'that the Duke's house are preparing an Opera and great machines. They will have dansers out of France, and St. André comes over with them.'" St. André's
stay in England was apparently very successful, for on May 2, 1678, he was granted a "Certificate by the King of the satisfaction he has always received from the Sieur de St. Andre, who has served him in all the ballets that have been danced before him for the last four years, before his departure for France." (Calendar of State Papers Domestic, for March 1678 to Dec. 1678, 1913, p. 151.)

54: Psyche. This spectacular opera appeared with "new Scenes, new Machines, new Cloaths, new French Dances" at the Dorset Garden in February 1675. (Downes, Roscius Anglicanus, p. 35.) The poetry is weak and irregular, but the play had great success, running eight days. Settle calls Psyche, "that insipid gay Bauble, which between its own, and the prodigious expence the Players laid out upon it, I can compare to nothing but a Baboon in a rich Coat." (Preface to Ibrahim.)

57: Singleton. John Singleton was one of the King's musicians. His name appears continually from 1673 to 1684 in The Calendar of Treasury Books, vols. IV to VII, with warrants for his yearly and semi-annual salary. Because payment was not always prompt, he had occasionally to petition
the Treasury. Pepys reports (Nov. 20, 1660) that at the Cockpit, "the King did put a great affront upon Singleton's musique; he bidding them stop and bade the French musique play, which, my Lord says, do much outdo all ours." Scott notes an allusion to Singleton's musical ability in Shadwell's *Bury Fair*, III, i. (Works, X, 446.)

58-59. Villerius, the Grand Master of Rhodes, is a leading recitative role in Davenant's *Siege of Rhodes*; I can find no notation that Singleton ever played this role. He did not appear in the role in 1660-61; the opera was revived in February 1676/77, perhaps Singleton performed then, but we do not have the list of players for that performance. (The London Stage, I, 255.) Much of the dialogue of this play about dynastic struggles is in lyrical recitative; thus, the reference to the "Lute and Sword." As Scott points out, Buckingham's *Rehearsal* (1671), Act V, introduces two warriors who "play the battle in recitativo" and who "Enter ... armed cap-a-pie, with each of them a lute in his hand, and his sword drawn." (Works, X, 447.)

59. Flecknoe's oration ends here.

64: Close to the Walls. The London Wall near Cripplegate.
64-65. Augusta is an epic name for London. Kinsley notes the similarity of these lines to the Prologue of Crowne's Calisto (1675), 11. 42-45:

Do you not see Augusta, Rich and Fair,
(Though to her Lap, I all my Treasure bear)
Will for no comfort stay her Tears?
Augusta is inclin'd to fears.

I do not see why, as Kinsley suggests, it is Popish intrigues that Augusta is afraid of. This would be so if the poem were written after 1678. What, after all, is Crowne's Augusta fearful of in 1675? Perhaps those internal dangers mentioned by Williamson in the note to 1. 74, below. David Ogg, England in the Reign of Charles II, Oxford, 1934, speaks of how the Fire, the plague, and the fear of invasion during the Second and Third Dutch Wars all made the people of London nervous. (See especially I, 364f.)

66-69. The Barbican was an ancient watchtower which "stood a little North of it [Barbican Street], and was supposed to date from Roman times." (Edward H. Sugden, A Topographical Dictionary to the Works of Shakespeare and His Fellow Dramatists, 1925, p. 67.) Thus, it was "rais'd t'inform the sight."
72-73. This parodies The Davideis, I:

Where their vast Court the Mother-Waters keep,
And undisturb'd by Moons in silence sleep.

The Mother-Strumpets are, of course, the madams and the Watch, the night-sentinels.

74: Nursery. Several Nurseries were founded through the Restoration period for the training of actors. The Nursery in the Barbican was founded by Lady Davenport in 1671. (Leslie J. Hotson, The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage, 1928, pp. 192-93.) The Mayor's Court Repertories for October 19, 1671, report that the Court feared "that manyfold evills would ensue to the Citty from a Playhouse there or in any other place soe neere the Bowells of the Citty." The Mayor's Court suggested the new Playhouse would be a threat to the City; to which Charles II replied, "The playhouses should be pulled down when the meeting houses [for dissenters] were." (Hotson, p. 190.) The Calendar of State Papers Domestic preserves this notation by Joseph Williamson on Nov. 23, 1671:

The Nursery in London. Pull down that and coffee-houses, and nothing be more to the establishment of the government. The City government is too lax already. The citizens already, even those that are of the Church of England, prefer to have fanatic children, rather than those bred in their
own way. If the two nurseries in Barbican and Bunhill be not taken away in a year, expect a disorder. The apprentices are already grown too heady. Advised to take them away now upon the pulling down meeting-houses. (p. 581.)

It is not clear whether Williamson heard and misunderstood Charles' ironic reply to the Mayor's Court, but his notes give us some picture of the low neighborhood of the Barbican and of the Nursery.

Pepys, a dedicated playgoer, offers two criticisms of plays at another Nursery, in Hatton Garden (Feb. 24 & 25, 1667/68):

After dinner I took them [his wife and Deb] to the Nursery, where none of us ever were before; where the house is better and the musique better than we looked for, and the acting not much worse, because I expected as bad as could be: and I was not much mistaken, for it was so. . . . Their play was a bad one, called "Jeronimo is Mad Again" [Thomas Kyd's Spanish Tragedy], a tragedy. Here was some good company by us, who did make mighty sport at the folly of their acting, which I could not refrain from sometimes, though I was sorry for it.

I took my wife and Deb. up, and to the Nursery, where I was yesterday, and there saw them act a comedy, a pastoral, "The Faythful Shepherd" [from Guarini's Pastor Fido], having the curiosity to see whether they did a comedy better than a tragedy; but they do it both alike, in the meanest manner, that I was sick of it, but only for to satisfy myself once in seeing the manner of it, but I shall see them no more, I believe.

From Pepys' account we may gather also that the Nursery
was allowed to act old plays and plays not likely to be 
revived; this fact would explain why Jonson and Fletcher 
ever were acted there (11. 79-80). In The Rehearsal, II, iii, 
when the actors will not play his scene, Bayes promises, 
"hereafter to bend my thoughts wholly for the service of the 
Nursery, and mump your proud players."

75: Queens. This should be read also as "queans," i.e., 
whores; "Hero's" will, thus, also be understood sarcastically. 
These references echo the low life mentioned in 11. 70-73 & 
77.

76-77. These lines also parody The Davideis, I:

Beneath the Dens where unfletcht Tempests lye,
And infant Winds their tender Voices try.

78: little Maximins the Gods defy. Maximin is the tyrant of 
Rome in Dryden's Tyrannick Love (1670). In the preface to 
that play he remarks, "Maximin was a heathen, and what he 
speaks against religion is in contempt of that which he pro-
fessed. He defies the Gods of Rome." (Essays, ed. Watson, 
I, 140; italics mine.) Kinsley reminds us of Dryden's 
apology for Maximin's ranting in the dedicatory epistle 
to The Spanish Friar (1681): "I remember some verses of
my own Maximin and Almanzor, which cry vengeance upon me for their extravagance." (Works, VI, 406.)

79-80: Buskins and Socks. "The high thick-soled boot . . . worn by the actors in ancient Athenian tragedy; frequently contrasted with the 'sock' . . . , or low shoe worn by comedians." (OED, "buskin" 2.)

81: Simkin. A "foolish fellow." (Grose, Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue.) A more direct reference is to "The Humours of Simkin," collected in The Wits, or Sport upon Sport (1662, 1672), an anthology of humors excerpted from famous plays, drolls, and jigs. Simkin is called "gentle," I suppose, because compared to the young wife, the old husband, and the blustering soldier, he is the quietest, silliest, and most malleable character in the droll. He wins the wife from the soldier, only to be beaten off by the old husband. Timothy in Shadwell's Misers (1672) says, "Violin-men . . . sing us a Catch; Oh I have seen one of these Act the Countrey-man and Simkin in the Chest rarely . . . give me such Pretty harmless Drolls for my money." (Works, II, 53.) Timothy makes Simkin sound somewhat proverbial.

The title-page of The Wits, Part II (1673) describes
where these drols and farces were played: "Presented and
Shewn For the Merriment and Delight of Wise Men, and the
Ignorant: As they have been sundry times Acted in Publique,
and Private, In LONDON at BARTHOLOMEW In the Countrey at
other FAIRES. In HALLS and TAVERNS. On several MOUNTEBANCKS STAGES, At Charing Cross, Lincolns-Inn-Fields, and
other places." Simkin has, thus, found his element at the
Nursery.

82: Monument of vanisht minds. The Nursery was a monument
to vacuity. A.L. Korn (p. 120) notes this analogue from
Gondibert II, canto v:

This to a structure led, long known to fame
And call'd, The Monument of Vanish'd Mindes.

83: Clinches. "Pure Clinches" are unadulterated word-plays,
involving no intellectuality. Dryden complains, in his
Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668), that Shakespeare "is many
times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clences,
his serious swelling into bombast," and, in his "Defence of
the Epilogue" (1672), that Jonson "was not free from the low-
est and most grovelling kind of wit, which we call clences
... ." (Essays, ed. Ker, I, 80 & 173.)

suburban. Not only descriptive of the Nursery, which
is outside the city walls, but also suggestive of rusticity and, even, indecency. Eric Partridge notes these euphemisms, popular throughout the seventeenth century: "suburb-trade" meaning "harlotry," "suburb-garden" meaning "a keep's lodging," and "house in the suburbs" meaning a "brothel." (A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, 1961.)

"Suburban" also has the sense of "below urbaneness," and urbanity was a virtue lauded as far back as Quintilian. (See Institutio Oratoria, VIII, iii, 40.) Dryden says of comedy, "I would have more of the urbana, venusta, salsa, faceta, and the rest which Quintilian reckons up as the ornaments of wit." (Ker, I, 139.) Dryden similarly observes that Lucian's wit "was full of urbanity, that Attic salt, which the French call--fine raillery; not obscene, not gross, not rude, but Facetious, well Manner'd, and well bred." (The Critical and Miscellaneous Prose, ed. Edmond Malone, 1800, III, 378.)

84: Panton. Editors beginning with Derrick have suggested that the reference is to Colonel Thomas Panton, "a famous punster." Kinsley is the first to question this identification, which seems to him "only a fanciful deduction from 'waging harmless War with words.'" Kinsley is right: Col. Panton
was known for his extravagant living, his amorous disposition, and his good fortune in gambling. The most complete sketch of him, in Theophilus Lucas, *Lives of the Gamesters* (1714), makes no reference to his punning or his conversation.

The context of this allusion makes it clear that Panton is a theatrical figure. I have considered that Panton could be a version of the name Pantaloon, from commedia dell'arte. This figure of the deceived father or husband, the Latin *senex*, spoke "long paragraphs of nonsensical, would-be-wise saws and 'counsels to youth' on the order of Polonius' fare-well to Laertes"; moreover, "his antics, including song and lute-playing, are all highly burlesque." (Winifred Smith, *The Commedia Dell'Arte*, 1964, pp. 5, 109.) Despite the similarities of this character with the Panton who wages "harmless War with words," I cannot find any example of a play, whether or not using the commedia dell'arte formulas, which has a Panton or a Pantaloon in the Dramatis Personae. There are Harlequins and Scaramouches but no Pantons. Moreover, while we know of performances of commedia dell'arte at Whitehall, we have no knowledge of one at the Nursery. (Cf. Hotson.) In May 1677, Ravenscroft's *Scaramouche* was
produced at the Theatre Royal. Powell played the role of Pancrace, a heavy father, a repetitive and verbose mock-logician. He delivers speeches like this: "I say you are a Dunce, a Blockhead, an Ignorant; an Ignorantior, an Ignorantissimus, an Ignorantissimetzissimus, an Ignoramus per omnes Casus, Moods and Tenses" (III, i). This kind of humor wages war with words as much as punning does; still, I am not arguing that Panton is Pancrace but that, given the specific reference to the Nursery and the Barbican area, MacFlecknoe alludes to a stage figure, one like Pancrace.

87: Dekker. I have been unable to turn up any prophecy about a prince of dullness arising in the Barbican area, and becoming a scourge to wit and sense. Wherever the prophecy is in Dekker's plays or prose, Dryden makes the content of the prophecy clear. Thus, G.B. Evans' suggestion that Dryden refers to a prediction, in Satiro-mastix, that "All Poets shall be Poet-Apes but" Jonson, is inadequate. ("Dryden's MacFlecknoe and Dekker's Satiromastix," MLN, LXXVI, 598-600.)

89: flayle. "An instrument for threshing corn by hand, consisting of a wooden staff or handle, at the end of which a
stouter and shorter pole or club, called a swingle or swipple, is so hung as to swing freely." (OED, Sb1.) Samuel Monk's identification of this flail with "the Protestant flail," a sort of black-jack, used during the Popish plot, cannot be accurate since the poem was written before 1678. (N&Q, CCV (1960), 67-68.)

90-93. Only "some Psyches" because Shadwell seldom attempted any form but the comic. Rather, he shall produce "Worlds" of humorous characters (and plays entitled), Misers, Humorists, and Hypocrites. The Hypocrites was never printed; Settle (preface to Ibrahim) says it was Shadwell's translation of Molière's Tartuffe and was acted for six days. The London Stage, I, 162, lists June 14, 1669, as the first performance.

Raymond is a "gentleman of wit and honour" in The Humorists, and Bruce a gentleman of "wit and sense" in The Virtuoso; neither is very witty or amusing.

94. This line is not indented in the 1682 edition or in five of the MSS. Evans inspected; the 1684 edition does indent, and the line clearly should be. (Evans, p. 39.)
Empress Fame. Also means "rumor." See Dryden's Aeneid, IV, 251-81.

95: the Town. Apparently, Dryden does not mean to use the usual contrast between the Town and City. He describes citizens gathering. He must have used the "Town" for its rhyme.

97. "Near" ought to be taken as an adjective rather than a preposition; it parallels the adjective "distant."

"Bun-Hill" was the name of a street, a graveyard, and an artillery ground in a neighborhood, even in the Restoration, of "a somewhat unsavory reputation." (Sugden, A Topographical Dictionary, p. 83.) From April to the summer of 1671, one John Perin operated a Nursery in Finsbury Fields upon Bun-Hill. (Hotson, pp. 189-90.) Interestingly enough, Dekker in his preface to Satiro-mastix comments that the range of poetry covers "all mount Helicon to Bun-Hill."

"Watling-street" was "a very spacious str. of good Buildings, much inhabited by Wholesale-Grocers, Tobacconists, and other great Dealers." (Hatton, A New View, I, 86.) Located to the east of St. Paul's, it was also a prominent street for woolens. Dekker noted that in fear of wool
carrying the plague, some men would "stop their foolish Noses, when they past through Watling street by a Ranke of Wollen Drapers." (The Plague Pamphlets, ed. F.P. Wilson, 1925, p. 117.)

Dryden's chief point is that all the merchants, shopkeepers, and lowlife gathered for Shadwell's coronation as the King of Dullness. The anti-heroic joke is that these two sites are only a few blocks apart.

101: Martyrs of Pies. Complaining about one poor poet, Dryden calls him "the very Withers of the City: they have bought more editions of his works than would serve to lay under all their pies at the Lord Mayor's Christmas." (Ker, I, 32.) The reader may also recall the unfortunate tale of John Warburton's cook, who ignorantly lined her pie plates with pages from rare MSS. of Elizabethan plays, destroying fifty-five plays. (DNB, XX, 755.)

The volumes are "Martyrs," having been tested and destroyed by the fiery oven. They are "Reliques of the Bum," having been preserved as mementos of a sanitary practice.

102: Ogleby. John Ogleby (1600-76) was a theater manager in Ireland, a printer, a cartographer, and a translator.
Anthony á Wood gives a very full account of his literary life in *Athenae Oxoniensis*, II, 263. He translated Virgil (1649) and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (1660 and 1665). In reference to these translations, Dryden says in his preface to *Sylvae* (1685): "What English readers, unacquainted with Greek and Latin, will believe me, or any other man, when we commend those authors, and confess that we derive all that is pardonable in us from their fountains, if they take those to be the same poets, whom our Oglebys have translated?"

(Ker, I, 253.) Again, in his preface to *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700), Dryden ridicules Luke Milbourne's translations of Virgil: "'Tis agreed on all hands, that he writes even below Ogilby. That, you will say, is not easily to be done."

(Ker, II, 271.) Ogleby is a target for his wide range of dull verse, rather than for any particular literary catastrophe.

104-105. H------ is Henry Herringman, Dryden's publisher until 1678. He published all of Shadwell's plays from 1673 to 1678. Why Dryden broke with him is not known, but his presence seems further proof that the poem must have been written around 1677 or 78.

Cheated booksellers are Yeomen of the Guard, led by
Herringman: the Yeomen acted as escorts of Charles II on the procession to his Coronation in 1662. (English Coronation Records, p. 284.)

106-107. Flecknoe paid to get many of his volumes printed. As he himself said, "I Write onely for my self and private friends; and none prints more, and publishes less than I." (Preface to Sir William D'avenant's Voyage to the Other World, 1668.)

108-111. Ascanius is the son of Aeneas. Kinsley notes the similarity of these lines to two passages in Virgil's Aeneid --II, 682-84, and XII, 168. Dryden's translation will serve well for a comparison.

Strange to relate, from young Iulus' head
A lambent flame arose, which gently spread
Around his brows, and on his temples fed. (II, 930-32)

And by his side Ascanius took his place,
The second hope of Rome's immortal race. (XII, 253-54)

111: lambent. This word denotes "softly radiant" or "shining with a soft clear light and without fierce heat." The OED reports that the adjective often denotes inspiration, an idea perversely developed in 11. 121 and 126-27.
114-117. Shadwell's oath roughly parodies the Coronation oaths of Charles I and Charles II:

> Will you graunt and keepe . . . to the people of England, the Lowest Costomes to them graunted by the Kings of England, your lawfull and religious predecessors?
> Will you keep peace and godly agreement . . . both to God, the holy Church, ye Cleargie ye People?
> Will you to your power cause Lawe Justice and Discretion, in Mercie and Truth, to be executed in all your Judgements? (English Coronation Records, pp. 251-52.)

118: Unction. Here used as "the act of anointing."

120-121. The ball or orb used since the Restoration is set upon a scepter and has the dove of the Holy Spirit above the orb's cross. This symbol recalls that the King is the representative of God through the Grace-giving power of the Paraclete. Shadwell has a mug of ale in his left ("sinister") hand--this is his inspiration. Dryden suggests that Shadwell is only a fool inflamed and befuddled by his ale.

Shadwell was well known for his love of drink. MacFlecknoe may have begun the series of attacks on his drinking; I have found no earlier references. But after MacFlecknoe these attacks were to become predictable topics in satires
on Shadwell. Dryden attacked Shadwell's drinking in Absalom and Achitophel, Part II (1682). Summers (Works, I, ccxxiii, cxc, and cxcii) notes three allusions to Shadwell's drinking, dated later than 1682.

Dryden, in MacFlecknoe, is alone among these lampooners in relating liquor with the muse and in developing this into an elaborate perversion of the inspiration of poetry.

122-125. Love's Kingdom by Flecknoe and Psyche are both pastoral dramas set in mythical lands. They have little in common materially; Dryden seems most concerned with the unhappy quality of these two plays similar in artistic form.

The metaphor here is amusingly indelicate: Psyche has sprung from the loins of Love's Kingdom, Shadwell (the prince here) having practiced with Love's Kingdom since youth.

Psyche was "recorded" in the sense, now obsolete, that it was "musically rendered." (OED.)

126: Poppies. Kinsley has this useful note: "the poppy is soporific (e.g. Aen. iv. 486), parching and sterilizing (Georgics, i, 78), and aphrodisiac but not fertilizing (see Browne, Pseudodoxia Epidemica, vii, 7)." Moreover, Shadwell was known for taking opium. In the Sermon Preached
at the Funeral of Thomas Shadwell, Esq (1692), Nicholas Brady assures us that "His Death seized him suddenly, but could not unprepared, since (to my own certain knowledge) he never took his dose of Opium, but he solemnly recommended himself to God by Prayer." (Works, I, cclxiv.) Dryden referred to Shadwell's habit less charitably when he advised, in Absalom and Achitophel, Part II (11. 482-83),

Eat Opium, mingle Arsenick in thy Drink,
Still thou mayst live, avoiding Pen and Ink.

129: Owls. As Kinsley remarks, owls look wise but are really stupid. In the time of Elizabeth, "owl" was a cant term for "fool." (Roscoe A. Small, The Stage-Quarrel between Ben Jonson and the so-called Poetasters, 1899, p. 125n.)

130-131. This incident is reported by Plutarch (The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, trans. Thomas North, 1928, I, 61-62.) While mentioning the important auguries during Augustus' reign, Suetonius includes this: "When he first took the auspices as Consul, twelve vultures appeared, as they had appeared to Romulus at the foundation of the City."
(The Twelve Caesars, p. 104.)

134: honours. "Honours" here mean "adornments." Flecknoe
is sprinkling Shadwell with the dull dampness of his own brow, a benediction of oblivion.

134-138. Kinsley has identified three epical passages being parodied here: an address by Jupiter in Aen. X, 113-15; a description of the Sybil in Aen. VI, 46-51, 77-82; and an account of Saul's anointing in The Davideis, IV. Dryden's translation of Virgil has these two similar passages (X, 171-72; VI, 120-25):

"The Fates will find their way," the Thund'rer said,
And shook the sacred honors of his head.

Struggling in vain, impatient of her load,
And lab'ring underneath the pond'rous god,
The more she strove to shake him from her breast,
With more and far superior force he press'd;
Commands his entrance, and, without control,
Usurps her organs and inspires her soul.

In The Davideis, Samuel
tells the mighty Fates to him assign'd,
And with great rules fill'd his capacious mind.
Then takes the sacred Vial, and does shed
A Crown of mystique drops around his head.

139-140. Flecknoe here begins his prophecy; the joke is, of course, that there is nothing but ocean between Ireland and Barbadoes.

144. Evelyn reports on the day of Charles II's Coronation,
April, 23, 1661: "The Bishop of London . . . went to every side of the throne to present the King to the people, asking if they would have him for their King and do him homage; at this they shouted 4 times 'God save King Charles the Second!'" Kinsley notes the similarity to Neh 8:6—

"And Ezra blessed the Lord the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands." Dryden is emphasizing the people's acceptance of Shadwell, for they are the ones who attend his comedies. They are getting what they deserve. Robert Gould, in The Play-House, put it well:

what the Audience that can smile
At things so mean, Ridiculous and Vile?
Farce has of late almost o'erwhelm'd the Stage;
But foolish Writers suit a foolish Age.

148. This line has an echo of *Psyche*, IV, i:

No raging pangs of sense here you shall know
But must eternal labours undergo.

149. The prologue to *The Virtuoso*:

Wit, like China, should long buri'd lie,
Before it ripens to good Comedy;
A thing we ne'r have seen since Johnson's days,
And but a few of his were perfect Plays.
Now Drudges of the Stage must oft appear,
They must be bound to scribble twice a year.

These lines attack Dryden's contract of 1668 to produce annually three plays for the King's Company. Dryden takes
Shadwell's preceding lines literally, and has Flecknoe say that plays like The Virtuoso should take five years to write (giving the playgoers a needed rest) and still no signs of wit would appear from all that labor.

151-153. Sir George Etherege was commonly referred to as gentle George. Dorimant, Loveit, and Fopling are characters in his great success, The Man of Mode (1676). Cully appears in The Comical Revenge (1664); Cockwood in She Would if She Could (1668). Langbaine calls Etherege, "One whose Talent in sound Sense, and the Knowledge of true Wit and Humour, are sufficiently conspicuous," and says The Man of Mode is"acknowledg'd by all, to be as true Comedy, and the Characters as well drawn to the Life, as any Play that has been Acted since the Restauration of the English Stage." (An Account, pp. 186, 187.)

Dryden compares Shadwell with the best comic playwright of the age. In fact, Shadwell himself remarked in his preface to The Humorists that She Would if She Could was "the best Comedy that has been written since the Restauration of the Stage." (Works, I, 183.)

163-164. Montague Summers explains, but without authority,
that "it was openly being gossiped about the town that Epsom-Wells was not the work of the supposed author at all, but a composite play, written by the whole society of Court wits."

Rumor had it that "his friends, especially Sir Charles Sedley, had furbished and polished the dialogue." (Works, I, xcv-xcvi.) Sedley had, indeed, written the prologue to that play. Summers further notes (p. cxciv) that Buckingham and Rochester's satire Timon refers to Sedley, when as "a dull dining Sot" he

Pulls out a Libel of a Sheet or Two,  
Insipid, as the praise of th'Fairy Queens,  
Or [hadwell's] unassisted former Scenes.

Further, Shadwell was to dedicate A True Widow (1678) to Sedley, claiming "this Comedy . . . had the benefit of your Correction and Alteration, and the honour of your Approbation."

(Works, III, 283.)

166. Kinsley draws our attention to Shadwell's prologue to Timon of Athens (1678):

Some Scriblers will Wit their whole bus'ness make,  
For labour'd dullness grievous pains will take.  
(Works, III, 195)

167: top. "Top" means "to insult" or "to get the better of in wit play." Gould, in The Play-House, remarks,
Our topping Authors oft descend so low,
That Hains and Holwajrd pass for Poets too!

"Top" may also be taken to mean "gulp down" a tankard.

168: Sir Formal's oratory. In The Virtuoso, I, i, Longvil says of Sir Formal, "he is indeed a very choice Spirit; the greatest Master of Tropes and Figures: The most Ciceronian Coxcomb: the noblest Orator breathing: he never speaks without Flowers of Rhetorick [1. 165]: In short, he is very much abounding in words, and very much defective in sense." (Works, III, 107.)

170: Northern Dedications. Shadwell dedicated The Sullen Lovers, The Humorists, Epsom-Wells, The Libertine, and The Virtuoso to either the Duke or Duchess of Newcastle. Flecknoe dedicated two plays, Damaoiselles á la mode (1667) and Love's Kingdom (1664), and several books of verse and prose to Newcastle. Besides sharing Newcastle as a patron, Shadwell and Flecknoe appear to have nothing in common. (H.T.E. Perry, The First Duchess of Newcastle and Her Husband as Figures in Literary History, 1918, pp. 141-44.)
173-174. Kinsley compares these lines to Aen. III, 342-43:

ecquid in antiquam virtutem animosque virilis
et pater Aeneas et avunculus excitat Hector?

I have not reproduced Dryden's translation (III, 439-41) because it is not a literal version.

177-178. Shadwell fixed a "brand," that is, a "stigma" on learning when he ridiculed speculative science in The Virtuoso. In the person of Sir Nicholas Gimgrack (the name means a "mechanical contrivance") Shadwell caricatured Sir Robert Hooke of the Royal Society, borrowing from his Micrographia (1665), the classical text on microscopy, examples of research on flies, worms, etc. (Margaret 'Espinasse, Robert Hooke, 1956, p. 25; also see entries for June 2, 1676 and immediately following, in The Diary of Robert Hooke, 1672-1680, 1935.) In The Virtuoso Sir Nicholas is a Rosacruccian, a bottler of air, a ponderer over the nature of the ant, and a speculative swimmer, i.e., out of water. When threatened by a mob of weavers for claiming the invention of an engine-loom, he defends himself thus: "I never invented an Engine in my life . . . . We Virtuoso's
never find out any thing of use, 'tis not our way." (Works, III, 169.)

179-180: Prince Nicander's vein. Here is some of the Prince's amorous verse (Psyche, I, i):

How long, fair Psyche, shall I sigh in vain?  
How long of scorn and cruelty complain?  
Your eyes enough have wounded me,  
You need not add your cruelty.  
You against me too many weapons chuse,  
Who am defenceless against each you use.  
(Works, II, 288)

Psyche's humble strain. Here is Psyche speaking to Venus about Cupid (IV, i):

Against all Kings he harden'd my poor heart,  
And for himself he struck me with his Dart:  
His beauty wou'd make hearts of stone to melt,  
And his almighty power your self have felt.  
(Works, II, 325)

Dryden calls Psyche's verse humble, not only because it demonstrably is, but also because he turns back on Shadwell his apology in his Prologue to the Town:

You must not here expect exalted Thought,  
Nor Lofty Verse, nor Scenes with labor wrought:  
His Subject's humble, and his Verse is so.  
(Works, II, 281)

Settle makes this unkind but accurate judgment of Psyche: "There's no Man that sees that pretty Pindarick piece call'd Psyche, but would swear Mr. Ninny ["A conceited
Poet" in *The Sullen Lovers*] was Sire to an Author, and Grandfather to an Opera." (Preface to *Ibrahim*.)

181. sold he Bargains. "It consisted in the seller naming his or her hinder parts, in answer to the question, What? which the buyer was artfully led to ask. As a specimen, take the following instance: A lady would come into a room full of company, apparently in a fright, crying out, It is white, and follows me! On any of the company asking, What? she sold him the bargain, by saying, Mine a--e." (Grose, *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue.*)


182. *The Virtuoso* is the play referred to. In his preface Shadwell had defined true humor, excluding folly, which is merely natural imperfection, and graceless farce: "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." (Works, III, 101.)

Dryden's charge that the play dwindles to a farce can be supported by describing a few scenes: Clarinda and Miranda rough up Snarl, an "Old pettish Fellow"; Sir Samuel is tossed in a blanket; after being dropped through a trap-door, Sir Formal and Sir Samuel, who is disguised as a woman, fumble around with one another in the dark; the play concludes with a noisy mob scene.

184. Borgman, Thomas Shadwell, p. 153, investigates Shadwell's borrowings in Epsom-Wells from She Would if She Could: they are not significant.

187-188. In the preface to The Virtuoso Shadwell claims, "Four of the Humors are entirely new; and (without vanity) I may say, I ne'er produc'd a Comedy that had not some natural Humour in it not represented before, nor I hope ever shall." (Works, III, 101.)

189-192. Both Kinsley and Scott-Saintsbury cite Shadwell's definition of a humor:

A Humor is the Byas of the Mind,
By which with violence 'tis one way inclin'd:
It makes our Actions lean on one side still,
And in all Changes that way bends the will.
(Epilogue to The Humorists; I, 254.) A "Byas" (OED B2) is "A term at bowls, applied alike to the construction or form of the bowl imparting an oblique motion, the oblique line in which it runs, and the kind of impetus given to cause it to run obliquely." A mind with a humor is a mind rolling off in its private direction and course. Shadwell's humor is dullness, that is, "New Humours to invent for each new Play."

193: mountain belly. See note to 11. 25-28. Also, "A Session of the Poets" (1676):

Next into the crowd Tom Shadwell does wallow
And swear by his guts, his paunch, and his tallow
That 'tis he alone best pleases the age.

(PQAS, I, 1963, 353)

194: tympany. This word denotes 1) "some kind of tumor or morbid swelling" and by metaphorical extension 2) "a swelling, as of pride, arrogance, self-conceit, etc., figured as a disease"; "something big or pretentious but empty or vain." (OED, sb, 1a, 2.) Each denotation has force in this line.

The word has an additional meaning of "pregnancy" (OED, 1b)—The Wild Gallant (1663), V, ii; "A mere tympany ... raised by a cushion." With this association, "tympany" recalls the pregnancy metaphor in 11. 40-41.
195-196. A "tun" is a large cask used especially for wine, it contained usually two hundred fifty-two gallons; a "Kilderkin" is a small cask holding about eighteen gallons. It is proper that Shadwell's girth and wit should be compared to liquor barrels, since his size and inspiration can be attributed to such spirits.

A satire attacking Ned Howard (POAS, I, 1963, 341) makes a similar thrust:

With daisy-roots thy dwarfish muse is fed:  
A giant's body with a pigmy's head.

197-198. Both of these charges, whether or not true, are commonplaces of literary ridicule.

199: gall. "Gall" is "bitterness of spirit." It is also, as an ingredient of ink, used as a synecdoche for ink.

201: felonious. That is, "villainous" or "treacherous," with a suggestion of illegality.

202: Irish. See note to title. This adjective connotes being "untutored" or "uncivilized."

204: keen Iambicks. This phrase suggests Horace's "celeres
"iam bes." (P. Legouis, "Dryden's MacFlecknoe, 11. 203-4,"
N&Q, V, 1958, 180.)

204-206. Kinsley notes Cowley's ridicule of anagrams and acrostics as examples of false wit in his ode "Of Wit,"

11. 41-44:

'Tis not when two like words make up one noise;
Jests for Dutch Men, and English Boys.
In which who finds out Wit, the same may see
In An'grams and Acrostiques Poetrie.

To give some idea of the kind of poetry that Dryden ridicules, I reproduce an acrostic by Thomas Jordan, City Poet during the years MacFlecknoe was written. Jordan describes this as a "Foure-fold Acrostick on two pairs of inseparable friends, who were married in one day."

| Jove  | Joyn these Pairs, and May each blessed bride |
| Obtain | A guard of Angels for A guide. |
| Heaven | Nature, Vertue, Reason in communion, |
| Nobilitate, | Enrich, and Love Your union; |
| Grace, | Faith, and Knowledge, Bind ye; may you be |
| Each | Others bliss No evil Injure ye. |
| Let nothing | Re-divide; Eternal Rest, |
| Love | Dwell and Last in each Diviner brest. (Fairholt, Part II, p. 112.) |

Even granting the cleverness of this verse, poetry of this sort is a far cry from Volpone and The Alchemist.

207. This line alludes to emblematic poetry; George Herbert's
The Temple (1633) contains the most well-known emblem poems.

212-213. Bruce and Longvil, in The Virtuoso, send Sir Formal (who is long-winded, circumlocutious, and tautological) through a trap-door into a room filled with flasks of bottled air. Despite their farcical behavior, Bruce and Longvil are described as "Gentlemen of wit and sense."

214: sinking. The stage direction when Sir Formal falls through the trap-door is "He sinks." (Works, III, 145.)

215: subterranean. The wind is "subterranean" not only because Flecknoe has dropped through a trap-door into a room filled with bottled air, but also in oblique reference to a song in Shadwell's Tempest (1675), "Arise, arise! ye subterranean winds." (Works, II, 224.)

215-217. As Kinsley points out, these final lines parody 2 Kings ii, 9-13: "And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me . . . and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father. . . . He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back."
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