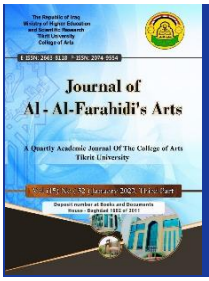
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Stylistic Aspects and Neo-Classical Elements in John Dryden's Mac Flecknoe

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ABSTRACT

To read John Dryden's Mac Flecknoe one may get the impression that the poem has been written spontaneously or quickly. This impression comes from the fact that the poem is very clear in its language and consequently easy to understand. This easiness is misleading. What seems easy and simple at the service hides very hard work and a complex web of relationships at the bottom. The allusions represent an obstacle in front of one's full understanding of the poem. Therefore, the poem requires a literate reader to understand the poem since some historical, religious, and mythological allusions cannot be understood unless one has been acquainted with their meaning. Thus, the seeming easiness and simplicity hide a lot of difficulties and skillful work. Dryden had worked hard to conceal art with art. He used all his artistic skillfulness to hide the hard work and the great effort he had exerted in writing the poem. He used his mastery of the art of poetry to make the poem seem simple and easy in terms of tight construction and sound language, elegant diction, and the great ability which made him accurate and precise in his expressions. Here, the power of the poet's tools and the extent of his superiority appear.

This study aims at showing Dryden's great effort in writing the poem despite the apparent simplicity, this can be seen through the poet's use of various stylistic aspects and his adherence to neoclassical elements.

KEYWORDS

Dryden, Stylistic Aspects, Neo-Classism, Elements, Mac Flecknoe

1. Introduction:

John Dryden (1631-1700), a poet, critic, and dramatist, was educated at Cambridge. He dominated the English literary scene during the reign of Charles II and became Poet Laureate in 1668. Dryden witnessed an age of scientific appeal that was fully acknowledged, not only by scientists and philosophers but by men of letters (Kinsely, 1951, 1).

Leibnitz (1646-1716), a philosopher, who thinks and works in a scientific environment, enthusiastically declares that.

We have raised up a truly philosophical age, in which the deepest recesses of nature are laid open, in which splendid arts, noble aids to convenient living, a supply of innumerable instruments and machines, and even the hidden secrets of our bodies are discovered; not to mention the new light daily thrown upon antiquity (Quoted in Sorokin, 2017, 273)

Dryden, as well, declares his self-congratulation of the age of science:

Is it not evident, in these last hundred years (when the study of philosophy has been the business of all the Virtuosi in Christendom), that almost a new Nature has been revealed to us? that more errors of the school have been detected, more useful experiments in philosophy have been made, more noble secrets in optics, medicine, anatomy, astronomy, discovered, than in all those credulous and doting ages from Aristotle to us? so true is it, that nothing spreads more fast than science, when rightly and generally cultivated (Dryden, 1962, I, 25-26).

In the seventeenth century, a rising concern with the sciences leads to a distrust of eloquence, imagination, and figurative language. An attack on decorative language, and rhetorical management of words, was made by the great concentration of experimental scientists in the Royal Society. The style was the handmaid of science, and a strong, clear, colourless handling of words was essential to the advancement of scientific knowledge (Kinsely, 1951, 3). The English philosopher, Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626), "would often ask if the meaning were expressed enough, as being one that accounted words to be but subservient or ministerial to the matter" (Bacon, 1872, iv, 254).

This scientific appeal was accompanied by the development of psychology, and the latter had a significant influence on literature. Thomas Hobbes (1588 –1679), an English philosopher and psychologist, was interested in the processes of the imagination as the tool of scientific analysis; and his opinions on imagination have immediate relevance for the study of Augustan poetry. In Hobbes' psychology, there are three important mental faculties: fancy, judgment, and wit.

In the domain of fancy, Hobbes differentiates between simple and compound imagination. Simple imagination is the recollection of memories or the images of objects that have been formerly experienced; compound imagination functions.

as when from the sight of a man at one time, and of a horse at mother, we conceive in our mind a Gentaure. So, when a man compoundeth the image of his own person with the image of the actions of another man; as when a man imagines himself a Hercules or Alexander... it is a compound imagination, and properly but a Fiction of the Mind (Bacon, 1872, iii, 6).

The purpose of compound imagination, then, is to find out similitudes in things of dissimilar natures through comparison. Out of these similarities "proceed those grateful similies, metaphors, and other tropes, by which both poets and orators have it in their power to make things please or displease, and show well or ill to others, as they like themselves" (Bacon, 1872, iv, 55-56).

The second faculty of the mind which makes comparisons between objects is judgment. Judgment characterizes differences, rather than similarities; and that who has a good judgment is apt in "discerning suddenly dissimilitude in things", by which "men attain to exact and perfect knowledge.... for to judge is nothing else than to distinguish and discern" (Bacon, 1872, iv, 55-56) .

Finally, Hobbes identifies a faculty that he calls with a certain 'tenuity and agility of spirits', which combines both fancy and judgment:

Wit is that ready 'discourse of mind' which is marked by quickness of perception, unusual aptness in discerning likenesses and differences, and general agility in the pursuit of ideas and the use of them to some definite end. (Thorpe, 1940, 105).

Hobbes acknowledges the importance of novelty in imaginative writing. A well-equipped poet should detect similitudes that please the reader not only with figurative decoration but also 'by the rarity of their invention' (Bacon, 1872, iii, 57). This effective novelty is not to be attained by inventiveness or art alone, but by drawing on a prolific experience and knowledge.

All these faculties find their echo in Dryden's writing and his interest in the creation of a poem. He investigates the poetic imagination and its characteristics:

So then the first happiness of the poet's imagination is properly invention, or finding of the thought; the second is fancy, or the variation, deriving, or moulding, of that thought, as the judgment represents it proper to the subject; the third is elocution, or the art of clothing and adorning that thought, so found and varied, in apt, significant, and sounding words: the quickness of the imagination is seen in the invention, the fertility in the fancy, and accuracy in the expression (Dryden, 1900, I, 15).

In the preface to An Evening's Love, Dryden defines wit as 'sharpness of conceit', and this was common in Dryden's age; it is in this sense that he is thinking of when he deplores the superfluity of wit in the Jacobean age, and when he claims that "the language, wit, and conversation of our age, are improved and refined above the last" (Dryden, 1900, I, 139-140). Dryden's broader notion of wit is associated with imagination and the whole creative process (Aden, 1959, 32). Here he adds a third sense to the term, anticipating his later definition of wit as "propriety of thoughts and words" (Dryden, 1900, I, 161). This definition he offers as a conclusion to the Apology for Heroic Poetry. In the preface, he explains that.

Propriety of thought is that fancy which arises naturally from the subject, or which the poet adapts to it. Propriety of words is the clothing of these thoughts with such expressions as are naturally proper to them; and from both of these, if they are judiciously performed, the delight of poetry results (Dryden, 1900, I, 270).

The "thought" of a good poem, then, is the product both of nature and of art, it grows from the poet's material, and is sometimes worked upon by deliberate art»- The language, on the other hand, seems to be the result entirely of deliberate art it is the dress of the thought, and is placed second in the sequence of composition. In the preface to Sylvae, he declares that he drew his definition from a particularly close consideration of Virgil:

for propriety of thoughts and words are only to be found in him, and where they are proper, they will be delightful.... He is everywhere above conceits of epigrammatic wit,and gross hyperboles; he maintains majesty in the midst of plainness. (Dryden, 1900, I, 256).

Dryden’s originality is "inviting us to recognise both similarity and difference, and to weigh discontinuous correspondences rather than seeking a totalising allegory" (Hammond, 1999, 225). Dryden's equivalences are mostly set together through using allusion and not assembled through analogy. His allusions support his inclination to criticism and his satirical efforts.

His conception of satire as a high form of poetic art safeguarded him from the mere roughness and indecency of his contemporaries. He carried with him his mastery of rhythm and his genius for the artistic manipulation of the heroic couplet form, however strong or familiar his expression, that is, often coarse, slashing, and heavily destructive; he is rarely graceless or subjective (Kinsely, 1951, 148).

His poetry is mostly public, objective and impersonal in accordance with the social culture of his age. His satire was accompanied by his use of the mock-epic or mock-heroic technique in poetry. Moreover, Dryden shows that the wit of the poet, whose discourse is "supposed to be the effect of sudden thought", includes "a too curious election of words, too frequent allusions, or use

of figures, or, in fine, anything that shows remoteness of thought, or labour, in the writer" (Dryden, 1900, I, 15-16).

In the preface to Tyrannic Love, Dryden eloquently states the ennobling effects of a majestic utterance in heroic drama:

By the Harmony of Words, we elevate the mind to a sense of Devotion, as our solemn Musick, which is inarticulate Poesie, does in Churches; and by the lively images of piety, adorned by action, through the senses, allure the Soul; which while it is charmed in a silent joy of what it sees and hears, is struck at the same time with a secret veneration of things Celestial, and is wound tip insens¬ ibly into the practice of that which it admires. (Dryden, 1931, ii, 330)

The heroic poem, like the heroic play, requires a style and diction raised above the average. Virgil, Dryden's acknowledged master in the loftier kind of poetry, is praised as 'a succinct and grave majestic writer', who weighed every word and syllable:

He is everywhere above conceits of epigrammatic wit, and gross hyperboles; he maintains majesty in the midst of plainness; he shines, but glares not; and is stately without ambition, I drew my definition of poetical wit from my particular consideration of him: for propriety of thoughts and words are only to be found in him; and where they are proper, they will be delightful... There is an inimitable grace in Virgil's words, and in them principally consists that beauty, which gives so unexpressible a pleasure to him who best understands their force. (Dryden, 1900, I, 255, 256, 258).

With all his potential for style, and his experience as a poet, Dryden originated an individual poetic character, giving distinctive power to the essential elements in neoclassical poetry. He followed and adhered to an established tradition. However, he gave these elements a new set of standards. He raised neoclassical poetic elements to the level of his Latin models, both in intrinsic excellence, and in reputation as a literary genre worthy of the consideration of poets.

2. Mac Flecknoe:

The style of Mac Flecknoe (1826) seems to be superficial, yet it is grand in magnificent open mockery and parody. In the poem, the poet Flecknoe realised the great truth that, although he had reigned for long as the undisputed monarch over the kingdom of dullness, writing stupid stuff in prose and verse like the Roman Emperor Augustus, he too must keep himself in readiness to obey the call of death, which must overtake him soon. Thus, this aged Prince, who had reigned as undisputed monarch of the realm of dullness, was now anxious to settle the question of a successor to him from among his numerous children. It is decided that, as urged by nature, i. e., that he should be succeeded by Shadwell because, among all his brothers, he has inherited the paternal quality of dullness. Flecknoe, the king, justifies his choice by the fact that his son, Shadwell is without a peer in point of dullness and is a perfect replica of his father. Indeed, his intellectual darkness is unrelieved by the least trace of sense and reason. Like the fog enveloping and darkening the daylight, Shadwell's sense of stupidity impedes clear thinking. Nature has endowed him with a huge massive body purposely intending to make his bulk to be the vessel of his intellectual grossness. Flecknoe himself, like John the Baptist, was sent to prepare the road for one greater than himself. Though famous among dunces, Flecknoe is, however, prepared to resign the primacy in favour of his dullest son, Shadwell. Like John the Baptist who used to be dressed in a dress of camel's hair, Flecknoe was clothed in a coarse woolen garment of Norwich to prepare the world for Shadwell, who represents the highest level of stupidity.

3. Stylistic Aspects and Neoclassical Elements in Mac Flecknoe:

A. Connotation of Sound Devices:

In addition to the fact that the use of various sound elements enhances the musicality of a poem, in Dryden's case, they contribute to the meaning and are used skillfully to serve specific functions. The heavy use of sound devices in the poem has a lot of purposes. These sound devices

add a musical element to the poem and in this way, they support the rhyme to create beauty. They also have significance in enhancing the meaning of the lines. Some sounds have special connotations, for example, the /s/ and/sh/ sounds are called sibilant sounds. A sibilant sound is a consonant sound that is pronounced when a stream of air passes through teeth that are touching or close together. An effect of a hissing sound is created by these /s/ and /sh/ strong consonant alliterations and assonant which are almost inserted within the whole poem, for example:

"To settle the succession of the State" (line 10).

"At thy well sharpen'd thumb from shore to shore" (line 45).

"And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign" (line 28).

"So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain," (line 114)

"Tragic Muse gives smiles, thy Comic sleep" (line 198).

In this stylistic device, the poet deliberately uses strongly stressed consonants to achieve his purpose. A sibilant sound reminds the reader of the hissing sound of the snake, and these sounds are connected and associated with animals. Dryden, through using these sounds, gives Flecknoe and Shadwell bestial and irrational attributes.

There is a similar fusion of sound and sense, though for a very different effect. The delicate comedy of Dryden's single line on Etherege is created almost entirely by the onomatopoeic suggestion of the footsteps sound by using alliterating sounds /g/ and /t/: "Let gentle George in triumph tread the stage Mac Flecknoe" (line 151).

Moreover, the combination of alliteration, assonance, and controlled stresses, is seen to advantage in the description of Flecknoe blessing his son, here the marked caesura after 'brows' throws weight forward into the next line, where it is enforced by the sound pattern:

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.... (lines 134-136)

The recurring letters above slow down the movement of action. What is more, the sibilants and recurring /f/ and /l/ sounds produce a contrasting effect, almost onomatopoeic difficulty and stress in reading, giving the effect of speech impediment, emphasising Flecknoe and Shadwell's dullness and their world of nonsense.

B. The Beauty of Versification by Using Sound Devices and Figures of Speech:

When we look at Dryden's poem, we find that the poet had worked hard to choose the elegant diction and graceful phrases that make his poem genial, witty, and beautiful. Firstly, this appears in his use of the rhyme which is written in a heroic couplet. The poem is written entirely in couplets (two successive rhyming lines). The first two lines set the pattern:

All human things are subject to decay,
And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey (lines 1-2).

Dryden also includes assonance (the repetition of a vowel sound in the same line) in the poem, as in the following lines:

And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey. (line 2).

In prose and verse was owned without dispute (line 5).

And blest with issue of a large increase (line 8).

Another sound device is consonance (the repetition of consonant sounds in a line of poetry in any place of the word), it can be found in "The rest to some faint meaning make pretence" (line 19).

Alliteration, a special type of consonance, is the repetition of the initial letters or consonants in a line of poetry, can be depicted in the following lines:

Worn out with business, did at length debate (line 9).

To settle the succession of the State: (line 10).

To reign, and wage immortal war with wit (line 12).
And coarsely clad in Norwich drugget came (line 32).

In addition, figures of speech are used in the poem as part of Dryden's hard work to enhance the magnificence of his poetic piece. Hyperbole is evident in the poem. It is a deliberate exaggeration used to magnify a fact, it can be traced in: "And torture one poor word ten thousand ways" (line 208). What is more, in the following lines, there is a comparison of Shadwell's dullness to night and fog, and of intelligence to a ray of light. This comparison is known as Metaphor, which is an implied or stated comparison between two unconnected subjects, without the use of 'like' or 'as'. It can be located in the following lines: "But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray /,

His rising fogs prevail upon the day" (lines 23-24). Furthermore, personification in which inanimate objects are described in terms of people and animals, as if the inanimate objects had minds and feelings, can be detected in the poem, such as: "And, when Fate Summons, monarchs must obey" (line 2). Finally, the simile is also used which is an obvious, explicit comparison through using 'like' or 'as' between different kinds of things as in this line: "Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain" (line 27).

Hence, Dryden tried his best to embellish his poem or his language with various sound elements and figures of speech. The result is that his language has become effective, powerful, impressive, musical, and beautiful.

C. The Use of Caesura:

Caesura is a natural or rhetorical pause within a line of poetry. It is a stylistic aspect of neoclassical poetry. It "cuts offsets of one or more...words, constituting what, from the viewpoint of the syntactic function, makes a single clause or assertion" (Dupriez, 1991, 88). Poets depend on this heavy stop or pause to emphasize certain aspects in the poem. These pauses inside the lines become more significant when they come in the middle of the line, i.e., a medial caesura. The direct effect of caesura is dividing the line into two parts or two halves. The relation between the two halves of the line becomes an equation of two balanced parts. The types of caesura or the relations between the two parts of the equation are either:

1. Complementary Caesura: In this type, one half of the line completes the other, i.e., complete the narrative or the story. One example is: "And when Fate summons, monarchs must obey" (line 2), in this complementary equation, each part completes the other. When fate (death) has its higher word, all people must obey and conform to the order, even kings. In another example, "Worn out with business, did at length debate" (Line 9), here, the king is tired of the business of ruling the country, and he discusses choosing an heir. The second part of the line depicts the debating attempts to find an heir.

2. Contradictory Caesura: In this kind, one half contradicts the idea of the other. In this line: "This aged prince, now flourishing in peace," (Line 7), although the king is an old, exhausted, and aged ruler, he is delighted and rejoiced. His concerns are resolved and appeased, he flourishes in peace as he succeeds in finding a suitable heir.

3. Emphatic Caesura: In it, one part of the equation is an echo of or repeats the meaning of the other part for emphasis. In this line, "Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain," (line 27), Dryden refers to "the first triumphal arch's invocation of the Royal Oak in which Charles hid himself in the aftermath of the Battle of Worcester" (Burton, 2019, 118). Thus, the second part of the equation explains its first part, it implies the type of trees that the poet refers to.

The use of caesura shows Dryden's hard work in writing his poem. It needs more attention and great effort to create these balances inside the lines. Sometimes the purpose of caesura is for inclusion (bringing things together). In the line: "This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young" (line 3), the caesura is used for inclusion. Here, Flecknoe and Augustus are brought together, or

represent, apparently, equal parts of an equation. They are similar in being both supreme rulers, they both became rulers while they were young, and their rule lasted for a long time. The caesura includes these similarities, and it helps to bring them nearer to each other only in these qualities. Dryden lifts Flecknoe to high levels. Sometimes, the caesura is used for exclusion (separating something from something else), in the line, "Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he" (line 17), caesura, here, is used for exclusion since Shadwell is an exception. He is excluded and separated from his brothers, to be the dullest one. The others may show some beams of wit, and they may show some ability to understand, even if this ability is weak, but Shadwell never deviates into sense.

D. The Use of Rhythmical Variations or Stress Variation:

Dryden followed the iambic pentametre (ˇ/) as the main rhythm throughout his poem. However, now and then, he changes the rhythm a little to create special effects to invoke the reader's feelings. For example, in lines (1-2):

All hu/man things/ are su/bject to/ decay →(pyrrhic metre- two weak or unstressed syllables vv)

And when/ Fate sum/mons mo/narchs must/ obey →(spondaic metre-two strong or stressed syllables / /)

Dryden intentionally makes such variations. He changes the rhythm purposely because he wants the rhythm to support the meaning of the line. To emphasize the weakness of human beings, he uses weak syllables (ˇ), in order to show the weakness of people in front of death, which is their inevitable, or unavoidable decay. Instead of the iambic metre, he uses the pyrrhic metre (ˇˇ). In the second line, the two strong syllables are given to fate (death). This metre is called spondaic, i.e., the use of two stressed syllables (//). Dryden, here, shows the mastery of fate. Fate is strong in comparison with the weakness of people. When fate calls, all people, including monarchs, must obey. The variations in the rhythm and metre show Dryden's mastery and skillfulness in manipulating his art .

In some other lines, Dryden makes other variations. Most variations are made for emphasis. The poet wants to emphasize certain things, which is why he uses emphatic syllables (/ˇ) (trochaic metre). To emphasize Flecknoe's happiness when he finds out a solution to his problem of finding an heir, Flecknoe rejoiced, " Cry'd, 'tis resolv'd; for Nature pleads that He" (line 13). Hence, to highlight this happiness, a strong stress is given to the first syllable "Cry'd".

Cry'd, 'tis/ resol/v'd; for/ nature pleads/ that he/

Whereas, to foreground the strength of striking, and hitting, the poet emphasized the first syllable in "Strike through and make a lucid interval" (line 23). To strike, force is needed, that is why the poet gives muscles to the first syllable.

Strike through/ and make/ a lu/cid in/terval;/

While, to call attention to the foolishness, absurdity, and ignorance of Shadwell, Dryden uses a trochaic metre (/ˇ) on the first foot in "Thoughtless as Monarch Oakes, that shade the plain," (line 27). He gives the first word an emphatic (strong) syllable:

Thoughtless/ as mo/narch oaks,/ that shade/ the plain,/

Samuel Johnson celebrates Dryden's dexterous efforts in his book Lives of the Poets (1905):

> Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught ' sapere et fari", to think naturally and express forcibly... What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, 'lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit', he found it brick, and he left it marble. (Johnson, 1967, ii, 417).

E. The Correctness of Language:

Looking closely at Dryden's poem, it could be found that the poet had tried his best to write it in correct English, he follows the rules of language without deviation. The result is that everything is exact precise and to the point, because the language is grammatically correct, and the lines are clear and easy to understand.

On the other hand, an inversion of word order could be found here and there in the poem. Inversion, or "anastrophe," (a Greek word means "to turn back"), is a "reversal of what is considered the normal or usual order of the constituent parts (words or word groups) of a sentence" (Dupriez, 1991, 242) to accomplish a specific impact of rhetorical emphasis, thematic focus, metre, or rhyme. Yet; It is not considered a break of rules, and the inverted sentences remain grammatically correct. Just like in common speech, poets use inversion in their works to emphasize certain words. When the natural flow of language is manipulated, the reader will pay attention to the shifted word order. Dryden uses inversion, such as: "Shadwell alone my perfect image bears," (line 15), the usual order is (Shadwell alone bears my perfect image). Another example could be found in: "Some beams of wit on other souls may fall," (line 21), in which the usual order is (Some beams of wit may fall on other souls).

These inversions are not deviations from grammatical rules, such structure is usually used in writing for emphasis, or for adding musical effects. Dryden tried his best to use grammatically accurate language, and this feature of correctness and accuracy makes his poem flows smoothly.

F. The Use of Epigram:

An epigram is "a short poem which often ends a satirical dig" (Dupriez, 1991, 166). a rhetorical device that is a memorable, brief, interesting, and surprising satirical statement. Often ingenious or witty statements are considered epigrams) can also be found in the poem. The best example is the first couplet: "All human things are subject to Decay/ And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey" (lines 1-2). This couplet carries wisdom and conveys the general truth about the fate of human beings, i.e., nobody can escape death including the powerful men who may think that their power and position make them immortal. The couplet then is full of wisdom and truth. The reader may suppose that this couplet has no relation with the rest of the poem. In the second couplet, the poet speaks about Flecknoe who is represented as an old man, worn out, and physically exhausted, he is about to die. Thus, the first couplet prepares the reader for the death of Flecknoe; therefore, an heir must be chosen. The first couplet reminds Flecknoe of this simple fact to induce him to choose a successor. The epigram, then, is a witty expression amounting to a proverbial phrase.

G. The Use of Anaphora:

Anaphora is "the repetition of the same first word in successive phrases, clauses, or sentences" (Dupriez, 1991, 39). Anaphora could be found in the poem in: "So just, so like tautology they fell" (line 56), and more remarkably in the following last three successive lines:

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 heroes bred;
Where unfledg'd actors learn to laugh and cry,
Where infant punks their tender voices try, (lines 70-77).

Burton writes that in the triplet, anaphora "underscores the generative power of the nursery" (Burton, 2019, 125). Tomarken explains that:

> To understand the nature of power-the ethical implications of ideology-Dryden takes us to the source of it, the theater district of London. We have moved from the excremental vision of power to that of prostitution of the arts. The nursery is a key concept here, referring in particular to school for young thespians but also to the more general sense of a nursery as a school for the young and for raising plants. The intermingling of theater, schooling (nurturing), and prostitutionindicates that what is being learnedis the art of satisfying the lowest of human desires.... The result is a symbiotic relationship between Shadwell and the nursery (Tomarken, 2002, 129).

H. The Mock-Heroic Technique:

Richard Tucker Whitescarver, a researcher, finds that:

> The tone of [Dryden's] poems' openings ... is a similar, mock-majestic, rumbling solemnity, which has the effect of distancing the speaker in his broad historical perspective from the figures he sees or alludes to who are out of step with the ancient grandeur they affect. As most satires and especially Augustan ones do, these poems and particularly this tone serve to remind us that standards have been set but not met by anyone presented (Whitescarver, 1984, 44).

A mock-heroic poem is a poem in which trivial and insignificant things are mockingly treated in a heroic or exalted manner, written in a heroic couplet. All neoclassical poetry is usually written in heroic form, especially heroic couplets. Mac Flecknoe has the same form it is written in the heroic couplet, where every two lines have the same sound at the end, and the metre is the iambic pentameter. The poem is a ludicrous imitation of the heroic, applying formal style and dignified language to a trivial theme. Dryden's Mac Flecknoe is the first great mock-heroic poem in English.

The poem starts in an epic-like tone introducing Shadwell's essential attribute as dullness. Dryden grants Shadwell a negative trait to be his one and only virtuous quality. The very opening of the poem is categorized by epic and heroic inflation which has a mock-elevation effect, this can be found in words like: empire, governed, prince, realms, the succession of state, and to resign. On the other hand, the key subject of the poem is the inferiority, dullness, and nonsense of Shadwell and Flecknoe. Flecknoe, an insignificant poet, is likened to Augustus Caesar. Yet; the former is entrusted with the responsibility of governing an empire entitled 'the realms of nonsense'. On the same level, Shadwell, the heir, is deemed by his father to be the fittest one to succeed to the throne of dullness because he looks majestic only with his huge body, like the huge oak trees, that shade darkness rather than light, and he is devoid of the power of prudent thinking. Dryden aims at defending respectful and good literature against inferior and bad ones.

Much of the comedy lies in Dryden's skillful use of ornate language on an essentially trivial theme. Although the heroic style is echoed and parodied at every turn of the poem, the fake grandeur of Dryden's tones and rhythms is broken again and again by guffaws:

My warbling Lute, the Lute I whilom strung
When to King John of Prtugal 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 toss'd (35-42).

.....

About thy boat the little Fishes throng,
As at the Morning Toast, that Floats along (49-50).

This irony which is an essential part of the developed mock-heroic style is obvious in Mac Flecknoe. In the poem, Dryden depends on a broad, clear, humorous mockery. Flecknoe, says the poet, is

Like Augustus, young
Was call'd to Empire, and had govern'd long (3-4).

Thus, the portrait of the Ruler of Nonsense in a setting of majestic power gives the poet abundant space for mock-elevation of style.

I. The Use of Allusion:

Dryden wanted to disconnect and detach himself from the meaning of the poem that he creates (1989, 55). To achieve this goal, he used allusions. In this technique, the poet writes his text so that it conveys a parallel world and brings to the reader's awareness, and echoes an earlier text which suggestively affects the meaning of the present text. The poet usually alludes to various historical, biblical, or mythological figures and incidents. Dryden did that in Mac Flecknoe, the poem is based on allusions from the beginning to the end. So many references are made to events, personages as well as history, mythology, and contemporary life at that time.

1. Historical Allusion:

From the very beginning, a reference is made to Augustus, the Roman emperor with whom Flecknoe is compared:

This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
Was call'd to Empire, and had govern'd long (lines 4-5).

In these lines, Augustus is frankly mentioned, and Dryden assumes the readers to be acquainted with the facts about this character that are significant to the poem: his restoration of peace after the civil war, and his patronage of superior poets like Virgil and Horace. However, this allusion gives negative rather than positive connotations, it reveals the huge differences between the great Augustus and the inferior Flecknoe. Then we have an allusion to Richard II, King of England, and his problem of finding a successor. Historically speaking, King Richard faced the same problem, he has a lot of sons, and most of them were illegitimate. In this respect, we may say that Dryden used a pun (a witty play on words) in "worn out with business" (L. 9). There is a pun in the use of the word "business," the explicit meaning is that he is an aged king, and got tired of ruling the kingdom, and wanted to abandon the position to one of his sons. However, the poet alludes to his relations with women. Dryden uses historical allusion as both Augustus and Richard are real figures from the past .

2. Religious / Biblical Allusion:

We also have religious, or biblical allusions, i.e. to John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Flecknoe is compared to John the Baptist who was sent to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus Christ. Flecknoe declares:

Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
Was sent before but to prepare thy way;
And coarsely clad in Norwich Drugget came
To teach the Nations in thy greater name.

In the first place, these lines recall to the reader's mind similar phrases in certain biblical texts (especially Matthew 3:1-4 and 11:7-10); these phrases describe John the Baptist and thus bring him into the poem. Yet, the religious figures give another negative connotation or the reverse sense of comparison, emphasizing Flecknoe's and Shadwell's ignorance, shallowness, and absurdity. Such religious figures preached love and peace among people and spread the light of knowledge. On the other hand, the darkness of Shadwell's "genuine night" admits no light or hope.

3. Mythological / Legendary Allusion:

Dryden employs mythological or legendary allusion for his purpose. There is an allusion to the mythological figure, Hercules) a semi-god in Greek mythology). He is famous for his physical strength and his maturity. He can discuss matters while he is still a child, and he has superhuman physical power, that he can strangle two serpents while he is still in a cradle. Yet, Shadwell is "mature in dullness from his tender years." (line 16) Shadwell is a dull kind of Hercules. Dryden lifts Shadwell's stature to the degree of gods but suddenly topples him down to be just a man of great dullness and stupidity. Hercules used to stand confirmed in wars, while Shadwell used to "wage war with wit," and to "stand [...] confirm'd in full stupidity".

The heavy use of allusion shows how much Dryden is well-read and educated. Dryden was well acquainted with mythology, as well as history especially Roman and Greek history, besides his religious conviction. He was also an active participant in the social and political life of his time. Allusions are also important in another way, they deepen the meaning of the poetic line and give moral experience to the ideas he is presenting. As we have already known that Dryden satirizes Shadwell, and when Shadwell is linked with some historical or religious figures, the allusion makes this satire deeper and more evident and reflects the reverse sense of comparison. It emphasizes Shadwell's dullness, and ignorance, which become clearer and deeper in meaning. The dimensions of allusion, and its aim at witty contempt, lead us to despise Shadwell for having the opposite features of the other characters. Dryden places Shadwell and Flecknoe in the historical shadow of Rome and its heroes, as well as in the mythological and biblical shadows. Dryden aims at highlighting how far removed from these luminaries Shadwell and Flecknoe truly are.

J. Public Themes and Satire:

Satire is a genre that uses wit as its tool and its purpose is social criticism. Satire tries to bring attention to certain follies, vices, and abuses, as well as to lead to improvements. Irony and sarcasm are often important aspects of satire. Dryden, like other neoclassical poets, was an active participant in the social and political events of his time. He was not a negative observer; he wrote about the incidents that happened in his time. While attacking Shadwell's work is the main theme, the sub-themes that shape Dryden's poem carry his comments on a wide scale of issues. His concerns about authorship, the quality of literature impacting people's tastes, and social and political intrigues also figure into the poem. These features make this famous poem of the seventeenth century a satire reflecting the anxieties of its time.

Flecknoe chooses Shadwell as his successor because "Nature pleads" for him to rule the realms of nonsense, a realm that exists outside of nature itself. The word "nature" not only stands for reality but is potent with17th century stress on order and harmony and art inspiration. So, when Dryden makes Flecknoe say that he and his son have "no part" in "Nature or in Art", he implies that they have no part in order and that they participate in adding more chaos and decay to the world.

The literary works of Shadwell (the real poet), according to Dryden, are "nonsense" that may affect the tastes of the reading public. These concerns in Mac Flecknoe are accomplished by a complex design of metaphor and allusion. The mock-heroic technique uses lofty themes for Shadwell that satirise him for not having actual greatness. This lack of greatness is what Dryden employs to disdain Shadwell's claims of being a good writer. Satire is supported by the mock-heroic style, which serves to magnify all that Shadwell's deficiencies.

The metaphorical imagery serves the mock-epic mode, as line 24: "His rising Fogs, prevail upon the Day" recalls the description of Satan disguising himself to enter Eden from where he is banished: "Satan involved in rising mist" (Milton, Paradise Lost). Instead of being the poet-prophet who has an aura of light, Shadwell is compared to the Devil whose "genuine night" challenges the light of the day. The religious and literary overtones associated with night and day in the [Miltonic] epic tradition, are exploited to satirise Shadwell.

The progress on the "Royal barge" on the Thames is a metaphor for royalty that is undercut by the place of London through which Shadwell is passing. The river is filthy and the fish are feeding on the filth. Another instance of decay in the poem is the image of brothels. This image shows that the danger of minor writers like Shadwell is similar to that of brothels. Dryden is afraid of a reduction to a material, chaotic world where words do not lift spirits but remain on the level of the flesh which uttered them.

The poem is full of public issues of succession, authorship, and the quality of literature, which were insisting concerns in the 17th century. The use of a wide assortment of genres like satire, and mock-heroic add to its richness. These features give the poem the urgency of public matters. Dryden's influence on satire can be gauged by the way he unites many themes to serve his concerns and writes one of the most famous satires of his time. With Dryden, it appears that the satirist is the physician to the wrongdoer and the patient and no more a rival to the offender. Hence, when Dryden recommends harsh prescriptions for a chronic illness, this is because the true objective of satire is to amend and correct vices.

Conclusion:

By using such a large amount of literary artillery, Dryden's talent is apparent. His poem shoots aimed fire that, by employing such different weapons, destroys everything in its path. Hence, his approach is crafty, cunning, and demanding; he conjures up all his talent and resources. He utilizes a full palette of colours, the beauty of versification, satire, mock-heroic technique, the use of epigrams, anaphora, allusions (historical, religious, mythological), rhythmical variations, sound devices, and figures of speech-—— all these are used to advantage. He had at his disposal formidable literary instruments, with which he felt completely and powerfully at ease, and on which he could ring so many variations, adaptations, and modifications. He had a big sense of humor, and the competence to fit a powerful statement into the length of a concise line. These literary qualifications, together with his proficiency in satire, regarding it as a high kind of poetry, assisted him to find a more complete expression of his poetry and a fuller space for poetic versatility.

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