

**Poetry**  
**Professor S P Dhanavel**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Madras**  
**John Dryden-1**

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## John Dryden (1631-1700)



- Historical and Literary Context
- Dryden
- *MacFlecknoe*
- Richard Flecknoe
- Thomas Shadwell
- Structure of *MacFlecknoe*
- Mock Heroic
- Selected Passages
- Analysis



John Dryden, is a gigantic figure of the restoration age. We will examine the historical, literary context, see something about Dryden himself then move on to the text that we have chosen for this course Macflecknoe and the background figures like Richard Flecknoe, Thomas Shadwell, who are actually the targets of this poem Macflecknoe and see the structure of course, see the features of Mock-Heroic poem. Then we will pay attention to certain selected passages from the first part of this poem, analyze them and then conclude this session.

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## Historical and Literary Context



- Abdication of Richard Cromwell in 1659
- Consolidation of Charles II (1660-1685)
- Test Act in 1673 against Dissenters, Catholics, Jews
- The Popish Plot in 1678
- Ascension of King James II (1685-1688)
- Suspension of the Test Act and birth of the King's son
- The Glorious Revolution in 1688 and the King's abdication
- William III and Mary II (1689-1702)
- The Bill of Rights and the Toleration Act in 1689
- Political conflict between the King and the Parliament
- Religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics



The historical background, for John Dryden the restoration period is actually, a long period beyond that but we will begin with abdication of Richard Cromwell in 1659 and return of Charles second as a king of England in 1660. We will also see this test act pass in 1673 against Dissenters, Catholics, and Jews we can notice this Popish plot to topple the government in 1678 then, we can notice this ascension of King James II for a brief period in 1675 and 1688. Then, the suspension of the test act and birth of the king's son which led to lot of apprehensions about this catholic dynasty in England and the subsequent glorious revolution or bloodless revolution and the king's own abdication and the arrival of William III and Mary II to rule England.

Now, because of this constant problem between the king and the parliament we have this bill of rights to limit the powers of the king and to increase the powers of the parliament. We also have the toleration act to accommodate the dissenters particularly from the protestant group, this was not extended to Catholics or Jews.

We notice the constant political conflicts and religious conflicts; on the one side we have conflicts between the king and the parliament on the other hand we have religious conflicts between people of different kinds particularly protestants and Catholics. This is the age that shaped John Dryden.

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### Dryden (1631-1700)



- Forty years of productive life: poems, plays, criticism, translations
  - Changed political affiliations often and later got into trouble
  - Supporter of Cromwell, King Charles II, and James II
  - Mentored by Sir William Davenant
  - Poet Laureate from 1668 to 1689
  - Lost his position as poet laureate and historiographer royal in 1689 to Thomas Shadwell.
- "All human things are subject to decay" (Dryden)
- "Nothing gold can stay." (Robert Frost)



Dryden was very powerful for forty years; he led a productive life; he wrote poems plays criticism and translations. He was a successful poet, translator. What he did was to change his political affiliations right from Cromwell period. we have to remember that Dryden, Milton

and Andrew Marvel these were the three poets who went along with the last rites of Oliver Cromwell.

And with this pre-restoration period, restoration period and the glorious revolution period we find Dryden able to maintain good contact with this king or anyone in power. That is where we have this focus on Dryden's change of political affiliations. He was a supporter of Cromwell king Charles II and James II as well. As a result, he was able to become poet Laureate and maintain it for some time from 1668 to 1689.

When there was a change of government again, he lost his power, his post of poet laureate and historiographer royal to Thomas Shadwell his opponent, who is attacked in Mac Flecknoe. He says in this poem Mac Flecknoe "all human things are subject to decay" and that is true of Dryden himself. Later in 20<sup>th</sup> century, we have Robert Frost saying the same thing in fewer words, 'nothing gold can stay, nothing royal can stay, nothing great can stay.'

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## MacFlecknoe (1682/1684)



- A mock-heroic satirical poem on **Thomas Shadwell** as the inheritor of dullness and non-sense from Richard Flecknoe who died in 1678
- **Sub-title:**
  - *Or, a Satyr on the True-Blew-Protestant Poet, T. S.*
- Written in 1676-77
- Widely circulated in manuscript
- Unauthorized publication in 1682 with errors
- Corrected version published in 1684.



Macflecknoe, is the personal satire that we are going to look into in this course. It was published in 1682 without Dryden's own authorization. Later on, it was published in 1684 with the supervision of Dryden. This is a Mock-Heroic poem; it is a satirical poem on Thomas Shadwell, as an inheritor of dullness and nonsense form Richard Flecknoe another contemporary poet of Dryden, this Flecknoe died in 1678. When, it was published first it had the sub-title "Or, a Satyr on the True Blew Protestant Poet T S," that is, Thomas Shadwell. Critics now, have unearthed certain facts about the date of composition of this poem and so they fix it as 1676 to 1677. It

was widely circulated before it was published in its unauthorized form. Later on, the corrected version, the first publication had some mistakes, these were corrected and published in 1684.

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### Richard Flecknoe (1600-1678)



- A Roman Catholic priest, poet, dramatist, etc
- Claimed to be an arbiter of taste and a son of Jonson
- Wrote *Miscellanea* (1653), *Love's Kingdom* (1664)
- Defended the stage
- Met Andrew Marvell in Italy
- Marvell satirized him in "Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome" (w.1645/p.1681)
- Marvell's poem **might have** inspired Dryden to satirize Thomas Shadwell in *Mac Flecknoe* (1682/1684)
- Dryden's poem became a model for Pope's *The Dunciad* (1728/1743)



Mac Flecknoe, title is actually referring to Richard Mac Flecknoe. Mac Flecknoe means the son of Flecknoe who is that Flecknoe that is Richard Flecknoe. Richard Flecknoe was an English poet, a dramatist, a traveler. He was a Roman Catholic Priest. He was claiming to be arbiter of taste and a son of Ben Jonson. Many poets, you know, we know one tribes of Ben in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and so here is one Richard Flecknoe. Thomas Shadwell also owed allegiance to Ben Jonson.

Flecknoe had written 'Miscellanea' and also a play called 'Love's Kingdom.' As a playwright he was defending the stage. When he went to Italy, he met Andrew Marvell in Italy. However, Marvell had satirized his Flecknoe in his poem called Flecknoe and English Priest at Rome. It was written in 1645 but, published only in 1681. Some critics believe that Marvell's poem might have inspired Dryden to satirize Thomas Shadwell in Mac Flecknoe. This is only a conjecture. Dryden's poem, became later on a model for Pope's poem called The Dunciad.

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## Thomas Shadwell (1642-1692)



- A very successful dramatist
- A follower of Jonson's comedy of humours
- Author of 14 comedies
- *The Virtuoso* (1676), a satire on the Royal Society
- Adapted Shakespeare's *The Tempest*
- Could not perform his plays freely during Charles II and James II due to his quarrel with Dryden



Who is this Shadwell? We have already seen him to be an opponent of Dryden. He was a very successful dramatist as in said, he was a follower of Ben Johnson's Comedy of Humors. Based on this comedy humors, he had written some 14 comedies, one of the most successful comedies of Shadwell was 'The Virtuoso' written in 1676.

It was a satire on the Royal Society. He also adapted Shakespeare's play The Tempest. He could not perform his own plays freely without restriction during king Charles II and also king James II because, of his quarrel with Dryden. Dryden, somehow prevented him from staging, Shadwell's plays very freely.

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## Dryden and Shadwell



Tory	Whig
Roman Catholic, in 1686	Protestant
<b>Shakespearean</b>	<b>Jonsonian</b>
the Comedy of wit	the Comedy of humours
"God's plenty"	Puritanical and moralistic
Powerful personality but not so popular in his day	Popular dramatist in his day but forgotten now
Remembered for his various contributions	Remembered because of Dryden's <i>Mac Flecknoe</i>

We have a comparison between the two now. These two are religiously and politically different dramatists. Dryden had royalist tory learnings, Shadwell on the other hand had whig and protestant leanings; while Dryden loved Shakespeare, Shadwell loved and admired Johnson. Dryden appreciated the comedy of wit, whereas Shadwell believed that the Comedy of Humors was the best. While Dryden found god's plenty in drama and literature, Shadwell found only one way of looking at things like, Puritanic and Moralistic idea of life.

Dryden, was a powerful personality but, he was not so popular in his own time as Shadwell. He was a popular dramatist but, today Shadwell is forgotten. We remember Dryden today for his various contributions but Shadwell we remember primarily because, Dryden had satirized him in his poem Mac Flecknoe.

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## Mock Heroic



- **Models:** Modelled on great epics like Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*
- **Theme:** Grand theme of succession and inheritance
- **Characters:** Characters of royalty like King and Prince
- **Language:** Elevated language of Latin and Greek
- **Poetic device:** Epic simile, Irony
- **Purpose:** to satirize human follies and expose people of their weaknesses
- **Effect:** Comic for readers and loss of face for the subject



A Mock-Heroic poem has certain features it follows great epic models like Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. It has a great theme of this succession and inheritance. It has characters, from the royalty like King and Prince. It uses an elevated language, modelling on Latin and Greek. It also uses Epic simile and Irony.

The purpose of a Mock Heroic is to satirize human follies and expose people of their weaknesses. The effect it has on the audience is different. While the poem has a comic effect on the readers, it has a loss of face for the subject, that is satirize in this poem. It is called Mock Heroic because, it uses Heroic conventions but, for the purpose of mocking at people.

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## Structure of *MacFlecknoe*



- 217 lines in Four sections
- I: 1-63
  - Flecknoe chooses Shadwell as his successor
- II: 64-93
  - Setting – London; Court
- III: 95-138
  - Publicity about the coronation to the people
- IV: 139-217
  - Flecknoe's blessings for Shadwell as the new king of non-sense



The poem Mac Flecknoe has 217 in lines and it can broadly divided into four groups: part one from 1 to 63 where Flecknoe, Richard Flecknoe chooses his heir apparent Shadwell as his successor. And in second part from 64 to 93 the setting is described, setting of London and in the third one from 95 to one 138, we have the announcement for this coronation of Shadwell as a king of nonsense. And in the last one from 139 to 217, we find Flacknoe offering his blessings to Shadwell and crowns him as a new king of nonsense to perpetuate stupidity in writings.

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## Flecknoe's Resolution



- All human 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:
5. 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
  10. 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
  14. Should only rule, who most resembles me:



We have some selected passages we will read them and for each slide we have some titles like for this one for example, Flecknoe's resolution. These titles will be of great help to understand

the different passages and also the whole effect of the passages we have chosen. The first one is Flecknoe's Resolution it starts like this:

“All human things are subject to decay  
And when fate summons, monarchs must obey.  
This Flecknoe found who like Augustus is young  
Was call'd to the empire and had govern'd long:

5. In prose and verse was own 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,
10. To settle the succession of the State:  
And pond'ring which of all his sons was fir,  
To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,  
Cry'd tis resolv'd; for nature pleads that he
14. Should only rule, who most resembles me.”

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### Flecknoe's Choice

15. Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,  
Mature in dullness from his tender years.  
Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he  
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.  
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
20. But Shadwell never deviates into sense.  
Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,  
Strike through and make a lucid interval;  
**But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,  
His rising fogs prevail upon the day:**
25. Besides his goodly fabric fills the eye,  
And seems design'd for thoughtless majesty:  
Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,
28. And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.





The title, we have given for this passage is Flacknoe's Choice. Now, Flecknoe has chosen. So, he names

15. "Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,  
Mature in dullness from his tender years,  
Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he,  
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity,  
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25. Besides his goodly fabric fills the eye,  
And seems design'd for thoughtless majesty,  
Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,
28. And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign,

Flecknoe has chosen Shadwell because, of his complete stupidity. He will not deviate, that is move away from nonsense to sense at all. So, even no light will come into his dark stupidity, that is why Flacknoe has chosen Shadwell as his inheritor.

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## Prophet of Tautology



- Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,  
30. Thou last great prophet of tautology:  
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.  
35. 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,  
40. 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.



Who is this Shadwell? Further emphasis on the foolishness of this poet we have. He is a Prophet of Tautology.

- “Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,  
30. Thou last great prophet of tautology,  
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And big with hymn, commander of an host,  
The like was ne'er in Epsom blankets toss'd.

Flacknoe now, considers himself to be a kind of St. John who has come before Jesus Christ to prepare the way for the kingdom of Shadwell. So, he is considered to be a prophet of tautology that is circumlocution not saying anything clearly, this new king of nonsense is received with the cheers by people on the way. So, we have lot of cheers for Shadwell from the public.

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## Cheers for Shadwell



Methinks I see the new Arion sail,  
The lute still trembling underneath thy nail.  
45. At thy well sharpen'd thumb from shore to shore  
The treble squeaks for fear, the basses roar:  
Echoes from Pissing-Alley, Shadwell call,  
And Shadwell they resound from Aston Hall.  
About thy boat the little fishes throng,  
50. As at the morning toast, that floats along.  
Sometimes as prince of thy harmonious band  
Thou wield'st thy papers in thy threshing hand.



“Methinks, I see the new Arion sail,  
The lute still trembling underneath thy nail,  
45. At thy well sharpen'd thumb from shore to shore,  
The treble squeaks for fear, the basses roar,  
Echoes from Pissing-Alley, Shadwell call,  
And Shadwell they resound from Aston Hall,  
About thy boat the little fishes throng,  
50. As at the morning toast, that floats along,  
Sometimes as prince of thy harmonious band,  
Thou wieldiest thy papers in thy threshing hand.”

Here, we have a journey of Shadwell to the coronation location. He is travelling, he is sailing on a boat, on river Thames. And there is a mythological reference to Arion. He was a poet who was drowned in water and some dolphin came and saved him. But, here, there is no such

possibility. So, here we have, echoes from pissing alley that is the place where people urinate and so, you can see how Dryden is undermining the capacity of Shadwell making him a dirt.

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### Made for Dullness



St. Andre's feet ne'er kept more equal time,  
Not ev'n the feet of thy own Psyche's rhyme:  
55. Though they in number as in sense excel;  
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.  
60. Here stopt the good old sire; and wept for joy  
In silent raptures of the hopeful boy.  
All arguments, but most his plays, persuade,  
That for anointed dullness he was made.



Now, this is a kind of confirmation of this dullness on Shadwell we have,

“St. Andre’s feet ne’er kept more equal time,  
Not ev’n the feet of thy own Psyche’s rhyme,  
55. Though they in number as in sense excel,  
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,  
60. Here stopt the good old sire; and wept for joy.  
In silent raptures of the hopeful boy,  
All arguments, but most his plays, persuade,  
That for anointed dullness he was made.”

Thomas Shadwell, is such a suitable boy. No argument can dissuade him from becoming something else. He is anointed, he is crowned for dullness. Psyche refers to a play cupid and psyche by Shadwell himself.

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### Augusta/ London City

Close to the walls which fair Augusta bind,  
65. (The fair Augusta much to fears inclin'd)  
An ancient fabric, 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.  
70. 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,  
75. 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,



The location the city, where Shadwell is being coronated. So, we have a mythical reference to Augusta the place, Augustan period and all that so, the parallel between Heroic and Mock-Heroic, we have in Dryden.

“Close to the walls which fair Augusta bind,  
65. (The fair Augusta much to fears inclin'd,  
An ancient fabric, rais'd t'inform the sight,  
There stood of yore, and Barbican it hight:  
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 Where unfledg'd actors learn to laugh and cry,  
 Where infant punks their tender voices try.”

This has, reference to a brothel house, a nursery where actors are trained to act in place; all bad things about the location and disreputation is brought to Shadwell by bringing Shadwell to this particular place by Dryden.

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### Shadwell's Throne



- Pure clinches, the suburban muse affords;  
 And Panton waging harmless war with words.  
 85. Here Flecknoe, as a place to fame well known,  
 Ambitiously design'd his Shadwell'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 flail of sense:  
 90. To whom true dullness 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.



Our Shadwell has come here and he has to occupy his throne. So, we have Shadwell's Throne.

- “Pure clinches, the suburban muse affords;  
 And Panton waging harmless war with words,  
 85. Here Flecknoe, as a place to fame well known,  
 Ambitiously designed his Shadwell's throne,  
 For ancient Decker prophesied long since,  
 That in this pile should reign a mighty prince,  
 Born for a scourge of wit, and flail of sense,  
 90. To whom true dullness 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.”

These are some of the characters from Shadwell’s play and we have this reference to Psyche. And here all we have is, only dullness nothing else, dull wittedness, that is what we have here. And whatever Dryden can do to bring down the fame of Shadwell, he has done it. All dirt, all heap of broken things here, he is giving the throne to Shadwell through Flecknoe.

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### Shadwell’s Throne

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And Panton waging harmless war with words.

85. Here Flecknoe, as a place to fame well known,  
Ambitiously design’d his Shadwell’s throne.  
For ancient Decker prophesi’d long since,  
That in this pile should reign a mighty prince,  
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90. To whom true dullness 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.



In the selected passages, we have seen, we notice certain thematic contrast on the one hand we have growth and decay then, we have obedience and disobedience, young and old, son and father, that is Flecknoe and Shadwell, father blessing the son, in fact referring to the curse that is possible. We also have contrast between peace and war, intelligence and stupidity, sense and nonsense, what is true or what is not true.

The king and the subject, humility and pride, past and present, ancient and modern, love and hate, aphorism and tautology, fate and free will, palace on the one hand brothel house or another court house on the one hand and pissing alley on the other hand. Dryden has brought in all these contrasts to tell us about the choice that he makes for Shadwell and Flecknoe to occupy nonsense the kingdom of nonsense, the location of nonsense, nonsense which promotes stupidity.

Flecknoe wants to ensure this continuation of nonsense through Shadwell according to Dryden and he gives some examples of this whatever creative activities that are possible for Flecknoe, Shadwell indulging in aphorism or tautology or word play or puns; nothing more, nothing

creative, nothing great they can write that is what Dryden says, but critics have found that Flecknoe was not such a bad writer as Dryden thought or even Shadwell was not such a shabby writer as Dryden has projected.

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## Poetic Devices



- **Epigram:** (1-2)  
All human things are subject to decay  
And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey:
- **Metaphor:** kingdom of nonsense
- **Metaphor:** night, ray, fog
- **Simile:** Thoughtless as monarch oaks (27)
- **Allusion:** St John preparing the way for Jesus (31-32)
- **Allusion:** Arion (43), a mythical poet saved by dolphins
- **Allusion:** Augusta (64)



We find a number of poetic devices here. We begin with actually this Epigram, which is attributed to something like a short pity saying that Flacknoe and Shadwell would write. “All human things are subject to decay and when fate summons, monarchs must obey,” this growth and decay and obedience and disobedience, fate and free will, all these ideas are brought in within the first two lines, even king and subject like monarch they are brought in here.

The whole poem, has this metaphorical structure of kingdom of nonsense, king of nonsense, prince of nonsense. And in this kingdom only darkness will rule, only night will be there, no ray will come in, all fog will be there so, nothing clear will be there, there is also the simile of thoughtless as monarch oaks in a forest where we have high oaks.

They are considered to be thoughtless; they do not have anything else but Dryden uses this kind of simile to attack Flacknoe and also Shadwell. We have these references; these are religious or these are mythical, they have high nobility or high level of importance and respect but, by contrasting with these religious and mythical Roman Allusions, what Dryden does is to throw Flecknoe and Shadwell down into the depth of dung or dungeon.


So, in the first allusion we have St. John preparing the way for Jesus like, Flecknoe preparing the way for Shadwell and in the case of the second allusion Arion, a mythical poet, who was saved by dolphins, but in this case nothing, Shadwell cannot be saved by anything. And also,




the city where, the place where, Shadwell is crowned is called Augusta referring to Augustus or Augustan Rome.

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## Rhyme, Rhythm, and Meter



- Rhymed iambic pentameter
- **Heroic couplet:**  
Heywood | and Shir | ley were | but types | of thee,  
Thou last | great pro | phet of | tauto | logy:
- **Caesura, enjambment and end stop**
- A triplet: 57-59  
That, pale | with en | vy, Si | ngleton | forswore  
The lute | and sword | which he | in tri | umph bore  
And vow'd | he ne'er | would act | Ville | rius more.



The rhyme, rhythm and meter these are very interesting for us to see in Dryden. Dryden uses Heroic couplet which a rhymed iambic pentameter. We have Heroic couplet and that is the example, we have here “Heywood” and “Shirley,” these were dramatists of the period.

“Heywood and Shirley were but, types of thee,  
Thou last, great prophet of tautology.”

This Shadwell is considered to be a prophet of tautology and other contemporaries like, Heywood and Shirley they were similar poets with bad temperaments or bad poetry.

We have, given this break to analyze the syllables and foot so it is easy for us to see. We also have this Caesura, enjambment and end stop in a triplet, Dryden for sake of variety, uses triplets in this poem. Here we have one in line number fifty-seven to fifty-nine:

“That pale with envy singleton forswore  
The lute and sword which he in triumph bore  
And vowed he never would act villerius, more.”

Forswore, bore, more, these three words rhyme with each other to draw attention to the new villerius, a character in one of the plays of Davenant; another contemporary of Dryden, who was a mentor for Dryden actually.

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## Meter



- Iambic pentameter
  - Iamb: unstressed and stressed syllables
  - Penta: five feet; e.g. lines 1-6
- All hu | man things | are sub | ject to | decay,  
And, when | Fate sum | mons, mo | narchs must | obey:  
This Fleck | noe found, | who, like | Augustus, young  
Was call'd | to em | pire, and | had go | vern'd long:  
In prose | and verse, | was own'd, | without | dispute  
Through all | the realms | of Non- | sense, ab | solute
- Variations in lines 2 and 5; spondee and pyrrhic



The meter is Iambic pentameter. Iamb, we have seen some time ago; Iamb refers to unstressed and stressed syllables, penta means five. So, we have this scansion here. We have lot of variations two and five where, we have this instead of Iamb, we have spondee and pyrrhic:

“All human 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.”

We can, see the breaks to understand the metrical feet.

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## Overall Impression



- Dryden reflects on the inevitable fate of changes in human life and suggests the theme of succession.
- He adopts the story of a king and son, picturizes a coronation ceremony of transfer of power in the Kingdom of Nonsense.
- He creates and sabotages the solemn occasion of coronation and celestial blessings to satirize Thomas Shadwell, a professional rival.
- He invokes the father Flecknoe, who also had indulged in attack on Thomas Killigrew, Sir William Davenant, George Etheredge, and Dryden.
- Dryden organizes the ceremony in a place of disrepute and thus attempts to push Shadwell out of the public favor.



On the whole, we see that Dryden is reflecting on the inevitable fate of changes in human life and suggests the theme of succession. Something has to follow one after another for good and also bad. Dryden, because of his personal vendetta against Flecknoe and also Shadwell he is thinking in terms of dullness, nonsense to attack Flecknoe and Shadwell.

Dryden adopts the story of a king and son; picturizes a coronation ceremony of transfer of power in the kingdom of nonsense. He prepares this whole sequence of story traveling from one place to another particularly through this river Thames. He creates and sabotages the solemn occasion of coronation, celestial blessings to satirize Thomas Shadwell, a professional rival.

Dryden invokes the father Flecknoe, who also had indulged in attack on Thomas Killigrew, Sir William Davenant, George Etheredge, and of course Dryden, these belong to one group. Thomas Killigrew, was a manager of king's company, for this company Dryden was writing his plays. Because these were attacked by Flecknoe and Shadwell, Dryden takes vengeance on Flecknoe and Shadwell.

Dryden organizes the ceremony, coronation ceremony in a place of disrepute near brothel houses, pissing alley all that and thus attempts to push Shadwell out of the public favor by associating Shadwell with dirty things in life.

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## Summary



- Historical and Literary Context
- Dryden
- *MacFlecknoe*
- Richard Flecknoe
- Thomas Shadwell
- Structure of *MacFlecknoe*
- Mock Heroic
- Selected Passages
- Analysis



To summarize, what we have seen in Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*, we have noticed the historical and literary context in which Dryden was writing. He wrote this *MacFlecknoe* keeping Richard Flecknoe in mind so, that he could give the place of inheritance to Thomas Shadwell as the son of *MacFlecknoe*. *MacFlecknoe* is Heroic Poem which attacks Richard Flecknoe who is considered to be the father of Thomas Shadwell in this poem.

We saw the four divisions in *MacFlecknoe* and also, we saw how this is a Mock-Heroic poem by referring to models on epics in terms of themes, characters and language. We saw some selected passages and analyzed the poetic devices and saw the overall impression, the purpose of Dryden was to attack Thomas Shadwell; he used Flecknoe also as his father because, belong to the opposite cam.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:22)

## References



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If you like to see some references, you can explore these and learn more about Dryden's artistry in Heroic couplet and personal satire. Thank you.