



Poetry
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John Dryden-2
Lecture 27

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Dryden-2

- Dryden's satire on Shadwell as son of Flecknoe
- Hence, MacFlecknoe.
- **Lines 94-217**
- Selected Passages
- Analysis
- A Source Study



In this lecture, we will continue with what we did earlier on Dryden and his satirical poem MacFlecknoe. We saw MacFlecknoe up to 93. That is line number 93. Shadwell was chosen as a successor for Flecknoe to occupy the Kingdom of Nonsense. So, we will continue with that now. This is a satire on Shadwell as the son of Flecknoe. So, we will now move to the selected passages from line number 94 to 217 and analyse the poem and then do a source study from a critic called Hammond.

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Audience for the Coronation

Now Empress Fame had publisht the renown,
95. Of Shadwell's coronation through the town.
Rous'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:
100. From dusty shops neglected authors come,
Martyrs of pies, and reliques of the bum.
Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogleby there lay,
But loads of Shadwell almost chok'd the way.
Bilk'd stationers for yeoman stood prepar'd,
105. And Herringman was Captain of the Guard.
The hoary prince in majesty appear'd,
High on a throne of his own labours rear'd.



For this coronation function, we have some audience. Who are they? Here Dryden describes.

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95. Of Shadwell's coronation through the town.
Rous'd by report of fame, the nations meet,
From near Bun-Hill and distant Watling-street.
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The hoary prince in majesty appear'd,

High on a throne of his own labours rear'd.

Shadwell is taken to the location of this coronation and audience are receiving him. Instead of the imperial way with carpets and things like that, here Shadwell is welcomed with the mangled that is mutilated body of poets, publishers and others. Actually, even the books, unused books, unsold books they are all there and the publisher is led by a Herringman, he was the Captain of the Guard. The hoary prince is, of course Flecknoe.

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Shadwell's Swearing in Ceremony




At his right hand our young Ascanius sat
Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state.

110. His brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,
And lambent dullness play'd around his face....
So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,

115. That he till death true dullness would maintain;
And in his father's right, and realm's defence,
Ne'er to have peace with wit, nor truce with sense.
The king himself the sacred unction made,
As king by office, and as priest by trade:

120. 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;



The swearing in ceremony takes place. Let us read.

“At is right hand our young Ascanius sat

Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state.

110. His brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,

And lambent dullness play'd around his face...

So Shadwell swore, now should his vow be vain,
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And in his father's right, and realm's defence,
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The king himself the sacred unction made,
As king by office, and as priest by trade:
120. 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;"

we can see that this mock-heroic poem is contrasted with the swearing-in ceremony of Ascanius, the son of Aeneas. And instead of the ritualistic setters and the globe that the king that is Ascanius carried, here we find Shadwell carrying ale and his father's book that is Love's Kingdom. It is a play by Flecknoe.


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Mythical Augury

126. His temples last with poppies were o'er spread,
That nodding seem'd to consecrate his head:
Just at that point of time, if fame not lie,
On his left hand twelve reverend owls did fly.

130. So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tiber's brook,
Presage of sway from twice six vultures took.
Th'admiring thron'g loud acclamations make,
And omens of his future empire take.
The sire then shook the honours of his head,

135. 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 prophetic mood:



On this occasion certain omens, good omens appear so we have some Augury. That is good omen for this coronation function. Here again, we have the contrast with the mythical figure Romulus, the founder of Rome.

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That nodding seem’d to consecrate his head:
Just at that point of time, if fame not lie,
On his left hand twelve reverend owls did fly.
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The sire then shook the honours of his head,
135. 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 prophetic mood.

So, we find these good omens for this coronation ceremony. As we said earlier Romulus is contrasted to show that vast distinction between mythical king on the one hand and this king of Nonsense on the other hand.

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Flecknoe's Blessing to Shadwell

Heavens bless my son, from Ireland let him reign

140. To far Barbadoes on the Western main;
Of his dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his father's be his throne.
Beyond love's kingdom let him stretch his pen;
He paus'd, and all the people cry'd Amen.

145. Then thus, continu'd he, my son advance
Still in new impudence, new ignorance.
Success let other teach, learn thou from me
Pangs without birth, and fruitless industry.
Let Virtuosos in five years be writ;

150. Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit.



Now, this is the time for Flecknoe to bless his son Shadwell. He offers his blessings.

“Heavens bless my son, from Ireland let him reign

140. To far Barbadoes on the Western main;

Of his dominion may no end be known,

And greater than his father's be his throne.

Beyond love's kingdom let him stretch his pen;

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Still in new impudence, new ignorance.
Success let other teach, learn thou from me
Pangs without birth, and fruitless industry.
Let Virtuosos in five years be writ;

150. Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit"

Virtuosas was a play written by Shadwell. Flecknoe says let Shadwell take 5 years to write this play and then show that he has not taken so much of effort to write this play. The dominion of Shadwell is such a great one from Ireland to Barbados and in between we have the vast land of water. So, in effect, in this kingdom of Nonsense, no human being would be there.

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Shadwell's Province

187. This is thy province, this thy wondrous way,
New humours to invent for each new play:
This is that boasted bias of thy mind,

190. 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.**

195. 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,

198. **Thy Tragic Muse gives smiles, thy Comic sleep.**



The whole province of Shadwell is described here.

187. "This is thy province, this thy wondrous way,
New humours to invent for each new play:

This is that boasted bias of thy mind,

190. By which one way, to dullness, 'tis inclin'd,

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But sure thou 'rt but a kilderkin of wit.


Like mine thy gentle numbers feebly creep,

198. Thy Tragic Muse gives smiles, thy Comic sleep.”


The province, that is ruled by Shadwell is a huge one and in this province humours will play a vital role. Comedy of humours inherited from Ben Johnson. Like Ben Johnson, Thomas Shadwell also had a tummy, huge tummy and this tummy swelled because of this arrogance or dullness and so Flecknoe says they are similar in that sense. So, through this likeness between Shadwell and Ben Johnson, Dryden attacks both Flecknoe and Shadwell. The last one is really paradoxical. The intention of a tragic playwright is to move them to tears but in comic we have the opposite, that is create laughter but in the case of Shadwell, everything is opposite. Comic play gives sleep and tragic play gives smiles.

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Shadwell's Genius



With whate'er gall thou sett'st thy self to write,
200. Thy inoffensive satires never bite.
In thy felonious heart, though venom lies,
It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies.
Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
In keen iambics, but mild anagram:
205. Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command
Some peaceful province in acrostic land.
There thou may'st wings display and altars raise
And torture one poor word ten thousand ways.



Flecknoe further continues to describe the genius of Shadwell.

“With whate'er gall thou sett'st thy self to write,

200. Thy inoffensive satires never bite.

In thy felonious heart, though venom lies,

It does but touch thy Iris pen, and dies.

Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame

In keen iambics, but mild anagram:

205. Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command

Some peaceful province in acrostic land.

There thou may'st wings display and alters raise

And torture one poor word ten thousand ways.”

The genius of Shadwell lies in writing drama, but Flecknoe tells him ‘your genius will be much better if you start writing more anagrams and acrostics.’ Play with words, punster making puns

and play with one word in such a way that you extend it to a long sentence or you play with it for a long time. Further Flecknoe draws reference to the wings and alters the kind of emblem poetry that was written during the early seventeenth century.

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Flecknoe's Disappearance

Or if thou would'st thy different talents suit,
210. 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,
215. Born upwards by a subterranean wind.
**The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,
With double portion of his father's art.**



After blessing his son, telling him about his province, genius and all that, Flecknoe suddenly disappears from the scene. That is the end of this satire on Flecknoe and Shadwell.

“Or if thou would'st thy diff'rent talents suit,

210. 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,

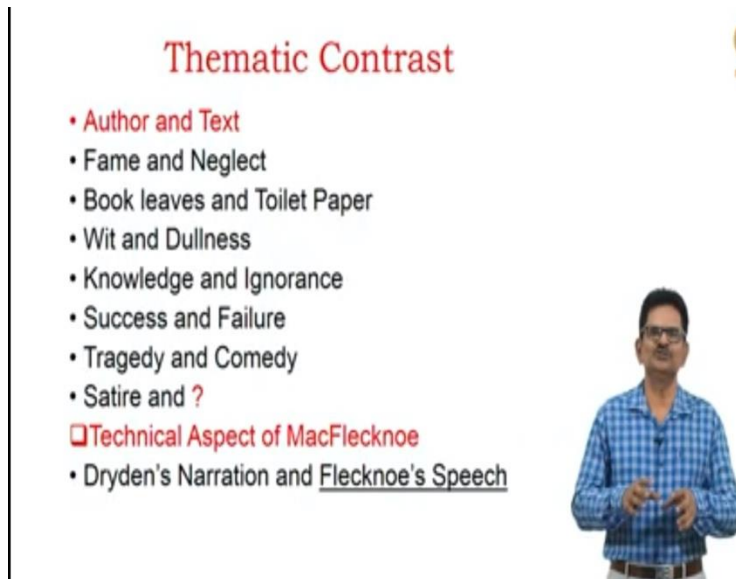
215. Born upwards by a subterranean wind.

The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,

With double portion of his father's art.”

The double portion of his father's art is, of course double dullness. The mantle falls on him, and probably it is something like bundling him up into a piece of dirt. Dullness, that is what we find at the end of this poem by Dryden. Bruce and Longvil are characters created by Shadwell. So the entire scenario is coronation, but it is done with the wrong purpose in the kingdom of dullness, primarily for attacking Shadwell and Flecknoe, who were the enemies, professional enemies or social enemies of Dryden and his friends in Restoration Period.

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The slide features a title 'Thematic Contrast' in red text at the top center. To the right of the title is a small circular logo with the letters 'NPTEL' below it. Below the title is a bulleted list of thematic contrasts: '• Author and Text', '• Fame and Neglect', '• Book leaves and Toilet Paper', '• Wit and Dullness', '• Knowledge and Ignorance', '• Success and Failure', '• Tragedy and Comedy', and '• Satire and ?'. Below this list is a red square icon followed by the text 'Technical Aspect of MacFlecknoe'. Underneath that is another bullet point: '• Dryden's Narration and Flecknoe's Speech'. To the right of the text is a small image of a man with glasses, wearing a blue and white checkered shirt, standing with his hands slightly apart.

If we pay attention to the contrasting words in this section that we have analysed, we will see author and text, these 2 are contrasted. Fame and neglect are contrasted. On the one hand, we have book leaves which are used as toilet paper. On the one hand, we have wit and on other dullness and knowledge, ignorance, success, failure, tragedy, comedy. We also see at the end the whole poem is a satire. What is the opposite of satire? is a question I leave for you to understand, to find out and help yourself to find the thematic contrast within this poem as quite opposite to satire.

There are certain technical aspects of MacFlecknoe that we can notice here. The whole poem is narrated by a narrator and during this narration, we find Flecknoe coming in and giving speech and describing Shadwell and all other situations. So, it is a kind of speech and narration and this

partly narrative, partly dramatic. That is what we find it and the whole poem is presented in satirical mode by Dryden.

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Poetic Devices

- **Irony:** mangled poets as carpets (98-99)
- **Oxymoron:** hoary prince (106)
- **Imagery:** Fecal matter, "reliques of the bum" (101)
- **Allusion:** Ascanius, Aeneas's son by his first wife Creusa (108)
- **Allusion:** Romulus, founder of Rome (130)
- **Hyperbole:** Dominion from Ireland to Barbados on the ocean (131-141)
- **Hyperbole:** Mountain belly (193)
- **Paradox:** Thy Tragic Muse gives smiles, thy Comic sleep. (198)
- **Hyperbole:** "And torture one poor word ten thousand ways." (208)

A number of poetic devices are used by Dryden in this poem. Major part of this poem is dominated by irony. Like one example we have is 'mangled poets as carpets.' This is a royal ceremony of coronation, but we do not have red carpet but on the other hand we have disfigured bodies of bad poets. We have this oxymoron hoary prince. Hoary is old aged. Actually, in another context in the previous section, we found Dryden using aged prince. Prince is supposed to be young person but here we have this oxymoron of old and young coming together and like this royal or king metaphor in this poem, we have another major imagery that is image of dirt to the books written by Flecknoe and Shadwell being used as toilet paper. That is the worst kind of image that one can think of using to attack one's enemy.

We have the allusions to Ascanius, the son of Aeneas by his first wife Creusa in the Roman mythology. And similarly, we have another mythical reference that is Romulus considered to be the founder of Rome and the son and the father how they are transferring power to each other from Roman context is contrasted with what Flecknoe does with his own successor, that is Shadwell.

Of course, to increase the effect of the satire and irony in this poem Dryden uses hyperbole. Particularly the level of dullness is expanded to rule a large kingdom. That is why the dominion

from Ireland to Barbados, that is a vast ocean but there is no human being for him to rule and similarly we have this hyperbole ‘tummy is fine, belly is fine, but then we have mountain belly.’

That is Shadwell’s belly. So, we here we find that, Dryden goes down to a level which is not acceptable to attack the very person of Shadwell. The paradox we find in this poem is of course ‘Thy Tragic Muse give smiles, thy Comic sleep’ and another hyperbole that we find in this poem is ‘you play with tinker with one word to create something big.’ That is why he says ‘And torture one poor word ten thousand ways’ to create anagrams or acrostics.

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Rhyme, Rhythm, and Meter

- Rhymed iambic pentameter: Heroic couplet

- **Two Triplets:** 136-138, 211-213

- Full on the filial dullness: long he **stood**,
Repelling from his breast the raging **god**;
At length burst out in this prophetic **mood**:

- 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**.



The rhyme, rhythm and meter of this poem, they are all interesting for us to see how they are used to create this heroic couplet, to create this heroic effect or mock-heroic effect in this poem. The whole poem is in rhymed iambic pentameter that is heroic couplet. We have 2 triplets also in this section that we have discussed so far.

Lines 136 to 138, again next set of lines from 211 to 213. This kind of triplet being used in heroic couplet is used for the purpose of variation:

“Full on the filial dullness: long he stood,

Repelling from his breast the raging god;

At length burst out in this prophetic mood:”

That this triplet announces the kind of speech that Flecknoe would make immediately after this and in the next one, he said, that this Flecknoe said, but his last words were scarcely heard.

Here this triplet prepares us to receive the information about Flecknoe’s disappearance from the stage. So, the narrator says,

“But his last words were scarcely heard,

For Bruce and Londvil had a trap prepar’d,

And down they sent the yet declaiming bard.”

He was shouting and yet; he was pushed out of the scene. So the father is sent out and now Shadwell has taken over the province to rule the kingdom of Nonsense.

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Heroic Couplet Variation

Double couplets: 104-107

- Bilk’d stationers for yeoman stood prepar’d,
And Herringman was Captain of the Guard.
The hoary prince in majesty appear’d,
High on a throne of his own labours rear’d.

Triple couplets: 139-144; six lines

- Heavens bless my son, from Ireland let him reign
To far Barbadoes on the Western main;
Of his dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his father’s be his throne.
Beyond love’s kingdom let him stretch his pen:
He paus’d, and all the people cry’d Amen.



We also have something more interesting about variation in the use of heroic couplets in this particular poem by Dryden. Two couplets come consecutively. So, I call them double couplets. So we can see, these double couplets playing some role particularly with reference to the publisher Herringman.

“Bilk’d stationers for yeoman stood prepar’d,
And Herringman was Captain of the Guard,
The hoary prince in majesty appear’d,
High on a throne of his own labours rear’d.”

It is not that Dryden attacks only Flecknoe and Shadwell. He also attacks people associated with Flecknoe and Shadwell. One of them is this publisher Herringman. Incidentally, he was also a publisher for Dryden. That is different. When it comes to attack, all are bundled together. The next one is triple couplets. Couplets in 3 successive form come together like the previous one, 2 couplets coming together. Now we have 3 couplets in our line number 139, 144. ‘Heavens bless my son’ as you can see, this is a very important occasion in this coronation function. Blessing the son so there it is not surprising that Dryden uses triple couplets.

“Heavens bless my son, from Ireland let him reign
To for Barbadoes on the Western main;
Of his dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his father’s be his throne.
Beyond love’s kingdom let him stretch his pen;
He paus’d, and all the people cry’d Amen.”

It is something like a liturgical performance, a ritual that is conducted in a church. Incidentally Flecknoe was a priest. That is why in one place, we have noted that priest by trade that Dryden refers to when he describes Flecknoe.

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Overall Impression

- *MacFlecknoe* is a mock heroic satire against Dryden's professional enemy Thomas Shadwell.
- Dryden designs Flecknoe to choose Shadwell as the King of Nonsense to attack both of them.
- The audience for the coronation are equally stupid authors and publishers.
- Dryden displays the difference between great kings and the stupid king Shadwell by contrasting the latter with Ascanius and Romulus.
- As Flecknoe blesses Shadwell to rule the vast unpopulated region of saline water from Ireland to Barbados proclaiming Shadwell's stupidity, Flecknoe disappears throwing the mantle onto Shadwell, which may, in fact, cover him up into a bundle of dirt.




In sum, we can form this impression of Dryden's satire. *MacFlecknoe* is a mock satire against Dryden's professionally enemy Thomas Shadwell. Dryden designs Flecknoe to choose Shadwell as the King of Nonsense to attack both the father and the son. We have an audience for the coronation who are equally stupid like authors and publishers.

Dryden displays the difference between great kings on the one hand and stupid king Shadwell on the other hand by contrasting the latter with Ascanius and Romulus in terms of occupying the throne and also referring to the omen auger that happened like 12 owls flying. Lastly, we find Flecknoe blessing Shadwell to rule the vast unpopulated region of saline water from Ireland to Barbados proclaiming Shadwell's stupidity.


It is not a rule; actually, it is proclamation of Shadwell's stupidity or dullness. Flecknoe disappears throwing the mantle on to Shadwell which may, in fact, cover him up into a bundle of dirt to be laughed at by the readers of Dryden. But we must remember this judgment of Dryden on both Flecknoe and Shadwell may not be really true. It is a prejudiced view that he has given that we must understand. Recent revisionary readings say that Shadwell was or even Flecknoe was not such a bad poet as Dryden attacked.

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A Source Study (Hammond)

- Why did Dryden select Flecknoe as the man whose poetic kingdom Shadwell was to inherit?
- Flecknoe was the epitome of a bad poet.
- Marvell's satire on Flecknoe unpublished until 1681.
- Points of disputes between Dryden and Shadwell
 - The estimate of Jonson
 - The nature of comedy
 - The purpose of comedy
 - Value of rhymed plays
 - Plagiarism
- Flecknoe's self-creation of a Jonsonian image



There is a very interesting question raised by many readers of Dryden. Why did Dryden select Flecknoe as the man whose poetic kingdom Shadwell was to inherit? Hammond, a critic, has analysed the material available to him and he has come up with some answers. Let us see the answers. Flecknoe was to some extent the epitome of a bad poet. There was a satire by Marvell on Flecknoe, it was published only in 1681. Some points of disputes between Dryden and Shadwell can be noted down.

There are some 5 points. One is the estimate of Jonson. Dryden thought Jonson was inferior to Shakespeare whereas Shadwell thought Jonson was superior to Shakespeare. Similarly, Dryden preferred the comedy of wit whereas Shadwell preferred the comedy of humours. For Dryden, the purpose was to entertain as well, whereas Shadwell thought the purpose of comedy was to punish vices and similarly, we have this value of rhymed plays and plagiarism.

We have to remember that Shakespeare was a great playwright in blank verse, not in rhymed plays. Similarly, Shakespeare used resources from other writers, but it was not plagiarism completely. So, on these points Dryden, Shadwell differed and in this context we also have to remember that Flecknoe also thought he was inheriting the tradition of Jonson and so he created a Jonsonian image for himself.

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Flecknoe and Shadwell



- Flecknoe's attempt to be an arbiter of the world of letters
- His dedications to the Duke of Newcastle
- Flecknoe misused classicism
- His insistence on the moral function of drama
- He attacked good playwrights and friends of Dryden like Etherage and Davenant
- He satirized Thomas Killigrew, the manager of the King's Company which staged Dryden's plays.



Like Dryden and Shadwell sharing or having differences, we find Flecknoe and Shadwell having some similarities. Flecknoe's attempt to be an arbiter of the world of letters. He was attempting to show himself, project himself as a man of letters giving judgments. Flecknoe dedicated his writings to the Duke of Newcastle. Flecknoe misused classicism to represent that was the only thing. Similarly, Flecknoe insisted that the function of drama was moralistic and then Flecknoe attacked some good playwrights and friends of Dryden like Etherage and Davenant. Similarly, Flecknoe satirized Thomas Killigrew, the manager of the King's Company for which Dryden was writing his plays. So whatever Flecknoe attacked, Shadwell shared and joined in some together or separately they were having the same purpose to attack Dryden and his friends.

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Flecknoe and MacFlecknoe



- Dryden read the second print of Flecknoe's travel book *A Relation of Ten Years Travels in Europe, Asia, Africa and America* (1656)
- Flecknoe's meeting with the King of Portugal in 1648
- His voyage to from Lisbon to Brazil
- The Image of kingship from one of Flecknoe's letters
- Flecknoe and Shadwell's drinking like Jonson
- Flecknoe, a maker of anagrams and riddles
- His epigrams celebrating the riches of Barbados
- Flecknoe's retirement announcements
- His active involvement in public life in 1676



Now, we see the father and the son coming together in Dryden's creation. Dryden to write this satire read the writing of Flecknoe. There was a travel book called *A Relation of Ten Years Travels in Europe, Asia, Africa and America*. In this travel writing, Flecknoe had described his meeting with the king of Portugal in 1648. He was traveling from Lisbon to Brazil. That also he has described. And even this idea of kingship for this kingdom that we find in this poem, Dryden found in these letters. The image of kingship from one of Flecknoe's letters was his source for Dryden. Flecknoe and Shadwell shared another habit of drinking, like that is also connected with Jonson, Ben Jonson.

Then we find Flecknoe was more at home with creating anagrams and riddles for celebrities or people, that fashionable people that he was familiar with and he also wrote some specific epigrams celebrating the riches of Barbados. Many times, Felcknoe had announced that he would retire from writing and from this public performance. But he did not do that for some time. He was making announcements but he was coming in and he was actively involved in the public life, even in 1676, when Dryden was writing this poem.

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Summary



- Dryden's satire on Shadwell as son of Flecknoe
- Hence, MacFlecknoe.
- Lines 94-217
- Selected Passages
- Analysis
- A Source Study



So, Dryden chose Flecknoe as a suitable father for Shadwell for this particular poem. Thus, we find that Dryden chose Flecknoe as the father of Shadwell to attack both Flecknoe and Shadwell. And so, he called Shadwell the son of Flecknoe and he coined a new name MacFlecknoe. What we have done in this lecture is to discuss lines from 94 to 217 to describe the actual coronation and then to describe the blessings Flecknoe gave to his own son. Finally, we also looked at the source for Dryden to write this satire.

One of the main sources for this satire is the writing by Flecknoe himself apart from all the events that took place during this Restoration Period. Finally, this satire is very effective to convey Dryden's own feeling to the public at that particular point of time. One of the reasons for writing such satires is personal. Another reason is also professional, in the sense, to promote good writers and prevent bad writers.

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- Wilson, R. F. Jr. 1977. "Sh- and Shakespeare in Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*," *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*, 25 (3): 155-157.



We have some references which we hope you will find them useful. The source study references Hammond. If possible, look into it. You will find it very interesting. Thank you.