



كلية : الاداب

القسم او الفرع : اللغة الانكليزية

المرحلة: الثالثة

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اسم المحاضرة السادسة باللغة الإنكليزية : **John Dryden's Satirical Poetry (Part Two)**

The most persuasive argument against reading the poem as a lampoon is its blithe and lively tone which is unlike the virulent tone of a lampoon. Dryden's critique relies on highlighting perversion of the arts at the hands of bad writers and the lack of any skill that is required to pursue these arts. The panegyric tone adds irony, but also gives him the chance to dismiss by mock appreciation. Even though the beginning lines of the poem are in the neutral public mode [Earl Miner], they convey what Dryden will elaborate throughout the poem- his preoccupation with "decay". The capitalisation of Fate also adds to the epic traits in the poem which will be undercut by the perversion of all grand

themes. The use of sexual puns and scatological humour serve the purpose of presenting a perverted praise of a bad poet, a poet whose very name is censored and is a pun in itself. The lines that describe Shadwell/Mac Flecknoe in the poem employ vivid imagery which shows how well Dryden uses the theatrical metaphor. Phrases like "beams of wit" and "lambent dullness" have a descriptive quality akin to a play in performance. The theatrical imagery also 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"^{iv} ". 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. Even though the Kingdom of Nonsense exists only in fiction and is exempt from claims to reality, Dryden uses allusions to the city of London that add realism. These allusions are to the spaces of the city that are far from the civility of the Town and Court. The progress on the "Royal barge" on the Thames is a metaphor of royalty which is undercut by the place of London through which Shadwell is passing. The river is filthy and the fish are feeding on the filth than being charmed by Shadwell's flute playing. The flute playing is the only creative activity that Dryden allows Shadwell [Earl Miner], and as the tactic functions, this activity also undergoes a perversion. Shadwell's music doesn't possess any harmony, as is testified by St. Andre's inability to dance to it. The lack of harmony in composition of an opera is a strong remark on Shadwell's incapacity. The

muses that attend Shadwell's pen are also distorted versions of the epic muse as the Tragick, Comick and Suburban muses do not inspire him to evoke the desired emotions. Another instance of decay in the poem is brothels rising out of Barbican ruins. The past giving way to a perverted present is a motif that is brought quite literally alive here. The Nursery "erect(ed)" only raises "queens" and

"punks". It is interesting to note that the "queens" are prostitutes that populate Love's Kingdom, an astute perversion of the monarchy metaphor in the poem. This lewdness encourages plays with "lewd scenes" and the public prefers them to Johnson and Fletcher. Dryden is deliberately keeping Shadwell out of a genealogy of canonised authors, placing him instead in the line of Ogelby and Shirley. The topography of the poem also functions as a metaphor that implies the bad quality of plays that Shadwell produces. It likens him to the playwrights and authors from Grubb Street, which was famous as a haven for hack writers. It is in such neglected parts of London that Shadwell's plays are performed and they are staged in "a monument of vanisht minds".

Even though the coronation scene is enacted near Pissing Alley, an actual place in London, the Kingdom of Nonsense has no place, it is unreal and Dryden is mocking its

"pretence" to reality throughout the poem. The subject of the first line of the poem is "humane things", but Shadwell is denied a human form. He is impotent, but also "big with hymn" which makes him unreal like his art. Flecknoe chooses him 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 with 17th century stress on order and harmony and an inspiration for art. So when Dryden makes father Flecknoe say that he and his son have "no part" in "Nature or in Art", he implies that 'they have no part in anything' [Earl Miner]. In some instances the meaning of 'nature' is also inverted, as Shadwell can "trust Nature" without using too much rhetoric in order to be dull. As the poem progresses, the emphasis on the utter lack of sense intensifies. Shadwell is granted some activity as he plays the "trembling" lute and writes verse that makes him the "Prophet of Tautology". Dryden undercuts this by calling his work "fruitless industry", implying that even if Shadwell is capable of "practice", like Flecknoe he is not capable of "success". The lack of results from his work makes his "labours" equal to nothing, just like his false pregnancy. The realm that Flecknoe is leaving for his successor, extending from Ireland to Barbadoes, is a vast

space but of nothingness. Flecknoe also advises his son to leave writing plays altogether; the same plays which he had said earlier “perswade” that he is fittest to succeed him. This change in a poem concerned with decay is interesting, as Dryden explores the possibility for progress in degradation. Flecknoe’s successor will surpass his father’s fame as he will bring “new ignorance”. As Earl Miner notes, the poem ends in an anticlimax which is an apt display of Mac Flecknoe’s lack of wit because he plots to depose his father who was willingly offering him the throne. Flecknoe’s long speech in praise of his son is neither responded to nor heard by his son. Shadwell, thus, is bereft of not only sense but basic faculties of speech and hearing.

The poem is replete with general issues of authorship, succession and quality of literature, which were pressing concerns in the 17th century. The use of a wide variety of genres like the panegyric, satire, mock-epic, and mock-heroic add to its richness. These features give the poem the “urgency” of public matters that Weinbrot credits Dryden’s verse with. Dryden’s influence on satire can be gauged by the way he unites many themes to serve his private concerns and writes one of the most famous satires of his time.