



JOHN DRYDEN

(1631-1700)

THE FATHER OF SATIRE

- Nicknames/Titles included “**The Father of Literary Criticism**” and “**Glorious John**”
- Appointed **Poet Laureate** and **Historiographer Royal** by Charles II
- Husband of **Lady Elizabeth** (the royalist sister of Sir Robert Howard). They had 3 sons and she outlived him.

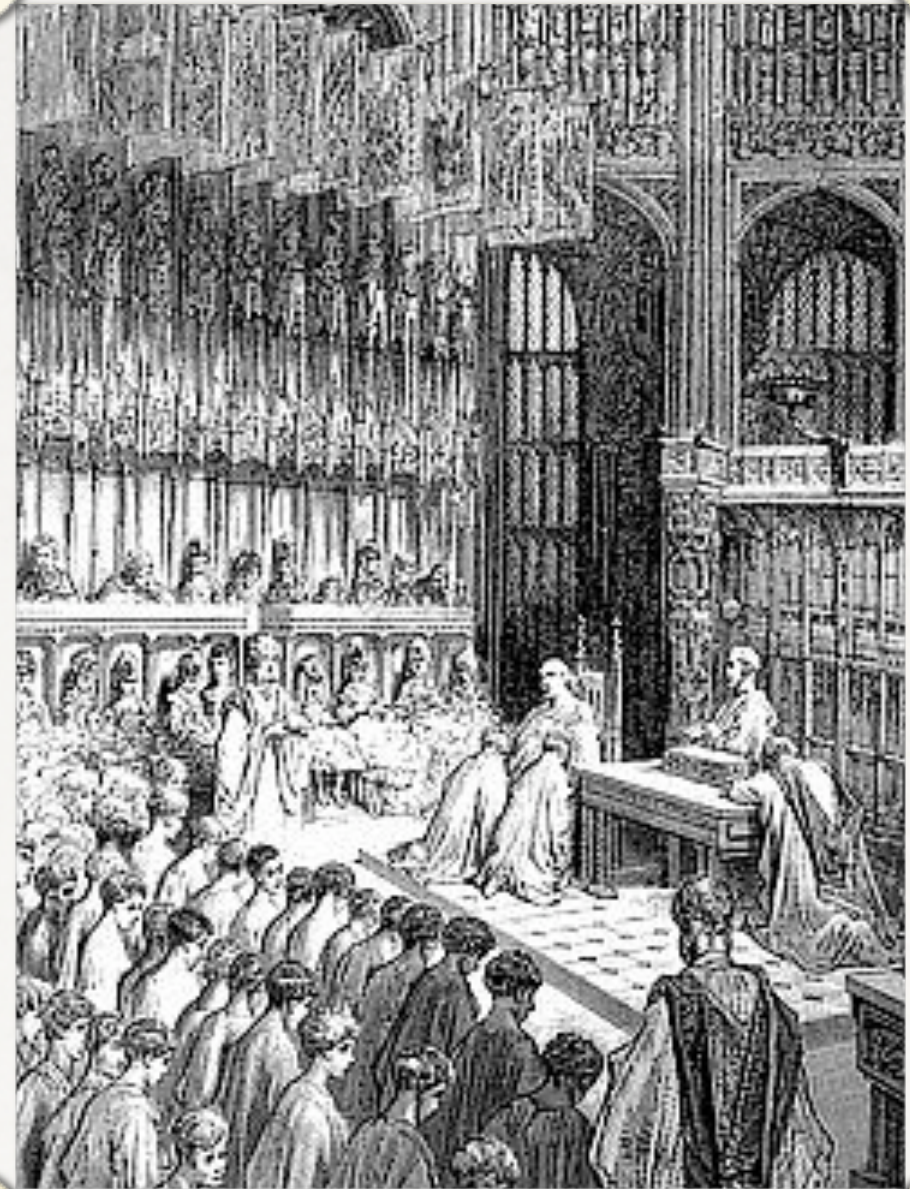
THE MAN BEHIND THE WORKS



- His **religious beliefs** changed several times during his life
- Criticized for his *seemingly* **fluctuating political allegiances**
- A man of headstrong **goals** and **passions** (writing)

HIS BEGINNINGS

- Sent to **Westminster School** at 11 years old
- Published his first poem on the death of his classmate
- At 19, he began to attend **Trinity College, Cambridge**. The same year he graduated, his father died



WHAT MADE HIM 'TICK'?

HIS MOTIVES, PHILOSOPHIES, & BELIEFS



NO
DANCING
NO
FORNICATING
NO
POSTPOSITION
PREPOSITIONS!

- MOTIVES:
 - wrote “public” instead of “private” writing
 - wanted for literature to be more accessible (translation work)
 - to critique others (Shadwell, earl of Shaftesbury)
 - to communicate his passionate beliefs (postposition prepositions)
 - provide for his family

- PHILOSOPHIES & BELIEFS

“As a critic and translator, he made many classics available to men and women who lacked a classical education.”

Norton Anthology

- Admits that he wrote plays for the sake of pleasing his audiences (unlike Shakespeare’s audiences, his were mostly from the court+fashion)

- His religious beliefs change between the rule of Charles II to James II from Anglican to Roman Catholicism, though they did not change with William and Mary

- Ties to the text:
Rivalry -> *MacFlecknoe*
Political Satire -> *Absalom and Achitophel* and “The Medal”
Religious -> *Religio Laici*

WHAT WAS GOING ON AROUND HIM?

• POLITICS

- Four rulers during Dryden's lifetime: Cromwell, Charles II, James II, and William and Mary
- Politically Savvy Man
 - * He commemorated Cromwell's death with "Heroic Stanzas" in 1659
 - * He then celebrated Charles II coronation with "Astraea Redux" in 1660
 - * He was raised a Protestant man but converted to Catholicism under James II
 - * His poem, "The Hind and the Panther" (1687) professed continued faith in Catholicism under the reign of William and Mary resulting in the loss of his poet laureate title

•&• CULTURAL

- In the beginning of his career, Dryden's writing was based mostly on the political goings-on of the day. His poems were mostly commemorative and professional
- In 1664, he began to embrace the freedom of the theater that Charles II brought about
 - * His plays used ideas from Greece, Rome, and of the Renaissance

SATIRE IN A NUTSHELL

sat-ire:

Def. Literature that serves to mock or ridicule a subject, whether that subject is specific, such as a person, or general, such as a situation or an event

Two types: Prose and Verse (can be comical)

Examples:

- The Earl of Rochester ridicules King Charles II

- Dryden mocks Thomas Shadwell:

("[Shadwell] alone, of all my sons, is he/Who stands confirmed in full stupidity" (lines 17-18))

MODERN DAY EXAMPLE: WALL-E



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHH3iSeDBLo>

HISTORY OF SATIRE

- Dryden transformed literature into a more “modern” form with his satire
- Footnote on page 2112 says that dashes were common “devices” used to hide the names of those that were targeted in satires

WHAT WAS DRYDEN'S CONNECTION TO SATIRE? & HOW WAS IT PORTRAYED IN HIS WRITING?

- Dryden's writings all follow a very precise plan. The majority of his poems are written in Iambic Pentameter, a form of verse in which words with short and long syllables are compiled into five pairs. When reading Iambic Pentameter, the emphasis or stress is always placed on the second or long syllable. A good example of Iambic Pentameter is the two opening lines of Dryden's Mac Flecknoe: "All human things are subject to decay, And when fate summons, monarchs must obey"(2112).

- Dryden rarely wrote in prose. His poems often fall into the Heroic Couplet form of verse, in which the ending syllables of both lines rhyme. Though many of his poems are epic and tell complicated stories, I've found that this particular form of verse helps to end a thought or phrase before moving on to the next, keeping the reader interested.
- The musical, Augustan style of writing was one that Dryden often fell into since it allowed room for his political opinions in an artistic manner. Augustan writing is derived from the heavy emphasis on education and the classics in Augustus Caesar's day. Dryden's grasp of this style of writing later inspired Alexander Pope, a renowned poet in the 18th century.

- It's very clear throughout Dryden's works that he cared immensely for his own writing style. Satire suited Dryden's style perfectly. It allowed him to free his very blunt and often politically incorrect opinions through analogies. With his technical perfection he was able to turn common ideas into witty phrases without losing their original meaning or heavily insulting the intended subjects of his poem. For example, in his work *Absalom and Achitophel*, rather than blatantly referencing the political and religious leaders who attempted to control the monarchy, he wrote in parentheses "... (Gods they had tried of every shape and size That god-smiths could produce, or priests devise)..." (2090).
- Not only was Dryden's writing appealing because of his analogies, but it was also attractive because of his new and relaxed approach to writing. His poems are very readable. In my opinion, it isn't hard to imagine Dryden speaking in perfect rhythm and rhyme during an average coffee shop conversation. In a sense, while I can imagine many other poets wracking their brains for the word that rhymes, my mental image of Dryden is that of a writer who knows exactly what to say and how to say it.

- To quote the Norton Anthology, "[Dryden] helped establish a popular new style, shaped to the cadences of good conversation" (2084). Since his writing was conversational, Dryden was able to address many current political and religious arguments. As the subject matter of his poems turned from the general mocking of lofty figures to defending religions and analyzing politics, his writing style became more serious. In 1682 he published *Religio Laici*, a poem which "...examined the grounds of his religious faith..." (2084) and compared the Anglican church with the Roman Catholic.

HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND “MACFLECKNOE” BETTER?

(THROUGH HISTORICAL & BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT)

- MacFlecknoe was a mock-epic which targeted the playwright & poet laureate of 1689 Thomas Shadwell
 - Shadwell saw himself as a model of Ben Jonson.
 - The relation between Shadwell & Dryden for the most part adversarial with many disputes based on Dryden undervaluing (seemingly) of Johnson's work.
 - Disagreement over the value of the Comedy of Wit (Dryden) & Comedy of Humors (Shadwell)

• MacFlecknoe was a mock-epic which targeted the playwright & poet laureate of 1689 Thomas Shadwell

- Shadwell saw himself as a model of Ben Jonson.
- The relation between Shadwell & Dryden for the most part adversarial with many disputes based on Dryden undervaluing (seemingly) of Johnson's work.
- Disagreement over the value of the Comedy of Wit (Dryden) & Comedy of Humors (Shadwell)

• Though there no definitive reason for what caused Dryden to write MacFlecknoe some of the

Speculations include:

- Irritated by Shadwell came to a boiling point
- The loss of mother & small fortune he received from it that was the mocked by Shadwell.
- Resentment towards Rochester that he was unable to express towards him that was displaced (and not without reason) onto Shadwell

(MORE ON MACFLECKNOE)

- The title was based of the writer Richard Flecknoe who died in 1678.
- A writer that Dryden did not care for because of being considered unremarkable, he was used as the legacy that Shadwell inherited (as opposed to Johnson) as a Father/Son dynamic in the poem.



- MacFlecknoe followed under the traditions of the Mock-Epic:
 - Used elaborate & ceremonious style in application to trivial or mundane subjects (ex. Line 12)
 - Heroes (those who the epic is pointed towards) is characterized by flaw as opposed to a virtue of the standard of an epic (ex. Line 16)
- Followed under the literary tradition of using allusions of the classical/biblical/literature ex. Line 83/Line 30/Line 207
- In 17th century poetry of vituperation, it was expected of attacks to point out the opponents' weaknesses ex. "mountain belly" (line. 193) made a reference to Shadwell's obesity but also Johnson's ex. "His timpls last with poppies were o'erspred" (line 126) readers would know that poppies replaced the laurels of the poet laureate & also that Shadwell was addicted to them

GENERAL CRITICISM ON MACFLECKNOE

- SUBJECT: Thomas Shadwell
 - English poet and playwright
 - Considered himself successor to Ben Jonson
 - Comedy of Humours - character's psychological trait or eccentricity (situational comedy)
 - Affiliated with the Whigs
 - Rivalry with Dryden: "I have been gossip to many such labours of a dull fat scribbler," (Aden, 233)
 - Appointed Poet Laureate 1689 - succeeded John Dryden
 - Reputation damaged by Dryden

DRYDEN HAS RELATIVELY FEW SINGLE LINES OR PHRASES THAT ARE REALLY MEMORABLE... IT IS AS WHOLES, AS COMPLETE THINGS, THAT WE CAN BEST SAVOUR DRYDEN'S POEMS" (HAMILTON, 36).

Satire - disparity between subject and style
subject: Shadwell and his dull writing (without wit)
style: grand language, lofty style, Miltonic syntax
Heroic Couplet - rhyming pair of iambic pentameter
(masculine rhymes - rhymes that match only one syllable)
Mock-heroic / Anti-epic / Anti-poet

"PACKED WITH ALLUSIONS, PARODIES, AND QUOTATIONS, YET IT IS LIGHT AND GRACEFUL AND VERY FUNNY," (WYKES, 180).

•🌀 Allusions: to Augustus Cesar (1st Roman Emperor) in his initial description of Flecknoe as the Emperor of Nonsense:

“This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
Was called to empire, and had governed long;

In prose and verse, was owned, without dispute,

Through all the realms of Nonsense, absolute. (3-6)

•🌀 Quotations: taken from Shadwell’s own comedy, *The Virtuoso*, used against him

“Where sold he bargains, ‘whip-stitch, kiss my arse,’

Promised a play and dwindled to a farce? (181-182)

•🌀 Parody: Use of Miltonic syntax (God / Son of God) to
“perversely link mock-father to mock-son.” (Morris, 175)

“The sire then shook the honors of his head

And from his brows damps of oblivion shed

Full on the filial dullness: long he stood,

Repelling from his breast a raging god;

At length burst out in this prophetic mood.” (134-138)

•✎ Quotations: taken from Shadwell's own comedy, *The Virtuoso*, used against him

“Where sold he bargains, ‘whip-stitch, kiss my arse,’
Promised a play and dwindled to a farce? (181-182

•✎ Parody: Use of Miltonic syntax (God / Son of God) to “perversely link mock-father to mock-son.” (Morris, 175)

“The sire then shook the honors of his head
And from his brows damps of oblivion shed
Full on the filial dullness: long he stood,
Repelling from his breast a raging god;
At length burst out in this prophetic
mood.” (134-138)

- ✎ “fiction of grandiose proportions, made of scraps of the London scene, of the world of writers, actors, publishers,” (Hamilton, 37)
- ✎ London scenery – in description of the location for Shadwell’s coronation
 - “From near Bunhill, and distant Watling Street” (97)
- ✎ Use of other writers / actors / publishers –
 - “From dusty shops neglected authors come,
Martyrs of pies, and relics of the bum.
Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogilby there lay,
But loads of Sh----- almost choked the way.
Bilked stationers for yeoman stood prepared
And Herringman was captain of their
guard” (100-105)



THANKS FOR
LISTENING!!

IT'S NOW TIME TO PUT YOUR
LISTENING SKILLS TO THE
TEST...

THERE WILL BE
EDIBLE REWARDS! :)