

**Restoration literary theory and satire:
the development of satire as a mode of criticism**

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Abstract

This thesis will examine the ways Restoration writers utilised verse satire as a form of literary criticism. Observing how Restoration literature becomes increasingly self-referential, it will reveal the emergence of a critical vocabulary that was shared by writers to define a series of theoretical principles they could not always agree on, and demonstrate how satirical texts came to encompass and engage with this vibrant exchange of ideas.

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Textual Policy

A few notes on the texts and citations used in this thesis. Wherever possible, quotations have been taken from modern, standard editions. This is especially true for Restoration dramatists. For example, the University of California edition of Dryden's works is used throughout, as is the 1927 Fortune Press edition of Thomas Shadwell's works. Dramatic prologues and epilogues are quoted from Pierre Danchin's 7 volume set *Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration*, in which is printed every dramatic framing text produced during the period studied. Quotes from verse satires also owes much to excellent modern editions: these include the 7 volumes of *Poems on Affairs of State* by Yale University Press and Harold Wilson's *Court Satires of the Restoration*, where they can be easily located for reference. Modern editions of author's works, such as *The Poems of John Oldham* (ed. Harold Brooks), *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings associated with George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham* (ed. Harold Love) and Samuel Butler's *Prose Observations* (ed. Hugh De Quehen) also provide invaluable sources. When a work is quoted from a manuscript source, both the text and title given are the exact spelling and punctuation of that source, with the reference given accordingly in the footnotes. Inevitably, there are works for which no modern edition exists. As such, several texts have been quoted directly from the original seventeenth-century printed edition(s). These include three editions of *The Poems of Horace Consisting of Odes, Satyres and Epistles* published by Alexander Brome in 1666, 1671, and 1680, as well as the 1680 edition of the Earl of Roscommon's *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*. The thesis also quotes a number of seventeenth-century pamphlets. In all these cases, the original spelling, punctuation, and stylisation of each source is maintained (except where otherwise indicated), and, where possible, the printer is also named in the accompanying bibliography.

Abbreviations

- Brome, *Horace* Alexander Brome, *The Poems of Horace Consisting of Odes, Satyres and Epistles* (London: 1666).
- Danchin *Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration*, 7 vols, ed. Pierre Danchin (Nancy: Publications Université de Nancy, 1981).
- Dennis, *Works* *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, 2 vols, ed. Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1943).
- Dryden, *Works* *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H.T. Swedenberg, *et al.*, 20 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956-1990).
- Horace *Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica*, ed. Henry Rushton Fairclough (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1926).
- Johnson, *Lives* *The Lives of the most eminent English poets; with Critical observations of their Works*, ed. Roger Lonsdale, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).
- Love, *Clandestine Satire* Harold Love, *English Clandestine Satire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- Pepys, *Diary* *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham & William Matthews, 11 vols (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1970).
- POAS *Poems on Affairs of state*, ed. George DeF Lord., 7 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).
- Rochester, *Works* *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Shadwell, *Works* *The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell*, 5 vols, ed. Montague Summers, (London: The Fortune Press, 1927).
- Vieth, *Attribution* David Vieth, *Attribution in Restoration Poetry: A study of Rochester's poems of 1680* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1963).
- Wilson, *Court Wits* John Harold Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration: An Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948).

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Introduction

In his 1677 preface to *All For Love*, John Dryden alludes to his former patron, the Earl of Rochester, in rather contrasting terms than those used in his dedication to 'my Lord Rochester' in *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1673). By this time, Dryden had cemented his status as Restoration London's leading playwright, notably with a string of heroic plays culminating in *The Conquest of Granada* (printed in 1672). His contributions to the genre are assessed by John Dennis, who asserts how Dryden 'refin'd the Language of our Rhyming Poetry, and improv'd its Harmony'.¹ Yet, despite such artistic accolades, his access to the elite circles of Charles II's court remained obstructed. It is therefore unsurprising he should dedicate a play to Rochester, whose social standing as a gentleman courtier and man of letters made him an appealing patron. The dedication exemplifies the hyperbolic sycophancy and self-effacement that pervaded such texts in this period; yet there is a tactical awareness of difference, as Dryden distinguishes both himself from Rochester as well as the current age from the past. 'Wit seems to have lodg'd itself more Nobly in this Age, than in any of the former' he declares, before submitting his own 'mean condition' as a writer exists only 'because some of the Nobility, and your Lordship in the first place, are above the narrow praise which Poesie could give'.² Here he articulates many of the ideals shared by his aristocratic superiors: that the royal court symbolized the fountain of the nation's creative values, supported and facilitated the continual progress of English poetics, and whose members had attained a more refined level of manners and eloquence of 'Wit'. Four years later, however, Dryden would drastically re-evaluate such views, declaring that 'if I come closer to those who are allow'd for witty men, either by the advantage of their quality, or by common fame, and affirm that neither are they qualified to decide Sovereignly, concerning Poetry, I shall yet have a strong party of my opinion'.³ Gone is the image of a court at the zenith of poetic excellence, replaced by members whose pretences to 'wit' rests on 'the advantage of their quality, or by common fame' rather than artistic talent. Additionally, 'neither are they qualified to decide Sovereignly, concerning Poetry', as Dryden rejects the court's capacity to oversee the development of English literature. What triggered such a stark contrast?

To answer this we may look more closely at the preface to *All For Love*. It has been well documented that Dryden elected to respond here to Rochester's *An Allusion to Horace*, a fiercely critical satire that ridiculed the poet laureate's insistence on rhymed drama, linguistic style, pandering to London audiences, and treatment of Renaissance playwrights (particularly

¹ Dennis, *Works ii*, p.121.

² Dryden, *Works xi*, p.223.

³ Dryden, *Works xiii*, p.13.

Shakespeare and Ben Jonson).⁴ However, the preface is significant not just for Dryden's reply to Rochester, but also for the way it encompasses a multitude of literary and cultural issues that preoccupied the thinking of Restoration writers and critics. One of the central topics it explores concerns a broader reimagining of the dynamics of England's patronage system, as Dryden sought to strengthen the authorial claim of the writer against an increasingly oppressive aristocratic structure. Rather than fostering artistic talent, Rochester and his fellow courtiers are charged with stifling the progression of English poetry by circulating their own 'scribble'; here the undertones of discontent pierce through the thinly veiled self-effacing rhetoric, as Dryden reasons that while playwrights 'have the excuse that we do it for a poor subsistence', what defence do those at court have 'who, not having the Vocation of Poverty to scribble, out of mere wantonness take pains to make themselves ridiculous?'.⁵ As Dustin Griffin observes, the preface expresses a belief Dryden initially hinted at in *Marriage A-la-Mode*, that 'the patron should be content to perform his assigned role in the patronage system, and leave writing to the writers'.⁶ Within this re-imagined structure, the study of English literature and the delineation of its artistic values required careful vigilance and serious scholarship, a task no longer suited to the frivolity and amateurism of the court gentlemen as outlined by Dryden, but rather to the emerging class of professional authors.

The widening chasm between the amateur gentleman and the professional writer was strongly influenced by the developing urbanization of the London metropolis between 1660-1680, wherein the idea of the 'town' – both as a concept and a geographical location – began to crystalize as an altogether separate entity from the royal court. The Great Fire of London and the subsequent rebuilding process played a role in this, but perhaps the most significant factor was the settlement of the West End during the early years of the Restoration.⁷ Harold Love provides a detailed analysis of the demographical, economical, and sociological elements of this process, and explains how communal hubs formed around the New Exchange, the newly opened Restoration theatres (particularly Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields) and London coffee shops – especially Wills Coffee House.⁸ The image of the professional author emerged as part of these

⁴ See Paul Hammond, *John Dryden: A Literary Life* (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1991), pp.86-7.

⁵ Dryden, *Works* xiii, p.14.

⁶ Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.81.

⁷ Cynthia Wall considers the impact of the Great Fire of London on the Restoration imagination in *The literary and cultural spaces of Restoration London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.39-76.

⁸ Harold Love, 'Dryden, Rochester and the Invention of the Town', in *John Dryden: His Politics, his Plays, and his Poets*, ed. Claud Rawson, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), pp.36-51, pp.36-8.

shifting cultural conditions, a figure who simultaneously came to embody the social attitudes and integrity of the town and through whom the town conveyed its own sense of identity.

The status of Restoration playwrights and their prominence within the overall performance and publication of their work was not shared by their Renaissance predecessors. Gerald Bentley has shown how in Shakespeare's time, writing professionally for the stage conveyed certain negative connotations that placed playwrights at the lower end of the social spectrum, as many Renaissance dramatist 'shrilly proclaimed their nonprofessional status'.⁹ Furthermore, Stephen Orgel cites the conspicuous absence of playwrights from printed books before 1600 as evidencing the professional dramatists inability to control their authorial status: 'even when plays were popular enough in the public theatres to be worth publishing, the author's name was generally not felt to contribute to their marketability' – including Shakespeare, who until *Love's Labour's Lost* in 1598, had no printed play credited to him.¹⁰ Orgel then notes the publication of Ben Jonson's first folio in 1616, *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, as marking a key turning point in shifting the attention of printed books more towards the author, as well as increasing the literary value of the work itself.¹¹ This sentiment is shared by Martin Butler, who states that 'Jonson's self-fashioning in the Folio is clearly seen in his careful exploitation of its textual features to project the author as a stable, self-determining and consistent persona'.¹² By the early 1660s, the status of professional playwrights was augmented further by what Paulina Kewes calls a 'reconstitution of the theatrical marketplace after the Restoration', citing changes in copyright, contracts and commissions, publishing practices, and the employment status of playwrights as strengthening the economic and social visibility of professional dramatists.¹³ Additionally, authors like Dryden exploited advances in the print industry by supplementing their published playtexts with critical essays and prefaces to consolidate their professional status and assert themselves as leading authorities on literary matters.

However, this increased visibility and prominence inevitably brought the professional playwright of the town into conflict with the faction of court wits led by the likes of Rochester and the Duke of Buckingham, who viewed themselves as the inherent custodians of English

⁹ Gerald Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatists in Shakespeare's Time 1590-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp.10-13.

¹⁰ Stephen Orgel, *The Idea of the Book and the Creation of Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp.70-1.

¹¹ Orgel, *The Idea of the Book and the Creation of Literature*, pp.72-77.

¹² Martin Butler, 'Jonson's Folio and the Politics of Patronage', *Criticism*, 35 (1993), 377-390, p.377.

¹³ Paulina Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the Stage in England, 1660-1710* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp.16-20.

poetry by virtue of their birth and education. Indeed, as Love explains, the primary issue in the Dryden-Rochester debate was 'whether literary values were to be defined and enforced from the Wits' Withdrawing Room at Whitehall or the supper chamber at Will's in the heart of the Town'.¹⁴ 'I shall yet have a strong party of my opinion' Dryden declares upon questioning the literary aptitude of the court: while the term 'party' underscores the growing division between the two factions, the line itself reads like a call to arms, one that seeks to galvanise and unite the town professionals against the band of amateur courtiers.

Critically, it becomes apparent that such divisions are indicative of a broader cultural need to establish a new governing set of literary principles for the nation. As the period progresses, critical writing began burgeoning in a variety of forms as Restoration literature grew increasingly self-reflective. John Wilson has observed how 'the late seventeenth century was growing more and more self-conscious about its art', wherein poetic ideologies were expressed in more sophisticated, vigorous, and creative ways than had previously been experienced, encompassing a variety of subjects ranging from the development of heroic drama, theories of translation, and the proper estimation of past writers.¹⁵ This progressive exploration and refinement of literary theory emanated chiefly from Dryden and his contemporaries, who, as Paul Hammond states, 'were self-consciously engaged in the project of recreating English literary culture'.¹⁶ As a consequence, both the stability of language and the lineage of literary forms fell into disrepute, particularly from Dryden, who in *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) advocated that language and cultural values were not universal constants but rather circumstantial, and were thus subject to innovation and modernity. In so doing, he prescribed to the notion that – through linguistic refinement and an accumulative knowledge of the world – Restoration authors exceeded their classical and renaissance predecessors, establishing in the process a critical lexis and vocabulary to validate his argument. This vocabulary centred on terms such as 'wit', 'nature', 'art', 'judgement', 'observation', and 'humour', and would subsequently underpin the way Restoration writers conceptualised key literary theories. It also facilitated complex theoretical disputes, demonstrated by the prefatory exchanges between Dryden and Thomas Shadwell, which centred chiefly on the proper merit and application of these terms.

The critical language writers used to negotiate and explore literary theory thus existed in a constant state of flux. This represented a fundamental issue that persisted throughout the

¹⁴ Love, 'Dryden, Rochester and the Invention of the Town', p.43

¹⁵ Wilson, *Court Wits*, p.190.

¹⁶ Paul Hammond, 'Figures of Horace in Dryden's Literary Criticism', in *Horace Made New: Horatian Influences on British Writing from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century*, eds. David Hopkins & Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.130.

Restoration and beyond. For example, in his 1690 treatise, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke repeatedly refers to the widespread 'abuse' of language and insisted on preventing words from deteriorating into an ambiguous state: 'the chief End of Language in Communication being to be understood, Words serve not well for that end, neither in civil, nor philosophical Discourse, when any Word does not excite in the Hearer, the same *Idea* which it stands for in the Mind of the Speaker'.¹⁷ It was this inability to establish a definitive understanding of key poetical terms that characterised many of the public disputes and private musings on literary matters during this period. This could take the form of public dialogues conducted through printed essays, the dissemination of scribal manuscripts to select readerships, or in the pages of private commonplace books.

Competing notions of 'wit' were a particular point of contention. Thomas Fujimura notes how 'wits' mercurial quality made it difficult to demarcate, stating that 'the concept of wit changed during the course of the century. As the age of enlightenment approached, there was a growing emphasis upon judgement and truth to nature, at the expense of fancy and "sheer wit"'.¹⁸ Dryden had, in his earlier essays, prioritized 'wit' – or 'fancy' – within the creative process, arguing that it was essential in elevating the grandeur and pleasantness of language. However, this emphasis on imaginative force risked compromising the poet's ability to provide a true mimetic image of nature – which, as most neoclassical critics agreed, was the primary purpose of art. However, James Sambrook argues how certain conceptions of 'nature' admitted a 'breadth of interpretation' and refers to Dryden's idea of 'perfect nature', wherein 'the scattered beauties of ordinary observed nature are unified, while nature's deformities and faults are excluded'.¹⁹ Poets, Dryden claimed, had the power to improve upon reality by utilising their creative ingenuity to produce more delightful and enjoyable images.²⁰ Sambrook then goes on to suggest how this concept could be thought of in Christian terms, an idea explored more fully in Martin Battestin's study of theology and aesthetics, which observes how later seventeenth-century critics inherited from the renaissance 'the idea of two levels of Nature', a prelapsarian

¹⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp.476-7.

¹⁸ Thomas Fujimura, *The Restoration Comedy of Wit* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), p.16.

¹⁹ James Sambrook, 'Poetry, 1660-1740', in *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol 4, ed. H.B Nisbet & Claude & Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.75-117, p.115.

²⁰ This notion closely resembles similar arguments made by Sir Philip Sidney in *A Defence of Poetry*, who states 'Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done'; see *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, eds. Katherine Duncan-Jones & Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp.78-80.

ideal and a fallen state, and that it was 'through the imitation of ideal Nature [...] that Art improves upon actuality, restoring us, as it were, to Eden'.²¹

Dryden's overall proclivity for 'wit' and 'fancy' manifests itself in his theory of dramatic comedy and would shape his impression of Ben Jonson. Reiterating his belief in historical progression, he argued that the refined tastes of Restoration audiences exceeded the cruder habits of Renaissance playgoers, thereby rendering Jonson's comedic style – which employed 'humour' characters designed to imitate the social and cultural values of the time – as outmoded. By contrast, Dryden preferred the wittiness displayed in Fletcher's plays, and argued that linguistic repartee represented a more refined mode of comedy that better corresponded with Restoration sensibilities.²² This drew the ire of Shadwell, a keen admirer of Jonson, who challenged Dryden's dramatic theory by advocating the comedy of 'humours' over 'repartee'. Shadwell theorised the faculties required to create 'humour' characters, 'observation' and 'judgement', were of a higher cognitive order than 'wit' or 'fancy'. 'Judgement', Shadwell postulated, was an essential creative tool necessary to produce mimetic representations on stage. As we will see, by encompassing this same critical lexis, Shadwell was aiming to not only re-define the artistic merit of these terms, but also re-imagine how they were conceptualised in the minds of authors and critics. The debate over this emergent vocabulary had a significant impact on the critical thinking during the following decades. For example, Dennis' 1702 treatise, *A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry*, concerns itself with defining this same poetical language; agreeing with Shadwell, Dennis posits that '[Humour] is harder to write, for the writing of Wit is the effect of the Fancy, and the writing of Humour the work of the Judgement. 'Tis observation alone that can qualify a man for it, and observation is the business of the Judgment'.²³ It therefore became necessary for authors to be keen observers of the world they lived in, as opposed to relying on innate poetic talent. In a later treatise published in 1711, Dennis would also argue how 'in Comedy it [wit] ought always to give place to Humour, and ev'n to be lost and absorp'd in that'.²⁴ This idea can also be traced back to earlier Restoration debates, wherein 'judgement' came to be viewed as a tool to circumscribe and refine the 'fancy' of a poet.

Another prominent issue to emerge from this increasingly self-reflective literary culture focused on the nature of satire. In his exploration of satire's literary heritage, Michael Seidel links this heightened scrutiny with the increased frequency of satirical verses produced during

²¹ Martin Battestin, *The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustine Literature and the Arts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p.50.

²² See Brian Corman, 'Comedy', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, ed. Deborah Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.52-70, pp.52-3

²³ Dennis, *Works i*, p.282.

²⁴ Dennis, *Works i*, p.411.

this period, stating that ‘as the seventeenth century progressed, the rise of satire was quite literally accompanied by a refined set of notions about its origin and a renewed sense of its public scope’.²⁵ However, the ability to conveniently locate the diverse forms and themes of these satirical verses within broader literary and cultural traditions is far from straight forward. Certainly, when examined through different critical prisms, including fields such as epistemology, genre studies, linguistics, and textual materiality, satirical practices during the Restoration appear a somewhat self-contained and unique phenomena. It is for this reason Robert Hume confines his study of satire to the reign of Charles II, claiming that ‘broad reading has convinced me that the actual practice of satire changed quite a lot in mid-century and again after the revolution of 1688’.²⁶ One explanation for the difficulty in establishing a wider theoretical framework for early modern satire may stem from the fact Restoration poets and critics themselves had trouble understanding it.

Indeed, Seidel would later remark how ‘prior to the Restoration and early eighteenth century in England, satire was a confused genre’, owing to the fact ‘no one was certain as to the origins of satire’s abusive spirit’.²⁷ The often crude, vitriolic, and personal invectives that characterise the majority of Restoration verse satire appear far removed from what John Peter identifies as ‘complaint’ verses produced during the late medieval and early Renaissance, which prided themselves on their moral objectives, wherein vices were chastised in general terms rather than ridiculing a specific individual.²⁸ While attempting to isolate this transition risks straying into over-generalisations, a key turning point appears in the introduction of more classical forms of satire into England during the mid-sixteenth century – in particular the Roman examples of Horace and Juvenal. These classical models would converge with the vernacular traditions of ‘complaint’ literature in the first ever English translation of Horace’s satires by Thomas Drant, published in 1566 under the title *A Medicinable Morall*. In Drant’s hands, Horace assumes the role of outraged railer and moral judge, as Drant presents readers with the image of ‘a much zelous controller of sinne’ who when faced with ‘such vices as were then flydge, and incident into that age, he assaileth fearcely, and ratleth up bitterly’.²⁹ The persona of the satirist is thus brought to the forefront of the verse, his personality and

²⁵ Michael Seidel, *Satiric Inheritance: Rabelais to Sterne* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p.7.

²⁶ Robert Hume, ‘Satire in the reign of Charles II’, *Modern Philology*, 102 (2005), 332-371, p.332.

²⁷ Seidel, ‘Satire, lampoon, libel, slander’, in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1650-1740*, ed. Steven Zwicker, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.33-58, p.36.

²⁸ See John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p.000.

²⁹ Thomas Drant, *A Medicinable Morall, that is, the two bookes of Horace his satyres, Englyshed* (London: printed by Thomas Marshe, 1566), sig.A1^v-A2^r.

predilections conveyed in a manner that portrays him as an outspoken critic towards new customs and forms of corruption.³⁰ This satirical persona – derived from Horace – was carried forward into the seventeenth century by the likes of Ben Jonson in print and John Donne in manuscript.³¹ As the period progressed, Harold Love explains how verse satire began to engender more complex and formal sub-traditions in the reigns of James I and Charles I: ‘as well as the straightforward lampoon [...] verse libels made frequent use of parody, especially the mock-epitaph, the mock-economium, and [...] the mock-litany. Lampoons in pentameter couplets would sometimes mimic the gravity of the classical grand style, in anticipation of Augustan mock-heroic’.³² However, while these developments certainly set the tone for the acerbic and venomous zeal found in English verse satire from the 1630s onwards, Ashley Marshall posits not all satire from this period was invariably negative, claiming that ‘few Carolean satires promise moral reform or exhibit buoyant Pollyannaism, but several of these writers clearly believed that satire could be productive, if in very local and specific ways’.³³

For Restoration audiences, the complexities surrounding satire’s etymological and epistemological derivations raised several fundamental questions. Griffin provides a succinct enumeration of the most pressing points:

Were its origins in *satyr*, or *lanx satura*? Was the satirist an unbalanced and ferocious malcontent, or a man of good natured and high principle? Was satire ideally a rugged and rough-edged form, or should it display the same kind of polish and urbanity as the speech of witty gentleman?³⁴

A key factor in this degree of uncertainty can be attributed to the radically different socio-political conditions Restoration satirists faced compared to the Civil War and Interregnum years. For example, in noting how Royalist poets such as Mennes and Smith, who had served the Stuarts loyally during that period, now faced the harsh realisation that the halcyon days of the

³⁰ Neel Mukherjee explores how Drant’s production was reacting to Renaissance politics in ‘Thomas Drant’s Rewriting of Horace’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 40 (2000), 1-20

³¹ See Collin Burrow, ‘Roman Satire in the sixteenth century’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire*, ed. Kirk Freudenburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.243-260, pp.254-9; Burrow also explores how both writers adapted the Horatian persona to their own immediate circumstances; for a discussion on how Donne himself viewed satire, see Frank Kerins, ‘The “Businessse” of Satire: John Donne and the Reformation of the Satirist’, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 26 (1984), 34-60

³² Love, *Clandestine Satire*, p.12.

³³ Ashley Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England 1658-1770* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), p.109.

³⁴ Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), p.15.

1630s could never again be revived, Timothy Raylor writes how 'the tone of Restoration society, conditioned by the long years of exile and poverty, involved an obscenity more vulgar, a cynicism more bitter, and a vandalism more fundamental and skeptical'.³⁵ Yet, despite such upheavals, Restoration lampooners could still draw on several literary traditions from previous decades. Certainly, Love highlights how Caroline anti-court libels found new life after the disastrous events of the second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-7), how anti-Puritan satire was re-energized following the success of Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1663), and how verse satire composed within Charles I's court 'offered models for a new, less idealistic generation installed at Whitehall, which Dorset, Buckingham, Sedley, and Rochester were to develop in remarkable ways'.³⁶ Still, Love is forced to concede that such historical disparities required the Restoration lampoon to be remade so that it could 'reassume its centrality to the communication of opinion', resulting in new kinds of verse forms and tonal vituperations that were unfamiliar to their Caroline and Interregnum predecessors.³⁷

There are relatively few studies dedicated solely to Restoration satire, and whenever it is the subject of modern scholarship it is often through a political lens. This is perhaps unsurprising given this was a period of increased factional rivalry which saw the emergence of party politics in England, fostering an environment wherein satire evolved into an inexorable device for polemical conflict. Such works also tend to focus on, or revolve around, a select group of writers and texts. Dryden is a dominant figure, with particular focus towards his satire *Absalom and Achitophel*, published anonymously in 1681 at the height of the Exclusion Crisis.³⁸ Steven Zwicker has extensively analysed the political language of Dryden's poem, which he links to the brazen display of sexuality and abundance during Charles II's rule.³⁹ In her study of Whig literary culture, Abigail Williams examines the satire alongside other poetic responses to the Exclusion Crisis, highlighting the 'profound divergence between Whig and Tory writers on the concept of populism' and exposing 'the polemical nature of Dryden's apparently even-handed treatment of recent history'.⁴⁰ Additionally, Matthew Augustine suggests the primary pleasure

³⁵ Timothy Raylor, *Cavaliers, Clubs, and Literary Culture: Sir John Mennes, James Smith and the Order of the Fancy* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), p.210.

³⁶ Love, *Clandestine Satire*, p.19.

³⁷ Love, *Clandestine Satire*, p.23.

³⁸ Paul Hammond argues the satire's anonymous publication was due to political reasons in *The Making of Restoration Poetry* (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 2006), p.54.

³⁹ Steven Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.132.

⁴⁰ Abigail Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture 1681-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.58.

of the satire for contemporary readers lay in ‘decoding its grid of biblicized politicians’.⁴¹ *Absalom and Achitophel* subsequently falls under a new kind of satire that developed in this period known as ‘state satire’, which encompassed wider national issues aimed at a much broader audience. The genre was shaped by its most influential exponent, Andrew Marvell, who in the 1660s composed a series of *Advice to a Painter* satire addressing the Second Anglo-Dutch War. Tracing the manuscript and printed transmissions of the *Second* and *Third* poems, Martin Dzelzainis proclaims how these satire’s ‘inaugurated what has been labelled the ‘Marvellian’ tradition of state satire’, before continuing to highlight a number of imitations and their political impact.⁴² Furthermore, in his analysis of Marvell’s *Last Instructions to a Painter*, Warren Chernaik explores how the satire insistently links sexual and political corruption, vividly depicting a world in which appetite alone rules.⁴³ This somewhat anticipates the sexual-political imagery displayed in Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel* – albeit in much greater partisan terms – a conflation that proved enticing to Restoration readers, writers, and printers, with Dzelzainis concluding in a latter essay how ‘Marvellian state satire and pornography were [...] the forbidden best sellers of pre-Revolutionary England’.⁴⁴

As these studies indicate, Restoration political satire represents a well-trodden scholarly path. By contrast, this thesis will venture down new and relatively uncharted pathways by examining a different kind of satire which emerges during this period. Indeed, as discussed above, the combination of an increased prominence on the dynamics of satire combined with a new, and potentially destabilizing literary culture that was constantly seeking new ways to express and define itself, had a profound influence on both the perception and practice of Restoration verse satire that has previously been unexplored by modern scholars. Chiefly, that a reciprocal relationship emerges between early modern literary theory and verse satire. Indeed, by encompassing prevailing literary ideologies, Restoration verse satire acquired a new layer of intertextuality that on one level transformed it into a more intellectual medium of ideas, whilst on another allowed it to function as a new mode of discourse. Not only did this result in the refinement of satire as a verse form, it also elevated the satirical medium as one of the primary vehicles through which to engage in poetical disputes, offering both writers and readers new

⁴¹ Matthew Augustine, ‘The Invention of Dryden as Satirist’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. Bullard, Paddy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.161-177, p.172.

⁴² Martin Dzelzainis, ‘Andrew Marvell and the Restoration Literary Underground: Printing the Painter Poems’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 22 (2007), 395–410.

⁴³ Warren Chernaik, ‘Harsh Remedies: Satire and Politics in ‘Last Instructions to a Painter’’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell*, eds. Dzelzainis, Martin and Holberton, Edward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp.443-462.

⁴⁴ Martin Dzelzainis, ‘Marvell, Nicolas Chorier, and the Earl of Rochester: State Satire and Pornography in the Dissenting Academies’, *Marvell Studies*, 2 (2017), 1-19, p.16.

opportunities to partake in the academic exercise of literary criticism. Dryden alludes to this phenomenon in the preface to *All For Love*, noting that ‘from hence it comes that so many Satyrs on Poets, and censures of their Writings, fly abroad’.⁴⁵ Not only was he decrying the behaviour of the court wits in their abuse of the professional playwrights, but also the manner of their critical discourse.

The idea that satire was able to articulate complex theory or sustain scholarly discourse is perhaps counter-intuitive. After examining several seventeenth-century dictionaries and glossaries, Hume claims that contemporary understandings and practices of verse satire under Charles II failed to square with the morality and artistically refined models derived from the classics.⁴⁶ As a vehicle for debate, Hume also posits that ‘literary criticism barely existed as a recognized form, but “critics” quickly acquired a nasty reputation that arose from work that was essentially derogatory rather than appreciative’.⁴⁷ However, closer analysis of the form and language utilized in such literary satire reveals satirists were not only sensitive to prevailing literary attitudes, but were also ostensibly taking part in the wider Restoration preoccupation of attempting to (re)shape English literary culture. Such works were often reacting to what they perceived as literary transgressions, and were thus attempting to uphold certain poetical standards. This idea echoes Marshall’s earlier premise that Carolean satire viewed itself as an inherently constructive enterprise, arguing that ‘many of them have at least an implicit positive agenda and so are better understood in terms of what they are defending than of what they are decrying or whom they are abusing’.⁴⁸ This sentiment can be felt in Rochester’s *Allusion*, which betrays a deep sense of unease that Dryden’s professionalism threatened the literary authority of the court, and so signifies an attempt to reconsolidate control over the realm of English letters with the gentleman wits. That Dryden felt compelled to respond to the satire in *All For Love* (two years after its initial circulation) also suggests he viewed the text as a serious threat to both his literary theories and reputation – one which required careful consideration. These kinds of scribally produced verse satires became the *modus operandi* through which the amateur courtiers attempted to regulate and define the values and practices of English poetics.

The realm of literary manuscripts was traditionally maintained by the cultivated, amateur gentlemen who, as a matter of principle, regularly eschewed print, preferring instead to circulate their work within exclusive networks of exchange and through systems of scribal publication. That manuscript was perceived as a more prestigious medium in the English imagination was apparent as early as the mid-late sixteenth century. Indeed, H.R. Woudhuysen,

⁴⁵ Dryden, *Works xiii*, p.14.

⁴⁶ Hume, ‘Satire in the reign of Charles II’, pp.33-5.

⁴⁷ Hume, ‘Satire in the reign of Charles II’, pp.345-6.

⁴⁸ Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England*, p.109.

in his seminal study of Philip Sidney, notes Sidney's preference for manuscript circulation as resulting from a 'fear of the so-called 'stigma of print', that it was not befitting for a man of his rank [...] he was after all writing for personal pleasure rather than in the hope of gaining patronage or of selling his works for profit: he was a courtier, not a hack'.⁴⁹ The flourishing of seventeenth-century manuscript culture, despite ongoing technological advances in the print industry, has been examined extensively by modern scholars. For example, Love states that 'the most characteristic mode through which verse was circulated to its readers was the [manuscript] miscellany containing work by a number of writers'.⁵⁰ Additionally, whilst acknowledging how the compilation and publication of such verse miscellanies in print became a more regular activity towards the end of the sixteenth century, Randall Anderson maintains that, on the whole, printed volumes were devoid of the poetic energies found in manuscript verses from the same period.⁵¹ This observation coincides with Arthur Marotti's assertion that both poetry anthologies and single-author editions of lyric poetry took longer to become 'an established feature of English print culture, as the manuscript system of transmission continued to have a remarkable strength and durability'.⁵² Furthermore, Peter Beal has drawn attention to the role early modern scribes played in raising the value and prestige of such texts, arguing that 'by judicious methods of presentation, the manuscript culture which the scribe supports manages to some extent to remain aloof from the vulgarity of the market-place, at least in the sphere of 'literature''.⁵³

The ability for these kind of texts to facilitate critical debate, as well as their increasing perception by Restoration audiences as an object of intellectual inquiry, was therefore enhanced by two key factors: first, through the manner of their composition and transmission, which became intricately linked with emergent forms of Restoration sociality; and second, by acquiring a new kind of textuality as they were exchanged and gathered into miscellaneous collections. For example, Nicholas Maltzahn cites an exchange of letters between the merchant John Verney and his father Sir Ralph Verney in 1676, which contained sheets of verses

⁴⁹ H.R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.211.

⁵⁰ Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.5.

⁵¹ Randall Louis Anderson, 'The Merit of a Manuscript Poem: The Case for Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poet. 85', in *Print, Manuscript & Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*, eds. Arthur Marotti & Michael Bristol (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), pp.127-172, p.127-8.

⁵² Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.211.

⁵³ Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp.29-30.

purported to be the Earl of Rochester's, as evidencing a burgeoning underground market for satirical manuscripts in the 1670s that invited its participants to circulate, copy, and speculate on satirical verses.⁵⁴ Critically, as part of his study on the origins and history of early modern English criticism, Michael Gavin posits that, 'rather than a discourse that stands apart from literature and comments upon it from the outside, criticism is woven into the very mental and social fabric of textuality'.⁵⁵ For the Restoration court wits, literary discourse took on a social quality that was simultaneously mirrored in the production of their satirical verses and perpetuated through their textual transmission, at once precluding certain audiences whilst also granting privileged access to those able to obtain a copy. Harold Love argues it was this feature of manuscripts culture which distinguished it from seventeenth-century print in generating and sustaining different reading communities, stating how the printed text, 'being available as an article of commerce, had no easy way of excluding readers. Inherent in the choice of scribal publication [...] was the idea that the power to be gained from the text was dependant on possession of it being denied to others'.⁵⁶ Consequently, the intellectual processes of Restoration literary criticism became bound not only to essential forms of elite sociality, but also confined to the world of manuscripts.

The inclusion of literary satire within manuscript miscellaneous also had a profound influence on how they were received and understood by prospective readers. Marotti notes how verses that extended beyond their immediate circumstances were 'usually recoded and recontextualised, especially when poems were collected or anthologized in a process that converted them into works of "literature"'.⁵⁷ While this at once elevated the literary status of verse satire, it also helped establish a sense of authority, thereby allowing such texts to represent an insightful discourse that readers could use to reflect on various literary subjects. This was enhanced further through the editorial decisions made by scribes and compilers; by selecting certain texts, deciding on their order, organizing them by theme, or by adding headnotes, annotations, or decorative elements, they had the power to create specific reading experiences for audiences, and could therefore control the context in which certain works were

⁵⁴ Maltzahn also proposes re-thinking the Restoration literary 'underground' as a regularly used network widely available to different parts of society rather than a strictly clandestine operation; see 'Rochester and the satiric underground', in *Lord Rochester in the Restoration Word*, ed. Matthew Augustine & Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.99-121, pp.99-100.

⁵⁵ Michael Gavin, *The Invention of English Criticism 1650-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.9.

⁵⁶ Love, *Scribal Publication*, p.183.

⁵⁷ Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric*, p.10.

received. Even individual readers, by transcribing copies for private use, could either limit or enhance their understanding of particular texts.

Conversely, in a fascinating case study of Renaissance scribal agency, Jessica Edmondson has argued that while these examples demonstrate the evident fluidity of texts in manuscript, 'less notice has been given to scribal practices that seem to show an interest in the "fixity" of texts and the identity of their authors'.⁵⁸ The idea that writers were both strategic in disseminating their work and show concern with maintaining an authoritative version, or that professional scribes were attuned to the authorial integrity of a given text, highlights the extent to which certain satires possessed a specific ideological objective or intellectual argument, one that was discernible and risked being lost through mis-transcription. The collecting and editing of these works, then, as Gavin highlights, 'transformed the manuscript culture of the prior decades into a textual tradition of debate [...] Compilation canonized critical verse, reconfiguring the give-and-take of criticism as a singularly textual phenomenon'.⁵⁹

In responding to Rochester's *Allusion*, Dryden encapsulates another prominent subject at the forefront of Restoration thinking, this being the assimilation and appropriation of Horace and Horatian precepts into both English literary theory and modern decorum. Certainly, the Roman author proved to be a major influence during this period, as 'almost every poet from Cowley to Pope, and beyond, engaged with Horace's works in one aspect or another'.⁶⁰ This included his Epistles, Satires, and especially his *Ars Poetica*. Though Dryden never names him outrightly in his preface to *All For Love*, the allusion to both Rochester and his satire is unmistakable, as he berates the wits for being 'Persecutors even of *Horace* himself, as far as they are able, by their ignorant and vile imitations of him; by making an unjust use of his Authority'.⁶¹ The censure works on two levels, at once ridiculing the 'ignorant and vile' manner of Rochester's translation of Horace's satire i.x as well as rebuking the Earl's attempts to unjustly seize 'his Authority'. This latter point would have been a particular concern for Dryden, who was himself incessantly adopting a Horatian voice in his own critical writing to both validate his theoretical assertions and present himself as the true heir to a classical tradition. As a lens through which to reflect on the modern poetic landscape, Hammond observes how Dryden frequently 'turns to Rome in order to define the literary achievements of his contemporaries,

⁵⁸ Jessica Edmondson, 'Poetic exchanges and scribal agency in Early modern manuscript culture', *The Huntington Library quarterly*, 80 (2017), 239-255, p.242.

⁵⁹ Gavin, *The Invention of English Criticism*, p.32.

⁶⁰ Robin Sowerby, 'Horatianism', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature Volume 4: 1660-1790*, eds. David Hopkins & Charles Martindale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.255-287, p.255.

⁶¹ Dryden, *Works xiii*, p.16.

and establish the discursive space of modernity'.⁶² A fundamental element of this processes was facilitated through the appropriation of Horace, who, as David Money points out, 'could form part of a discourse of 'politeness', in which his approval was sought for civilized lifestyles and literary fashions'.⁶³ To engage with Horace was to therefore at once engage in the reimagining of English poetry whilst also providing a more decorous vehicle to enter the arena of literary debate. Moreover, that Dryden actively sought to undermine Rochester's imitation highlights the extent to which authors of the period fought for control over the Horatian genre.

This in turn had a profound influence on the ideological form and function of Restoration verse satire, which also displays an indebtedness to Horace. Indeed, in noting how 'Roman satire was widely read, translated and imitated' during the period, Raman Selden asserts that 'the developing Augustan values of 'common sense', 'moderation', 'clarity' and 'naturalness' would seem to favour the Horatian model'.⁶⁴ Yet, as previously noted, there does appear an initial disconnect between the ideals of Horatian satire and Restoration satirical practices, one that highlights the inherent ambiguity in the Horatian model as both a measured and profane poetic channel; even Money accepts that 'he was also appropriated for scurrilous personal abuse. Rochester could see himself as Horatian, loathing the rabble, sexually ambivalent, devoted to friendship, drinking and sharp wit'.⁶⁵ However, there was also a heightened awareness towards the social and political utility of verse satire, which was simultaneously accompanied by efforts to elevate satire as an artform. Critically, as we will see, this began to foster a practice whereby writers increasingly utilized verse satire itself to reflect both on its own form and function and the nature of its production and transmission. The ideas that were expressed and contested as these self-reflective texts circulated in manuscript draws attention to the way Restoration poets were continuously exploring new ways to progress and refine contemporary poetics. This would eventually culminate later in Dryden's extensive theoretical treatise on satire, *A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693), wherein he was 'eager to describe satire in terms of important classical writers, to stress serious moral purpose and the delicacy of the art', and, perhaps most importantly, re-establish the Roman lineage underpinning contemporary satirical practices.⁶⁶ Moreover, it becomes apparent that Dryden's theory was not only informed by the satirical exchanges from the previous

⁶² Paul Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.45.

⁶³ David Money, 'The reception of Horace in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, Ed. Harrison, Stephen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 318-333, p.330.

⁶⁴ Raman Selden, *English verse Satire 1590-1765* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1987), p.74.

⁶⁵ Money, 'The reception of Horace in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', p.330.

⁶⁶ Hume, 'Satire in the reign of Charles II', p.362.

decades, but that it was also participating in a larger theoretical narrative. Certainly, as Griffin argues, Dryden's *Discourse* 'is the result not of disinterested observation but of acutely interested participation', and affirms that 'Dryden too is committed to the "reformation" of modern poetry'.⁶⁷

All of these points will be discussed in this thesis, which aims to provide new perspectives on a relatively understudied area of English literature. Principally, it seeks to elevate the literary qualities of Restoration satire by exhibiting the diverse ways authors utilised verse satire to engage in literary discourse, refining both the verse form and the medium itself into a more sophisticated and intellectual realm of ideas. In so doing, it will also posit how satirical manuscripts acquired a new textuality that not only facilitated critical inquiry, but which also transformed manuscript into the preeminent arena of literary debate. One method of achieving this will be to analyse a number of previously overlooked and marginalised satirical texts which deal chiefly with literary subjects, revealing for the first time a body of material indicative of a broader cultural shift in the way early modern audiences employed and perceived verse satire as a tool for critical debate and poetic introspection. By exploring more closely the language, forms, and materiality of these texts, as well as the literary theories and issues they encompass, we can see how such satire, far from being ephemeral pieces of malicious abuse and senseless invective, functioned as more insightful, artistic, and valuable items of literary criticism that were actively trying to re-shape Restoration literary culture, and which also had the capacity to transcend their immediate socio-cultural conditions. This will in turn provide new insights into the way Restoration readers and writers themselves regarded the current literary landscape, including the kinds of anxieties they felt over certain poetic standards, the theoretical principles on which they disagreed, and how they viewed the overall progression of English literature.

The opening chapters will focus on Horace, and explore the correlation between the appropriation of Horatian precepts with the emergent critical vocabulary of the Restoration. Chapter one provides a comparative study of four translations of Horace's *Arts Poetica*. It will argue that the art of translation was a perpetual development parallel to cultural progression, wherein classical precepts could be deployed to meet the need of a poetic language in constant flux. Paying close attention to the linguistic variations of translations by Jonson, Pordage, Roscommon, and Oldham, it will map out how key theoretical terms infiltrated discussions on Restoration literary theory, and examine how poetical refinement became linked to the identity of the nation. Chapter two then offers a fresh perspective on the prefatory exchanges between Dryden and Shadwell by exploring how the latter appropriated Horace for his own ideological

⁶⁷ Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, p.18.

and rhetorical purposes. It will specifically examine the competing theoretical concepts of 'wit', 'nature', 'judgement', 'observation', and 'humour', and in so doing shed new light on Shadwell as a central figure in both refining a new kind of critical lexis and of establishing new forms of literary debate. Examining the reception and re-appropriation of Horace's *Ars Poetica* in this will subsequently help establish the theoretical context in which verse satire begins to encompass and engage with Restoration literary ideology.

The third chapter is a case study exploring the works of Samuel Butler. The chapter will reveal how Butler was an astute literary critic, one whose works encompassed, analysed, and brought together multiple issues ranging from defining modern poetical terms, deliberating theories of satire, and reflecting on the world of literary manuscripts. Particular focus is given to Butler's rarely explored private commonplace books, specifically the nature of their textual composition and publication after Butler's lifetime, and how Butler's wider reading influenced his literary criticisms. The chapter concludes with an analysis of his satire *Upon Critics who judge of modern Plays precisely by the Rules of the Ancients*, written in response to Thomas Rymer's critical essay *Tragedies of the Last Age Considered* (1677), and which will demonstrate how, through careful intertextual reference, Butler's satire operates at a much higher intellectual level, where it is able to encompass complex theoretical concepts and offer a sustained critical rebuke of Rymer's arguments, thereby helping to elevate satire as a more thoughtful realm of literary ideas.

The final chapters are dedicated to Restoration verse satire. Chapter four examines how verse satire evolves into a new mode of English literary criticism through various case studies. For example, the first of these will explore a series of satires known as the 'sessions' poems, which were employed by the court wits as a means of regulating the reputations of the professional playwrights, and will illustrate how this sub-genre represented a mode of critical discourse that not only became linked with elite forms of sociality, but which also attempted to locate the processes of literary criticism within the world of London manuscripts. This will be supplemented by a study of how professional playwrights retaliated by adopting their own satirical strategy in a series of dramatic prologues and epilogues, which sought to relocate the domain of literary criticism from private networks of manuscripts into the public arena of London's theatres. The chapter will also shed light on another, less examined sub-genre of verse satires known as the 'Julian' satires, which utilized the notorious seventeenth-century scribe, 'Captain' Robert Julian, as a poetical device through which to reflect on the current state of Restoration manuscript culture. The final chapter will then explore how writers began utilizing verse satire itself as a tool to reflect on its own form and function. In doing so, it will argue that Restoration satire developed out of its own self-reflective arguments, and reveal how writers established textual dialogues through the exchange of verse manuscripts that in turn helped to

advance the cultural perception of satire as a medium of literary inquiry. Moreover, not only will it demonstrate how writers utilized the Horatian genre within their satirical verses, it will also reveal how control over the genre itself was fiercely contested by poets and critics alike, expressing the view that to control Horace was to control the realm of English letters.

Chapter 1

Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Restoration concepts of literary identity

I

The fact that Horace provided a major cornerstone for seventeenth century readers and writers is a critical commonplace. 'Nearly every practising poet made a friend of Horace, dipped into his works, found common ground in a familiar theme, and produced a version. The sheer number of versions must be evidence of his ubiquitous popularity amongst the reading public and the easy familiarity with which readers took up his works'.⁶⁸ Whether this was in the form of manuscript miscellanies, commonplace books, or printed editions of complete works, Horace maintained a constant presence throughout the century – sustained by translations from the likes of Jonson, Cowley, Denham and Dryden. Yet, while the *Epistles*, *Odes* and *Satires* appear most frequently translated for inclusion in various miscellaneous collections, it is Horace's *Ars Poetica* that had the most profound influence upon the critical thinking and literary practice of the period. As Andrew Laird suggests, 'the *Ars* provided an object of imitation, as well as a code of practice, for Renaissance poets and playwrights; it continued to be the paradigm for neo-classical literature and aesthetics'.⁶⁹ Likewise, Paul Hammond, in his discussion on the formation of the Restoration poetic canon, notes that 'writers such as Oldham and Roscommon, who were keen to promote modern translations themselves, translated the *Ars Poetica* both as a demonstration of what could be done and as a way of casting into contemporary English idiom the precepts which Horace offered'.⁷⁰ Additionally, as the Restoration progressed, not only did the *Ars* appear in several key verse translations (each with its own agenda outlined in a preface or dedication), it was also frequently quoted in various prose works: most famously in the prefaces that formed the very public debate between Shadwell and Dryden, where it was regularly cited as a means of validating each author's own literary practices. These examples alone show that the Restoration experience of the *Ars Poetica* was one of continuous competition, emulation, and interpretation as writers regularly evoked Horace as a way of making sense of a literary culture that was self-reflectively looking for new ways to define and express itself. However, this raises a problematic question: in a poem that is so idiosyncratic, multifaceted, and, occasionally conflicting as the *Ars Poetica* is, how may we determine which precepts authors chose to observe and which elements of the poem had the greatest influence on Restoration literary theory and practice?

⁶⁸ Robin Sowerby, 'Horatianism', p.266.

⁶⁹ Andrew Laird, 'The *Ars Poetica*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, ed. Stephen Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.132-143, p.132.

⁷⁰ Paul Hammond, *The Making of Restoration Poetry* (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 2006), p.10.

Despite the unanimous scholarly acceptance on the significance of Horace in seventeenth century England, relatively little work is dedicated to the *Ars Poetica*, a sentiment also shared by Victoria Moul, who writes that ‘the poem itself – what it was for, or how it is meant to be read – is not often well discussed’.⁷¹ Moul continues by adding that ‘every attempt to summarise, subdivide or rationalise the content of the poem as a systematic ‘treatise’ of definable rules or principles has proved to be unsatisfactory’.⁷² Equally, regarding the textual history of the poem, there appears a lack of discussion by modern scholarship concerning the three complete editions of Horace’s works published by Alexander Brome (1666; 1671; 1680), where the tendency is to jump from Jonson – whose translation of *Ars Poetica* appears in the first two editions – straight to Roscommon and Oldham’s version’s without considering the Samuel Pordage translation published in the third edition. Indeed, while *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature* refers fleetingly to Brome only twice, *The Cambridge Companion to Horace* omits him completely, and neither refer to Pordage.⁷³ Also, not only does the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography fail to acknowledge Pordage’s translation, it also incorrectly claims that Roscommon’s 1680 translation was the first English version published since Jonson’s.⁷⁴

The Pordage translation was most likely composed late in 1679 for inclusion in the 1680 edition of Brome’s *The Complete Poems of Horace Consisting of Odes, Satyres and Epistles*, and was anticipated in ‘To the Reader’ (possibly written by H. Brome as a result of A. Brome’s death in 1666), which claims ‘there is nothing either added to, or taken from the former, more, or less than (if he had liv’d) himself intended [...] where he invites new adventurers, and conceives it a work by which they might gratifie and oblige posterity’.⁷⁵ Clearly the decision to replace Jonson’s translation – which had earlier been described by A. Brome as being ‘borrowed to crown the rest’ – was a conscious one that required delicate wording.⁷⁶ Moreover, the notion that translation was able to ‘gratifie and oblige posterity’ demonstrates the collection’s wider preoccupation with creating and refining a new literary culture; where the art of translation is a perpetual development parallel to cultural progression and where classical precepts could be deployed to meet the need of a poetic language constantly in flux. While such notions are often

⁷¹ Victoria Moul, *Jonson, Horace and the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.175.

⁷² Moul, *Jonson, Horace and the Classical Tradition*, p.176.

⁷³ Stephen Harrison, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Horace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁷⁴ See Nigel Smith and Stuart Gillespie’s articles on ‘Pordage, Samuel’, and ‘Dillon, Wentworth, fourth earl of Roscommon’, in the *ODNB* respectfully.

⁷⁵ Alexander Brome, *The Poems of Horace Consisting of Odes, Satyres and Epistles*, (London: 1680), sig.A8^r.

⁷⁶ Brome, *Horace*, (London: 1666), sig.A5^v.

reserved for Roscommon and Oldham's translations, they were also evidently realised in the editions published by Brome. Thus, by paying closer contextual and linguistic attention to the Pordage translation, we will be able to trace more comprehensively the emergent critical vocabulary that begins to infiltrate discussions on Restoration literary theory, the way in which these influence the later translations by Roscommon and Oldham, and how authors utilise more generally the *Ars Poetica* as a vehicle for English literary criticism.

The significance of Brome's first edition in 1666 cannot be underestimated: both as the first complete collection of Horace's works published since the return of Charles II and as a critical insight into the practical production and theoretical intricacies that went behind its publication. In the dedication addressed to his patron, Sir William Backhouse, Brome outlines four chief processes: his inspiration for the endeavour; its practical composition; its impact within the printed market; and its theoretic implications. Brome confesses the attempt to produce a complete works of Horace came not from any expertise with the Latin author but rather one of temptation, before stating that:

frequent quotation of him by all sorts of ingenious men, and the Hault-goust which the wit and truth of his excellent sayings gave, made me languish till I had broken through all difficulties which my imbecillity contended with, and thrown myself on this audacious endeavour.⁷⁷

Brome highlights two key points here: the abundant frequency with which Horatian dicta permeated in Restoration works by 'ingenious men', and the reverence placed upon the 'wit and truth' of those Horatian precepts. To engage with Horace thus also meant engaging with the topical issues he was used to arbitrate on, and places one's work in dialogue with other leading translators and literary figures of the period. It also gives an indication to the types of reader he was aiming to attract – those who not only had a familiarity with the Latin author but also an awareness of how he was employed within contemporary models of literary practise. If Brome was seeking to enter the public arena of literary debate, Horace certainly appeared the most likely avenue.

Maintaining the belief that this was an enterprise involving the aristocratic elite of Restoration society (both readers and writers) Brome is quick to point out that 'in the prosecution whereof I never blusn'd to ask the advice or take the assistance of any person whom I thought able to contribute'.⁷⁸ Indeed, Brome's edition falls into what Penelope Wilson

⁷⁷ Brome, *Horace*, sig.A4^r-A4^v.

⁷⁸ Brome, *Horace*, sig.A4^v.

calls the 'several hands' format, noting that 'Brome drew chiefly on versions from early to mid-seventeenth century, by writers such as Sir Thomas Hawkins, Sir Richard Fanshawe, and Barten Holyday'.⁷⁹ He also names verses from Cowley and of course cites Jonson's *Ars*. To do so appears part of an overall strategy deployed by Brome to simultaneously endow the collection with the authority of previously well-received translators of Horace as well as an attempt to avoid literary censorship: 'if any dislike what is done, it will not be safe for them to traduce it publicly [...] for we are considerable for number and quality, consisting of many persons; and those either Right Honourable, Right Worshipful, Revered, or (which is as good) Well-beloved'.⁸⁰ Brome is clearly conscious of the competitive and aggressive nature of the literary marketplace he is about to enter, but in doing so demonstrates here an attempt to establish a definitive canon for Horace – one that places his edition both at its centre and, through the derivation of previously respected translations, beyond the reach of public criticism. Yet despite this initial concern, and in somewhat paradoxical fashion, Brome informs the reader his principle reason for publishing as being to stimulate intellectual dialogue and participate in the exchanging of literary theory:

Such as I expose it to the pullick perusal, with this become confidence
[...] that Horace my chance to find as good fortune as his dear friend
Virgil had, who being plundered of all his Ornaments by the old
Translatours, was restored to others with double lustre by those
Standard-bearers of Wit and Judgment, Denham and Waller.⁸¹

Through the example of Virgil, classical translation is presented not as a constant rubric but rather one that, by necessity, must develop to meet the demand of a particular culture (or else fall into obscurity and become obsolete) and by highlighting 'wit' and 'judgment' – two major critical terms that come under scrutiny through the 1660's and 1670's – Brome specifically places Horace within Restoration spheres of literary theory. To reinforce this notion further, he invites potential readers to sustain the tradition of refining classical translation: 'if any Gentlemen will be so industrious and kind, as to amend, or but to find out the faults in this Essay [...] I invite them to it, conceiving it a work by which they may gratifie and oblige posterity'.⁸² Critically, Brome is not simply implying a universal application of Horatian precepts, but rather that through the perfection of translation, Horace himself may be recast into an English idiom

⁷⁹ Penelope Wilson, 'Lyric, Pastoral, and Elegy', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English: Volume 3: 1660-1790*, Eds. Stuart Gillespie & David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.173-191, p.176.

⁸⁰ Brome, *Horace*, sig.A6^r.

⁸¹ Brome, *Horace*, sig.A6^r-A6^v.

⁸² Brome, *Horace*, sig.A7^v.

self-reflectively preoccupied with improving its own culture. Thus, while he may initially appear cautious regarding its circulation within the public marketplace, it is actually the artistic and sociological aspects of publication itself that enables this edition to realise its overall function, which, as Brome outlines, is to act as an academic exercise whereby Horace may continually be re-interpreted by readers and re-translated by writers as a way of addressing specific cultural and literary issues. This may help to explain the varied understanding and usages of the *Ars Poetica* as the period progressed, as not only were the poetics of English language constantly morphing, but so too were the application of Horatian precepts used to define them.

Despite this emphasis on the beneficial and theoretical purposes for translating Horace, the language used throughout the 'Dedication' also demonstrates this was an enterprise equally concerned with its own publication and impact within the printed market place. As Hammond notes, Restoration audiences 'would have read the Latin text[s] of Horace's poetry in editions which surrounded it with glosses, notes, parallel passages, and perhaps a prose paraphrase; they would have practised translating and imitating Horace's poetry at school; they would have read English translations and imitations of Horace'.⁸³ Such translations therefore made literature of this kind more accessible to Restoration audiences (even to those without a classical education). To this extent, as David Money suggests, Horace subsequently proved 'good for business, generally attractive to the taste of the public (whether buying scholarly editions, cribs, or scurrilous imitations) and profitable for booksellers'.⁸⁴ Certainly, the fact that Brome's collection was revised in 1671 and 1680 (with new additions) demonstrate both its success and the period's continued interest in Horace's works. Critically, however, these later publications proved more than a simple financial endeavour, as demonstrated by 'To the Reader' in the 1680 edition, which highlights the importance of providing a platform for practising poets to showcase their artistic and intellectual skill. Indeed, as part of its justification for replacing certain translations with newer versions, H. Brome claims 'that having a tolerable Opinion of their own performances (as all Poets have) they judg'd it reasonable, that they also should have their turn in the Press [...] intended by this Experiment, to inform themselves how the World stands affected towards their Muses'.⁸⁵ This suggests the definitive purpose for an author is to have their works published and read amongst a reading public capable of sincere empathy, and in doing so presents the literary marketplace not as a hostile and unreceptive institute, but rather one of opportunity, whereby the success of an author is best measured by his influence within the public sphere. Moreover, by paraphrasing A. Brome's earlier remark that the writer

⁸³ Hammond, *The Making of Restoration Poetry*, p.89.

⁸⁴ Money, 'The reception of Horace in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', p.321.

⁸⁵ Brome, *The Poems of Horace Consisting of Odes, Satyres and Epistle*, sig.A8^r.-A8^v.

should 'gratify and oblige posterity', H. Brome implies a reciprocity of duty between author and publisher: while an author is obliged to seek publication to enable their work to make significant contributions to English culture, it is also the publisher's responsibility to provide a way of doing so if it is to sustain the continual development of that culture – a sentiment which is embodied by the practical and theoretical production of this third edition, and especially represented by Pordage's translation of the *Ars Poetica*.

As Moul observes, 'the *Ars* offers a discussion of literary art, written by a practising poet at the height of his powers, and delivered in a form which not only acknowledges but actually enacts the embeddedness of the poet within his society'.⁸⁶ For the Restoration, this was a society majorly invested in establishing a practice and a vocabulary of English literary criticism, wherein the rhetoric of Horatianism, which 'brought a new air of cultivated wit to criticism's articulation of principal' was increasingly deployed as a vehicle to comment on contemporary issues, both as a way of defining a poetic language experiencing severe scrutiny and creating a new English literary tradition distinct from previous ages.⁸⁷ Pordage's version of the *Ars Poetica* is therefore significant not only because it is the first translation since Jonson's, but also because it highlights the way in which the *Ars* was being re-appropriated by writers to engage with prevailing literary ideologies and aesthetics, as well as the increasing conflation of the poet's status and his role as critic.

By comparing the process of painting with poetic composition, Pordage follows Jonson's opening that stresses the notion of uniformity in dramatic work. However, not only does Pordage shorten this section, by removing the multiple caesurae's that plague Jonson's version he creates a greater rhythmical flow that leads to his inclusion of the line 'But yet we mayn't contrary Nature make' (p.393) in place of 'Yet not as therefore wild, and tame should cleave/Together' (p.380); while both stress the need for accurate representativeness, Pordage's reference to 'Nature' places greater prominence on the mimetic quality of writing – highlighting the notion that a writer's inspiration should derive directly from images found in nature. The significance of mimetic representations featured heavily in literary debates of the Restoration, and is a key theoretical aspect in Dryden's *Essay of Dramatick Poesie*, where it is even mentioned in Lisideius' definition of a play: 'A just and lively Image of Human Nature, representing its passions and Humours'.⁸⁸ Furthermore, this initial concern derives from the need to circumscribe an overactive imagination, as both Pordage and Jonson stress the importance of

⁸⁶ Moul, *Jonson, Horace and the Classical Tradition*, p.177.

⁸⁷ Philip Smallwood, 'The Classical Critics', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature Volume 4: 1660-1790*, eds. David Hopkins & Charles Martindale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.361-401, p.364.

⁸⁸ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.15.

achieving a balance between excessive 'fancy' and writing to the point of obscurity – yet their concluding remarks differ slightly. While Jonson writes:

Him whose choice doth rear,
His matter to his power, in all he makes,
Nor language, not cleer order e're order forsakes (p.382).

Pordage employs additional contemporary terms that were being debated during the period:

Who to his Wit does make a right choice, can't
Or Language, or perspicuous Method want.
As well as Beauty as the strength of Verse (p.394).

The inclusion of 'wit' is certainly deliberate. As noted by Harold Wilson, 'the nature of wit as a quality of art was much discussed; it was well defined by two of the leading poets of the age, Cowley and Dryden [...] Dryden was more specific. To him, wit was the perfect blend of fancy and judgment'.⁸⁹ Pordage's use of wit aligns similarly with Dryden's, as it is used here to describe both the judgment a poet must possess when fitting subject matter with poetic form whilst also being associated with the delightfulness of poetic language required for verse; emphasised through the nouns 'Beauty' and 'Strength'. Consequently, Pordage demonstrates in these opening passages an acute sensitivity to the critical vocabulary being utilised to discuss key principles in Restoration literary theory.

The extent to which Pordage was invested in these issues can be measured by his continual re-appropriation of Horatian precepts, allowing him to elaborate on how such critical concepts may be conceived in the mind of the reader and subsequently applied to contemporary practices. For example, regarding Horace's articulation of formulating dramatic characters, while Pordage varies little from Jonson's translation by saying 'Nature doth first of all with us begin, / And every change of Fortune forms within' (p.397) – as both argue how human emotion is first perceived in nature – he does rework Jonson's version to shift the emphasis on the transition from abstract or visual mimesis to spoken language:

'These passions are made publick by the tongue,
But who speaks words that do his Fortune's wrong
Is greatly laughed at, both by old and young.
Observe a difference still in those who speak,
Whether he be an Asian, or a Greek (p.397).

⁸⁹ Wilson, *Court Wits*, p.6.

By substituting how the tongue 'reports the mind' (p.385) from Jonson with 'passions are made publick', Pordage can be seen specifically evoking Restoration theatrical spaces and the processes involved in conveying to public audiences a recognisable dialogue drawn from a culture to which they also belong. Moreover, as Laird notes, 'in telling the imitator to look at the exemplar of life and to draw living voices from there, Horace is actually suggesting that the imitation of life in poetry comes down to the imitation of real-life utterances [...] literary language may imitate life, but it must imitate everyday language in order to do so'.⁹⁰ Critically, Pordage identifies this with the poet's faculty of judgment located by his use of the word 'observe' (Jonson offers no equivalent or alternative in his version). Indeed, the ideological merits of *observing* as a source of artistic inspiration became a prominent feature in the debate between Dryden and Shadwell, who regularly quoted the *Ars* to support their own conflicting views on its literary value in relation to theories of Restoration comedy and 'humour' characters. Pordage, by placing the word in this extract of the *Ars*, exhibits an equal engagement with determining its literary merits, and, in doing so, assumes the Horatian precept to define the term more broadly; rather than limiting the function of observation to models for comedy, he denotes how the effective representation of character across genres derives from the writer's ability to observe, and therefore subsequently transpose, mimetic images into the commonplace language of a particular culture. This argument is carried forward and subsequently applied to the introduction of original characters: 'if thou dar'st show what yet the Stage ne'er had [...] / let them be seen, / To be as last, as first they did begin' (p.397), thus demonstrating how Restoration concepts of judgement and observation are for Pordage inherently bound with Horatian precepts of uniformity and mimesis.

This critical vocabulary continues to infiltrate Pordage's translation, emerging in fundamental instances that expand on Jonson's version to incorporate the idiosyncrasies of contemporary theory. This is especially evident during the discussion on the poet's ability to function as a 'whet stone', encompassing the social status of the poet as critic and their role in refining literary values. Indeed, regarding the essential quality required for poetic composition, Jonson offers us 'the very root of writing well, and spring / Is to be wise' (p.393); Pordage on the other hand is more specific, advocating 'What's fit, what's not, what's good, what's ill, I'll tell / For Judgment is the ground of writing well' (p.403). By replacing Jonson's 'wise' with 'Judgment', he specifically evokes modern attitudes towards the term that would not have gone unnoticed by contemporary readers, particularly as he develops Jonson's version to relate judgment to both words and character: 'fit words then most easily will flow, / He only proper

⁹⁰ Laird, 'The Ars Poetica', pp.140-1.

Characters, and true, / Can write' (p.403). This again suggests Pordage's preoccupation with Restoration theatrical practises by echoing the earlier critical prefaces of Shadwell and Dryden (wherein the reader is exposed to the intricacies of dramatic characters developing from a writer's ability to judge and observe proficiently). Likewise, when discussing the fundamental components that are used to universally measure the quality of writing, 'Art' and 'Nature', Pordage integrates a modern critical lexis. Wherein Jonson we have:

What makes the nobler Verse,
Nature, or Art. My judgment will not pierce
Into the profits, what a meer rude brain
Can, or all toil, without a wealthy vein:
So doth the one, the others help require (p.397).

Pordage offers the contemporary reader:

But you may ask, which has the greatest part
In making Poets, Nature alone, or Art?
What Art can do without a vein of Wit,
Or simple Wit, without the help of it,
I cannot see: Both make the poet fit (p.406).

While the raw splendour and beauty of poetic language are in Jonson's version associated with the term 'nature', in Pordage they become identified as those qualities pertaining to 'Wit'. Certainly, the rhyming triplet generates greater poetic force in conveying Pordage's rhetoric (enhanced through its use of plosives), while its concision emphasises more closely the association between Restoration understandings of wit and its significance in poetic practise.

If the overall purpose of Brome's third edition of Horace's works is to 'gratify and oblige posterity', Pordage's translation of the *Ars Poetica* certainly facilitates that purpose; indeed, whereas Jonson's version, through its stricter translation of the Latin original, speaks more universally regarding the liberty and status of the poet, by encompassing modern literary ideology and recreating it's critical vocabulary within Horatian precepts, Pordage is able to arbitrate precisely on Restoration values. Moreover, by grafting the contemporary principles of 'nature', 'wit', 'judgment' and 'observation' – all fundamental in the attempt to establish a new English literary identity in the period – onto the idiosyncrasies of Horatian dictates, Pordage is at once able to elevate the status of those terms by presenting them as inherent to the classical tradition whilst simultaneously using those Horatian precepts to perfect their usage in a Restoration literary culture constantly seeking new ways to express and define itself.

II

Pordage's *Ars Poetica* was at the forefront of the intellectual exercise of attempting to recreate literary theory and practise through classical translation. As Margaret Ezell observes, 'during this period we see an expansion of published literary criticism, some of it by the same figures who served as patrons, and some by professional writers done with the conscious design of defining standards for English vernacular [in] literature'.⁹¹ The Earl of Roscommon's *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English* was published by Henry Herringman almost immediately after Pordage's version appeared in 1680 and 'must likewise have seemed like a clarion call to the contemporary world to set their sights high' regarding what could be achieved through classical translation.⁹² According to Paul Davis, it was in fact Dryden who 'culminated the movement towards free translation in English poetic culture, instigated during the royalist exile by Denham, Fanshawe, and Cowley'.⁹³ Davis later goes on to argue that through a number of critical essays during the 1670's, Dryden 'naturalised the term 'poetic licence' within the English critical lexicon'.⁹⁴ Certainly, Roscommon and Dryden maintained a close personal and professional relationship – both had Tory affiliations, while Roscommon also served as Dryden's sometimes patron. Critically, however, the ideological and aesthetic objectives of Roscommon's translation aligns his text more with the artistic and cultural imperatives expressed in Brome's printed editions of Horace, specifically regarding its own self-enhancement of classical translation in a manner which reciprocally enables it to function as a tool to develop and perfect the language of English poetics. Indeed, aware of how modern English translations (like those published by Brome) were capable of generating new kinds of readerships – especially the up-and-coming London 'gentlemen' – Roscommon perhaps sensed the opportunity of utilising the increasingly accessible Horace to communicate to a wider audience how contemporary literary culture can itself benefit from the refinement of classical translation, stating in his preface to the poem that 'I think it could never be more seasonable than now to lay down such Rules, as if they be observ'd, will make Men write more Correctly, and judge more discretely' – thus echoing Brome's earlier sentiment to 'gratifie and oblige posterity'.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Margaret Ezell, *The Later Seventeenth Century Volume 5: 1645-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.265.

⁹² Sowerby, 'Horatianism', p.261.

⁹³ Paul Davis, *Translation and the Poet's Life: The Ethics of Translating in English Culture, 1646-1726* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.132.

⁹⁴ Davis, *Translation and the Poet's Life*, p.216.

⁹⁵ Earl of Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English* (London: 1680), sig.A2^r. Here and throughout, the italic of Roscommon's preface has been changed to roman.

Additionally, in declaring ‘it could never be more seasonable than now to lay down such Rules’, Roscommon may also have had in mind the political anxieties that were engulfing the English government at this time, specifically the Popish Plot and the prospect of a Catholic monarchy. Throughout 1680 parliamentary gatherings were the sight of heated disputes concerning the security of the country: ‘stoked up by all manner of allegations about Catholic conspiracies, the house [of Commons] [...] launched into a frank discussion of the Duke of York and unanimously concluded that his Catholicism and his position as heir to the throne gave encouragement to popish plotters’⁹⁶. This reignited complicated debates on Church settlement and views on toleration, as there was now an apparent and urgent need for Protestant unity. But such unity was not forthcoming. The House of Commons, on the whole, supported greater toleration towards more mild Protestant dissenters, and aimed to reduce the legal discriminations imposed by the Act of Uniformity. Conversely, the House of Lords, comprised mainly of rigidly Anglican peers, were opposed to any liberty of worship and ‘sought to impose severe penalties upon dissenters, and especially members of the sects, whom they regarded as posing the greatest threat to internal security’⁹⁷. This was all complicated further by Charles II’s earlier preferences for toleration (expressed through two failed Acts of Indulgence) and his refusal to exclude his Catholic brother from the right of succession. By acutely placing the *Ars Poetica* against this political backdrop, Roscommon hints at how classical translation can benefit English society more broadly by extending his text to encompass national issues.

Throughout the preface Roscommon stresses the intellectual aspects of reading and writing Horace, as well as the obligations of the reader: ‘Horace must be read seriously or not at all, for else the reader wont be the better for him’.⁹⁸ According to Joseph Levine, ‘for the seventeenth-century advocate of the ancients there was no point in writing something new, especially in the realm of literature. When the Earl of Roscommon adapted Horace’s *Art of Poetry* in 1680, all he claimed was to write what Horace would have said if he were alive’.⁹⁹ However, to do is to create a type of dislocation between Horace and his classical setting. Indeed, by reimagining Horace as invaluable living in contemporary England, Roscommon fashions an entirely new theoretical paradigm: rather than precepts that have been rooted in literary history since the classics that readers and writers can look back and refer to, Roscommon presents his translation as a product of the contemporary world, implying that the *Ars Poetica* – should

⁹⁶ John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: ‘This Masquerading Age’* (Oxford; Blackwell, 2000), p.279.

⁹⁷ Andrew Swatland, *The House of Lords in the Reign of Charles II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.156.

⁹⁸ Roscommon, *Horace’s Art of Poetry Made English*, sig.A2r.

⁹⁹ Joseph Levine, M., *Between the Ancients and the Moderns: Baroque Culture in Restoration England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p.74.

Horace be alive and writing now – was specifically intended to encompass the idiosyncrasies immediately relating to Restoration literary theory, and therefore offers the perfect model for improving current English standards. Furthermore, like Brome, Roscommon also observes the critical correlation of literary refinement with advancements in translation theory, exhibited by his discussion on Jonson:

But with all the respect due to the name of Ben. Johnson, to which no man pays more Veneration than I, it cannot be deny'd that the constraint of Rhyme, and a literal translation [...] has but made him want a Comment in many places.¹⁰⁰

'Rhyme, and a literal translation' have, in Roscommon's view, prevented the poem from realising its cultural potential by leaving certain precepts in obscurity for readers to fully comprehend and make relevant to modern times. For Roscommon, then, if he is to 'oblige posterity', it is first necessary to self-reflectively transform the way writers translate and subsequently read Horace.

These sentiments are also echoed by Edmund Waller in his dedicatory poem printed with *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, which notes that Roscommon's ability to ventriloquised Horace 'Gives us a pattern in his flowing style,/And with rich Precepts do oblige our Isle,/Brittain, whose Genious is in Verse exprest/Bold and sublime'.¹⁰¹ Waller highlights two key points here: firstly, the authority and reverence of Horace's presence specifically in English criticism, and secondly, the notion that it is not necessarily the precepts themselves which carry authority, but the way in which they are conveyed, emphasised through his use of 'flowing', 'rich', 'bold' and 'sublime'. Waller states in particular that 'verse' is the most suited medium for conveying such ideas, bringing together the roles of poet and translator. Critically, in doing so, Waller suggests that the liveliness and delightfulness of Restoration poetry stems from its ability to reimagine classical texts. There is a reciprocal relationship at play here between poet and translator, that while advancements in translation theory benefit from embracing the creative expression of poetry, poetry itself, by recreating those classical precepts, is able to function more profoundly as a vehicle for literary criticism, emphasised by Waller's assertion that 'Horace will our superstuious Branches prune,/Give us new rules, and set our Harp in tune' – with the couplet of 'prune' and 'tune' reinforcing the aim of the refinement of language in literature.

Intriguingly, Horace is not the only classical figure reimagined in a contemporary setting, as Waller also recasts the role of Piso Caesoninus (the Roman senator and consul to whom

¹⁰⁰ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, sig.A2^r-A2^v.

¹⁰¹ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, sig.A3^r.

Horace dedicated the *Ars Poetica*) in the form of Roscommon: 'Rome was not better by her Horace taught [...] / The poet writ to Nobel Piso, there, / A noble Piso do's instruct us here'. However, while Piso was a high ranking political figure in the early Roman empire – serving as confidant to Augustus – there is no indication he provided patronage to Horace in the same manner as Maecenas. Despite this, Waller maintains the image of a noble instructor and patron of the arts, one that becomes simultaneously and intrinsically linked with the wider political sphere. Such a recontextualization subsequently allows him to syndicate the role of Pisa as statements with the artistic enterprise of Roscommon in a way that elevates the Earl's status to one who not only seeks to improve literary standards, but in doing so, is also fulfilling a greater national duty. While such laudatory remarks frequently formed part of the Restoration patronage system, it should be noted that Waller was himself an independently wealthy individual, being an active member of parliament and a well-regarded poet. Rather than the customarily plea for patronage, then, Waller's poem serves a more precise, rhetorical function, one that capitalises on his literary reputation in order to emphasis the wider cultural value of Roscommon's translation. It also highlights the paradigmatic shifts currently transpiring in Restoration patronage systems; indeed, rather than a passive agent, Waller presents Roscommon as taking an active role in the production of grand literary works, thereby creating an association between the role of the patron and the literary critic. Certainly, this amalgamated figure had a growing presence within the social circles of Restoration London, as observed by Ezell, who notes that 'many of the most prominent of the literary patrons, such as the Earls of Mulgrave and Roscommon, performed the role of the discerning critic as well [...] establishing the criteria by which works of translation and literary forms should be evaluated'.¹⁰² However, as we will see in later chapters, the functionality and utility of these types of patrons would prove to be a rather contentious issue, especially amongst the professional dramatists.

In this instance, Waller's poem highlights the mechanics of social exchange that played a fundamental part in establishing the shared intellectual objectives of refining current English standards through classical translation. Indeed, Waller's portrayal of Roscommon as a national critic and patron appear quite apt, and may allude to the fact that it was around this time in 1680 that Roscommon first conceived of a formal academy that he would later gain recognition for throughout the 1680's. Greg Clingham argues that 'the function of this "academy", like the Royal Society and other seventeenth-century versions of a literary society, was a scientific and linguistic one and primarily given to compiling a dictionary (and a grammar) for the purposes of

¹⁰² Ezell, *The Later Seventeenth Century Volume 5: 1645-1714*, p.265.

fixing and thereby purifying the language'.¹⁰³ The intimacy of this academy is described by Knightly Chetwood in a memoir to Roscommon; Chetwood was himself an accomplished translator and acquaintance to both Roscommon and Dryden, contributing to Dryden's *Plutarchs Lives* and the various Dryden-Tonson *Miscellany* collections, and, as Clingham states, was most likely an associate of the academy. According to Chetwood, Roscommon:

Set himselfe to form a sort of Academy [...] During this happy, but short Interval, good men began to know one another better, there was then Friend-ship, english good nature flourish'd, every spark of which ought to be preserv'd.¹⁰⁴

What is particularly striking about this passage is the sociality Chetwood describes, wherein 'good men' are able to convene and discuss topics openly without fear of criticism, suggesting that the academy envisioned itself as both centring on and functioning through the collective exchange of ideas. This is certainly a distant environment from the competitiveness and censorious nature of the current London literary scene. Chetwood comments on a number of 'projects' and works of translation by various members, amongst whom include the Marquess of Halifax, the Earl of Dorset, Sir Charles Scarborough, and Dryden, claiming that 'they aim'd at refining our Language, without abating the force of it [...] they purposed to persue our best writers and mark such words, as they thought vulgar, base, improper, or obsolete'.¹⁰⁵ The focus on 'good men' and 'best writers' indicate the type of individual the academy wanted to attract, perhaps as a way of bolstering its reputation as a credible institute, but also as a way of ensuring its ambitions were realised – as it would have been unlikely to succeed without the skill of accomplished, well-established poets, along with the financial support and patronage from courtly and aristocratic figures. However, Roscommon's academy is distinguished by its amiability that results from a shared ideology. Indeed, within this institution, literary ideas and texts existed as social thoughts or laudable works that were exchanged congenially amongst a group with a unified belief that, through improvements of translation theory, a poet was able to gain a greater sense of self that enabled him to better define an English language in constant flux. This highlights the increasingly diverse and self-reflective preoccupation of Restoration writer's attempts at recreating a new English literary identity.

¹⁰³ Greg Clingham, 'Roscommon's 'Academy', Chetwood's manuscript *Life of Roscommon*, and Dryden's translation project', *Restoration*, 26 (2002), pp.15-26, p.16.

¹⁰⁴ Greg Clingham, 'Knightly Chetwood's "A Short Account of Some Passages of the Life & Death of Wentworth late Earle of Roscommon": A Transcription and Introduction', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700*, 25 (2001), 117-138, p.129.

¹⁰⁵ Clingham, 'Knightly Chetwood's "A Short Account of Some Passages', p.130.

The opening of Roscommon's translation echoes both Jonson and Pordage's version with its emphasis on unity in dramatic works achieved through the circumscription of an overactive imagination. In doing so, Roscommon's translation integrates the same critical lexis and definitions utilised by Pordage regarding the term 'Nature': 'Their Pencils, and their Fancies unconfin'd,/This privilege we freely give and take;/But Nature, and the Common-Laws of Sence, Forbid to reconcile Antipathys'.¹⁰⁶ While acknowledging the ubiquitous creative licence intrinsic to poetic language, Roscommon maintains that 'Nature' is the primary element central to poetic composition, emphasising the mimetic qualities proceeding from a poet's ability to observe the world around them. Roscommon also echoes Pordage's translation regarding the balance between excessive fancy and writing that leads to obscurity; however, he does so with a much higher self-awareness of the poem's pedagogical authority, stating that 'After a serious and judicious choice,/Method and Eloquence will never fail;/As well the Force as Ornament as Verse,/Consist in choosing a fit time for things'.¹⁰⁷ By re-appropriating the Horatian precept to include 'serious' and 'judicious', Roscommon emphasises the notion that writing represents a thoughtful and reflective exercise dependant on the cognitive processes of the writer. These processes derive from one's faculty to observe 'Nature', which serves as both the source of artistic inspiration and determines the parameters in which poetic language can operate. This also encapsulates the wider aim of Roscommon and his academy to improve modern poetic standards, as it is through the refinement of one's language, represented here as the careful consideration of word choice and subject matter, that enables literary works to achieve perfection in English.

Following this measured attempt at forming a decisive set of characteristics to the term 'Nature', Roscommon continues to examine its ideological applications in Restoration literature by establishing a more profound connection between its moment of contact with humanity and its subsequent expression through human language. While he differs little from Pordage when he writes 'Nature forms, and softens us within' – as both writers describe the transition from visual representation to spoken dialogue – unlike Pordage, whose process of transition shows a conscious concern for public spaces and conveying an identifiable dialogue to public audiences, Roscommon exhibits a greater sensitivity to the creative agency of the writer:

Nature forms, and softens us within,
[...]
Pleasure enchants, impetuous Rage transports,
And grief deiects, and wrings the tortur'd Soul,

¹⁰⁶ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, p.2.

¹⁰⁷ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, p.4.

And these are all interpreted by Speech.¹⁰⁸

While he does not dismiss the need for a language drawn from a modern culture, the verb choice of 'interpreted' places greater emphasis on the internalisation of those emotions first perceived in nature and the active role of the poet in expressing them. Indeed, while Pordage limits himself to the function of spoken dialogue, Roscommon highlights the artistic and intellectual intricacies that help form that dialogue. By demonstrating an awareness of this creative process, Roscommon reinforces the notion that the potential impacts for mimetic representations are only as effective as their manner of expression. In many ways, this parallels Roscommon's wider convictions of translation theory that unite the role of poet and translator; for as with classical texts, 'Nature' also has the potential to be interpreted in multiple ways, and therefore requires the creativeness of the poet to 'translate' its true meaning and carry forward those ideas and precepts. By appointing himself to this role as part of his translation project, Roscommon's poem can thus be viewed as actively performing its own critical function.

Furthermore, like Pordage, Roscommon recognises that the shift from mimetic images to spoken dialogue is achieved through one's faculty of judgment, located in his use of the word observe: 'Observe the Characters of those that speak'.¹⁰⁹ Roscommon's line and inclusion of the term here are almost identical to Pordage's version – an indication that he was perhaps working from this particular translation. In so doing, both authors change the point of emphasis from the Horatian original in a subtle, but nevertheless crucial way. Horace's text states that:

intererit multum, divusne loquatur an heros,
maturusne senex an adhuc florente iuventa
fervidus, et matrona potens an sedula nutrix,
mercatorne vagus cultorne virentis agelli,
Colchus an Assyrius, Thebis nutritus an Argis.

[Vast difference will it make, whether a god be speaking or a hero, a ripe old man or one still in the flower and fervour of youth, a dame of rank or a bustling nurse, a roaming trader or the tiller of a verdant field, a Colchian or an Assyrian, one bred at Thebes or at Argos]¹¹⁰

When enumerating the phonological differences between various characters, Horace initially centres on distinguishing between the human and the divine, an element that both Pordage and Roscommon dispense with. Instead, their immediate focus is on discerning the varied intricacies of human language, facilitated through a poet's ability to 'observe'. This again highlights

¹⁰⁸ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, p.9.

¹⁰⁹ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, p.9.

¹¹⁰ Horace, pp.458-461.

Roscommon's sensitivity to the prevailing critical vocabulary emerging during this period, especially considering that, through his links with Dryden, he was almost certainly aware of the term's contested value during the prefatory debates between his literary protégé and Shadwell (discussed in chapter 2). As with Dryden, Roscommon utilises Horace to engage with the major spheres of literary theory to better define a highly disputed poetic language. To achieve this, he assimilates the prevailing theoretical concepts of 'observe' within Horace's original precept to provide a more universal application of the term, one which he subsequently applies to the formation of dramatic characters across genres. Roscommon's translation of this section subsequently differs from Pordage in order to better illustrate this universality. Indeed, while Pordage writes:

Observe a difference still in those who speak,
Whether he be an *Asian*, or a *Greek*,
An *Argive*, or a *Theban*, young or old,
An honest Servant, or a Cheat that's bold,
A grave rich Lady, or a busie Nurse (p.397).

Roscommon re-organizes the lines to offer the reader:

Observe the Characters of those that speak,
Whether an honest Servant, or a Cheat,
Or one whose blood boils in his youthful, veins,
Or a grave Matron, or a busie Nurse.
Extorting Merchants, carefull Husbandmen,
Argives, or Thebans, Asians or Greeks.¹¹¹

In Pordage's translation, the immediate emphasis is placed on 'observing' ancient nations and cultures, whereas Roscommon, by placing those references further down his text, creates a greater proximity between his list of theatrical characters and the verb 'observe'. Consequently, Roscommon draws more immediate attention to those stock characters modern readers would initially associate with the Restoration stage, thereby giving the Horatian precept greater purchase on contemporary theatrical models.

By incorporating the same critical vocabulary exhibited in the Pordage translation, Roscommon reveals how Restoration concepts of judgement and observation were underpinned by Horatian precepts of mimetic representation: as the *Ars Poetica's* emphasis on uniformity becomes associated with the term 'Nature', so too does the Horatian precept of mimesis to

¹¹¹ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, p.9-10.

achieve that uniformity becomes identified as those qualities pertaining to 'observe'. Indeed, this faculty of observation (or judgment) became a prerequisite for Restoration writers, whereby the skill required to represent a unified character – 'the likest Copies which are drawn,/By the Original of human life' (p.22) – was often valued above the quality of the verse itself: 'we meet with such a lucky Character,/[...] Succeeds much better, than the shallow Verse'.¹¹²

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of Roscommon's *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English* is his use of blank verse (rather than the rhymed translations of Jonson, Pordage, and Oldham). Hammond is quite critical of this format, arguing that 'the tendency for his translation to come apart into single-line precepts is aggravated by his unfortunate choice of blank verse as his medium. In Roscommon's hands, it reads as unrhymed couplets, and has none of the powerful and flexible movement that blank verse can afford'.¹¹³ While Roscommon does sporadically make strategic use of rhyme, his translation is perhaps a more tedious read; however, Hammond's suggestion that it turns into 'single-line precepts' may in fact help facilitate the poem's overall aim to 'lay down such Rules'. Roscommon was clearly dissatisfied with Jonson's version on account of its obscurity, while the Pordage translation, despite adopting the idiosyncrasies of modern literary theory, was still too reliant on the Jonsonian model to elucidate on those theories and provide transparency on the values of a highly contested poetic language that lacked stability to a growing readership. As Sowerby states, it is the function of the *Ars* to 'help remedy this deficiency by advocating attention to the technical aspects of poetry which can be learned and need to be perfected in the interests of a truly great national literature'.¹¹⁴ From Roscommon's perspective, then, blank verse represented an improvement on previous attempts at translating the *Ars* by ensuring its function of refining literary culture was realised through a plainer, more lucid English idiom, one that was less liable to interpretation or misconception.

Consequently, Roscommon is able to accentuate the pedagogical aspects of the poem, and, by encompassing modern literary ideology within that pedagogy, his translation exhibits a greater capacity to articulate with more authority and lucidness those critical convictions essential to Restoration literary practises. This is especially evident during his discussion on his role as critic. Indeed, Pordage initially appears quite vague regarding the position of the critic,

¹¹² Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, p.22.

¹¹³ Paul Hammond, *John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.93-4.

¹¹⁴ Robin Sowerby, 'Pope and Horace', in *Horace Made New: Horatian Influences on British Writing from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century*, eds. David Hopkins Charles & Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.159-184, p.162.

stating:

I'm like the stone that whets, and cannot cut.
Though I myself write nothing, yet to you
I will the duty of a poet show (p.403).

Conversely, Roscommon adopts a modern critical lexis into his translation that gives a more pointed aim to the responsibility of the critic:

I am satisfied to keep my sense,
And only serve to whet that Wit in you,
To which I willingly resign my claim.
Yet without writing I may teach to write,
Tell what the duty of a Poet is.¹¹⁵

As demonstrated earlier, the term 'wit' in this period was loaded with theoretical and ideological values, which Roscommon here identifies as the primary quality the literary critic is required to 'whet'. While this poetic quality is presented as innate – 'that Wit in you' – it also relies on the mediation of a critical voice to cultivate it habits. His re-appropriation of the Horatian precept goes beyond the claim he will simply enhance one's 'wit' to instead assert he will refine one's understanding of its derivations and critical applications within a modern literary context.

Moreover, he expands on Pordage's translation by including the line 'To which I willingly resign my claim'. Not only does this highlight a greater sense of the devoted nature and social position of the critic, but it also serves as a self-reflective statement on the overall objective of Roscommon's translation. Certainly, his use of 'serve', 'willingly', 'resign', and 'teach' throughout this passage indicate his preoccupation with the pedagogical function of the *Ars*, which is coupled here with the social duty of the literary critic whom Roscommon specifically locates within the theoretical spheres of Restoration thinking (in this instance, his choice of blank verse strengthens his rhetorical certitude). This combines several key aspects of Roscommon's theory of translation by bringing together the roles of translator, poet, *and* critic, as he re-appropriates Horace's *Ars* to simultaneously define the role of the modern critic, the Restoration principles on which he is required to arbitrate, as well as their manner of doing so.

Roscommon follows this by elaborating on what constitutes the 'duty of a poet', part of which embraces his own definition of the Restoration understanding of wit. First of all, Roscommon follows Pordage's conviction that Judgment is the chief skill required for writing

¹¹⁵ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, p.21.

creatively, proclaiming that 'Sound judgment is the ground of Writing well'.¹¹⁶ Having previously adopted Horace to expound the theoretical mechanics of the term and its conception in Restoration literary thought, Roscommon concisely relates the term to a multi-layered dramatic structure wherein the unity of subject matter and language in turn enables the portrayal of unified dramatic characters: 'To proper Subjects rightly understood,/Words from your Pen will naturally flow;/He only gives the proper Characters'.¹¹⁷ In this sense, the faculty of judgment takes on a ubiquitous quality as it not only encompasses all components of poetic composition, but also underpins their creative progression. This ultimately leads to the central question with which the *Ars Poetica* preoccupies itself: the value of art against nature:

Some think that Poets may be form'd by Art,
Others maintain, that Nature makes them so;
I neither see what Art without a vein,
Nor wit without the help of art can do,
But mutually they need each others aid (p.28).

As with Pordage's modernisation of Johnson's translation which incorporates a contemporary idiosyncratic lexis, Roscommon in this passage adopts the same critical vocabulary to define the characteristics and parameters of key Restoration principles. Unlike Jonson, who associates the innate splendour and beauty of poetic language with 'nature', Roscommon shifts these qualities to the term 'wit'. This transposes the universal nature of the question as it exists in the *Ars* to one that is grounded specially in Restoration literary practices. In Roscommon's hands the subject of the passage now centres on achieving an equilibrium between the literary merits of 'wit' and 'Art' – the latter of which can be understood in this context as designed to regulate excessive creativity to ensure a work remains uniform. To speculate further, the fact that Roscommon stresses throughout his translation that uniformity itself is achieved through the faculty of judgment, may lead one to suggest that the essence of this question in his version aims to re-evaluate the perceived dichotomy between Restoration concepts of wit and judgment that are exhibited elsewhere in the period (especially in Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesie* and his earlier debate with Shadwell). By reimagining these modern concepts specifically within a Horatian precept that discusses the rudiments of writing, Roscommon is able to underline their significance in creating a new Restoration literary identity.

The idea Roscommon presents in the preface, that this translation derives specifically from the literary spheres of the Restoration rather than the classical world of Horace, is

¹¹⁶ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, p.21.

¹¹⁷ Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*, p.21.

strengthened by its employment of a critical vocabulary that encompasses the idiosyncrasies of modern literary theory. The structural arrangement of these lexical fields, which corresponds almost identically with Pordage's translation, reveals not only the pervasive use of this idiolect in Restoration theory, but also highlights those Horatian precepts that writers identified as having the greatest capacity to shape contemporary literary practise. If Roscommon's poem thus represents the shared ideology of his academy to refine the English language through classical translation, it does so by recreating the precepts within Horace's *Ars* into an English idiom designed to enhance the critical definition and understanding of terms such as 'nature', 'wit', 'judgment' and 'observation' that were all essential to Restoration literary culture. Roscommon advocates that the potential resonance for these improvements is reciprocally dependent upon improving the way Horace is translated and read amongst audiences. Indeed, through his use of blank verse Roscommon stresses the pedagogical function of the poem; this enables him to strengthen his rhetorical convictions regarding the theoretical and technical elements of modern literary customs as a way of ensuring readers fully internalise the cognitive processes of writing. Consequently, Roscommon's re-appropriation of Horace's *Ars* demonstrates through its own methodological form how the role of the poet as translator attempts to assume the mantle of the literary critical, and the apparent need to define a highly contested poetic language.

III

To the same goal did both our studies drive,
The last set out the soonest did arrive.
Thus Nisus fell upon the slippery place,
While his young friend performed and won the race.¹¹⁸

While Dryden voiced respect and admiration for many writers during his career, his poem *To the Memory of Mr Oldham* (1684) displays a particularly personal and emotional touch. Yet, as the above passage shows, the poem represents more than a simple eulogy as Dryden presents himself and Oldham as equals with a shared intellectual belief, a single unified goal that 'did both our studies drive'. He reinforces this bond aptly by evoking the figures of Nisus and Euryalus from Virgil's *Aeneid*, who were depicted as loyal friends as well as implicit lovers. Indeed, while there remains uncertainty surrounding the 'race' Oldham is declared to have won, if we consider where Dryden is during this point of his career as a critic and translator producing numerous works for Tonson, together with his participation in the ideological principles of Roscommon's academy, the fact that he associates his own literary ambitions ('studies') with those of Oldham

¹¹⁸ Dryden, *Works ii*, p.175.

suggests he too saw in him a poet concerned with recreating a new literary culture and the role translation can have in achieving this. To this end, the victorious 'race' is most likely a reference to Oldham's *Some New Pieces* published in 1681, in which contained his own translation of the *Ars Poetica* titled *Horace His Art of Poetry, Imitated in English*.

Oldham's sensitivity to the reception of Horace during the period is exhibited in the 'Advertisement' prefixed to *Some New Pieces*, wherein he notes the 'two such great Hands as have gone before me in the same attempts [...] I mean Ben Johnson, and the Earl of Roscommon, the one being of so establisht an Authority [...] the other having lately performed it with such admirable success' (curiously, however, there is no mention of the Pordage translation).¹¹⁹ Yet, as the 'Advertisement' continues, one can sense the dissatisfaction Oldham felt towards these translations, located in their failure to truly transpose Horace into an accessible English idiom that readers would be able to conceptualise. For example, while Roscommon envisages his poem as being composed by a modern Horace living in seventeenth-century England, this only remains implicit within his translation, which reads as if it was still set within its classical context. In Oldham's view, as a consequence of retaining these Roman contexts, Roscommon's translation not only lacked individual creativeness, but also prevented the poem from gaining purchase on contemporary literary culture, effectively rendering any potential impact from the poem inapt. To resolve this issue, Oldham adopts a different method of translation, one that seeks to transform the aesthetics of the poem by making explicit those modernisations hinted at in Roscommon: 'This I soon imagin'd was to be effected by putting Horace into a more modern dress, than hitherto he has appear'd in, that is, by making him speak, as if he were living, and writing now'.¹²⁰ In doing so, Oldham's poem represents that mode of translation known as 'imitation', which began appearing sporadically throughout the seventeenth century.

Harold Brooks comprehensively traces the development of this mode over the period, asserting that it originated as an 'aspect of the Renaissance theory of translating and borrowing from the classics in order to enrich the vernacular; and from that theory, with the practises it prompted or endorsed, the imitation more immediately takes rise'.¹²¹ Critically, this emphasis on 'enriching the vernacular' corresponds with the Restoration concept that translation led to a refinement of language, thereby placing Oldham within a literary tradition that immediately concerns itself with the cultural development of language. Brooks continues to examine how later writers such as Denham, Cowley and Waller adopted this method during the 1640's and

¹¹⁹ John Oldham, *The Poems of John Oldham*, ed. Harold Brooks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.87.

¹²⁰ Oldham, *Poems*, p.87.

¹²¹ Harold Brooks, 'The 'Imitation' in English Poetry, Especially in Formal Satire, before the Age of Pope', *The Review of English Studies*, 25 (1949), pp.124-140, p.125.

1650's, wherein their work expanded on the conventional Renaissance doctrine by deploying a greater freedom of paraphrase, allowing them to produce a contemporary context containing references that modern readers could identify and engage with. This new method of translation also facilitated a greater poetic licence, enabling a poet to instil his own distinctive, often critical voice within classical texts. For Restoration theorists, both of these qualities were essential in measuring the potential influence modern translations carried. Consequently, as Stuart Gillespie proclaims, 'not only the expression but also the thematic content of an original was consciously modernized [...] the rise of the 'imitation' [...] may thus be said itself to result from developments in translation'.¹²² Oldham acknowledges this when he states the overall aim of his translation: 'to give a kind of new Air to the Poem, and render it more agreeable to the relish of the present Age'. Moreover, Oldham embodies here the notion that the art of translation is a perpetual development parallel to cultural progression, whereby his ability to provide a 'new Air to the Poem' – to improve upon a translation's creative expression – will enable it to function more profoundly as an instrument for cultural refinement, making it 'more agreeable to the relish of the present Age' – the use of 'relish' here reinforcing the intellectual scope and function of the poem.¹²³ For Oldham, then, the 'imitation', with its capacity to encompass modern cultural references with a more liberated artistic expression, represented the ideal medium through which to engage with Restoration literary theory, and present those theories in a vernacular that modern readers could comprehend.

Yet, even with this new method of translation, Oldham's poem still displays a tendency to incorporate elements from his predecessors, with Tom Winnifrith claiming that 'Oldham's 1681 version of Horace's treatise shows the influence of Roscommon by borrowing several lines verbatim'.¹²⁴ We may even be more specific by saying that Oldham also adopts the same critical vocabulary utilised by Roscommon. This is evident in the opening to Oldham's version in his advice against distorting reality: 'But to mix natures clearly opposite, / to make the Serpent and the Dove unite [...] Shocks Reason, and the rules of common Sence' (ll.18-21). Oldham here maintains Roscommon's sense of 'nature' as being instrumental to poetic writing by way of keeping its images intact, as failure to do so 'Shocks Reason, and the rules of common Sence'. 'Common Sence' echoes Roscommon's phrase 'Common-Laws of Sense'; skipping over the legal connotations implicit in Roscommon's line, Oldham adds the word 'Reason' to the literary

¹²² Stuart Gillespie & Robin Sowerby, 'Translation and Literary Innovation', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English: Volume 3: 1660-1790*, eds. Stuart Gillespie & David Hopkins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.21-37, p.24.

¹²³ Oldham, *Poems*, p.87.

¹²⁴ Tom Winnifrith, 'Moralists, Orators, and Literary Critics', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English: Volume 3: 1660-1790*, eds. Stuart Gillespie & David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.253-271, p.263.

precept, which subsequently becomes subsumed within the faculty of judgment. This juxtaposition between 'nature', 'Reason', and 'common Sence' creates a clearer theoretic link reinforcing the concept that mimetic representations derive from one's aptitude to incisively observe the world around them. These concepts appear again during Oldham's discussion on the development of dramatic characters, a section where his borrowing from Roscommon is more blatant. Indeed, Oldham follows closely Roscommon's 'For Nature forms, and softens us within' (p.9) by offering 'For Nature works, and moulds our frame within' (l.185), where the emphasis is on the internalisation of 'Nature', which again serves as the source for creative inspiration. In doing so, Oldham, like Roscommon, focuses on how the mimetic unity of dramatic characters is achieved through the powers of observation, mimicking Roscommon by instructing the poet to 'Observe what characters your persons fit' (l.193).

Oldham does little to alter or expand on the meaning of these terms, suggesting he was either content with Roscommon's definitions or that his focus lay elsewhere. Hammond suggests that Oldham 'uses his predecessors in passages that make no special claim on him [...] [but] where he is more interested there is often less use of previous versions'.¹²⁵ One passage that seems to mark this transition is the discussion on the role of the critic. Oldham's initial borrowing from Roscommon here is obvious, varying little from 'I am satisfied to keep my sense,/And only serve to whet that Wit in you (p.21) by offering 'Tho I my self am not dispos'd to write; In others I may serve to sharpen Wit' (ll.486-487). The evidence that Oldham was working specifically with Roscommon's translation in mind here is provided by the inclusion of the word 'wit', which is absent in the Horatian original:

ergo fungar vice cotis, acutum
reddere quae ferrum valet, exsors ipsa secandi
munus et officium, nil scribens ipse, docebo

[So I'll play a whetstone's part, which makes steel sharp, but of itself cannot cut. Though I write naught myself, I will teach the poet's office and duty]¹²⁶

Indeed, Like Roscommon, Oldham identifies 'Wit' as the object of focus for the literary critic (an obligation that is not made explicit by Horace), where the need for its improvement is depicted as a social duty – thus emphasising the significance of 'wit' in Restoration literary culture. However, Oldham later expands on Roscommon as the passage leads into the formation of dramatic characters. Wherein Roscommon we have 'He only gives the proper Characters,/Who

¹²⁵ Hammond, *John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture*, p.98.

¹²⁶ Horace, pp.474-477.

knows the duty of all Ranks of Men' (p.21), Oldham presents us with 'Who e're will write, must diligently mind/The several sorts and ranks of humane kind' (ll.500-1). While Roscommon's 'Ranks of Men' evokes a stronger social aspect to the poem, Oldham's insertion of 'The several sorts and ranks of humane kind' encompasses a more sweeping audience, losing a stricter sense of social hierarchy in favour of cultural inclusion. This is compounded further by Oldham's control of the couplet; whereas Roscommon's verse is more abrupt in its rendering of the Horatian precept, Oldham allows himself more space to outline and explore this cultural diversity, before ultimately coming back to the function of the precept, which is to 'Take humane life for your original' (l.508). In this instance, while Oldham incorporates the same critical lexis as Roscommon to define the techniques required to refine English writing, he also reveals a greater concern for the wider cultural influences of the poem – a characteristic that becomes apparent during the more overtly modernised passages of his translation.

His ability to shift the poem's attention from the pure mechanics of writing towards these wider cultural issues is aided through his use of the 'imitation'. As part of his discussion on Oldham, Brooks claims that 'to secure the essential advantages of imitation – the freshness and immediacy, the scope for self-expression – [...] he would give his readers an adequate reflection of the author's thoughts'.¹²⁷ This is certainly not the case with Roscommon, whose stricter translation is not only stylistically condensed, but also the universality of his poem – that is, its tendency to read as a set of universal precepts derived from Horace – negates any sense of individual thought. Conversely, Oldham's assimilation of more immediate political, social and intellectual references clearly demonstrates he is thinking beyond the confines of vocabulary and language; indeed, the creative exercise this process invites enables his poem to reflect his own personal experiences of English literary culture. This is no longer what a living Horace in the seventeenth century would say, but rather Oldham himself becoming Horace to comment explicitly on a world that is distinctly his own with its own unique customs. Wilson notes the potential impact for this mode of translation in her argument that 'because of readers' familiarity with the originals, imitations (with the added spice of reapplication to contemporary circumstances) were often of more interest than closer translations'.¹²⁸ Oldham's use of the 'imitation' not only makes the poem directly pertinent to contemporary London, but it also offers readers a more profound insight on the attitudes towards Restoration literature from a poet embedded within its society.

Oldham wastes little time setting the modern scene for his readers by mentioning 'the gliding *Thames*' (l.29), but it is his discussion on the evolution of language that offers his first

¹²⁷ Brooks, 'The 'Imitation' in English Poetry', p.136.

¹²⁸ Wilson, 'Lyric, Pastoral, and Elegy', p.176.

significant re-appropriation of the poem.¹²⁹ Unlike previous translations that distinguish between Greek and Roman poets, Oldham draws a comparison between Renaissance and Restoration writers and their contribution specifically towards the English vernacular:

Words new and forein may be best brought in,
If borrow'd from a Language near akin:
Why should the peevisch Criticks now forbid
To *Lee*, and *Dryden*, what was not deny'd
To *Shakespear*, *Ben*, and *Fletcher* heretofore,
For which they praise, and commendation bore?
If *Spencer's* Muse be justly so ador'd
For that rich copiousness, wherewith he stor'd
Our Native Tongue; for Gods sake why should I
Straight be thought arrogant; if modestly
I claim and use the self-same liberty?
This the just Right of Poets ever was (ll.94-105).

Oldham expresses frustration at the perceived lack of creative licence afforded to modern writers compared to their Renaissance counterparts. The satirical tone of his earlier works (notably the *Satyrs Upon the Jesuits*) is on display here, as he attacks the 'peevisch Criticks' for their hypocrisy in condemning those qualities in Lee and Dryden that were praised in '*Shakespear, Ben, and Fletcher heretofore*'. This juxtaposition between Renaissance and Restoration authors reveals an anxiety similar to the issue Neander raises in *An Essay on Dramatick Poesie* regarding the previous age acting as a creative hindrance – 'we acknowledge them our Fathers in wit, but they have ruin'd their Estates themselves before they came to their childrens hands'.¹³⁰ However, rather than an English lineage that has reached its pinnacle, Oldham externalises this burden on literary development by shifting the blame towards the harsher social attitudes modern writers must compete against. This appears part of an overall strategy that attempts to establish a new English literary identity. Indeed, by observing how '*Spencer's* Muse be justly so ador'd/For that rich copiousness, wherewith he stor'd/Our Native Tongue', Oldham reinforces the notion that the circumstantial nature of poetic language is subjected to cultural progression, thus demonstrating the necessity to not only equal, but also surpass the likes of Spencer to ensure that language reaches its perfection in Restoration England. There is an urgency in this passage – accentuated by the use of enjambment – that culminates in the passionate exclamation 'for Gods sake why should I / Straight be thought

¹²⁹ All quotes taken from Harold Brooks *The Poems of John Oldham* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp.91-112.

¹³⁰ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.73.

arrogant; if modestly/I claim and use the self-same liberty'. The language used here is more severer compared to previous translations, as Oldham re-appropriates Horace's *Ars* to draw attention to the current state of Restoration literary attitudes and the need to recreate a new English tradition.

One way Oldham achieves this is through his recasting of the Horatian metaphor of the falling leaves representing fluctuations in the usage of words into a distinctly English idiom. In Horace, the process is depicted as part of a natural, somewhat passive, cycle:

ut silvae foliis pronos mutantur in annos,
prima cadunt; ita verborum vetus interit aetas,
et iuvenum ritu florent modo nata vigentque.
debemur morti nos nostraque

[As forests change their leaves with each year's decline, and the earliest drop off: so with words the old race dies, and, like the young of human kind, the new-born bloom and thrive. We are doomed to death, we and all things ours]¹³¹

In Oldham's translation, however, the metaphor acquires more agency, attained through his emphasis on the way modern cultures should actively be engaged with their own self-development. Indeed, while Oldham maintains the inevitable sequence of linguistic customs observed by Horace – 'Death is the Fate all things here below' (l.111) – he then immediately states that 'Nature her self by Art has changes felt' (l.112), a line that has no Horatian equivalent or any correspondence with the Pordage or Roscommon translations. Although such a sentiment is implicit within Horace's text – particularly a few lines later wherein he describes a marsh that has been plied by oars so as to supply water to neighbouring towns ('sterilise palus diu aptaque remis vicinas urbes alit et grave sentit aratrum'), the addition of this line in the Oldham translation brings it to the forefront of the poem. While the Pordage and Roscommon translations carry forward the original Horatian notion that language, as a naturally occurring phenomenon, inhabits social customs, and is thereby subjected to modernity, it is Oldham who advocates explicitly the agency which that modernity has in shaping its own conventions: that 'Art' is able to directly and consciously affect the 'Nature' from which language originates.

Oldham reinforces the point to Restoration readers by replacing Horace's original examples with contemporary models. In Horace, we are presented with the following:

[...] sive receptus
terra Neptunus classes Aquilonibus arcet,

¹³¹ Horace, pp.454-455.

regis opus, sterilisve palus diu aptaque remis
vicinas urbes alit et grave sentit aratrum,
seu cursum mutavit iniquum frugibus amnis
doctus iter melius: mortalia facta peribunt,
nedum sermonum stet honos et gratia vivax

[whether Neptune, welcomed within the land, protects our fleets from northern gales—a truly royal work—or a marsh, long a waste where oars were plied, feeds neighbouring towns and feels the weight of the plough; or a river has changed the course which brought ruin to corn-fields and has learnt a better path]¹³²

The processes and imagery described here appear at once universal, lending themselves neatly to Oldham, who is able to map them seamlessly onto modern English examples facilitated through the ‘imitation’ mode of translation. The first of these includes the English Tangier:

The *Tangier* Mole (by our great *Monarch* built)
Like a vast Bulwark in the Ocean set,
From Pyrates and from Storms defends our Fleet (ll.113-15).

Received as a dowry when Charles II married the Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza in 1662, Tangier remained an English overseas possession until 1684. During this period, the city was heavily fortified against Moroccan forces (supported by Spain, who opposed the marriage on account of their conflict with Portugal). The modernisation of the poem to include this particular reference creates a sense of national pride, praising ‘our great *Monarch*’ for the way he ‘defends our Fleet’. Critically, it is Oldham’s account of the city’s physical fortification that embodies his view on the progression of words, noting that ‘Fens every day are drain’d, and men now Plow,/And Sow, and Reap, where they before might Row’ (ll.116-17); just as the natural landscape is being cultivated to defend the English realm, so too must language be continually refined, amended and enriched to truly represent the values of Restoration culture. Oldham further transposes Horace’s original scene into a contemporary English setting by claiming:

And Rivers have been taught by *Middleton*
From their old course within new Banks to run,
And pay their usual Tribute to the Town (ll.118-20).

He refers here to Sir Hugh Middleton, who was the chief engineer behind the construction of the New River built to bring clean water from the River Lea in Hertfordshire to London, which was successfully completed in 1613. Again, the emphasis is on the direct impact humanity has in

¹³² Horace, pp.454-457.

shaping nature for the benefit of society, as the river is 'taught' to pay 'Tribute to the Town'. By recreating Horace's original metaphor for change, then, Oldham is subsequently able to compare literary development with identifiable English figures who are actively shaping the world around them. Indeed, while he accepts the continual variability of words in relation to their cultural circumstances – 'Many which we approve for current now,/In the next Age out of request shall grow' (ll.123-4) – he does so by advocating the need for those cultures to self-reflectively perfect the immediate usage of those words. Furthermore, by alluding to contemporary political and social references, Oldham conflates literary integrity with national identity, whereby the morals and foundations of English culture are reciprocally dependent upon the progression of poetic language.

This conflation of national identity with literary integrity is made more explicit during Oldham's discussion on improvements to theatrical practises. Again, the poem is modernised to distinguish between Renaissance and Restoration literature by specifying the Cockpit and Blackfriars theatres:

At first the Musick of our Stage was rude,
Whilst in the *Cock-pit* and *Black-Friers* it stood:
And this might please enough in former Reigns,
A thrifty, thin, and bashful Audience (ll.336-39).

While these lines suggest the Renaissance theatrical experience was rudimentary, they also contain a satirical undertone deriding previous audiences, implied by the irony within the line 'And this might please enough in former Reigns'. Oldham uses this critical tone to denote a progression of literary standards that not only reaches its pinnacle in the Restoration, but also separates it from previous ages, emphasised by the lines 'But since our Monarch by Kind Heaven sent,/Brought back the Arts with him from Banishment' (ll.342-43). 'From Banishment' reminds modern audiences of the despairs of civil war and the repressing regime of the commonwealth (1649-1660), wherein parliament ordered the closing of public theatres. By associating these political events with the 'Banishment' of creative expression, Oldham reinforces the conflation of social and political posterity with literary freedom through his depiction of the returning Charles II, whose figure 'by Kind Heaven sent' is able to instil 'all the harmless Luxuries of peace' (l.354). Certainly, in 1660 Charles not only signed two royal patents that granted the playwrights Killigrew and Davenant licenses to build two new playhouses and form their own acting companies, but he would continue to shape Restoration theatre through his own personal preferences in drama as well as actors and actresses. For Oldham, these events created a more prosperous literary landscape that also reflected a greater political harmony. Moreover, Oldham

draws on this to establish a distinctly new literary tradition by defining the advancements made to these newly erected theatres:

And since that Opera's at length came in,
Our Players have so well improv'd the Scene
With gallantry of Habit, and Machine (ll.350-52).

The increasing popularity of opera emanated chiefly from Davenant, who utilised the technologically advanced facilities of the Lincoln's Inn Fields (a converted indoor tennis court) to produce more spectacular works he originally conceived during the interregnum. Oldham's mention of 'Machine' likely refers to the elaborate scenery that could now be changed between scenes. According to Oldham, these innovations 'makes our Theater in Glory vie / With the best Ages of Antiquity' (ll.353-54); the rhythmic control of the heroic couplet here underlines Oldham's preoccupation with attempting to establish a new English literary identity, one that not only stands apart from Renaissance works, but also rivals those of the classics.

As Dryden's *To the Memory of Mr Oldham* suggests, Oldham was clearly engaged with the role translation played in improving English literary standards. The 'Advertisement' reveals Oldham's awareness of the types of issues permeating literary ideology, and the dominant principle that improvements in translation theory were essential in ensuring that classical precepts could meet the need for a constantly morphing poetic language. However, while Oldham does incorporate the same critical vocabulary utilised by Pordage and Roscommon, by adopting the 'imitation' he shows a concern beyond the confines of language and writing as the creative license this mode provides enables him to comment more profoundly on the current state of Restoration literature. Consequently, by re-contextualising the poem to London, Oldham conflates notions of national identity with literary development, whereby the function of the *Ars* now becomes the refinement of literature, set within a distinctly English tradition comprised of a nascent canon of English writers, which forms a fundamental and quintessential part of Restoration culture and a wider sense of English identity. Oldham's re-appropriation of Horace's *Ars Poetica* thus represents one of the most creative and profound attempts at utilising classical translation as a way of recreating a new literary culture.

Chapter 2

Tracing Horace in the early critical prefaces of Thomas Shadwell

The overarching remit for this chapter is to shed new light on the literary and intellectual standing of Thomas Shadwell, to disentangle and explicate his dramatic views and principles from those of Dryden – with whom he is too often inauspiciously compared – and to reveal his hitherto overlooked contributions to the development of Restoration literary discourse. It will therefore build on the increasing trend of late twentieth-century scholarship which began viewing Shadwell more favourably, with the likes of Kirk Combe arguing that ‘a thorough consideration of Shadwell is crucial to our understanding of the Restoration era’.¹³³ While more recent studies emphasise his artistic inventiveness as a comic playwright and have provided a re-examination of the economic and social reception of his plays, there remains little work on his role as a literary critic.¹³⁴ The following chapter will subsequently explore this aspect of Shadwell’s career through two key prisms of analysis. The first will examine the conjectural vocabulary that permeates his printed exchanges with Dryden, and will posit how it was a lack of philological unanimity concerning this emergent poetic language that underpinned their dramatic dispute. The second will provide the first detailed study of Shadwell’s appropriation of Horace. Building on the ideas explored in chapter 1, it will demonstrate how playwrights appropriated the *Ars Poetica* to better define the theoretical concepts and practices underpinning Restoration dramatic criticism. Furthermore, by tracing Shadwell’s engagement with his classical predecessor, the chapter will also show more broadly the role Horace played in the development of Restoration literary debate, and will specifically illuminate Shadwell’s influence in establishing a new decorous medium of critical inquiry.

I

When modern readers encounter Shadwell, the first image they often face is that of a blundering and ridiculous writer heir to a squalid kingdom of dullness, one who is destined to ‘Ne’er have peace with wit, nor truce with sense’.¹³⁵ The unrelenting satirical attack by Dryden on Shadwell in the anonymous manuscript circulation of *Mac Flecknoe* (1676) had a lasting impact, and clearly still taints modern critical perceptions of Shadwell as both a writer and critic. The fact

¹³³ Kirk Combe, ‘Introduction: considering Shadwell’, *Thomas Shadwell Reconsider’d: Essays in Criticism*, 20 (1996), 88-100, p.88.

¹³⁴ For example see Peter Craft, ‘The Contemporary Popular Reception of Shadwell’s *A True Widow*’, *Restoration and 18th century theatre research*, 24 (2009), 5-16

¹³⁵ Dryden, *Works ii*, p.57.

that most references to Shadwell in studies throughout the twentieth century were made almost exclusively in relation to the superior sophistication and prowess of Dryden suggests he had dealt a major blow to the literary estimation of his so called 'archrival'. Yet throughout their respective careers (especially during their early careers), Shadwell was equally regarded, if not more highly at times, as a playwright in the eyes of Restoration audiences. A handful of recent studies have since attempted to re-establish this literary equilibrium that not only existed between the two writers – in terms of their patronage, financial success, and social dealings – but also drove their competing artistic and critical voices to be heard within both theatrical spaces and the printed marketplace. By situating Shadwell among other Restoration writers, Christopher Wheatley points out that 'John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, paired Shadwell with Wycherley as the writers of 'true comedy', before continuing that '[George] Etherege, while ambassador to the Imperial court at Ratisbon, specifically asked for Shadwell's latest play, *The Squire of Alsatia*' (1688).¹³⁶ Additionally, by observing the interconnections of Shadwell with the predominant social and intellectual concerns of the Restoration, and contrasting his Whiggish and Presbyterian affiliations with Dryden's Anglican royalist views, Judith Slagle remarks that 'Shadwell's "tenacity" assured him a secure place on the Restoration stage for most of his writing life'.¹³⁷ However, while such works are vital in re-establishing Shadwell as a leading Restoration playwright, they tend to overlook his contribution towards that Restoration preoccupation of reimagining literary culture, and of developing a new kind of critical practice and vocabulary through which to best engage in literary debate, ranging from dramatic form, theories of comedy, and the reception of authors from previous ages. Indeed, despite Michael Gavin's claim that 'throughout the seventeenth century, few people saw criticism as a coherent practice unto itself, and they almost never described it as a kind of writing', Shadwell was at the centre of a debate that set a new precedent for the discussion of literary values in more formal ways; his continual dialogue with Dryden in the form of published prefaces represents the structural mode and intertextual exercise of engaging with contemporary writers and their literary stances that would become quite seminal in later years.¹³⁸ Moreover, like Dryden, part of Shadwell's rhetorical strategy involved the utilization of Horace as both an arbiter of new literary standards and as an authoritative voice through which to convey one's own principles –

¹³⁶ Christopher Wheatley, "'Who Vices Dare Explode": Thomas Shadwell, Thomas Durfey and Didactic Drama of the Restoration', in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, ed. Susan Owen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp.340-355, p.341.

¹³⁷ Judith Slagle, 'Dueling prefaces, pamphlets, and prologues: re-visioning the political and personal wars of John Dryden and Thomas Shadwell', *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research*, 21 (2006), pp.17-32, p.18.

¹³⁸ Michael Gavin, 'Historical text networks: the sociology of early English criticism', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 21 (2016), pp.53-80, p.53.

a prominent feature throughout his essays that has yet to be fully explored.

Of course, one cannot talk about Horatianism and the influence of literary theory on Shadwell without first discussing Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), for 'to trace the influence of Dryden upon subsequent literature is, to a large extent, to trace the influence of Horace'.¹³⁹ As Paul Hammond notes, 'Dryden was one of a group of writers who used Horace to work out a code and a vocabulary of literary criticism which would sustain, advertise and analyse the new creative achievements of Restoration England'.¹⁴⁰ Within the *Essay*, these manifest themselves primarily in the form of three arguments: the merit of classical drama in relation to modern drama; a comparison of French and English drama; the value of rhymed verse in drama. Consequently, one of the central themes to emerge from Dryden's work – wherein Horace is frequently invoked as a constant criterion – is the notion that cultural development is a perpetual phenomenon, and that the language writers negotiate and utilize, which is a part of that culture, is also constantly in flux. Subsequently, therefore, Dryden insists that contemporary writers improved on the works from their classical and Renaissance predecessors by virtue of a greater accumulation of knowledge and a clearer understanding of nature. As a way of measuring this, Dryden establishes a critical lexis and terminology that pervades throughout his disputes with Shadwell; these focus on the correct form of *wit*, the uses of *judgement* and *observation*, and the theorizing of *comedy* – especially in relation to Ben Jonson and the value of *humour*.

James Jenson's *A Glossary of John Dryden's Critical Terms* provides both an essential overview and detailed account of these lexical terms.¹⁴¹ By isolating each key word, Jenson is not only able to trace comprehensively the development of Dryden's critical vocabulary, but also demonstrate how they can embody a multitude of concepts depending on the context in which it is utilised. For example, regarding Dryden's use of the word 'wit', Jenson explains that 'a wit reveals his abilities or genius through his facility with words and the playfulness of his attitude toward words and the ideas they represent', but it can also mean 'a man who can speak with sharpness of conceit and quickness of reply'.¹⁴² However, regarding Dryden's use of 'judgment', while Jenson does initially provide a space to discuss it in isolation, it only becomes fully examined in its relation to 'wit', as Jenson notes that 'the other main faculty, judgment, comes primarily from experience and observation [...] although imagination is the important element

¹³⁹ Amanda Ellis, 'Horace's influence on Dryden', *Philological Quarterly*, 4 (1925), pp.39-61, p.59.

¹⁴⁰ Hammond, 'Figures of Horace in Dryden's Literary Criticism', p.130.

¹⁴¹ James Jenson, *A Glossary of John Dryden's Critical Terms* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969).

¹⁴² Jenson, *Dryden's Critical Terms*, p.123.

of wit, control in the form of judgment is always present'.¹⁴³ Thus, for Jenson, judgment is a method of intellectual control that is designed to circumscribe the more imaginative elements drawn from wit. The result is to suggest not only that the faculty of judgment is subordinate to wit within the creative process, but also that it can only exist as a controlling mechanism – always confining imagination, never the source of creative images or language itself. Despite this, while Dryden may initially appear to subsume theories of judgment within his discussions of wit within the *Essay*, in later works (such as the preface to *An Evening's Love* and *The Defence of the Epilogue*) he treats them as two independent concepts. This may largely be in response to Shadwell's repeated assertions in his own prefaces that the faculty of judgment is in no way a lower form of creative skill, and that wit is rather governed by Judgment. In doing so, Shadwell brings these critical terms into disparity, and provides a contrasting critical perspective which separates Jenson's conflation of 'wit' and 'judgment' by creating a binary between the two, whereby the faculty of Judgment is now a distinctly separate creative entity, one that has its own defining characteristics and theoretical applications outside the parameters of wit. These alternate perspectives provided by Shadwell force Dryden into elaborating on, or re-evaluating, his own critical perceptions, and in the process demonstrates the fluctuating state of key literary terms during the period, thereby highlighting the need to reconsider the development and deployment of this newly emergent critical vocabulary.

The *Essay* introduces immediately the concept and application of what Dryden means by 'wit' in the form of Crites and Lisideius' discussion of two unnamed poets. Lisideius criticizes the first as one who 'does not perpetually pay us with clenches upon words, and a certain clownish kind of raillery: - if now and then he does not offer at a catachresis or Clevelandism, wresting and torturing a word into another meaning'.¹⁴⁴ The issue here is an abuse or misuse of wit resulting in a disjunction between subject matter and language, whereby the ignorant transmuting of words is detrimental to poetic effect to the point of convoluting its meaning. Conversely, Crites illustrates the damaging consequences of poetry completely devoid of wit through his depiction of a writer who 'is a very Leveller in poetry [...] He doubly starves all his verses, - first, for want of thought, and then of expression. His poetry neither has wit in it, nor seems to have it'.¹⁴⁵ By using these polarizing examples Dryden is thus able to delineate wit to the reader as a tangible equipoise between a meaningful representation of reality and a pleasingly delightful expression of language. Hence, as Edward Pechter notes, 'when taken together these two extremes anticipate by contrast and negation a comprehensive notion of

¹⁴³ Jenson, *Dryden's Critical Terms*, p.124.

¹⁴⁴ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.10.

¹⁴⁵ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.11.

proper wit which the *Essay* as a whole may be said to define'.¹⁴⁶ However, while Crites and Lisideius are in agreement with their evaluations, Eugenius interjects, stating his displeasure that 'there are multitudes who would think you malicious and them injured'.¹⁴⁷ Critically, as part of his defence against Crites' claim that 'There are so few who write well in this age [...] They neither rise to the dignity of the last age, nor to any of the ancients', Eugenius resorts to Horace:

indignor quidquam reprehendi, non quia crasse
compositum illepideve putetur, sed quia nuper.¹⁴⁸

[I am angry when any work is censured, not because it is thought coarse or inelegant in style, but because it is modern]

In doing so, he is able to circumscribe such critiques and subsequently establish a methodological framework wherein theoretical criticism can function in a more progressive and measured way, demonstrated by Crites' agreement to define 'what part of poesie he would confine his arguments'.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Dryden strategically quotes Horace here to prevent the literary argument from deteriorating into arbitrary accusations and unchecked libel. Horace thus provides an efficient vehicle for Dryden in the regulation of literary decorum, and is here pre-emptively placed to allow readers to anticipate the rhetorical authority he becomes associated with throughout the *Essay*.

Dryden later amalgamates these initial ideas of wit with his tactical employment of Horace by subsuming them within his argument that cultural development has brought about a refinement of language. Indeed, as part of Eugenius' concern for the ancients, whilst conceding to Crites' premise that many witticisms will be lost due to insufficient knowledge of ancient language and social customs, he advocates that their work 'yet leaves an impression of the wit upon our souls', implying that modern authors are still able to access this and judge it proficiently. This leads to a critical review of the apparent lack of wit in ancient writings:

but this happens seldom [...] in Plautus oftner, who is infinitely too bold in his Metaphors and coining words out of which many times his wit is nothing, which questionless was one reason why Horace falls upon him so severely in those Verses:

Sed Proavi nostri Plautinos et numeros et

¹⁴⁶ Edward Pechter, *Dryden's Classical Theory of Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.38

¹⁴⁷ Dryden, *Works xvii*, pp.11-12.

¹⁴⁸ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.13.

¹⁴⁹ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.13.

Laudavere sales, nimium patienter utrumque
Ne dicam stolidé.¹⁵⁰

[Yet our forefathers praised both Plautus' verses, and his wit, being over tolerant, not to say stupid]

While Eugenius' remark initially appears severe, the seamless flow into his quotation from Horace alleviates that harshness of tone and places him within a literary tradition of evaluating past writers. Horace therefore acts as a contextual figure in justifying Eugenius' rubric for literary criticism, one that, somewhat paradoxically, reinvents classical practices to distinguish between the classics themselves and modern writers. Dryden particularly expresses this through the Horatian precept of the coining of words, as Eugenius later proclaims:

For Horace himself was cautious to obtrude a new word upon his
Readers, and makes custom and common use the best measure of
receiving it into our writings.

Multa renascentur quae nunc cecidere, cadentque
Quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,
Quem penes arbitrium est jus, & norma loquendi.¹⁵¹

[many terms now obsolete shall be born again, and those now in favour shall fall, if usage so decrees, in whose hands lies the judgement, the law, and the rule of speech]

As Hammond states, '[Dryden] understands that social usage shapes the language which writers employ, and therefore all writers are subject to criticism by their successors when the language has changed'.¹⁵² In doing so, Dryden reveals a re-appropriation of Horatian dictum to illustrate how true wit is bound up in the development of language, which has reached its pinnacle in the English vernacular. Moreover, Dryden goes beyond simply quoting Horace as a model of literary practice; rather, he adapts and modernizes the *Ars Poetica* to his own theoretical analysis, allowing him to develop a critical voice endowed with the authority of Horace, but still distinctly his own. This is especially evident in the comparison that Eugenius provides between the unnatural elocution of John Cleveland – whose verse is burdened by abstruse meaning – and the simplicity of language that John Donne uses to express more profound poetic thoughts, whereby he concludes that 'wit is best conveyed to us in the most easy language; and is most to be

¹⁵⁰ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.29.

¹⁵¹ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.29.

¹⁵² Hammond, 'Figures of Horace in Dryden's Literary Criticism', p.135.

admired when a great thought comes dressed in words commonly received'.¹⁵³

These theoretical concepts culminate in Dryden's discussion of Ben Jonson and relate specifically to his theory of different forms of comedy – particularly those of 'high' and 'low' comedy. Regarding this, Michael Gelber argues that 'the identifying mark of high comedy is the presence [...] of that intensely imaginative element which Dryden calls 'wit'. 'Wit' is thus a key to unlocking the distinction he draws between low and high comedy'.¹⁵⁴ Thus, when Dryden says of Jonson 'one cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it' he is asserting that Jonson's skill lay in a specific mode of comic writing: 'Humour was his proper sphere, and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people'.¹⁵⁵ Perhaps feeling self-consciously aware that his critique may be misconstrued, Dryden chooses to define his meaning of 'humour' in a different manner to his previous definition of a 'what a Play should be'.¹⁵⁶ While the former is presented as only a rough notion, an idea presented to the group that requires complete unanimity, this latter definition is stated as a universal fact imbedded within Dryden's argument. This rhetorical shift allows Dryden to immediately place Jonson within a recognized mode of writing that subsequently requires little elaboration. Dryden defines the comedy of humours as such:

where by humour is meant some extravagant habit, passion, or affection, particular (as I said before) to some one person, by oddness of which he is immediately distinguished from the rest of men.¹⁵⁷

A fundamental component to the dramatic representation of these 'extravagant habit[s]' and certain 'particular[s]' is, as Dryden stresses, a proficiency concerning the faculty of *observation*. Certainly, for the dramatist to mimetically convey reality on the stage they must be a keen observer of the world which they are a part of, and it is for this that the writer of humours should be commended; 'Here everyone is a proper judge of all he sees; nothing is represented but that with which he daily converses, so that by consequence all faults lie open to discovery, and few are pardonable'.¹⁵⁸ Dryden presents the humourist as more open to scrutiny from theatre audiences as a result of their every-day subject matter and identifiable characters, meaning that any forced or unconvincing element of their play is left awkwardly exposed. To

¹⁵³ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.30.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Werth Gelber, *The Just and the Lively: The literary criticisms of John Dryden* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.107.

¹⁵⁵ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.57.

¹⁵⁶ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.14.

¹⁵⁷ Dryden, *Works xvii* p.60.

¹⁵⁸ Dryden, *Works xvii*, pp.61-2.

support his vindication of this comic mode, Dryden inevitably turns to Horace:

creditur, ex medio quia res arcessit, habere
sudoris minimum; sed habet comoedia tanto
plus oneris, quanto veniae minus.

[it is thought that comedy, drawing its themes from daily life, involves less effort; but it calls for proportionality more as it is allowed less indulgence]

Of course Horace is not himself referring to *humour* specifically, as once again Dryden re-appropriates his literary theory, subsumes it within his own concepts, and presents them as an innovative discussion on the merit of the comedy of humours. However, both Dryden and Horace are in agreement that observation and judgement are necessities for the mimetic quality of the comic genre.

Nevertheless, despite this apparent praise, Dryden's comments simultaneously appear to carry undertones of disparagement towards the value of humour – encompassing Jonson as a result. Certainly, it is possible to perceive in Dryden's former quotation from Horace a dualistic function that serves to expose the flaw in the writing of humour, that whilst praising the meticulousness and intricacy of staging the world as it appears, that very dedication to observation results in less artistic indulgence. This coincides with Gelber's observation that 'low comedy works predominantly through the judgement and aims at natural imitation [...] since low comedy is so tightly bound to the world of fact, it contains few imaginative elements'.¹⁵⁹ For Dryden, then, that essential quality of wit that helps elevate the grandeur and pleasantness of language is distastefully absent in the model for humour. Furthermore, to postulate that Dryden is absolving Jonson from lacking wit, and rather criticizing the comic mode as not providing the functional space to exercise that wit, is perhaps inaccurate. For example, when Dryden says of Jonson that 'you seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavoring to move the passions. His genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully', there appears an ironic inflection.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, as opposed to simply locating Jonson's 'genius' – as it would first appear – Dryden may be masking his attempt to confine it to base stylistic modes of 'sullen and saturnine' substance, wherein Jonson is unable to achieve the delightfulness of 'making love' or 'endeavoring to move the passions'. Whether this stems from a reluctance on Jonson's behalf to branch into that 'higher' form of comedy or if he simply lacks the skill to achieve it is open to interpretation, but what does become clear are the ironic (almost satirical) undercurrents behind Dryden's praise towards the value of humour and its practitioners.

¹⁵⁹ Gelber, *The Just and the Lively*, p.106.

¹⁶⁰ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.57.

Of course, Dryden could not express too forcefully these views through fear of backlash from his contemporaries, for just as much as the *Essay* exercises the discursiveness of critical theory, it also preoccupies itself with navigating the social and aristocratic circles of Restoration literary culture. As Dryden himself states in the dedication to Lord Buckhurst, 'for my own part, if in treating this subject I sometimes dissent from the opinion of better Wits, I declare it is not so much to combat their opinions, as to defend my own'; Dryden clearly acknowledges here the treacherous territory of inserting his own voice within established literary spheres without compromising his position as an emerging dramatic writer.¹⁶¹ It is perhaps for this reason that Dryden desired to have the *Essay* published rather than circulated in manuscript. Certainly, the manuscript circulation of a work containing depictions of leading Restoration figures disputing various literary principles and practitioners may have been at risk of inciting a stronger satirical reading, while the subject matter itself may have lost some of its seriousness as it was passed around the coffee houses and taverns of London. By turning to the printed marketplace, particularly through his regular partner and foremost publisher of the age, Henry Herringman, Dryden may have been aiming to circumvent any social entanglement caused by inadvertent satirical implications, and, crucially, to preserve the intellectual integrity of his work. This latter point is reiterated by Slagle, who argues that Dryden's activities in print were 'less the result of a lack of proper lineage and education [...] and more a choice through which to demonstrate his own intellectual [and political] arguments'.¹⁶² Indeed, if we consider the *Essay's* intended readership to be the leading wits, playwrights, and courtiers of the period – as suggested by Dryden's repeated patrician references to 'some of our wits' – the formal propriety of the printed marketplace, which was often infused with hyperbolic flattery and a rhetoric of politeness (though as we have already seen not always sincerely), offered a more suitable medium to disseminate his work, providing a stylistic decorum of humility which enabled him to engage respectfully with the leading scholars and patrons of the period.¹⁶³

This preoccupation with humility is clearly at the forefront of Dryden's thinking, and in many ways dictates the structuring of the *Essay*. By observing the development of Dryden's argument, Pechter notes that 'Eugenius doesn't defeat Crites, doesn't contradict his premise, only adds to them, develops them by subtle shifts of emphasis'.¹⁶⁴ The humility of Dryden's *Essay* is thus located in its ability to encompass literary theory rather than contest it outright, while the work as a whole in its printed format represents a legitimate way of communicating a multitude of topical theoretical concepts. In this way, Dryden attempted to maintain the

¹⁶¹ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.5.

¹⁶² Slagle, 'Dueling prefaces, pamphlets, and prologues', p.18.

¹⁶³ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.5.

¹⁶⁴ Pechter, *Dryden's Classical Theory of Literature*, p.46.

patronage he received from his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard (represented by Crites), as well as potentially gain new backing and artistic reverence from the Restoration circle of court wits, including the likes of Charles Sackville (represented by Eugenius). Later in the period, while Dryden was eventually able to secure a financial income as a shareholder in the King's Company in the 1670's – wherein he was contracted to supply three plays a year – he consequently found himself bound by a professionalism that required subjection to the expectations of audiences and the demands of the theatre company, leaving him little space for individual artistic licence (at least on the stage). The essay format represented by the *Essay on Dramatick Poesy* and later prefaces attached to the printed editions of Dryden's plays therefore remained the ideal space to both convey and disseminate his intellectual and creative thoughts.

II

It would seem the publication of the *Essay* succeeded in reaching the type of readership Dryden was aiming for as it soon found its way into the hands of Thomas Shadwell, who had already established himself as a prominent social, political and intellectual figure in the Restoration. While friends or peers may have presented Shadwell with a copy of the *Essay*, it is perhaps more likely he came across it in Henry Herringman's bookshop in the lower walk of the New Exchange, as Herringman had a close working relationship with both writers – acting as publisher to both Dryden's *Essay* and Shadwell's first play, *The Sullen Lovers* (1668). Critically, according to Paul Cannan, 'while the *Essay* sparked a number of debates it appears to have had little impact on dramatic practice or on how criticism was written'.¹⁶⁵ While Shadwell clearly takes issue with many of Dryden's principles, Cannan's dismissal of the *Essay*'s influence on the subsequent practice of criticism is perhaps inaccurate, especially when we consider how Shadwell engages with and adopts Dryden's form and arguments in his own preface to *The Sullen Lovers*, especially his appropriation of Horace. Shadwell seized the circumstantial opportunity the essay format presented, allowing him to address the topical issues raised by Dryden. Indeed, as Robert Hume notes, 'the importance of the occasional circumstances of Dryden's criticism can scarcely be overemphasized. Not only were his essays occasioned by his other writings, but they were produced in the midst of a kind of literary warfare'.¹⁶⁶ Shadwell also appeared mindful of this environment, as he states in his dedication to the Earl of Newcastle his hope that his patron's presence will 'rescue this [work] from the bloody hands of

¹⁶⁵ Paul Cannan, 'Restoration Dramatic Theory and Criticism', in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, ed. Susan Owen, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp.19-36, p.21.

¹⁶⁶ Robert Hume, *Dryden's Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p.42.

the criticks'.¹⁶⁷ The ability for the essay format to address a particular moment in literary criticism made it the ideal medium to discuss contemporary literary statements as well as promote one's own ideas in a constantly variable – and often hostile – theoretical landscape. There can be no coincidence then that Shadwell's preface to *The Sullen Lovers* saw publication only months after Dryden's *Essay*; this would have assured him an instant entrance into a print culture that would allow him to express his own intellectual skill and literary arguments to an audience already familiar with Dryden's essay.

The opening of the preface to *The Sullen Lovers* immediately concerns itself with what Shadwell perceives as a corrupt and deteriorating literary scene in London, noting the success of his play despite 'this very Critical age, when every man pretends to be a Judge'.¹⁶⁸ To begin with such a disparaging depiction (while not uncommon) was a certainly a risk, but a calculated risk, as it enabled Shadwell to present his argument against the backdrop of an undefined and unstable literary tradition, so that audiences may read his preface as a progression on current literary and critical practices.¹⁶⁹ To facilitate this, Shadwell (like Dryden) deploys a rhetoric of humility, stating that an essential role of a writer is to accept criticism – at least from those who judge 'with all the severity imaginable'.¹⁷⁰ The issue, according to Shadwell, arises when authors reject such criticism:

who, when their plays are damn'd, will strut, and huff it out [...] Or, like some other of our Modern Fopps, that declare they are resolv'd to justify their playes with their Swords [...] Such Gentlemen as these I must confess had need pretend they cannot Erre.¹⁷¹

These actions have the potential to destabilize scholarly discussion and bring the practice of English literary criticism into disarray. By contrast, Shadwell, rather than responding satirically like those who 'strut, and huff it out', or by ignorantly disregarding alternative perspectives as those who 'pretend they cannot Erre', presents himself as the humble writer who has 'submitted to my fate'.¹⁷² Critically, as part of her analysis on the preface's ability to communicate a sense of self to the reader, Anne Cotterill explains that 'the preface, as a space and as the undefined matter of what needs to be said 'beforehand', distinct from the main text, offers to the writer

¹⁶⁷ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.7.

¹⁶⁸ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.9.

¹⁶⁹ Dryden opens his *Essay* in similar volatile circumstances: 'It was that memorable day in the first summer of the late war', *Works xvii*, p.8.

¹⁷⁰ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.9.

¹⁷¹ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.9.

¹⁷² Shadwell, *Works i*, p.9.

something of the same space and opportunity for evolving self-portraiture'.¹⁷³ As part of this 'self-portraiture' it becomes apparent that humility was a key element (a rhetorical trope that became quite seminal in the composition of these early critical essays) as both writers appear conscious of injecting their thoughts into the public sphere. Shadwell certainly adopts this technique from Dryden's *Essay*, but subtly shifts the emphasis to suit his own rhetorical argument: while the humility of the *Essay* focuses on debating literary theory, the humility of Shadwell's preface focuses on accepting criticism. The preface thus represented to Shadwell the ideal medium in an attempt to establish the appropriate reception and decorum surrounding the newly emerging practices of critical inquiry.

However, despite this initial preoccupation with humility, the preface displays several ironic nuances emphasized through its structural design. For example, as soon as Shadwell claims to have 'submitted to my fate', he instantly shifts to a lengthy digression on the churlish ways contemporary authors cope with rejection. Later, the modesty implied by his claim 'I am so far from valuing my self (as the phrase is) upon this Play' is immediately undercut by his mentioning that the play found favour with Charles II.¹⁷⁴ And finally, upon acknowledging that his play was heavily influenced by the French play *Les Facheux* (1661) written by Moliere, wherein he states 'I freely confess my Theft, and am asham'd on't', he again digresses into wider issues of plagiarism exhibited by other Restoration dramatists.¹⁷⁵ This structural arrangement of drawing the reader's attention to a specific issue before cutting away to a lengthy digression enables Shadwell to locate his work within a particular theoretical context whilst simultaneously distancing himself, thereby safeguarding his work from the very criticism he wishes to engage with. The initial portrayal of the humble, modest writer thus serves as a façade for a much harsher critical voice embedded within the digressive structure of the preface. This is particularly evident in his discussion on plagiarism, as he asserts: 'I have the example of some that never yet wrote a Play without stealing most of it; and [...] at length, by continual Thieving, reckon their stolne goods their own too'.¹⁷⁶ The language used here is almost overtly satirical, as Shadwell goes beyond simply claiming instances of plagiarism by suggesting a more profound corruption permeating Restoration London that prevents writers from distinguishing their own originality. This is compounded further by the material value Shadwell places on intellectual and artistic property, as he regards plagiarism as 'so ignoble a thing, that I cannot but believe that he that makes a common practice of stealing other mens Witt, if he could with the same safety, steal

¹⁷³ Anne Cotterill, *Digressive Voices in Early Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.247.

¹⁷⁴ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.9.

¹⁷⁵ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

¹⁷⁶ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

any thing else'.¹⁷⁷ By presenting 'Witt' as a commodity within a public market place where literary ideas take precedence, Shadwell elevates the act of plagiarism from a purely moral literary transgression to a tangibly measurable social crime, one that puts the security of Restoration England at risk, thereby conflating notions of national identity with critical and literary integrity.

Having established the contextual and methodological framework within which his critical voice operates, Shadwell then proceeds to engage with the most contentious issue he finds in Dryden's literary theory: the value of the comedy of *humour*. In doing so, he inevitably encompasses the critical lexis Dryden previously established within the *Essay*; however, by contesting the significance and usage of those key terms pertinent to Dryden's theories (*wit, humor, observation* and *judgment*), Shadwell consequently prescribes to those words an entirely new set of values and applications – especially regarding plot and character. Indeed, Shadwell was clearly dissatisfied with the terminology used throughout Dryden's *Essay* in relation to his appraisal of literary tradition, and so re-evaluates Dryden's critical vocabulary and subsequently transposes it to define his own literary practices.

This begins with a defence of the plot of *The Sullen Lovers*, which has been accused of 'want of design'.¹⁷⁸ Shadwell initially answers this charge by declaring that the intricacies of plotting and action are better suited to 'Playes of a higher Nature' (tragedy) as opposed to the comic genre, and develops this further by stating that within the comic genre, the comedy of humours in particular has an even lesser need to incorporate elaborate plots: 'where there are so many Characters as there are in this, there is yet less design to be expected'.¹⁷⁹ Critically, he argues that within the *humour* play, the portrayal of characters takes precedence, claiming that:

for, if after I had form'd three or four forward prating Fopps in the Play, I made it full of Plott, and Business; at the latter end, where the turns ought to be many, and suddenly following one another, I must have let fall the humor.¹⁸⁰

Shadwell is not simply defending his play against the charge of lacking elaborate plot design, but rather arguing that the function of *humour* does not facilitate it; the preoccupation of *humour* concerns the unity and consistency of its characters, which can only be maintained by a singular and minimalist action – plot is therefore only a subsidiary element. Moreover, this elaboration distinguishes *humour* from other dramatic genres – in terms of its artistic uses and applications

¹⁷⁷ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

¹⁷⁸ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

¹⁷⁹ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

¹⁸⁰ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

of plot – in a way that Dryden’s *Essay* does not. Certainly, while the *Essay* does consider the various characteristics of plot in different modes of dramatic writing (tragedy, humour, repartee), it fails to separate the process that distinguish genres, and rather treats plot as a universal rubric that runs through each mode; conversely, Shadwell argues that the mechanics of plot are variable, and should be used accordingly to fit within the genre of writing the dramatist is utilizing. Thus, as Shadwell emphasizes, whereas an overtly elaborate plot may drive the action of a tragedy, a minimalist plot enables characters to retain their humorous identity. Furthermore, by stating that ‘it would have been easier to me to have made a Plott then to hold up the Humour’, Shadwell demonstrates the skill and delicacy required to incorporate elements of plot in a way that does not encumber the integrity of a play’s characters, thereby adding a more detailed layer of complexity surrounding the creative process of the writing of *humour*.¹⁸¹

The second accusation Shadwell confronts in the preface regards the apparent repetitiveness of his play. However, rather than discussing it independently, he combines it with the previous criticism regarding plot, of which he states ‘I do not apprehend, unless they blame the unity of the Action’.¹⁸² This proves a tactical move by Shadwell, who proceeds to quote Horace as a way of justifying his literary practices in a way that simultaneously addresses both criticisms aimed at him:

*Sit quod vis, simplex duntaxat, & unum.*¹⁸³

[Whatever you wish [to create] let it be simple and uniform]

Not only does this quotation from *Ars Poetica* immediately place Shadwell in an established literary tradition that emphasizes the uniformity of writing, it also, by implication, offers a dualistic function that on one level identifies Shadwell as the classically learned writer, as well as simultaneously suggesting that *humour* itself can represent a classic form of literature. At the very least, by applying Horatian philosophy to his own literary practices, Shadwell is able to elevate the status of the comedy of humours. This is compounded further through his juxtaposition of humorous characters with Horatian precepts:

Whether it be the carrying on of the humours to the last, which the same
Author [Horace] directs me to do.

¹⁸¹ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

¹⁸² Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

¹⁸³ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

Si quid inexpertum Scence committis, & audes
Personam formare novam, Servetur ad Imum
Qualis ab incepto processerit, & sibi constet.¹⁸⁴

[If you entrust an untried theme to the stage, and if you boldly fashion a fresh character, keep it to the end just as it appeared at the beginning, and make it self-consistent]

Although Shadwell takes Horace's advice quite literally here – as opposed to Dryden's approach, which is more interpretive – he still exhibits the same type of re-appropriation found in Dryden's *Essay*, in the sense that although Horace is not himself referring to *humour*, Shadwell adapts his theory and applies it to modern literary practices; the major difference being that whilst Dryden is presenting them as original thoughts to strengthen the notion of cultural development, Shadwell is conspicuously quoting Horace as an eternal authority to demonstrate the skill required to write *humour* and to justify its practice in Restoration England.

However, while Shadwell deploys Horace as a way of rationalizing to the reader the artistic characteristics and definitions concerning *humour*, the model for that mode of writing is taken directly from Jonson: 'I have endeavour'd to represent variety of Humours [...] which was the practice of *Ben Jonson*, whom I think all Dramatick *Poets* ought to imitate'.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, Shadwell praises Jonson for his ability to create 'perfect Representations of Humane Life' – that is, to use the faculty of *judgment* to mimetically portray characters as close to nature within the theatre.¹⁸⁶ Through this comparison, Shadwell is clearly attempting to establish himself as the foremost Restoration dramatist, simultaneously noting his imitation of Jonson's literary lineage whilst criticizing his contemporaries, who 'in their lower Comoedies content themselves with one or two Humours at most'.¹⁸⁷ However, through the structural arrangement of the preface, Shadwell reaches Jonson through Horace, quoting the *Ars Poetica* as a way of defending his imitation of Jonson. Consequently, through this conflation of Horatian precepts and Jonsonian practices, Shadwell portrays himself as a hybrid Jonson-Horace, a figure whose literary ideology is at once classic and contemporary, whilst also functioning as a self-reflective literary tool enabling Shadwell to present himself as the learned literary critic. Shadwell's position is therefore rigidly classic, unlike Dryden's, with Hume stating that '[Dryden's] belief in a radical split between Renaissance and Restoration is perhaps the most prominent feature of his discussions of English literature'.¹⁸⁸ Thus, if we take Dryden's utilization of Horace as a way of establishing himself as a Dryden-Horace figure who represents innovation and change,

¹⁸⁴ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.10.

¹⁸⁵ Shadwell, *Works i*, pp.10-11.

¹⁸⁶ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.11.

¹⁸⁷ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.11.

¹⁸⁸ Hume, *Dryden's Criticism*, p.90.

Shadwell's Jonson-Horace is more preoccupied with reaffirming literary tradition and dramatic form within Restoration culture.

It is this discussion of Jonson in Shadwell's criticism that has drawn the most attention from modern scholars. Certainly, Richard Oden cites Dryden's analyses of Jonson as the principal factor spurring Shadwell's reply, stating that 'Shadwell and his friends among the Wits knew of these statements and of Dryden's *Of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), where he says that Jonson, though learned, was "frugal of wit" [...] this would seem too condescending for the Wits and Shadwell'.¹⁸⁹ Gelber takes this even further, claiming that 'Dryden's statement [...] that Jonson is 'frugal of [wit]', or the witticisms and therefore the conceits of high comedy, Shadwell misunderstands; and he is then offended by what he takes to be Dryden's assertion that Jonson in fact 'wrote his best *playes* without wit' (that is, with none at all)'.¹⁹⁰ However, while Jonson is obviously an integral element of Shadwell's criticism, it becomes apparent that his chief concern centres on Dryden's treatment of dramatic form, of which Jonson is a consequential part.

Shadwell may well have been mimicking Sir Robert Howard's line of criticism of Dryden's *Essay* in the preface to *The Duke of Lerma* (1668), which saw publication only two months before Shadwell's preface was printed. According to Philip Harth, 'amongst other things, Howard had accused him [Dryden] of setting himself up as a legislator for the drama and of enacting rules which all play-wrights were expected to obey'.¹⁹¹ Published again by Herringman, Shadwell would undoubtedly have had access to a printed copy of Howard's preface, where it appears his remarks on Dryden's mistreatment of dramatic form helped Shadwell establish a context in which to align his own critiques. Additionally, this would also have allowed Shadwell to associate his own views with other key Restoration court figures, perhaps as a way of seeking social approval or endorsement from London's aristocracy. Far from being an arbitrary response, then, Shadwell demonstrates an awareness of the types of criticism being directed at Dryden and incorporates them into his own arguments, specifically by debating the critical vocabulary with which Dryden measures different modes of comedy.

Shadwell begins this by contesting the principles Dryden associates with 'wit', wherein he claims Dryden's application of the term is exclusively limited to a particular mode of comic writing:

[he] imagining, that all the Wit in *playes* consisted in bringing two persons upon the Stage to break Jests, and to bob one another, which they call Repartie, not considering that there is more wit and

¹⁸⁹ Richard Oden, *Dryden and Shadwell: The Literary Controversy and Mac Flecknoe (1688-1979)* (New York: Delmar, 1977), p.3.

¹⁹⁰ Gelber, *The Just and the Lively*, p.104.

¹⁹¹ Philip Harth, *Contexts of Dryden's Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p.5.

invention requir'd in the finding out good Humor.¹⁹²

Critically, Shadwell is not disagreeing outright with Dryden's notion that 'wit' manifests itself as a delightful expression of language and sharpness of conceit, but rather expands on the somewhat restrictive functions he prescribes to wit; as opposed to it simply being deployed as a tool to 'break Jests, and to bob one another', Shadwell argues that not only can wit encompass the artistic process of 'finding out good humour', but also that the faculty of *judgment* required for humour actually necessitates more wit in comparison to repartee. To support his argument Shadwell again provides the example of uniform characters, noting that 'For, in the Writing of a Humor, a Man is confin'd not to swerve from Character, and oblig'd to say nothing but what is proper to it'.¹⁹³ In doing so, he completely subverts Dryden's premise that reduces humorous characters to base dramatic components devoid of the pleasantness of language or creative imagination, and fosters the notion that *judgment* and *observation* are themselves vital instruments for artistic inspiration, endowed with all the witticisms used for other modes of comic writing. Shadwell clearly felt dissatisfied with the prevailing literary models and understanding of wit, as well as taking issue with Dryden's attempt to establish himself as the dominant authority on literary form, and therefore attempts to redefine those critical terms as a way of publicly discrediting Dryden's conceptions to both substantiate and promote his own critical thoughts. This at once demonstrates the immediate concern Restoration dramatists had in defining the literary landscape which they were a part of, as well as emphasizing the instability of such critical terms in a constantly unsettled and rapidly shifting theoretical environment.

While the preface to *The Sullen Lovers* is not as expansive as the *Essay*, it demonstrates the intellectual exercise of engaging with literary ideology that would become quite influential in the following years. Unlike the elaborate and lengthy format represented by Dryden's *Essay*, the preface offered to writers a more succinct and appropriate space to justify their literary methods and disseminate their ideas to a wider audience. Certainly, this allowed prospective buyers of the printed playtext an opportunity to read the preface before the actual dramatic work, potentially exposing themselves to the critical beliefs of the author even if they were initially unaware of any wider literary debates. In this way, the preface takes on the form of a conversation between writer and reader, as opposed to a fictionalized aesthetic that challenges its audience to understand its concepts. It is this conversational form that allows the preface to be occasioned by other writings as it enters the literary marketplace, and so forms a complex

¹⁹² Shadwell, *Works i*, p.11.

¹⁹³ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.11.

network of literary dialogues. This is especially exhibited in the preface to Shadwell's second play, *The Royal Shepherdess* (1669), wherein he not only continues to engage with issues raised by Dryden's *Essay*, but also echoes literary principles from his previous work, again by employing Horatian dictums taken from *Ars Poetica* within his critical discussions.

First, Shadwell seemingly contradicts the comparison Lisideius provides in the *Essay* between French and English modes of narration and action. Indeed, Lisideius argues that 'The words of a Writer which describe it lively, will make a deeper impression of belief in us then all the Actor can insinuate into us', before claiming that the superiority of French drama lies in its ability to convey in narration what the action can not justly represent, and that English audiences are too unrefined to appreciate this.¹⁹⁴ He then turns to Horace as a way of vindicating this statement:

Nor does this any thing contradict the opinion of *Horace*, where he tells us,

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.*¹⁹⁵

[The mind is stirred less vividly by what finds entrance through the ears than by what is brought before the faithful eyes]

Dryden seems curiously self-conscious here about his appropriation of Horace, requiring a lengthy explanation by Lisideius to justify its use in this moment and to reaffirm in no way does it contradict the literary authority he has been consulting throughout the *Essay*. Conversely, Shadwell argues that 'though the French do often relate the most considerable Actions in their Plays [...] the English will not be content without seeing such Actions done, and this is one of those many things, that make our English Plays so much exceed the French'.¹⁹⁶ Critically, not only does Shadwell disagree with Lisideius' premise regarding visual action by placing English drama above French, he does so by referring to the same quotation from the *Ars Poetica* (*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,/Quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus*). This may be a strategic move that aims to undermine Dryden's attempt to establish himself as the classically learned authority on Horace, as Shadwell appeals to the superior achievements of English literature and places Restoration standards within a classical tradition that values action above narration. This demonstrates the increasingly competitive and interpretive experience of the *Ars* in the period, as both writers draw on the same moment to argue two contradictory points.

¹⁹⁴ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.41.

¹⁹⁵ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.41.

¹⁹⁶ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.99.

The use of Horace throughout this preface highlights Shadwell's current prescription to a universal set of principles that were initially conceived by the classics. This is particularly evident when he shifts his attention to the 'Rules of Morality and good Manners' – with the emphasis on 'Rules' implying a precedence and obligation that all literary works must observe irrespective of social or cultural circumstances.¹⁹⁷ Despite proclaiming his play upholds virtue and punishes vice, he ironically insists those qualities have drawn contempt from critics as he evokes his earlier preface's depiction of a deteriorating literary society. Indeed, Shadwell criticises the current state of London theatres by irately declaring:

It pleases most to see Vice encouraged, by bringing the Characters of debauch'd People upon the Stage, and making them pass for fine Gentlemen who openly profess Swearing, Drinking, Whoring, breaking Windows, beating Constables [...] And that is esteem'd, among us, a Gentile gayety of Humor.¹⁹⁸

By failing to uphold the classical precept of morality, Restoration drama has degraded itself by allowing corrupt and perverted characters to fester within its theatres. Moreover, Shadwell associates these decadences with the practice of wit and repartee as advocated by Dryden, and derides those who consider 'high comedy' (Dryden's term) as representing the 'Gentile gayety of Humor'. Consequently, he reveals here his interest in the character types that contribute to dramatic form, claiming those who revert to 'Swearing, Drinking, Whoring, breaking Windows' misrepresent the values of humour, thus subverting Dryden's previous evaluations of the comic mode and endorsement of repartee.

Furthermore, this passage may well be a response to Dryden's recent theatrical activity. Prior to *The Royal Shepherdess's* publication in 1669, Dryden had staged a revised edition of *The Wild Gallant* at the Theatre Royal in 1667, a play that was originally chastised for its character depictions, with Pepys referring to it as 'so poor a thing as never I saw in my life'.¹⁹⁹ Also, in 1668, the King's Company performed Dryden's *An Evenings' Love*, which likewise received the same criticism from Pepys, who notes 'it being very smutty'.²⁰⁰ Shadwell not only condemns Dryden's latest output, but by using the topical nature of the preface he is able to recreate the types of images readers would instantly be able to identify within his works. However, Shadwell goes beyond simple accusations of literary ignobility to suggest these works represent a threat on the fundamental principles of English society, for to portray such morally corrupt characters

¹⁹⁷ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.100.

¹⁹⁸ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.100.

¹⁹⁹ Pepys, *Diary iv*, p.56.

²⁰⁰ Pepys, *Diary ix*, p.247.

is also 'contrary to the Customs and Laws of all civilized Nations'.²⁰¹ Again, this is most likely in response to Dryden's appointment as poet laureate the previous year, as Shadwell recognises how the stage became bound up with the Restoration social and political landscape. Shadwell portrays these authors as unfit for the title, arguing how any such playwright 'debases himself to think of nothing but pleasing the Rabble', and surely turns to Horace to validate this:

But the Office of a Poet is,

*Simul & jucunda, & idonea dicere vitae.*²⁰²

[[Poets seek...] to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life]

'Office' implicitly alludes to the position of the poet laureate, as the precept simultaneously highlights both the moral qualities and public responsibilities alarmingly absent in Dryden's work. This clearly represents an attempt to discredit both Dryden's writing and social status. By using Horace here, Shadwell is able to assert that Dryden is not only rejecting a literary tradition, but also betraying his duty as poet laureate to uphold the civil and judicial standards of Restoration England.

III

The critical convictions that appear in Shadwell's first two essays carry forward into the preface that accompanied *The Humorists* (1671), wherein Shadwell criticises those who write purely for entertainment without any concern for moral instruction. In doing so, Shadwell turns to Horace to define the role of the poet as critic:

*Pectus praeceptis format amicis,
Asperitatis & invidiae, corrector & irae,
Recte facta refert, orientia tempora notis
Instruit exemplis.*²⁰³

[He moulds the heart by friendly precepts, correcting roughness and envy and anger; he tells of noble deeds, and provides the rising age with famous examples]

By contrasting Dryden's appropriation of Horace with that of Shadwell's, Hammond states that

²⁰¹ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.100.

²⁰² Shadwell, *Works i*, p.100.

²⁰³ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.183.

Shadwell was 'unimaginatively repeating dicta from Horace to clinch his argument about the moral purpose of writing without reflecting on either the historical circumstances of Horace's original remarks, or their applicability to modern conditions'.²⁰⁴ However, while this may be true of Shadwell's first two essays, by the time he writes the preface to *The Humorists* one can not only see a development in his application of Horatian precepts, but also a more considered and polished approach to his own literary methodology. Rather than simply relying on the above quotation to substantiate his claims, Shadwell instead moulds it around his own literary argument. Indeed, while agreeing with Horace that the primary responsibility of a poet is to refine and correct, he specifically advocates:

I think Comedy more useful than Tragedy; because the Vices and Follies in *courts* [...] so they concern but a few; whereas the Cheats, Villanies, and troublesome Follies, in the common conversation of the World, are of concernment to all the Body of Mankind.²⁰⁵

Horace thus becomes subsumed within Shadwell's argument that tragedy is ill suited for moral instruction due to its courtly setting (making its contents obscure); conversely, comedy is able to convey universally accessible subject matters that offer audiences a more self-reflective experience. Furthermore, Shadwell associates this quality specifically with the comedy of humours by emphasising the 'ridiculous' nature of its portrayals: 'to render Vices and Fopperies very ridiculous, is much a greater punishment than Tragedy'.²⁰⁶ This re-appropriation thus provides the Horatian dictum with a greater purchase on contemporary literature, as it not only elevates the status of humour above other dramatic forms, but also presents it as part of a classical tradition. This assists Shadwell in defining a set of principles for the comedy of humours that he clearly felt needed to be established as a result of Dryden's *Essay*.

One particular principle Shadwell is keen to stress is the universality of a play's dramatic characters. However, while Shadwell does eventually provide a critical argument for this aspect writing, his initial concern stems from accusations that his own plays display the likeness of targeted individuals:

I challenge the most clamorous and violent of my Enemies (who would have the Town believe that every thing I write, is too nearly reflecting upon persons) to accuse me, with truth, of representing the real Actions [...] of any one particular Man, or Woman living.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*, p.46.

²⁰⁵ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.184.

²⁰⁶ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.184.

²⁰⁷ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.185.

This is likely a response to the ‘clamorous opposition of a numerous party’ mentioned earlier in the preface that were ‘resolved, as much as they could, to damn it [the play]’.²⁰⁸ These disruptions were more than likely carried out by associates of Sir Robert Howard based upon Shadwell’s supposed caricature of him as Sir Positive At-All in *The Sullen Lovers*. Pepys, upon seeing the play for the third time notes ‘I find the better, too. By Sir Positive At-all, I understand, is meant Sir Rob. Howard’.²⁰⁹ These charges circulated precipitously through numerous London social circles, with Pepys stating only a few days later that ‘to see how this play of *Sir Positive Att all*, in abuse of Sir Rob. Howard, doth take, all the Duke’s [of York] and everybody’s talk being of that’.²¹⁰ This gossip could prove potentially damaging to Shadwell, especially as contemporary ‘comic theorists almost universally condemned personal ridicule in favour of a more general satire of types’, and eventually reached a point where Shadwell felt the need to profess his innocence in print – taking advantage of the formal and occasional nature of the preface to professionally distance himself from the churlish imbroglio (implicitly anticipating the competitive and factional tensions beginning to emerge in London literary groups).²¹¹ However, despite maintaining a sense of humility in defending his plays, he still writes a thinly masked gibe aimed at his opponents: ‘Nor will any apply to themselves what I write in this kind, that have but the wit, or honesty, to think tolerably well of themselves’ – touché?²¹²

Regardless of any intentional parody of Howard, Shadwell’s claim that the characters in his plays ‘are not appropriate to any one *Fop*, but applicable to many’, denotes a familiar – almost ubiquitous – concept within Restoration theories of comedy: that in order for a play to be universally representable it must derive its linguistic and dramatic depictions from subjects directly recognisable to the average spectator.²¹³ In the prologue to *The Man of Mode* (1676), Sir Car Scroope informs the audience that:

For Heav'n be thank't 'tis not so wise an Age,
But your own Follies may supply the Stage.
[...]
While at your Doors are to be daily found,
Such loads of Dunghil to manure the ground.
'Tis by your Follies that we players thrive.²¹⁴

²⁰⁸ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.183.

²⁰⁹ Pepys, *Diary ix*, p.186.

²¹⁰ Pepys, *Diary ix*, p.190.

²¹¹ Brian Corman, ‘Comedy’, p.53.

²¹² Shadwell, *Works i*, p.186.

²¹³ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.185.

²¹⁴ Danchin, p.706-7.

It is through the representation of these identifiable activities that the play intends to function as a mirror for society: ‘Why shou’d you, when we hold it, break the Glass?’.²¹⁵ Similarly, in distinguishing between tragedy and comedy in his preface to *Theatrum poetarum* (1675), Edward Philips writes that ‘Comedy sets before us the humours, converse, and designs of the most ordinary sort of people’.²¹⁶ Traces of Shadwell’s criticism is evident in both examples; however, while Scroope and Philips treat the principle as a general rule for comedy, Shadwell specifically locates it within the parameters of the comedy of humours, claiming the form itself functions through such generalised and ‘ordinary’ portrayals: ‘For if a man should bring such a humor upon the Stage [...] as only belongs to one, or two persons, it would not be understood by the Audience, but would be thought [...] wholly unnatural, and would be no jest to them’.²¹⁷ Furthermore, in his discussion on the role of realism and contemporary responses to dramatic characters, Hume recognises this emphasis on universal characters as facilitating the moral aim of comedy, stating that ‘the bulk of contemporary critical theory is postulated on the traditional view that comedy works by ridiculing low characters’.²¹⁸ In a later essay, Hume again echoes this idea whilst also considering instances of deliberate portrayals of individuals, stating ‘it can be teasing or frivolous, but it is usually aggressively nasty and is one of the commonest varieties of harsh satire’.²¹⁹ However, by isolating the practice of *humor* writing from other, more general formulations of comedy, Shadwell’s theory on the universality of characters offers more than a simple moral and ethical consideration of social and dramatic protocol; rather, it presents a functional theoretical component necessary for a specific mode of writing.

By addressing these accusations, Shadwell unsurprisingly compares himself to Jonson – ‘Mr. *Jonson*, I believe, was very unjustly taxed for personating particular men, but it will ever be the fate of them, that write humours of the *Town*’.²²⁰ Subsequently, as Kewes notes, Shadwell ‘reiterates his conviction, first expressed in the preface to *The Sullen Lovers*, that imitation of suitable models is the surest means of achieving professional excellence’.²²¹ Conversely, the idea that ‘professional excellence’ was Shadwell’s ultimate goal has been examined by Love, who

²¹⁵ Danchin, p.707.

²¹⁶ Edward Philips, *Theatrum poetarum* (London: 1675), sig.B8r.

²¹⁷ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.186.

²¹⁸ Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.47.

²¹⁹ Robert D. Hume, ‘The socio-politics of London comedy from Jonson to Steele’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol.74 (2011), pp.187-217, p.202.

²²⁰ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.186.

²²¹ Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation*, p.46.

instead proposes he was a 'professional who liked to pose as an amateur'.²²² The reputation of 'amateur' in the Restoration was far from a pejorative, and was the basis for Rochester's praise of Shadwell in the *Allusion to Horace*, wherein he outlines qualities such as 'hasty', 'unfinished', and 'nature' that not only associates Shadwell with the court wits, but which also existed in a creative context that still allowed for literary greatness, with Love proclaiming how Rochester's lines imply Shadwell 'was a praiseworthy writer because of his accommodation of professional talents to an ethic of underachievement'.²²³ Of course, Rochester was writing a few years later (1675/6) against a distinctly alerted theatrical and social backdrop, and was strategically encompassing these earlier theoretical exchanges to sharpen his own ideological and satirical attack against Dryden (discussed in chapters 4 and 5). The notion of modulating his status as a professional playwright was clearly absent when Shadwell composed *The Humorists* in 1671. Rather, he attempts to underscore the view that dramatic professionalism can be achieved through appropriate imitation – particularly through Jonson. One way he does this is by juxtaposing Jonson with esteemed historical figures (Julius Caesar, Archimedes) as a way of presenting him as a classical symbol whose achievements represents the pinnacle of his profession. According to Shadwell, the rejection of such models would be 'an obstruction to the progress of all learning and knowledge in the world. Men of all Professions ought certainly to follow the best in theirs-theirs'.²²⁴ The rhetorical emphasis surrounding Shadwell's construction of the 'professional' enables him to simultaneously discredit Dryden – 'my particular friend' – and establish himself as the period's leading professional playwright. Moreover, by presenting Jonson as the epitome of literary professionalism, it is Shadwell as the imitator that is more suited to supersede that role as opposed to Dryden.²²⁵ To reject Jonson is to therefore encumber oneself in achieving the status of professional writer. Likewise, by positing that through imitation one is able to advance 'all learning and knowledge in the world', Shadwell again precludes Dryden from having any meaningful impact on English literary culture. However, the 'progress' that Shadwell identifies is not one of difference or innovation, as it is for Dryden, but rather a perpetuation of existing principles and ideologies that must be preserved in their current – and in Shadwell's view already perfected – state (the distinction of which leads to one of the fundamental concepts concerning the role of criticism and the critic in the period).

Consequently, Shadwell's preface demonstrates the social-literary convention of anonymity when discussing other writers. As with Dryden's *Essay*, this may well be a measure

²²² Harold Love, 'Shadwell, Rochester and the Crisis of Amateurism', *Thomas Shadwell Reconsider'd: Essays in Criticism*, 20 (1996), 119-134, pp.119-120.

²²³ Love, 'Shadwell, Rochester and the Crisis of Amateurism', p.119.

²²⁴ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.187.

²²⁵ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.187.

employed by Shadwell to avoid any satirical inference. Certainly, as Andrew Bricker notes in his discussion on satirical naming, ‘satirists employed such practices to satisfy a dubious literary-ethical standard [...] a way to name but not name; a questionable way to skirt an ethical commonplace [...] such practices allowed satirists to feign a margin of ethical safety’.²²⁶ While Shadwell is not writing satirically here (at least overtly), the same apprehensions are displayed in this essay intended for print distribution. To name Dryden – particularly in print – may bring the validation of Shadwell’s views into disrepute, diluting the authority he is attempting to assert as well as undermining any attempts at establishing a decorous medium of critical debate. Shadwell thus resumes a rhetoric of humility to deliver a veiled critique, ‘though I will not say his is the best way of writing, yet, I am sure, his manner of writing it is much the best that ever was’, allowing him to uphold the required stylistic decorum of the printed marketplace.²²⁷ The same tactic is apparent in Howard’s criticism, who, despite referring to Dryden’s *Essay* directly, never mentions him by name, and maintains that ‘none has written in that way better than himself’.²²⁸ Critically, this anonymity is aided by the occasional conditions that comprise the essay format, as Shadwell trusts the ability of the reader to both identify Dryden and show an awareness of recent topical issues, thereby enabling him to maximise the prefatory space by offering a comprehensive critical perspective to an already predisposed audience. Moreover, this self-effacing vernacular exemplifies how the essay itself develops into a conversational format, one that, through implicit intertextual referencing, enables the critic to negotiate ideas between himself, present writers, and the general reader.

The preface to *The Humorists* thus enables Shadwell to contest the critical lexicon of Dryden’s *Essay*, challenging the conceptions and creative cognitions of its theoretical vocabulary and ideologies. This initially stems from a simple appraisal of Jonson’s writing, which, according to Shadwell, contained ‘more true Wit than any of his Contemporaries’, a statement that significantly contradicts the premise of the *Essay* which distinguishes Jonson within a particular artistic sphere where wit was less prominent – if at all required.²²⁹ Indeed, for Dryden the writing of humour, or ‘low comedy’, was predicated on a strict adherence to mimetic images achieved through the faculty of observation, leaving no space for the type of eloquent and inspired language realised through wit, the hallmark of repartee, or ‘high comedy’, thereby creating a form of linear hierarchy. Conversely, Shadwell goes on to say of Jonson ‘nor can I think, to the writing of his humors [...] that wit was not required, but Judgment; where by the

²²⁶ Andrew Benjamin Bricker, ‘Libel and satire: the problem with naming’, *ELH*, 83 (2014), 889-921, p.910.

²²⁷ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.187.

²²⁸ Robert Howard, *The Duke of Lerma* (London: 1668), sig. A5r.

²²⁹ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.187.

way, they speak as if judgment were a less thing than wit'.²³⁰ This brings into play two key concepts: first, it requires that wit itself is not exclusive to a particular mode of writing, and is in fact apparent in the composition of humour; secondly, it challenges Dryden's theory on the subordination of the faculty of judgment in relation to wit as previously outlined by Jenson. Thus, whereas Dryden's critical definitions of 'wit' and 'judgment' appear hierarchical, Shadwell conceives them as not only more fluid in terms of their ability to inhabit different modes of comic writing, but in the process reassesses their prevailing literary valuations.

Indeed, Shadwell rejects the notion that judgment becomes subsumed within the cognitive processes of wit, postulating instead: 'but certainly it was meant otherwise by nature, who subjected wit to the government of judgment, which is the noblest faculty of the mind [...] nay judgment does indeed comprehend wit'.²³¹ This contradiction between Dryden and Shadwell highlights the lack of philological unanimity concerning conjectural vocabulary; whereas for Dryden wit is the true reflection of a writer's power and connection with nature, for Shadwell it is judgment that nature ordains the 'noblest faculty of the mind'. This critically rearranges the composition of previous Restoration derivations of the term, as Shadwell presents judgment not as a form of learned art gained through experience or practise, but rather an inherent ability that stems from a writer's empathy with the rawness of human nature. In doing so, Shadwell refutes Jenson's conflation of 'wit' and 'judgment' – wherein the latter is reduced to a controlling mechanism for the more expansive inventiveness of wit – and proposes that judgment is in fact the ingenious talent of the writer and therefore the primary imaginative agent in the creative writing process.

This subsequently leads to Shadwell's claim that:

The reason given by some, why *Johnson* needed not wit in writing humor, is, because humor is the effect of observation, and observation the effect of judgment; but observation is as much necessary in all other Plays, as in Comedies of humor.²³²

While this statement echoes Dryden's remarks on Jonson in the *Essay* concerning the roles of observation and judgment, it also reinforces the inadequacy of the literary hierarchy it attempts to establish by emphasising the necessity of 'observation' in *all* modes of dramatic writing. Certainly, by associating Jonson almost exclusively with the faculty of judgment, Dryden limits both its value and practitioners to lower scopes of literary precedence – 'Humour was his proper

²³⁰ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.187.

²³¹ Shadwell, *Works i*, pp.187-88.

²³² Shadwell, *Works i*, p.188.

sphere' – thus preventing any movement into other, more desirable modes of drama. This model clearly proved derisory for Shadwell, who rejects the notion that literary styles, and in turn the vocabulary and principles used to define those styles, can be restricted to specific genres of writing, claiming that 'even in the highest Tragedies, where the Scene lies in Courts, the Poet must have observed the Customs of Courts, and the manner of conversing there, or he will commit many indecencies'.²³³ The same notion would later ground Thomas Rymer's construction of tragic characters, whereby the poet is 'not to leave his reason, and blindly abandon himself to follow fancy; for then his fancy might be monstrous, might be singular and please no body's maggot but his own, but reason is to be his guide [...] and can never carry him from what is Natural'.²³⁴ The anxieties presented in both texts derives from a 'fancy' or 'wit' that leads one away from 'what is Natural', which can consequently only be regained through 'reason' or 'observation'. Again, such faculties are not simply a means of circumscribing excessive imagination, but are themselves aligned with the artfulness of expressing human sentiment. By expanding the parameters of 'judgment' to encompass multiple genres, Shadwell not only vindicates its practice within the Restoration dramatic scene, but by associating it with the perceived heights of tragedy, he is also able to significantly increase its critical and literary value.

Shadwell's prefatory essays subsequently sheds new light on the instability of poetic language during this period. Indeed, while the bulk of modern scholarship often reduces Shadwell's disputes with Dryden to superficial disagreements over the values of Ben Jonson and dramatic comedy, by paying closer attention to the critical lexis of these earlier prefaces, we can instead see how those aspects emerge from Shadwell's broader attempts to re-define the theoretical vocabulary used in Restoration dramatic criticism. They exhibit a sophisticated intertextuality that centred on fundamental notions of 'wit', 'humour', 'judgement', and 'observation', as Shadwell aims to controvert the rigidly linear hierarchy Dryden initially prescribes to these terms by re-imagining their creative status and artistic function within the cognitive processes of dramatic composition. Moreover, it becomes evident that Shadwell drew heavily on Horace, particularly the *Ars Poetica*. Dryden had already demonstrated the centrality of Horace to Restoration literary criticism in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* – both as a vehicle of stylistic decorum and an arbitrator on key poetic principles – which Shadwell would emulate. However, by analysing more closely Shadwell's uses of Horace, we gain new insights into the varied ways writers appropriated the *Ars Poetica*. Rather than insipidly quoting Horatian dicta to support his views, as he has sometimes been accused of, Shadwell's rapport with Horace is far

²³³ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.188.

²³⁴ Thomas Rymer, *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, ed. Curt Zimansky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p.62.

more acute, as he subsumes Horatian precepts into his own theoretical arguments in order to re-conceptualise and elevate Restoration dramatic practices, such as his attempt to locate 'humour' within a classical tradition. Furthermore, that the *Ars Poetica* itself became a source of intellectual competition and interpretation is evidenced by the fact that Dryden and Shadwell both quote the same lines of Horace's text to argue two conflicting critical perspectives when comparing French and English drama.

In the first chapter, we saw how different translations of Horace's *Ars Poetica* encompassed the emergent critical vocabulary of the Restoration, as translators looked to the classics to help stabilise a nebulous poetic language that became linked to a broader sense of national identity. In this second chapter, we have seen how writers re-appropriated specific elements of the *Ars Poetica* within their own works to re-define the conjectural vocabulary underpinning Restoration literary theory, and in the process establish new modes of critical discourse in the form of printed essays and prefaces. Horace was thus instrumental in shaping Restoration literary culture, dictating the kinds of issues that preoccupied writers and critics of the period as well as informing the manner and style of critical inquiry, including, as we will see in chapter 5, theories of satire. To understand the reception of Horace and the *Ars Poetica* is to therefore understand the prevailing literary ideologies of the age that satirists themselves began to engage with. It is to these satirists this thesis will now turn.

Chapter 3

Samuel Butler: satirist and theorist

The 'Poetical Thesaurus' and Butler's commonplace books

When he was but a Boy, he would make observations and reflections on every Thing one sayd, or did, and Censure it to be either well or ill.

John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, p. 386.²³⁵

John Aubrey's account of Samuel Butler here reveals an individual who was not only a keen observer of the world and of human behaviour, but also a critic who embodied the values of Restoration England. The description of Butler's practice of continually noting and judging all that he saw in particular reflects the importance he ascribed to empiricism – the method of gaining knowledge through meticulous study and observation. This epistemological approach was popular during the Restoration, and was a major component in the newly formed Royal Society's scientific doctrine, which, after being granted a Royal Charter in 1662, was 'devoted to the study of natural philosophy [...] centering on natural and mechanical problems but extending through the life sciences towards medicine and through chemistry and applied mathematics towards technology'.²³⁶ Despite often being critical of the society, Butler clearly valued this advancing empirical methodology.²³⁷ Indeed, in one of his commonplace books he considers that in order to perceive the material world one must first gain knowledge through sensory experience, writing that 'the Intellect cannot pursue any thing beyond the reach of Sense, but by observing the Instructions which it reciev's from Sense'.²³⁸ Throughout his life Butler would record thoughts such as these in various commonplace books that contained observations and reflections on a multitude of topics ranging from philosophical inquiry to social trends and fashions. Alongside these eclectic prose passages he would also inscribe several verses and other pieces of poetry engaging with an equally diverse range of subjects, such as law, religion, and history, in which he displays the same empirical analysis.

Furthermore, as the pages of his commonplace books reveal, Butler was also a keen observer of the period's attitudes towards writing, and in the process displays a heightened

²³⁵ John Aubrey, *Brief Lives i*, p.386.

²³⁶ Michael Hunter, *Science and Society in Restoration England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.32.

²³⁷ Butler wrote several satires criticising the Royal Society, including 'The Elephant in the Moon' and 'Satyr upon the Royal Society', printed in *The Genuine Remains* by Thyer in 1759, the original manuscript of which is now held in the British Library, Add. MS 32625.

²³⁸ Samuel Butler, *Prose Observations*, ed. Hugh De Quehen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p.82.

sensitivity for prevailing literary theories. Amongst his erratic scribblings one can find passages concerning Aristotle, theatre, rhyme, translation, print culture, satire, and a horde of other topics. He also composed several prose and verse passages that engaged specifically with a number of key terms and concepts that formed part of a wider debate within Restoration literary spheres – these primarily centred on ideas regarding wit, judgment, reason, art, and nature. These works were never published during Butler’s lifetime, and they remained unprinted until 1759, when the writer and editor Robert Thyer authorized the first published edition after acquiring his manuscript remains. As a textual object, the history of Butler’s manuscript remains prior to Thyer publishing them is quite complex.²³⁹ Upon his death in 1680, following years of poverty, Butler named William Longueville, a bencher of the Inner Temple, as his heir. According to the seventeenth-century biographer Robert North, Longueville became Butler’s sole remaining friend and patron, to whom Butler had left all his papers, which comprised fair copies of several satires and prose tracts, including two collections of miscellaneous prose observations and verses. While some of this material was classified under separate headings, many passages existed as separate, random pieces which were perhaps intended to be rewritten into the appropriate classified sections. This idea must also have occurred to Longueville, who accordingly transcribed these scattered scribblings (both prose and verse) into a quarto manuscript book, in which he wrote under 84 headings incorporating material from Butler’s classified and unclassified folios – some of which are now lost. Longueville’s commonplace book thus represents a unique and sole source of Butler’s prose writings. Upon Longueville’s death in 1721, the manuscripts passed to his son, Charles Longueville, who subsequently willed them to his own natural son, John Clark, in 1750. Clark became acquainted with Thyer upon moving to Chester, where Thyer secured permission to publish selections from Butler’s manuscript, which he titled *Genuine Remains in Verse and Prose of Mr. Samuel Butler*.

Critically, in this edition, Thyer provides an interesting comment in a footnote regarding the composition and purpose of Butler’s commonplace book poetry, in which he characterizes them as forming a ‘poetical *Thesaurus*’, going on to say that ‘whether he intended ever to publish any of them, as separate distinct Thoughts, or to interweave them into some future Composition, a Thing very usual with him, cannot be ascertained’.²⁴⁰ The phrase ‘poetical thesaurus’ suggests Thyer viewed Butler’s verses as a collection of lexical descriptions and classifications in which Butler was endeavouring to ascribe a definitive set of values to this emergent critical

²³⁹ For a full account of the textual history of Butler’s manuscript remains and printed editions of his works, see Quehen, *Prose Observations*, xvii-xxiv; a brief summation is provided here.

²⁴⁰ Robert Thyer, *The genuine remains in verse and prose of Mr. Samuel Butler* (London: 1759), p.228.

vocabulary. Thyer also tentatively proposes that Butler may have envisioned these pieces as being published, or at least read in the public domain, thereby implying his poetry went beyond personal study and in fact served a wider ideological objective, one that aimed to bring stability to a highly contested and constantly fluctuating critical language. Of course, as Thyer himself acknowledges, it is impossible to discern whether or not Butler intended this poetry to be published in revised form; however, while his works remained private they nevertheless reveal an individual who was deeply interested in Restoration standards of language and poetical practice.

Thyer's uncertainty regarding the composition and purpose of Butler's writings is indicative of the challenges one faces when approaching the commonplace book as a textual object. In her discussion on the ways in which commonplace books convert printed, manuscript, and oral sources into hand-written manuscript form, Heidi Hackel states that 'nowhere is the relation between print and manuscript culture more complicated, and nowhere are the roles of the writer and reader more blurred, than in early modern commonplace books'.²⁴¹ As a tool for learning, business purposes, and the storing of knowledge, the compiling of commonplace books was certainly a regular practice during the seventeenth century, having long been established in school syllabuses where students were taught how to organise themes and topics and were also instructed in various verse compositions.²⁴² As a graduate of Kings School in Worcester, Butler undoubtedly represents a product of this type of education, in which meticulous note taking served an intellectual, and perhaps even a social function leading into adulthood. Butler would maintain this practice throughout his life, particularly during his reflections on Restoration literature, where he would often revise or expand on ideas explored in earlier passages. In doing so, Butler reveals the extent of his reading, which in turn shows his alertness to prevailing literary values.²⁴³ From a social perspective he was certainly well placed; his friendship with Thomas Shadwell – whom he assisted in the writing of his play *The Virtuoso* in 1676 (also a satire on the Royal Society) – and popularity amongst Buckingham's circle of court wits, exposed him to all manner of topical issues and theoretical concepts. Immersed in a variety of both printed and oral sources, such exposure clearly had a profound influence on Butler's commonplace book writing. For example, many of his ideas (such as his discussion of 'wit' and 'judgment') correspond with those debated by Dryden and Shadwell in printed paratexts, while

²⁴¹ Heidi Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.143.

²⁴² For a discussion on the pedagogical practice of commonplace books and their wider social function during the Restoration see Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp.215-220.

²⁴³ Hackel discusses the relationship between reading and the intellectual purpose of the commonplace book in *Reading Material in Early Modern England*, pp.145-146.

many of his analogies and verses possess a colloquial quality, capturing the witty verbal exchanges between friends and colleagues.

Such richness of topics, intellectual stimuli, and both printed and verbal sources become synthesised with Butler's own literary values and empirical standards, all of which combine within the pages of his commonplace book. This consequently transforms the material text into a site of convergence, one that blurs the boundaries between public and private, revealing not only the types of ideas Butler was reading and hearing about, but also in what ways they were read and understood, as well as to what purpose they were being used. Butler's commonplace book thus sat at the centre of a complex network of intertextual and oral exchange, bringing his private manuscript reflections on literary principles in dialogue with wider Restoration views and ideals.²⁴⁴ This transformative space creates a unique relationship between Butler's prose and verse writing, where there is a clear reciprocity between his prose observations and poetical composition. This reciprocity endows Butler's poetry with a perceptiveness that draws on his empirical practice, at once enabling his verses to reflect on cultural processes with greater critical insight as well as express different ideas in creatively coherent ways. It is entirely possible that Butler intended to (and in fact did) read these passages aloud to his colleagues for both amusement and as a way of increasing his social and professional standing. Rather than a fragmented series of private scribbles then, Butler's 'Poetical *Thesaurus*' represents a cognitive exercise that engages with the period's linguistic and poetic anxieties.

One such example is Butler's musings of Restoration conceptions of 'wit', a term that he discusses in depth across multiple headings in both prose and verse. At best, Butler's discussion of this subject is variable, while at other times he appears to contradict himself entirely; yet, through close inspection it is possible to identify certain patterns of thought and distinctions between the various values, conceptions and applications Butler ascribes to wit, as well as its relationship to other cognitive faculties (such as reason or judgement). Throughout his commonplace books the term takes on a different set of values and properties in different contexts – the two most prominent being to denote the general intellectual capacity of man and as an artistic quality that elevates creative writing. Critically, despite the dissimilarities between these concepts, they are united by a shared paradigm in which Butler views wit as a commodity, one that possesses material value within the public marketplace. However, his attitude towards this commodity is one of apprehension, stating that 'Wit is very chargeable, and not to be maintained in it's Necessary Leasure, and Expences, at an ordinary Rate: It is the worst Trade in

²⁴⁴ Fred Schurink notes the merits of exploring commonplace books as a means to understanding a given culture's practice of reading, writing, and thinking in 'Manuscript Commonplace Books, Literature, and Reading in Early Modern England', in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73 (2010), 453-469, pp.453-457.

the world to live upon'.²⁴⁵ The issue here is that despite wit being a product that can be exploited for profit, its economic value is unpredictable, having no fixed or 'ordinary Rate' with which to secure financial stability. This way of imagining wit subsequently informs his verse passage under the heading 'Wit and Folly', where he writes: 'Wit beare's no Rate but as it pleases:/So Pearels in Fishes, are Diseases'.²⁴⁶ Butler's reemployment of 'Rate' here highlights the interrelationship between his prose and verse passages, where it now takes on a new cultural aspect. Indeed, while the couplet maintains the commodity analogy, the focus shifts from financial worth to intellectual worth, where it now possesses value only 'as it pleases'; the 'Rate' of wit is thus proportional to its ability to entertain. Consequently, wit is portrayed as dependant on the specific tastes of a society in a particular moment, and these of course are subject to sudden and unexpected changes. The intellectual value of 'wit' thus exists in a constantly fluctuating state. Furthermore, Butler's descriptions of wit as an unstable commodity may itself be a reflection on the highly disputed theoretical conceptions of the term within wider social and professional literary spheres.

Certainly, throughout his commonplace book Butler provides several assessments on the role wit plays in the creative writing process. Regarding poetic composition itself, under the heading 'Poetry', he has this to say: 'As wine, that with its own weight run's, is best,/And counted much more noble then the Prest:/So is that Poetry, whose generous Straines/Flow without servile Study, Art, or Paines'.²⁴⁷ Butler implies that the ability to write poetry is an inherent quality, one that flows instinctively from the natural genius of the author. This emphasis on a smooth elegance is reflected in the verse itself, particularly through its uninterrupted rhythm and use of enjambment from the third line leading into 'Flow'. The use of 'Art', which Butler equates here to 'servile Study', is portrayed as a hindrance to the creative processes, one that stifles or obstructs poetic composition. The idea and language expressed here appears to draw on a familiar distinction within seventeenth century literary thinking, this being the apparent antitheses between 'art' and 'nature'. Butler's consideration of the term in this passage not only associates 'art' with a tedious form of study, but also identifies it as a type of forced artifice that imposes itself on the organic process of writing.

Conversely, while these aspects pertaining to 'art' are best avoided, wit is deemed eminently desirable as a means of elevating poetic language and imagery. Butler's most considered thoughts on wit are explored in relation to his concepts of 'reason'. Indeed, Butler describes reason as a 'Faculty of Minde, whereby she put's the Notions, and Images of things [...]

²⁴⁵ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.56.

²⁴⁶ Samuel Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, ed. Rene Lamar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), p.153.

²⁴⁷ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.243.

that are confusd in the understanding, into the same order and condition, in which they are really disposd by Nature, or event'.²⁴⁸ This definition clearly draws on Butler's empirical method of gaining knowledge, in which reason is conceived as the quintessential 'Faculty' that allows humans to perceive and comprehend the world around them. This cognitive ability is predicated on individual sensory experiences that are subsequently transposed by 'reason' into a series of images that depict the material world as it truly exists. According to Butler, the successful application of reason 'is cald Truth, to which Reason naturally tend's in a direct line', however, 'she sometime miscarry, and faile by the Subtly of the Object, or her own Imperfection, and that we call Falshood'.²⁴⁹ While there is clearly a mental process at play here, this conception of 'reason' distinguishes it from Butler's previous thoughts on 'art'; while the latter is regarded as a type of learned skill, 'reason' is perceived as a natural and intrinsic human faculty. Critically, it is the space between these two concepts in which wit manifests itself, with Butler explaining that 'Betweene this [falsehood], and Truth, ly's the Proper Sphere of wit, which though it seeme to incline to falsehood, do's it only to give Intelligence to Truth'²⁵⁰. Wit here serves the specific function of giving 'Intelligence to Truth', of heightening images found in nature in order to achieve a more pleasing and delightful aesthetic. Additionally, it also performs a crucial role in elevating poetic language:

When it imployes those things which it borrows of Falshood, to the Benefit and advantage of Truth, as in Allegories, Fables, and Apologues, it is of excellent use, as making a Deeper impression into the mindes of Men.²⁵¹

Butler's phrase 'Deeper impression' suggests he viewed wit as possessing an enlightening quality, one that not only makes profound images accessible through eloquent and pleasant language (expressed through 'Allegories, Fables, and Apologues'), but one that also enables literary works to have a greater moral impact on its readers. Interestingly, Butler does not treat wit here as an instinctive or inherent skill, but rather as an affection that requires precise judgment and sensitivity so as to correctly embellish the natural poetic abilities of the writer.

However, despite this positive influence, the overall outlook from Butler's commonplace book exhibits an anxiety when it comes to actually employing wit. This principally stems from the need to achieve a balance between poetic language and the depiction of nature. Indeed, under the heading 'Wit and Folly' in the 'Poetical *Thesaurus*', Butler writes

²⁴⁸ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.65.

²⁴⁹ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.65.

²⁵⁰ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.65.

²⁵¹ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.65.

that 'Too much or too little Ingenuity and wit/Do only render th' owners fit/For Nothing, but to undon/Much easier, than if he had none'.²⁵² Butler's application of wit here parallels his initial conception expressed under the heading 'Reason'; in both instances, wit demands a sense of perceptiveness, of being able to judge when it becomes necessary to elevate images found in nature – highlighting again the reciprocity between Butler's prose and poetic writing. As indicated by the verse passage, this understanding of wit is essential in ensuring a text achieves its desired effect without its meaning becoming obscured. The problem arises from the difficulty in realizing this balance. There is a fine equilibrium at play here, one that 'Too much or too little Ingenuity and wit' can destabilize, potentially subverting the impact or understanding of a text. Wit is thus portrayed here as an elusive and almost volatile quality, with Butler even suggesting that it causes more damage to poetry 'Much easier, than if he had none'. This emphasis on balance in many ways echoes the conversation between Lisideius and Crites in Dryden's *Essay on Dramatick Poesy*. Certainly, as part of their critique of two anonymous authors, Lisideius condemns the first for an excessive wit that results in a dislocation between language and subject matter, while Crites explains how another writer's lack of wit leaves their work devoid of any pleasure or meaning.²⁵³ Through these contrasting examples, then, Dryden presents wit as a delicate equipoise between mimetic representation and a pleasant expression of language. Such notions certainly become manifest in Butler's commonplace books, corresponding in particular with his theory that wit occupies a space between 'Truth' and 'Falshood'. However, unlike Dryden, Butler's private reflections reveal a greater concern for the distorting effects brought on by an excessive wit.

This is particularly evident in a prose passage under the heading 'Criticisemes upon Bookes and Authors', wherein Butler claims that 'Allegories are only usefull when they serve as Instances, to illustrate Some obscure Truth: But when a Truth, Plaine enough, is forced to Serve an Allegory, it is a preposterous mistake'.²⁵⁴ As demonstrated earlier, Butler viewed allegories as vehicles for writers to express their witticisms in order to give 'Intelligence to Truth'. The point is reinforced here, whereby wit helps reveal 'some obscure Truth', further highlighting the apparent moral, almost social function of wit. However, this use of wit need only be applied when the initial subject is beyond simple comprehension; to force an allegory onto a commonplace subject and embellish it with superfluous language is thus a redundancy. Critically, Butler's theoretical perception of 'Truth' here undergoes a shift; whereas earlier 'Truth' denoted the ability to perceive the world as it exists in nature, it now becomes associated

²⁵² Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.155.

²⁵³ Dryden, *Works xvii*, pp.10-11

²⁵⁴ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.126.

with the types of universal truths that help define mankind through the pursuit of knowledge. 'Truth' thus simultaneously becomes conflated with nature and ideas of mimesis, as well as those human values that allow mankind to navigate through, and attach meaning to, the material universe. Butler's emphasis on simplicity over a highly stylized language therefore stems from a sense of poetic duty, one that requires the uncompromised communication of such truths for the overall benefit of society.

This idea would be reflected in the 'Poetical *Thesaurus*' under the heading 'Writers', where Butler again dismisses composite language in favour of more modest expressions: 'For He that Plainly writes his Busenes down,/He is obligd to Justify and owne,/Appears more wise, then if he did Compile/Far Greater Matters in a Polishd Style'.²⁵⁵ The preference for thoughts 'Plainly write' over a more 'Polished Style' again shows a disregard for learned arts and scholarly study, with greater value being placed on a more natural and colloquial poetic style. There are also further echoes with Dryden's *Essay* here, specifically with Eugenius' discussion of Donne's poetic language, where he concludes that 'wit is best conveyed to us in the most easy language; and is most to be admired when a great thought comes dressed in words commonly received'.²⁵⁶ The shared similarity regarding this mode of expression demonstrates the extent to which Dryden and Butler were aware of reading habits in Restoration London as well as the expanding demographics of readers, which began to encompass the rising middle classes and women readers. Indeed, the stress on a simple linguistic style suggests a sense of universality, one that enables literature to transcend beyond specific social groups and communities and be of meaning to all types of English readers. Furthermore, both men's preoccupation with how works are read and subsequently internalised by readers shows their awareness of how literary texts have the potential to shape Restoration thinking.

Critically, at the centre of Butler's argument for a more lucid poetic language lies a deeper anxiety: one that concerns the mimetic representation of nature. This concern principally emerges from two modes of thinking displayed in the commonplace books; the first is the synonymous relationship Butler establishes between 'truth' and 'nature', while the second stems from his proclivity towards empiricism. Under the prose heading 'Truth and Falshood', Butler proclaims that 'Truth is Scare so much as a Notion, for it is but the Putting of those Notions of things (in the understanding of Man) into the same order that their Originals are in Nature'.²⁵⁷ Butler presents 'Truth' here as a process containing a series of 'Notions' that eventually leads to a genuine image of nature. Conceptually, this process develops out of the

²⁵⁵ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.240.

²⁵⁶ Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.30.

²⁵⁷ Butler, *Prose Observation*, p.21

empirical practice of gaining knowledge through observation and experience, whereby the 'Notions' represent an accumulation of individual sensory experiences that are subsequently rationalised by cognitive faculties. This theory of perception would underpin many of the literary values contained in the poetical thesaurus. For example, under the verse heading 'Nature', Butler states that 'Art is in vain unless it takes its Lesson/From Nature or her Secretary Reason',²⁵⁸ Nature is depicted as the foundation for all artistic forms and from which all art should take inspiration. By way of implication, then, art has an obligation to 'Truth', where it is required to produce a faithful mimetic representation of the world. Moreover, alongside nature, Butler also identifies 'Reason' as a means of achieving artistic excellence. As previously highlighted in his prose reflections, reason functions as a mental exercise that allows individuals to recognise the material universe. Butler's ideological use of reason within the creative processes functions in a similar fashion, wherein authors must be keen observers of the world in which they are a part, recreating in artistic works the orders and structures of nature that their own cognitive powers have organised. By contrast, attempts to elevate or aggrandise through elaborate imagery or language results in a deviation from truth, with Butler warning that 'All wit do's but Divert men from the Road,/ [...] And Force Mistake and Ignorance to own/A better Sense, then commonly is known'²⁵⁹. The chief issue with wit is its tendency to 'Divert men from the Road', leading writers away from reality and into 'Ignorance'. The literary values that Butler attributes to reason, then, clearly derive from his empirical methodology, whereby the ability to perceive the world through 'Notions' of sensory experience parallel the skills required by the writer in order to achieve a true mimetic representation of nature.

It is this view of mimesis that would underpin Butler's critique of Aristotle. His initial disapproval centres on Aristotle's theory of interpreting reality, arguing that:

Aristotle thought to reduce Nature to his own Notions, rather than to suite them agreeable to her; and studies her more in the metaphysiques of his own Braine, then her own certaine operations; As if his chieftest care had been to make his Systemes of her rather Artificiall then true, and to agree among themselves very prettily, but perhaps without any regard to Truth or Nature.²⁶⁰

Rather than aiming for a general, more comprehensive image of nature, Aristotle is guilty of reducing it to his own 'Notions', focusing instead on particulars that only serve his own ideological purposes. Moreover, Butler's rebuke of Aristotle's 'metaphysiques' reveals further

²⁵⁸ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.195

²⁵⁹ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.156.

²⁶⁰ Butler, *Prose Observation*, pp.132-3

how the private reflections of his commonplace book engages with wider public issues in Restoration London – in this case the way in which Aristotelian philosophy was received by the Royal Society. Understanding how Aristotle’s doctrines were both debated and assimilated more broadly in Restoration England, as well as the manner in which he was debated amongst modern scholars, provides a crucial framework in analysing Butler’s writings. Chiefly, it highlights the intertextuality of his critical theory, shedding new light on how key poetical concepts and the language used to define them were both underpinned and reformulated by classical precepts. Additionally, it also provides an important theoretical context for Butler’s satirical critique of Thomas Rymer to be discussed later in this chapter, which sees both writers assume opposing views on the values and teachings of Aristotle.

Certainly, the 1660s saw an increasing division with how members of the Royal Society valued Aristotle’s work, which often manifested itself as part the wider debate between the ancients and moderns. For example, the philosopher and clergyman Joseph Glanvill (elected fellow of the society in 1664) warns against schools and universities adopting a strict Aristotelian centered curriculum. Instead, Glanvill’s 1665 treatise offers a more rational approach, where he begins by stating that ‘I am none of those, that would dissuade junior Academicks from the study of that Philosophy [...] And doubtless that reverence and observance is due to the Statutes of those Universities that recommend this Author’.²⁶¹ He would then balance this by saying ‘Only, I think, ’twould be very injurious to Knowledge, if Aristotle should ingross men, and should his Placits be all receiv’d as the dictates of universal Reason’.²⁶² The concern here is the advancement of knowledge, which in order to progress must expand beyond Aristotelian precepts. Glanvill’s argument is grounded in the belief that as a culture develops so too does new forms of knowledge, which by virtue of time builds on the work of the ancients and is subsequently refined by modern understandings of the universe. To treat Aristotle’s ‘dictates’ as ‘universal Reason’ is to thus remain ignorant to these developments, with Glanvill eventually declaring: ‘Let Aristotle be studied then, but not adored’.²⁶³

However, like Butler, Glanvill does take specific issue with how Aristotle’s metaphysics relate to his perception of nature. This criticism forms part of his discussion regarding first causes, where he writes: ‘When I affirm nothing can be known but by a resolution of things into their first causes, I mean the Mechanical, not Metaphysical: For I am of opinion [...] That Natural

²⁶¹ Joseph Glanvill, *Scepsis scientifica, or, Confest ignorance, the way to science in an essay of The vanity of dogmatizing, and confident opinion* (London: printed for Henry Eversden, 1665), p.7; *Scepsis scientifica* was an expanded reworking of his 1661 treatise titled *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*.

²⁶² Glanvill, *Scepsis scientifica*, p.7.

²⁶³ Glanvill, *Scepsis scientifica*, p.8.

Theory hath been very much hindered, and corrupted by Metaphysical admixtures; And this is a considerable fault of Aristotle and his Sectators'.²⁶⁴ By 'first causes' Glanvill refers to the actions that move the material universe into existence and shapes its current state. Aristotle initially proposed the concept of the 'unmoved mover', a divine figure beyond material substance and causation who was responsible for the physical world.²⁶⁵ Glanvill here rejects that notion, arguing instead that the 'resolution' of the universe only comes into focus through 'the Mechanical, not Metaphysical'. We can take Glanvill's use of 'Mechanical' here as denoting those empirical practices grounded in sensory and corporal experiences, drawing on the observational skills and rational power of the individual. These processes form what Glanvill refers to as 'Natural Theory', which emerges in his work as the antithesis of metaphysics. Consequently, Metaphysics is portrayed as a misguided and dangerous philosophy that perverts the certainties gained by empirical practices: 'That Natural Theory hath been very much hindered, and corrupted by Metaphysical admixtures'. 'Natural Theory' is therefore eminently desirable because it is grounded in axiomatic truths, unlike metaphysics, which deals in abstractions that extend beyond the sensible world.

While Aristotelian metaphysics was a popular topic at this time, Glanvill's assessment attracted particular attention – much of which emanated from a religious perspective accusing Glanvill of atheism. One such example came from the Roman Catholic priest Thomas White, who in 1663 published a direct response to Glanvill's original 1661 publication titled *Sciri, sive, Sceptices et scepticorum a jure disputationis exclusio*. White would republish an English version of this work again in 1665, presumably as an answer to Glanvill's revised edition a few months earlier, this time referencing Glanvill's original work in the title: *An exclusion of scepticks from all title to dispute being an answer to The vanity of dogmatizing*. Though not a member of the Royal Society himself, White was certainly immersed with its dealings and its members – his older brother, Richard, was an elected fellow, and he became close acquaintances with other prominent members such as John Hall and Isaac Barrow. The fact that the preface is addressed to 'The the Young Wits Of Both Universities' clearly shows White was aiming for this type of learned readership, in which he appears rather dismayed that no previous attempts have been made to censure Glanvill's work: 'hearing no news of any publick Caution apply'd to that Tumour of Glanvil's [...] methought this silence of my Betters turn'd the task upon my weakness, if not to avert, at least to open & expose [...] the injustice of that Calumny impos'd on the whole

²⁶⁴ Glanvill, *Scepsis scientifica*, p.71.

²⁶⁵ Aristotle explores this concept in Book XII of *Metaphysics* and Book VIII of *Physics*.

Profession of Philosophers'.²⁶⁶ White positions his work as serving a type of scientific duty, one that is endeavouring to uphold the scholarly principles of both the universities and the nation as a whole. While on one level we may take this as White's attempt at ingratiating himself towards the Society, it also reveals the extent to which the ideas espoused by Glanvill began permeating through university and academic spheres, and the potentially destabilizing threat it posed.

In answer to the 'Moderns, who loudly crack of Aristotle and Metaphysick',²⁶⁷ White presents an image of the consummate scholar whose work has been influential for centuries by proclaiming 'he alone, of all the Ancients, has left any Monument of Demonstration in Metaphysicks and Physicks'.²⁶⁸ He then takes this further by declaring Aristotle as the sole authority on the subject of metaphysics, arguing that his philosophical doctrines transcend time and culture and are thus still of huge significance to contemporary society: 'Metaphysical Principles must be taken from Aristotle [...] For, Aristotle, by contemplation, form'd into method those things which he found engrafted in nature'.²⁶⁹ As White explains here, Aristotle was able to perceive things beyond the material world, employing a type of prophetic power beyond simple memory and sensory observation in order to discern qualities 'engrafted in nature', and formulate a system through which humans can both comprehend and take meaning from those qualities. White subsequently establishes a distinction between 'Physick' and 'Metaphysick' that draws on the concept of the mind's eye, where he proposes that Physick is 'content with few experiments, surprises Truth by vertue of Demonstration [...] This eye alone pierces into the strength of Contradiction; and is onlily certain and necessary, as far as it scapes ore-shadowing by the senses'.²⁷⁰ White implies that Physick alone provides an incomplete sense of nature, being only 'content with few experiments' that rely on the limitations of human sensory experiences. In order to reach a more advanced and fuller understanding, then, Physick(s) benefits from metaphysical experiences in a surprisingly harmonious way, being portrayed as 'making use of them; and advances in growth by reflecting on it self its inmost eye'.²⁷¹ It is this 'inmost eye' that endows substance and truth with reason and meaning, thereby allowing humans to move beyond the mere fact of an objects existence and towards the complexity of its spiritual nature, its primary or its first cause. Francis Bacon outlines a similar epistemological distinction in 'The Advancement of Learning', claiming that 'Physic should handle that which

²⁶⁶ Thomas White, *An exclusion of scepticks from all title to dispute being an answer to The vanity of dogmatizing* (London: printed for John Williams, 1665), sig.A2^r.

²⁶⁷ White, *An exclusion of scepticks*, sig.A3^r.

²⁶⁸ White, *An exclusion of scepticks*, p.55.

²⁶⁹ White, *An exclusion of scepticks*, p.77.

²⁷⁰ White, *An exclusion of scepticks*, sig.A3^r.

²⁷¹ White, *An exclusion of scepticks*, sig.A3^r.

supposeth in nature only a being and moving, and Metaphysic should handle that which supposeth further in nature a reason, understanding, and platform'.²⁷²

On the concept of first causes, White takes particular issue with Glanvill's premise, criticizing him for his seemingly narrow view: 'he assumes, that nothing can be known, unless it be resolv'd into the first Causes. Whence, he should have seen clearly that the First Causes, and Metaphysicks, which treats of them, is most known of all to Nature'.²⁷³ White's notion that Metaphysicks 'treats' first causes is borrowed directly from Aristotle, indicating the presence of an intangible, divine figure that both sets things into motion and consequently bestows on them a spiritual value. Critically, whereas Glanvill excludes metaphysical philosophy from the realm of truth by reducing first causes to a series of 'Mechanical' observations, White encompasses metaphysics within the natural world, arguing that although the unmoved mover or movers (to borrow Aristotle's terms) are themselves without substance existing before any prior action, there are responsible for the forms that comprise the material universe. N.K Sugimura observes a similar line of thought during Raphael's speech to Adam in Milton's *Paradise Lost*; as part of her analysis of Raphael's lines 'one first matter all,/Indu'd with various forms, various degrees/Of substance', she writes that 'prime matter is itself without form and properties, it cannot therefore be material [...] Yet the word "one" also draws attention to the way this "first matter" not only constitutes everything created in the universe, but also underlines it'.²⁷⁴ White thus concludes that 'Naturalists strive in vain, who negotiate much about the particulars of Nature; and comprehend nothing through their ignorance of Metaphysick'.²⁷⁵ This implies that those 'Naturalists' who limit themselves to purely empirical observations are thereby restricted to the 'particulars of Nature', unlike scholars such as Aristotle, who, through their knowledge of metaphysics are able to achieve a more complete understanding of nature. White's premise thus subverts the model proposed by Glanvill by implying the practice of 'Natural Theory' must by definition embrace the study metaphysics.

Returning to Butler, it is clear his private manuscript reflections were informed by these public debates. Like Glanvill, Butler shows a concern for the way in which metaphysics obstructs empirical practices, criticizing Aristotle for studying nature 'more in the metaphysiques of his own Braine, then her own certaine operations' – with 'certain operations' signifying the material and physical motions found in nature, which Aristotle is guilty of

²⁷² Francis Bacon, *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.195.

²⁷³ White, *An exclusion of scepticks*, p.76.

²⁷⁴ N.K. Sugimura, *Matter of Glorious Trial: Spiritual and Material Substance in Paradise Lost* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p.44.

²⁷⁵ White, *An exclusion of scepticks*, p.77.

neglecting. In so doing, Butler contradicts White's viewpoints entirely. Indeed, while White praises Aristotle for the way in which he is able to encompass all aspects nature, Butler accuses him of reducing nature 'to his own Notions, rather then to suite them agreeable to her', implying that his ideas are too idiosyncratic to be of universal value, as well as being too subjective to signify absolute truths, underlining Aristotle's inability to uphold modern empirical standards. It is this metaphysical contamination that leads to the most severe crime, the falsification of reality, with Butler condemningly stating of Aristotle that 'his chiefest care had been to make his Systemes of her rather Artificiall then true, and to agree among themselves very prettily, but perhaps without any regard to Truth or Nature'. Butler implies that Aristotle forced his own ideological 'Systemes' onto nature as opposed to focusing on its material properties in an attempt to elevate them beyond the sensible realm. The result, however, leads only to and 'Artificiall' image devoid of truth.

Butler's view on Aristotle clearly places him in the camp of the moderns. His primary cause for rejecting Aristotelianism is grounded in his belief that the practice espoused by the ancient figure no longer coincides with contemporary standards, and is in fact contrary to modern pursuits of learning and knowledge. These ideas would be echoed in a verse passage under the heading 'Truth' in the 'Poetical Thesaurus':

The End of Learning's only to Persue
 The ways of Truth within and out of view,
 To Copy out the' Originals of Nature
 As Far as Human wit can Imitate her,
 And draw a Scheam exactly in the minde
 T' agree with that shee in the world Designd.²⁷⁶

The emphasis on 'Originals of Nature' and 'in the world Designd' reinforces the extent to which the empirical values displayed throughout Butler's prose observations informs his poetry. Truth is the catalyst that advances human 'Learning's', which in turn is dependent on the ability to 'Copy out the' Originals of Nature'. The verbs used in this passage ('Copy', 'Imitate', 'draw') highlight the importance Butler places on achieving accurate mimetic representations. Certainly, in contrast to Aristotle – who abuses the 'metaphysiques of his own Braine' – Butler proposes that individuals should 'draw a Scheam exactly in the minde' that corresponds precisely with that of nature. The difference lies in the way individuals internalise reality. Truth is not obtained by subsuming nature with ones own personal ideology or imposing on it an intangible belief system, nor is it ethical to elevate reality through excessive fancy in order to

²⁷⁶ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.185.

achieve a desired effect; rather, as Butler's language encourages, it is gained through a more methodical, systematic approach that relies on sensory perception and human judgment. This is reinforced by the line: 'As Far as Human wit can Imitate'. Critically, not only does 'Human wit' prioritise individual experience (with 'wit' in this context referring to the intellectual capacity of mankind), it also locates truth and learning as proceeding from those human faculties, as opposed to metaphysical abstractions.

Butler's commonplace book thus represents a unique composition that actively engages with a number of Restoration issues. It is also through these manuscript writings that we can see how Butler's wider reading influenced his literary criticisms. For example, it becomes apparent that Butler's theory of how artists and writers take inspiration from nature in the *Poetical Thesaurus* corresponds with his prose reflections on work published by associates of the Royal Society. Additionally, his observations and definitions of key literary principles such as wit and reason evidently form part of a wider public dialogue. While Butler's commonplace book remained an unpublished manuscript, its active engagement with cultural debates places it between the realms of public and private. Indeed, Butler is not simply commenting on aspects of Restoration culture he found noteworthy, but is in fact synthesising them with his own critical perspectives in an attempt to generate something new and original. Thyer, Butler's eighteenth century editor, was alert to this, and suggests that his private manuscripts were written with the intention of being read by a wider audience. This transforms the material text from a series of personal reflections and observations into a doctrine of critical terms that aimed to bring universal stability to an emergent critical vocabulary. At the very least, Butler's commonplace book, and especially the *Poetical Thesaurus*, reveals the private anxieties writers felt towards the current state of English linguistics and literary practices.

Butler as court wit

While his manuscript works remained unpublished during his lifetime, Butler did secure fame at the beginning of the Restoration through the publication of his mock-heroic poem *Hudibras*, the first part of which was published in 1662. Unfortunately this newfound fame would not last, and by the mid 1670s Butler returned to the relative obscurity he occupied before the poem's release. Nevertheless, upon its initial publication, *Hudibras* was an instant success that launched Butler into the public eye as a gentlemanly figure with good learning. Pepys fondly records in his diary an evening spent with a group of associates he considered to be of significant prominence that included Butler: 'getting things ready against noon, when comes Mr. Cooper, Hales, Harris, Mr. Butler, that wrote Hudibras [...] there we dined; a good dinner, and company

that pleased me mightily – being all eminent men in their way'.²⁷⁷ While Pepys eventually came to acknowledge him as belonging to that group of 'eminent men' in this entry from 1668, his initial reaction to *Hudibras* itself was less than impressive. After purchasing a copy in December 1662 following a 'discourse of a new book of drollery in verse called Hudebras', he remarks that 'it is so silly an abuse of the Presbyter-Knight going to the warrs, that I am ashamed of it'.²⁷⁸ This opinion, however, went firmly against the general public view. Conscious of this, Pepys felt it necessary to reconsider his initial position, and only three months later he purchased a second copy, writing that 'it being certainly some ill humour to be so against that which all the world cries up to be the example of wit – for which I am resolved once again to read him and see whether I can find it or no'.²⁷⁹ As part of her discussion of trends in Restoration reading habits, Kate Loveman writes of Pepys' *Hudibras* dilemma that 'he was puzzled and somewhat troubled to find that his contemporaries celebrated the poem, while he could see little in it', going on to say that 'the usefulness of this work therefore lay in the fact that it was in 'Fashion' and required reading among Pepys's fellows'.²⁸⁰ While Loveman's analysis is centred on Pepys, it also reveals how in demand Butler's poem was amongst London town gentlemen. As Pepys himself acknowledges, *Hudibras* came to represent 'the example of wit', thereby making its reading a social necessity for individuals not just to participate in communal activities, but also a resource to refine and showcase their own wit and intellect.

At the same time as being popular with the inhabitants of the town, *Hudibras* also caught the eye of those at court. Indeed, Samuel Jonson's entry of Butler in *The Lives of the Poets* relates how in 1663 'was published the first part, containing three cantos, of the poem Hudibras, which, as [Matthew] Prior relates, was made known at court by the taste and influence of the earl of Dorset'.²⁸¹ Dorset's presence is unsurprising given his reputation as the leading patron of the arts during the Restoration.²⁸² In late 1662 Butler himself acknowledged the poem's status at court in a letter addressed to Sir George Oxenden, writing 'Whether I have performed it well or noe I cannot tell, Onely I have had ye good fortune to have it gen^{lly} esteem^d Soe especially by ye King & ye best of his Subjects'.²⁸³ One of those 'best subjects' appears to have been the Duke of Buckingham, whom Butler came to work for sometime in the early 1670s, accompanying the

²⁷⁷ Pepys, *Diary ix*, p.265.

²⁷⁸ Pepys, *Diary iii*, p.294.

²⁷⁹ Pepys, *Diary iv*, p.35.

²⁸⁰ Kate Loveman, *Samuel Pepys and his Books: Reading, Newsgathering, and Sociability, 1660-1703* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.39.

²⁸¹ Johnson, *Lives*, p.2

²⁸² Harold Wilson describes Dorset as the 'Maecenas of the Restoration', and lists Samuel Butler amongst those poets whom benefited from his patronage in *Court Wits*, p.23-4.

²⁸³ British Museum, MS.40711, fo.34, sig.14^r.

Duke on political trips to France and serving as secretary to his affairs as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge.²⁸⁴ Moreover, Butler was at this time (even if only in a periphery manner) thought of as belonging to that group of Restoration court wits. As Butler himself acknowledges, this position was initially achieved by the court's reception of *Hudibras*, whose form and style came to embrace the literary values held by the court wits.

In his diary, Pepys on two occasions refers to *Hudibras* as 'drollery'. Over the course of the English Civil War the term 'drollery' took on a specific ideological purpose where it became closely associated with royalist writing. Certainly, throughout the 1640s and 1650s, large miscellaneous editions began proliferating in print advertising themselves as collections of drollery on the title page. The word had become such a commonplace for English readers that it would make its way into Thomas Blount's *Glossographia*, where it is defined as 'a kinde of facetious way of speaking or writing, full of merry knavish wit'.²⁸⁵ Blount's definition highlights two key aspects that link this style of writing with the royalist cause: the employment of wit and a sense of merriment. The prerequisites outlined by Blount coincide with Nigel Smith's discussion of drollery, where he argues 'wit became a sign of royalist affection and distraction', before adding that 'by the mid-1650s, the demands of the market for 'drollery' verse were irresistible'.²⁸⁶ This literary style belonged predominantly to land-owning gentry and aristocracy loyal to the King, and the use of wit that accompanied this style thus became associated with gentlemanly writers, all of whom were armatures writing principally for their own enjoyment, to exercise and express their own pleasure, and as displays of frivolous liberty and freedom.

It is to this literary tradition that Timothy Raylor asserts *Hudibras* belongs, arguing that the poem emerges from 'a lengthy process of generic transmutation, as the gentlemanly drolling style of the 1630s was applied to the horrific events of the 1640s'.²⁸⁷ As a lampoon against the Puritan movement from the previous decade, the poem found an enthusiastic readership from a newly formed court faction whose newfound freedoms and excessive lifestyle contrasted sharply with the sombreness and austerity of Cromwell's government. Moreover, as the Restoration progressed, the imagery and language Butler utilises transformed *Hudibras* into a general satire that would lampoon all nonconformist groups. Its attack on Presbyterianism (represented in the form of the eponymous Sir Hudibras) has obvious political overtones:

²⁸⁴ Both Wilson and Love mention in passing Butler's connections with Buckingham: *Court Wits*, p.178; *English Clandestine Satire*, p.80.

²⁸⁵ Thomas Blount, *Glossographia*, (London: 1661), p.105.

²⁸⁶ Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p.310.

²⁸⁷ Raylor, *Cavaliers, Clubs, and Literary Culture*, p.187.

For he was of that stubborn Crew
 Of Errant Saints, whom all men grant
 To be the true Church *Militant*:
 [...]
 And prove their Doctrine Orthodox
 By Apostolic *Blows* and *Knocks*;
 Call Fire and Sword and Desolation,
 A *godly-thorough-Reformation*.²⁸⁸

The depiction of a ‘stubborn Crew’ striving to ‘prove their Doctrine Orthodox’ calls to mind issues of Church settlement during the early 1660s in the wake of the Act of Uniformity, while the images of a militant religious group seeking reform through ‘*Blows*’, ‘*Knocks*’, ‘Fire’, and ‘Sword’ would certainly have resonated with readers during the conflicts surrounding the Exclusion Crisis (such as the attempted rebellion by Shaftsbury and the Duke of Monmouth) – with the couplet of ‘Desolation’ and ‘*Reformation*’ displaying Butler’s flair for satirical irony. The lampoon’s collection of stock images and employment of what John Wilders refers to as an ‘earthy, colloquial language’ combine to create a particular aesthetic that displayed the type of wit valued by Buckingham’s circle of poets.²⁸⁹ This idea is reinforced by Love’s premise that ‘the writing of lampoons was one of several markers by which one recognized a wit’.²⁹⁰ Despite the fact that *Hudibras* was always intended for the printed market, then, its poetic style and grounding in a tradition of amateurish, gentlemanly writing places the poem alongside the literary ideals held by the Restoration court wits.

Furthermore, along with the poetic style of *Hudibras*, Butler’s own personal literary principles appear to correspond with the Buckingham faction of court poets. For example, in his translation of Boileau’s satire, titled *Satyr on Rhyme*, Butler reveals a disregard for the use of rhymed verse in heroic drama. To be sure, as Wilson points out, ‘the Wits were united in their hatred for what passed in the Restoration as heroic poetry, dramatic and epic’.²⁹¹ This view existed in complete contrast to Dryden’s estimation and definition of the genre in ‘Of Heroique Playes’, where he writes that ‘an Heroick Play ought to be an imitation, in little of an Heroick Poem’.²⁹² Dryden had already discussed the genre extensively in *An Essay of Dramtick Poesy*. One of the most contentious points centred on the use of rhymed heroic couplets, which Dryden argued elevated poetic language above ordinary prose language, thereby making it a more

²⁸⁸ Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, ed. John Wilders (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.7.

²⁸⁹ John Wilders, *Hudibras*, p.xl.

²⁹⁰ Love, *Clandestine Satire*, p.185.

²⁹¹ Wilson, *Court Wits*, p.177.

²⁹² Dryden, *Works xi*, p.10.

appropriate vehicle for conveying the heroic thoughts and actions of a plays characters. Sir Robert Howard, a close acquaintance of Buckingham and Dryden's brother-in-law, was critical of this relationship between rhyme and language. In the preface attached to his printed collection of *Five New Plays*, he argues that rhyme detracts from the 'present Effect of Accidents not thought of', thereby making heroic dialogue appear artificial and deliberate, a trait more suited to poetry, with a poem being a 'premeditated form of Thoughts upon design'd Occasions' which 'ought not to be unfurnish'd of any harmony in Words or Sound'.²⁹³ A further criticism centred on the restrictions this imposes on the writer: 'It may be said, That Rhime is such a confinement to a quick and luxuriant Phancy, that it gives a stop to its speed, till slow Judgment comes in to assist it'.²⁹⁴ Howard contests here that rhyme inhibits the creative flow of poetic composition, making it counterintuitive to the natural genius of the poet.

Butler's satire raises similar points. The poem is written from the perspective of a writer suffering from crazed urges to compose rhymed verse. The satire amusingly depicts this as an uncontrollable physiological condition, for despite multiple attempts by the speaker to abstain he continues to beg the muses' aid: 'Spight of myself, I strait take fire agen, [...] And breaking all Oaths I made, in vain/From verse to Verse, expect their Aid again'.²⁹⁵ The speaker is here reduced to a frantic scribbler who is unable to uphold the values he has sworn 'Oaths' to, thereby portraying his actions as kind of moral transgression. While the comical imagery and lyrical language Butler employs creates an almost ridiculous scene, there is a real sense of danger posed by the speaker's 'fire' for writing in rhyme. This becomes more apparent through a brief but powerful tonal shift in the poem, where the speaker furiously exclaims: 'May he be damn'd, who first found out that Curse,/T' imprison, and confine his Thoughts in Verse;/To hang so dull a Clog upon his Wit,/And make his Reason to his Rhime submit'.²⁹⁶ Like Howard, Butler also considers rhyme an obstruction to poetic imagination, labeling it as 'so dull a Clog upon his Wit'. However, Butler's satire heightens the stakes through its much harsher and damning language; the use of 'Curse', 'imprison', 'damn'd' and 'submit' portray rhyme as a serious threat upon English dramatic writing, one that left unchecked has the potential to corrupt modern literary standards as it has done the speaker. Additionally, one can see here how Butler's commonplace book informs his poetry, specifically his identification with rhyme as a type of forced artifice stemming from tedious study of the arts, a point further emphasized by

²⁹³ Robert Howard, *Four New Plays* (London: printed for Henry Herringman, 1665), sig.A4^r.

²⁹⁴ Howard, *Four New Plays*, sig.A4^r.

²⁹⁵ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, pp.125-6.

²⁹⁶ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.126.

his lampooning the speaker for continuously editing his work: 'I waste my Age/In mending this, and blotting out that Page'.²⁹⁷

While Butler engages with the same literary theories discussed by Howard, their expression through a satirical medium not only reveals a different set of ideological objectives, but also shows how satire itself was increasingly used as a vehicle for literary reflection and criticism. By deciding to publish his ideas in the space offered by the printed essay, Howard is participating in that emergent critical format dominated by decorum, wherein the self is seen entering a realm of public debate in which civilized manners (however falsely flattering) are a prerequisite for literary discussion. His envisioned audience was most likely those associated with the theatre (both professional writers and regular playgoers), though his work could also be purchased by anyone who happened to visit Herringman's bookshop, potentially giving it a far wider readership. Conversely, Butler's manuscript satire was never intended for wider public distribution, but rather to be read by a smaller group of individuals who shared his own critical perspectives. Whereas Howard aims to convince readers through a series of well-mannered theoretical arguments, Butler's poem forgoes a polite, balanced assessment in order to attack what it views as a literary transgression by adopting a witty, and at times vulgar language free from the formal strictures of print. Yet despite this, the satire maintains a sense of severity and intellectual depth through more formal elements. Indeed, the poem is abound with caesuras that force the reader to stop and ponder the effects of the speaker's condition, while Butler's tight control of couplets such as 'Curse'/'Verse' and 'Wit'/'Submit' reinforce the anxieties behind the poem. The effect is to create a satire that works on two levels; while the speaker is at once a figure to be both laughed at and ridiculed, readers should also recognize the danger he poses to contemporary literature.

Many readers would also have identified he 'who first found out that Curse' with Dryden, who had already been the subject of much public ridicule for his staunch defence of the heroic genre. Perhaps the most brutal and high profile of these came in the form of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, first performed in December 1671 at the Royal Theatre.²⁹⁸ Indeed, as part of his discussion of the play's critiques, Ronald Paulson notes that 'proving Dryden's employment of couplets, however skilled, was not suited to any conceivable form of genuinely heroic drama, Buckingham and his collaborator recommended that Bays turn to satire, which was, as Dryden had made clear, a step down from comedy, as humor was from wit'.²⁹⁹ Butler, still under the Duke's employment at this time, is believed to have been one of those

²⁹⁷ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.126.

²⁹⁸ The play was published anonymously in 1672.

²⁹⁹ Ronald Paulson, 'Dryden and the energies of satire', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.37-59, P.45.

collaborators who had a significant hand in the play.³⁰⁰ This premise is strengthened by the fact that Butler's *Satyr on Rhyme* not only attacks the heroic genre on similar theoretical grounds as *The Rehearsal*, but also echoes the same cultural values the play clearly promotes. At the very least, the crazed and buffoonish speaker of Butler's poem can be likened to the equally deranged playwriting Bays portrayed by John Lacy, who had supposedly been instructed by Buckingham on how to imitate Dryden's mannerisms; the closing couplet of the play's prologue, 'Then I'll cry out, swell'd with Poetique rage, / 'Tis I, John Lacy, have reform'd your Stage', certainly appears to act as a lampoon on Dryden's previous attempts to establish both himself and the heroic genre as the foremost elements of the modern dramatic landscape. It is therefore likely that Butler wrote his satire around the same time as his involvement with *The Rehearsal*, thereby dating the poem between November 1671 and February 1672, most likely for circulation amongst a poetically inclined court readership, where it was able to take advantage of its immediately topical subject matter and be well received by the likes of Buckingham, Rochester, and Dorset.

One of the more damning aspects of the play is the part of Drawcansir, whose bombastic verbal outbursts and morally perplexing motives served as a lampoon of Almanzor, the protagonist of Dryden's *Conquest of Granada*. Derek Hughes has argued that Almanzor's ambiguity was actually part of a strategy by Dryden, who 'baffles his spectators into shifting and equivocal responses to the hero, suspending them between admiration, censure, and laughter, and providing no criteria whereby to form a settled judgment'.³⁰¹ However, if Dryden was creating a type of imaginary space to explore the psychological condition of his hero, it was of little interest to the writers of *The Rehearsal*. Indeed, Bays first describes Drawcansir as 'a fierce *Hero*, that frights his Mistress, snubs up Kings, baffles Armies, and does what he will without regard to numbers, good manners, or justice'.³⁰² While this account is both amusing and ridiculous, it also embodies a deeper issue, this being the increasing divorce of meaning from plot and language. Bays had already been lampooned for his arbitrary treatment of plot in his argument that 'why, what a Devil is the plot good for, but to bring in fine things?'³⁰³ In Drawcansir, the audience is now presented with a series of actions that not only contradict the image of a 'fierce *Hero*', but also strip him of all morally instructive qualities. This is compounded further through his verbal outbursts in the form of heroic couplets, which continually undermine his attempts at heroic virtue: 'Let petty Kings the names of Parties

³⁰⁰ See Wilson, *Court Wits*, p.158.

³⁰¹ Derek Hughes, *Dryden's Heroic Plays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), p.81.

³⁰² Duke of Buckingham, *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings associated with George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham*, Ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.433

³⁰³ Buckingham, *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings*, p.420.

know:/Where e'er I come, I slay both friend and foe'.³⁰⁴ The verse traps Drawcansir in a prison of language that prevents him from grasping the consequences of his actions and from recognizing the boundaries between hero and villain. *The Rehearsal* thus transforms what might be perceived as an equivocal juxtaposition between heroic qualities in Almanzor into a permanent state of ambivalence wherein no moral or meaningful values can be discerned. Such issues become apparent in Butler's *Satyr on Rhyme*, where they are specifically viewed as a consequence of rhymed verse itself:

Sometimes I set my Wits upon the Rack,
And, when I would say *white*, the Verse says *black*.
When I would draw a brave Man to the Life,
It names some Slave, that pimps to his own wife.³⁰⁵

The image of a 'brave Man' reduced to a slave 'that pimps to his own wife' certainly echoes Bays' earlier description of Drawcansir. Critically, Butler's satire portrays rhyme as a subversive influence upon poetic imagination, where it is charged with perverting the original image drawn by the speaker. However, there is again a more profound issue at play here, encapsulated in the lines 'Sometimes I set my Wits upon the Rack,/And, when I would say *white*, the Verse says *black*'. Indeed, the speaker recognizes that the words he writes no longer convey their original value. This is accentuated by the antithesis between '*white*' and '*black*', which demonstrates on a visual level the growing dislocation between words and meaning. Like Drawcansir, Butler's speaker is no longer in control of the language, which has since been corrupted by rhyme – 'the Verse says *black*' – forcing him to produce senseless works devoid of linguistic integrity. In so doing, Butler's satire not only presents rhymed verse as threatening to degrade English poetics, but also of threatening to destabilize the English language as a whole.

While Butler's satire encompasses the same theoretic arguments as *The Rehearsal* in its destructive attack upon the heroic genre, it does so by simultaneously upholding those ideological principles that Buckingham's play advocates. Chief amongst these is the increasing division between the court and town. The emergence of the town as a separate community from both the court and country is central to Love's analysis of the differing functions between court and town lampoons; whereas a court satire 'arises from a sense of special identity of the court as a community and sets out to reinforce that community's sense of exclusiveness', a town satire 'speaks to a new social formation which was still in the process of fashioning its own identity'.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Buckingham, *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings*, p.449

³⁰⁵ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.125.

³⁰⁶ Love, *Clandestine Satire*, p.67.

The characters of Smith and Johnson can be viewed as dramatic agents seeking to define this emergent community – Smith the visiting country gentleman and Johnson the indoctrinated navigator of town life. When asked how he spends his time, Johnson replies ‘Why, as I use to do; eat and drink as well as I can, have a she-friend to be private with in the afternoon, and sometimes see a Play’.³⁰⁷ While Buckingham portrays Johnson as mastering the required sociality of the town here, the same cannot be said of the speaker of Butler’s poem: ‘Without this Plague, I freely might have spent/My happy Days with Leisure and Content;/Had nothing in the World to do, or think,/Like a fat Preist, but whore, and eat, and drink’.³⁰⁸ There is an obvious intertextuality here as both texts promote the same libertine lifestyle which Butler’s speaker is both envious of and keen to emulate. However, he is ultimately excluded from participating in those social customs because of his literary ineptitude. *A Satyr on Rhyme* therefore establishes a correlation between literary practices and the newly emerging social order of the metropolis, whereby the speaker’s employment of rhymed verse demotes him to the lower spheres of the town. As a consequence, literature becomes conflated with the evolving identity of the town itself – forming part of its sociological hierarchy that one must also learn to navigate.

In doing so, Butler’s satire draws on how the increasing distinction between the town and court became manifest in discussions relating to literary style. This phenomenon is also evident in Buckingham’s *The Rehearsal*, which immediately sets out to attack modern theatrical productions on the grounds that they embody all the venalities of the town, which Johnson reduces to a cornucopia of ‘Fighting, Loving, Sleeping, Rhyming, Dying, Dancing, Singing, Crying; and everything, but thinking and Sence’.³⁰⁹ These ‘new kind’ of plays are also distinguished by their appealing to the masses and need of tedious study and preparation, which is lampooned by Bays’ ridiculous claims to ‘make use of Stew’d Prunes only’, or ‘ever take Physic, and let blood’ before he writes.³¹⁰ The theatrical products of the town are thus presented as something other, and are contrasted with the traditional country values embodied by Smith, the amateurish gentleman who writes for private amusement without any prerequisite thoughts.

These opposing literary values become juxtaposed in Butler’s satire, where he writes:

Unhappy is that Man, who, spite of’s heart,
Is forc’d to be ty’d up to Rules of Art.
A Fop that scribbles, does it with Delight,
Takes no Pains to consider, what to write;

³⁰⁷ Buckingham, *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings*, p.398

³⁰⁸ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.126.

³⁰⁹ Buckingham, *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings*, p.339

³¹⁰ Buckingham, *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings*, p.411.

But, fond of all the Nonsense he brings forth,
Is ravish'd with his own great Wit and Worth.³¹¹

As well as rhyme, one can also infer that the 'Rules of Art' include all the other qualities listed in *The Rehearsal* associated with the town. Furthermore, such 'Rules' imply a sense of professionalism, encompassing the type of monotonous study required for an envisioned mass audience. This is contrasted with the 'Fop that scribbles', an image that calls to mind the type of amateurish manuscript writing favored by the court wits. Unlike the professional Bays, who must perform absurd preparations before writing, the imagined fop of Butler's poem 'Takes no Pains to consider, what to write'. Moreover, the lampoon employs here the same critical vocabulary that was of interest to both Butler and other writers during the Restoration. The poem presents 'Art' and 'Wit' as diametrically opposed qualities that are identified as belonging to two separate literary communities – the town and the court. The satire thus helps define the practical and theoretical applications of those terms by assigning them a specific set of literary characteristics that emerge from the ideologies of their respective social spheres. Yet there is also pause for person introspection. Indeed, Butler's satire presents the removal of 'Art' as a form of self-liberation, allowing the writer to be 'ravish'd with his own great Wit and Worth'. Only by abandoning the 'Rules of Art' can one truly access their own poetic imagination in order to reveal 'his own great Wit'. While the poem therefore acts as a reflection of the polarizing literary values emerging between communities of writers, it also allows writers to judge their own status within those newly developing social structures.

However, the literary values Butler assigns to these communities appears to only reinforce the exclusivity of the court, and in the process establishes it as the pinnacle of literary ideals and poetical standards. The poem therefore falls loosely into the category of the court lampoon as outlined earlier by Love. This is despite the fact that Butler had no previous lineal or social connections with the court, suggesting that he was consciously using *A Satyr on Rhyme* to strengthen his position amongst the court wits by aligning his own literary views with theirs. Critically, the satire achieves this by emulating the form and style of its own ideological arguments; indeed, by adopting a colloquial language expressed through a rhythmically smooth and simple verse, the text itself functions as a representation of the literary ideals it is aiming to uphold. Furthermore, by appropriating this style, the lampoon purposefully presents itself as a product of more traditional modes of writing that derive from the royalist lyrics composed by country gentleman from earlier decades. This is reinforced by the material text itself, which was never published during Butler's lifetime, and was most likely read out loud from manuscript

³¹¹ Butler, *Satires and Miscellaneous Poetry and Prose*, p.127.

copies for the private amusement of those who delighted in its satirical targets and subject matter. It is perhaps for these reasons that the Earl of Rochester lists Butler amongst those poets who 'Approve my sense', and whom he can 'count their censure fame'.³¹²

A Satyr on Rhyme thus begins to exhibit the reciprocal relationship that was emerging between literary criticism and its mediation through satirical verse during the Restoration. Indeed, by encompassing the theoretical and cultural disputes surrounding heroic drama, the satirical aesthetic of Butler's poem is able to develop into a more critical and self-reflective mode of literary analysis, which in turn is able to express those ideas in more profound and creative ways. While the poem's initial motivation is certainly to lampoon rhymed verse, it does so by exploring more broadly the current conditions of literary institutes in an attempt to uphold certain ideological principles. Consequently, the form and function of Butler's satire can be seen as developing from its own self-reflective arguments – helping to shape the satirical medium into a more refined realm of literary ideas.

Butler and the usefulness of satire

Of course, we might ask the reasons why Butler decided on verse satire as his choice of medium to debate and reflect on prevailing literary attitudes. After all, much work had already been done by the likes of Dryden, Howard, and Shadwell in the 1660s to create a space in which literary ideas could be explored more formally in the form of the printed essay. As discussed earlier, as the most esteemed expression of wit satire became the chief medium in which to showcase a writer's skill, especially if one was looking to align oneself with those literary wits at court (which Butler certainly seemed keen to do). Additionally, the circumstantial nature of satire made it an ideal format to seize upon the most topical issues at the time without the need to adopt the polite rhetoric of the essay. Such lampoons could thus be used opportunistically as a way of bolstering literary reputation and gaining approval from particular social factions. Butler's *Satyr on Rhyme* undoubtedly takes advantage of its immediate cultural circumstances in riding the wave of criticism directed towards the heroic genre, as well as implicitly offering a personal lampoon on Dryden himself. However, it also hints at a more thoughtful and enduring mode of satirical writing that began developing out of debates on the ideological role of satire itself. Certainly, as Restoration literary culture increasingly turned towards its own internal meanings and functions, questions were raised about the nature of satire and its social scope. Butler's commonplace book demonstrates that such issues were at the forefront of his own

³¹² Rochester, *Works*, p.74.

critical thinking. These manuscript pages not only show that Butler had a vested interest in the potential of satire, they also offer new ways in which seventeenth-century readers and writers might conceive and understand it, particularly during his attempts to define the theoretical applications of satire within the cultural texture of the nation. In doing, Butler reveals some interesting developments in the ideological function of Restoration satire that can be traced back to the conflicts arising between traditional literary practices and the proliferation of professional writers, which is itself a consequence of the growing distinction between town and court communities.

Butler's aversion towards the tribe of professional writers around London becomes apparent in his critique regarding the practices of Restoration print culture. The swelling of printed materials during this period has been explored by James Raven, who notes that 'the gentle increase in the publication of new books and periodical titles in the decades following the Restoration hides an apparently enormous growth in the quantity of print, notably religious and instructional small books'.³¹³ While Raven claims that the commercial developments in the later seventeenth-century book trade yielded greater economic stability for London businessmen (to which we might also add better financial circumstances for budding professional authors), Butler's private manuscripts offer a somewhat different view, this time from the perspective of contemporary writers, where he suggests that such developments are at the detriment of the quality of literature currently being produced.³¹⁴ Indeed, as part of his account on the manner in which critical debates are conducted, Butler writes that: 'Those who write Bookes against one another, do but Play a Prize in Defaming one another, in which nothing is to be gotten by either of them but Infamy'.³¹⁵ The remark itself is a testament to the increasingly self-reflective nature of Restoration literary culture. However, Butler argues here that the printed format has been perverted by writers who simply aim at 'Defaming one another', thereby reducing the domain of print to a series of destructive, personal squabbles and, more worrying, into a realm of meaningless critical noise. This is made worse by the subversive effect this inflicts upon the authors themselves, who, rather than being portrayed as learned and courteous scholars are only able to secure their own 'Infamy'. Butler compounds this degradation further by employing a bestial analogy: 'Those who rayle at one another in Print, encounter like the Fight of Rams [...] And that beast that tilt's with greatest Force, give's as much of the Blow to himself, as he do's to his Enemy, and receive's as much Hurt as he give's'.³¹⁶ Rather than representing the pinnacle of

³¹³ James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p.91.

³¹⁴ Raven, *The Business of Books*, p.83-4.

³¹⁵ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.140.

³¹⁶ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.140.

refined cordially and scholarly debate as envisioned by the likes of Dryden and Shadwell, Butler instead presents a Hobbesian scene of animalistic warfare in which all parties are made to suffer. The original values that print might have offered have consequently mutated into a tainted spectacle designed to preserve a writer's own sense of intellectual worth.

One can easily detect from Butler's prose observations a sense of mistrust and cynicism for Restoration print culture. However, this does not necessarily stem from a prejudice against the printed format itself, but rather with its subsequent exploitation and misuse by certain groups – specifically from those circles of professional writers and critics. Certainly, the characteristics we can infer from those abusers of print previously outlined strongly suggest Butler had in mind such aspiring professional authors emanating from the town. Perhaps the most telling trait here is their apparent eagerness to publish works under their own name in an attempt to enhance their reputation and position themselves at the forefront of Restoration critical thinking. By contrast, works from aristocratic and amateur writers often circulated anonymously in manuscript, and would often remain anonymous even when they did eventually make their way into print.³¹⁷ Another reason that shows Butler was not wholly adverse to print is the fact that he turned to the format himself on several occasions in the form of printed pamphlets. The most significant of these are arguably *The Censure of the Rota* (1660), which attacked both Milton and republicanism at the onset of the Restoration, and *The Transproser Rehears'd* (1673), a critique of Andrew Marvell's perceived preference for republican values and a direct response to his polemical pamphlet *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1672). However, there are a number of features that distinguish these pamphlets from those criticized earlier by Butler. First, they were published without any attribution, and secondly, they both adopted a satirical aesthetic to convey their ideological aims.

While authorship of *The Censure of the Rota* has been contested, Nicholas von Maltzahn's essay succeeds in synthesising earlier studies of its attribution and comes to the conclusion it is most likely Butler's.³¹⁸ However, by failing to consider Butler's private manuscript reflections in any detail, von Maltzahn misses a significant intertextual reference that helps strengthen Butler's claim to authorship. This comes at the beginning of the pamphlet, where the author (ironically) states his displeasure in relating to Milton the criticisms levelled against himself and his treatise, *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*: 'For whereas it is our usuall custom to dispute every thing, how plain or obscure soever, by knocking Argument

³¹⁷ Paul Hammond discusses anonymity in court poetry in his analysis of the circulation of Rochester's works in 'Anonymity in Restoration Poetry', *The Seventeenth Century*, 8 (1993), 123-142, pp.130-132.

³¹⁸ Nicholas von Maltzahn, 'Samuel Butler's Milton', *Studies in Philology*, 92 (1995), 482-495, pp.482-486.

against Argument, and tilting at one another with our heads (as Rams fight) untill we are out of breath'.³¹⁹ The imagery of printed exchanges taking the form of Rams fighting is borrowed directly from Butler's prose reflections quoted above. Similarly, the idea that the domain of critical debate has been reduced to a forum of senseless and exhaustive arguments 'knocking' against each other also echoes those earlier prose observations. We may therefore tentatively consider the pamphlet as belonging in Butler's oeuvre.

Despite the fact that Butler enters a realm of public exchange he clearly loathed, *The Censure of the Rota* succeeds in breaking away from that supposedly corrupt and futile system. Rather than adopting a sophisticated and aggrandizing literary style as Milton had done, Butler's pamphlet employs a witty and satirical aesthetic. As part of his own analysis of the pamphlet's language and structure, von Maltzahn argues that 'Butler's skill in answering Milton followed from some different tactics in prose that had evolved in the pamphleteering and journalism of the 1640s, and especially in the works of John Berkenhead and other Cavalier satirists and writers of burlesque'.³²⁰ (Berkenhead was a political writer imprisoned several times for his outspoken royalist devotion.) This not only reinforces the idea that Butler's literary style has its roots in the royalist lyric, it also places this satirical prose rhetoric within a tradition of amateur writing indicative of the country gentleman, thus distinguishing it from other forms of rhetorical strategies in later seventeenth-century print. Critically, the pamphlet itself reflects on these rhetorical differences through its own attempts to devalue the elevated language of republicanism as well as through its own self-promotion. After listing all the vices Milton's treatise has inflicted upon the nation – ranging from sacrilegious actions against the church to slandering the dead – Butler adds 'These have been the attempts of your stiffe formall Eloquence, which you arme accordingly, with any thing that lies in your way, right, or wrong'.³²¹ Alongside the content of Milton's *The Readie and Easie Way*, the pamphlet also takes issue with its manner of expression, whose 'stiffe' formality only further exaggerates its political and theoretical deficiencies. Conversely, by appropriating the conventions of the cavalier burlesque into his response, Butler states that 'I thought I had sufficiently demonstrated, not only in my writings but publique exercises in that Coffee-house, that there is no possible foundation of a Free Common-wealth'.³²² Not only does Butler seize upon traditional styles of royalist writing, he also updates them by placing his work in the context of London coffee houses. Doing so opens up more networks of transmission, ensuring his ideas reach a wider audience in both

³¹⁹ Butler, *The Censure of the Rota upon Mr Miltons book, entituled, The ready and easie way to establish a free common-wealth* (London: printed by Paul Giddy, 1660), p.3.

³²⁰ von Maltzahn, 'Samuel Butler's Milton', p.490.

³²¹ Butler, *The Censure of the Rota*, p.9.

³²² Butler, *The Censure of the Rota*, 14.

written and oral forms. Moreover, Butler establishes here a correlation between oral spectacles in public coffee houses and the literary style of his critical writings. Both vehicles employ a colloquial lexicon and adopt a conversational mode of communication, which is subsequently used to pierce and subvert the more complex and refined speech patterns found in republican texts. By proclaiming the superiority of his own pamphlet, then, Butler is implicitly promoting a specific kind of writing, one that utilises a satirical aesthetic to convey its arguments, and which is perceived as being a more suitable medium to engage in critical debate.

Butler would develop and utilise this satirical mode to a more devastating effect thirteen years later in *The Transproser Rehears'd*.³²³ As a direct response to Marvell, the pamphlet attacked the author on both personal and political grounds. However, modern scholarship often highlights the complexity of discerning Marvell's personal views, a challenge that also tested many of his contemporaries.³²⁴ Consequently, any rivals of Marvell required clever and calculated rhetorical strategies in order to effectively censure their target. *The Transproser Rehears'd* is a prime example, which casts Marvell in the light of a staunch republican dissenter guilty of propagating Cromwellian principles by portraying him as an agent of Milton. The link was tenable given that Marvell served alongside Milton as Latin secretary to Cromwell's Council of State. In his pamphlet, Butler accuses Marvell's work of evoking the same corruptions previously uttered by Milton, to the point where his words appear to emanate from Milton's own hand: 'His Malicious and Disloyal Reflections on the late Kings Reign, traducing the Government of the best of Princes, and defaming his faithful Councillors in so foul a manner, as if he had once made use of *Miltons Pen*'.³²⁵ By portraying Marvell as a defiant disciple of Milton, the satire strategically places him within a specific political tradition, one that threatens the safety of the nation and requires swift and severe censorship. Butler generates a much harsher tone here compared to his previous pamphlet, perhaps owing to the much alerted political climate he now faced. Certainly, when Butler initially responded to *The Readie and Easie Way*, Milton's final advocacy for a republican form of government, the Restoration of the monarchy was all but inevitable, supported by parliament and an enthusiastic nation. The impact of Milton's treatise was therefore likely insignificant, and he would go into hiding in June 1660,

³²³ Butler's authorship is argued for in Matthew Augustine, 'The Chameleon or the Sponge?: Marvell, Milton, and the Politics of Literary History', *Studies in Philology*, 111 (2014), 132-162; Nigel Smith claims joint authorship between Butler and Samuel Parker in 'How to make a biography of Andrew Marvell', *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell*, eds. Derek Hirst & Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.194-219.

³²⁴ Joad Raymond, 'A Cromwellian centre?', *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell*, eds. Derek Hirst & Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 140-157, p.141.

³²⁵ Butler, *The transproser rehears'd, or, The fifth act of Mr. Bayes's play* (London: printed for Jacob Van Harmine, 1673), pp.146-7.

four months after its publication.³²⁶ By contrast, Marvell's *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* was written at the height of a religious crisis incited by Nonconformists' desire for freedom of worship following Parliament's decision to renew the 1664 Conventicle Act in 1670. According to Martin Delzainis, Marvell's pamphlet proved immensely popular amongst nonconformists readers, a fact that was also apparent to Butler.³²⁷ Perhaps viewing Marvell's work as a greater, more immediate threat that could have tangible political consequences, Butler treats it with a heightened satirical venom.

Much of Butler's abuse in *The Transproser Rehears'd* falls on the relationship between Milton and Marvell. For example, he states that:

So black a Poyson has he suckt from the most virulent Pamphlets, as were impossible for any Mountebank but the Author of *Iconoclastes* to swallow, without the Cure of Antidotes. And certainly if that Libeller has not clubb'd with our Writer [...] we may safely say, there are many *Miltons* in this one Man.³²⁸

Butler's language is damning as he describes Marvell as an infectious 'Libeller' whose spurious scripts have absorbed the 'Poyson' fluids produced by Milton. This increased satirical malice also insinuates a sexual liaison between the two authors, with the above passage being loaded with innuendo that depicts Marvell as a sexual servant of Milton.³²⁹ Critically, this imagery forms part of the pamphlet's wider satirical strategy. Indeed, as Hammond observes: 'when allegations of homosexual behaviour are made in political poems and pamphlets they tend to be motivated by an ideological agenda [...] implicitly in the pamphlets against Marvell, sodomy is a sign of religious and political nonconformity'.³³⁰ Again, we see Butler using satire as a way of locating Marvell within the religious landscape of Restoration England. The satirical nature of *The Transproser Rehears'd* thus works on multiple levels. While the pamphlet aims to destroy Marvell both personally and politically, it does this by simultaneously creating the criteria with which to do so through a series of derisive lampoons. It is therefore only through this satirical aesthetic that the pamphlet is able to fully realise and achieve its ideological objectives.

³²⁶ See Gordan Campbell & Thomas Corns, *John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 307-9.

³²⁷ Martin Delzainis, 'The Second Edition, Corrected': A Revised Printing History of Andrew Marvell's *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1672)', *Notes and queries*, 63 (2016), 62-66

³²⁸ Butler, *The transproser rehears'd*, p.147.

³²⁹ Augustine highlights other passages that imply a sexual relationship, 'The Chameleon or the Sponge?', p.138,

³³⁰ Paul Hammond, *Figuring Sex between Men from Shakespeare to Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.200-201.

Print thus offered a viable outlet for Butler when it came to addressing broader political and national issues; however, it was the use of a satirical medium that elevated his pamphlets into such effective vehicles for combating republican rhetoric and its apparent promoters. On the whole, as his commonplace books reveal, Butler maintained his disdain for print culture, particularly when it came to carrying out intellectual discussions and the actual effectiveness of bringing about significant change – whether that be moral, social, or political change – that such texts purported to inspire. Indeed, the fact that his pamphlets deliberately invoke the colloquial style of verse lampoons disseminated in London coffee houses – a comparison Butler himself invites – indicates his view that manuscript transmission provided a more effective means of communication. Consequently, the realm of print proved unsatisfactory, and a new mode of critical inquiry was needed to sustain the continual cultural progression of the nation as well as function as an efficient means of self-reflection. Crucially, for Butler, the answer lay in clandestine satire.

On the usefulness of satire, Butler writes that ‘Libels and Lampoones are but a kinde of Morall Representations that only Rally and Rhime Treason, for which they are Commonly Contemn’d and slighted, as things in Jest, though they do more hurt then all the Dull earnest of vulgar Mutiners’.³³¹ There are a several key ideas to note here. First, Butler considers that libels and lampoons possess a noble quality, referring to them as ‘Morall Representations’, implying that satire conveys moral lessons intended to rouse individual and social reform. This contrasts sharply with the chaotic and venal scenes of the Restoration book trade discussed earlier, suggesting that satire operates as a more respectable and unequivocal mode of critical debate and reflection. This is reinforced by the fact that Butler views satire as inherently constructive, being written to rebuke only the most severe forms of cultural transgressions. Moreover, the fact that lampoons ‘only Rally and Rhime Treason’ distinguishes them further from the printed marketplace; unlike the English book trade, which embodies the egotism of writers concerned with personal ambition (most of which is deemed trivial), satire transcends individual revenge or self-aggrandizement, addressing only the most profound contemporary issues for the overall benefit of the nation. Butler’s prose observations here correspond with Ashley Marshall’s evaluation of the perceived negativity of Caroline satire, who writes that ‘much of the negativity of this satire comes from the writers’ fear or despair or outrage rather than from frivolous meanness, and we also find many satires penned from constructive impulses in the hopes of achieving positive results’.³³² Butler also highlights the significance of expression, claiming that the informal and witty style of libels – which often leads to them being ‘slighted, as things in Jest’

³³¹ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.163.

³³² Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England*, p.72.

– are in fact able to inflict ‘more hurt’ in comparison to the ‘Dull earnest of vulgar Mutiners’. Again, this is undoubtedly a jibe at the current state of English print culture – ‘Dull’ and ‘earnest’ certainly echo Butler’s pamphlet critiquing Milton’s prose style, while ‘vulgar’ coincides with his previous descriptions of the people involved in the English book trade; conversely, satire encapsulates the everyday language of the people. Satire is therefore not only viewed as a more effective mode for engaging with critical debate, it is also perceived as having the potential to generate the greatest impact amongst its readers.

Butler goes on to list several reasons explaining why Restoration audiences are more receptive to satirical texts. The first is the fact that libels and lampoons encompass universal issues that have far-reaching political and social implications: ‘For as they are but Prologues to all Tragedies or Comedys of State, So they are fitted to the Humors of all People who are to sit as Judges, or Spectators of the following Acts and Sceanes’.³³³ Butler imagines the political stage as part of a theatre wherein the whole nation forms the audience. Through this theatrical space – in which the nation is privy to the ‘Acts and Sceanes’ of state – audiences form a collective set of assumptions and anxieties that allows satire to resonate on a much larger scale, where it can address ‘the Humors of all People’. Butler also likens satire to dramatic prologues, revealing intriguing insights into his own conception of satire and how prospective readers might receive it. Like prologues, satire is viewed as a direct address to the audience, and is perceived as an external evaluation of cultural affairs rather than a product of the culture itself. It also hints at the manner of delivery; by equating prologues with lampoons, Butler invokes a conversational and colloquial exchange of a more personal kind between writer and reader – echoing the sentiments in his earlier pamphlet critiquing Milton’s crabbed and inflated style. This is strengthened by the fact that both these examples express their point through the analogy of performance, in the form of dramatic prologues and coffeehouse spectacles. As part of its immediate task of entertaining, then, satire establishes an imagined proximity between writer and reader, one that creates a sense of audience participation. This somewhat reciprocal relationship allows for greater flexibility, with the speaker enlisting the reader’s support by simultaneously supplying information and ideas that allow audiences to act as their own ‘Judges’. For Butler, satire thus represented a direct channel of communication that grants readers a certain level of autonomy, enabling satire to subsequently present itself as embodying the values and attitudes of the nation.

A second factor that makes libels and lampoons a more appropriate medium for reflection is the idea that such works possess an honest, sincere quality in comparison to other literary forms. Part of Butler’s conception of this apparent earnestness again appears to stem

³³³ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.163.

from his distinction between print culture and clandestine satire, writing that: ‘And as they are more True then Panegyriques so they are capable of doing Princes more good, (for Panegyriques being nothing but Polite Flattery never did any) if rightly considered, and like Charmes easily Cure those Fantastique Distempers in Government’.³³⁴ During the Restoration the writing of panegyrics and dedicatory epistles was a common tactic used by authors aiming to secure patronage of various kinds. However, as the period progressed the genre began falling into disrepute and was often marred with accusations of flattery, which would eventually culminate in outright ridicule at the turn of the eighteenth century – especially by the likes of Pope and Swift.³³⁵ In 1684, Thomas Otway would comment on the burgeoning of printed epistles with a feeling of concern and suspicion: ‘For though Epistles Dedicatory be lately grown so Epidemical, that either sooner or later, no man of Quality (whom the least Author has the least pretence to be troublesome to) can escape them’.³³⁶ Butler’s aversion towards the panegyric is therefore at once a consequence of its innate falseness as well as it being a manifestation of the immoral and unscrupulous nature of Restoration print culture. Panegyrics and print are thus perceived as the realm of lies and deceit, whereas satire is presented as the realm of truth. This meant that Restoration audiences were more likely to turn to libels and lampoons as a genuine account of contemporary news and as a source for moral or intellectual knowledge. Indeed, it is precisely its truthful nature that makes satire ‘capable of doing Princes more good’, as well as being able to ‘Cure those Fantastique Distempers in Government’. Butler envisions satire here as serving a national purpose, elevating it beyond its base use for private conflict or malicious destruction and transforming it into a tool capable of instilling social and cultural change (at the highest level) through more thoughtful critical reflection.

Lastly, Butler highlights the clandestine nature of satire itself, drawing attention to the lively transmissions of manuscript texts during the period.³³⁷ It is these systems of transmission that he credits with increasing the impact of libels and lampoons:

for they spread like News, and all Pretenders to wit, and Intelligence hold it a Disparagment to their Parts to be unfurnished of them, in which all men seeme to bee so much concernd, that nothing passes so safely under the Rose, and Seal of Secresy (for though they pass

³³⁴ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.163.

³³⁵ See James Garrison, *Dryden and the Tradition of Panegyric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp.21-37

³³⁶ Thomas Otway, *The Atheist: OR, The Second Part of The Souldiers Fortune* (London: printed for Jacob Tonson, 1684), sig.A2^r.

³³⁷ Raven points out that manuscript circulation continued to flourish during the Restoration alongside the rapid growth of the print industry, *The Business of Books*, p.91.

through so many hands, the Right Authors or seldom never
Discovered).³³⁸

Butler presents here an organised and structured network of communication and information centring on the free-flowing circulation of satirical manuscripts.³³⁹ One might assume that support for such surreptitious networks was in part driven by the various licensing acts the government imposed immediately following the Restoration. This might be especially true considering that Butler is advocating a particular kind of political satire that printers would have been cautious to publish through fear of falling under laws prohibiting libel and sedition.³⁴⁰ Critically, such political conditions could strengthen the concept of satire as a more truthful realm of critical inquiry; for, unlike print, authors of lampoons were less likely to curtail their message through fear of persecution, not least of all because, as Butler points out, 'the Right authors are seldom or never Discovered' as texts passed from hand to hand. The materiality of satirical manuscripts themselves thus had the potential to embody honest and unabridged articles of 'News'.

Conversely, while the 1662 Licensing Act undoubtedly fostered intricate networks of underground writing, Peter Beal offers an alternative perspective that made manuscript culture such an appealing endeavour. Shifting from a political lens to a sociological one, Beal posits that 'manuscript circulation provided an especially immediate and congenial culture in which risqué, topical, and selectively communal material could effectively flourish: when the interaction between author, text, and reader of such things was at its liveliest, most coordinated, and most appropriate'.³⁴¹ This account certainly aligns more with the wider values Butler places on clandestine satire. The idea of a 'congenial' and 'immediate' system of transmission corresponds with the image of lampoons being exchanged 'through so many hands', as well as the fact that Butler viewed satire as a direct channel of communication. Moreover, the relationship Beal outlines between author, text, and reader that emerges from this kind of exchange has strong parallels with the intimate proximity Butler envisions satire creating between writer and reader discussed above. Such networks also had the potential to create a sense of exciting exclusivity, and in the process transform libels and lampoons into coveted items. Butler alludes to this possibility during the moment of physical exchange by stating that 'nothing passes so safely under the Rose, and Seal of Secresy'. This again presents satire as granting audiences a sense of autonomy and participation, as the reader of such manuscripts could not only feel they had

³³⁸ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.163.

³³⁹ For an overview of the forms and variety of manuscript transmission see Love, *English Clandestine Satire*, pp.259-266.

³⁴⁰ See Hammond, *The Making of Restoration Poetry*, pp.29-30.

³⁴¹ Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, pp.19-20.

privileged access to certain secretive texts, but by virtue of being part of these select, covert networks could also be actively complicit in the transmission and dissemination of such works. The premium this places on satirical texts is made clear by Butler, as ‘all Pretenders to wit, and Intelligence hold it a Disparagement to their Parts to be unfurnishd of them’. To read or be in possession of lampoons was both a fashionable and required occupation for those wishing to portray themselves as learned men familiar with current affairs (perhaps as a means of securing social status), whilst failure to achieve this risked being excluded from vital channels of information, as well as from engaging in new forms of sociality. For Butler, then, the acquisition, reading, and circulating of satirical manuscripts was a fundamental social process ingrained into the texture of English literary culture, and one that helped shape satire into an instrument of critical reflection that benefited the nation.

So far, Butler’s thinking about satire has centred on its socio-political function, in which the increased status and usefulness of satire emerges from the immediate need to identify new modes and practices of cultural discourse. Against the alleged deteriorating conditions facing the book trade (and print as a whole), libels and lampoons – as both textual objects and articles of news – provided a more receptive and persuasive format for writers and readers. However, alongside such observations Butler would also consider how the internal poetics of satirical literature further enhanced its potential impact and influence. Part of this examination centred on the idea that Restoration satire possessed a heightened sensibility and aesthetical quality that ostensibly positioned it as the preeminent mode of critical inquiry, with Butler coming to the conclusion that ‘Satyrical wit may seeme to be the most pleasant of all other’.³⁴² Wit, the essential marker for all great writers, signifies here a particular form of poetic expression or style, which, despite being able to manifest in other modes of writing, is at its most ‘pleasant’ and impactful when expressed through a satirical medium. But what exactly made satire such a poetically fertile ground that enabled wit to flourish and reach this literary pinnacle?

According to Butler’s commonplace book, the answer lay in satire’s ability to encompass and channel extreme human emotion: ‘There is nothing that provokes and sharpens wit like Malice, and Anger [...] So much power has Malice above all other Passions, to heighten wit and Fancy, for malice is Restles, and never finde’s ease until it has vented it self’.³⁴³ The fact that satire draws upon these ‘Passions’ is unsurprising. Despite acknowledging some variations in patterns, Marshall concedes that Restoration satire ‘is often fierce and only rarely funny’, before adding that ‘a large proportion of them tend toward the heated, angry, or alarmed’.³⁴⁴ Love

³⁴² Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.138.

³⁴³ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.60.

³⁴⁴ Marshall, *The Practice of English Satire*, p.72.

offers a much harsher summary, stating that ‘many lampoons were written out of undisguised, inveterate, unthinking malice. For them and their authors it is hard to find any excuse except for what they reveal as case studies in the pathology of hatred’.³⁴⁵ At first Butler might appear to agree with Marshall and Love’s diagnosis – at least in terms of the emotional inspiration for such works. However, rather than emanating from an ‘unthinking malice’ that can only generate humourless outbursts of pathological vindictiveness, Butler posits that such passions are not only far from thoughtless, but in fact stem from an acute sensibility that acts as an essential catalyst for the production of exceptional wit. He describes a process wherein malice actually ‘sharpens wit’, which in turn imbues a text with an increased sense of urgency and gravitas, ‘for malice is Restles, and never finde’s ease until it has vented it self’.

Butler was not alone in thinking that such extreme passions were beneficial to the poetics of satire. In 1688, his friend and occasional patron, the Earl of Dorset, would write the poem *A Faithful Catalogue of our Most Eminent Ninnies*, a cutting lampoon directed at a number of court personnel – including King James II – which opens with a critique of the failing standards of verse satire:

Curs’d be those dull, unpointed, doggerel rhymes,
Whose harmless rage has lash’d our impious times.
Rise thou, my muse, and with sharpest thorn,
Instead of peaceful bays, my brows adorn;
Inspir’d with just disdain and mortal hate,
who long have been my plague shall feel thy weight (ll.1-6).³⁴⁶

While the rest of the poem carries a clear political flavor, these introductory lines succeed in demonstrating the increasingly self-reflective aspect of late seventeenth-century satire, and how such works developed from the analysis of their own form and function. The opening couplet addresses a number of issues. It condemns modern verse satire for its ‘harmless rage’ that renders it ineffective in the censuring of transgressions that have ‘lash’d our impious times’. Implicit in this critique is the idea that satire acts as a countermeasure to the most immoral of offences, and so performs a vital socio-political purpose (though Dorset slightly undermines this position by shifting from the general to the personal in line six). It also berates the linguistic and poetic quality apparent in contemporary satires, labeling them both ‘dull’ and beset by ‘doggerel rhymes’ – that is to say, lacking any wit or poetic force. To amend these shortcomings, Dorset

³⁴⁵ Love, *Clandestine Satire*, p.190.

³⁴⁶ Earl of Dorset, *The Poems of Charles Sackville Sixth Earl of Dorset*, ed. Brice Harris (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), p.137; Brice, having verified Dorset’s authorship, postulates a date between February and May 1688, p.136.

calls upon his muse to be 'Inspir'd with just disdain and mortal hate', replacing the 'peaceful bays' that have plagued recent satirical verse with 'sharpest thorn'. Dorset's theoretical language and creative process closely follows that of Butler's. There is a sensible process apparent in both works, wherein extreme human emotion is not the end but rather the means through which satire reaches new levels of refinement and sharpness. By drawing on 'disdain and mortal hate' Dorset is able to turn his verse away from the plodding dullness dominating other such works and infuse it with a more profound and focused wit, increasing the potential impact of his poem in the process.

The development of Restoration satire is thus in part driven by its increased sensibility. Its anger and disdain is, on one level, a manifestation of particular cultural transgressions, and on another an essential artistic stimulus. This dual sensibility both heightens the poetical aesthetics of verse satire and enhances its effectiveness in answering specific offences. Butler reinforces this by asserting that 'Satyrs that are only provok'd with the Madnes and Folly of the world, are found to containe more wit, and Ingenuity then all other writings whatsoever, and meet with a better Reception from the world'.³⁴⁷ In a somewhat paradoxical way, then, the increased 'Malice' of satire actually refines its literary quality and improves its overall ability to uphold cultural standards (the latter due to the fact that lampoons invoke 'a better Reception from the world'). Throughout his private theoretical musings Butler thus establishes a distinct reciprocity between the progressive development of satirical verse and its wider reception. Critically, this reciprocal relationship is also seen as evolving from satire's perceived sensibility. Indeed, on the reasons for its superior reception, Butler adds that the nation is 'always more delighted to heare the Faults and vices though of itself well described, then all the Panegyriques that ever were, which are commonly as Dull as they are false'.³⁴⁸ Not only does satire's fierce indignation yield a more entertaining report, it also provides a more precise and detailed one. This is contrasted with the dullness and falsity associated with the panegyric, and which subsequently allows satire to fully realize its ideological function of responding to and amending 'Faults and vices'. The sensibility of Restoration satire thus reinforces its perception as a medium of truth. Its substance, though severe, is a more sincere reflection of human emotion, capable of refining and enhancing 'Satyrical wit', which in turn helps shape satire as both a form and realm of critical ideas.

³⁴⁷ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.60.

³⁴⁸ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.60.

Ancients and moderns: theory and satire

Butler's considered reflections on satire reveals a writer and thinker deeply invested in not only establishing a new set of theoretical and creative definitions for satirical literature, but one who was ready to push satire into new territory by re-imagining the genre as a more stylish and superior mode of critical inquiry, one capable of achieving a greater level of poetic introspection and of engaging with prevailing Restoration literary theory. Indeed, his reevaluation of its transmission, social scope, and sensible poetics reveals the emergence of a new conceptual framework in which satire could operate, providing it with a much greater versatility. The increased sensibility of Restoration satire would not only refine and heighten the linguistic and lyrical quality of its verse, but also transform the medium into a more constructive and critically engaged format that was capable of addressing a range of issues. No longer limited to the political sphere that typified Butler's prose pamphlets, verse satire could assume a new cultural purpose as it was continually re-appropriated throughout the period to achieve a variety of ideological and aesthetic objectives. As previously demonstrated, this emergent satirical phenomenon had already begun to establish itself as a popular form of literary criticism. Critically, for Butler, the decision to turn to satirical media to engage with prevailing literary issues can be viewed as part of a wider anxiety towards the apparent decline in Restoration intellectual standards across a range of subjects.

Under the heading 'Criticisms upon Bookes and Authors' in his commonplace book, Butler appears offended by the proliferation of texts claiming to deal with scholarly topics that in reality are devoid of any true learning: 'Those treaties that are dayly publish'd upon all sorts of Learning, are, for the most part, nothing else but Notes and Collections gather'd by Ignorant Novices in those studys, and Professions; Who like all Smatterers admiring that most which they least understand, believe that the same thing that please them best, out of their want of Judgment, will have the same effect upon all the world'.³⁴⁹ Alongside Butler's familiar aversion for print we find the intellectual realms of Restoration England clogged with treaties 'dayly publish'd', written by 'Ignorant Novices' whose 'want of Judgment' threatens the stability of the nation's cultural values. This private observation betrays the same indignation and sensibility that Butler had earlier deemed necessary for the production of 'Satyrical wit' against the state, implying that such an affront to Restoration scholarship required (and produced) an equally immediate and austere response. Within this volatile and potentially deteriorating intellectual milieu, literary theory emerges as a high priority, evidenced by a number of verse satires that encompass a range of issues concerning the state of modern literature. Regarding Butler's

³⁴⁹ Butler, *Prose Observations*, p.145.

contribution, he would follow his critique of heroic drama in a *Satyr on Rhyme* with the much more accomplished and theoretically complex satire *Upon Critics who judge of modern Plays precisely by the Rules of the Ancients*.

As the title suggests, the poem engages with the popular Restoration debate surrounding the current standard of English drama compared to its classical counterparts, and was supposedly prompted by the publication of Thomas Rymer's *Tragedies of the Last Age Considered* around August 1677.³⁵⁰ However, the evidence that Butler was responding directly to Rymer is circumstantial. In his modern edition of Rymer's works, Curt Zimansky handles the satire with caution, writing that 'The poem – which does not mention Rymer by name – cannot be considered a reasoned answer [...] The verses are general enough to serve as an attack on almost any Restoration critic with leaning toward the ancients'.³⁵¹ Butler's eighteenth-century editor Thyer on the other hand is more assertive, stating that 'This warm invective was probably occasioned by Mr. Rymer, Historiographer to Charles II, who censured Three Tragedies of Beaumont's and Fletcher's'.³⁵² If so, this would date the satire to the summer of 1677, three years before Butler's death.

The most compelling evidence that Butler was answering Rymer's tract comes from an examination of the satire itself, where closer analysis of the poem's language reveals he was following diligently the arguments and the language used to express them that are manifest in Rymer's essay. The fact that the satire also reads as a general critique forms part of its rhetorical strategy, allowing Butler to simultaneously reflect on the literary debate as a whole as well as showcase his skill and wit by countering the beliefs of a specific writer. To this we might also add a social dimension. On 20th August, William Wycherley, a renowned member of the Buckingham circle, penned a letter to the Earl of Mulgrave in which he derides Rymer's treatment of Beaumont and Fletcher. 'The King and no King, The maid's Tragedy, and Rollo, are all torn to Pieces by a New Criticque lately publish'd by Rymer [...] The Book is duller than his Play of Edgar'.³⁵³ As an associate of the same social circle, it is not only plausible that Butler had access to a copy of Rymer's text, but also that his satire was initially written for private circulation amongst those colleagues whom shared its literary disposition. Certainly, anyone familiar with *Tragedies of the Last Age* would have recognized elements of Butler's satire as a critique of Rymer's text, as Thyer had evidently done.

³⁵⁰ The original manuscript in the British Library (MS.32625) bears no title. Thyer added the title in *Genuine Remains* (1759).

³⁵¹ Rymer, *Works*, p.194.

³⁵² Thyer, *Genuine Remains*, 161.

³⁵³ Letter quoted from *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, p.193.

Moreover, by paying closer attention to the language and form of *Upon Critics*, we are able to observe the way in which satire is able to encompass and express the types of literary theories from which they derive, and how this in turn shapes satire into a more refined and respected medium of literary ideas. Thyer himself alludes to this development in the *Genuine Remains*. His opening remark that the poem represents a 'warm invective' implies that despite its harshness, the satire is earnest in its criticisms, which are expressed with an insightful elegance. This praise extends into the poem's reception: 'The cold severe Critic may perhaps find some few Inaccuracies to censure in this Composition; but the Reader of Taste will either overlook or pardon them, for the Sake of the Spirit, that runs through it'.³⁵⁴ Far from being a mundane editor, Thyer displays a skillful and shrewd writing style, contrasting the 'warm' satire with the 'cold severe Critic' incessantly hunting for 'some few Inaccuracies to censure', implying that the literary satire contains more knowledge and value than most eighteenth-century critics. Thyer clearly admired the poem, and would attempt to elicit the same reaction from his eighteenth-century audience, stating that the satire would appeal to 'the Reader of Taste'. The 'Spirit' that runs throughout *Upon Critics* may at once refer to the adept satirizing of Rymer's critical theory or the newfound sensibility that Restoration satire had obtained. (Thyer's use of 'Spirit' has obvious parallels with Butler's theory that satire is most effective when it draws on the passions). Thus, what Zimansky had once characterized as an unreasoned response has in Thyer's editorial annotations become a pleasant and enlightened critical reply that challenges the literary ideals on which Rymer builds his argument, demonstrating the role satire played in recreating Restoration literary culture.

Like Butler, Rymer came from relative obscurity before eventually moving amongst more elite circles of Restoration society. *Tragedies of the Last Age* was written in the form a letter to Fleetwood Sheppard, whom Rymer met at Grey's Inn. Through his relationship with Sheppard, he was able to position himself at the centre of London's literary scene due to Sheppard's connections with the period's foremost writers, including the likes of Rochester, Charles Sedley, and the Earl of Dorset. It is most likely through Dorset that Rymer eventually came to know Dryden, who writes a letter to Dorset to report his receiving a copy of *Tragedies of the Last Age* while away in the country: 'Mr Rymer sent me his booke, which has been my best entertainment hitherto: tis certainly very learned, & the best piece of Criticism in the English tongue'.³⁵⁵ While Dryden would later disclaim Rymer's critical views, his initial impression was of a critic who demonstrated considerable learning, and whose essay touched upon some of the

³⁵⁴ Thyer, *Genuine Remains*, 161.

³⁵⁵ Charles E. Ward, *The Letters of John Dryden With Letters Addressed to Him* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942), pp.13-14.

broader cultural issues that preoccupied his own critical thinking in *An Essay on Dramatick Poesy* – in particular the question of how far English literature has progressed.

Maximilian Novak has argued that ‘in Rymer’s approach may be found some elements of the battle between the Ancients and the Moderns, in which the Moderns are seen as improving themselves by learning directly from the authors of Greek tragedy and ridding themselves of their ‘Gothic’ past’.³⁵⁶ However, unlike Dryden, Rymer’s essay presents a far more damning portrait, claiming that English authors have failed to recreate the masterpieces of antiquity and have instead ‘forc’d another way to the *wood*; a *by-road*, that runs directly cross to that of *Nature, Manners* and *Philosophy* which gain’d the *Ancients* so great veneration’.³⁵⁷ As a way of measuring this digression, Rymer establishes a series of rationalistic principles that emerge throughout the essay’s scathing and systematic censuring of Renaissance tragedy. These rules centre on ideas such as common sense, probability, and ‘poetical justice’. Yet, despite its harshness, Rymer’s essay discloses an implicit anxiety towards the English dramatic landscape. As Douglas Patey posits, ‘oppositions of ancient and modern emerge as part of the way any age constructs its identity, particularly the way it understands itself as a distinct ‘age’’.³⁵⁸ With this in mind, Rymer’s text offers a self-reflection of literary identity, simultaneously tracing the habits and characteristics of our literary lineage whilst revealing how these manifest in our immediate cultural conditions. His anxiety thus stems from the need to dislocate Restoration literary practices from its English heritage so it can realign itself with more classical ideals.

Upon Critics responds to such charges with a lively and perceptive satirical intellect that aims to reduce Rymer’s theoretical assumptions to a series of ridiculous and arbitrary ravings. One way the poem achieves this is by creating a legal setting that draws on Butler’s own familiarity with the law:

Who ever will regard Poetique Fury,
When it is once found Idiot by a Jury?
And evry Peart and Arbitrary Fool
Can all Poetique Licence over-Rule? (ll.1-4)³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ Maximilian E. Novak ‘Drama, 1660-1740’, in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism Volume 4: The Eighteenth Century*, eds. H.B. Nisbet & Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.167-184, p.177.

³⁵⁷ Rymer, *Works*, p.18.

³⁵⁸ Douglas Patey, ‘Ancients and Moderns’, in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism Volume 4: The Eighteenth Century*, Eds. H.B. Nisbet & Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.32-75, p.33.

³⁵⁹ Butler, *Satires*, p.60.

Aubrey highlights Butler's legal experience, implying that he maintained connections with Grey's Inn where he 'had a clubb every night', and that while 'he studied the Common Lawes of England' he 'did not practise'.³⁶⁰ The imagery in these opening lines places 'Poetique Fury' on a trial ruled by an incompetent board of literary critics. Butler's concept of 'Poetique Fury' here correlates with his earlier commonplace book reflections, signifying the artistic power that flows naturally from the poet. While the language used to describe that process is more profound in *Upon Critics*, this is most likely due to a combination of rhetorical effect and as an intertextual reference to Rymer's own thoughts on poetry, which he characterises as 'blind inspiration', 'pure *enthusiasm*', and '*rapture and rage* all over'.³⁶¹ Such excessiveness necessitates the use of reason, which must not only 'consent and ratify what-ever by *fancy* is attempted in its absence', but regarding the '*economy* of a Play, *reason* is always principally to be consulted'.³⁶² Reason here possesses a malleability that alters between genres, acting as either a controlling mechanism or as the primary creative agent. In both cases the role of poetic imagination is diminished, a condition that is of chief concern for Butler. The satire thus appropriates the highly contested vocabulary of Restoration literary theory, and in doing so can be viewed as actively participating in the recreation of a new English poetic language.

Upon Critics begins by considering the status of 'Poetique Fury', which is at risk of being 'found Idiot by a Jury' of critics seeking to vitiate its creative currency. Butler laments the current trends of modern literary theory that actively degrades the traditional values associated with poetic imagination. Such treatment not only reduces its immediate cultural value, but also threatens to impede the overall development of English literature, as he continues: 'And evry Peart and Arbitrary Fool/Can all Poetique Licence over-Rule?'. 'Poetique Licence' denotes the necessary freedom that permits writers to experiment with poetic form and subsequently push the boundaries of literary practices; however, this freedom is currently being circumscribed by 'evry Peart and Arbitrary Fool' – with the rhyme of 'Fool'/'Rule' underlining the irony that fundamental literary issues are subjected to the 'Arbitrary' verdicts of incompetent critics.

The satirical language of the poem intensifies as Butler carries the legal imagery into the next lines: 'Assume a Barbrous Tryanny to Handle/The Muses, worse then Ostro-goth, or Vandal?/Make 'em submit to a verdict and Report/And stand (or Fall) to th' orders of a Court' (ll.5-8).³⁶³ Butler's depiction of the critic shifts from an unlearned fool to that of a corrupt sovereign whose 'Barbrous Tryanny' has abused the creative muses 'worse then Ostro-goth, or Vandal'. (There is a subtle mockery here involving the word 'Assume', which taunts the

³⁶⁰ Aubrey, *Brief Lives I*, p.21; p.387.

³⁶¹ Rymer, *Works*, p.20.

³⁶² Rymer, *Works*, p.20.

³⁶³ Butler, *Satires*, p.60.

ambitiousness of men like Rymer as well as imply that any authority is merely feigned). The Ostrogoths and Vandals were Germanic people of Rome who throughout western history have both been depicted as violent, uncivilised races. Dryden recalls the Vandals fifth-century sacking of Rome, in which many works of art were destroyed: 'Till Goths, and Vandals, a rude Northern race,/Did all the matchless Monuments deface'.³⁶⁴ Butler's referencing them in *Upon Critics* cleverly undermines the validity of Rymer's literary assertions by placing them within an uncultured and destructive artistic precedent. It also discloses a fear that present-day London will suffer the same fate as ancient Rome, as Butler threads England's literary accomplishments into its national identity, both of which are at risk of having their cultural heritage decimated. The satirical medium therefore raises the gravities of the literary debate, as Rymer – along with all those whom side with the ancients – is treated as a danger to the cultural legacy of the entire nation. This is emphasised further through a satirical language that revolves around legal corruption and oppression – 'Tyranny', 'submit', 'Report', 'orders' – which casts Rymer's theoretical declarations in the guise of an absolute autocracy. Butler condemns the need to submit poetic imagination ('The Muses') to the 'orders of a Court', a more obvious reference to Rymer's systematic treatment of Renaissance drama. *Upon Critics*'s use of both classical and legal imagery thus forms part of a satirical strategy that subverts both the legitimacy and authority of Rymer's literary theories, whilst simultaneously providing an intellectual framework that helps refine the poem's own satirical aesthetic, allowing it to function as a more learned and sincere piece of literary criticism. The legal structure that Butler draws on also subtly reverses the expectations of the reader; despite the fact that 'Poetique Fury' is the object on trial, the poem draws the reader's attention more to the absurdity of the jury and the arbitrary rules it is imposing, thus manoeuvring audiences to instead try and condemn those who share Rymer's ideological views.

Upon Critics starts on a fairly common note, incorporating the same Restoration critical vocabulary used to discuss the value of natural inspiration against more studied artistic practices. Butler consciously encompasses the language of this argument before going on to demonstrate how these issues are also manifestly at the centre of the debate between the ancients and moderns. In doing so, Butler foregrounds his theoretical censuring of Rymer's support for the ancients within a literary context familiar to most seventeenth-century audiences. After being tried by an incompetent and corrupt jury, the creative 'Muses' must further 'Be sentenc'd by the Arbitra[r]y/Proceedings of a witless Plagiary/That forge's old

³⁶⁴ John Dryden, *The Poems of John Dryden volume IV*, ed. Paul Hammond & David Hopkins (London: Longman, 2000), p.347.

Records, and Ordinances/Against the Right and Property of Fancy' (ll.9-12).³⁶⁵ Butler portrays the literary principles derived from ancient edicts as archaic relics that no longer correspond with contemporary standards. Alternatively, one could argue here that the fundamental issue is not necessarily with the ancient precepts themselves, but that *Tragedies of the Last Age* represents a 'witless Plagiary', wherein Rymer is found doubly guilty, first of committing the immoral act of plagiarism, but also of doing so in the most dull and 'witless' manner, both of which expose his lack of scholarship and creative flair. This also reinforces the idea that wit and 'Fancy' are the key elements that modern writing is judged by. Butler continues to showcase his lexical inventiveness as the satire maintains its legal imagery. The 'Right and Property of Fancy' imagines poetic inspiration as a tenure-commodity enshrined in and protected by English common-law, and so transforms the act of obstructing 'Fancy' with 'old Records, and Ordinances' from a literary transgression to a palpable crime, as the satirical aesthetic once again elevates the severity of Rymer's actions.

The accusations of plagiarism, whilst at once an obvious reference to Rymer's appropriation of classical precepts, may also refer to what Butler felt was an overreliance on the works and theories of the seventeenth-century French neo-classics. The charge would be repeated towards the end of the poem, where Butler sketches the European route through which classic theatrical models entered English critical thinking, beginning with 'Virtuosi-Tuscans', continued by 'Lope Vega' (the sixteenth-century Spanish playwright), and then 'After him the French Filou Corniele', whom finally 'our English Plagiarys Nim/And steal their farfet Criticisms, from him' (ll.85-92).³⁶⁶ Despite the complexity of tracing an ancient literary ideology as it manifested at various points across European cultures, Butler clearly felt that the emergence of literary criticism in Restoration England in support of the classics had a distinctly unwelcome French flavour. This distaste stems from an aversion towards French culture in general, a view most articulately displayed in the poem *Satyr Upon Our Ridiculous Imitation of the French*, where, amongst other things, Butler warns English audiences against emulating French dramatic models, 'To learn the dullest of their Whims/[...] To turn and manage every Part,/Like Puppets, by their Rules of Art' (ll.87-90).³⁶⁷

Rymer's *Tragedies of the Last Age* is unquestionably indebted to French neo-classicism in both form and context. Dramatic criticism in seventeenth century France derived much of its models from the works of classical writers, particularly Aristotle and Horace. However, while both were influential in shaping French neoclassical thinking, the stylistic and dogmatic method

³⁶⁵ Butler, *Satires*, p.60.

³⁶⁶ Butler, *Satires*, p.60.

³⁶⁷ Butler, *Satires*, p.51.

of critical inquiry that emerges is a consequence of a misreading, or perhaps a reinventing, of linear history. The wider ramifications this had across continental Europe is demonstrated by Thora Jones, who explains that ‘when an interest in classical criticism was revived in the sixteenth century it was almost inevitable, given the hierarchically structured society [of] post-Renaissance Europe, that scholars would adopt the formalistic posture of Horace rather than the tentative experimental organic approach of Aristotle’.³⁶⁸ It was through this formalistic lens that French critics interpreted Aristotle’s *Poetics*, and in particular the unities, with Ann Delehanty observing that the century ‘moves from Corneille’s initial resistance to the strictures of the rules to his eventual writing of the three discourses that famously accede to the needs of the rules. The rule-bound model of poetics culminates with Racine’s almost obsessive observation of the three unities’.³⁶⁹ Rymer had already translated the 1674 treatise *Reflexions sur la poetique* by Rapin (another key neoclassical figure), and by the time he came to write *Tragedies of the Last Age* many of the features that preoccupied French neo-classicism had synthesised with his own ideas and experiences of English drama. Certainly, the works of the French neoclassics, with their emphasis on vraisemblance, virtue and the unities, underpin the theoretical grounding for Rymer’s own concepts of probability, decorum, and poetic justice.

Upon Critics attacks both the theoretical particulars of Rymer’s essay as well as its proposed systematic implementation of ancient precepts. Butler condemns those who would:

Reduce all Tragedy to Rules of Art
 Back, to its Antique Theater, a Cart
 And make ‘em hence forth keep the beaten Roades
 Of Reverend Choruses, and Episodes (ll.17-20).³⁷⁰

The lines neatly encapsulate the primary motivation behind the satire. The ‘beaten Roades’ are an intertextual reference to Rymer’s claim that modern drama has created a ‘by-road’ that diverges from classical drama; though what becomes a trans-historical standard in Rymer’s exegesis of ancient models becomes in Butler’s satire a derivative and confined avenue for artistic expression. He also repeats the phrase ‘Rules of Art’ (used above in *Our Ridiculous Imitation of the French*). As we have already seen throughout his commonplace book, ‘Art’ is treated pejoratively, and is conceived as a forced and encumbering method of writing. Butler reinforces that definition here in two ways: first, by associating the term with a regressive set of

³⁶⁸ Thora Burnley Jones & Bernard De Bear Nicol, *Neo-Classical Dramatic Criticism 1560-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.16.

³⁶⁹ Ann T. Delehanty, *Literary Knowing in Neoclassical France: From Poetics to Aesthetics* (Bucknell University Press, 2012), p.19.

³⁷⁰ Butler, *Satires*, p.60.

principles that will 'Reduce all Tragedy' to cheap, monotonous copies; and secondly, by contrasting these 'Rules of Art' with the creative bliss attributed to 'Poetique Fury', where the former is seen restricting the latter. Butler thus consciously encompasses the highly contested language of Restoration criticism and utilises the satirical medium as a way of re-examining its literary values; indeed, by employing this vocabulary to attack Rymer's systematic treatment of contemporary drama whilst simultaneously protesting for greater creative intensity, *Upon Critics* is actively redefining and reinforcing certain poetical standards.

Butler goes on to ridicule several 'Rules of Art' that emerge in *Tragedies of the Last Age*, beginning with the emphasis placed on plot, or the 'fable'. Rymer states his chief focus is with dramatic plot, which he labels 'the *soul of Tragedy*', as opposed to the more '*mechanical part of Tragedies*', 'the *proportions, the unities, and outward regularities of a play*'.³⁷¹ By contrasting the '*reasonable Soul*' of classical tragedy with the '*brutish, and often worse than brutish*' state of English theatre, he insists that plot is the means through which modern authors can reconnect with their classical predecessors.³⁷² Critically, it is from this base that Rymer's demands for probability are met, which aims to ensure that the characters and action of a play maintain their integrity. He charges English drama with failing to uphold this natural semblance, exclaiming that 'The Characters are all *improbable and improper* in the highest degree [...] their actions and all the *lines* of the Play run so wide from the *Plot*, that scarce ought could be imagin'd more contrary'.³⁷³ At first, Rymer's arguments might appear to demote the unities to artistic affections; however, they eventually become bound to his theory of probability, which is not only viewed as a dramatic necessity, but also a means through which writers can better observe the unities, for 'if the Poet design any certain *sense* by his *Fable*, that sense will bind him to the *unity of action*; and the *unity of action* cannot well exceed the rule of *time*. And these two *unities* will not permit that the Poet transgress in the *third*'.³⁷⁴ This forms an intricately reciprocal relationship between plot, probability, and the unities which helps reinforces the overall vraisemblance (to borrow the French term) of dramatic tragedy. *Upon Critics* rejects these views, arguing against the imitation of classical plots comprised 'Of Reverend Choruses, and Episodes' that will ultimately reduce English theatre 'Back, to its Antique Theater, a Cart'. The satirical language here depicts an extremely archaic and limited theatrical environment that acts as a lampoon on the strict conditions required for Rymer's concept of probability, which only serves to confine the dramatic spaces in which characters and action can operate.

³⁷¹ Rymer, *Works*, p.18.

³⁷² Rymer, *Works*, p.18.

³⁷³ Rymer, *Works*, p.42.

³⁷⁴ Rymer, *Works*, p.27.

The significance ascribed to dramatic narrative is predicated on a wider belief that tragedy contains universal elements that transcend cultural conditions. Rymer emphasises this by challenging the Restoration view that '*Athens and London have not the same Meridian*' – the idea that geographical separation creates contrasting physical and sociological climates.³⁷⁵ Instead, he posits that the qualities required for great literary works are rooted in universal veracities. Principally, these centre on the representations of nature and mankind: '*Nature is the same, and Man is the same, he loves, grieves, hates, envies, has the same affections and passions in both places, and the same springs that give them motion*'.³⁷⁶ Butler, following closely Rymer's argument, rebukes this premise, proclaiming 'As if the Antique Laws of Tragedy/Did with our own Municipall agree' (ll.43-44).³⁷⁷ Butler again reverts to a legal vocabulary to undercut Rymer's theory by establishing a distinct English 'Municipall' that proves discordant with the 'Antique Laws of Tragedy'. He sneers at the simplistic attempt to superimpose classical 'laws' onto modern practices, disregarding the universality of man's relationship with nature on the basis that as societies diverge and develop, so too do the laws and values that shape them. Furthermore, the term 'Municipall', with its obvious political overtones, reinforces the idea that the Restoration embodies a new and refined period in the history of English literature, being imagined as its own governing body, whose laws and practices have been produced by its own native writers and scholars under the patronage of Charles II. The sentiment might appear timely, as Butler was soon to be awarded a pension from the king in November following the release of the second and third parts of *Hudibras*, ostensibly confirming his reputation as a leading court poet; however, the pension would not be paid until a year later. The whole episode was noted by Oldham, who writes that Butler was 'with wonder read,/And promises of Princely Favour fed'.³⁷⁸

Moreover, the idea that dramatic narrative embodied universal truths was for Rymer the key to achieving an essential function of tragedy: to arouse fear and pity. The link between plot and emotional response comes directly from Aristotle, who writes that 'seeing a play performed may evoke fear and pity, but so too can the plot itself'.³⁷⁹ *Tragedies of the Last Age* initially seizes this idea in order to justify the imitation of classical narratives, before building on Aristotle's work by arguing that human emotions are inherent sensations that manifest themselves identically throughout history, and so 'what mov'd *pity* there, will *here* also produce

³⁷⁵ Rymer, *Works*, p.19.

³⁷⁶ Rymer, *Works*, p.19.

³⁷⁷ Butler, *Satires*, p.61.

³⁷⁸ Oldham, *Works*, p.243.

³⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.33.

the same effect'.³⁸⁰ Critically, this line of thinking conflates emotional effect with the idea of mimesis, stemming from Rymer's belief that nature exists in perpetuity; if the pity evoked by Greek tragedy emanates directly from mankind's relationship with the world, the recreation of that emotion thus necessitates an equal dedication to mimetic depictions of nature. This resonates closely with emergent themes amongst the French neo-classics. Certainly, as part of her argument that the French emphasis on poetic rules were employed for more sentimental purposes rather than formal mechanics, Delehanty posits that 'the goal of the rules of poetic production in the seventeenth century was *vraisemblance*. By making the play [...] seem as real as possible, the proper emotional effect could be achieved'.³⁸¹

It is on these literary principles that Butler's poem is at its most satirical. On the impact they will have on English drama, he laments that 'No Pudding shall be suffered to be witty/Unless it be in Order to Raise Pitty' (ll.27-28).³⁸² His criticism again focuses on the correct use of poetic wit, which is here erroneously associated with being able to 'Raise Pitty', as Rymer's essay seemingly correlates wit with achieving the desired premeditated Aristotelian response. In doing so, Butler reassesses the fundamental ideas within the *Poetics* through contemporary Restoration terms, and condemns the idea that the pinnacle of tragedy is to evoke pity on the basis that it fails to showcase the more inventive and imaginative qualities necessary for Restoration concepts of wit. Perhaps his most severe remark comes in the lines: 'For none but such for Tragedy are fitted/That have been Ruined only to be Pittyd' (ll.35-36).³⁸³ On one level, this serves as a theoretical critique on the forced theatrical mechanics through which dramatic characters encounter their tragic fate, whilst on another level acts as a playful remark on entire works that have been 'Ruined' for the sake of evoking pity.

As shown in Thyer's commentary, Butler's satire also makes use of classical allusion. However, instead of supporting the Aristotelian model, it only further highlights the contrived nature with which it proposes to achieve elements of catharsis and moral instruction, which Rymer claims are essential duties for the poet: 'Shall he not rather *purge* away the corruption, and reform our *manners*?'.³⁸⁴ *Upon Critics* lampoons the way such objectives are theatrically presented, whether it is through specific character's that 'have had th' Il Luck, against their wils to erre' (l.38), or because 'some God, or Dev'l chance t' have Piques/Against an Antient Family of Greeks' (ll.31-32).³⁸⁵ Thyer suggests 'It is very probable, that he [Butler] had his eyes on

³⁸⁰ Rymer, *Works*, p.19.

³⁸¹ Delehanty, *Literary Knowing in Neoclassical France*, p.20.

³⁸² Butler, *Satires*, p.60.

³⁸³ Butler, *Satires*, p.61.

³⁸⁴ Rymer, *Works*, p.19.

³⁸⁵ Butler, *Satires*, p.61.

Sophocles's famous Tragedy *Oedipus*, whose Banishment and Misery was owing entirely to his having unknowingly and accidentally kill'd his Father [...] and afterwards married his Mother'.³⁸⁶ The allusion to specific classical examples achieves two things: first, it places the satire within an established theoretical and scholarly precedence; second, and more immediately, it allows Butler to expose the absurd and implausible nature of such dramatic mechanisms, particularly in their attempts to evoke fear or pity in the pursuit of moral reform. This sentiment culminates in his critique towards the representation of tragic character:

Whence only such as are of Midling Sizes
Between Morality and venial vices
Are Qualifyd to be Destroyd by Fate
For other Mortals to take warning at (ll.39-42).³⁸⁷

Butler ends the section with a flourish of enjambment directly attacking the *Poetics*, specifically Aristotle's insistence that tragic characters must exist between extremes of good and evil: 'We are left, then, with a person in between: a man not outstanding in virtue or justice [...] who falls into adversity not through vice or depravity but because he errs in some way'.³⁸⁸ The word 'Qualifyd' parodies the highly artificial world of classical theatre by drawing attention to the narrow requirements of its tragic characters and the specific supernatural forces acting against them. Consequently, they are unable to function as a mirror to society for 'other Mortals to take warning at'. Butler is not rejecting here the morality of tragedy, but rather its realisation under a classical paradigm.

Moreover, *Upon Critics* subsumes this point within a wider anxiety concerning the playwright's obligation to portray accurately the world around him, and so obliquely touches upon a complex theoretical contradiction within neo-classical thinking. The moral function of tragedy has become commonplace in modern scholarship, with critics often highlighting the influence of Rymer's theory of poetical justice, which stipulates that vice must be punished and virtue rewarded.³⁸⁹ However, closer analysis reveals Rymer's conception of poetical justice stems from a merging of ideas between the moral duty of tragedy and mimetic representation, expressed through the distinction he identifies between 'poetical justice' and 'historical justice'. Indeed, Rymer advises tragedians that 'like good Painters they must design their Images like the Life, but yet better and more beautiful then the Life'.³⁹⁰ (The idea is taken directly from Aristotle,

³⁸⁶ Thyer, *Genuine Remains*, p.163.

³⁸⁷ Butler, *Satires*, p.61.

³⁸⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.32.

³⁸⁹ See Novak, 'Drama, 1660-1740', p.178.

³⁹⁰ Rymer, *Critical Works*, p.32.

who writes that 'poets should copy good portrait-painters, who portray a person's features and offer a good likeness but nonetheless make him handsomer than he is')³⁹¹ This paradoxical assertion highlights an internal conflict best summarized by Jones: 'on the one hand the poet has an interpretation of the general, not what was but what could be [...] on the other hand he appeared to be obliged to hold a mirror up to Nature and Nature dealt in particulars'.³⁹² Rymer attempts to reconcile these diametric objectives by again drawing on classical precedence.

Like the ancients, Rymer recognises that while tragedy requires a grounding in historical events, the narrative truth of history often provided inadequate examples for instilling virtue: 'finding in History, the same end happen to the *righteous* and to the *unjust* [...] they saw these particular *yesterday-truths* were imperfect and improper'.³⁹³ Rymer's comparison here between tragedy and history resembles closely Philip Sidney's arguments in *A Defence of Poetry*: 'do they not know a tragedy is tied to the laws of poesy, and not of history; not bound to follow the story, but having liberty either to feign a quite new matter or to frame the history to the most tragic conveniency?'.³⁹⁴ A writer must therefore construct an idealised version of reality, with Rymer explaining that the ancients 'would not trust History for their examples, but refin'd upon the History'.³⁹⁵ The emphasis thus shifts from a literal transcription of nature to a more artificial version of the world in order to convey moral axioms 'more *accurate* than history'.³⁹⁶ Rymer locates this process as part of the negotiation between poetical and historical justice. For example, regarding the action of tragic characters, he argues they must 'transgress not too far, that he committed not *two* crimes, when but responsible for *one*: nor, indeed, be so far guilty, as by the Law to deserve death. For though *historical Justice* might rest there; yet *poetical Justice* could not be so content'.³⁹⁷ Poetical justice thus transforms history into a series of heightened theatrical images.

Butler responds specifically to this concept in the lines 'No longer shal Dramatiques be confind/To draw tru Images, of al Mankinde' (ll.51-52).³⁹⁸ Picking up on the inherent neo-classical paradox between mimetic and heightened forms of reality, Butler, who has already demonstrated his proclivity for empirical practices, prioritises the imitation of the world as it naturally exists – this is reinforced by the poetic syntax, with the caesura forcing the reader to pause at 'tru Images'. The ironic claim that modern drama be permitted to exaggerate such

³⁹¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.36.

³⁹² Jones, *Neo-Classical Dramatic Criticism*, 10.

³⁹³ Rymer, *Works*, p.22.

³⁹⁴ Sidney, *Miscellaneous Prose*, p.114.

³⁹⁵ Rymer, *Works*, p.22.

³⁹⁶ Rymer, *Works*, p.22.

³⁹⁷ Rymer, *Works*, p.27.

³⁹⁸ Butler, *Satires*, p.61.

truths serves as a reminder that doing so will only reduce tragic action and characters to crude attempts 'To terrify Spectators from committing/The Crimes, they did, and suffered for, unwitting' (l.58), as Butler equates romanticised ideals with tedious forms of moral instruction.³⁹⁹ The lines also identify a further flaw in Rymer's literary theory, signified by the phrase 'of al Mankinde', a clear jibe at the limited scope of characters discussed in *Tragedies of the Last Age*. Certainly, Rymer's text deals almost exclusively with the representation of monarchs and other highborn figures within a courtly setting. Part of this exclusivity is to demonstrate his theory of decorum, which aims to ensure that the conduct of certain characters is appropriate to their cultural standing; for example, 'though it is not necessary that all *Heroes* should be Kings, yet undoubtedly all crown'd heads by *Poetical right* are *Heroes*'.⁴⁰⁰ There is again an element of embellishment here, as Rymer insists that all monarchies embody idealised heroic traits. *Upon Critics* thus satirises Rymer's model for its inability to capture the diversity 'of al Mankinde' present in Restoration England, and poses the question of how such dramatic works can instil moral change when it fails to represent truthfully the reality of its audience.

Summing up Rymer's critical theory, Butler concludes: 'These are the Reformations of the Stage, Like other Reformations of the Age:/On Purpose to Destroy all wit and sense/As th' other did all Law, and Conscience' (ll.59-62).⁴⁰¹ The comparison is a powerful one, as Butler juxtaposes Rymer's dramatic 'Reformations' with the religious oppression experienced during the English Civil War. Butler, a known opponent of Presbyterianism (as seen in *Hudibras*), evokes the religious intolerance exhibited by the Presbyterian governments during the Cromwellian Commonwealth and Interregnum and equates it with Rymer's attempts to 'Destroy all wit and sense'. Moreover, the juxtaposition enables Butler to entwine poetic 'wit' into the fabric of England's national identity, where it is perceived as an essential intellectual property that symbolises the newfound freedom of the Restoration, and where any attempts to stifle it can be construed as an attack on the whole nation. Subsequently, *Upon Critics* aims to distinguish the period as a new age, and in the process reveals how Restoration satire began to consciously engage with the recreation of English literary culture. Indeed, returning to the use of legal imagery, Butler insists that 'An English Poet should be tryd b' his peres' (ll.71), and not subjected to 'Forrain Jury Men, like Sophocles/Or Tales falser than Euripides;/When not an English Native dares appear/To be witnes for the Prisoner' (ll.76-80).⁴⁰² Revealing his ascription to the belief that cultures evolve over time, Butler argues here for a new mode of literary discourse grounded in the values and ethics of contemporary English 'peres' who he

³⁹⁹ Butler, *Satires*, p.61.

⁴⁰⁰ Rymer, *Works*, p.42.

⁴⁰¹ Butler, *Satires*, p.61.

⁴⁰² Butler, *Satires*, p.61.

deems the most qualified to 'witness' the development of modern poetics. *Upon Critics* is thus clearly interested in establishing a distinctly English literary identity, one that encapsulates the refined tastes and standards of the Restoration untainted by the obsolete dictates of the ancients.

Closer examination of Butler's much neglected prose observations and miscellaneous verses thus sheds new light on the author, revealing an erudite critic who was intricately attuned to the vicissitudes of Restoration literary theory – one whose private reflections echoed wider anxieties surrounding the instability of poetic language and the overall progression of English literary culture. They also offer a new perspective of Butler as a kind of pseudo-court poet, sharing and championing the same literary values as the likes of his occasional allies Buckingham and Rochester. Moreover, his manuscripts provide invaluable evidence that helps illustrate the rise of Restoration verse satire as a medium for literary discourse, including how manuscripts begins to displace the printed format as the principle sphere of literary engagement in the 1670s. Indeed, we have seen how Butler's commonplace books act as site of convergence, wherein he discusses at length the emergent critical vocabulary previously discussed in chapters 1 and 2 (focusing particularly on 'wit', 'reason', 'art', and 'judgement'), and attempts to establish a conceptual consensus for these terms by creating the *Poetical Thesaurus*. This critical lexis subsequently permeates Butler's poetry through the reciprocal relationship he establishes between his prose and verse observations. Crucially, it was through verse, specifically clandestine satire, that Butler felt these types of cultural issues were best conveyed; unlike print, which was deemed deceitful, violent, and self-aggrandizing, satirical manuscripts came to possess a new poetical sensibility, representing a more universal, honest, witty, and artistic mode of critical discourse.

Consequently, we see in the pages of Butler's commonplace book how the critical vocabulary used to debate Restoration literary theory becomes intertwined with his re-imagining of the cultural function of satirical manuscripts, resulting in a new, more refined satirical medium that was capable of articulating and debating key literary issues. Butler would exemplify this notion himself in *Upon Critics* (1677), which, far from being a thoughtless satirical barrage, clearly operates on a much higher intellectual level as it engages through precise intertextual reference the fundamental principles underpinning Rymer's theoretical assertions. The poem also encompasses complex elements of classical and neoclassical theory, which further helps enhance the satire into a more profound and thoughtful realm of literary ideas. This new satirical practice would subsequently elevate how the genre itself came to be perceived as a more discerning vehicle of critical inquiry during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as evidenced by Thyer, who published *Upon Critics* in the 1759 edition of Butler's

works with footnotes indicating his belief that the poem represented an important work of literary criticism that transcended its immediate historical setting.

Butler's writing thus offers a unique, essential, and until now unexplored source that helps demonstrate how Restoration satire not only encompassed prevailing literary ideology, but also how the medium itself evolved into a more refined, intellectual, and sustainable mode of literary debate.

Chapter 4

New modes of discourse: verse satire as literary criticism

The overarching aim of this chapter is to showcase the variety of ways Restoration authors utilized, appropriated, and experimented with verse satire as a vehicle to engage in the processes of literary criticism. It will demonstrate not only how the satirical medium acquired a new mode of discourse, but also how verse satire itself acquired new kinds of textuality that helped transform it into the preeminent realm of literary debate. While each case study within this chapter examines these points individually, they also contain threads of critical inquiry that run throughout this thesis, including: the growing ideological and poetic divisions between the town and the court; the premise that manuscript displaces print as the primary medium for literary debate; and how Restoration satire came to develop out of its own self-reflective arguments, creating a more refined verse form which helped elevate it as a realm of ideas. These concepts are subsequently exemplified in the following material, which, when considered as a whole, will help illustrate the broader Restoration phenomenon in which writers turned to satire to engage with prevailing literary theory and practices. This begins with an examination of how the ‘sessions’ satires offered the Restoration court wits a new theoretical model to assert control over the processes of literary criticism, as well as uphold and impose certain poetical values. We will also see how Restoration playwrights attempted to subvert the court’s hegemony over the English letters by adopting their own satirical strategy in a series of dramatic prologues and epilogues. The chapter will also explore a much overlooked subgenre of satire known as the ‘Julian’ satires, which utilized the seventeenth-century scribe ‘Captain’ Robert Julian as a poetical device to reflect on the current state of Restoration manuscript culture. The chapter then concludes with an analysis of Dryden’s *Mac Flecknoe*, and will demonstrate how the emergent critical vocabulary discussed in chapters 1 and 2 becomes subsumed in the poems satirical aesthetic, which Dryden himself viewed as embodying a more refined and noble kind of verse satire.

The ‘Sessions’ satires

When Samuel Johnson writes about Abraham Cowley in *Lives of the most eminent English poets*, he gives special attention to the author’s self-fashioning image of himself as the ‘melancholy Cowley’ in ‘The Complaint’ (1663). This, according to Johnson, was ‘met with the usual fortune of

complaints, and seems to have excited more contempt than pity'.⁴⁰³ Amongst the contemporary derision Cowley faced, Johnson isolates one particular example, not so much for its content but for its satirical style and mode of discourse, as well as its indebtedness to an earlier Caroline work: 'These unlucky incidents are brought, maliciously enough, together in some stanzas, written about the time, on the choice of a laureat; a mode of satire, by which, since it was first introduced by Suckling, perhaps every generation of poets has been teased'.⁴⁰⁴ The reference is to Sir John Suckling's 'A Sessions of the Poets', a lyrical ballad written in 1637 that narrates a meeting of the period's leading playwrights presided over by Apollo to determine England's next poet laureate.⁴⁰⁵ The satire proved immensely popular over the following decades, being frequently adapted in the words of Jonson to chastise 'every generation of poets'. Several Restoration versions following closely Suckling's example occur in numerous extant manuscript miscellanies, with texts from 1668 and 1676 attributed variously to Rochester, Buckingham, and Settle.⁴⁰⁶ Additionally, alongside these socially circulated manuscripts, the conceptual framework of the satire appears to have existed prominently in the private imagination of writers, evidenced by an incomplete version of the poem by Matthew Prior located in the *Prior Papers*.⁴⁰⁷

'A Sessions of the Poets' clearly had a powerful impact on seventeenth-century literary thinking, and can be viewed as fostering a new ideological and aesthetic genre of verse satire. Jonson himself seems mindful of this, and considers the text in both genealogical and epistemological terms, arguing that it introduces into English poetics a new 'mode of satire', one concerned with literary theory and standards of poetical practices. He imagines a kind of satirical (and distinctly English) lineage that persisted throughout the continually changing landscape of seventeenth-century literary values. Recognising that different historical moments embody their own unique customs, Johnson credits Suckling's satire with providing a critical and theoretical model that future writers could inherit to address the immediate literary conditions of their own generation – a practice that helped fuel a wider literary phenomenon that saw Restoration poets and critics increasingly turn to satire as a vehicle for literary debate. Johnson's brief statement subsequently invites further questions: what is the exact nature of this new 'mode of satire'? Are these poems purely derisive, or do they offer new creative forms

⁴⁰³ Johnson, *Lives i*, p.197.

⁴⁰⁴ Johnson, *Lives i*, pp.197-8.

⁴⁰⁵ The title appears as 'The Wits' in various manuscripts, while all printed texts use 'The Sessions of the Poets'. For an overview of textual variants see L.A. Beaurline, 'An editorial experiment: Suckling's "A Sessions of the Poets"', *Studies in Bibliography*, 16 (1963), 43-60.

⁴⁰⁶ See Harold Wilson, 'Rochester's 'A Session of the Poets'', *Review of English Studies*, 16 (1946), 109-16

⁴⁰⁷ The Marquess of Bath, Longleat House MS L.28, vol. xxvii.

of social and intellectual discourse? And who precisely inherited this 'mode'? By analysing and tracing the developing linguistic, ideological, and theoretical patterns across the 'Sessions' poems, we can thus see how writers began utilising satire to engage with literary subjects, and how this in turn codified a series of poetic principles that were perpetuated by the group of court wits led by the likes of Rochester and Buckingham throughout the late 1660s and mid 1670s.

The exact occasion for Suckling's 1637 satire is unclear. It may have been prompted by Jonson's death in the summer; however, that Jonson himself is the primary satirical target makes this suspect. Alternatively, it may have been reacting to the disputed status of the laureateship itself at the time; while Jonson had held the title since 1616 in a somewhat vague and undefined capacity, many believed it had passed to William Davenant amidst the former's declining literary reputation and health.⁴⁰⁸ This may itself reflect a wider dissatisfaction with the general state of court affairs. Suckling's opening remarks that 'The Laurel that had been so long reserv'd,/Was now to be given to him best deserv'd' (ll.3-4) appears to address this uncertainty and the urgent need to re-evaluate England's literary landscape, to seek a new 'Laurel' and establish a stable set of literary principles.⁴⁰⁹ Suckling therefore summons a 'Sessions' to assess the merits and skills of the period's leading playwrights, employing Apollo as literary arbitrator.

Allen Benham considers Suckling's satire alongside more formal modes of seventeenth-century verse criticism, comparing it to the funeral elegy wherein 'space is given to criticism of the poet memorialized and to the effort to establish his position in the world's literature'.⁴¹⁰ Richard Terry also considers the 'sessions' format in such terms, arguing that it can 'sometimes [be] directed to canonical ends'.⁴¹¹ Despite this, both conclude that the ironic nature of the text fails to achieve any serious critical or canonical function. However, rather than reimagining the literary past, Suckling offers a scene of animated combat amongst living authors: 'the wits of the Town came thither,/Twas strange to see how they flocked together' (ll.5-6), thereby re-contextualising the critical function of such verse, which now encompasses the present. The satire's narrative format subsequently provides a creative method of juxtaposing the competing

⁴⁰⁸ Edmund Broadus, *The Laureateship: a study of the office of poet laureate in England, with some account of the poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp.40-59.

⁴⁰⁹ All quotations taken from *The works of Sir John Suckling: The Non-Dramatic Works*, ed. Thomas Clayton, 2 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

⁴¹⁰ Allen R. Benham 'Sir John Suckling, 'A Sessions of the Poets': Some Notes and Queries', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 6 (1945), 21-27, p.21.

⁴¹¹ Richard Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past 1660-1781* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.47.

ideologies of Caroline literature, indicated by the crowd of authors 'Each strongly confident of his own way' (l.7).

The 'Sessions' format subsequently offered writers a new textual space that could facilitate literary debate. Michael Gavin considers the 'Sessions' poems as belonging to the Parnassus tradition of critical writing, arguing that by mapping Apollo onto London the narrative 're-constitutes the city and its courts as a context for poetic criticism'.⁴¹² Suckling's text would therefore transform how writers conceived the Parnassus metaphor; rather than an ancient kingdom of literary authority or a source of progressive inspiration, it 'changes from a place into a space. It becomes a scene of action and mobility where poets interact'.⁴¹³ Both the setting and Apollo himself appear analogous with the Caroline court and Charles I respectively. While this implicitly confers control over English poetics onto the royal court, it also creates a physical proximity between contemporary writers that enables them to engage in critical debate. The satire thus portrays the intellectual processes of literary criticism as a new form of sociality for seventeenth-century writers and readers. This dynamic is reinforced by the text's own manuscript life, alluded to via the speculative phrase 'they say' (l.2). The expression implies the speaker was absent from the original 'sessions' and has instead obtained the information elsewhere. 'A Sessions of the Poets' thus presents itself as a product of a social network, a handwritten transmission acting as a mode of exchange. The textuality of the poem thus granted readers privileged access to information by allowing them to inhabit the imaginary space of the satire, to be included amongst the 'sessions' and partake in the elite practice of literary criticism.

Simultaneously, Suckling may be attempting to recapture the atmosphere of seventeenth-century clubs and societies. Indeed, in her study of the development of early modern fraternities, Michelle O'Callaghan posits that 'the tavern and the table were symbolic and social spaces inhabited by convivial societies [...] and constituted a discursive space that was simultaneously distinguished from the public forum, while nonetheless offering an alternative arena where affairs of state and religion could be discussed'.⁴¹⁴ Acting as a nexus for scribal networks, these symposiastic settings saw the production and circulation of multiple poetic forms that included nonsense poems, mock-epistles, drollery, and burlesques. However, Timothy Raylor notes how the verse forms experimented with by these clubs often expressed a feeling of critical discontent from aristocratic wits towards prevailing court policies and structures. Raylor then loosely associates Suckling with the Order of the Fancy (a club operating throughout the seventeenth-century) and suggests that by burlesquing the ballad format, 'A

⁴¹² Gavin, *The Invention of English Criticism*, p.57.

⁴¹³ Gavin, *The Invention of English Criticism*, p.58.

⁴¹⁴ Michelle O'Callaghan, *The English Wits: Literature and Sociability in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.61.

Sessions of the Poets' was also taking part in such criticism: 'even Sir John Suckling [...] takes up a stance of old-fashioned, unaffected Englishness against the continental affectations of the court [...] in his adoption of coarse, native modes of literary expression'.⁴¹⁵ Critically, Michael Parker has since observed how Suckling's verse consciously challenges contemporary literary attitudes: 'turning his back on the sophisticated Continental mode Carew introduced into English lyric, Suckling draws upon native, "subliterary" forms [...] integrating the country matters of the ballad and character with the courtly rhetoric of serious lyric poetry'.⁴¹⁶ The very form of Suckling's satire was thus conceived and utilised as a vehicle for poetical criticism.

On one level, by alluding to the activities of clubs and taverns, the text functions as a direct lampoon on Ben Jonson, who would play a fundamental role in converting tavern-based societies into more congenial, sophisticated spaces that sought to define various social and linguistic codes. Tracing Jonson's movements over the period, O'Callaghan observes that 'in the 1620s, the Apollo Room seems to have taken over from the Mermaid and Mitre taverns, not simply as a fashionable meeting place for gallant company, but as a symposiastic space [...] Jonson and the 'Sons of Ben' took up residence at the Apollo Room, and fashioned it in their image'.⁴¹⁷ Suckling's employment of Apollo may therefore act as a pun on Jonson's inhabitation of the Apollo Room, which may itself serve to subvert Jonson's apparent social and literary misconduct. The chief motivation for this attack lay in Jonson's attempts to assert his authorial status through the medium of print following his publication of *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (1616). In so doing, the satire expresses wider seventeenth-century concerns about the encroachment of the print industry on traditional manuscript values.

This becomes apparent in Jonson's appeal to Apollo for the laureateship. His claim rests on the literary prestige of his works and his critical acumen, which has refined the English stage:

[...] He deserv'd the Bayes,
For his were call'd Works, where others were but Plaies;
And
Bid them remember how he had purg'd the Stage
Of errors (ll.19-22).

The lines express a commonplace critique, whereby authors repeatedly mocked Jonson's attempted differentiation between the 'works' contained in his elaborately produced folio and

⁴¹⁵ Raylor, *Cavaliers, Clubs, and Literary Culture*, p.109.

⁴¹⁶ Michael Parker, 'All are not born (Sir) to the Bay': 'Fack' Suckling, 'Tom' Carew, and the making of a poet', *English Literary Renaissance*, 12 (1982), 341-68, pp.343-6.

⁴¹⁷ O'Callaghan, *The English Wits*, p.168.

the mere 'plays' of his contemporaries.⁴¹⁸ Martin Butler has argued that Jonson exploited technological advances within the print industry as a way of regulating his own literary reputation, claiming that 'he organized the volume as a whole so as to imply that it delineated an inexorable advance towards professional and social acclaim'.⁴¹⁹ Consequently, by asserting his authorial status within the public realm of print, Jonson breaks away from the traditional image of the gentlemanly amateur poet, separating himself from the world of manuscripts and, in the process, compromising his position within the congenial spaces of seventeenth-century societies. The satire addresses these points through its satirical rendering of Jonson: '*Apollo* stopt him there, and bid him not go on,/'Twas merit, he said, and not presumption/Must carry it' (ll.25-26). Apollo rejects him for his 'presumption', a clear attack on his publicly declaiming himself an authoritative poetic figure. He is then charged with erroneously equating his own self-fashioned professionalism with literary excellence, being in reality devoid of poetic 'merit'. Moreover, his authority as a literary critic becomes diminished chiefly because his printed endeavours remove him from the manuscript tradition. By alienating himself from the networks of Caroline manuscript circulation he is unable to take part in the sociality of literary criticism, particularly of the kind generated from clubs and societies, in which manuscripts of critical verse were both produced and disseminated – a feeling encapsulated by 'A Session of the Poets' itself. Suckling thus implicitly locates true poetic authority within the realm of verse manuscript, as the satirical aesthetic of the satire echoes its own critical argument.

Continuing this socially driven process of critical inquiry, the satire systematically eliminates various candidates based on their poetic principles. Carew is denied the laureateship on the basis that 'His Muse was hard bound, and th'issue of's brain/Was seldom brought forth but with trouble and pain' (ll.33-34). Suckling's criticism encompasses the wider theoretical debate in which poetry was viewed as either an expression of innate skill or a product of learned study. Clearly advocating the former, Suckling derides the sophisticated intricacies Carew introduced into the English lyric, mocking his deployment of continental affectations that required arduous study and revision.⁴²⁰ Carew's fault lies in his 'Muse' being too 'hard bound' to a series of poetic rules whose complex mechanics obscure 'th'issue of's brain'. There is an artificiality underlying his works; his poetic imagination, which is 'seldom brought forth but with trouble and pain', feels forced and unnatural, projecting a seriousness unbecoming for a court wit. The verdict of the sessions reinforces this idea: 'All that were present there did

⁴¹⁸ See *Ben Jonson*, edited by C.H. Hereford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1952), ix, p.13.

⁴¹⁹ Martin Butler, 'Jonson's Folio and the Politics of Patronage', *Criticism*, 35 (1993), 377-390, p.377.

⁴²⁰ See Parker, 'All are not born (Sir) to the Bay', pp.342-343.

agree,/A Laureats Muse should be easie and free' (ll.37-38). Suckling's rhetoric presents the notion as a universal truth unanimously accepted and agreed upon by the sessions. This poetic ideal is reflected in the form of the satire itself; unlike Carew's 'hard bound' lyrics, Suckling's verse exhibits greater fluidity, employing multiple enjambment, accentual rhythms, and unstressed line endings that embody the 'easie and free' style the poem advocates. This highlights the reciprocity between literary theory and verse satire, and reveals how this mode of satire developed out of its own self-reflective arguments.

In contrast to Jonson and Carew, 'A Sessions of the Poets' goes on to identify the quintessential poetic values a court wit should embrace in the form of Suckling himself – the archetypal royalist cavalier:

Suckling next was call'd, but did not appear
And strait one whisperd *Apollo* in's ear,
That of all men living he cared not for't,
[...]
And
Prized black eyes, or a lucky hit
At bowls, above all the Trophies of wit (ll.73-78).

Suckling's absence is obviously self-deprecating, perpetuating the image of the dishevelled and idle cavalier court wit. However, rather than signifying a lack of critical engagement, his actions encapsulate and personify the poetic ideals the text engages with. His refusal to reduce or even conceptualise 'wit' as a physical trophy symbolises his rejection of the hierarchical structures and material ambitiousness of the Caroline court. To think of 'wit' in such terms is to devalue its cultural currency, and perverts both the social ethics of writing and the traditional philosophy of the court poet. Rather than adhering to a strict set classical precepts or poetic rules, by abstaining from the sessions Suckling not only implies that his skills are innate, but also locates them – and by extension true 'wit' – beyond such erudite and material processes (including those associated with print). 'A Sessions of the Poets' helped crystalized a series of social and theoretical definitions of the term 'wit' that greatly influential Restoration critical thinking. The amateurish and idle persona Suckling generates thus informs the poems overall satirical strategy; rather than a sign of intellectual neglect, his absence and outlook reinforce a certain ideological perspective, embodying in a somewhat paradoxical way a set of literary principles that would be emulated over the following decades.

'A Sessions of the Poets' resonated strongly with the Restoration court wits, offering both a social and critical model that allowed writers to simultaneously assert their own literary hegemony and participate in new forms of sociality. This is demonstrated by two verse adaptations that circulated extensively over the period which survive in numerous extant

miscellanies. Harold Love considers these texts as exemplifying a tradition of court lampoon writing that evolved as a way of controlling the emerging poets and playwrights of the town, to 'impose court discipline on the unruly tribe of professionals'.⁴²¹ The popularity of the satire amongst the wits undoubtedly derives from Suckling's status as a symbol of royalist devotion, nostalgia, and the courtly ethics befitting an amateur gentleman wit, realised by various royalist publishers and booksellers who preserved his works in handsome printed volumes over the Civil War and Interregnum.⁴²² Dryden proclaims that 'in the Epique or Lyrique [...] they can produce nothing so courtly writ, or which expresses so much Conversation of a Gentleman, as Sir *John Suckling*'.⁴²³ The satire therefore encapsulated a golden standard of literary excellence and sensibilities under a system of royal patronage, one that could now be used to recreate those values under the court of Charles II. The imaginary space of the poem thus functions as a microcosm for the social and literary activities performed by the Restoration court, allowing writers to define a critical framework within which to operate.

The first adaptation, titled 'The Session of the Poets', can be dated to 1668.⁴²⁴ While all surviving copies are anonymous, the poem clearly assumes a court perspective. The text follows closely Suckling's original in both form and style, recreating the same imaginary space depicting a socially prescribed pseudo-court overseen by Apollo, which aims to crown a new laureate. However, the tone and language of the 1668 version are much more severe and urgent, and convey a profound unease with the current state of Restoration literature. There is an immediate need to define a new understanding of English poetics, as the satire attempts to impose a series of values onto a chaotic literary landscape so as to delineate a new sense of national identity emanating from the court:

Apollo, concern'd to see the transgressions
Our paltry poets did daily commit,
Gave order once more to Summon a sessions
Severely to punish the abuses of wit (ll.1-4).⁴²⁵

⁴²¹ Love, *Clandestine Satire*, p.80.

⁴²² See Paul Joseph Zajac, 'Suckling's *Fragmenta Aurea* and the construction of Cavalier authorship', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 55 (2015), 125-49

⁴²³ Dryden, *Works*, xvii, p.14.

⁴²⁴ Love specifies 1668 as the date of composition in *Clandestine Satire*, p.80; Gillian Brown also proposes 1664 as a year of composition in 'The Session of the Poets to the Tune of Cook Lawrel': playhouse evidence for composition date of 1664', *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research*, 13 (1974), 19-26

⁴²⁵ All quotations taken from *POAS*, i, p.327-37.

The reader is presented with an evidently more corrupt London, one plagued with 'paltry poets' committing daily 'transgressions'. This degenerate environment requires direct intervention from Apollo, who here wields greater agency, transitioning from arbitrator to a more discerning literary critic as he now aims 'Severely to punish the abuses of wit'. This shift reflects the way the author subtly reworks the primary function of Suckling's original text; rather than exploring various social and literary values to determine a prerequisite set of values appropriate for a laureate, 'The Session of the Poets' intends to 'punish' offenders, to censure and in turn control certain literary practices. The satire is more preoccupied with actively shaping Restoration literary perceptions and habits. Assuming a sense of moral duty, then, the author appropriates the 'Sessions' format to purify and refine certain poetical standards, demonstrating how Restoration satire was invested in recreating English literary culture.

Critically, the satire makes a conscious intertextual reference to Suckling's original work through the establishment of its imaginary space, informing audiences that Apollo 'Gave order once more to Summon a sessions'. Assuming readers would already be familiar with Suckling's text (and the ideas it expresses), the author presents his satire as continuing both a social and a literary tradition. Locating his text within a self-fashioned lineage of satirical writing, the 'sessions' format thus came to represent a universal theoretical model that writers could call upon to help regulate and define a volatile literary culture – affirming the genealogical aspect of the mode hinted at by Johnson. This intertextuality subsequently confers an inherent set of values within the 'sessions' format, codifying in turn a series of ideological values and practices that transformed verse satire into the foremost medium of literary criticism.

The poem itself attempts to reinforce this perception by generating a lexical field of clandestine exchange. Despite Restoration playwrights like Dryden, Howard, and Shadwell resorting to the public realm of print to articulate their critical views and establish their status, the 'Sessions' stresses that literary criticism and reputation are mediated and determined through exclusive channels of gossip and manuscript circulation. For example, William Davenant is denied the laureateship because 'Apollo had heard, it seems, a report', containing information regarding his recent works, which 'did show he had no skill' (ll.7-8). Abraham Cowley's reputation is ascertained in a similar fashion: 'Ev'ryone gave him so good a report' (l.47). Additionally, on the composition of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, we are told 'Intell'gence was brought' (l.13), at which point 'Apollo rejoic'd' and 'wish'd his play well clapp'd as his Grace' (ll.17-20). In these examples literary criticism is conducted covertly, being upheld and controlled via handwritten documents and hearsay within privileged channels of information. Acting as a microcosm for the Restoration court, the poem centralises the intellectual practice of critical discourse within its boundaries, where it is overseen by the aristocratic elite,

simultaneously transforming both the court and the satirical aesthetic of the poem itself into a site of convergence wherein literary matters are gathered, analysed, and disseminated.

Recreating the symposiastic atmosphere emulated in Suckling's text, the author generates an equally palpable social dynamic, with multiple agents moving through the private contours of London and the Royal court, emphasising the notion that literary criticism represented a socially prescribed activity. Moreover, these moments of social exchange are perceived as fundamentally linked to the development of satire as a medium for critical inquiry, demonstrated by the author's appraisal of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*. Indeed, Apollo's praise for the play stems precisely from its collaborative nature, 'Because he knew it was the first case/The Duke e're did ask the advice of his friends' (ll.17-9) – listed here as Matt Clifford and Thomas Sprat.⁴²⁶ The play exemplifies a work of creative and scholarly interaction: its ability to function as a theoretical tool sharpened by the collective merits of each participant, including the 'malicious' aspects of Clifford, the 'spiritual' qualities of Sprat, and the critical acumen of Buckingham, 'a peer of the trade' (ll.15-6). *The Rehearsal* is therefore conceived as a product of intellectual and philosophical exchange that refines the satire into a more sensitive and constructive medium for literary criticism. Furthermore, it also embraces new forms of sociality that were considered essential to the act of critical debate, conflating the social etiquette of the Restoration gentleman of the court with new modes of literary discourse.

The author's advocating of clandestine networks and social interaction contrasts sharply with their disdain for print, unequivocally revealed in Thomas Killigrew's failure to secure the bays: 'But Apollo was angry and bid him beware/That he caught him no more a-printing his plays' (ll.39-40). Cowley is also charged with a series of 'rebukes' and 'notable folly' relating to print, having 'Writ verses unjustly in praise of Sam Tuke,/Or printed his pitiful "Melancholy"' (ll.49-52). The lines refer to commendatory verses Cowley supplied to Samuel Tuke's 1663 edition of *The Adventures of Five Hours* and to the publication of 'The Complaint' that same year. It was 'The Complaint' that drew particular ire from the court poets. The text voices Cowley's displeasure at having been overlooked for the position of Mastership of the Savoy, and provides a brazen appeal for royal patronage: 'Kings have long hands (they say) and though I be/So distant, they may reach at length to me'.⁴²⁷ While on one level the 'Sessions' criticises Cowley's printed forays, the phrase 'pitiful "Melancholy"' works to censor his projection of a self-fashioned melancholic persona into the public arena in an attempt to procure royal patronage. The nature of the critique parallels Suckling's ridicule of Jonson's own attempts to control his

⁴²⁶ On the authors involved see Hume, *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings Associated With George Villiers Second Duke of Buckingham*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ii, pp.337-9.

⁴²⁷ Abraham Cowley, *Poems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), p.440

public reputation through print. The overall effect relocates the regulation of authorial status within the satirical aesthetic of Restoration verse whilst simultaneously affirming the court's authority over systems of literary patronage.

Most of 'The Session' satirical thrust is directed at the Restoration stage, where it encompasses a number of highly debated dramatic issues. For example, Davenant is denied the laureateship for writing 'That damnable farce, *The House to be Let*' (l.12) – first performed in 1663. Over the decade, dramatic farce was subjected to severe scrutiny and regular contempt.⁴²⁸ Sir Robert Howard was a staunch opponent, writing in 1668 that farce not only 'debases the Dignity of the Stage', but in so doing, 'true Comedy is fool'd out of Countenance'.⁴²⁹ Equally concerning was the popularity of farce amongst Restoration spectators, with Howard again noting how the genre 'tickled some la'e Audiences, with I know not what kind of Jollity'.⁴³⁰ Like Howard, the text's satirical rebuke likely derives from this popularist appeal, which may have constituted a perceived threat to the power of the court, as it bestowed on London audiences an implicit influence over Restoration dramatists literary outputs. Intersecting an already established sphere of critical debate, the derision aimed at Davenant's play represents a conscious effort to shape Restoration literary values.

Additional topical subjects the satire engages with are issues of dramatic plagiarism and collaboration. The author recalls an episode between Dryden and Howard regarding their jointly produced *The Indian Queen* (1664), which initially failed to acknowledge Dryden's contribution. The nature of Dryden's alliance with his brother-in-law was not an uncommon practice; noting the genteel indifference to profit, Paulina Kewes explains professional playwrights willingness to work with amateurs: 'even if the professional's contribution were not immediately acknowledged [...] that writer was likely to be the sole financial beneficiary and, moreover, had a chance of establishing useful contacts with and through his socially superior partner'.⁴³¹ However, Dryden breaks this aristocratic covenant by announcing his role in the printed preface to *The Indian Emperor* (1667), which seems to provoke a dual critique from 'The Sessions'. The first accuses him of plagiarism, alleging that the artistic and aesthetic qualities of his latest play are derived from Howard – 'Dryden had lately robb'd him of his muse' (l.64). The second stems from how print impacted Restoration views on dramatic cooperation. We are told 'Each man in the court was pleas'd with the theft,/Which made the whole family swear and rant' (ll.65-6). Unlike *The Rehearsal*, which is praised for embracing the socially prescribed practice of

⁴²⁸ See Leo Hughes, 'Attitudes of Some Restoration Dramatists toward Farce', *Philological Quarterly*, 19 (1940), 268-8.

⁴²⁹ Robert Howard, *The Usurper* (London: 1668), sig.A3^r.

⁴³⁰ Howard, *The Usurper*, sig.A3^r.

⁴³¹ Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation*, p.136.

amateur composition, Dryden is lampooned for publicly declaring his authorship in print, violating the confines of that social harmony in an effort to enhance his professional and authorial identity.

'The Session' therefore reinforces the social chasm between the professional playwrights of the town and the courtly gentleman, emphasised by the unanimity of Dryden's rejection by 'Each man in the court'. However, in doing so it also reveals a certain anxiety regarding the social and literary advancements being made from those town agents. This is displayed in the satire's critique of Dryden's sycophantic appeal for patronage in the *Wild Gallant* (1663), where he is mocked for 'Pleading some pitiful rhymes he had writ,/In praise of the Countess of Castlemaine' (ll.71-2). Moreover, the attack on Dryden's *Wild Gallant* becomes more poignant when we consider that in the preface he claims 'I made the Town my Judges', looking to the playhouses and London crowds for approval of his literary status instead of the court.⁴³² Threatening to undermine the hegemony of the court, the allegorical and textual space of the satire – overseen by Apollo – performs a specific ideological function, attempting to enforce a series of poetic values through a socially driven, aristocratically controlled mode of critical discourse conducted via the exchange of manuscripts. The textuality of 'The Session' itself thus embodies the critical ideology presented in its own imaginary setting.

Anxieties surrounding the rise of professionalism and the subsequent need to enforce court discipline are more forcefully displayed in the 1676 version, 'A Session of the Poets', a text associated with the Buckingham/Rochester circle of court wits. The satire naturally appealed to the wits, for, as Wilson explains, 'the Court Wits considered themselves Apollo's vicegerents [...] by virtue of their birth and education they, and they alone, were qualified to pass judgment on the poor-fed poets of the Town'.⁴³³ Furthermore, Wilson provides strong evidence that the satire may have been composed at Rochester's lodge at Woodstock with several notable wits in attendance.⁴³⁴ Again, we see how the processes of literary criticism are firmly linked to aristocratic forms of sociality amongst gentleman poets, with the lively and discursive action of the text mirroring the social circumstances of its own production, echoing the symposiastic atmosphere of earlier seventeenth-century clubs. This also helps establish a poetical heritage for the 'sessions' format; certainly, by recreating the convivial dynamics of clubs and taverns, the textuality of 'A Session' inherits the same critical and oppositional qualities as those verses written and circulated amongst elite clubs such as the Order of the Fancy. Like Suckling's original text, then, the very form of 'A Sessions' was conceived as a vehicle for critical inquiry,

⁴³² Dryden, *Works viii*, p.3.

⁴³³ Wilson, *Court Wits*, p.174.

⁴³⁴ Wilson, *Court Wits*, pp.182-3.

offering a theoretical model that allowed the wits to define and impose their own ideological values against an increasingly shifting literary landscape.

Furthermore, just as the 1667 version makes a conscious reference to Sucking's original work, the 1676 version functions in equally intertextual ways, enabling the author to present the satire as part of a larger theoretical dialogue. This in turn imposed upon Restoration audiences the impression of an ongoing critical debate, to which 'A Sessions' was the latest contribution, thereby creating the semblance of a sustained literary argument. Evidence that this occurred can be found in a scribally produced manuscript located at University of Leeds Brotherton Collection (see plate 1 below). Indeed, as we can see on the contents page, alongside the numbering of works in the lefthand margin, the scribe elected to add a second, sub-set set of numbers preceding the actual titles to each 'Session of Poets' text, labelled '1' and '2' respectively. This reveals two key points. First, it demonstrates not only how the implicit intertextuality of 'A Sessions' succeeded in generating the idea of a literary tradition, but also that the scribe understood these texts as constituting a continual critical narrative that required a specific reading order to fully comprehend. This intertextual connection is emphasised in the heading to the second poem, titled 'Another Session of the Poets', which reinforces the perceived social, literary, and critical continuities between the two works. Secondly, it highlights how scribes had the potential to create specific reading experiences for perspective audiences. Indeed, by adding these numerical annotations, they direct the reader towards a specific, preconceived way in which to internalise these works. Critically, this also shows how the original meaning of verse manuscripts could be re-contextualised to serve a new purpose, as the inclusion of this sub-numbering had the potential to project a sense of historical significance onto these satires; as such, the scribal manuscript invites readers to view these texts as offering a historical development of English poetry. This in turn demonstrates how verse satire acquired a new kind of textuality that heightened its ability to function as a more insightful vehicle of literary criticism.

If the idea of the 'town professional' loomed ominously in the minds of the courtiers during the 1660s, by the 1670s they had firmly crystallised into their own distinct faction. This is evident in the derogatory language the satire directs at associates of the London playhouse: 'Since the sons of the Muses grow num'rous and loud,/For th' appeasing so clam'rous and factious a crowd' (ll.1-2).⁴³⁵ While the burgeoning of 'num'rous and loud' authors poses a destabilising threat towards the natural order of English poetics, of equal concern is their efforts to appeal to the London spectators – 'th' appeasing so clam'rous and factious a crowd'. They are lampooned for pandering to the crude and senseless audiences congregating in

⁴³⁵ All quotations taken from *POAS, i*, pp.352-6

Index.

1.	MacFleckno.	i.	26.	Seneca
2.	1 Session of Poets.	11.	27.	Timon
3.	2. Session of Poets.	15.	28.	Rambler
4.	Defence of Satyr.	20.	29.	A Letter

And so wish'd the Play as well Capt as his Grace.
 A number of other small Poets appear'd,
 With whom for a while Apollo made sport;
 Gifford & Fleckno were very well jeer'd,
 And in conclusion cohipt out of the Court.
 Thus, seeing the Croud to a tumult resort,
 With Authors of Satyrs, of Poems, and Playes;
 Apollo resolv'd to Adjourn the new Court,
 And left 'em together by th' ears for the Bayes.

Another Session of Poets.

Since the Sons of the *Ellyes* grew num'rous & loud,
 For the appeasing so Great & clamorous a Croud,
 Apollo thought fit in so weighty a Cause
 To establish a Government, Leader, and Laws:
 The hopes of the Bays, at this Summoning call,
 Had drawn 'em together the Devil and all;
 All thronging & listning they gap'd for the Blessi

Plate 1. University of Leeds Brotherton Collection, MS Lt 54. The top image shows the index page with two sets of numbering for the 'The Sessions of Poets' poems, the first being in the margin and the second preceding the titles. The bottom image shows the 1676 version under the heading 'Another Session of Poets', which immediately follows the 1668 version.

London theatres who are themselves deemed inferior judges of literature. The attack highlights fears that power was beginning to move away from the court and into the public domain of the town. Not only could professional playwrights exert greater control over their literary reception, they could also command a greater authority over their aristocratic superiors, thereby subverting traditional systems of patronage that helped maintain court hegemony over literary matters.

Dryden is identified as the chief offender – ‘In the head of the gang John Dryden appear’d’ (l.9) – the term ‘gang’ reinforcing the distinction between the two literary groups. While Dryden’s standing makes him an obvious target, his prominence here may also stem from remarks made about the prevailing culture of Restoration patronage in his dedication to *Marriage A-La-Mode* (1673), addressed to Rochester himself. In a thinly veiled critique, Dryden highlights the dubious nature of modern patronage, identifying a ‘middling sort’ of courtier whose ‘want of wit’ threatens to impede the development of English poetics: ‘from the Patron of Wit, you may become its Tyrant: and Oppress our little Reputations with more ease then you now protect them’.⁴³⁶ Hypothesising a world wherein the professional writer could exceed the creative and moral prestige of the amateur gentleman, Dryden’s statement works to transpose poetic ‘Wit’ from the court and confer it onto the town. He subsequently proposes a rethinking of the broader cultural role of the court wits, boldly advising Rochester to ‘be content with reading some Papers of your Verses, without desiring you should proceed to a Scene or Play’.⁴³⁷ As noted by Dustin Griffin, this suggestion drastically reduces the influence of patrons by limiting their role to that of benefactor. Additionally, Griffin also posits how the dedication implies that ‘by insisting on being poets and judges the patrons are throwing the system out of proper balance’.⁴³⁸ Dryden therefore challenges the position of the court to arbitrate on poetic matters, and so calls into question the very nature of the literary critic.

‘A Sessions’ therefore aims to impose order on the socially inferior faction of professionals whilst also reaffirming the wits’ socio-cultural standing as custodians of English literature. This is apparent in the lines: ‘Apollo thought fit in so weighty a cause/To establish a government, leader, and laws’ (ll.3-4). As noted earlier, the satire opens against the backdrop of a chaotic London, overflowing with ‘loud’, would-be poets and unruly, ‘clam’rous’ crowds. Aside from acting as an obvious lampoon on the town, this portrayal forms part of the poem’s satirical strategy, allowing the author to present the text as a progression on the current disarray of poetic affairs. In order to bring stability, the satire offers to usher in a new cultural age, to

⁴³⁶ Dryden, *Works xi*, pp.222-4

⁴³⁷ Dryden, *Works xi*, p.223.

⁴³⁸ Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800*, pp.81-3.

'establish a government, leader, and laws'. The language used implies this is a matter of national importance, thereby conflating the refinement of English poetics with a sense of national identity. Additionally, the word 'laws' reinforces the need to identify and enforce a series of poetic definitions and values, providing writers with a critical and creative framework in which to operate, and, by implication, a set of social conducts to follow. Of course, such rules will also preclude certain writers from participating in elite social and literary practices, simultaneously reducing the influence of the town whilst reinforcing the exclusivity and prestige of the court. Rather than a damning attack, then, the ideological function of the satire is a constructive one, introducing a governing set of principles in order to foster poetic refinement. The 'sessions' format can thus be seen as a vital tool that enables satirists to take part in the wider Restoration preoccupation of recreating English literary culture.

The nature of these 'laws' manifests in the author's satirical rendering of various court wits and professional playwrights. Vieth claims the satire exhibits a lack of partisan purpose, arguing that the views expressed 'favour neither the Rochester-Shadwell nor the Dryden-Mulgrave faction, nor do they support either of the two playhouses'.⁴³⁹ However, closer analysis of the language not only reveals a sharp distinction between the two competing factions, but also how the author codifies an ideal set of poetic values and manners exemplified by the wits, which are then measured against the undignified habits of the professional playwrights. For example, on George Etherege (referred to as 'gentle George'), Apollo 'frankly confess'd of all men that writ/There's none had more fancy, sense, judgment, and wit' (ll.16-18). The author encompasses here many of the key theoretical terms that were disputed in printed essays and prefaces during the period. In bestowing Etherege with these qualities, the satire can be viewed as an attempt by the court to regain control of this highly contested critical vocabulary, whose delineation and creative practice is limited to the aristocratic elite. Likewise, while Shadwell is ultimately denied the laureateship, we are told that Apollo, 'to keep him in humor [...] bid him drink on and keep his old trick/Of railing at poets and showing his p----' (ll.34-6) – the use of 'humor' here clearly punning on his theoretical debate with Dryden regarding the various merits of Restoration comedy. Interestingly, 'Brawny Wycherley' is also denied the title, not through poetic ineptness, but for his social standing: 'Apollo e'en thought him too good for the place./No gentleman writer that office should bear' (ll.21-23). Corresponding with Suckling's self-depiction in the original 'Sessions', this author implies that the amateur 'gentleman' transcends the material processes and dreary 'office' of the laureateship, which befits more a

⁴³⁹ David Vieth, *Attribution in Restoration Poetry: A study of Rochester's poems of 1680* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1963), p.305.

mere 'trader in wit' (l.24), a derogatory phrase that elevates the court wits above the base, economically driven objectives of the town professionals.

Returning to the initial questions raised by Johnson's assessment of Suckling's poem, then, this 'new mode of satire' he identifies subsequently denotes a burgeoning kind of satirical verse in the mid-late seventeenth century which dealt principally with matters of literary ideology and poetical practices. Suckling's satire provided both a critical and theoretical model for reflecting on the present literary landscape; re-creating the canonical functionality of other seventeenth century verse forms, he generates a new textual and imaginary space capable of juxtaposing competing literary principles. Emulating the kinds of discontented verses produced within the symposiastic settings of clubs and taverns, which also acted as nodes of scribal transmission, the very form of Suckling's satire was conceived as a vehicle for critical discourse, in which was codified a set of literary and social principles. As to who inherited this satirical mode, the answer is those amateur poets of the restored court of Charles II. As we have seen, later versions of the 'sessions' poem work in deliberately intertextual ways as they invoke Suckling's original text; this not only establishes a poetic tradition of literary criticism, it also perpetuated the inherent values within the 'sessions' format. These centred on proper notions of wit, upholding the cultural status of the amateur court poet, and emphasising a preference for manuscript over print. Indeed, by chastising writers who utilise print to augment their authorial standing, the 'sessions' satires locate true poetic authority within the world of manuscripts – a fact both reflected and reinforced by the textuality of the poems themselves. It also becomes apparent in the 1668 and 1676 versions how this preference for manuscript over print becomes linked to the factional divisions emerging between the professional playwrights of the town and the amateur poets of the court, in which the latter sought to maintain their hegemony over the realm of English letters. While the 'sessions' certainly set out to undermine and ridicule, they also aim to preclude writers from the act of literary criticism by placing this intellectual process within exclusive networks of scribally produced satirical manuscripts. How the professional dramatists decided to respond will be discussed later in this chapter.

'Captain Julian' and the production and transmission of satirical verse

Most verse satire composed during the Restoration was written exclusively for manuscript and circulated via scribal publication. Paul Hammond considers this development as a response to the censorship and restrictions imposed on the print industry following the 1662 Licensing Act,

which helped foster 'a flourishing manuscript culture, in which scribes produced copies of the latest political and erotic poems which no printer would risk handling'.⁴⁴⁰ On the other hand, Peter Beal considers the proliferation of scribal satires in more sociological terms, writing that 'if manuscript lampoons flourished [...] it was because, for a complex of social reasons, manuscript circulation provided an especially immediate and congenial culture in which such risqué, topical, and selectively communal material could most effectively flourish'.⁴⁴¹ In both cases, the role of the scribe in the production and transmission of satirical manuscripts becomes an integral component to the literary milieu of Restoration London, both as a physical conduit between authors and consumers as well as a symbolic figure in the imagination of readers and writers. Harold Love has extensively detailed facets of seventeenth-century scribal publication: 'since it usually rested on a personal agreement between the supplier of the text and the copyist, or copyist and recipient, there was a strong tendency for patterns of transmission to coincide with pre-existing communities'.⁴⁴² These primarily included the court; parliament; playhouses; coffeehouses; and parks around London. As the period progressed, these locations and the communities inhabiting them became increasingly divided along socio-political lines.⁴⁴³ Within this fractured world, the scribe himself came to exert a significant influence over the way Restoration readers and writers consumed, collected, and composed satirical manuscripts.

Professional scribes often aligned themselves with the period's leading figures in client-patron relationships. This no doubt enhanced the cultural currency of their wares – usually single sheets, or separates – creating a sense of proximity to the social elite whilst promising to convey potentially scandalous gossip. The potential for these manuscripts to disclose exclusive and uncensored information subsequently transformed them into coveted articles of news, with Ian Atherton stating that 'manuscript was the more important form of written news [...] it was more plentiful than printed news; it was more accurate, less censored, and regarded as more authoritative'.⁴⁴⁴ Furthermore, the fact that such verse became increasingly produced and read within the context of political conflicts meant obtaining and reading a copy could signify one's social or political affiliation.⁴⁴⁵ Aside from separates, a scribe might also produce larger, more

⁴⁴⁰ Hammond, *The Making of Restoration Poetry*, p.29.

⁴⁴¹ Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, pp.19-20.

⁴⁴² Love, *Scribal Publication*, p.179.

⁴⁴³ Markman Ellis claims that London coffeehouses became hotbeds for whiggish activity during the 1670s in *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), p.90.

⁴⁴⁴ Ian Atherton, 'The Itch Grown a Disease: Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century', *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp.39-65, p.40.

⁴⁴⁵ See Alan Marshall, *The Age of Faction: Court Politics 1660-1702* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.36.

polished collections containing works on a particular theme or subject.⁴⁴⁶ While such items sometimes acted as gifts to patrons in an attempt to secure financial or social backing, they also resulted from commissioned orders. Love identifies three principal categories of satire found in such miscellanies: state poems, erotic poems, and lampoons on court figures.⁴⁴⁷ Scribes not only had the capacity to create new reading experiences for Restoration audiences, but also enabled writers to engage with a range of contemporary issues in more creative and pervasive ways. The values and practices of scribal satire subsequently came under greater scrutiny, as critics began to re-assess the changing perceptions of English manuscript culture and the ideological uses such texts were put to. Critically, writers regularly turned to verse satire itself to reflect on these matters, producing an insightful sub-genre of satirical writing that encompassed the period's most notorious scribe: 'Captain' Robert Julian.

Historical details of Julian's life are scarce: there are no records of his birth, education, death, or marriage. In terms of employment, he served briefly as a naval secretary during the 1660s, and at one time appears to have resided in Bury Street, and at another time in the town-hall at Windsor. Most of the information we have stems from the various lampoons addressed to him, where he is habitually depicted as a knavish, ugly, immoral, destitute drunkard.⁴⁴⁸ Yet, despite such defects, he appears to have orchestrated a rather flourishing (and highly illicit) manuscript business that evaded libel laws. Mary Randolph observes that Julian 'catered to high and low alike. Apparently, persons of all degrees [...] could hand or send by messenger to Julian a few scribbled lines with the requisite sum of money and be assured that the piece would be presently copied and distributed'.⁴⁴⁹ Elaborating on this, Beal adds that Julian was 'reported to have hired at least two scribes to copy out current verse satires [...] and then he is reported to have carried these handwritten lampoons around the town in his large coat pockets, hawking them about for ready money'.⁴⁵⁰ Intriguingly, his early career seems to have been supported by the Restoration court wits. Judith Slater has identified Julian as the secretary who accompanied naval hero Sir Edward Spragge during the Dutch Wars, where a chance encounter with the Earl of Rochester may have occurred in the summer of 1666.⁴⁵¹ He then wrote a letter to the Earl of Dorset detailing the loss of his 'dear Master', his subsequent 'want of Employ'm't', and

⁴⁴⁶ Beal has identified a bound miscellaneous collection of Whig satire produced by Julian and purchased by William Stanley, ninth Earl of Derby, *In Praise of Scribes*, pp.20-30.

⁴⁴⁷ Love, *Scribal Publication*, p.233.

⁴⁴⁸ See Harris, 'Captain Julian, Secretary to the Muses', *English Literary History*, 10 (1943), 294-309, pp.294-7.

⁴⁴⁹ Mary Randolph, 'Mr. Julian, Secretary of the Muses', *Notes and Queries*, 184 (1943), 2-6, p.3

⁴⁵⁰ Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, p.20.

⁴⁵¹ Judith Slater, 'The Early Career of Captain Robert Julian, Secretary to the Muses', *Notes and Queries*, 211, (1966), 260-262

imprisonment for debt.⁴⁵² Brice Harris claims that 'though Dorset and his friends sarcastically dubbed Julian with his pompous title ['Secretary of the Muses'], it would not be surprising to learn that he assisted the penniless scandalmonger in his time of need'.⁴⁵³ However, Julian would lose the support of his Whig court patrons in 1677 after circulating material by the Dryden-led group of Tory poets. This appears to include the attack carried out on them in *An Essay Upon Satyr*, with one lampoon specifically accusing him of hawking 'Feirce Drydens Satyr'.⁴⁵⁴ His subsequent reputation as an unscrupulous and perfidious purveyor of lampoons thus helped foster a literary tradition that saw writers incorporate his person into a range of verse satires.

Surprisingly, there has been relatively little modern scholarship on this emergent practice. While Love and Beal have considered some of this material in relation to their wider discussion of scribal publication, their analyses have been focused more on gleaning biographical and historical information in attempts to reconstruct the economic and social contexts of seventeenth-century scribal practices and lampoon culture more broadly. This leaves a number of questions unanswered regarding the literary merit and the cultural and political strategies of the poems themselves. By paying closer attention to the language and aesthetical qualities of these satires, this section therefore aims to reveal how Robert Julian became a symbol that facilitated the critical introspection of Restoration manuscript culture and the state of English literature in general. In doing so, it will also show how these satires reflected on their own production and transmission, and so highlight the reciprocal relationship between the development of Restoration verse satire and the literary discussions from which they arise.

These ideas are displayed in an anonymous 1682 poem, 'Satire to Julian'.⁴⁵⁵ The poem takes the form of an epistle addressed to Julian and acts as a report on topical political events, particularly the Duke of Monmouth's unexpected arrival to London in November 1681 in the wake of the failed *Exclusion Bill* and subsequent return of James, Duke of York, from Brussels that October, taking a clear anti-Whig perspective. Critically, the satirical rendering of its Whig targets is driven by their reading habits, which ridicules the manner of their consumption and collection of manuscripts owing to their popularist appeals and false pretences to social status. The writer therefore urges Julian distribute 'all thy books/Of scandal' (ll.1-2) so that Whig readers will inevitably encounter the lampoons directed at them. The opening stanza provides

⁴⁵² Undated letter quoted from Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville, Sixth Earl of Dorset: Patron and Poet of the Restoration* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1940), pp.178-9.

⁴⁵³ Harris, *Charles Sackville, Sixth Earl of Dorset*, p.179.

⁴⁵⁴ 'The Miseries of Visits', University of Leeds Brotherton Collection, MS Lt 87 ff.50^r-51²

⁴⁵⁵ John Wilson, *Court Satires of the Restoration* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), pp.86-91.

interesting details on Restoration ideas of scribal publication. For example, Julian's wares are initially referred to as 'books', indicating a more refined, perhaps even professional level of bound products. This implies that Julian himself played an editorial role, assembling and selecting works deemed worthy of preservation; rather than a passive transcriber, then, in producing larger 'books/Of scandal' Julian is actively shaping Restoration reading experiences. Additionally, it also suggests that such 'books' were made in advance, apparent in the opening command 'Send forth, dear Julian, all thy books' (l.1), with the writer clearly anticipating these products were available for immediate distribution. The mass transmission of scribal manuscripts subsequently serves a specific purpose: 'That every knave that in them looks/May see himself described./Let all the ladies read their own,/The men their failings see,/From Nell to him that heads the throne' (ll.3-7). They act as a mirror to society, enabling individuals – ranging from those inhabitants of the town to the King himself – to see 'their failings'. While such depictions function chiefly to subvert and ridicule, the poem nevertheless reinforces the notion that it is only by reading satirical manuscripts that individuals can fully perceive their moral worth and engage with English society in general.

The satire then ironically depicts a series of Whig figures reading works that expose their own corruption. The writer delights in the prospect of the Duke of Monmouth reading 'himself put down/For being turned out of doors' (ll.9-10), referring to his rejection by the King and exile to the Dutch Provinces following a failed political campaign orchestrated by the Earl of Shaftsbury.⁴⁵⁶ Critically, part of the poem's satirical strategy centres on the political tactics that characterised Whig campaigns – the use of petitions. Petitioning was used to appeal to popular opinion in an effort to influence court policy and national politics.⁴⁵⁷ This activity was widely ridiculed; Dryden would undermine their legitimacy in both political and divine terms: 'Nor shall the rascal rabble here have place,/Whom Kings no titles gave, and God no grace' (ll.579-80).⁴⁵⁸ Similarly, 'Satire to Julian' parodies the mass distribution of documents, wherein 'Each peer shall see his lordship's name,/Each Whig shall read his life' (ll.17-8), by converting them into scribal lampoons that reveal their own immorality. For example, 'Lord Grey shall find his blazoned fame/Of pimping for his wife./His virtuous lady her rebuke/In manuscript shall see' (ll.19-22) – a reference to the leading Whig figure Lord Ford Grey of Werke, who was believed to have facilitated a sexual liaison between his wife and the Duke of Monmouth. The poem thus subverts Whig reading habits by reducing their reliance on petitions and popularist appeals to the laughable image of them discovering satirical manuscripts mocking their own persons and

⁴⁵⁶ John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: This Masquerading Age* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp.286-9.

⁴⁵⁷ Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678-1681* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.227-241.

⁴⁵⁸ Dryden, *Works ii*, p.22.

actions. In doing so, the author presents verse satire as the foremost medium for conveying news, wherein the actions and vices of individuals are observed, recorded, and broadcast to the nation.

A 'Satire to Julian' extends beyond the act of reading by illustrating how manuscript verses were collected and preserved, exhibited in a parody of the Whig military leader, Charles Mordaunt:

Each witty sonnet he shall own,
And his own lines deny;
Yet ere h'has read two pages o'er,
His lordship's name he'll see,
For marrying Mulgrave's painted whore (ll.27-31).

Mordaunt is here derided for obsessively gathering 'Each witty sonnet'. The author implies that he actively hunted copies of verse, perhaps even commissioning from scribes larger miscellanies, with the phrase 'two pages o'er' potentially hinting at a bound product. The size of an individual's collection appears to directly influence their social status, as we are told that Mordaunt did 'flutter up and down' (l.25), revelling in his access to privileged and coveted works. However, the author immediately lampoons Mordaunt's ignorance, informing us that 'Yet ere h'has read two pages o'er,/His lordship's name he'll see'; he is oblivious to the fact that his personal compendium contains satires bearing 'His lordship's name' a mere 'two pages o'er'. This implies a level of illiteracy that precludes Mordaunt from fully participating in prevailing socio-political happenings, and so ironically reduces his manuscript gathering to a duplicitous façade.

The poem concludes by examining the roles of scribal publication and that of the satirist. 'For to that truth our poet gives,/My sense seems to agree' (ll.85-6). The writer posits that poets themselves are the most skilful in discerning 'truth', and are thus most suited to conveying important issues to wider audiences. This also presents scribal manuscripts as an uncensored realm of truth, thereby increasing their cultural currency as articles of news and gossip. The author then exclaims 'every night I'll sit and write' (l.95). While the line expresses a sense of moral duty, it also reflects on the satire's own textuality and production that can be linked back to its initial appeal towards Julian. Indeed, the author, mindful of the process of scribal publication, specifically writes 'Satire to Julian' anticipating its wider transmission through scribal means. The satire itself is thus a product of the writing and reading conditions in which it depicts, its poetic form developing out of its own reflections on the role and nature of scribally produced satire.

This self-reflective element is found in another satire addressed to the scribe titled 'Letter to Julian' (1684).⁴⁵⁹ Like the first, this poem also takes an anti-Whig stance, and attacks several literary figures linked to the Whig faction of court poets led by Buckingham. The 'Letter' was occasioned by a revised 1684 production of Rochester's adaptation of Fletcher's *Valentinian*, and specially targets those who contributed various paratextual materials. As with a 'Satire to Julian', these opening lines also shed light on contemporary Restoration perceptions towards the nature of scribal publication:

Dear Julian, twice or thrice a year
I write to help thee in some gear;
For thou by nonsense liv'st, not wit,
As carps thrive best where cattle shit (ll.1-4).

Again, the satire displays a preoccupation with its own production and transmission, with the phrase 'Dear Julian' implying a level of familiarity and rapport with the scribe. The author consciously locates his text within the world of scribal production, informing Julian and the reader that 'twice or thrice a year/I write to help thee in some gear'. Furthermore, Julian is here transformed into a physical emblem capturing the current state of literary affairs, which the author utilises as a poetic device to facilitate the critical introspection of the conditions in which he is writing. The charge that Julian dwells 'where cattle shit' denotes how scribes unscrupulously spread the works of inferior poets that degrade the status of English manuscripts. The principal objective of the 'Letter' is to therefore elevate this deteriorating realm. Scorning Julian's current wares as lacking the necessary 'wit' required for poetic composition – 'For thou by nonsense liv'st, not wit' – a 'Letter' is written to provide the scribe with 'some gear', injecting a more refined, witty, and newsworthy text into the various channels of Restoration manuscripts in order to regain their literary prestige. This self-reflectiveness exhibits the way Restoration satire creates a reciprocal relationship between its own poetic development and the literary issues that it encompasses.

The satire then provides an interesting comparison of the relative political implications of verse and prose writing through its discussion of the Savile Family. By contrasting George Savile's (1st Marquis of Halifax) political career with the poetical endeavours of his son, Henry, 'whose pen as nimbly glides/As his good father changes sides' (ll.7-8), the author claims that by expressing his views in verse, Henry's position is much securer than his father's, for 'Poets live when statesmen lose their heads' (l.12). While the anonymity of Restoration verse inevitably offered some protection, a 'Letter to Julian' presents the idea that poetry represented a more

⁴⁵⁹ Wilson, *Court Satires of the Restoration*, pp.131-7.

transcendent medium, one unburdened by English laws: 'Though truth in prose may be a crime,/ 'Twas never known in any time/ That one was hanged for writing rhyme' (ll.13-15). Poetic manuscripts are given a historic precedent, and are perceived as the principal mode of discourse across 'any time', operating as indiscriminating agents of truth – a feeling emphasised by the rhyming triplet. By addressing the poem directly to Julian, the author is simultaneously able to place 'Letter to Julian' within this established poetic tradition whilst addressing his immediate literary circumstances, as the self-referential qualities of the satire enable it to embody the poetical values underpinning its verse.

This idea is reiterated in the way the satire distinguishes itself from other, Whiggish verse, stating that 'should some poets be accused/ That have the government abused' (ll.16-7), they would be severely punished: 'by their neck-verse freed:/ Some Whigs write that cannot read' (ll.18-9). Rather than upholding the ethical principles of poetic discourse, these writers have degenerated into base, railing libel against the court. This adds a new political charge to the earlier line 'Thou by nonsense liv'st, not wit', referring to Julian's reputation as a prominent peddler of Whig verse. In the Tory satire 'The Cabal', he is depicted as an associate of Shaftsbury during the Monmouth Rebellion: 'Then cries, All hands! To pump a leakish keel,/ And stops it up with Julian's conger-eel'.⁴⁶⁰ Additionally, in noting the inclusion of 'The Cabal' in the Roxburghe Ballads Collection, Randolph suggests 'it is also possible that many items in the Monmouth collection now assembled in the 'Roxburghe Ballads' went through Mr. Julian's hands'.⁴⁶¹ The suggestion that Whig writing is devoid of 'wit' creates a subsequent framework for the literary critique of those court poets involved in the 1684 production of Rochester's *Valentinian*. Mordaunt is accused of plagiarism 'By's making Suckling's songs his own' (l.23), and for relying on Etherege to write *Valentinian's* epilogue, who helped 'make his verse more soft and tame' (l.26). Jack Howe's prologue is also ridiculed for its style and tedious composition, being 'Born with hard labor and much pain' (l.36).

While both 'Satire to Julian' and 'Letter to Julian' were primarily conceived as political texts, by directly addressing their poems to Julian they obliquely reflect on prevailing perceptions towards Restoration scribes and manuscripts, and reveal how Restoration satire became increasingly self-referential. They also employ Julian as a symbolic embodiment of scribal production in order to achieve their own political objectives, transforming manuscripts into an ideological weapon. Of course, this satirical strategy was not limited to the political sphere. Several satires emerge over the period wherein Julian functions as a poetic device used to engage specifically with literary matters. Often, Julian's malpractice and immorality are

⁴⁶⁰ *POAS ii*, p.331.

⁴⁶¹ Randolph, 'Mr. Julian, Secretary of the Muses', p.5.

equated with a perceived decline in both the literary quality and textual value of English manuscript culture. To address Julian was to thus participate in the wider Restoration preoccupation of re-evaluating English literary culture.

These notions are apparent in a 1680 satire, 'The Miseries of Visitts', wherein a London gentleman ventures into town and experiences the deteriorating poetic landscape.⁴⁶² Assuming a court perspective, the speaker defends the monarchy and separates the space of the court from the town, which is instantly described as a locus of profanity: 'Pox on the Rhiming Fopps that Plague the Towne/With Libelling the Court, & Railing at the Gowne (ll.1-2). The satire criticises those aspiring 'Towne' poets whose literary incompetence has reduced English verse to senseless 'Libelling' and 'Railing'. While this tacitly positions the court as the pinnacle of English literature, it also discloses concern that it risks being undermined by the inept rabble of the town. There is also particular concern for the way verse satire itself is currently being disseminated and encountered:

A Man can make no visits now but his Carrissee
Is a lewd Satyr shown; with pray Sir Guesse
Whose stile it is (ll.3-5).

The lines echo a passage from Rochester's 'Timon', whose speaker is also unexpectedly presented with a satirical manuscript: 'He takes me in his coach, and, as we go,/Pulls out a libel of a sheet or two' (ll.13-14).⁴⁶³ Sneering at the ubiquity of this 'lewd Satyr', the 'Visitts' laments the excessive proliferation of scribally published manuscripts and its impact on Restoration reading experiences, as such works have become saturated into the very fabric of London's identity, subjecting audiences unwillingly to the corruption they espouse. Unlike the previous satires, scribal transmission is here viewed as a culturally destabilising phenomenon. Moreover, it alters the way audiences interact with English manuscripts. Despite most Restoration satires circulating anonymously, readers are now beginning to 'Guesse/Whose stile it is', inferring and assigning attribution to poems at the moment of exchange, thereby reconstructing the contexts in which works might be imagined. Again, there are parallels here with 'Timon', whereby the speaker informs us that the dull 'sot' carrying the lampoon 'admired, and praised at every line;/At last it was so sharp it must be mine' (ll.17-18), and who 'knew my style, he swore' (l.25).

Deliberating over the style of a particular poem became an important pastime during the period. For instance, a copy of 'A Sessions of the Poets' is in the Yale Manuscript

⁴⁶² Anon., 'The Miseries of Visitts', University of Leeds Brotherton Collection, MS Lt 87 ff.50r-51²

⁴⁶³ Rochester, *Works*, p.258.

accompanied by the inscription ‘Suppos’d to be written by Elk: Settle’.⁴⁶⁴ Such speculation inevitably influenced an author’s reputation, demonstrated by Rochester’s letter to Savile containing a copy of *An Essay Upon Satyr* with the claim ‘The author is apparently Mr. D-----’, an accusation that potentially led to Dryden’s beating in Rose Alley.⁴⁶⁵ The ‘Visitts’ posits that these sociological changes, coupled with the excessive production of scribal satire, are now severely corrupting how modern readers encounter verse manuscripts. After initially rejecting a lampoon from an inhabitant of the town – ‘For truly I Read none that Treason’ous are’ – the speaker is pressed further: ‘Lord tis the Wittiest thing/Tis smart on Nelly Portsmouth & the King (ll.6-7). There is a fear that contemporary audiences are now incapable of discerning true poetic wit from ‘Treason’ous’ libel. Again, this serves to emphasize the disparity between the town and court, as the speaker, hailing from the latter, is able to identify the immoral nature of the ‘Satyr’. Scribally produced satire is here presented as an affliction (reinforced through a lexical field of illness: ‘Plague’, ‘Sicke’, ‘disease’), the propagation of which irrevocably taints the faculties of Restoration readers.

This cultural decline is physically embodied by Julian himself, who enters the scene ‘Pockets stuff with scurrilous Poetry’ (l.9). The details of his interactions here expose the way scribal transmission influenced the changing perceptions of Restoration manuscripts:

My Freind cry’s hem & adds to that a bow
 Thou slaue to th’ Muses, whats the Newest now
 S’bloud Sr Says he your Sicke oth’ old disease
 You want new Papers: Dam’mee wer’s my Fees
 A Guinny’s toast wth Julian you’re a Rogue
 We’re straight Presented wth whats now in vogue (ll.10-15).

He appears on intimate terms with the town’s residents, being greeted as ‘My Friend’, and the primary source of London gossip, ‘whats the Newest now’ – reinforcing the textual status of manuscripts as articles of news. Of course, there is a satirical undertone to this cordialness designed to mock the scribes’ pervasive presence. The author takes particular aim at Julian’s commodification of English manuscript: ‘S’bloud Sr Says he your Sicke oth’ old disease/You want new Papers: Dam’mee wer’s my Fees’. The analogy used to describe the process of reading and procuring ‘new Papers’ is a disturbing one; rather than representing enduring works of art, verse manuscripts are coarsely treated as an ‘old disease’, as fleeting and superficial textual objects that must be consumed immediately, but which are then rendered a useless and

⁴⁶⁴ Vieth, *Attribution in Restoration Poetry*, p.455.

⁴⁶⁵ *The Letters of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Jeremy Treglown (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp.232-3

infectious blight upon humanity, the only cure being the purchase of new manuscripts. This sets up a vicious cycle of sickness and profit – a notion underscored by the rhyme of ‘disease/Fees’ – created and perpetuated by Julian himself. In this way, the image of Julian functions as a literary tool that exposes the increasing materiality of Restoration manuscripts, his economic endeavours an emblem for how scribal publication has reduced the morally heightened practice of poetic composition into a demeaning system of material gain.

Beal has argued that a major influence in this devaluing of manuscripts stemmed from texts no longer being confined to their immediate aristocratic networks, suggesting that Julian had ‘cheapened manuscript culture itself [...] he effectively brought manuscripts out of the relatively ‘private’ and socially elevated sphere of gentlemanly circulation on to the streets’.⁴⁶⁶ By the same token, however, we can also argue that Restoration scribes themselves were no longer bound to a single network of patronage, one comprised of an exclusive cluster of persons united by a shared set of beliefs under a single benefactor, instead navigating and serving a myriad of bodies regardless of socio-political affiliation. This posed a significant challenge to the supremacy of the court, as it risked diluting traditional forms of patronage vital to its continuing influence over English life. Indeed, the inability to exercise exclusive control over these scribal agents inevitably led to the propagation of ideas and values unsanctioned by the court from other competing groups; moreover, it also risked compromising London’s wider poetical landscape through the transmission of immoral and incompetent verses composed beyond the creative sanctity of the court poets themselves. The dynamics and nature of scribal publication consequently came under greater scrutiny, with writers examining the role scribes played in systems of patronage and how this in turn contributed to the wider development of Restoration critical discourse.

This becomes a major preoccupation in ‘A Familiar Epistle to Mr. Julian’, a court lampoon attributed variously to Buckingham or Dorset.⁴⁶⁷ The satire was provoked by Julian’s dissemination of work by the Dryden-led group of Tory poets, and addresses the on-going literary quarrel between Rochester and Scroope. His actions aroused aristocratic anger – ‘All mischeifs thine, transcribing thou wilt stoop/From lofty Middlesex to lowly Scroope’ (ll.9-10); Julian has descended from the culturally heightened sphere of gentlemanly manuscript production into the ranks of lesser writers. Critically, by focusing on this new client-patron relationship the satire betrays an underlying anxiety. Indeed, on the formation of the Tory circle, Love claims that ‘the impetus to this new scribal community arose from the increasingly

⁴⁶⁶ Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, p.28.

⁴⁶⁷ Love, *Plays Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings Associated with George Villiers Second Duke of Buckingham*, 2 vols, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ii, p.434.

oppositional position of the Buckingham group and the consequent need to create a Yorkist centre of patronage'.⁴⁶⁸ According to Marshall, it was the emergence of these competing networks that led to a 'factional form of politics', whereby 'various groups or individuals banded together in a client-patron relationship and competed with others in a similar relationship for the axis of honour'.⁴⁶⁹ As key agents within this scribally communal chain of patronage, scribes subsequently helped crystallise various factions, thereby playing a fundamental role in fostering a culture of critical debate. Recognising this, the 'Epistle' attacks Julian's association with the likes of Dryden and Scroope out of concern that scribal publication threatened to encroach on the cultural apparatuses traditionally controlled by the aristocratic elite.

A prominent feature displayed so far in this satirical sub-genre is the geographical distinction between the court and the town, a characteristic also manifest in the 'Epistle':

Thou Comon Shore of this Poetique Towne,
Where all our Excrements of Witt are throwne,
For Sonnet, Satyr, Bawdry, Blasphemy,
Are empty'd and disburdened all on thee (ll.1-4).

The references to 'Excrements' and London's 'Shore' (meaning sewer) serves to illustrate and heighten the decaying standards of English poetic writing. The derisive phrase 'Poetique Towne' scorns the congested hordes of poets, whose abject verse is represented by the crude metaphor of bodily fluid; whereas the court houses the fountain of pure, creative brilliance, the town is subjected to 'our Excrements of Witt', overflowing with base writers whose derivative works have polluted London's streets. The metaphor continues into the lines 'The Chollerick Wight, untrussing in a Rage,/Finds thee, and leaves his Load upon thy Page' (ll.5-6), reducing the town to a squalid basin collecting the literary waste of inept writers. The realisation of this putrid condition in part stems from the dissemination of scribal manuscripts, indicated by the verbs 'empty'd' and disburthen'd', underlining the pervasive influence scribes exert on to the cultural value of literary works. This is further demonstrated in the way the satire mocks Julian for departing from the elite space of the court in order to exploit this wretched environment: 'Thou Julian! O thou wise Vespasian rather/Dost from this Dung, thy well-pict Guineys gather (ll.7-8). The emphasis on 'well-pict Guineys' clearly censures the commercialization of poetic manuscripts, an act that violates the congenial and artistic values that inform aristocratic creative writing. Despite the palpable anger at Julian's disloyalty, his presence within the

⁴⁶⁸ Love, *Scribal Publication*, 256.

⁴⁶⁹ Marshall, *The Age of faction*, p.36.

satirical aesthetic again functions as a kind of poetical barometer, enabling the author to assess the broader context and decline of English manuscript culture.

The satire then shifts to a ridicule of Scroope, whom the author tasks Julian to locate owing to his desire 'to be thought a Poet, fine and fair' (l.80). The text subsequently acts as a document of 'Intelligence' (l.23) detailing Scroope's poetical ineptness, and intersects the literary quarrel between himself and Rochester. Alongside his inability to 'Rhyme', the 'Epistle' also addresses Scroope's literary misconduct:

Laugh at him, justle him, yet still he writes,
In Rhyme he Challenges, in Rhyme he fights;
Charg'd with the last, and basest Infamy,
His Bus'nesse is to thinke what Rhymes to – Lye (ll.93-6).

Scroope is censured for attempting to appropriate verse satire as a medium for literary discourse, a genre previously reserved by the court wits but which is now being used against them in 'Defence of satyr' (1677). This consequently provokes the charge: 'In Rhyme he Challenges, in Rhyme he fights'. His efforts to engage in meaningful debate are portrayed as erratic and bombastic, lacking the refined sophistication echoed by the poem's own metrical dexterity and tight couplet control – the satire even mocking Scroope's poor rhyming skills: 'His Bus'nesse is to thinke what Rhymes to – Lye' (which he rhymed with 'dyes' at ll.36-7 in the 'Defence'). The satirical form of 'A Familiar Epistle' therefore aims to assert (or perhaps reassert) control over the genre, allowing the wits to maintain their *modus operandi* regarding the delineation of literary values whilst simultaneously refining the poetic quality of the genre itself. This, combined with the repeated emphasis on 'Rhyme', exhibits the extent to which verse satire was perceived as the preeminent medium to partake in Restoration literary criticism.

Additionally, the satire relies on audience familiarity with the Rochester/Scroope debate in order to appreciate the intertextual reference to Scroope's crude rhyme – perhaps even being designed to be read alongside the 'Defence'. While this suggests the author envisioned a predominantly court readership (where individuals could readily source copies), it also made it appealing to other readers with an interest in modern literary theory, as the intertextuality of the satire invites them to engage in the act of criticism. We can observe this facet through the satire's manuscript life. Indeed, Vieth has identified the 'Epistle' as belonging to a group of five satires that shared a collective circulation. Each piece has been attributed to the Buckingham/Rochester circle and provides a literary critique of either Mulgrave or Scroope: 'The best evidence is a manuscript pamphlet, bound into B.M Egerton MS. 2623, which is entirely occupied by these five poems in order [...] Additional evidence that the five satires circulated as a linked group is their occurrence, in exactly the same order, in Osborn MS. Chest

11, Number 14, and the Yale MS'.⁴⁷⁰ This mirrored sequence across multiple manuscripts suggests that compilers and copyists felt it necessary to preserve their reading order, a decision that inherently endows the group with an internal intellectual coherency. The 'Epistle' was thus read as part of a literary dialogue, and perceived as consciously participating in the Restoration preoccupation of defining and enforcing certain poetical standards. The textual preservation shows how the satire was valued as an intrinsic work of literary criticism.

Julian's years of activity helped cultivate a sub-genre of satirical writing not only alert to the pervasive influence of Restoration scribes but also introspective in nature, being mindful of its own production whilst examining the present realm of English manuscripts where it anticipated its own transmission. However, the primary satirical strategy of these works was often predicated on Julian's operational status during the 1670s and early 1680s, meaning the self-reflective quality of such verse could only manifest fully in relation to the success of his scribal enterprise. This underwent a subtle shift following Julian's imprisonment in 1684, when he was convicted for his hand in publishing a libel against Charles II titled 'Old Rowley the King'. He was sentenced to the pillory on 12th November that year and remained incarcerated until June 1685. The incident obviously removed him from London's scribal communities, terminating his underground business and depriving him of his livelihood. Despite this, he remained a prominent figure in the minds of many Restoration writers, with numerous poems addressed to him in King's Bench prison. Critically, rather than invoking his capacity or position as professional scribe, writers now began utilising him as poetic vehicle to reflect more thoughtfully on a range of other contemporary literary issues.

Of course, he did not escape ridicule for his predicament. 'Julian's Farewell to the Muses' (1684/5), a satire bearing a court perspective, delights in presenting Julian as a Whig peddler whose illicit actions have justly severed him from London's poetical sphere.⁴⁷¹ The satire's political mood coincides with the Tories ascendancy in 1685, by which time the Duke of York had returned to the Privy Council and harsher measures were being imposed on Whig dissenters. Additionally, the satire displays several intertextual allusions to 'A Familiar Epistle', such as the depiction of London town as a 'common sink [...] wherein you shit', and even borrows the quotation 'excrements of wit' (ll.11-12). This intertextuality is given further credence when we consider how, like 'A Familiar Epistle', 'Julian's Farewell to the Muses' enumerates multiple Restoration poets as it assesses the impact Julian's imprisonment will have on London's scribal scene, incorporating several writers mentioned in the 'Epistle' – such as Dryden, Etherege, and Dorset – and treating them in similar terms. This subsequently suggests a

⁴⁷⁰ Vieth, *Attribution*, p.323.

⁴⁷¹ Wilson, *Court Satires of the Restoration*, pp.138-40.

higher level of readership and influence the 'Epistle' had on the way Restoration readers and writers thought about and articulated certain literary attitudes.

Of particular interest, however, is the author's description of Julian's physical mutilation and exposure in the pillory: 'May you all be adorned with bays like me,/No laurel crown you, but a pillory!' (ll.5-6); 'Vending your nonsense to expose my ears' (l.8); 'To save your ears, poor Julian lost his own' (l.16). Beneath the euphoric tone surrounding Julian's sentence, the visual representation of corporeal disfigurement encapsulates concerns regarding government punishment for libellous and seditious works. The idea of the pillory, as Thomas Keymer explains, became a 'tool for the retrospective censorship of print', which not only threatened authors but 'fell with equal menace over printers, publishers, and other book-trade professionals'.⁴⁷² While Keymer's study focuses on how authors creatively navigated this censorship in print form, 'Julian's Farewell' makes it clear that the realm of manuscript was also at risk. Certainly, despite the government's primary focus on the print industry (largely for practical purposes) scribal manuscripts remained a concern; in 1675, Roger L'Estrange complained that 'not one in forty ever come to press, though, by the help of transcripts, they are well nigh as public'.⁴⁷³ The text conveys a sense of the changing political risks surrounding the production of satirical manuscripts compared to those expressed in 'Letter to Julian'; whereas the 'Letter' depicts poetic manuscripts as a secure, even noble vehicle of socio-political commentary uninhibited by capital punishment, we now see Julian physically mutilated for circulating a scribal satire critiquing the monarchy.

The satire thus shows that even while incarcerated and removed from the world of London manuscripts, Julian could still function as a literary symbol to reflect on various issues. Certainly, it was during this time, following the exposure of the Rye House Plot in late 1683 (in which Monmouth and other conspirators were charged with plotting to kill the King and his brother, the Duke of York) that the government intensified its persecution of those who denied royal authority, including both Whig dissenters and other non-conformist groups, and which regularly led to imprisonment, mutilation, and death.⁴⁷⁴ Julian's plight and physical disfigurement thus acts as a corporeal reminder of the political hazards now being imposed upon London's manuscript communities and the dangers satirists now faced in an increasingly dogmatic public landscape.

⁴⁷² Thomas Keymer, *Poetics of the Pillory: English Literature and Seditious Libel, 1660-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp3-6.

⁴⁷³ D.F. McKenzie & Maureen Bell, *A Chronology and Calendar of Documents Relating to the London Book Trade, 1641-1700*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), ii, pp.94-5.

⁴⁷⁴ See Ronald Hutton, *Charles the Second, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp.422-4.

Prologues and Epilogues: theatre, theory, and satire

At the beginning of this chapter, we saw how the Restoration court poets began reacting to the rise of professional playwrights associated with the town through a series of satires which aimed to undermine their authorial and literary status by locating the processes of literary discourse within the realm of Restoration manuscripts. We now turn to the way in which those playwrights fought back – utilising the same satirical medium used against them no less – in the form of prologues and epilogues. In doing so, the following analysis will provide a new perspective on how dramatists of the Restoration both understood and developed dramatic framing texts as a serious tool for literary debate, as well as demonstrate how these texts are representative of the wider Restoration phenomenon which sees satire transform into the principle realm of critical discourse. In order to best illustrate this, the following analysis adopts a slightly non-linear approach towards its choice of material. It will begin by revealing how the form and function of framing texts fell under greater scrutiny within the early years of the Restoration, particularly their increasingly satirical tone, and demonstrate that by the late 1680s and early 1690s, at the end of the period, writers eventually came to perceive such texts as being inherently satirical. The purpose of this is to provide a new theoretical prism that enables Restoration prologues and epilogues to be viewed as works of formal verse satire. The analysis then continues with a chronological examination of specific texts. This begins with a series of prologues and epilogues by Davenant and Dryden in the late 1660s and early 1670s, which attempted to cultivate new audiences and arenas of literary discourse, as well as transform the medium into a more enduring form of criticism. We will then see how the format was subverted by Buckingham's satirical critique of Dryden in the prologue to *The Rehearsal*, and the profound influence this had on professional playwrights of the town, such as Nathaniel Lee and Thomas Otway, who re-directed that satirical energy back at the wits in their own effort to subvert the literary prerogative of the court and assert their own authority.

The ways in which Restoration playwrights imagined and experimented with dramatic prologues and epilogues has been a relatively unexplored area in modern scholarship. Concurring with this sentiment, Brian Schneider's recent study posits that many of the 'framing texts' written during this period engage with the major on-going discussions about the nature of drama: 'playwrights took advantage of the extra-theatrical dimension that these framing texts afforded and used them, often in highly original ways, to enunciate their diverse ideas on referentiality, theatricality, audience participation and expectation and authorial

competence'.⁴⁷⁵ Additionally, such texts were often consciously self-referential, as playwrights utilised prologues and epilogues to explore their own poetical nature and critical function. Providing a creative platform from which one could project their own literary authority to diverse audiences and showcase their sensibility to prevailing cultural attitudes, they represented a new mode of public poetry that helped sustain new classes of professional writers.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, the performative nature of framing texts offered a distinct mode of discourse. Bruce Smith has argued that the prologist immerses the audience in a 'field of sound', thereby transforming the ensuing play into a 'totalizing experience of sound'.⁴⁷⁷ Such a space not only allowed authors to showcase their creative flair, it also generated a closer proximity between themselves and London spectators, creating unique moments of exchange and interaction. Indeed, Adam Fox notes how 'the spoken word [...] provides a more immediate and sensitive insight into the mental world of a people than perhaps all other forms of expression'.⁴⁷⁸ As a mode of expression which is principally (though not invariably) conceived as an oral performance, authors could approach the composing of framing texts without necessarily worrying about the formal restrictions and decorum required of printed essays and prefaces, thereby allowing them to voice with greater freedom and brazenness their personal values and critical condemnations.

All these notions are expressed in Robert Howard's prologue to *The Vestal Virgin* (1664). It is one of the earliest examples by a Restoration author to elucidate the characteristics, versatility, and uses of dramatic prologues. Entering on stage, the actor explains the text's basic function: 'Prologues, like Forlorn-hopes, first face the Stage,/Before the main Battalions do engage' (ll.1-2) – the war imagery evoking the conflicts from the previous decade, as the prologist anticipates his own demise ('Forlorn-hopes') in service of assisting the 'Battalions'.⁴⁷⁹ The allegory is then followed by an intriguing interaction between actor, audience, and poet, in a rhetorical shift that transitions the prologist away from an ill-fated and passive theatrical agent:

But stay, I fancy that I hear one call;
I'll step but to the door, and tell you all.
'Troth 'tis the Poet's Voice, now danger's near;

⁴⁷⁵ Brian Schneider, *The framing text in early modern English drama: 'whining' prologues and 'armed' epilogues* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.10.

⁴⁷⁶ On the diversity of Restoration playhouse see Emmett Avery, 'The Restoration Audience', *Philological quarterly*, 45 (1966), 54-64

⁴⁷⁷ Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp.271-2.

⁴⁷⁸ Adam Fox, *Oral and literate culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.51.

⁴⁷⁹ Danchin, *i*, 203.

He sends me back as his Commissioner (ll.5-8).

The sonic language here ('call', 'voice') recalls Smith's idea that the prologue generates an immersive soundscape as hearing and listening become integral to the performance – not simply in a theatrical sense as between actor and spectator, but also to the fictional and immersive world of the play itself and the characters inhabiting it. After a brief discussion, the actor re-enters on stage in an altered state, having been sent by the playwright now 'as his Commissioner'. The prologue thus assumes a more specific function, acting as a direct channel of communication and exchange between playwright and playhouse, drawing the audience into its theatrical aesthetic in the process. He then proceeds to list the multitude of ways playwrights composed and exploited prologues, many of which were standard practice during the period. For example, 'Some Prologues are more modestly address'd,/Just like Petitions, those he thinks are best' (ll.30-1), a reference to authors' appeals for financial and social backing from those aristocrats and nobles in attendance. Of particular interest, however, is the way certain framing texts operated in more critical, intertextual, and even satirical ways:

Sure such believe you'll do as you are bid,
And that you paid your money to be chid.
Some craftier Poets at each other hit,
[...]
This does a wretched dearth of Wit betray,
When things of Kind on one another prey (24-29).

Not only were some prologues conceived primarily as a tool to 'chid[e]' their audience, they appear to draw on a self-established socio-cultural custom to justify their ends, proclaiming that such a reproach forms part of the overall 'paid' theatrical experience. Alongside this, we also see how such works could function as a vehicle to engage specifically in literary criticism, wherein 'Some craftier Poets at each other hit'. Dismayed at this betrayal of 'Wit', Howard observes how this disconnected certain prologues from their plays, which now become wholly preoccupied with continuing a critical and theoretical dialogue in which 'things of Kind on one another prey'. This coincides with Schneider's notion that 'prologues and epilogues, examined separately from the dramas they frame, often appear to be feeding off each other', and that 'regular playgoers (or readers) might well discern an on-going debate about the nature of the theatrical presentation before them'.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁸⁰ Schneider, *The framing text in early modern English drama*, p.10.

Howard's text highlights two key aspects of prologue/epilogue writing that would become increasingly interlinked as the Restoration period progressed: the deployment and understanding of framing texts as works of satire, and how such texts became an important medium to engage in literary theory. To analyse prologues and epilogues as works of formal verse satire is to rethink how writers conceived their aesthetic values and ideological uses, and how this in turn influenced the way spectators and readers perceived and understood them. Ashley Marshall's study of the practices of early modern satire helps illustrate these ideas. She posits that satire represents a 'mode (or a set of modes) that inhabit multiple genres', observing that 'model terms are usually adjective – a satiric pamphlet, a satiric play'.⁴⁸¹ For our purposes here we may also add 'satirical prologue/epilogue'. Furthermore, noting how genre theory assumes genre is paramount in determining outcome, Marshall proposes that because satire is a 'purposive mode' it tends to dominate the genre it inhabits: 'where the satiric mode dominates, then formal genre no longer controls the results or response. In that case a genre is simply a vehicle for satire'.⁴⁸² Prologues and epilogues that ridicule or censure prevailing cultural and dramatic attitudes thereby transcend the play they accompany in order to achieve a desired effect, as their satirical energies aim to both influence and re-shape both the social and intellectual dynamics of English literary culture.

As such texts enter the wider public arena of English literary theory they work increasingly through intertextual means. Consequently, they incorporate an emergent theoretical vocabulary that underpinned Restoration critical thinking in their discussion of terms such as 'wit', 'art', and 'nature'. Efforts to determine the theatrical nature of prologues and epilogues therefore coincided with attempts to better define an English poetic language, helping to transform Restoration framing texts into a more thoughtful, introspective realm of literary inquiry. This growing versatility may also stem from the diverse ways authors utilised framing texts to address different audiences across multiple venues – including the Royal Court, Inns of Court, universities, and open-air theatres. Plays performed at these venues were often accompanied by a new prologue/epilogue tailored strategically for the performance space and its prospective spectators – their temporal nature suggesting they were written to elicit a particular response or impress a certain view upon a specific audience in a given moment. This is further compounded by the tendency for such texts to exist beyond their initial performance. Indeed, Tiffany Stern observes how framing texts 'were independently copied, and sometimes independently purchased', adding that they 'could then be separately memorised in manuscript

⁴⁸¹ Marshall, *The practice of satire in England*, p.5.

⁴⁸² Marshall, *The practice of satire in England*, p.7.

and print [...] it is the habit of prologues and epilogues to circulate outside their plays'.⁴⁸³ Alongside their ability to lead audiences into a 'field of sound', then, prologues and epilogues acquired a new textuality; instead of relying purely on sensory experiences through performance, these written verses could be re-read and studied in more reflective and intellectual ways. In this more enduring form, framing texts represented a more sophisticated medium to disseminate one's opinions to a more learned readership.

If Howard's prologue to *The Vestal Virgin* hints at the rise of satire in framing texts at the start of the Restoration, by the end of the period it seems to have become a common practice. This is reflected in Thomas D'Urfey's prologue to *Bussy D'Ambios* (1691), which acts as a retrospective survey of Restoration prologue writing. Rebuking poets who compose 'in a railing way' (l.3) D'Urfey laments that 'Through our last Age has been no prologue us'd/In which the Audience have not been abus'd' (ll.1-2).⁴⁸⁴ Resolving to be more 'Civil', the text recounts an exchange between actor and playwright on the correct use of satire in theatrical prologues. Considering satire's ability to reflect society, the actor explains how 'well writ Satyr' can delight spectators: 'no worthy Man would break the Glass,/That shew'd him handsomely his homely Face' (ll.11-12). Conversely, the playwright argues 't'was the vice of all mankind/To be to their own imperfections blind' (l.14), providing prologues with a moral obligation to expose the deficiencies amongst their audiences. This kind of 'hating Satyr' (l.20), however, is problematic due to its proximity to reality, attracting those critics who 'Severely cry the Poets labour down,/That shows you vices, too much like your own' (ll.22-3). Of all the spectators within the playhouse the actor is hyper-aware of those with links to the court:

To all compos'd of Courtly Critick mold
These truths must never be at all times told:
Plain dealing's rude, and will provoke their spite (ll.30-2).

The lines disclose the level of influence the court continued to exert over London's theatre scene. To highlight or ridicule the debauched behaviours of the aristocratic elite risked destroying a play's reputation, for it was the 'Courtly Critick' who determined the success of a given work. Utilising the performative space of the prologue, D'Urfey negotiates a tolerable level of satire within Restoration framing texts through an oral interchange between actor and playwright that subsequently encompasses the audience – incorporating them into the intellectual process in order to establish a unified verdict. Moreover, this rhetorical tactic allows

⁴⁸³ Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.98-100.

⁴⁸⁴ Danchin, *iii*, p.9.

D'Urfey to himself implicitly mock the court: confronted with their own vices, they are forced to accept certain 'truths' on the condition they 'never be at all times told', or else they forfeit their own participation within the prologue's oral negotiations.

Alongside its self-reflective qualities, D'Urfey's text highlights how thoughts on satire and prologue writing often become entangled on stage. The need to unknot satire from modern conventions of prologue writing thus became a key issue for Restoration playwrights, as seen in Thomas Otway's prologue to *The Atheist* (1683). Despite the abundance of new plays, 'Ne'er were *good Prologues* harder to be found' (l.2) on account of their abusive contents, whereby 'Some poignant Satyr in a Prologue rise,/And growing Vices handsomly chastise' (ll.9-10) – echoing D'Urfey's earlier observation.⁴⁸⁵ Otway specifically addresses the language of modern prologues, which have deteriorated into a tedious and clichéd mode of ridicule, condemning contemporary playwrights for the linguistic configuration of their prologues:

He always in One Line upbraids the *Age*;
And a good Reason why; it Rymes to *Stage*.
With *Wit* and *Pit* he keeps a hideous pother;
[...]
But if, by chance, he get the *French Word Raillery*,
Lord, how he segues the *Vizor-Masques* with *Gallery!* (ll.16-21).

The lines show how writers incessantly deployed an identical vocabulary and rhyming pattern to achieve their satirical ends. Otway subsequently depicts Restoration prologues as deteriorating into an indistinguishable mass of base, rudimentary verse lacking poetic originality or merit. Critically, this use of satire threatened to undermine the way language denotes meaning, as the semantic markers used to identify the theatre ('Wit', 'Stage', 'Pit', 'Gallery') have been reduced to a series of vindictive rhymes and associations, thereby corrupting the way audiences potentially perceive Restoration playhouses. Such works not only destabilised the linguistic integrity of English framing texts, they also perverted the critical vocabulary used to regulate Restoration literary and social values. By urging authors to give their '*Iambicks o're*' and 'write *Lampoons* no more' (ll.44-5), Otway's text not only attempts to reshape current practices of Restoration prologue writing, it also contains wider implications for the usage and refinement of England's poetic language.

While Otway engages with the satirical language of Restoration framing texts, Samuel Pordage focuses on their dramatic utility. In his prologue to *The Siege of Babylon* (1677), he complains of modern plays that 'Custom does prevail,/It must be Satyr, in its Head, and Tail'

⁴⁸⁵ Danchin, *ii*, p.471.

(ll.20-1).⁴⁸⁶ He explains how prologues from the previous age 'Us'd to have some Coherence, with the Play' (l.2), wherein they formed part of the theatrical and fictional fabric of the text, leading organically into the action of the play – 'Like necessary Porches, to a house,/They, to the Inner Rooms, did introduce' (ll.4-5). His claim that 'Prologues of old [...] Were not so much, for Ornament, as use' (ll.1-3) underscores the poetic devaluation of Restoration framing texts, which have been reduced to a mere 'Ornament' lacking any dramatic unity. More worryingly, the disjunction generated by these satirical texts taints the overall theatrical experience; while the play itself might exhibit 'Verses run, on smooth, and even feet', and does 'of Love, and Honour treat' (ll.15-16), Pordage proclaims that 'The Prologue still, has a rough Satyr's face,/Which does the moving, sweet, soft, thing, disgrace' (ll.18-19). The increasingly satirical nature of Restoration prologues therefore had more profound consequences that extended beyond their internal literary value as they risked subverting the actual plays they belonged to.

The works of D'Urfey, Otway, and Pordage illustrate several key points. Not only do they show how Restoration authors perceived prologues/epilogues as satire, they also reveal how such works were preoccupied with defining their own form and function, and how this in turn could influence the declining standards of English drama. Moreover, as both their function and aesthetic nature fell into greater disrepute and uncertainty, we can see how writers began manipulating this spoken verse form to achieve a number of ideological effects. Indeed, within the first decade of the period, several authors made a concerted effort to establish new social and literary practices by re-imagining the performance space of framing texts as forums of critical discourse. This involved two key, reciprocal strategies. First, framing texts displayed greater sensitivity to prevailing literary theories, encompassing key critical vocabularies and concepts that enabled them to work intertextually. Second, they addressed perceptions of audience manners and judgment. This, combined with the occasional aspect of framing texts, provided a unique space wherein playwrights could publicly assert their dramatic authority as well as articulate and revise their ideas to suit their immediate needs. This becomes evident in a series of interlinked texts by Davenant and Dryden.

In 1667, Davenant supplied a new prologue for a revived production his play, *The Witts*. The text aims to vindicate the play's revival by re-defining modern understandings of key poetical terms – principally 'wit'. Employing an analogy likening 'Wit' to 'Coyn', Davenant echoes the premise expressed in Dryden's *Essay* (published the previous year) that language and values change as societies develop.⁴⁸⁷ As a form of poetic currency, 'wit' operates in a perpetual state of flux, where no writer can 'by any stamp enjoyn/Wit to the World as universal Coyn' (ll.3-4). The

⁴⁸⁶ Danchin, *ii*, p.73.

⁴⁸⁷ Danchin, *i*, p.242.

value of wit thus exists in relation to the sensibilities of a particular culture as well as the poet's ability to infuse it with the prevailing customs of their age – 'Tis by alloy, like Gold, more current made' (l.9). Because of this continual modernisation, works from earlier periods were viewed as lacking the refined splendour of the Restoration, having been written during a time 'when the Stamp is bad' (l.20). Recognising the play's value had begun to 'lessen', the prologue then explains how Davenant 'did call it in./And then he quickly melted it again', reshaping it with a 'second stamp' to 'raise the worth', thereby conforming it to the standards of contemporary audiences (ll.29-36). Composed specifically for this occasion, Davenant utilised the prologue to engage with prevailing literary attitudes and convey these to a specific audience. Indeed, its elevated subject matter suggests he was addressing like-minded individuals able to discern his theoretical views, allowing the prologue to function as an exchange of ideas between poet and spectator. Davenant thus reimagines the performance space as a discursive realm of literary criticism. That audiences themselves participated in this discourse is evidenced by Pepys, who, after attending the opening night, reflected on Davenant's play by echoing the same sentiment expressed in the prologue, writing how the drama 'is now corrected and enlarged'.⁴⁸⁸

By publicly attempting to define key literary terms Davenant's prologue inevitably intersects with wider dramatic issues. For example, his conceptualisation of 'wit' would manifest itself in debates regarding Shakespeare and Jonson. Discussing seventeenth-century developments in Shakespearean criticism, Jean Marsden asserts that 'the critical vocabulary and approach to literature remained essentially constant [...] critics retained their goal of rational, balanced, critical assessments'.⁴⁸⁹ Both Davenant and Dryden would contribute to this debate by collaborating on a modified version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1667), including a prologue that was clearly influenced by Davenant's earlier example. Like *The Witts*, the prologue to *The Tempest* conveys similar ideas:

As when a Tree's cut down the secret root
Lives under ground, and thence new Branches shoot
So, from old *Shakespeare's* honour'd dust, this day
Springs up and buds a new reviving play (ll.1-4).⁴⁹⁰

The image of the tree works identically to Davenant's earlier use of 'Coyn', and is used to rebuke those critics who deem Shakespeare's writing a product of an inferior, rougher age. While not outrightly denying the play's original linguistic and artistic defects, the prologue does insist that

⁴⁸⁸ Pepys, *viii*, p171.

⁴⁸⁹ Jean Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), p.47

⁴⁹⁰ Danchin, *i*, p.266.

Shakespeare's creative essence (his 'secret root') transcends its rudimentary setting. It is thus the responsibility of modern playwrights to enhance the playtext, to 'cut down' the original tree in order to produce 'new Branches' and 'buds' – echoing the rhetoric and creative process displayed by Davenant's earlier prologue. Additionally, while the prologue continues to emphasize the superior judgement of Restoration audiences, it also breaks down the spatial proxemics of the playhouse: 'if for *Shakespeare* we your grace implore,/We for our Theatre shall want it more' (ll.27-28). The phrase 'our Theatre' invites spectators from the pits and galleries into the performative space; viewed as equally cognisant of prevailing dramatic theories, they become integrated into the rational and elevated practices of Shakespearean criticism.

Davenant and Dryden would manipulate this performance device further by exploiting the extra-theatrical circumstances of their prologues. *The Witts* and *The Tempest* were both performed by the Duke's Company at Lincoln's Inn Fields only months apart. Considering the rhetorical and ideological similarities between both framing texts, it is highly likely the prologue to *The Tempest* was composed specifically for this venue, where the playwrights could take advantage of regular playgoers recently exposed to the theoretical principles discussed in Davenant's earlier piece. The prologue thus represented a spoken vehicle through which Dryden and Davenant could create and sustain a continuous critical dialogue conducted in public, one that allowed them to articulate and revise their views at the moment of performance. Moreover, this deliberately intertextual appropriation of the same theatrical space suggests that both writers were attempting to fashion new types of audiences, comprised of more learned spectators capable of discerning the dramatic debates presented before them. This formed part of a wider ideological objective that saw writers like Dryden re-imagine the way prologues/epilogues could be experienced; indeed, the attempted cultivation of Restoration audiences allowed framing texts to act as an oral exchange of ideas amongst like-minded individuals, thereby transforming the performance space into a heightened mode of critical discourse.

This employment of framing texts perhaps reaches its pinnacle in Dryden's epilogue to the second part of *The Conquest of Granada* (first performed in 1670). Placing the work within an intertextual web of dramatic criticism, the epilogue encompasses the Dryden and Shadwell's debate on the merits of Jonson. Again, the performance required familiarity with the on-going debate and draws on an established critical vocabulary. Echoing the concepts discussed in the above prologues, Dryden reiterates the temporal nature of poetic language, stating that the most successful writers 'Have still conform'd their Genius to their Age' (ll.1-2).⁴⁹¹ We are then told that '*Jonson* did *Mechanick* humour show,/When men were dull, and conversation low' (ll.3-4).

⁴⁹¹ Danchin, *i*, p.386.

The term 'Mechanick humour' stems from Dryden's own *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, and refers to Jonson's skill in imitating the various 'humors' of society.⁴⁹² The reference illustrates that Dryden viewed his epilogue as forming part of a wider theoretical narrative. That Jonson's writing was bound to the low' linguistic customs of his age is exposed further by the refined manners of Restoration playgoers, who now act as 'Critiques' fastidiously judging 'Each Line, and ev'ry word' (ll.13-14). This new sociological custom corresponds with new preferences for more sophisticated themes – 'Love and Honour now are higher rais'd' (l.21) – which have been realised through the development of poetic wit: 'Wit's now arriv'd to a more high degree;/Our native Language more refin'd and free' (ll.23-24). Dryden subsequently exploits the theatrical space to show how these social and literary practices cohere in this theatrical production: a play dealing with grander dramatic subjects; the expression of a more refined poetic language; and an epilogue that performs Jonsonian criticism on stage.

Critically, when we consider the 1672 printed edition of *The Conquest of Granada*, it becomes evident Dryden's utilisation of the epilogue extended beyond the theatrical confines of the playhouse. Stern has discussed the ways Restoration playwrights and publishers organised framing texts within printed works to achieve a variety of effects, noting how 'it is entirely usual to find the epilogue printed immediately after the prologue, linking the two texts with one another more than with the play', and that 'prologues and epilogues even when present in printed editions [...] are not always treated as though they are one with their plays'.⁴⁹³ Dryden clearly envisioned his epilogue as representing a more enduring work of scholarly criticism by printing it alongside his 'Defence of the Epilogue'. Transitioning from the oral to the written, he now addresses the reader, explaining how the nature of his epilogue made it 'necessary for me either not to print it, or to show that I could defend it'.⁴⁹⁴ The epilogue was thus conceived as existing in multiple lives. Moreover, the editorial layout of the volume allowed it to function as a more intellectual mode of literary analysis, with the 'Defence' immediately following the epilogue and thereby creating the impression of a single critical discourse, as the oral and the written blend seamlessly together. By targeting the reader, Dryden was following a precedent set by Jonson; describing the 1631 edition of *The New Inn*, Schneider notes how Jonson used the printed octavo version 'to castigate both actors and audience and make his appeal to the 'Readers'. The title page bears a Latin inscription which can be rendered as 'I prefer to put myself in a reader's hand than to brook the disdain of a scornful spectator'.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹² Dryden, *Works xvii*, p.57

⁴⁹³ Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p.103.

⁴⁹⁴ Dryden, *Works xi*, p.203

⁴⁹⁵ Schneider, *The framing text in early modern English drama*, p.87.

This use of framing texts altered the way Restoration readers and writers perceived and experienced prologues/epilogues as the distinction between the oral and written become increasingly distorted. This can be observed as early as 1662 in Margret Cavendish's *Plays*. The volume is an extraordinary work of editorial craft; aside from its four plays, the text opens with nine successive addresses 'To the Readers'. The fact that the playtexts themselves were actually a series of closet dramas, combined with the ostentatious production and arrangement of its textual features, indicates the volume was aimed at the wealthy, judicious readers of London society. Intriguingly, while each individual play has its own prologue, Cavendish provides a unique piece titled 'A General Prologue to all my Playes' positioned at the front of the volume. Despite assuming the form of a prologue the work was clearly never intended as a performance piece, but was rather conceived as introducing readers specifically to the printed plays, thus existing exclusively as a written text. Despite its textual nature, however, Cavendish urges the reader to experience such texts as if they were being performed: 'Playes must be read to the nature of those several humours, or passions, as are exprest by Writing [...] Scenes must be read as if they were spoke or Acted'.⁴⁹⁶ She encourages readers to internalise printed texts as verbal utterances that retain the inflections of the actor. Her prologue subsequently blurs the boundaries between the oral and the written, creating a new and dynamic verse format that could be adapted for a variety of aesthetic effects.

However, this sustained experimentation with framing texts throughout the 1660s would soon be subverted. Dryden's repeated attempts to re-appropriate prologues/epilogues into a more sophisticated medium of literary criticism was eventually seized by the Duke of Buckingham in his own epilogue to *The Rehearsal*. First performed in 1671 at the Theatre Royal, the text responds directly to Dryden's *Conquest of Granada*. Observing how Dryden manipulated the performance space to declare and regulate his professional status and literary authority, it appears Buckingham's epilogue served specifically to undermine this mode of discourse through satirical ridicule. This may be rooted in concerns that professional playwrights had formed new ways to publicly exert control over literary matters previously maintained by the court. Buckingham's satirical epilogue therefore not only derides Dryden's views but also parodies his use of the epilogue itself, at once subverting its authorial legitimacy and reminding the professional dramatist he did not hold a monopoly over this particular performative space.

Like *The Rehearsal*, the epilogue lampoons the convoluted action of Dryden's play: 'The Play is at an end, but where's the Plot?/That circumstance our Poet Bayes forgot' (ll.1-2).⁴⁹⁷ The

⁴⁹⁶ Margret Cavendish, *Plays Written by the thrice noble, illustrious and excellent princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London: printed for John Martyn, 1662), sig.A6^v.

⁴⁹⁷ Buckingham, *Plays Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings*, i, p.453.

spoken delivery of this line suspends the audience between the theatrical world and reality: the play may be concluded, but the satirical critique it invites is still on-going, as Buckingham's rhetoric transforms the playhouse into an auditory chamber of satirical discourse. Yet, despite its jeering tone, the epilogue succeeds in challenging Dryden on a deeper theoretical level by alluding to ideas expressed in the 'Defence of the Epilogue':

The Ancients Plotted, though, and strove to please
With sence that might be understood with ease;
They every Scene with so much wit did store (ll.5-7).

Utilising the same emergent critical vocabulary, the lines refute Dryden's definition of 'wit' as the articulation of fantastical imagery and elevated conversation by positing instead that it denotes 'sence that might be understood with ease'. This understanding of wit was practiced by the 'Ancients' when plotting their own plays. Whilst an obvious jibe at the complex action of heroic plays represented by *The Conquest of Granada*, the satire cleverly dispossesses Dryden of his own self-fashioned classical heritage, declaring that his 'new way of wit' (l.9) perverts the traditional values of his classical predecessors. Moreover, rather than contributing to the overall refinement of poetic wit, Dryden has in fact obfuscated its meaning; his over-reliance on rhymed verse and dramatic spectacle not only prevents true wit from being discerned but also corrupts the very mind of the poet, for 'Men lose their wits in wond'ring where it lyes' (l.10). This is contrasted by Buckingham's advocacy of 'Reason' and a 'year of Prose and Sense' (ll.18-20). The epilogue thus addresses both the stage play and the 1672 printed playtext, incorporating the same critical vocabulary used by Dryden to re-define key terms, and so enabling the court to regain control over a highly contested poetic language, demonstrating how framing texts could work intertextually as a mode of literary debate. Its satirical nature therefore performs a specific function: to undermine Dryden's attempts to present himself as the period's leading literary authority.

Crucially, it was this employment of framing text(s) that seemingly influenced the practice of composing satirical prologues/epilogues to engage with wider dramatic issues. Emerging from the rising tensions between the amateur court poets and the swelling class of professional authors, Buckingham's epilogue sought to maintain aristocratic hegemony over England's literary landscape. However, it becomes apparent that this satirical strategy was hijacked by the town professionals themselves to combat and censure the increasingly hostile London playhouses and, moreover, those Restoration courtiers gathered in its pits. This phenomenon has been observed by Paul McCallum, who states that playwrights frequently turned to ridicule to challenge the assumed authority of London's playgoers. Noting how the pit contained those 'who passed for the London intelligentsia, gentleman of wit and fashion,

members of the Inns of Court, amateur versifiers and critics', McCallum posits their familiarity with London's literary world allowed them to 'exercise the prerogative of connoisseurs and to pose a direct and immediate challenge to the prerogative of the professional poet'.⁴⁹⁸ This prerogative, McCallum argues, would be 'undone by a shrewd cozening scheme enacted in prologues and epilogues'; this involved the initial depiction of the pit as comprising the quintessential London gentlemen – including praising for their decadent and sexual lifestyle – before changing rhetoric and censuring those behaviours previously indulged, 'leaving your rivals exposed, ridiculous universally scorned and [...] with no serious claims upon the literary authority that by rights is yours alone'.⁴⁹⁹ Like the epilogue to *The Rehearsal*, their satirical energy was directed more towards enforcing certain literary principles. They show concern for how prevailing cultural practices inhibit the overall progression of English drama, and in the process call into question the role and nature of the literary critic. In doing so, such texts were actively aiming to reshape English literary culture.

All these notions are displayed in Otway's prologue to *The Orphan* (1680), which addresses the growing disillusion towards Restoration patronage systems. That Otway was directing his frustration towards the court is supported by a satire he composed around the same time titled *A Poets Complaint of his Muse* (1680), in which he not only retaliated against his literary enemies at court, but in doing so addressed specifically the attack made upon him in 'A Session of the Poets': 'Next him appear'd that blund'ring Sot,/Who a late *Session of the Poets* wrote./Nature has mark'd him for a heavy Fool'.⁵⁰⁰ These sentiments can be felt in *The Orphan's* prologue, which presents itself as a work of serious introspection as it immediately addresses the aristocratic dignitaries gathered in the pit: 'To you, Great Judges in this Writing Age,/The Sons of Wit, and Patrons of the Stage' (ll.1-2).⁵⁰¹ Assuming a rhetoric of humility, Otway transforms the performance space into an exclusive realm of critical discourse between the stage and pit comprising those 'Great Judges' to reflect on this 'Writing Age'. The prologues' spoken sycophancy encourages the polite exchange of ideas between equally educated and witty individuals, converting the playhouse into an oral forum of cultivated conversation. However, the sustainability of this elevated sphere is compromised by the actions of the court:

⁴⁹⁸ Paul McCallum, 'Cozening the Pit: Prologues, Epilogues, and Poetic Authority in Restoration England', in *Prologues, Epilogues, Curtain-Raisers, and Afterpieces: the rest of the eighteenth-century London stage*, eds. Daniel Ennis & Judith Slagle (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), pp.33-70, p.34.

⁴⁹⁹ McCallum, 'Cozening the Pit', p.35.

⁵⁰⁰ *The complete works of Thomas Otway* iii, ed. Summers, Montague (London: Nonesuch Press, 1926), p.180-181.

⁵⁰¹ Danchin, *ii*, p.224.

The Author sends to beg you would be kind,
And spare those many faults you need must find,
You to whom Wit a Common Foe is grown,
The think ye scorn, and publickly disown' (ll.7-10).

The lines reiterate the frustrations expressed in Dryden's preface to *Marriage A-La-Mode* (1676) towards those patrons who fail in their cultural duty to nurture writers, preferring instead to 'scorn' new plays for 'those many faults you need must find'. In a more stinging remark, Otway declares 'You to whom Wit a Common Foe is grown', censuring the court's neglect towards the literary merit emanating from the town, wherein true 'wit' is now perceived to lay. They are also criticised for labouring to 'publickly disown' these poets, and so exceed the socio-cultural boundaries appropriate for a literary patron by seeking to influence a play's reputation via public ridicule: 'Satyr's the effect of Poetries disease;/Which, sick of a lew'd Age, she vents for Ease,/But now her only strife should be to please' (ll.21-3). These diseased utterances at once diminish the court's poetic quality and breaks the code of gentlemanly conduct required to participate in the prologue's discursive medium. The satire thus works to lure the pit into its performance space before exposing their social and literary ineptitude, rendering them unfit judges of literature and leaving the playwright with sole dominion over the stage. Otway utilises the prologue to re-imagine the nature of the literary critic by placing the responsibility for safeguarding English drama with the professional poet and confining the court wits to the role of benefactors. This shift is enacted on stage as the prologue urges the pit to 'receive him as his Friends;/Embrace the blessings which he Recommends' (ll.33-4).

While Otway's satire works more subtly, the critical condemnations of John Crowne's epilogue to *The Destruction of Jerusalem* (1677) are evident. Of particular note is its allusion to a dispute between Crowne and Rochester. Rochester originally served as Crowne's benefactor, having in 1675 procured for the playwright a royal commission for his court masque *Calisto* – apparently at the expense of Dryden.⁵⁰² Unfortunately, by the time *Jerusalem* was staged at the Duke's Theatre, Crowne would experience Rochester's notoriously fickle patronage and eventual contempt. A possible cause for this was perhaps Crowne's apparent clash with Rochester's recently composed *An Allusion to Horace*: not only had he backed Dryden in the printed edition of *Calisto*, his play *Jerusalem* also utilised the heroic genre, both of which had been satirised in Rochester's poem. The epilogue may thus be reacting to the 'Allusion': 'First of all you Wits, who for some secret Crime,/Have taken up a pique against poor Rhime' (ll.7-8).⁵⁰³ Clearly aimed at Rochester's circle of 'Wits', the lines condemn their assault on professional

⁵⁰² See Dennis, *Works*, ii, p.404.

⁵⁰³ Danchin, *ii*, p.6.

playwrights and efforts to push their own poetical ideology onto the professional stage. The lines also evoke Buckingham's epilogue to *The Rehearsal*, creating a theoretical dialogue between the two texts enacted publicly via a form of dramatic presentation Restoration playgoers became increasingly familiar with. Crown then makes an overt reference to the closet drama *Sodom*, a sexually explicit satire on the royal court that has been variously attributed to Rochester – though no definitive attribution has been identified.⁵⁰⁴ However, the fact that Crown had been acquainted with Rochester during this period, combined with his earlier reference in the epilogue to Rochester's *Allusion*, seems to suggest he had good reason to suspect Rochester's authorship. Certainly, he goes on to intimate an implicit connection between Rochester and *Sodom*, and compares his own play with the closet drama: 'What made the Poet on *Jerus'lem* fall?/A Tale of *Sodom* wou'd ha' pleas'd you all' (ll.24-5). *Sodom* gained infamy for its lascivious portrayal of Charles' court, and was itself the subject of a satire by Oldham: 'Hast thou of late embrac'd some Succubus,/And us'd the lewd Familiar for a Muse?' (ll.5-6).⁵⁰⁵ The manuscript date of Oldham's verse coincides with the publication of *Jerusalem*, indicating the play was circulating by 1677. Taking advantage of the occasional and performative nature of framing texts, then, Crowne seizes *Sodom* from the world of London manuscripts and launches it into the wider public sphere, drawing on its obscene reputation and juxtaposing it with the virtue of his own heroic play in order to diminish Rochester's status as a leading poet and patron of the arts.

Crowne's epilogue also foreshadows how playwrights began incorporating wider national anxieties into their satirical framing texts by addressing religious 'Fanaticks' (l.15). This strategy became increasingly prominent in the following years of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis. Indeed, McCallum notes how these twin emergencies provided an opportunity for playwrights 'to extend and compound their cheat, and to portray the Gallants of the Pit as unfit for meaningful action beyond as well as within the theatres walls'.⁵⁰⁶ This can be seen in Nathaniel Lee's prologue to *Theodosius* (1680). Alongside its disgust at the corruption pervading through England's political systems, the text also shows dismay towards London's literary scene, immediately depicting the stifling conditions poets face: 'Wit long opprest, and fill'd at last with rage,/Thus in a sullen mood rebukes the Age' (ll.1-2).⁵⁰⁷ The prologue presents itself as a product of the prevailing political climate and reflects on its own satirical nature, which develops out of concerns that 'Wit' is being 'opprest' due to declining ethical standards within wider spheres of public affairs. Certainly, the prologue attacks 'ambitious States-men' for their

⁵⁰⁴ For an analysis of *Sodom*'s authorship see Nicholas Nace, 'The Author of *Sodom* among the Smithfield Muses', *The Review of English studies*, 68 (2017), 296-321

⁵⁰⁵ Brooks, *The Poems of John Oldham*, p.341.

⁵⁰⁶ McCallum, 'Cozening the Pit', p.55.

⁵⁰⁷ Danchin, *ii*, p.254.

own self-interests, 'Who in private Chests whole Nations drain' (ll.7-8). Likewise, lawyers are described as 'Swarming [...] thro' the *Strand* like Bees,/They buz at *Westminster*, and lye for Fees' (ll.15-16). The prologue then falls upon the dissenting sects: 'The godly too their ways of getting have;/But none so much as your Phanatick Knave' (ll.18-19). Each group is censured for their duplicity and selfish ambitiousness, qualities that Lee cleverly transposes onto the wits and literary patrons gathered in London's theatres. Arriving at the realm of English letters, Lee states how professional playwrights have been most egregiously treated:

'On Poets only no kind Star e're smil'd [...]
Therefore he warns his Brothers of the Stage
To write no more to an ingrateful age' (ll.31-34).

Enacting this on stage, the prologue enables the pit to see themselves reflected in the immoral actions of those public figures; just as they weaken the wider political and financial stability of the nation, so too has the pit degraded England's literary integrity, leaving playwrights devoid of creative and financial support and forced to withdraw from this 'ingrateful age'. Consequently, Lee implores his 'Brothers of the Stage' to 'in Lampoons excell' (l.38), demonstrating how playwrights deliberately employed satirical framing texts to challenge the literary prerogative of the court. By incorporating all these elements into the performance space, Lee conflates the deterioration of English theatres with the national unrest generated by the Exclusion Crisis, and in the processes reimagines his satirical prologue as fulfilling an essential moral and national duty by censuring those corrupt individuals, exclaiming how such works aim to 'traduce the great,/Grow impudent, and rail against the State' (ll.39-40). Through careful introspection of its own form and function, Lee's text aims to foster new kinds of satirical writings for the stage, highlighting again how Restoration verse satire developed out of its own self-reflectiveness.

Allusion as satire: the literary criticisms of *Mac Flecknoe*

'In the English I remember none, which are mix'd with Prose, as *Varro's* were:
But of the same kind is [...] (if it be not too vain, to mention any thing of my
own) the Poems of *Absalom* and *Mac Fleckno* [sic]'.⁵⁰⁸

In *Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693) Dryden characterises his infamous desolation of Shadwell as belonging to the Varronian tradition of satirical writing.

⁵⁰⁸ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.48

Placing it alongside the works of Tassoni and Boileau – ‘who have left us the best Examples of this way’ – he admired the style for its deployment of ‘Heroique Verse’, ‘stately’ words, ‘smooth’ numbers, and the inversion of its own subject matter through epic language, writing for example of Boileau that ‘His Subject is Trivial, but his Verse is Noble’.⁵⁰⁹ It was this latter negotiation that Ulrich Broich claims was central to Dryden’s understanding of the mock-heroic genre: ‘what is primary for Dryden, in the mixture of the heroic and the satirical, is that the low subject-matter which is to be satirised must be elevated by the heroic couplets and epic diction’.⁵¹⁰ Shadwell’s farcical coronation throughout a kingdom of poetic ‘Dullness’, articulated through an unmistakably high-Virgilian style, thus epitomised what was for Dryden the ideal satiric mode: ‘This, I think [...] to be the most Beautiful, and most Noble kind of Satire. Here is the Majesty of the Heroique, finely mix’d with the Venom of the other’.⁵¹¹ He therefore distinguishes *Mac Flecknoe* (perhaps somewhat problematically) from the plethora of vitriolic lampoons composed during the same period. This idea is touched upon by Claude Rawson, who notes how Dryden’s use of the mock-heroic ‘runs against the implication that satire, which deals with low and unedifying matter, is antithetical to epic, and also against the tendency of satirists’.⁵¹² Signifying a more refined and ‘Nobel kind’ of verse satire, Dryden thus turned to the mock-heroic to not only continue his dramatic discourse with Shadwell, but also as an ideological weapon in his attempts to re-create English literary culture, subverting Shadwell’s claims to authority and, by proxy, that of the Restoration court itself.

The ability of the mock-heroic to function as a vehicle for critical inquiry was aided by a developing Virgilian style during the seventeenth-century, which, as Raman Selden explains, would be ‘perfected in Dryden’s marmoreal couplets’ and which saw an ‘ironized Virgilian heroic’ emerge as a distinct form of mock-heroic.⁵¹³ This ironically charged idiom profoundly influenced how writers utilised verse satire, with Ronald Paulson arguing that ‘during the Augustan period English practice transformed irony from a strictly rhetorical device to a vehicle of psychological and cognitive meaning’.⁵¹⁴ This concept underpins Dryden’s use of *Mac Flecknoe*, which not only works as a devastatingly comical censure of Shadwell’s dramatic assertions, but whose satirical aesthetic provided a new medium through which to redefine contemporary literary values and theories. One way Dryden achieves this is to deliberately

⁵⁰⁹ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.82-3

⁵¹⁰ Ulrich Broich, *The Eighteenth-Century Mock-Heroic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990), p106.

⁵¹¹ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.84

⁵¹² Claude Rawson, ‘Mock-Heroic and English Poetry’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*, ed. Catherine Bates (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.167-192, p.175.

⁵¹³ Selden, *English Verse Satire*, p.104-5.

⁵¹⁴ Ronald Paulson, *The fictions of satire* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1967), p.97.

encompass the emergent critical vocabulary used to convey competing ideologies. Certainly, Ian Jack observes how ‘the words ‘wit’, ‘sense’, ‘art’, ‘nature’, ‘nonsense’, ‘tautology’, and ‘dullness’, which had been the current coin of Dryden’s prolonged critical warfare with Shadwell, sound through the poem like a fanfare’.⁵¹⁵ Re-appropriating the Virgilian heroic, Dryden plays out this critical revaluation through a bizarre ritual of succession, with Shadwell re-cast as Richard Flecknoe’s heir to a squalid literary kingdom: ‘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’ (ll.115-7).⁵¹⁶ Elements of the epic and the satirical converge within an intertextual and discursive space, and it is here that Dryden transforms the ironically charged heroic couplet into a theoretical mode of discourse capable of attributing new meanings to a highly disputed poetic language.

Dryden’s resort to satire, and specifically his employment of Virgilian heroics, may also have been a response to the wider social and literary climate he experienced during the 1670s. In his dedication to *Aureng-Zebe* (1675) addressed to Mulgrave, Dryden expresses his disenchantment with the current Restoration regime, no doubt fuelled by his inability to secure patronage from the court and the regular abuse he suffered from its members: ‘The times of *Virgil* please me better, because he had *Augustus* for his Patron’ he declares before criticising the court wits directly, ‘the nauseousness of such Company is enough to disgust a reasonable Man’.⁵¹⁷ Evoking Rome to judge the present, his longing for the Augustan ideal here is quite measured, and contrasts sharply with the failed efforts to establish Charles II as a new Augustus. This view is reiterated in the Augustan imagery used in *Mac Flecknoe* that links ‘Shadwell’s coronation through the town’ (l.95) with the King’s own 1661 ceremonial passage through London. Here we are told that ‘Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogilby there lay’ (l.102). In referencing Ogilby, Dryden recalls the series of triumphant arches erected for the royal procession, described vividly in John Ogilby’s *The relation of His Majestie’s entertainment* (1661), and which are alluded to elsewhere in *Mac Flecknoe* (l.27; ll.38-40). Each arch was adorned with quotations and pictures taken largely from Virgil in a clear attempt to parallel classical Rome with Restoration London.⁵¹⁸ Dryden’s satire, however, redeploys and subsumes this classical imagery through its own Virgilian heroics, subverting the ideology of the Resorted court and exposing the reality of England’s literary degradation. Of Shadwell’s procession we are told that:

⁵¹⁵ Ian Jack, *Augustan Satire: Intention and Idiom in English Poetry 1660-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), p.44.

⁵¹⁶ Dryden, *Works ii*, p.54-62.

⁵¹⁷ Dryden, *Works xii*, pp.150-155.

⁵¹⁸ See Howard Erskine-Hill, *The Augustan Idea in English Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), pp.216-9

No Persian carpets spread th' imperial way,
 But scattered limbs of mangled poets lay:
 From dusty shops neglected authors come
 [...]
 At his right hand side our young Ascanius sat,
 Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state (ll.98-109).

The satire works on multiple levels here as the reader is presented with various layers of allusion, firstly to Virgil's Rome and secondly to the royal court, the latter being portrayed as a world fallen from its former ideal. This all culminates in the farcical figures of Flecknoe and Shadwell, who become perversions of multiple historical moments and people – a false Augustus and Virgil, Aeneas and Ascanius, King and court poet, all simultaneously.

Furthermore, *Mac Flecknoe's* Roman allusions together with its Virgilian heroics can be seen as a direct response to the satirical writings of the court wits themselves, especially Rochester and Buckingham. Indeed, Matthew Augustine proposes that 'not only was Dryden stung into writing *Mac Flecknoe* in part by the insults he suffered at the hands of these writers, he also retooled much of the arsenal which had been aimed at him for the purposes of his own literary offensive'.⁵¹⁹ *Mac Flecknoe* therefore works in an acutely intertextual manner, as its satirical form consciously embodies the criticisms Dryden was subjected to, indicating how verse satire developed reciprocally with the literary theory it encompasses. This becomes apparent when we consider Buckingham's censuring of Dryden's use of the heroic couplet in *The Rehearsal*. Having parodied Dryden's application of rhymed drama through the dim-witted Bays, the inept playwright is eventually forced into composing satire against his own players and the town itself: 'I will both Lampoon and print 'em too [...] Since they will not admit of my Plays, they shall know what a Satyrist I am' (v.iii, ll.25-7). Consequently, as Paulson notes, 'it was Buckingham [...] who drew Dryden's attention to the satiric utility of his couplet, at the same time that he stimulated Dryden to respond in kind'.⁵²⁰ Additionally, Howard Erskine-Hill suggests that *Mac Flecknoe* was informed by a series of Horatian satires, including Marvell's 'Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome' and, more significantly, Rochester's *Allusion to Horace*, both of which were circulating in manuscript: 'for Dryden himself, plotting in the mid-1670s a satire on the poet Shadwell, any of these poems may have been a model'.⁵²¹ Dryden would

⁵¹⁹ Matthew Augustine, 'The Invention of Dryden as Satirist', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. Paddy Bullard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.161-177, p.168.

⁵²⁰ Paulson, 'Dryden and the Energies of Satire', p.45.

⁵²¹ Erskine-Hill, 'Mac Flecknoe, Heir of Augustus', in *John Dryden: Tercentenary Essays*, eds. Paul Hammond & David Hopkins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp.15-32, pp.21-22

allude to a passage in Marvell's satire that describes Flecknoe's lute playing – 'My warbling lute' (l.35) – and even bestows on him the title of Catholic priest – 'As king by office, and as priest by trade' (l.119). These literary allusions imply that Dryden composed his poem for a specific audience within London's manuscript community, as their satirical effects depend on audience's familiarity with Marvell's work.

The primary force behind *Mac Flecknoe*'s Horatian inflections, however, most likely stemmed from what Dryden deemed a serious misappropriation of classical values and practices, exemplified by Rochester's *Allusion* as well as Shadwell's prefatory essays, and which spanned various mediums. Certainly, while Rochester employed the Horatian genre as a vehicle to express his own literary values via networks of manuscript transmission, Shadwell had in his printed works repeatedly punctuated his arguments with Horatian dicta to validate his own dramatic theories (see Chapter 2). Consequently, Paul Hammond has argued that Dryden's employment of Roman allusion aimed specifically to undermine Shadwell's classical authority: 'Dryden's outrage with this unjustified claim finds expression in the Augustan imagery of *Mac Flecknoe*, which dresses Shadwell in precisely those robes which he had assumed, so that readers might see how uneasily they fit'.⁵²² Allusion in the poem thus functions as a satirical device that heightens its critical force. However, it also suggests the form of *Mac Flecknoe* itself was an oblique challenge to those modes of discourse favoured by the court wits, and in particular confronts Rochester's appropriation of Horace as a medium of literary criticism. This idea is reinforced by the fact that Dryden chose to circulate his poem scribally, utilising the wit's own preferred format of the manuscript lampoon.⁵²³ Seizing the literary apparatuses the court employed to regulate London's poetical standards, then, Dryden's Roman imagery responds to the classicism of Rochester's *Allusion*, at once rejecting the Earl's efforts to define the literary achievements and values of Restoration London whilst simultaneously fashioning a more definitive mode of literary criticism. Entering the scribal arena of verse satire as conducted by the court wits, *Mac Flecknoe* not only continues Dryden's dramatic debate with Shadwell but also encompasses broader literary disputes and ideologies, demonstrating the extent to which satire was viewed as the preeminent medium to engage in literary theory.

Allusion in *Mac Flecknoe* therefore serves a dual purpose, on one level acting as a satirical device whilst on another level facilitating new modes of theoretical discourse. Indeed, closer analysis of *Mac Flecknoe*'s language reveals how Dryden's satirical critiques of Shadwell are at their most complex when they are expressed through the prism of allusion. As previously

⁵²² Paul Hammond, 'Flecknoe and *Mac Flecknoe*', *Essays in Criticism*, 35 (1985), 315-29, p.316.

⁵²³ See Hammond, 'The Circulation of Dryden's Poetry', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 86 (1992), 379-409

noted, Dryden called upon Rome and elements of the epic to subvert the beliefs and controlling mechanisms of the court so as to redefine our understanding of modern cultural values. As part of this process, he also makes use of various literary and religious allusions that enhance the intellectual depth of his poem – helping to refine the satirical medium as a more sophisticated realm of ideas. While religious allusion chiefly takes the form of biblical iconography, the satire frequently refers to Shadwell’s own critical writings, and engages particularly with the highly disputed vocabulary of their prefatory exchanges, demonstrating how *Mac Flecknoe* is concerned with the Restoration preoccupation of advancing our understanding of key poetical terms. These elements converge in the poem’s satirical rendering of Shadwell as an author of multiple origins, being at once the heir of Richard Flecknoe, the son of Aeneas (Ascanius), as well as a Christ-like (or perhaps an anti-Christ-like) figure. Moreover, while each of these allusions functions independently to achieve a specific effect, they also simultaneously inform and interact with each other. This subsequently generates a unique and intricately layered discursive space, as Dryden employs a complex intertextual matrix of classical, biblical, and literary allusions that transforms *Mac Flecknoe* into a multi-faceted site of literary criticism.

Shadwell’s impossible number of lineages is itself a ridicule of his self-professed status as the heir of Ben Jonson. This becomes coupled with his repeated insistence of the universality of Jonsonian comedy, particularly his depiction of ‘humor’ characters and the ability to mimetically portray reality on stage. For Shadwell, these qualities made Jonson’s work an eternal model for emulation, and whose creative practices and values are both defined and validated through the period’s emergent critical language. Much of *Mac Flecknoe*’s satirical thrust is subsequently directed towards the conceptualisation and application of these terms, as Dryden attempts to render the theories underpinning Shadwell’s dramatic philosophy as illogical and absurd. This is apparent at the poem’s outset: ‘All human things are subject to decay,/And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey’ (ll.1-2). The inevitability of ‘decay’ here echoes the ideas expressed in Dryden’s *Essay on Dramatick Poesy*, that cultural development is a perpetual phenomenon that results in a constantly evolving set of values and ideals. By contrast, in his preface to *The Humourist*, Shadwell had declared Jonson an author whom ‘all Dramatick Poets ought to imitate’, irrespective of their immediate cultural conditions.⁵²⁴ The line therefore act as a ridicule of Shadwell’s apparent ignorance of this historical difference.

Furthermore, the opening couplet at first gives the impression of a true heroic text with its grandiose subjects of dominion and demise, themes that become inextricably bound to the world of letters, as readers are told that it is ‘In prose and verse’ that Flecknoe – who is likened to ‘Augustus young’ – did rule ‘without dispute’ (ll.3-5). Again we see the employment of Roman

⁵²⁴ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.11.

allegory as Dryden maps the classical world onto contemporary London to discuss the current state and advancement of English poetics. However, any hint of the heroic is immediately undercut and the true irony of the Virgilian verse is revealed upon learning that Flecknoe's authority exists 'Through all the realms of nonsense, absolute' (l.6). Shadwell stands to inherit an empire of 'nonsense', a literary domain that lacks any disenable meaning or value. Critically, Dryden alludes again here to the preface to *The Humourist*, in which Shadwell used the term 'Nonsense' to discuss the capacity for comedy to instil moral change through its portrayal of human vice(s). Proclaiming how 'Men of Wit and Honour, and the best Judges (and such as cannot be touch'd by Satyr) are extreemly delighted' with this comedic style, he censures the 'rabble' of Restoration theatres for preferring instead the 'extravagant and unnatural actions, the trifles, and fripperies of a Play, or the trappings and ornaments of Nonsense'.⁵²⁵ It becomes apparent that the literary world of *Mac Flecknoe* is founded on those standards and values which Shadwell here rejects, those 'unnatural actions' and 'ornaments of Nonsense' ironically being transposed into the ideals and beliefs that govern the kingdom of dullness, as Dryden traps Shadwell in an absurd universe comprised of his own critical drivel. The literary allusions to Shadwell's *The Humourist* thus forms part of the poem's overall satirical strategy, which seeks to turn his own dramatic theory against him, as Dryden cleverly casts Shadwell as the victim of his own critical assertions, having indeed been 'touch'd by Satyr' in a way that separates him from the 'Men of Wit and Honour' Shadwell himself describes as the 'best judges' of literature.

Mac Flecknoe continues to allude to Shadwell's critical works during the process by which Flecknoe decides to 'settle the succession of the state' (l.10), with the language employed by 'This aged prince' (l.6) echoing the theoretical lexis Shadwell used to support the notion that the faculty of 'judgement' takes precedent over 'wit'. Whereas Dryden advocated poetic 'wit' and fancy as a means of elevating the language and spectacle of dramatic scenes, Shadwell theorised that 'nature [...] subjected wit to the government of judgment, which is the noblest faculty of the mind'.⁵²⁶ This estimation of judgement was vital to the way dramatists were able to more accurately depict human behaviours on stage and produce a more truthful imitation of reality – both of which were fundamental in generating the types of 'humour' characters as practiced by Jonson. Dryden would engage with these ideas in the following lines, as we are told that Flecknoe:

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

⁵²⁵ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.185.

⁵²⁶ Shadwell, *Works i*, pp.187-88.

Should only rule, who most resembles me:
Shadwell alone my perfect image bears (ll.11-15).

While the word 'immortal' provides a further critique of Shadwell's prescription to a universal set of literary principles, the main satirical energy is directed at the significance he places on achieving mimetic representations of nature (demonstrated through the phrases 'nature pleads', 'resembles', and 'perfect image'), which is here depicted as the antithesis of 'wit'. Dryden's use of 'perfect image' is particularly shrewd, as Shadwell had in his preface to *The Sullen Lovers* praised Jonson for his ability to create 'perfect Representations of Humane Life'.⁵²⁷ However, rather than re-creating truthful depictions of humanity, Shadwell's works only capture the 'perfect image' of Flecknoe, as Dryden parodies his theory of mimesis through Flecknoe's insistence that the heir to the Kingdom of poetic dullness is he 'who most resembles me', an absurd monarchy from whom Shadwell is only able to learn 'fruitless industry' (l.148). The intertextual allusions to Shadwell's preface therefore achieves two things: first, it allows Dryden to subsume his ideas into the very fabric of *Mac Flecknoe's* satirical universe in a way that strips Shadwell's works of all meaning; and secondly, it enables Dryden to dislocate Shadwell both comically and incisively from his own self-fashioned Jonsonian lineage.

As well as encompassing the theoretical language of Shadwell's critical writing, the passage is also loaded with literary allusions to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Dryden was an admirer of Milton and, as Aubrey testifies, was granted permission to adapt his epic poem into a dramatic opera, noting how Dryden 'went to him to have leave to putt his Paradise-lost into a Drama in Rhythme: Mr Milton recieved him civilly, and told him he would give him leave to tagge his verses'.⁵²⁸ By 'tagge' Aubrey refers to Dryden's transposition of Milton's blank verse into that more noble format, the heroic couplet.⁵²⁹ However, while *The State of Innocence* was composed around 1673-4 it was never staged (perhaps due to its hasty composition and technical demands), and instead circulated widely in manuscript before being published in 1677. Marianne Thormählen has argued the failure surrounding the opera's production was a contributing factor to Rochester's dismissal of Dryden as a recipient of his patronage in the mid 1670s.⁵³⁰ While the work is regarded as one of Dryden's lesser achievements, his endeavour to convert Milton's poem into a rhymed play certainly contradicts the values held by the court wits concerning the use of rhyme in English drama, a view articulated in Rochester's *Allusion to*

⁵²⁷ Shadwell, *Works i*, p.11.

⁵²⁸ Aubrey, *lives i*, p.663.

⁵²⁹ On Dryden's creative engagement with *Paradise Lost* see Dustin Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the eighteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.144-6.

⁵³⁰ Marianne Thormählen, *Rochester: the Poems in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.318.

Horace. Nevertheless, it is in the preface to the 1677 edition where Dryden lauds *Paradise Lost* as ‘one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime poems which either this age or nation had produced’, qualities that are desperately absent in Shadwell’s writings as Miltonic imagery pervades throughout the above lines, heightening the critical intensity of the satire.⁵³¹

Indeed, while Shadwell is elected by Flecknoe to ‘wage immortal war with wit’, Satan is resolved ‘To wage by force or guile eternal war’ (i, l.121) against God. There is also a mirroring of characters between Shadwell and Sin that clearly satirises Shadwell’s earlier praise for Jonsonian comedy, for just as Shadwell is the ‘perfect image’ of Flecknoe, so too is Sin the ‘perfect image’ of Satan – ‘Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing’ (ii, l.764). Such parallels cast Shadwell as an immoral being whose plays are both unnatural and devoid of artistic virtue. This idea is compounded moments later and blends with Dryden’s critique towards his theory of mimetic depiction in the lines ‘The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,/But Shadwell never deviates into sense’ (ll.19-20). This links back to the poem’s earlier use of ‘Nonsense’, for despite Shadwell’s insistence on the need to accurately observe and ‘judge’ reality, he ‘never deviates into sense’. Consequently, both his kingdom and his plays appear to exist outside the natural world, the latter being predicated on the false images of a nonsensical reality that have been meaninglessly fabricated by an irrational judicious faculty. This line of attack is subsequently intensified and reverberated through the Miltonic allusions, which renders Shadwell’s dramatic imitations as perverse corruptions of nature. Dryden thus establishes here a multi-layered locus of intertextual allusion, first to Shadwell’s own theoretical language and secondly to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, and while both help sharpen the satirical criticisms of *Mac Flecknoe* on an individual level, they also simultaneously interact with each other to generate a more sophisticated critical lens through which to subvert Shadwell’s dramatic practices.

There is also a third mirroring of characters here that links Shadwell with Milton’s Christ, who is the ‘image’ of God the Father: ‘The radiant image of his glory sat’ (iii, l.63). Dryden would also invoke this association by drawing on Biblical imagery to describe Shadwell’s succession to the kingdom of dullness by declaring ‘Ev’n I, a dunce of more renown than they,/Was sent before but to prepare thy way’ (ll.31-2), a reference to Matthew iii, wherein Christ follows John the Baptist: ‘The voice of the one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord’.⁵³² However, while *Mac Flecknoe* encourages the reader to associate Shadwell with Satan and Sin, it is clear Shadwell’s position in relation to Christ is as his antithesis, an anti-Christ, a role Dryden successfully casts him in by employing a lexical field that simultaneously

⁵³¹ Dryden, *Works* xii, p.86.

⁵³² *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, Authorised King James Version (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Matthew 3.3.

intersects the critical vocabulary and ideologies underpinning key Restoration literary concepts. This is displayed in the lines:

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 (ll.21-4).

The contrast between Shadwell and Christ is shown through the imagery of light and darkness; whereas Milton describes Christ as 'radiant', Shadwell emits only a 'genuine night'. Moreover, Dryden utilises this same imagery as a means of defining Restoration understandings of the origin and creative application of 'wit', as we are told how 'Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,/Strike through and make a lucid interval'. Encompassing the theoretical concepts disputed in his early prefatory exchanges with Shadwell, Dryden engages here with the competing values of 'wit' and 'judgement' in dramatic composition. As John West notes, 'Dryden ignores judgment almost altogether in his critical essays of the early 1670s in which the fancy is crucial in freeing up a visionary sense of the poet prophetically gifted with privileged abilities to see farther into hidden realms'.⁵³³ The phrase 'beams of wit' articulates this notion, implying that poetic fancy emanates from an otherworldly sphere and is bestowed upon select poets – 'other souls', from who Shadwell is comically excluded – allowing them to perceive and convey complex ideas and truths. 'Lucid interval' may also express Dryden's belief that it was the unbound imagination of the poet that elevated both the grandeur and pleasantness of the English language. Literary and biblical allusions thus converge to form a new intertextual and discursive space that heightens the theoretical critiques of *Mac Flecknoe*, enabling Dryden to redefine the meanings and values of a highly contested Restoration poetic language and transforming the satire into a multi-layered site of literary criticism.

The amalgamation of multiple intertextual allusions subsequently forms a significant component of *Mac Flecknoe's* satirical aesthetic, one which Dryden employed at key moments to enhance the poem's capacity to function as a theoretical mode of discourse. This can be seen during Shadwell's mock-coronation, wherein:

The hoary prince in majesty appeared,
High on a throne of his own labours reared.
At his right hand our young Ascanius sate,
Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state (ll.106-9).

⁵³³ John West, *Dryden and Enthusiasm: Literature, Religion, and Politics in Restoration England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.21.

In his analysis of *Mac Flecknoe*, Selden observes this particular passage ‘is not only complex in its allusions, but also illustrates three modes of epic reference’, which he identifies as Miltonic, biblical, and classical – ‘the subsequent allusion to Aeneas’ son Ascanius is in part an imitation of lines which appear later in Dryden’s *Aeneid*’.⁵³⁴ The Miltonic reference occurs in the line ‘High on a throne of his own labours reared’, which echoes Satan in Pandemonium sitting ‘High on a throne of royal state’ (ii, l.1). Trusting his audiences’ ability to draw parallels between Shadwell’s procession through his dilapidated kingdom and the Restoration court, Dryden employs the Miltonic allusion to present both as existing in a fallen state, consumed by sin and anarchy. Additionally, Kirk Combe identifies a fourth layer of allusion here contained in the same line, which he argues refers to Horace’s satire i.x, wherein Horace’s treatment of the infamous scribbler Cassius appears to mirror Dryden’s depiction of Shadwell.⁵³⁵ According to Horace:

Etrusci
 quale fuit Cassi rapido ferventius amni
 ingenium, capsis quem fama est esse librisque
 ambustum propriis.

[Such was the gift of Tuscan Cassius, more headstrong than a rushing river, whose own books and cases, so ’tis told us, made his funeral pile].⁵³⁶

Both Cassius and Shadwell are portrayed as inept scribblers sat atop a ‘throne’/‘pile’ forged of their own poetic drivel. Critically, this reference reinforces the satire’s earlier strategy to establish the literary kingdom of *Mac Flecknoe* as one governed by the meaningless values of Shadwell’s own writings, a notion reiterated here through the visual metaphor of a royal throne formed by Shadwell’s own ‘Labours’. This in turn demonstrates how the use of allusion acted as a controlling mechanism within Restoration verse satire, enabling Dryden to maintain a heightened level of literary criticism.

Combe gives further weight to this Horatian allusion by suggesting that in drawing on satire i.x, Dryden was actively engaging with Rochester’s *Allusion to Horace*, and questions whether *Mac Flecknoe* was in part ‘a rebut to *Allusion to Horace*, confuting Rochester’s

⁵³⁴ Selden, *English Verse*, p.117.

⁵³⁵ Kirk Combe, ‘Dryden’s allusion to Horace in *Mac Flecknoe*’, *Notes and Queries*, 34 (1987), 330-1, p.300.

⁵³⁶ Horace, p.120-1

favourable judgement of Shadwell expressed in that poem?'⁵³⁷ While there are obvious social overtones to this notion, as previously discussed, the sprinkling of Horatian inflections throughout *Mac Flecknoe* was primarily a reaction towards the misappropriation of classicism by the Restoration courtiers, and it is therefore more likely Dryden was evoking Horace to not only undermine Rochester's imitation of satire i.x at a time when Dryden was publicly positioning himself as the true heir to a classical tradition, but also as a way of reclaiming control over the Horatian genre (an idea to be discussed more fully in chapter 5). Moreover, Dryden may have found the image of Horace's notorious scribbler a particularly useful vehicle to reflect on London's manuscript culture, specifically the production and employment of Restoration verse satire. Indeed, by drawing parallels between Cassius and Rochester (and, by implication, the court), Dryden charges the wits with inundating London's scribal networks with hastily composed, scurrilous verses that lack the critical acumen and lyrical finesse to properly define England's literary values and reputations. This subtle engagement with Restoration manuscripts leads Gavin to compare *Mac Flecknoe* with the 'sessions' satires, both of which 'try to represent poetic culture in something like its entirety: the courts of Apollo and Dullness offer a framework for thinking about a social group that exists only insofar as it is mediated through manuscript circulation'.⁵³⁸

We might therefore say that Dryden distinguishes *Mac Flecknoe* from other works of satire discussed in this chapter – from the 'sessions' and 'Julian' poems through to satirical prologues/epilogues – which he deemed as lesser, vitriolic, and more ephemeral kinds of lampoons. Certainly, through its employment of a high-Virgilian style and ironically charged heroic couplets, Dryden perceived his text as hailing a more elevated, refined, and noble form of verse satire. Yet, while this may certainly be true, by experimenting with the mock-heroic genre in this manner, we can see how *Mac Flecknoe* resonates in previously unobserved ways with the subgenres of satire previously identified in this chapter. Chiefly, that by integrating his theoretical disputes with Shadwell into the satirical aesthetic of his poem, Dryden's text forms part of the broader Restoration exercise of appropriating the satirical medium in new and artistically innovative ways to create new modes of literary discourse.

Dryden achieves this principally through the use of allusion, which throughout *Mac Flecknoe* serves a dual purpose, one ideological and the other aesthetical. On the one hand, it is used as a satirical device that seeks to subvert the theoretical language and concepts that underpin Shadwell's dramatic arguments, rendering him both ridiculous and devoid of artistic integrity. On the other hand, allusion functions as a critical lens that heightens the intellectual

⁵³⁷ Combe, 'Dryden's allusion to Horace in *Mac Flecknoe*', p.331.

⁵³⁸ Gavin, *The Invention of English Criticism*, p.58.

depth of the satire, as Dryden weaves a complex intertextual network of classical, religious, and literary images that sharpen his criticisms. As we have seen, while these allusions work on an individual level, they also simultaneously inform and interact with each other, creating an intricately layered discursive space that transforms *Mac Flecknoe* into a multi-faceted site of literary criticism.

In many ways, the key ideas running through this thesis thus far can be seen as culminating in *Mac Flecknoe*. Indeed, Dryden's text illustrates the way satire encompasses the emergent critical vocabulary underpinning Restoration literary theory established in the first two chapters. It also reveals the ideological and aesthetic motives that helped establish manuscript as the principle realm of literary debate, rather than the printed essays and prefaces examined in chapter 2; consequently, *Mac Flecknoe* embraces the new cultural purposes and poetical sensibilities Samuel Butler assigned to Restoration verse satire as discussed in chapter 3. As such, Dryden's text not only exemplifies the refinement of satire as a verse form, it also highlights how the satirical medium could function as an intellectual realm of literary ideas. Critically, however, *Mac Flecknoe* raises another key point: the role Horace played in Restoration satire, both as a contested symbol of literary authority and in helping define satire's true nature. Such issues will be addressed more fully in the final chapter, which now turns to the way authors debated the form and function of satire itself.

Chapter 5

'Then whence comes satire – is it Poetry?': debating Restoration satire

Ethics and aesthetics: Dryden's 'Discourse' on satire

As the previous chapter demonstrates, poets and playwrights of the Restoration frequently adopted and experimented with satire across a number of literary forms and genres in order to engage with an increasingly introspective and fractured literary culture – one that became preoccupied with defining, understanding, and regulating its own poetical standards and ideals. However, this in turn would give rise to a number of other questions and anxieties that would preoccupy poets and critics throughout the period. Indeed, that satire proved to possess a particular malleability and dexterousness in the multiplicity of ways writers appropriated it was eventually accompanied by a more sophisticated set of principles regarding its poetic style and critical function. The nature of satire subsequently came under greater scrutiny, with particular focus aimed at its lyrical quality, subject matter, moral duty, and classical heritage. At the same time, as more writers emanating from diverse social, political, and educational backgrounds began appropriating satire for their own purposes, concerns were raised over who should retain control of its uses. This debate over the critical control and aesthetic merits of satire was sharpened by the crystallization of London's literary factions during the 1670s, and was contested most vehemently between the band of court wits led by Rochester and Buckingham, and the Yorkist faction of poets headed by Dryden, Mulgrave, and Scrope – the latter having at this point firmly associated himself with Dryden. One of the most intriguing aspects of this debate is the manner in which it was conducted, as writers turned to verse satire itself to not only reflect on its own internal poetics, but to form theoretical dialogues via the exchange and dissemination of scribally produced manuscripts. This would produce a complex reciprocity that saw the refinement of Restoration verse satire develop out of the self-reflective arguments of its own form and function, whilst simultaneously enhancing the perception of the medium as a more discerning vehicle of intellectual inquiry. Furthermore, it becomes immediately apparent how many of these works share an indebtedness to Horace – especially his satires.

As shown in the first two chapters, Horace maintained a constant presence in the Restoration imagination; his *Ars Poetica* in particular was hugely influential, and was continually integrated into modern conceptions of literary criticism, providing both a code of practice as well as multiple poetical precepts that were emulated throughout the period. Crucially, his verse satires proved equally as seminal in the way Restoration writers and critics both thought about and conveyed theoretical concepts. In his comparison between early modern receptions of Horace and Juvenal, Charles Martindale proclaims that 'from the sixteenth

to the eighteenth centuries [...] Roman verse satire was regularly translated and imitated. During this period views of Horace and Juvenal were central to the definition of satire, the question of its proper character, and its justification'.⁵³⁹ Of course, Horace had in his own satire's critiqued his Roman precursor, Lucilius, for his satirical writing, and endeavoured to build on the foundations established by his predecessor by outlining a more progressive and elevated form of verse satire. To translate or assume a Horatian voice was to therefore at once promote the refinement of satire whilst also vindicating its use as a creative tool to perform literary criticism. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that Horatian satire came to play a key role in how the aristocratic wits and patrons of the Restoration court attempted to assert their hegemony over England's literary spheres. Sowerby reinforces this notion by noting how Horace was imitated by 'the unexpected person of Rochester, who in 'An Allusion to Horace' [...] takes upon himself the mantle of the poet-critic to represent the views of the court wits'.⁵⁴⁰ Likewise, considering Rochester's poem as marking a crisis point in the clash between the amateur court wits and the professional playwrights, Love views the *Allusion* as 'an attempt on behalf of the leading court patrons [...] to reassert their waning authority over matters of literary judgment'.⁵⁴¹ However, this authority would be challenged by Scrope's *In Defense of Satyr*, an imitation of Horace's satire i.iv that directly responds to Rochester's version of satire i.x. In its attempts to redefine Restoration satire's artistic values and cultural utility, the *Defense* on one level implicitly challenges the manner of Rochester's appropriation of Horace whilst explicitly calling into question his – and by proxy the court's – capacity to oversee the progression of English literature. Moreover, that both writers utilize the Horatian genre to realize their ideological aims highlights how satire became a highly contested mode of poetical discourse during the Restoration: to gain control of Horace was to gain control over the realm of English letters. These ideas and texts will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Our immediate attention now turns to Dryden's *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*. Prefaced to *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis* (1693), the *Discourse* has been described as 'the most important contemporary English discussion of formal verse satire', offering a lively study of the nature and ancient origins of satire whilst juxtaposing the writings of Juvenal, Horace, and Persius.⁵⁴² The longest of Dryden's critical essays, it is also his most

⁵³⁹ Charles Martindale, 'The Horatian and the Juvenalesque in English letters', in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire*, ed. Kirk Freudenburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.284-298, p.286.

⁵⁴⁰ Sowerby, 'Horatianism', p.259.

⁵⁴¹ Love, 'Shadwell, Rochester and the Crisis of Amateurism', *Thomas Shadwell Reconsider'd: Essays in Criticism*, 20 (1996), 119-134, p.122.

⁵⁴² Howard Weinbrot, *The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p.65.

idiosyncratic, often appearing uneven, digressive, and ambiguous. Robert Hume, however, considers the *Discourse's* excursiveness a rhetorical tactic designed to avoid formality and simulate gentlemanly conversation, thereby creating 'the illusion of a casualness which he felt was appropriate to a critical essay'.⁵⁴³ This was perhaps fitting given the work is dedicated to the Earl of Dorset, whom Dryden reminds us was the dedicatee of his earlier *Essay* (1668): 'I made my early Addresses to your Lordship, in my *Essay of Dramatick Poetry*; and therein bespoke you to the World'.⁵⁴⁴ While this at once helps set the neoclassic tone of intellectual inquiry amongst likeminded individuals, it also establishes a link between Dryden's two works, creating a continued theoretical and ideological narrative for readers in which the ideas expressed in the *Essay* are fully realized – with the benefit of retrospection – within the *Discourse*.

Conversely, Anne Cotterill, considers the digressive structure of the essay as constituting 'a deliberate strategy to guide the reader circuitously toward a highly unflattering and dangerous portrait of Dorset and William's court'.⁵⁴⁵ Certainly, Dryden's personal circumstances in 1693 had altered radically from the previous decades. His conversion to Catholicism under James II not only cost him his position as Poet Laureate under William III's new government, but also aligned him quite precariously with Jacobite sympathizers. Turning to translation, as Hammond argues, thus offered Dryden the 'opportunity for a different kind of commentary upon contemporary England from the outspoken forms which he had employed under Charles II, and which were no longer safe under William III'.⁵⁴⁶ All this can be seen in the highly charged political language used to define the ethical parameters of Juvenalian satire, wherein Dryden carefully invites audiences to draw parallels between the political climate of the 1690s and Juvenal's Rome. Juvenal, we are told, is justified in his satirical severity because 'His was an Age that deserv'd a more severe Chastisement', wherein 'Vices' were not only 'more gross and open', but are also 'encourag'd by the Example of a Tyrant; and more protected by his Authority'.⁵⁴⁷ The moral decay of ancient Rome is clearly resonant with contemporary England, particularly the notion that such widespread corruption emanates directly from 'the Example of a Tyrant' – a thinly veiled reference to the immoral and arbitrary rule of William's government. Dryden may also have in mind here the Licensing Act, renewed in 1685 and enforced with much greater

⁵⁴³ Hume, *Dryden's Criticism*, p.38-9.

⁵⁴⁴ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.4.

⁵⁴⁵ Anne Cotterill, "The Politics and Aesthetics of Digression: Dryden's "Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire"", *Studies in philology*, 91 (1994), 464-495, p.466.

⁵⁴⁶ Paul Hammond, *John Dryden: A literary life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p.153.

⁵⁴⁷ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.69.

stringency under William's rule.⁵⁴⁸ Noting how a tyrant is 'more protected by his Authority', he furtively accuses the government of abusing the Act to preserve the image of the monarchy. Turning to Juvenal thus provided Dryden a means off vicariously censuring the new regime in the stylistic manner his immediate cultural climate demanded.

The socio-political dynamics discussed here subsequently forms part of the *Discourse's* wider critical objective, which is to examine:

the Origine, the Antiquity, the Growth, the Change, and the
Compleatment of Satire among the *Romans*. To Describe, if not
Define, the Nature of that Poem, with it's several Qualifications
and Virtues.⁵⁴⁹

Concerned with the etymological and epistemological nature of verse satire, Dryden's analysis revolves around two fundamental theories: the aesthetic and artistic nature of satire; and its ethical and ideological uses. Underscoring this is the belief that both language and poetic form evolve concomitantly as cultures progress, a theoretical axiom found throughout Dryden's works, with Hume explaining that 'insofar as Dryden has any systematic idea of change, he relies on his old standby, refinement. As a society matures its language and literature grow more polished'.⁵⁵⁰ However, the present age has experienced a severe decline in the standards of satirical writing; reflecting back on the barrage of lampoons aimed at himself during the Restoration, Dryden laments how modern practices have degenerated into 'a multitude of Scriblers, who daily pester the World with their insufferable Stuff'.⁵⁵¹ Furthermore, such works appear devoid of any literary merit, exhibiting only 'a perpetual Dearth of Wit; a Barrenness of good Sense, and Entertainment'.⁵⁵² Lacking poetic imagination, perceptiveness, and the ability to please readers, satirical verses have become a transient and meaningless literary genre. There is thus an urgent need to re-define the poetical values and integrity of verse satire, with Ashley Marshall arguing that 'behind Dryden's exhaustive account of satire/*Satura* is a desire to make what had become in England a disreputable form of writing – personally vicious, vulgar, ephemeral – into a credible artistic mode'.⁵⁵³ Critically, many of the theories explored in the *Discourse* have their origins in the competing principles and ideologies debated in the satirical

⁵⁴⁸ See Raymond Astbury, 'The Renewal of the Licensing Act in 1693 and its Lapse in 1695', *Library*, 33 (1978), 296-322, p.298.

⁵⁴⁹ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.26.

⁵⁵⁰ Hume, *Dryden's Criticism*, p.88.

⁵⁵¹ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.8.

⁵⁵² Dryden, *Works iv*, p.60.

⁵⁵³ Ashley Marshall, 'Thinking about satire', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. Paddy Bullard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.475-92, p.477.

exchanges between the literary factions under Charles II. Indeed, the ideas and values employed by these works to define their own form and function recur frequently in Dryden's arguments, while his appraisal of Horace provides valuable insights into how Restoration verse satire developed into a more sophisticated and self-reflective tool for literary criticism. To map out the *Discourse's* examination of satire is to therefore trace the critical thinking and literary perceptions of earlier Restoration poets and critics.

It is also worth noting Dryden's premise that, despite the poor state of English satire, early modern audiences possess the ability to discern these literary deficiencies, granting them the autonomy to both judge and shape modern literary culture: 'The neglect of the Readers, will soon put an end to this sort of scribbling'.⁵⁵⁴ Dryden here shows an awareness of the way satirical writings were being read and internalised by readers, and hints at a new type of learned readership who were able to both appreciate satirical literature as a higher art form as well as use it for a variety of social, educational, and formal purposes. Additionally, it may also serve as a jibe towards the Restoration court wits, who employed verse satire as a means of asserting their own hegemony over the realm of letters, and so implies how their efforts to regulate the cultural values of literary forms was being subverted by an audience more sensitive to prevailing literary perspectives.

Dryden begins by foregrounding his discussion of satire with Aristotle's views on tragedy, which represents 'the most Perfect Work of Poetry [...] because it is the most United'.⁵⁵⁵ While this idea initially seems jarring, Dryden would later bind this formal requirement with satire's ideological purpose, whereby its ability to fulfil its ethical function is dependent upon an author's adherence to the rules of classical unity: 'the Poet is bound [...] to give his Reader some one Precept of Moral Virtue; and to caution him against some one particular Vice or Folly [...] he is chiefly to inculcate one Virtue'.⁵⁵⁶ Variety may be permitted on the condition they are subordinate to, and derived from, the chief precept. Marshall proposes that by placing Aristotle at the beginning of the *Discourse*, Dryden seeks to imply how 'satire should share key qualities of those superior genres, or, put differently, use these genres to raise itself up'.⁵⁵⁷ The conceptual links between satire and tragedy were not uncommon during the seventeenth-century. For example, Milton proclaims:

For a Satyr as it was borne out of a *Tragedy*, so ought to resemble
his parentage, to strike high, and adventure dangerously at the

⁵⁵⁴ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.60.

⁵⁵⁵ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.26.

⁵⁵⁶ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.80.

⁵⁵⁷ Marshal, 'Thinking about satire', p.477.

most eminent vices among the greatest persons.⁵⁵⁸

Milton's claim that satire 'ought to resemble his parentage' highlights the formal and critical parallels between the two genres, which are united by a moral duty to 'strike high' at governments and explore the most deplorable flaws in human nature. Again, the ethical capacity of satire is closely linked to its ability to 'resemble' the formal requirements of classical drama, as Milton, like Dryden, locates satire alongside tragedy in the upper echelons of literary genre.

Of course, as the *Discourses* progresses, it is clear that Milton and Dryden differed in their etymological understanding of the term. Like many authors in the seventeenth-century, Milton takes his meaning from the Greek *satyr*.⁵⁵⁹ There are two origins for this term: the first derives from the derisive socio-political commentary provided by dramatic choruses in classical tragedy, while the second signified a class of bestial, mythological figures, and drew on a crude, often demonic language indicative of its ritualistic origin. Dryden, however, would favour the Latin derivation, *satura lanx*, meaning a festival platter or banquet.⁵⁶⁰ David Bywaters argues this distinction was paramount for Dryden in his attempts to re-define modern understandings of satire, asserting that he 'firmly rejects its traditional associations with that rustic, lecherous, and ill-natured being, the satyr'.⁵⁶¹ To this end, Dryden shifts from the formal workings of a text to its aesthetic features, and declares heroic poetry 'the greatest Work of Human Nature' over tragedy chiefly because 'the Beauties and Perfections of the other are but Mechanical; those of the Epique are more Nobel'.⁵⁶² While tragedy epitomes the 'Mechanical' excellences of form and structure, it is the 'Heroique Poem' that represents the prophetic power and creative skillfulness of the poet. In a somewhat contrary move away from his earlier emphasis on unity, he praises the heroic genre over tragedy precisely due its creative scope; whereas the tragedian requires 'a less and more confin'd Knowledge', the 'Epique Poet' demands a 'Universal Genius' and a 'Universal Learning', as the innate, boundless fancy of the poet is coupled with the ability to depict the fundamental truths of the natural world.⁵⁶³ Not only does this line of thinking reiterate Dryden's preference for the Latin understanding of satire, but by foregrounding his analysis of Horace and Juvenal with concepts of heroic poetry, Dryden again reiterates how such qualities could both emerge in and elevate verse satire into a more refined literary genre.

⁵⁵⁸ John Milton, *An apology against a pamphlet* (London: printed for John Rothwell, 1642), p.33.

⁵⁵⁹ See Irene Samuel, 'Milton on Comedy and Satire', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 35 (1972), 107-130, p.115-7.

⁵⁶⁰ See Paulson, 'Dryden and the Energies of Satire', p.37.

⁵⁶¹ David Bywaters, *Dryden in Revolutionary England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p.140.

⁵⁶² Dryden, *Works iv*, p.27.

⁵⁶³ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.27.

Most modern scholarship regarding Dryden's attitude towards Horatian and Juvenalian satire focuses on the artistic and ethical merits between the two genres, with James Fowler stating the how the *Discourse* is preoccupied with distinguishing 'between mastery of verse and the use of satire for the public good'.⁵⁶⁴ However, closer analysis suggests that these definitions and values were neither fixed nor diametrically opposed, but were rather fluid and occur simultaneously in the writings of both authors. At first, regarding poetic quality, we are told 'the Victory is already gain'd on the side of *Horace*.'; even Virgil is inferior to his poetic prowess, and 'must yield to him in the delicacy of his Turns, his choice of Words, and perhaps the Purity of his Latin'.⁵⁶⁵ Praised for his linguistic and syntactical versifications, innovation and improvement of language, and a natural poetic genius, Horace generates a more stylistic and erudite literary form. Conversely, on the wider ideological and cultural impact of satire, 'we cannot deny, that *Juvenal* was the greater Poet, I mean in Satire'.⁵⁶⁶ This stems from the rhetorical intensity of his writing – 'his Indignation against Vice is more vehement' – and how 'he treats Tyranny, and all the Vices attending it, as they deserve, with the utmost rigour'.⁵⁶⁷ The literary success of Juvenalian satire is thus measured against its exasperated tone and harsh rendering of its subject matter, alongside its ability to evoke an emotional response from audiences, as we are told '*Juvenal* always intends to move your Indignation; and he always brings about his purpose'.⁵⁶⁸ Recalling his earlier notion on the role of the reader, Dryden is aware of the need to move audiences so that they may in turn perpetuate the values of a particular work, thereby allowing it to realise its ideological objective. Furthermore, in another echo to earlier notions mentioned in the *Discourse*, the efficiency of Juvenalian satire becomes enhanced by its uniformity, with Juvenal confining himself 'to the exposing of some particuler Vice; that he lashes, and there he sticks'.⁵⁶⁹ Evoking his use of Aristotelian precepts, this again emphasises the theoretical similarities between satire and higher genres in an attempt to both elevate and vindicate satire's status as an artistic and morally instructive literary mode.

The ethical role of Juvenalian satire is clear. However, regarding Horatian satire, while most of the focus falls on its aesthetic qualities, the genre is not without its wider cultural benefits, which are seen as emanating naturally from its superior poetic qualities. This itself stems from Horace's own personal process of poetic refinement. Indeed, Dryden would dismiss

⁵⁶⁴ James Fowler, 'Moralizing Satire: Cross-Channel Perspectives', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. Paddy Bullard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.595-613, p.602.

⁵⁶⁵ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.58.

⁵⁶⁶ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.65.

⁵⁶⁷ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.65.

⁵⁶⁸ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.72.

⁵⁶⁹ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.62.

the Odes and Epodes on the basis that Horace had ‘written many of them Satirically [...] somewhat of the Nature of the *Greek Silli*, which were Invectives against particular Sects and Persons’; taking care to differentiate modern understandings of satire from the cruder ‘Invectives’ associated with the Greek origin, we see Horace shift towards a more enlightened and cultivated style, having ‘purg’d himself of this Choler, before he enter’d on those Discourses, which are more properly call’d the *Roman Satire*’.⁵⁷⁰ Critically, Dryden uses Horace’s works here as a microcosm for the historical development of verse satire, projecting onto his texts the etymological distinction between its two theoretical definitions in order illustrate how language and literary forms develop over time, and which eventually reach their artistic pinnacle in Horatian satire. This also may serve as a subtle critique of the Restoration wits – especially Rochester – whose verses reflect Horace’s earlier libellous, unpolished works, and so fail to show the poetic skill or self-improvement seen in his ‘*Roman Satire*’. Horace’s elevated style subsequently displays more learned qualities, as Dryden argues he ‘is the more Copious, and Profitable in his Instructions of Humane Life’ compared to Juvenal.⁵⁷¹ This echoes the literary imperatives Dryden previously outlines for heroic poetry; just as the latter requires a ‘Universal Learning’, Horace’s verses are deemed more ‘Copious’, accentuating the key theoretical qualities that unities the two genres. The capacity to encompass a multitude of subjects thus enables Horace to advance mankind’s understanding of both themselves and their understanding of the world. Moreover, this ability is itself facilitated by the cultivated elegance of Horace’s verse, with Dryden commending his ‘Urbanity, that is, his Good Manners’.⁵⁷² The term ‘Good Manners’ has a dual meaning: it at once links Horatian satire in sociological terms to the elite conduct of the prototypical courtly gentleman, and also denotes a more courteous and noble mode of poetic discourse, one that allowed writers to convey ideas and values in a more thoughtful, sophisticated, and delightful manner.

As the *Discourse* progresses, however, it becomes apparent that the poetic qualities traditionally associated with Horace – the delightfulness and ease of his expressions, the brilliance of his versification – can also be found in the works of Juvenal. In fact, it is on these principles that Dryden distinguishes the two authors, that while Horace is more informative:

‘*Juvenal* is the more delightful Author. I am profited by both, I am pleas’d with both; but I owe more to *Horace* for my Instruction; and more to *Juvenal*, for my Pleasure’.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷⁰ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.59-9.

⁵⁷¹ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.61.

⁵⁷² Dryden, *Works iv*, p.63.

⁵⁷³ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.61.

Perhaps surprisingly, Dryden praises Horace for his 'Instruction' – of offering an exemplarily poetical model to delineate ideals and cultivate society – whilst advocating the aesthetic merits of Juvenal's satires, which are 'more delightful' and offer greater 'Pleasure'. This difference lies chiefly in the nature of their 'wit'; whereas Horace's wit is 'faint' and 'insipid', Juvenal exhibits 'a more vigorous and Masculine Wit' that contributes 'to the Pleasure of the Reader'.⁵⁷⁴ The poetic prowess of Juvenal is emphasised more fully when Dryden exclaims that, compared to Horace,

'His Expressions are Sonorous and more Noble; his Verse more numerous, and his Words are suitable to his Thoughts; sublime and lofty'.⁵⁷⁵

The profusion of his linguistic and syntactical inventiveness combined with the splendor and gravity of his 'Expressions' produce a more 'Noble' artform. That Juvenal's 'Thoughts' are described as 'sublime and lofty' are particularly significant, as it demonstrates Dryden's efforts to re-imagine verse satire as transcending its immediate cultural settings, where it is instead perceived as proceeding from a higher creative inspiration. Bywaters reinforces this notion by arguing that, throughout the *Discourse*, Dryden is keen to describe satire 'primarily as an aesthetic form, independent of the particular social and political conditions by which individual satires so often seem to have been provoked'.⁵⁷⁶ Furthermore, by considering the way audiences internalize certain texts, David Hopkins links the more sublime and profoundly creative elements of satire with its wider ends. Highlighting how Juvenal both exhibits and provokes in others more intense human 'passions' – with Dryden noting that 'His Spleen is rais'd, and he raises mine' – Hopkins argues how 'the passions are engaged and inflamed in a way that mounts exhilaratingly to a climax and finally leaves the mind in a state of satisfied calm. Such a state of 'purgation' [...] can only be achieved by poetic pleasure'.⁵⁷⁷ While the genre is given a specific role within the socio-political sphere, it becomes clear the chief aim of the *Discourse* centers on re-defining the aesthetical nature of verse satire, as Dryden attempts to establish a new set of poetical values.

The importance of poetic style over ethical scope is perhaps best demonstrated when Dryden likens the satirist to an executioner, declaring how 'there is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly Butchering of a Man, and the fineness of a stroak that separates the Head

⁵⁷⁴ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.63.

⁵⁷⁵ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.63.

⁵⁷⁶ Bywaters, *Dryden in Revolutionary England*, p.142.

⁵⁷⁷ David Hopkins, *Conversing with Antiquity: English Poets and the Classics, from Shakespeare to Pope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.145.

from the Body'.⁵⁷⁸ Whilst acknowledging the end result, it is the manner of the execution that takes precedence; rather than an unruly and pejoratively charged assault, Dryden advocates a more precise and refined use of satirical language, one capable of delighting both readers and victims so as to facilitate its objectives more efficaciously. The metaphor itself also invokes a sense of national duty, reminding audiences of the socio-political role of the satirist. However, Dryden is quick to reiterate satire's need to conform to a heightened set of linguistic standards, emphasised by the term 'fineness'. Pointing towards a more refined and noble poetic style, the phrase highlights Dryden's attempts to establish a form of verse satire capable of functioning within a more civilised society, and which represented a more witty and cordial mode of discourse between learned gentlemen. Dryden subsequently claims how such ideals are reflected in his own lampoon of the Duke of Buckingham in *Absalom and Achitophel*: 'the Character of *Zimri* in my *Absalom*, is, in my Opinion, worth the whole Poem. 'Tis not bloody, but 'tis ridiculous enough. And he fore whom it was intended, was too witty to resent it as an injury'.⁵⁷⁹ Without resorting to crude or violent language, the satire instead offers a pleasing linguistic style expressed through a more cultivated manner, to the point where Buckingham himself is forced to recognise its wit and ingenuity. In highlighting the more courteous and urbane elements of his own poetry, then, it is perhaps unsurprising that Dryden claims to have 'preferr'd the Manner of *Horace* [...] in this kind of Satire, to that of *Juvenal*'.⁵⁸⁰ One might therefore conclude that for Dryden, the Horatian model represented the ideal poetic 'Manner', revealing how verse satire developed into a more cultured literary medium.

However, despite this admission, the sincerity of Dryden's statement has been widely disputed. For example, Selden posits that 'Dryden proceeds to confirm his general preference for Horace', whereas Marshall argues how 'the 'Discourse' ultimately favors the strong satire of Juvenal', stating how Dryden 'depicts the politer Horace as entertaining but inefficacious' and that 'for all his consciousness of style, Dryden privileges effect over aesthetics'.⁵⁸¹ The principle issue with such conclusions, however, is that they fail to take into account the fluidity of literary qualities the *Discourse* recognizes as being manifest in both Roman poets. This notion is particularly evidence during Dryden's cooking analogy, wherein he states: 'The Meat of *Horace* is more nourishing; but the Cookery of *Juvenal* more exquisite'.⁵⁸² The implications here inverts the traditional literary aspects ascribed to each satirist: rather than having little effect or consequence, the end product of Horatian satire is described as 'more nourishing',

⁵⁷⁸ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.71.

⁵⁷⁹ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.71.

⁵⁸⁰ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.71.

⁵⁸¹ Selden, *English Verse Satire*, p.105; Marshall, 'Thinking about satire', p.479.

⁵⁸² Dryden, *Works iv*, p.65.

whereas it is the 'Cookery' of Juvenalian satire, its lyrical style and poetic manner, which makes it 'more exquisite'. Furthermore, as noted above, while the *Discourse* does prescribe satire an ideological function within the wider public and political spheres – emphasizing its obligations to achieve a particular effect in the process – it becomes clear that such effects manifest reciprocally through the heightened poetical aesthetics of a text. In this way, Dryden can be seen as prioritizing the artistic qualities of verse satire as he attempts to create a more transcendent mode of satirical writing, one whose verse is at once more noble and sublime, capable of mediating grander thoughts and important cultural issues in a more sophisticated manner to the benefit of mankind. It is this emphasis on aesthetics, combined with the correct form, function, and regulation of verse satire that would preoccupy the critical thinking of Restoration poets and critics.

Issues of control: confining and defining satire

As noted above, one of the primary catalysts behind Dryden's re-evaluation of verse satire in the 1690s stemmed from the disreputable condition into which it had fallen, exacerbated by its misuse at the hands of those 'multitude of Scriblers, who daily pester the World with their insufferable Stuff, that they might be discourag'd from Writing any more'.⁵⁸³ This sentiment was echoed during the Restoration itself, especially during the 1670s. Indeed, the feeling that the mass production of satire required immediate curtailing is expressed in the poem 'Advice to Apollo' (1677), an overlooked but intriguingly significant lampoon believed to have been produced by Rochester's circle of court wits. Addressing the proliferation of scurrilous libels and their propensity to devalue the integrity of English verse, the poem asks the fundamental question: 'Then whence comes satire – is it poetry?' (l.9).⁵⁸⁴ The line reveals how repeated abuses of satire by unskilled writers have perverted the genre to such a degree that it is no longer discernible as a literary art form. While the 'Advice' singles out three chief perpetrators in Dryden, Mulgrave, and Scrope, who are each subjected to ridicule, there is a feeling of unease and concern throughout the poem pertaining to perceptions of verse satire more broadly. The satire is a testament to how the literary values and practices of satire had fallen into disrepute, and were at the forefront of Restoration critical thinking. Consequently, the 'Advice' preoccupies itself with re-defining the poetical values of verse satire, and seeks to establish a more definitive and appropriate style. Moreover, part of this involved aiming to confine the use of satire to a

⁵⁸³ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.8.

⁵⁸⁴ *POAS i*, p.392-5.

select coterie of poets, whose natural poetical abilities and elite social standing will allow the genre to return to its proper cultural standing.

As such, there emerges an underlying tension in which the aristocratic court wits felt the literary apparatus used to perpetuate their identity and authority was at risk of being subverted, and even hijacked, by a group of socially inferior and poetically inept writers, one of whom was a strong exponent of that deplorable medium of print. Critically, this idea is reinforced by the fact that the 'Advice' appears to allude specifically to *Mac Flecknoe* and *Essay Upon Satyr*, with apparent knowledge of Dryden and Mulgrave's involvement. Such references conjure interesting bibliographical and sociological questions, as well as draw attention to the intertextuality of verse satire and its development as a self-reflective vehicle for literary criticism.

For example, we know that *Mac Flecknoe* was circulating in manuscript by the time the 'Advice' was composed in 1677.⁵⁸⁵ However, despite its extensive distribution, the poem was rarely attributed to Dryden; only one extant manuscript, Yale Osborn Collection b 105, assigns it to Dryden before 1682, the year in which a pirated edition appeared in print with the subheading 'By the Author of *Absalam & Achitophel*'. An authorized edition would eventually appear in 1684, when Dryden printed the poem in his *Miscellany Poems* alongside *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medal*.⁵⁸⁶ Despite *Mac Flecknoe*'s strict anonymity during its earlier transmission, the author(s) of the 'Advice' admonishes Dryden for bridging into poetic practices that are traditionally 'Bestow'd on satirists' by claiming that he 'quits the stage/To lash the witty follies of our age' (ll.24-6). This likely refers to Dryden's apparent retirement from playwrighting between November 1675 and December 1677; critically, only *Mac Flecknoe*, Dryden's earliest and only known satire from this period, would seem to fit these circumstances, making it the only viable candidate for provoking the response displayed in the 'Advice'. This suggests that a manuscript copy had swiftly found its way into the hands of the court wits, who were aware – or at least informed enough to believe – Dryden was its author. They may have deduced Dryden's authorship from the contents of *Mac Flecknoe* itself, which encompasses the theoretical debate between himself and Shadwell, the latter being well respected by Rochester and on close terms with many of the wits. The fact that the 'Advice' specifically criticizes Dryden for lashing the 'witty follies of our age' certainly seems to suggest the authors were aware of the on-going debate, and had in mind those contested literary principles central to both *Mac Flecknoe* and the prefatory exchanges between the two playwrights.

⁵⁸⁵ See David Vieth, 'The Discovery of the Date of *Mac Flecknoe*', *Evidence in literary scholarship: essays in memory of James Marshall Osborn*, eds. René Wellek & Alvaro Ribeiro, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp.63-87.

⁵⁸⁶ See Hammond, *The Making of Restoration Poetry*, pp.152-3.

Similar questions arise when we consider the satire's apparent reference to the *Essay* (the misattribution of which led to Dryden's beating in Rose Alley on 18th December 1679), which suggests that an earlier version of that text was in circulation, or was at least known to exist, before 1679 – the year it was thought to have been distributed. This date is predicated chiefly on two primary sources, both of which are discussed by Wilson. The first is Anthony Wood's study of the Duke of Buckingham in *Athenæ Oxonienses* (1691), who recalls that 'in Nov. (or before) an. 1679, there being *An Essay upon Satire* spread about the city in MS', and that the poem's treatment of both Rochester and the Duchess of Portsmouth led them to take 'it for a truth that Dryden was the author; whereupon one or both hiring three men to cudgel him'.⁵⁸⁷ The second is a letter Rochester sent to Savile dated 21st November 1679 which apparently references the *Essay*: 'I have sent you herewith a libel in which my own share is not the least'.⁵⁸⁸ That Rochester is today considered the chief instigator for the assault on Dryden (as Wood believed), however, is based on an undated letter by the Earl believed to have been composed in late 1676/early 1677. Once again addressing Savile, Rochester remarks:

You write me word that I'm out of favour with a certain poet [...] if he falls upon me at the blunt, which is his very good weapon in wit, I will forgive him if you please and leave the repartee to Black Will with a cudgel.⁵⁸⁹

If this is indeed an admission of guilt by Rochester, surely the catalyst for such a violent recourse could only have been the *Essay*? Despite this, after meticulously examining the contextual clues of each Rochester letter, Wilson concludes that the 'Black Will' letter is neither referring to the *Essay* nor is proof of Rochester's role in an assault on Dryden that would occur three years later.⁵⁹⁰ However, when considered alongside 'Advice to Apollo', it becomes increasingly plausible that Rochester had in mind the *Essay* when penning his 'Black Will' letter. Indeed, deriding Mulgrave's satirical writing, the 'Advice' lampoons him for being 'In fee with Dryden', and for his attempts 'to be counted wise,/Who tells the world he has both wit and eyes' (ll.42-3). In the *Essay*, Mulgrave had boasted of 'bringing wit and friendship to Whitehall./But with sharp eyes those nicer faults to find' (ll.32-3). The intertextual allusions to these lines are too specific and too calculated to be a coincidental critique. Additionally, while Mulgrave was firmly established as Dryden's patron at this time, the author(s) specifically targets their

⁵⁸⁷ Quoted from Wilson, 'Rochester, Dryden, and the Rose-Street Affair', *Review of English Studies*, 15 (1939), 294-301, p.294.

⁵⁸⁸ Treglown, *The Letters of John Wilmot*, p.232.

⁵⁸⁹ Treglown, *The Letters of John Wilmot*, p.120-1

⁵⁹⁰ Wilson, 'Rochester, Dryden, and the Rose-Street Affair', p.301.

collaboration in satire – the *Essay* is Mulgrave’s earliest known satire. All of this strongly indicates that an earlier version of that text was indeed in circulation before 1679, and that Rochester may well have heard news of such a poem when writing his ‘Black Will’ letter. Alexander Pope, who was under the patronage of Mulgrave until the Earl’s death, also thought the poem belonged to an earlier date, and assigns it to the year 1675 in his edition of Mulgrave’s *Works* (1723).⁵⁹¹

While the ‘Advice’ reveals some curious and often overlooked insights pertaining to the circulation and reception of key satirical works during this period, its own textual production, transmission, and authorship also displays several interesting features. Regarding authorship, Wilson posits the satire was a collaborative piece written by Rochester, Buckingham, and other prominent court wits in October 1677, stating that it ‘has all the earmarks of one of their cooperative poems’.⁵⁹² It is possible the poem was the subject of a letter sent by Savile to Rochester on 1st November 1677. Based in London and reporting back to Rochester who was away in the country, Savile writes:

now I am upon Poetry I must tell you the whole tribe are alarumd
att a libel against them lately sent by the Post to Will’s coffee
house, I am not happy enough to have seen it but I heare it
commended and therefore the most probably thought to be
composed at Woodstock, espeacially considering what an
essembly either is yet or att least has been there.⁵⁹³

The passage has several noteworthy features. First, it exhibits the Restoration pastime of assigning attribution to authors, as despite never seeing a copy, Saville predicts it ‘most probably thought to be composed at Woodstock’ (Rochester’s country lodge), based purely on its poetic merit, leading him to judge it the work of the wits. That the ‘libel’ in question is the ‘Advice’ is implied when Savile recalls how ‘the whole tribe are alarumd’, this most likely being a reference to the Yorkist-aligned poets Dryden, Mulgrave, and the recently affiliated Scrope, who are all derided in the satire. Critically, Savile’s conjecturing here demonstrates how Restoration audiences contemplated certain works and even re-imagined the contexts in which they could be read, as he clearly envisioned the ‘libel’ as forming part of the manuscript feud between London’s two competing literary factions – the ‘tribe’ of Yorkist poets and the eminent ‘essembly’ of court wits gathered at Woodstock. Conversely, Love postulates the ‘Advice’ ‘seems to come from an admirer of the Whig court wits rather than from within the group itself’ on the

⁵⁹¹ *The works of John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, Marquis of Normanby, and Duke of Buckingham* (London: printed by John Barber, 1723), p.110

⁵⁹² Wilson, *Court Wits*, p.195.

⁵⁹³ Treglown, *The Letters of John Wilmot*, p.163-4.

basis that it fails to engage with the on-going feud between the aristocratic amateur poets and the professionals playwrights.⁵⁹⁴ However, internal evidence strongly suggests the text not only emanated from Rochester's circle, but that it was specifically responding to the manuscript exchanges between himself, Dryden, and Scrope. For example, the satire's ridicule of Scrope, 'that Knight o'the wither'd face' (l.15) who lacks both 'wit and ease' (l.19) and does 'lov'd laborious walks' (l.20), echoes closely Buckingham's lampoon of the same author in *A Familiar Epistle* – and as confirmed by Wilson, 'we know that Buckingham [...] had been visiting Rochester at Woodstock since mid-October 1677'.⁵⁹⁵ When considered alongside the intertextual references mentioned above, all this points towards a court origin, and suggests an intended readership of those directly involved in, and who had knowledge of, both the theoretical and textual details of this on-going literary dispute.

If Wilson's analysis and Savile's first-hand account are accurate, the actual production of the 'Advice' shares several stylistic and ideological features that links it closely to the 'sessions' satires discussed in chapter 4 – a format favoured by the aristocratic courtiers. On a conceptual level, the 'Advice' works similarly to the 'sessions' poems, both of which utilise an imaginary space governed by Apollo, who acts as arbitrator and guardian of England's literary ideals. While previously we have seen how the Parnassus metaphor shifts from symbolizing a kingdom of literary knowledge and divine inspiration to being mapped onto the real world of Restoration London, the 'Advice' actually reverses this processes, and begins by depicting an idyllic scene of poetic virtue and splendor: 'I've heard the Muses were still soft and kind [...] / And that Parnassus Hill was fresh and gay, / Crown'd still with flowers as in the fairest May' (ll.1-4). Critically, this transition helps facilitate the ideological function of the text itself, as we are told how this literary paradise is at risk of being corrupted by writers who not only infect it with base satirical verses, but who also lay false claims to the poetic power of Apollo himself:

Then whence comes satire – is it poetry?
 O great Apollo, God of Harmony,
 Far be't from thee this cruel art t'inspire!
 Then strike these wretches who thus dare aspire
 To tax they gentleness (ll.9-13).

These opening lines demonstrate how the 'sessions' format provided a versatile poetical model that could be manipulated to achieve a variety of effects. In the 'sessions of the poets' texts, the Parnassus metaphor is used to create a specific space mimicking the Restoration court, wherein

⁵⁹⁴ Love, *Clandestine Satire*, p.81.

⁵⁹⁵ Wilson, *Court Wits*, p.196.

literary agents can move and interact. It is in this exclusive space that literary criticism is performed via the clandestine exchange of satirical manuscripts. Concerned with establishing new modes of discourse that centralise the practice of critical inquiry within its spatial boundaries, they seek to confine the processes of literary criticism to the production and transmission of satirical verses. By contrast, in re-invoking the Parnassus metaphor as an ethereal domain of poetic imagination, the 'Advice' is able to direct its attention towards the artistic merit and creative value of those satires. It is concerned principally with the aesthetic quality of verse satire, censuring those who produce spurious verses that pervert Apollo's poetic authority: 'Far be't from thee this cruel art t'inspire' – the line emphasizing how such 'cruel' works are devoid of the true majesty of Apollo's creative inspiration. Furthermore, in discussing the development of the format over the seventeenth-century, Gavin notes how a key aspect of the genre 'came to rely increasingly on the idea that poets were a special group in need of regulation'.⁵⁹⁶ This is particularly evident in the 'Advice', as the writers implore Apollo to 'strike these wretches who thus dare aspire/To tax they gentleness', to exclude them from partaking in the satirical tradition. The passage betrays an anxiety by the court wits, as the phrase 'dare aspire' signifies their outrage that poets of lower social and literary standings were appropriating a mode of writing traditionally reserved for England's elite – highlighting the cultural value placed upon verse satire. This at once reveals how multiple groups competed over control of the satirical medium, and represents a clear attempt by the court wits to assert their authority over the genre by restricting its usage to a select coterie of writers.

Additionally, much like the 'sessions' poems, the 'Advice' also displays a reliance on the emergent forms of sociality that underpinned the type of critical inquiry practiced by the aristocratic elite. As we have seen, the communal dynamic that supported these intellectual processes originated in seventeenth-century clubs and taverns, which, as O'Callaghan has demonstrated, 'functioned as nodal points within scribal networks, the termini at which epigrams, libels, satires and parliamentary treaties were produced and transmitted'.⁵⁹⁷ As is evident between Rochester and Savile's private correspondence, while away at his country retreat, Rochester both sent and received manuscript texts to and from his London colleagues, transforming Woodstock into a focal scribal community inhabited by the period's leading wits. The 'Advice' can thus be viewed as product of the social conditions associated with clubs and taverns, and of embodying the genial atmosphere, displays of impromptu wit, and elements of social exchange. 'I heare it commended and therefore the most probably thought to be composed at Woodstock', Saville remarks, his praise stemming precisely from his belief the

⁵⁹⁶ Gavin, *The Invention of English Criticism*, p.57.

⁵⁹⁷ O'Callaghan, *The English Wits*, p.161.

satire represents a collaborative work, its lyrical vibrancy and critical acumen sharpened by the collected 'essembly' of noble gentleman.

Regarding the critical function of the 'Advice', this seems to be directly linked to its textual transmission, for which we may again turn to Savile's letter, which discloses the potential ways Rochester – and the court wits in general – began altering their approach to the wider circulation of their verse manuscripts. Indeed, Savile notes that the satire was 'lately sent by the Post to Will's coffee', indicating it was written specifically for the public domain and with a particular readership in mind. This in turn suggests the satire possessed a wider ideological purpose beyond its mere lampooning of authors. Indeed, Peter Lake and Steve Pincus have argued that the Restoration saw the emergence of a new single, self-sustaining public sphere, whose multiple facets converged within London's coffeehouses: 'Coffeehouses had become spaces in which merchants, tradesmen, aristocrats, and clerics assembled in urban settings to discuss news, politics, and trade'.⁵⁹⁸ They had also captured the Restoration imagination as a locus of literary transmission and consumption, especially for libels, with one 1673 pamphlet describing them as an '*Exchange* where Haberdashers of *Political small wares* meet, and mutually abuse each other, and the *Publique*, with bottomless stories [...] the *Rendezvous* of *idle Pamphlets*, and persons more idly imployd to read them'.⁵⁹⁹ Disseminating the 'Advice' at Will's Coffee House therefore seems part of a deliberate strategy to maximise its readership, and it is likely the authors intended Dryden to see a copy, given that he often frequented the establishment. Additionally, by inserting it in such a vibrant textual nexus, the author(s) made it possible for the poem to be read and encountered alongside the works it alludes to – especially *Mac Flecknoe* and the verse exchanges between Rochester and Scrope, all of which maintained an extensive manuscript circulation. In this way, the intertextual nature of the 'Advice' is not only intrinsically linked to its public scope, but also indicates how the critical function of the text itself only becomes fully realised through the public domain, with its satirical effect and strategies relying on audiences familiar with the on-going theoretical dispute between London's literary competing factions.

The idea that Rochester was involved in a text that was not only conceived for the public, but whose objectives and internal intricacies worked through the arena of public dispute, initially appears to contradict the traditional image of the amateur poet whose sole audience was the court. However, Matthew Augustine posits that Rochester maintained an acute sensitivity to the public sphere, claiming that he frequently made himself visible within

⁵⁹⁸ Peter Lake & Steve Pincus, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), 270-292, pp.282-3.

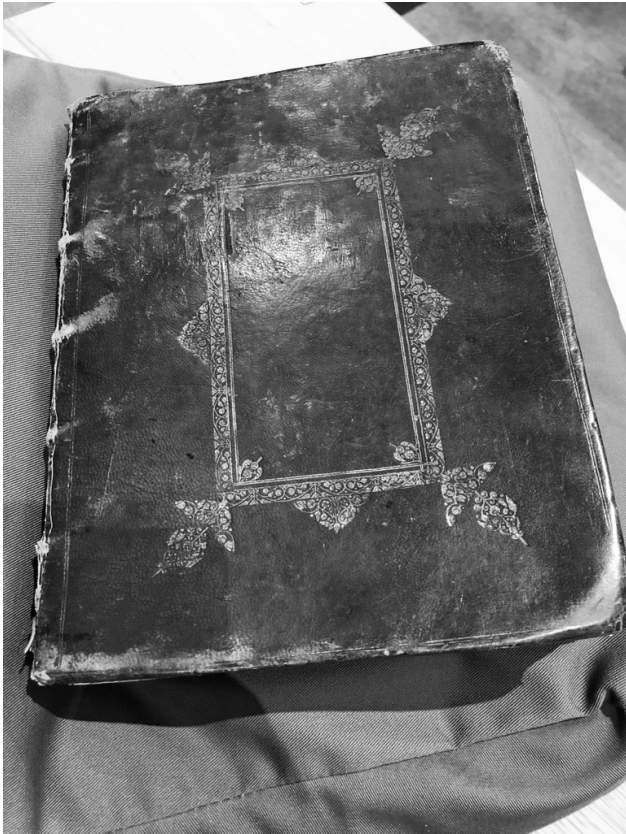
⁵⁹⁹ Anon., *The Character of a coffee-house* (London: printed for Jonathan Edwin, 1673), p.1.

Restoration theatres ‘as the author of prologues and epilogues, as the deviser of scenes for others’ plays, as a judicious ‘amender’ of clients’ works’, before concluding that ‘evidence suggests that Rochester [...] played increasingly in the 1670s to an audience beyond the confines of the court’.⁶⁰⁰ This certainly appears to be the case with the ‘Advice’, which appears to be taking part in the wider Restoration preoccupation of recreating English literary culture, as it attempts to fashion a kind of quasi-satirical canon through intertextual allusion, bringing the most relevant and topical texts together in the imagination of Restoration readers in order to re-evaluate prevailing standards of verse satire and impose a new set of ideological principles. Despite its personal ridicule of Dryden, Scrope, and Mulgrave, then, the wider transmission combined with the intertextuality of the ‘Advice’ shows how it was conceived as a vital work of critical theory that was intended to be read within a particular literary context. Evoking Apollo and the ‘sessions’ format, the satire presents itself as a thoughtful examination on contemporary satirical practices, while its circulation through a nexus of textual exchange allowed audiences to read and consider the ‘Advice’ alongside other works of satire, and brought it into closer proximity to those authors and works which it criticises.

Evidence that this occurred is provided by the Brotherton Collections manuscript MS Lt.54 (dated 1680), wherein a copy of the ‘Advice’ appears in the same collection as those works it alludes to, as well as many other works relating to the manuscript feud between London’s competing factions (see plate 2 below).⁶⁰¹ The collection itself is a lavishly bound, professional produced scribal product. While the collection consists of multiple hands, the first fifty-nine poems are all written by the same scribe, and are primarily verse satires that encompass literary subjects. The fact that the compiler begins the volume with *Mac Flecknoe* and continues it with the two ‘sessions’ satires indicates they wanted to create a particular reading experience from the outset, one that deals with the exploration and definition of contemporary poetical values and practices. This not only suggests the collection itself was aimed at readers who were invested in prevailing literary theories, but that as a textual object, it symbolised a canon of satirical verses that enabled readers to engage with, and reach a more cognisant understanding of, the competing ideals and critical perspectives of Restoration literature. The inclusion of the ‘Advice’ here is significant for a number of reasons. First, it shows the poem, far from being an ephemeral lampoon, achieved a sustained public interest and extensive distribution – having been transcribed here three years after its initial composition (it would also be printed in 1697 as part of the *Poems on Affairs of State*). Secondly, that the compiler selected it for inclusion

⁶⁰⁰ Augustine, ‘Trading Places: Lord Rochester, the Laureate and the making of literary reputation’, *Lord Rochester in the Restoration Word*, ed. Matthew Augustine & Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.58-79, pp.64-5.

⁶⁰¹ University of Leeds Brotherton Collection, MS Lt 54, p.63.



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Plate 2. University of Leeds Brotherton Collection, MS Lt 54. The top left and right-hand images show the exterior of an ornate, professionally bound scribal manuscript miscellany of Restoration verse. The bottom image shows the index page, which contains all the major pieces of satirical criticism from the period, including 'Advice to Apollo'.

alongside such poems as *Mac Flecknoe*, *Allusion to Horace*, *An Essay Upon Satyr*, *In Defence of Satyr*, and the 'sessions' satires, implies they viewed the 'Advice' as being conceptually linked – both stylistically and thematically – to the most popular satires of the period. To this point, it is also possible they understood the poem as forming part of the critical dialogue between the court wits and the Yorkist poets. Third, and perhaps most significantly, it provides evidence that the satire had indeed reached its ideological objective and was being read as a thoughtful reflection on current standards of Restoration satire – its textual proximity to prominent works enabling it to function as a valuable literary tool against which the artistic merit of other verse satires could be measured. This in turn shows how Restoration audiences perceived such texts as signifying important works of critical inquiry, thereby helping transform satire into a more enlightened medium of ideas.

Within the critical reflections of the 'Advice', there is a stark contrast between the satirical verses produced by the Yorkist poets Dryden, Mulgrave and Scrope, and those satires written by the court wits. From these distinctions we can infer some of the major theoretical principles and perceptions of satire maintained by the wits at this time. Firstly, there was a clear sense that verse satire possessed a prestigious literary legacy, one that carried significant cultural currency and was traditionally practiced by the amateur aristocratic gentleman. However, such values were at risk of being subverted by the proliferation of satirical manuscripts produced by the perceived ambitious and socially inferior poets associated with the town, which both dilutes and devalue satire's cultural and poetical status. Furthermore, contained within this outrage is a deeper anxiety that London's competing literary factions were encroaching upon the literary forms traditionally reserved for England's social elite. This provoked an urgent response, as the wits sought to re-define certain poetical principles as a means of regaining control of the satirical medium. For example, the author asks Apollo to 'First, strike Sir Carr' for his 'reversion of a poet's place' (ll.15-6), deriding his desire to be proclaimed a poet before criticising his inability to infuse into his verses the witty and elevated conversations practiced by the court wits – 'And strives to write as wisely as he talks' (l.21). He then turns to Dryden: 'Next with a gentle dart strike Dryden down,/Who but begins to aim at the renown/Bestow'd on satirists' (ll.23-6). Dryden is ridiculed for ambitiously attempting (and failing) to adopt a poetic mode beyond his literary ability and social status – with the phrase 'renown/Bestow'd on satirists' reiterating the notion that satire represented a more noble poetic genre. Finally, the author asks Apollo to strike Mulgrave 'with many angry darts;/He who profanes thy name, offends thy arts' (ll.38-39). The quintessential example of a false coxcomb, Mulgrave's pretences to satire – viewed as stemming directly from Apollo's divine authority – not only transgresses against the standards and values set by the court wits in accordance with Apollo, but also defiles the very essence of English poetry. Similarly to how Dryden's *Discourse*

sets out to re-imagine the aesthetic qualities of verse satire, so too does the 'Advice' reject these works for lacking the prerequisite artistry and skill. In dislocating these writers from the satirical tradition, then, the 'Advice' thus aims to enforce certain aesthetic imperatives for the genre.

Moreover, while the 'Advice' overtly lampoons the quality of Dryden and Mulgrave's satires, it does so out of concern for the way both writers were appropriating the genre itself for their own ideological purposes, particularly using it as a vehicle to perform their own literary criticism. Certainly, in ridiculing Mulgrave's efforts to imitate Apollo's creative brilliance, the author writes that he 'Ne're saw thy light, yet would usurp thy pow'r,/Would govern wit, and be its emperor' (ll.40-41). In what seems to be a clear reference to the *Essay on Satyr*, Mulgrave is attacked for utilising satire as a tool to assert his own theoretical precepts (especially with regards to re-defining the critical parameters of English satire itself); despite being unworthy of Apollo's divine inspiration ('light'), he narcissistically attempts to 'usurp' the realm of satire in order to 'govern wit, and be its emperor'. The lines implicitly reflect how the satirical medium developed into a preeminent forum in which Restoration literary values and practices were governed, as the author derisively rejects Mulgrave's status as a literary critic by rendering him artistically incapable of creating valid satirical verses. The same criticism can also be said of Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*, which seeks to explore and convey key literary concepts via a critical mode traditionally 'Bestow'd on satirists'. This again expresses the notion that the satirical medium developed into an elite forum of literary criticism through which England's poetical values were defined. The 'Advice' thus not only discredits the poetical integrity of *Mac Flecknoe*, but in doing so undermines the validity of its theoretical arguments, as well as its ability to function as a work of serious critical inquiry. This subsequently demonstrates how the contest for control over verse satire stemmed from how it was perceived as an important cultural tool that granted writers significant influence over England's literary landscape.

Implicit within this criticism is the idea that in order to truly compose verse satire, the satirist himself must have access to an otherworldly realm of creative imagination. In this case it is Apollo himself, acting as a living muse who emits a divine radiance capable of inspiring poets to compose exceptional literary works. On one level this functions as another instrument of control, as it further precludes hordes of writers from claiming authority over the genre; for example, Dryden never displays any of the poetic vision 'Bestow'd on satirists', while Mulgrave's satire is blind to Apollo's heavenly inspiration, having 'Ne're saw thy light'. On another level, however, it reveals how the author was attempting to transform verse satire into a more elevated artform, one that encapsulates the true virtue and beauty of Apollo's artistic splendour, as opposed to those malefactors who only pervert and misuse his image – 'making thee seem/Malicious as their thoughts, harsh as their theme' (ll.13-4). The 'Advice' thus presents

satire as being able to transcend its immediate cultural conditions, advancing beyond its cruder use as a cynical weapon to 'To lash the witty follies of our age' (as Dryden had done), and which instead relied on higher forms of poetic imagination and inventiveness. These notions would correspond with Dryden's theoretical assertions in the *Discourse*, wherein he continually depicts satire as an aesthetical artform elevated by the natural genius of the poet, which itself flows from higher realms of creativity, writing for example of Juvenal that 'His Expressions are Sonorous and more Noble; his Verse more numerous, and his Words are suitable to his Thoughts; sublime and lofty'.⁶⁰²

The 'Advice' subsequently identifies these qualities in the works of Earl of Dorset:

Dorset writes satire too, but writes so well,
O great Apollo, let him still rebel!
Pardon a muse which does so far excel,
Pardon a muse which does with art support
Some drowsy wit in our unthinking court (ll.32-37).

In Contrast to the group of Yorkist poets, Dorset not only writes satire 'so well', but also possess an innate creative fancy – 'a muse which does so far excel'. The lines emphasis the idea that both 'wit' and 'art' are prerequisites for the composition of satire, again demonstrating how the 'Advice' was attempting to enhance the genre's aesthetical value. However, the author here distinguishes different types of wit, the 'drowsy wit' indicative of an 'unthinking' poetic faculty, and the more brilliant, boundless 'muse' that showcases the literary genius of the satirist. Of course, Dorset falls into the latter category, uniting his 'muse' with learned 'art' to create sublime satirical verses that in turn elevates the critical thinking of the Restoration court. Dorset therefore comes to embody the ideal satirist, both through his social status as an aristocratic gentleman as well as his superior literary ingenuity, in what can again be viewed as part of the poems wider ideological objective to confine the use of satire to a select coterie of court poets. Similarly to Dryden's *Discourse*, then, the 'Advice' was also seeking to re-define the prevailing values of verse satire, and to present it as more transcendent poetical genre in order to refine its literary aesthetic. This at once shows how the self-reflective criticisms of Restoration satire helped shape English literary theory in the following decades, and demonstrates how the 'Advice' was itself engaged in re-creating Restoration literary culture. Moreover, by invoking Apollo in this way, the author of the 'Advice' implies they too had access to his creative inspiration, and that the satire itself therefore embodies the literary qualities it

⁶⁰² Dryden, *Works iv*, p.63.

seeks to perpetuate, thus revealing how Restoration verse satire began to develop out of the form and function of its own self-reflective arguments.

Rochester's Horace and satirical criticism

The stylistic, ideological, and thematic elements that made Horatian satire so appealing to Rochester would extend beyond his famous and devastating lampoon on Dryden.⁶⁰³ Even in his most personal and intimate moments, the gracefulness, ease of language, and social elegance embodied by Horace permeated Rochester's day-to-day thinking and actions. This can be gaged from his private correspondence, particularly between himself and Savile, which, as noted by Fisher, is 'deliberately structured, humorous and entertaining', exhibiting 'a classical influence, largely derived from Horace'.⁶⁰⁴ Certainly, despite their seemingly disinterested and offhand composition, one can discern a writer who was much in tune with the attitudes of readers, and was sensitive to the prevailing habits and developments of English literary values. A conceptual overlap thus emerges between Rochester's private letters and his public assault on Dryden, both of which exhibit a discerning quality dressed in a witty and informal style typical of Horace's own satires. This emulation was understandable given the ideals Horatian satire was perceived to embody; for example, John Dennis would conflate Horace's satires with emergent forms of elite sociality during the Restoration period, declaring that:

above all things, must it not be most agreeable to a Polite Court, where that dexterous Insinuation, that fine good Sense, and that true Pleasantry, which are united in the Horatian Satire, are the only shining Qualities which make the Courtier valuable and agreeable?⁶⁰⁵

The lines echo the virtues previously outlined in Dryden's *Discourse*, who writes – albeit somewhat backhandedly – that '*Horace* was a Mild Admonisher, a Court Satirist, fit for the gentle Times of *Augustus*'.⁶⁰⁶ As a symbol of a 'Polite Court' and an indicator of 'fine good Sense' and 'true Pleasantry', Rochester's appropriation of the Horatian genre offered the perfect

⁶⁰³ Wilson proposes *Allusion To Horace* was composed in the winter of 1675-6 in 'Rochester, Dryden, and the Rose-Street Affair', *Review of English Studies*, 15 (1939), 294-301, p.299.

⁶⁰⁴ Nicholas Fisher, 'The perspective of Rochester's letters', in *Lord Rochester in the Restoration Word*, ed. Matthew Augustine & Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.250-270, p.51.

⁶⁰⁵ Dennis, *The Critical Works ii*, p.219.

⁶⁰⁶ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.69.

medium to engage with Dryden's literary theories, and can be viewed as embodying what Peter Porter identifies within his works as 'a pleasing gentlemanly lightness and detachment'.⁶⁰⁷ At the same time, it can also be viewed as a defence of those traditional cultural values that were under threat by the likes of Dryden, whose strive towards professionalism destabilized the gentlemanly amateurism of the aristocracy.

Rochester's proficiency with the classics was also recognized by his contemporaries. In the sermon delivered at his funeral in 1680, Robert Parsons declares that 'his natural talent was excellent, but he had hugely improved it by Learning and Industry, being throughly acquainted with all Classick Authors'.⁶⁰⁸ Somewhat surprisingly, Rochester is lauded for his 'Learning and Industry', qualities that seem contradictory to the natural and spontaneous wit favored by the court wits. It is likely Parsons had in mind the *Allusion* here, as his praise corresponds precisely with the texts insistence on the need for attentiveness and revision in poetry – to 'examine ev'ry line,/Weight ev'ry word, and ev'ry thought refine' (ll.100-1).⁶⁰⁹ Additionally, he would also reflect on the manner of Rochester's translation, noting how he 'used not, as other Poets have done, to translate or steal from them, but rather to better, and improve them by his own natural fancy'.⁶¹⁰ This analysis corresponds with the 'free imitation' aspect of Dryden's tripartite division of translation, which 'assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sence, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original'.⁶¹¹ Acknowledging how Rochester's 'own natural fancy' improved upon his ancient predecessors, Parsons recognizes the reciprocity between the way Restoration authors could reimagine and reinvent the literary present by turning to the classical past, and how those past works themselves could be rendered into a more pleasing idiom that encapsulated the superior linguistic expressions achieved during the Restoration.

Both the style and significance of Rochester's translation would later be highlighted by Johnson, though in a somewhat conflicting assessment. Identifying it as the first work of its kind, he notes how 'few will be found where the parallelism is better preserved than in this. The versification is, indeed, sometimes careless, but it is sometimes vigorous and weighty'.⁶¹² The 'parallelism' Johnson speaks of here is ambiguous. As we will soon see, most modern scholarship concurs that Rochester departs significantly – albeit in a deliberate and strategic

⁶⁰⁷ Peter Porter, 'The Gentleman Amateur', in *Spirit of Wit: Reconsiderations of Rochester*, ed. Jeremy Treglown (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), pp.58-75, p.62.

⁶⁰⁸ Quoted from David Farley-Hills, *Rochester: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p.46.

⁶⁰⁹ Rochester, *Works*, pp.71-4.

⁶¹⁰ Farley-Hills, *Rochester: The Critical Heritage*, p.46.

⁶¹¹ Dryden, *Works i*, pp.114-5.

⁶¹² Johnson, *Lives ii*, p.13

manner – from his source material; however, Johnson may be referring to the ideological objectives between Horace and Rochester's verses, both of which attempt to delineate a set of poetic principles in the form of an extended critique. Johnson thus acknowledges how Rochester was carefully placing himself within a classical tradition of utilizing verse satire to engage in literary theory, with his declaration that the *Allusion* is both 'vigorous and weighty' suggesting that while his versification is swift and lively, it also signifies an astute work, possessing a critical acumen and intellectual insight.

The 'weighty' scholarship of the text in part stems from its intertextuality and establishment of a theoretical dialogue between itself and the critical works of Dryden. Indeed, Money asserts that 'Rochester's 'Allusion to Horace' formed part of a feud with Dryden, who himself absorbed and refashioned Horace's critical precepts'.⁶¹³ By entering into a creative engagement with Horace, then, Rochester hijacks the very vehicle Dryden was employing to validate his own critical theories (particularly towards the Restoration theatre) and encompasses them within his own satirical critique, thereby allowing the 'Allusion' to function as a truer fulfilment of the literary ideals so crudely practiced by Dryden – as Horace had originally done with Lucilius. Though it was no doubt partly motivated by personal envy and creative rivalry, the carefully crafted intertextual allusions and implicit engagement with Horatian satire provides the *Allusion* with a genuine sense of concern for the advancement of Restoration literature. Furthermore, it also points towards the anger felt by the court wits that Dryden was appropriating the Horatian genre for his own purposes, again betraying an anxiety over who controlled its critical and creative usage.

As noted above, Rochester deviated noticeably from his source material, with Selden going so far to call him 'England's most subversive Horatian satirist'.⁶¹⁴ In a pioneering analysis of Rochester's employment of the 'imitative' mode of translation, Howard Weinbrot also argues that his position differs from Horace in numerous ways, none more so than the attitude towards its chief satirical target: Dryden. After examining the tone, style, and argument of Horace's original satire i.x, Weinbrot observes that in order to dismiss the charge from contemporary critics that he maliciously maligned Lucilius in satire i.iv, he employs a rhetoric that creates an alliance with his predecessor and attacks the foolish critics, acknowledging the greatness of Lucilius as the architect of the genre whilst maintaining that his expressions were confined to the age he lived in.⁶¹⁵ Weinbrot then contrasts this with Rochester's *Allusion*, noting how, unlike Horace, 'we do not see a satirist defending himself for having attacked the inventor of the form

⁶¹³ Money, 'The reception of Horace in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', p.330.

⁶¹⁴ Selden, *English verse Satire*, p.100.

⁶¹⁵ Howard Weinbrot, 'The "Allusion to Horace": Rochester's Imitative Mode', *Studies in Philology*, 69 (1972), 348-368, p.357.

[...] instead, we see a satirist attacking a dramatist who is neither his superior nor an inventor', and that while the former's intentions 'are to defend himself and to define the best satiric mode for a correct age; the latter's to attack Dryden and bad drama that seeks the favour of the mob'.⁶¹⁶ These sentiments would be echoed by Hooley, who states that Rochester's 'imitation can be seen as an inversion of Horatian priorities', and that while Horace was concerned primarily with aesthetic form, 'Rochester might be said to have written his version, in part, to get at Dryden personally'.⁶¹⁷ Yet, despite the overt cynicism and derisive tone of Rochester's text typical of other court satires directed at the professional playwrights, closer analysis reveals a more strategic and critically perceptive work that actually brings the *Allusion* more in line with its Horatian counterpart.

Certainly, in electing to translate satire i.x Rochester consciously adopts the Horatian concept of poetic decorum. This can be seen in passages that offer a more balanced appraisal of Dryden's literary status; for example, despite his poetic deficiencies, Rochester concedes that 'But to be just, 'twill to his praise be found,/His excellencies more than faults abound (ll.77-8), and also acknowledges that Dryden best deserves to wear' the laurel crown (l.80). Naturally we may question the sincerity of such statements and consider any ironic inflection (irony being an important critical tool throughout the satire), however, such lines, at least externally, convey a sense of measured literary judgment. This sentiment is concurred by Farley-Hills, who writes that 'the tone strikes me as a successful attempt to capture the Horatian judiciousness'.⁶¹⁸ Similarly, Augustine also posits that the criticisms of the *Allusion* speaks to a more studied response rather than an offhand, occasional lampoon, postulating that while the satire sets out to deride 'the heavy mass/That stuffs up his loose volumes' (ll.8-9) – referring to the prefaces and critical essays that saturated Dryden's printed playtexts – Rochester 'evidently read this 'stuff' with some care', highlighting an 'awareness that Dryden's critical opinions were not to be laughed off, and indeed demanded a response of the highest order'.⁶¹⁹ Rochester achieves this chiefly through the manner of his translation, cleverly re-appropriating his source material to at once distance himself from Dryden and undermine his theoretical assumptions.

His opening salvo follows Horace's initial censure of Lucilius:

Nempe incomposito dixi pede currere versus

⁶¹⁶ Weinbrot, 'The "Allusion to Horace": Rochester's Imitative Mode', pp.358-362.

⁶¹⁷ Hooley, 'Roman Satire and Epigram', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature Volume 4: 1660-1790*, eds. David Hopkins & Charles Martindale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.217-255, p.222.

⁶¹⁸ David Farley-Hills, *Rochester's Poetry* (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), p.202.

⁶¹⁹ Augustine, 'Trading Places: Lord Rochester, the Laureate and the making of literary reputation', p.68.

Lucili. quis tam Lucili fautor inepte est,
ut non hoc fateatur?

[To be sure I did say that the verses of Lucilius run on with halting foot. Who is a partisan of Lucilius so in-and-out of season as not to confess this?]⁶²⁰

Similarly, 'Dryden's rhymes' are described as 'stol'n', 'unequal', and dull' – his language and metrics devoid of the free-flowing rhythms and wit necessary to create great poetry. Rochester's rendering of 'partisan' to 'foolish patron' (l.3) takes on a more poignant meaning during the intense social climate of Restoration England, acting as an attack upon the Earl of Mulgrave, Dryden's new patron, and may also serve to counter Dryden's earlier attempts to publicly align himself with the Earl. Evidence indicates Rochester and Dryden were at least on amicable terms only a few years prior to the *Allusion*, with Dryden writing to his then patron in the spring of 1673 to thank him for some commendatory verses: 'And to receive, as if it were my due, the most handsom Compliment, couched in the best language I have ever read'.⁶²¹ The same year was printed Dryden's *Marriage A-La-Mode* with its dedication to Rochester, which proudly proclaims the Earl's revisions to the play: 'I may yet go farther, with your permission, and say, that it received amendment from your noble hands, ere it was fit to be presented'.⁶²² However, as shown in chapter 3, the dedication also expresses discontent towards Restoration patronage systems, as Dryden, acknowledging his own 'self-interest', urges Rochester to 'be content with reading some Papers of your Verses' rather than composing 'a Scene or Play'.⁶²³ Rochester was likely keen to disassociate himself from such impositions upon aristocratic systems, particularly ones that sought to restrict the role of patron to benefactor rather than literary arbitrator, and, perhaps with a nod towards Dryden's 1673 letter, reminds the playwright that even in formal poetry, he cannot match the same linguistic heights Rochester himself reaches with ease in his private correspondence and occasional verse. Dryden, it seem, did in fact go too far.

Rochester follows this with a triplet targeting Dryden's primary career, the theatre:

But that his plays, embroidered up and down
With wit and learning, justly pleased the town,
In the same paper as I freely own (ll.5-6).

While Dryden was certainly eager to advance his career by affiliating himself with England's foremost cultural figures, as Julian Ferraro states, it was the theatre wherein 'the professional

⁶²⁰ Horace, p.115

⁶²¹ Rochester, *Letters*, p.86.

⁶²² Dryden, *Works xi*, p.221

⁶²³ Dryden, *Works xi*, p.223

writer's need for the approval of the public is most brutally dramatized'.⁶²⁴ One of the primary issues here centres on the artifice of Dryden's plays, which are 'embroidered' with 'wit and learning'. These false ornaments of literary skill are then compounded by accusations that Dryden writes merely to please an audience, and are coupled together in the line: "Tis therefore not enough when your false sense/Hits the false judgement of an audience' (ll.12-3). Rochester here again departs from Horace, particularly regarding the way each other depicts ancient and contemporary audiences. Though Horace warns writers against seeking public approval, he acknowledges that there is at least some value in pleasing them:

ergo non satis est risu diducere rictum auditoris; et est quaedam tamen
hic quoque virtus

[Hence it is not enough to make your hearer grin with laughter—though even in that there is some merit]⁶²⁵

Horace recognises to a certain degree the reception of a work amongst the wider public. Conversely, Rochester's tone is more derisive, implying 'the rabble' (l.17) of Restoration theatregoers are insufficient indicators of literary merit. Embellishing his Horatian counterpart, Rochester describes modern theatres as comprising 'an audience/Of Clapping fools' (l.13-14) as part of a wider satirical strategy to undermine Dryden's literary authority, claiming his plays function only in 'assembling a vast crowd/Till the thronged playhouse crack with the dull load' (ll.14-15). The oxymoron of 'dull load' reduces the audience's applause to an incoherent, senseless disorder that lacks true literary insight and displays only a 'false judgement', thus implying that Dryden's literary status is founded only on the mutual falseness of his own writing and its 'false' reception within an unintelligible public domain.

The *Allusion* then focuses its attack on Dryden's practice of heroic drama, encompassing as it does a number of literary principles that had been debated in the prefatory exchanges between Dryden and Shadwell – including the nature of expression, stylistic organization, and an economy of language. The satire emphasises the need to circumscribe excessive amounts of wit, particularly to avoid prolonged passages of oppressive bombast:

But within due proportions circumscribe
Whate'er you write, that with a flowing tide

⁶²⁴ Julian Ferraro, 'Pope, Rochester and Horace', in *That Second Bottle: Essays on John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Nicholas Fisher, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.129.

⁶²⁵ Horace, p.115-7

That style may rise, yet in its rise forbear
With useless words that oppress the wearied ear (ll.20-3).

Critically, the rhetoric of Rochester's argument is both reinforced by, and reflected, in a clever use of lexical and syntactical composition. Indeed, he refers to the need of comparing writing to a 'flowing tide', a metaphor carried through to the next line by the use of enjambment that associates its 'rise' with a more elegant literary style. The caesura located in the middle of the line forces the reader to pause as Rochester draws our attention to this pinnacle moment of literary expression; however, like the peak of a wave that inevitably crashes, Rochester's rapid succession of monosyllabic words followed by further enjambment demonstrates how swiftly that summit of literary style becomes degraded by 'useless words that oppress the ear'.

Consequently, Rochester's structural arrangement exhibits the very advice he relates to Dryden: 'Your rhetoric with your poetry unite' (l.25). This is compounded further by the harsh diction surrounding Dryden's epithets as a consequence of inappropriate rhyme schemes, causing his couplets to appear forced rather than natural. Thormählen observes that Dryden had himself in the mid 1670s started to reconsider the unconfined fancy of the poet, and had begun to emphasize 'the importance of refining one's wit, of 'circumscribing' an over-fruitful fancy, and of choosing rhymes calculated to enhance the second line of a couplet'.⁶²⁶ Engaging with these concepts, Rochester advocates a renegotiation of language to achieve a satisfactory equilibrium between style and expression – 'here be your language loft, there more light' (l.24) – that will help 'soften the discourse' (l.27) of Dryden's argument. This subsequently demonstrates two key points: first, it shows how satire was used to enforce certain poetical principles and shape Restoration creative practices; and secondly, it highlights the reciprocal relationship between satire and critical theory, that by engaging with and articulating prevailing literary theories Restoration satire itself becomes a more refined verse form.

This emphasis on the ease of expression echoes Horace's critique of Lucilius:

est brevitae opus, ut currat sententia neu se
impediat verbis lassas onerantibus auris

[You need terseness, that the thought may run on, and not become entangled in verbiage that weighs upon wearied ears]⁶²⁷

In an ironic twist, Rochester suggests the qualities Dryden lacks can be found in the writings of those Renaissance poets he was accused of disparaging: 'Shakespeare and Jonson did herein

⁶²⁶ Thormählen, *Rochester: the Poems in Context*, pp.315-6.

⁶²⁷ Horace, p.117.

excel/And might in this be imitated well' (ll.30-1). By advocating these authors surpassed the skills of Restoration playwrights, Rochester subsequently reverses the historical process that Dryden had misjudged in his own misuse of Horace: rather than reimagining the present through the past (as Horace and Dryden had done) it is the past that can shape and influence the critical thinking and practices of the present. This idea corresponds with Farley-Hills proposition that such a reversal purports to expose the crudeness of Dryden's writing: 'taking on Horace's role himself Rochester inverts the relationship between Dryden and the writers of the past by pillorying Dryden for his coarseness in sentiment and expression and holding up the Jacobean as superior literary models'.⁶²⁸ Conversely, Thormählen disagrees with Farley-Hills' analysis that it was coarseness of language and expression that marred Dryden's writings, but rather his 'looseness'; Referring to the *Allusion's* insistence on refining and circumscribing, Thormählen posits that Dryden's works 'are unconnected and rambling, and as an artist he is marked by inaccurate or careless thought or language. Looseness signifies the antithesis of circumscribing'.⁶²⁹ He is twice charged with 'looseness', first for his 'loose volumes' (l.9) – a critique of his printed paratextual material, whose muddled precepts and disorderly structure fails to provide a cogent set of literary principles – and secondly for his 'loose slattern muse' (l.91). Dryden's 'looseness' is thus indicative of his failure as both a literary critic and as a poet. By contrast, the carefully crafted verse exhibited by the *Allusion* represents a more concise and refined medium to articulate one's critical thinking, highlighting at once how writers utilised satire as a vehicle for literary criticism, and, moreover, the reciprocal relationship that emerges between the refinement of verse satire and its encompassment of prevailing literary theory.

Despite this emphasis on editing and refining, the *Allusion* goes on to praise Shadwell on the very grounds for which Dryden is lampooned, as we are told 'Hasty Shadwell' (l.43) not only dashes off plays in rapid succession but also 'Scorns to varnish his good touches o'er' (l.48). However, while this may at first seem contradictory, Rochester takes care to distinguish the nature of Shadwell's writing from that of Dryden's. The primary distinction centres on the creative power displayed by the two playwrights, as Rochester explains that 'Shadwell's unfinish'd works do yet impart/Great proofs of force of nature, none of art' (45). Though Shadwell's plays display less editorial corrections with little 'art', they possess a 'force of nature', an innate poetic genius that contrast sharply with Dryden's 'loose slattern muse'. Such effortless creative abilities offsets the lack of meticulous amendments and enables a work to still be considered a brilliant piece of art, as we are told Shadwell shows 'great mastery with little care' (l.47). Through such praise, Rochester also throws another barb at Dryden by declaring

⁶²⁸ Farley-Hills, *Rochester's Poetry*, p.200.

⁶²⁹ Thormählen, *Rochester: the Poems in Context*, p.320.

that 'of all our modern wits' it is Shadwell (alongside 'slow Wycherley') who has 'touch'd upon true comedy' (l.41-2) most clearly – a dramatic form Dryden had himself been attempting to master, and which was a key subject in this theoretical dispute with Shadwell. Critically, the *Allusion* appears to intersect this debate, particularly when we consider the dual meaning behind the phrase 'force of nature'. Certainly, Rochester's use of 'nature' here may in fact be a sublet reflection on the key critical vocabulary disputed between Shadwell and Dryden regarding the highest form of comedy (see chapter 2). By proclaiming Shadwell's 'force of nature', Rochester is in fact advocating the importance of mimetic representation over Dryden's preference for witty repartee, the former being deemed more important in the composition of 'true comedy'. Encompassing the theoretical language of contemporary dramatic theory, *Allusion* consequently precludes Dryden from those forms of writing which he was attempting to claim authority over. The satire thus offers a triple-pronged attack that leaves Dryden devoid of those literary principles he was espousing in his own critical assertions, stripping him simultaneously of all editorial skill, creative inspiration, and an understating of key dramatic ideals.

When we consider all these elements, it becomes apparent that Rochester's appropriation of the Horatian original exhibits a dualistic quality: while it at once re-directs Dryden's language to ironically make him the target of his own literary criticism, it also draws distinct parallels between Dryden and Lucilius that would not have gone unnoticed by Restoration readers. In this way, a major aspect of the *Allusion's* satirical strategy relies on audiences' awareness of Dryden's own employment of Horatian criticism. Certainly, Dryden attempted to justify his critique of Renaissance authors by establishing a correspondence with Horace's treatment of Lucilius; however, by re-appropriating the same critical language as Horace, Rochester has transformed Dryden into a new Lucilius, thereby transposing that same Horatian criticism onto Dryden himself. Farley-Hills extends this further by arguing that 'Dryden is not just taking the place of Lucilius in the poem, he is being made to assume the position he gives the older English writers he so arrogantly disparaged'.⁶³⁰ Rochester was clearly irritated by the fact Dryden had assumed a Horatian role in his own criticism, a feeling expressed in the lines 'But does not Dryden find ev'n Jonson dull;/Fletcher and Beaumont uncorrect, and full/Of lewd lines' (ll.81-83). Part of this anger stemmed from pride and an over ambitiousness, with Rochester stating: 'to his own the while/Allowing all the justness that his pride/So arrogantly had to these denied' (ll.84-86). Love postulates that such animosity stemmed from differences in social class, proclaiming that Dryden's real crime is that he 'claimed an authority to distinguish good writing from bad, which Rochester regarded as among

⁶³⁰ Farley-Hills, *Rochester's Poetry*, p.200.

the hereditary privileges of the aristocracy'.⁶³¹ However, by depicting Dryden as a Horace-figure to Jonson, Rochester adds a further level of satirical irony to his poem, which succeeds in creating a paradox wherein Dryden as Horace is in fact criticizing Dryden as Lucilius.

The *Allusion* also elaborates on the correct use of satire: 'A jest in scorn points out and hits the thing/More home than the moreosest satyr's sting' (ll.28-29). Satire must contain an element of humour and function more as a comedic jest rather than a scornful attack. The lines also emphasize the moral capacity of satire to correct the flaws in human behaviour, which, as Ronald Greene highlights, is a fundamental characteristic of Horatian satire, whereby 'the satirist serves as self-appointed persecutor, judge, and jury, exposing and condemning the worst excesses of human behaviour, sometimes, like Horace, with the intention of improving the wicked through humorous, moral instruction'.⁶³² However, the *Allusion* displays less concern for moral instruction by focusing instead on contemporary literary issues, and, as a consequence, subverts what many critics would perceive as flaws in human behaviour. This is especially true when Rochester praises the sexual conduct of his fellow court wit, Sir Charles Sedley:

Sedley has that prevailing gentle art,
That can with a restless charm impart
The loosest wishes to the chastest heart;
[...]
Till the poor vanquished maid dissolves away
In dreams all night, in sighs and tears all day (ll.64-70).

The passage denotes the quintessential behaviour of the court libertine. Restoration satire regularly condemns this type of sexual licentiousness (as we will see later in this chapter), and often treats it as socially or politically destabilizing. This is not the case with Rochester's poem, whose flowing rhythm and verb selection ('gentle', 'charm', 'dreams') creates a desirable disposition that is deemed praiseworthy. However, it is not Sedley's libertine actions that Rochester is admiring here but rather the literary medium through which they are realized, indicated by the rhyming triplet that associates Sedley's 'art' with the 'chastest heart' it aims to seduce. The tone and positioning of this passage serves as a juxtaposition to the crudeness of Dryden's own verse:

Dryden in vain tried this nice way of wit,
For he to be a tearing blade thought fit.

⁶³¹ Harold Love, 'Shadwell, Rochester and the Crisis of Amateurism', p127.

⁶³² Ronald Greene, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp.1255-1256.

But when he would be sharp, he still was blunt:
To frisk his frolic fancy, he'd cry, "Cunt!" (ll.71-74).

The lines conflate Dryden's poetic failures with his sexual shortcomings. Despite attempting 'this nice way of wit' he can only produce 'a tearing blade', which acts as a dual lampoon of his sexual endeavours and the coarseness of his lyrics, and is compounded further by a mixture of plosives ('sharp', 'blunt', 'frisk') and alliteration ('frisk', 'frolic', 'fancy') that drives the final couplet toward its shockingly crude conclusion of 'Cunt!'. The abruptness of the word subverts the lyrical flow of the passage, forcing the reader to pause and consider the crudity of Dryden's verse. There is also a sociological factor at play here, as the praise for Sedley's carnal verse juxtaposed with the vulgarity of Dryden's writing enables Rochester to dismiss Dryden as being unworthy of his patronage by highlighting his incompatibility with the libertine lifestyle.

It is perhaps for this reason that Hammond argues Rochester's personal criticisms of Dryden are 'far from being a balanced appraisal, and are often couched in personally abusive language. Besides lacking any clear principles of literary judgment.⁶³³ Similarly, Dan Hooley states that 'Rochester's invention and effervescent wit never fall neatly into Horatian stylistic descriptors'.⁶³⁴ However, rather than measuring the stylistic similarities and critical appraisals of the *Allusion* against Horace's satire, it is perhaps better to consider Rochester's poem as a creative engagement with, and clever re-appropriation of, the Horatian genre, one that is designed to achieve a particular ideological objective. Indeed, unlike Dryden, whose adoption of the Horatian voice in his critical works was a rhetorical necessity, Rochester's manipulation of his source material functions to undermine and subvert the critical and literary status of his rival. To do so required a heightened sensitivity and acute understanding of the ideas and values pervading Restoration spheres of critical thinking, as the *Allusion* carefully encompasses the theoretical language and poetic ideals underpinning Dryden's 'volumes' in order to ironically render him the subject of his own criticisms. While the satire does not explicitly delineate a definitive set of imperatives, it does, as Augustine argues, engage both critically and creatively with the concepts espoused by Dryden: 'An *Allusion to Horace* in its way paid a kind of tribute to the laureate by making so learned and artful a transversion of the dull 'stuff' that it pretends to scorn'.⁶³⁵ This subsequently demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between Restoration satire and literary theory – that by encompassing prevailing literary ideologies

⁶³³ Hammond, 'Figures of Horace in Dryden's Literary Criticism', p.145.

⁶³⁴ Dan Hooley, 'Alluding to Satire: Rochester, Dryden, and others', in *Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire*, ed. Kirk Freudenburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.261-283', p.270.

⁶³⁵ Augustine, 'Trading Places: Lord Rochester, the Laureate and the making of literary reputation', p.69

verse satire becomes a more refined artform, one that in turn transforms the medium into a more discerning and artistically advanced realm in which to perform literary criticism.

Textual dialogues I: Rochester, Scrope & Horace

Should I be troubled when the purblind knight,
Who squints more in his judgment than his sight,
Picks silly faults, and censures what I write (ll.115-8).

While most of the abuse in *An Allusion to Horace* is aimed at Dryden's literary ineptitude, Rochester makes room for a triplet directed at Scrope, represented here by the now ubiquitous epithet the 'purblind knight'. The lines, which comically conflate Scrope's diminished vision with his lack of poetic 'judgement' (a criticism also levelled against Dryden), also act as a dismissal of his attempts at literary criticism; rather than being a judicious critic, he comes across as pedantic, obsessed with 'silly faults', and of being too severe, lacking the required poetic insights and proper decorum befitting a true literary critic. This of course contrasts with the wit, easiness, and acumen exhibited by Rochester's own lyrics. As discussed in chapter 3, this animosity towards Scrope stemmed from his socio-political affiliation with the rival group of Tory poets headed by Dryden, as well as for his association with the professional scribe Robert Julian, who circulated Scrope's poetry unscrupulously alongside the works of the court wits. We have already seen this partnership ridiculed in Buckingham's *A Familiar Epistle*, which chastises Julian for stooping to someone of Scrope's meaner social standing (at least compared to the wits themselves), and lampoons Scrope's own hubristic attempts at writing – 'to be thought a Poet, fine and fair' (l.80). Additionally, just like the *Allusion*, *A Familiar Epistle* censures his efforts to engage in critical theory, deriding how 'In Rhyme he Challenges, in Rhyme he fights' (p.94). The line is specifically concerned with the way Scrope appropriates the medium of verse to articulate his insipid views and partake in critical discourses, signifying the extent to which verse was viewed and utilised as an essential vehicle for literary criticism. Furthermore, that Buckingham, writing a few years after Rochester's initial attack, echoes these sentiments, discloses an underlying anxiety that the realm of satirical manuscript utilised by the court wits to maintain their hegemony over English letters was being threatened both stylistically and textually, and indicates that wider issues were being raised about the nature of the literary critic. Such concerns were perhaps realised when Scrope elected to retaliate in kind with *In Defence of Satyr* (1676), which responds directly to Rochester's *Allusion* on multiple levels – artistically, critically, and philosophically.

The transmission of the *Defence* has a complex history of misattribution and appears in

multiple printed and manuscript collections, which has been meticulously traced by David Vieth.⁶³⁶ Throughout the period, the *Defence* was regularly attributed to Rochester himself; not only were there multiple manuscript copies that carried his name, the poem would also be included in various early editions of his works. Buckingham has also been touted as a potential candidate owing to the poem appearing under the Duke's name in his *Miscellaneous Works* (1704), albeit under the rather different title 'A Satyr upon the Follies of the Men of the Age'. However, after systematically examining the internal and circumstantial evidence, Vieth confirms that the majority of manuscript (and some printed) attributions to either Rochester or Buckingham were copied or derived from untrustworthy editions, and ultimately concludes Scrope was indeed the author. Scrope's identity would also become recognised as the period progressed; for example, the satire would appear in Tonson's 1714 edition of Rochester's poems with a heading detailing Scrope's authorship.

The poem itself contests the manner of Rochester's satirical style and acts as a theoretical treatise on the correct form and function of verse satire, drawing on many of the notions discussed in Dryden's *Discourse*. Additionally, the poem encompasses the cultural principles upon which the court wits assumed their identity, principles that Scrope felt were encoded in Rochester's *Allusion*. Certainly, if the *Allusion* represented a wider effort to uphold a traditional set of social as well as poetical ideals in the face of a radically shifting cultural landscape, than it is unsurprising how the *Defence* shifts between various literary, social, and sexual tones in its critique of Rochester and the court wits. Responding astutely to the arguments and manner of Rochester's satire, Scrope had evidently procured a manuscript copy from which to plot his retort, indicating the *Allusion* had spread beyond the confines of private social circles and into the wider public domain.⁶³⁷ The same can also be said of the *Defence*, whose intertextual references not only rely on audiences' familiarity with Rochester's literary and social activity, but which also prompted the Earl to retort with another satire titled *On the Supposed Author of a late poem in Defence of Satyr* (1677), again showing how manuscripts spread amongst different reading communities as they entered the wider public sphere. Like the *Defence*, Rochester's reply pays close attention to Scrope's poem and challenges his understanding and practice of satire.

Consequently, this exchange can be seen as marking a crisis point in the ethical implications and artistic merits of seventeenth-century verse satire, and demonstrates how writers felt the urgent need to establish a more definitive set of poetic principles in order to stabilise a genre that has fallen into disrepute. Moreover, that the debate itself was conducted

⁶³⁶ Vieth, *Attribution*, p.145-9.

⁶³⁷ Love describes the ways Rochester distributed his own texts in *Scribal Publication*, p.247-8.

via the very public exchange of verse manuscripts subsequently generates a rather unique literary environment, one that fostered an intrinsic network of satirical texts in dialogue with each other, and which could be read as an ongoing critical narrative. This in turn would create a peculiar paradox that saw Restoration verse satire develop into a self-reflective form of literary criticism whilst simultaneously aiming to censure the competing ideological values of satire itself and the poets who practice them. In doing so, such texts exhibit an increased sensitivity to prevailing literary theories and attitudes, demonstrated through their acute intertextuality and employment of key critical terms. By engaging with such ideas we see how satire itself becomes more refined, both in terms of the quality of its verse and the way in which it was perceived as a vehicle for critical inquiry by early modern audiences.

Rochester's *Allusion* would thus play a seminal role in the way contemporary writers employed verse satire to engage in literary debate, particularly his use of 'imitation' and use of the Horatian genre. As previously noted, Johnson considered the imitative mode of Rochester's satire the first of its kind in the English language.⁶³⁸ The technique subsequently proved quite influential, with Weinbrot arguing that 'such an imitation, in which some parallelism is preserved and some altered, could not have been ignored by poets who either translated or carried the imitation as a form to its highest level of achievement'.⁶³⁹ Weinbrot was looking more towards Pope and the eighteenth-century Augustans than he was Scrope, whose own translation has received significantly less scholarly attention other than as a historical footnote to Rochester. In his key study of seventeenth-century 'imitation', Brooks fleetingly observes how the *Allusion* 'provoked Sir Car Scrope to a reply in which he in turn imitates Horace, though much more loosely and with none of Rochester's address'.⁶⁴⁰ Despite the 'looseness' of Scrope's imitation, however, the poem provides a significant indicator on the way Restoration poets reappropriated Horatian satire for their own ideological and aesthetic purposes, and marks a vital juncture in the development of verse satire as an important vehicle for literary criticism.

One of the more intriguing aspects of the *Defence* is Scrope's choice of primary material. While Rochester's *Allusion* is modelled on Horace's satire i.x, Scrope would base his text principally on satire i.iv, the work in which Horace made his original remarks towards Lucilius. As Dan Hooley notes, 'Horace had said there [...] that Lucilius was "a witty fellow with a keen nose, but harsh when it came to versification ... He was a muddy river with a lot of stuff that should have been removed"'.⁶⁴¹ While Horace accepts that Lucilius displays some measure of

⁶³⁸ Johnson, *Lives ii*, p.13.

⁶³⁹ Howard Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire: Essays on Text and Context from Dryden to Peter Pindar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.77.

⁶⁴⁰ Brooks, 'The 'Imitation' in English Poetry', p.133.

⁶⁴¹ Dan Hooley, 'Alluding to Satire', p.263.

wit and satirical skill, he is ultimately reproved for his hasty output, onerous metrics and language, and improper writing practices (ll.5-13).⁶⁴² As the work that prompted his more conservative and judicious satire i.x – from which Rochester bases his own poem – Horace’s satire i.iv clearly had a tactical appeal to Scrope. Implicit in this decision was the view that the Horatian genre represented a more civilised and proper mode of poetic decorum in which writers could form polite theoretical dialogues. Such a dialogue is of course inherent in the two Horatian satires, and it is likely Scrope relied on audiences’ awareness of this interconnection in order to create a conscious intertextuality in the minds of Restoration readers, and also as a means of manipulating the critical narrative they establish.

He achieves this chiefly by transposing the original reading order of the texts; by having satire i.iv proceed satire i.x Scrope reverses the historical and theoretical process of refining and fulfilling the true satirical mode as originally outlined by Horace now being attempted by Rochester. This subsequently generates two interesting effects. The first works similarly to how Rochester casts Dryden as Lucilius in the *Allusion*, as Scrope likewise replaces the ancient poet with the Earl; however, this Rochester-Lucilius is viewed through the lens of the first satire, one whose poetic virtues appear greatly diminished and whose flaws are more openly exposed to disdain. Secondly, and perhaps more subtlety, is the idea that Scrope, now assuming the role of Horace, is critiquing Rochester’s role as Horace. Indeed, rather than moving towards a more artful and judicious mode of satire embodied by satire i.x, by reversing the reading order, Rochester’s attempts at writing are instead placed in an inferior literary context of undeveloped poetic tact and decorum, thereby displacing him from the historical refinement of verse satire, which now becomes fully realised in Scrope’s *Defence*. This at once precludes him from the tradition of employing satire to regulate England’s cultural values whilst undermining his attempt to inherit the role of the classical critic, now being claimed by Scrope. In electing to imitate satire i.iv – however loosely – Scrope demonstrates how Restoration poets and critics competed over control for the Horatian genre, which not only helped endowed one’s assertions with a greater authorial weight, but which was also increasingly perceived as the preeminent vehicle through which to define the values and standards of Restoration poetics.

The opening lines of the *Defence* parallel the Horatian original as both authors assess the merits of past writers. Reflecting on the Elizabethan dramatists (Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher) Scrope explains how they ‘took so bold a freedom with the age/That there was scarce a knave, or fool, in town/Of any note, but had his picture shown’ (ll.1-3).⁶⁴³ Horace would praise the likes of Eupolis, Cratinus, Aristophanes in similar terms:

⁶⁴² Horace, p.47.

⁶⁴³ *POAS i*, p.364-370.

si quis erat dignus describi, quod malus ac fur,
quod moechus foret aut sicarius aut alioqui
famosus, multa cum libertate notabant.

[If there was anyone deserving to be drawn as a rogue and thief, as a rake or cut-throat, or as scandalous in any other way, set their mark upon him with great freedom]⁶⁴⁴

Each set of writers are praised for their ability to judge the behaviours of humanity, with particular emphasis on the poetic skill required to mimetically recreate their flaws, drawing on the idea that art should truthfully reflect the natural world. This act of ridicule of course becomes linked to satires wider cultural role; as Charles Knight explains, 'the idea that satire is justified in its nastiness by its moral or didactic functions has run through the history of satiric theory'. Scrope acknowledges this in his assertion that 'And without doubt, though some it may offend,/Nothing helps more than satire to amend/ill Manners, or is trulier virtue's friend' (ll.5-7).⁶⁴⁵ The rhyming triplet conflates the conflicting verbs of 'offend' and 'amend' under the paradigm that satire is 'virtue's friend', thereby subsuming satires offensiveness within its primary function of moral enrichment. This stance echoes Dryden's affirmation in the *Discourse* that 'satire is of the nature of Moral Philosophy; as being instructive'.⁶⁴⁶ Additionally, much like Horace, who in his original text, as Ralph Mark Rosen notes, 'proceeds to contrast explicitly his own brand of satire with that of his early predecessor, Lucilius', so too does Scrope begin to formulate his own critical theory and application of satirical writing which moves away from the explicitness and targeted aspect of Rochester's *Allusion* towards one that is more general and universal in nature.⁶⁴⁷

The debate over the general or particular nature of satire was prominent in Restoration literary theory. Marshall asserts how those who supported a more explicit form of satire claim that 'readers not specifically indicated will not admit the criticisms relevance to them', preventing satire from realising its wider sociological function. Yet, in her discussion of Scrope, she also notes how 'not everyone agrees that general satire is unable to get through to individual readers [...] Scrope is defending satire, and perhaps simply exaggerating claims about its potency'.⁶⁴⁸ Certainly, the *Defence* posits that 'when a vice ridiculous is made,/Our neighbor's shame keeps us from growing bad' (ll.12-13). Rather than being directly referenced, individuals

⁶⁴⁴ Horace, p.47.

⁶⁴⁵ Charles Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.4.

⁶⁴⁶ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.55.

⁶⁴⁷ Ralph Mark Rosen, *Making Mockery: the Poetics of Ancient Satire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.6.

⁶⁴⁸ Marshall, *The practice of Satire in England*, p.60-61.

can experience the effects of satire through its broader depiction of vices, which acts as a mirror to the readers own self. Scrope's theory somewhat anticipates Dryden's *Discourse*, specifically his preference for a more circuitous and oblique mode of satire, writing:

How easie it is to call Rogue and Villain, and that wittily? But how hard to make a Man appear a Fool, a Blockhead, or a Knave, without using any of those opprobrious terms? To spare the grossness of the Names, and to do the thing yet more severely'.⁶⁴⁹

In his discussion on the proper objects of satire, Sean Silver notes how Dryden advocates that 'at its very best, satire will describe its target with enough detail to make it sufficiently known and known as an object of scorn, without using names or words of censure themselves'.⁶⁵⁰ The conceptual framework Scrope initially establishes is subsequently reflected in the overall form of the *Defence*, evidenced in his contemplation of mankind that: 'Look where you will and you shall hardly find/A man without some sickness of the mind' (ll.20-21). The satire then focuses on a particular vice: lust. It censures those who adopt a façade of civility and intellect who are instead governed only by their sexual impulses, 'in vain we wise would seem, while ev'ry Lust/Whisks us about, as whirlwinds doth the dust' (ll.22-23), and exposes those pretenders to wit who display only 'lewdness, blasphemy, and noise' (l.35). These lines were clearly motivated by the libertine values practiced by Rochester, though he is never explicitly mentioned. As such, they conform to the periphrastic strategy identified by Silver, wherein satire 'describes someone sufficiently well to make their identity apparent, and even to create them as objects of censure', whilst simultaneously 'leaving enough ambiguity for the play of interpretive pleasure'.⁶⁵¹ Certainly, while Scrope was aiming for Rochester, Restoration readers could equally apply such critiques to various court figures whose sexual exploits had become infamous. Critically, this demonstrates how Restoration verse satire developed out the form and function of its own argument, as the *Defence* comes to embody the practice it espouses whilst also employing a language that mediates the disputed issues within the genre in order to lampoon the literary and social activities of the court wits.

One way Scrope achieves this is by alluding the events of the Epsom Brawl on June 17th, 1676, during which Rochester, accompanied by several other libertine rakes, including Etherege and Captain Downs, broke into the constable's property after being misinformed it was a whorehouse. After escaping and returning with the watch, Rochester is alleged to have drawn his

⁶⁴⁹ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.70.

⁶⁵⁰ Sean Silver, 'Satirical Objects', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. Paddy Bullard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.371-87, p.378.

⁶⁵¹ Silver, 'Satirical Objects', p.378.

weapon upon the constable, and the ensuing brawl resulted in the Death of Captain Downs.⁶⁵²
Scrope captures the incident in the lines:

He that can rail at one he calls his Friend
[...]
To fatal midnight frolics can betray
His brave companion and then run away,
Leaving him to be murder'd in the street,
Then put it off with some buffoon conceit (ll.48-55).

Aside from alluding to the event, the lines makes an intertextual reference to Rochester's *To the Postboy*, wherein the Earl himself acknowledges, and seemingly dismisses, what had transpired:

[...] I have fled
And bravely left my Lifes Defender dead;
Broke houses to break Chastity, and Dy'd
That floor with Murther which my Lust denyd (ll.9-12).⁶⁵³

Thormählen posits that Scrope's 'main accusation against Rochester is that the latter is capable of maltreating and betraying his friends for the sake of salvaging a joke'.⁶⁵⁴ However, his critique appears much more profound, registering across various social and literary transgressions that converge in Rochester's 'buffoon conceit'. Scrope clearly took issues with the Earl's poem, deriding his expression 'bravely left' and reapplying that virtue to his 'brave Companion' (Captain Downs), while Rochester is instead associated with betrayal, murder, and cowardice. The severity of Scrope's language is elevated by a greater rhythmical flow that conveys the intensity of his disdain, culminating in the phrase 'buffoon conceit'. This indicates an equal amount of satirical criticism is directed at Rochester's poetic propensity, which becomes linked to his public debauchery – emphasised by the rhyme of 'street/conceit'. Rather than censuring *To the Postboy* for simply attempting to salvage a joke, then, the *Defence* actually articulates a much harsher condemnation of libertine values and its subsequent propagation and representation in English poetry. Scrope's satirical language thus conflates the depravity of Rochester's social activities with his perversion of traditional literary moral.

The *Defence* subsequently relates this distortion of poetic values with the way Restoration audiences currently misconceive verse satire. In doing so, Scrope follows closely his Horatian counterpart, with Rosen stating how 'we may recall Horace's complaint [...] that the

⁶⁵² A full account is given in James William Johnson, *A Profane Wit: The Life of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2004), pp.249-251.

⁶⁵³ Rochester, *Works*, p.42-3.

⁶⁵⁴ Thormählen, *Rochester: the Poems in Context*, p.353.

satirist is wrongly perceived by the public as injurious'.⁶⁵⁵ Scrope addresses accusations that 'he cares not whom he falls on in his fit./Come but in's way, and strait a new lampoon/ Shall spread' (ll.43-45), and seeks to resolve this public perception by juxtaposing his own brand of satire – which he affirms is 'dipp'd in no such bitter gall' (l.47) – with the improper practices of Rochester's satirical writing. Indeed, drawing on the immorality encapsulated by the Earl's 'Buffoone Conceit', Scrope laments how audiences are unable to discern the true nature of Rochester's satire: 'This, this is he you should beware of all,/Yet him a witty, pleasant man you call' (l.56-7). This is then contrasted with Scrope's own satirical verses: 'But if I laugh, when the court coxcombs Show [...] To me the name of railer straight you give,/Call me a man that knows not how to live' (ll.60-65). Scrope's imitation here closely resembles Horace's original satire i.iv, wherein he too accuses his audience of misunderstanding the true merits of verse satire:

hic tibi comis et urbanus liberque videtur,
infesto nigris. ego si risi, quod ineptus
pastillos Rufillus olet, Gargonius hircum,
lividus et mordax videor tibi?

[Such a man you think genial and witty and frank—you who hate the black of heart. As for me, if I have had my laugh because silly "Rufillus smells like a scent-box, Gargonius like a goat," a do you think I am a spiteful, snappish cur?]⁶⁵⁶

Scrope implicitly likens his own circumstances with that of his Roman predecessor and locates his theory of satire within a classical tradition, whereas Rochester is identified as a pretender to true satirical wit who both deceives and threatens society. Moreover, such an appropriation cleverly places Rochester's poetry as the subject of Horace's own criticism, and so forms part of a wider strategy to undermine the literary values espoused in the *Allusion* by depicting them as both corrupt and inept – far removed from the principles advocated by both Horace and Scrope. The *Defence* subsequently generates an ironic comparison between the two poets, wherein Rochester's verses are praised for their perpetuation of profane and socially destabilizing libertine values, while Scrope is reviled for simply writing satire. Not only does this irony help expose Rochester's crudeness and literary incompetence, it also depicts Scrope's verses as symbolising a more ethical mode of satire, one that is deemed an improvement on the form practiced by Rochester. This is reinforced by the line 'E're that black malice in my rhymes you find/That wrongs a worthy man or hurts his friend' (ll.72-73), which again follows closely the Horatian original:

⁶⁵⁵ Rosen, *Making Mockery*, p.228.

⁶⁵⁶ Horace, p.57.

hic nigrae sucus lolliginis, haec est
aerugo mera. quod vitium procul afore chartis
atque animo prius, ut si quid promittere de me

[Here is the very ink of the cuttlefish; here is venom unadulterated. That such malice shall be far from my pages, and first of all from my heart, I pledge myself]⁶⁵⁷

This again reveals how the form and function of the *Defence* develops out of its own self-reflective arguments. Much like Dryden was attempting to elevate the artistic merits of satire beyond the cruder practices of ‘scribblers’ in the *Discourse*, Scrope was also attempting to re-define Restoration perceptions of verse satire in order to establish a more noble poetic artform.

In Defence of Satyr thus exhibits the increasingly self-reflective nature of Restoration satire and shows how the medium developed into the preeminent vehicle to engage in literary criticism. Scrope’s text in particular appears to have had a significant impact on the way early modern audiences valued verse satire, shaping the way such works could be utilised and even re-contextualised by readers for their own private reflections. One example of this can be found in manuscript BC MS Lt 15 located in the University of Leeds Brotherton Collection, an eighteenth-century commonplace book comprising prose and verse that contains an extract of Scrope’s *Defence* (see plate 3 below). Transcribing the opening lines, the writer gives it the heading, written separately red ink, ‘Usefulness of Satyrical Verses’. In re-naming the poem, the writer reconceptualises how the work might be read and understood; this heading suggests they not only viewed the text as containing valuable precepts and insights into the nature of satire, but also that they felt it successfully delineated a definitive set of poetical standards and ethical practices for verse satire. This idea is reinforced by the fact they include annotations highlighting the rhyming triplet: ‘without doubt, though some itt may offend,/nothing helps more than satyr to amend/ill manners, or is, truelyer virtue’s friend’. Such an annotation indicates how the reader was not only mindful of the critical theories inherent within the genre, but also that they wanted to accentuate specific elements of Scrope’s text, revealing how early modern audiences used satire to partake in the processes of literary criticism. Clearly the *Defence* represented a valuable satirical model, one that both captured the moral duty of the satirist as well as helped define the role of the poet-critic. Moreover, when considering its position within this private commonplace book and its proximity to other material, it becomes apparent that the *Defence* transcended its original socio-literary conditions.

Indeed, the extract is immediately preceded by two shorter pieces under the headings

⁶⁵⁷ Horace, p.57.

20
 And parts, without the help of art, will fail.
 But both ingredients jointly must unite
 to make the happy character compleat.
 usefulness of Satyrical verses.
 When Shakespear, Johnson, Fletcher rul'd the stage,
 they took so bold a freedom with the Age,
 that tho' our Scavv, or Fool in town,
 of any Note, but had his picture drawn:
 & without doubt, the same it may offend,
 nothing helps more then Satyr to amend
 ill manners; or is, knelyer, Vertue's friend.
 Princes may launce ordain, Preists grauely preach,
 but Poets most successfullly will teach;
 for as a passing Bell frights from his meat
 the

19
 Praise of Poetry.
 Well sounding verses are the charm we use,
 heroic thoughts & vertue to insure.
 Things of deep sense we may in prose unfold,
 But they move more in lofty numbers told.
 By the loud Trumpet which our courage aids,
 we learn that sound, as well as sense, prevails.
 Art & Nature Make A poet.
 Concerning Poets there has been content,
 whether they're made by art, or Nature, best.
 But if I may presume in this affair,
 among the rest, my Judgement to declare,
 no art without A serious will avail.

Plate 3. University of Leeds Brotherton Collection, BC MS Lt 15, pages 19-20. A private commonplace book containing prose and verse c.1720-1748. Top image shows an extract of the first 13 lines from Scrope's *In Defence of Satyr*. Bottom image shows two smaller quotations preceding the Scrope extract titled 'Praise of Poetry' and 'Art and Nature'.

'Praise of Poetry' and 'Art & nature make A Poet' (see plate 3 above). Their inclusion here appears part of a deliberate effort by the compiler to form a cogent and intellectual contemplation of English poetics, particularly when we consider that, on a conceptual level, all three pieces share similar values and ideas. For example, under 'Praise of Poetry', the writer transcribes the following:

Well sounding verses are the charms wee use,
heroic thought & virtue to infuse
Things of deep sens wee may in prose unfold,
But they move more in lofty numbers told (p.19).

The passage asserts how verse is the most suitable medium to 'move' audiences, and emphasises the notion that the expression of an idea is equal as its content, arguing that 'Well sounding verses' are able to instil into readers 'heroic thought' and 'virtue'. This again links the refinement of English poetry with the advancement of human culture. The passage corresponds with the portion of the *Defence* transcribed on the following page, especially the lines 'Princes my laws ordain, preists gravely preach,/But poets most successfully will teach' (p.20). The proximity of the two pieces implies the compiler felt the more noble qualities associated with poetry were equally manifest in verse satire, which was likewise capable of inspiring audiences to 'heroic thought' and 'virtue', thereby elevating the artistic and moral merits of the genre. Similarly, under 'Art & nature make A Poet', after pondering the now common literary dispute regarding art verses nature, the passage concludes that 'both ingredients must unite/to make the happy character complete' (p.19-20). Critically, the phrase 'happy character complete' suggests the primary focus here is with the creative portrayal of human affairs and behaviours – linking back to the theory of dramatic 'humour' characters. While the poet must possess a natural 'Genious', their fancy must also be circumscribed by 'art' – their ability to judge effectively – so as to create a true mimetic portrayal, indicated by the word 'complete'. This concept recurs in the following transcription of Scrope's text: 'ther was scare A knave, or fool in town,/of any note, but had his picture drawn' (p.20). The lines deal with how poets depict certain stock character in order to satirise their various follies and vices. Furthermore, while multiple versions of Scrope's poem appears in both print and manuscript with the phrase 'picture shown', this compiler replaces 'shown' with 'drawn'. This change brings Scrope's text more in line with 'Art & nature make A Poet', as it creates more of an emphasis on artistic craft, and the idea of re-creating an image as close to reality as possible. Drawing on the key theoretical vocabulary of the period, the proximity of the texts implies that satire was perceived as sharing the qualities of 'art' and 'nature', thereby raising its poetical value. In composing and ordering the commonplace book in this fashion, the compiler subsequently places the *Defence*

within a broader framework of literary criticism. Removing the work from the satirical manuscript skirmish between Rochester and Scrope, they recontextualise it alongside other reflective pieces in order to form part of a serious scholarly contemplation on art and poetry, indicating they viewed the *Defence* as a valuable work of critical inquiry. This in turn demonstrates how verse satire developed into a more refined and intellectual tool to perform and engage in literary criticism.

Textual dialogues II: forming critical narratives

As well as shaping the experiences of eighteenth-century readers as shown above, Scrope's *In Defence of Satyr* also had an immediate impact on Restoration audiences, especially Rochester, who would retaliate with *On the Supposed Author of a late poem in Defence of Satyr* (1676). At this point Rochester abandons the polite, gentlemanly manner represented by the Horatian genre and turns to outright ridicule, utilising a harsher satirical language as shown in his depiction of Scrope: 'A lump deform'd, and shapeless wert thou born' (l.11).⁶⁵⁸ Rochester perhaps felt such a response was necessary given that under Charles' court, as Hooley notes, 'reputation and the manners of self-presentation were all', and that 'Rochester knew it was not a nice place to be. His poems are rife with that knowledge, with disgust, disillusionment, contempt, self-loathing'.⁶⁵⁹ Indeed, he appears vexed at Scrope's assault on his social activities and libertine philosophy, and so retorts with his own barrage upon Scrope's failed sexual endeavours, proclaiming: 'Harsh to the Ear hideous to the sight,/Yet love's thy business, Beauty thy delight' (ll.14-5), and that 'every comeing Mayd, when you appeare/Starts back for shame, and strait turns chaste for fear' (ll.25-6). Scrope's romantic pursuits throughout the period became infamous. His courtship of Cary Frazier was a debacle on multiple fronts; not only were her extravagant expenses beyond his means, but it also transpired she had been secretly married to Charles, Viscount Mordaunt, since 1675.⁶⁶⁰ A futile attempt to woo Nell Gwyn followed, who in a letter dated June 1678 wrote to Lawrence Hyde that 'he [Scrope] could not live always at this rate & so begune to be a little uncivil which I could not suffer from an ugly baux garcon'. The affair was later referenced in a scurrilous libel of 1682, wherein the anonymous author states 'Poor Nelly [...]/Though she exposed her poor defunct Sir Carr,/She'd

⁶⁵⁸ Rochester, *Works*, p.106-7.

⁶⁵⁹ Hooley, 'Alluding to Satire', p.271.

⁶⁶⁰ See Wilson, *Court Wits*, pp.116-7.

now be glad o'th' brother of Dunbar' (ll.15-6).⁶⁶¹

Drawing on these fruitless endeavours in his own satire, Rochester implies the true motivation behind Scrope's remarks stem from his own sexual impotence, and in so doing untangles the *Defence's* attempts to conflate libertine philosophy with poetic decadence. Moreover, the *Supposed Author* would in fact invert this premise by ridiculing Scrope's attempted love lyrics: 'And all those awkward follies that express/Thy Loathsome love, and filthy Daintiness' (ll.19-20). The awkwardness of Scrope's poetic expressions arise – in a comically grotesque and unnaturally way – from his putrid efforts in love. These sentiments are later echoed by Buckingham in *A Familiar Epistle*, who writes of Scrope 'For when his Passion, has beene bubling long,/The Scumm at last boyles up into a Song' (ll.51-2) – drawing on the same lewd imagery, particularly the crude innuendo on bodily fluid in 'Scumm at last boyles'. Both poets consequently insist that bad poetry actually stems from unrequited love and sexual impotence, implicitly suggesting that in order to write both persuasively and well, one must embrace libertine ideals, thus conflating libertinism with poetic excellence. In this way, as we have already seen in the *Allusion*, Rochester's *Supposed Author* was not simply an empty, vindictive lampoon, but rather an impassioned subscription to, and defence of, certain ideological principles that were at risk of rapidly dissipating.

While the *Supposed Author* deals with Scrope's attack upon the libertine-driven social behaviour of the court wits, its initial concern is with literary matters, specifically Scrope's use of the satirical medium:

To Rack and torture thy unmeaning brain
In *Satyrs* Praise, to a low untuned strain,
In Thee was most Impertinent and vain (l.1-3).

The text is primarily motivated by Scrope's assuming and subsequent misappropriation of verse satire – highlighting again the increasingly self-reflective nature of Restoration satire and the extent to which poets preoccupied themselves with establishing a new set of theoretical principles for the genre. Rochester's criticism is twofold, attacking Scrope first for his attempts to claim authority over satire, and secondly, that in the process of doing so, has only managed to produce a verse of 'low untuned strain'. This lyrical deficiency is heightened by the verbs 'rack' and 'torture', suggesting Scrope had no claims to natural poetic talent and was devoid of the easy wit and sparkling conversation typical of the court wits, which are here viewed as prerequisites for the production of satirical verses. In writing the *Supposed Author*, Rochester

⁶⁶¹ Wilson, *Court Satires of the Restoration*, p.82.

was also responding directly to Scrope's Horace imitation, and so we may assume that part of his criticism is directed towards Scrope's appropriation of the Horatian genre, which he describes as being 'impertinent and vain'. While 'vain' obviously indicates failure, 'impertinent' implies Rochester felt Scrope was reaching beyond his social and literary station, and was attempting to assume a classical tradition to which he had no rightful claim. As such, he treats satire as an exclusive mode of poetry accessible only to a select, worthy few, and from which Scrope is clearly precluded. Crucially, all of this betrays a deeper anxiety from the court wits that their dominion over the realm of satirical manuscripts was beginning to wane. Rochester clearly viewed Scrope's efforts to re-define the literary values of satire in the *Defence* as a threat not only to his own poetic hegemony, but also to the textual vehicle through which the wits regulated and imposed their own literary ideologies. The *Supposed Author's* dislocation of Scrope from the satirical tradition thus demonstrates how there was a critical battle for control over the satirical medium, which was perceived as a fundamental instrument in shaping, and indeed re-shaping, Restoration poetical values. Rochester's attempts to delineate a new theoretical model for verse satire can therefore be seen as part of a wider strategy to reclaim dominion over the genre, and in turn over the entire English literary landscape.

As previously noted, the tone and language of the *Supposed Author* is measurably harsher compared to Rochester's and Scrope's earlier Horatian imitations. Rochester points out the irony in Scrope's theoretical discussions of satire given that he himself represents the living embodiment of satirical ridicule, declaring that his very existence is divinely crafted for the purposes of being mocked: 'in thy person we more clerely see/That *Satyr's* of Divine Authority/For God made one a man when he made Thee' (ll.4-6). This contradiction is mirrored at the end of the poem, wherein Scrope is depicted as being comprised of multiple halves: 'Halfe witty, and halfe mad, and scare halfe brave;/Halfe honest, which is very much a knave' (ll.31-2). Rendered an impossible and unnatural paradox, Scrope is ridiculously stripped of all meaning, including his literary criticisms, which are reduced to illogical absurdities. Though Scrope would reply to Rochester's satire, his answer is more of a parting shot that comes in the form of a short epigram, titled *The Authors Reply*, before his withdrawal from the debate. The opening lines acknowledge the increased crudeness and uncivil manner of Rochester's satire, in which Scrope states 'Raile on, poor feeble scribler, speak of mee/In as bad Terms as the world speaks of Thee' (ll.1-2).⁶⁶² In Scrope's view, the 'bad Terms' (poetic language) pervading the *Supposed Author* degrades its value, reducing Rochester to a 'poor feeble scribbler' of ineffectual and transient verse. This would be reiterated in the closing line: 'Thy pen is full as harmless as thy sword' (l.5-6) – which can also be seen as a reference to the abortive duel between Rochester and

⁶⁶² Rochester, *Works*, p.107.

Mulgrave.⁶⁶³ Despite the nature of Scrope's criticism and his retirement from the manuscript conflict, Rochester would continue this textual dialogue and carry over the same ideas and tone from the *Supposed Author* into his next satire against Scrope, *On Poet Ninny* (1678).

Like the *Supposed Author*, *Poet Ninny* begins by lampooning Scrope's satirical style: 'But never Satyr, did soe softly bite' (l.3).⁶⁶⁴ Rochester's notion that a true satirist must express a greater sense of vigour and indignation brings his theories more in line with Juvenalian styles of writing, and somewhat anticipates Dryden's declared preference for Juvenal over Horace precisely because 'His Thoughts are sharper, his Indignation against Vice is more vehement'.⁶⁶⁵ This particular style not only stands opposed to the literary qualities previously defined by Scrope in the *Defence*, but also vindicates the harsher tone of Rochester's text. Indeed, in attacking Scrope for his vanity and pretences to elite social and literary practices – writing that 'For of all Folly, sure the very topp,/Is a conceited Ninny; and a Fopp' (l.21-2) – Rochester fulfils one of the principal criteria outlined by Dryden that justifies the deployment of satire, stating in the *Discourse* that one reason 'which may justifie a Poet, when he writes against a particular Person; and this is, when he becomes a Publick Nuisance'.⁶⁶⁶ In this way, Rochester's text can be seen as carrying out a vital cultural duty of exposing social and literary transgressions in order to uphold certain standards. This becomes particularly evident in the line 'Thou dost at once, a sad Example prove,/Of harmless Malice, and of hopeless Love' (ll.8-9). Once again conflating bad writing with sexual impotence, Rochester proclaims how Scrope's mode of satire, his 'harmless malice', sets a 'sad example' of poetical and satirical skill. By contrast, however, *Poet Ninny* consciously displays those qualities lacking in Scrope's satire, and embraces the severe indignation and intensity associated with Juvenalian satire, demonstrated in lines such as 'Borne to noe other, but thy owne disgrace,/Thou art a thing soe wretched, and soe base' (ll.5-6), as well as 'All Pride, and Ugliness! Oh how wee loath,/A nauseous Creature so compos'd of both' (ll.10-11) – with the multiple use of caesuras forcing the reader to pause and acknowledge each facet of Scrope's flaws. It thus becomes apparent that Rochester's method of satirical writing here emerges out of the need to differentiate his own brand of satire from the style practiced by Scrope, as *On Poet Ninny* comes to embody the form and function of its own critical arguments. Certainly, the ridicule of Scrope's satirical strength helped refine Rochester's own verse by forcing it to assume a more cutting tone and employ a sharper use of language.

These satirical exchanges, conducted through scribally produced manuscripts, thus form part of a theoretical dialogue in which the poetic qualities and cultural purposes of verse satire

⁶⁶³ See Johnson, *A Profane Wit*, p.121-4.

⁶⁶⁴ Rochester, *Works*, p.107.

⁶⁶⁵ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.65.

⁶⁶⁶ Dryden, *Works iv*, p.60.

were debated. Crucially, that these texts were both understood and read in such a way as to indicate a coherent critical narrative by Restoration audiences is evidenced by their manuscript transmission. Indeed, David Vieth identifies four of these satires as comprising a ‘linked group’, consisting of *Allusion*, *Defence*, *Supposed Author*, and *The Authors Reply*, all of which were gathered together in the order of their composition and circulated widely in manuscript before being printed together in the first edition of Rochester’s poems in 1680.⁶⁶⁷ He then adds how ‘the existence of a linked group is attested by early texts of the four satires. All four appear together in order in Harvard MS. Eng. 623F, Harvard MS. Eng. 636F, the Yale MS., and the Huntington edition’.⁶⁶⁸ The fact these texts circulated as part of a manuscript group strongly suggests that Restoration audiences perceived them as a credible source of literary knowledge and of articulating valuable insights into the nature of English poetry. In owning a manuscript copy of the complete set, readers could feel they not only had privileged access to such material, but that they also possessed comprehensive knowledge of the topical issues and theoretical disputes pervading current literary spheres, placing them at the forefront of Restoration literary culture, and, in the process, transforming the satires of Rochester and Scrope into valuable pieces of critical inquiry.

Far from being passive agents, however, it becomes apparent how the scribes and readers involved in the production and transmission of these manuscripts were themselves participating in the processes of literary criticism, demonstrated in the way they construct the reading order of each text. As Vieth notes, ‘without exception, every early source which mentions the third poem indicates that it satirizes the author of “In defence of Satry” [...] Also without exception, every early text of the fourth poem states that it answers the third’.⁶⁶⁹ Such annotations indicate how scribes and compilers identified the pieces as possessing both a cogent and linear critical argument that necessitated being read in a specific order. This would in turn shape the experiences of early modern audiences as they circulated in manuscript by implying how these works could be used as an introspective tool to trace the development of verse satire during this period. All of this illustrates the way in which satire evolved into a more self-reflective medium that not only helped inform and re-define the understandings and values of Restoration verse satire, but which enabled such works to transcend their immediate cultural conditions and function as more durable pieces of literary criticism.

The manuscript exchanges between Rochester and Scrope – including Rochester’s *Allusion* – therefore represents a culmination of texts that help chart the perception and

⁶⁶⁷ Vieth, *Attribution*, p.138.

⁶⁶⁸ Vieth, *Attribution*, p.152.

⁶⁶⁹ Vieth, *Attribution*, p.153.

progress of verse satire during the period. Not only do they reveal how the artistic and ideological values of Restoration satire fell into disrepute, they also show how writers of the age turned to satire itself as a vehicle to debate these issues. By examining more closely their intertextuality and sensibility to prevailing attitudes and theories, we can see how these texts form a continual critical dialogue, one that not only helped refine satire as a verse form, but which also helped shape the medium into a more sophisticated realm of ideas – one that offered a new mode of discourse enabling both writers and readers to engage in literary criticism.

Furthermore, their exchanges exhibit how the Horatian genre became a key battleground in determining who would gain authority over the realm of modern poetics. Indeed, by appropriating Horace's satire i.iv to respond to Rochester's own imitation of satire i.x, Scrope challenges the Earl's use of the Horatian genre to arbitrate on literary matters. In this way, Scrope's poem functions similarly to Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* (see chapter 4), albeit in a more direct fashion. This was compounded further by his decision to circulate the poem scribally, the same method employed by the court wits. As we have seen, Rochester responded fiercely to both these aspects of Scrope's text, lambasting his perceived usurpation of verse satire and ridiculing his attempts to re-define the genre. In this way, their textual dispute both echoes and encapsulates the anxieties expressed in *Advice to Apollo*: that there was not only an urgent need to establish a definitive set of satirical conventions, but to also regain control of the medium by confining it's composition to the aristocratic elite of the Restoration court. It therefore becomes apparent that, implicit within these satirical manuscripts, is the cultural status of verse satire itself, which is perceived as a vital instrument in controlling, regulating, and shaping modern literary values, and one which was subjected to increasing theoretical scrutiny and competition for its usage.

Afterword

As the Restoration period progressed, it becomes apparent that a correlation exists between the increasingly self-reflective nature of English literary culture and the development of verse satire as a medium through which to engage in, and perform, literary criticism.

A significant aspect in the development of this satirical practice can be seen as stemming directly from Horace, especially the *Ars Poetica*. As the first chapter shows, Horace's text maintained a constant presence in the imagination of seventeenth-century readers and writers, and was sustained in the Restoration period by a number of translations all seeking to appropriate Horatian precepts for their own ideological purposes. Their primary motivation concerned the continual refinement and progression of English literature, an exercise that became linked to advances in the art of translation itself. By employing different methods of translation to address their immediate cultural and literary needs, each translation of the *Ars Poetica* by Pordage, Roscommon, and Oldham embodies the artistic imperatives outlined by Alexander Brome in his 1666 edition of Horace's works, who advocates the perpetual improvement of classical translation in order to allow Horace to be continually recast into an English idiom that was self-reflectively preoccupied with improving its own culture. Horace's text thus symbolised a code of practice for Restoration authors, one whose values and ideals continued to be used as a paradigm for literary aesthetics and modes of decorum, and whose multiple translations – varying from the rigidly 'metaphrase' to the loose 'imitation' (to borrow Dryden's terms) – showcased how Horace could be used to elucidate and enhance contemporary English poetics.

This influence of Horace was simultaneously accompanied by the broader Restoration preoccupation of trying to re-create, or re-define, the values, forms, and practices of contemporary literature. This in turn resulted in a new critical lexis and emergent vocabulary that would underpin Restoration literary theory, and which centred specifically on notions of 'wit', 'art', 'nature', 'judgement', 'observation', and 'reason'. Crucially, it becomes apparent that many of these terms came to be conceptualised and defined in relation to the ideas outlined in the *Ars Poetica*. However, the idiosyncratic nature of Horace's poem made it difficult for authors to establish a definitive understanding of these terms, exhibited clearly in the critical essays by Dryden and Shadwell. Closer examination of the dramatic principles expressed in Shadwell's prefatory essays reveals not only how the instability of this poetic language manifested itself within broader literary debates, but also sheds new light on the often neglected role Shadwell played in contributing to the scholarly delineation of their poetical meaning. To be sure, by engaging through careful intertextual reference the theoretical vocabulary used in Restoration dramatic criticism, Shadwell challenged the somewhat linear and static hierarchy Dryden

initially prescribed to 'wit', 'humour', and 'judgement' in the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, offering instead a more fluid model that sought to re-conceptualise the artistic value and creative application of these terms. In so doing, Shadwell, like Dryden, regularly turned to the *Ars Poetica* to not only validate his assertions, but to subsume Horatian precepts into his own theoretical arguments. Moreover, by exploring the increasingly competitive manner in which Horace was appropriated by Dryden and Shadwell, we gain new insights into how the Horatian genre itself came to be fiercely contested by writers and critics, who viewed it as a key vehicle through which to control the values of contemporary poetics and to assert their authority over the domain of English letters – a contest that would be more brutally waged in the satirical manuscript exchanges between Rochester and Scrope a few years later.

As evidenced by the Dryden-Shadwell debate in the 1660s and early 1670s, it was the printed essay which offered authors a new textual space to express and disseminate their opinions to a wider audience, allowing them to simultaneously present an evolving self-portraiture of themselves as a leading authority on literary matters. Such essays were informed by notions of humility and decorum, qualities which were themselves rooted in the Horatian ideal in the quest to establish a more enlightened arena of theoretical debate. Dryden and Shadwell would follow this formula obediently in their initial prefatory exchanges; however, Dryden would eventually break this sequence by transferring their theoretical debate from the printed medium into the underground world of satirical manuscripts when he composed *Mac Flecknoe* in 1676. In doing so, Dryden's text at once helps illustrate the way verse satire encompasses the emergent critical lexis of the Restoration, as well as demonstrate how the satirical medium itself acquired a new mode of discourse. We can see this in the way Dryden employs an intertextual web of religious, biblical, and literary allusion, the effect of which is twofold. Indeed, not only does it sharpen *Mac Flecknoe's* satirical criticisms as Dryden skilfully subverts the theoretical language and concepts underpinning Shadwell's dramatic arguments, it also creates an intricately layered discursive space that transforms the satire into a multi-faceted site of literary criticism. With its high-Virgilian style and ironically charged heroic couplets, the mock-heroic genre encapsulated by *Mac Flecknoe* was subsequently considered by Dryden as signifying a more elevated, refined, and noble form of verse satire.

We may ask, however, what initially led Dryden to the scribal world of satirical manuscript? One explanation may stem from the fact that Dryden recognized the influence such manuscripts had over the imagination of Restoration London. In this way, *Mac Flecknoe* can be seen as embracing the new literary qualities and cultural purposes of Restoration verse satire that are expressed in Samuel Butler's private commonplace books. Butler's writings, which have received very little attention by modern scholarship, provide invaluable insights into the development of verse satire as a medium of literary criticism during this period. Acting as a site

of convergence, we see in his private reflections how the emergent critical vocabulary permeating Restoration literary theory becomes intertwined with his re-imagining of the broader cultural function of satirical manuscripts. Rejecting the realm of print for its deceitful and self-aggrandizing nature, Butler champions clandestine verse satire not only as a more honest, universal, and witty articulation of principle, but which also came to possess a new poetic sensibility, all of which helped transform the satirical medium into the preeminent mode of critical discourse. This is also reflected in the series of 'sessions' satires. Originally utilized by Suckling, the 'sessions' format offered both a new textual and critical model for the Restoration court wits to enforce their ideological values onto English literary culture, part of which involved controlling the literary reputation of authors, especially the growing tribe of professional playwrights emanating from the town. In so doing, they locate the intellectual processes of literary criticism – which became increasingly bound to elite forms of sociality – within exclusive networks of scribally transmitted manuscripts.

A second factor for electing to circulate *Mac Flecknoe* scribally, then, can be viewed as a conscious effort by Dryden to seize the same literary apparatus traditionally used by the aristocratic court wits to maintain their hegemony over England's literary landscape, and as a way of demonstrating what could be achieved with the genre. This can itself be seen as a consequence of the growing factional divisions between the amateur wits of the court and the professional playwrights of the town. This usurpation of the satirical medium was also expressed in the theatres themselves, as Restoration playwrights began experimenting with dramatic framing texts as a tool to engage in literary criticism. Indeed, we have seen how the likes of Dryden and Davenant set out to cultivate new audiences and arenas of discourse in a series of linked prologues and epilogues that blurred the boundaries between performance and print, elevating the format into a more enduring mode of criticism. Despite Buckingham's attempt to subvert the format with his own satirical prologue attacking Dryden, he appears to have only galvanised town playwrights like Lee and Otway, who channelled that satirical energy into their own framing texts as part of a strategy to undermine the court's prerogative whilst asserting their own literary authority. By re-evaluating how these texts were conceived as works of formal verse satire, we can see how they form part of the broader Restoration phenomenon wherein satire acquired a new mode of discourse that facilitated literary criticism.

This phenomenon, however, did not go unnoticed by those Restoration readers and writers. Rather, it prompted a re-thinking of the current state of Restoration satire, with fears that the present proliferation of satirical verses had not only degraded the genre, but that there was also an urgent need to confine its uses to an exclusive coterie of poets who were deemed worthy. At the same time, there was also a broader analysis on the current conditions of Restoration manuscript culture itself, specifically concerning the role played by scribes in the

production and transmission of satirical manuscripts. Reflecting back on the Restoration years in 1693 in his *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*, Dryden laments the degenerated state in which he viewed satire to have fallen, caused by an unrelenting flood of witless lampoons, and attempts to elevate satire's artistic and moral qualities by re-establishing its classical heritage – specifically through Horace and Juvenal. Critically, while these issues of transmission, aesthetics, and morality would preoccupy the critical thinking of Restoration poets and critics themselves, they do so by employing verse satire itself, which becomes a self-reflective tool capable of serious poetic introspection. For example, we have seen how the professional scribe 'Captain' Robert Julian was transformed into a literary symbol, creating a new and relatively unexplored sub-genre of Restoration satire that writers utilised to not only assess their immediate literary circumstances, but to also reflect on the production and transmission of their own texts. Likewise, the satirical exchanges between Rochester and Scrope are concerned with establishing a more refined understanding of the social and artistic values of verse satire. In both of these examples, it becomes apparent that a unique reciprocity emerges between satire and literary theory, one which sees Restoration verse satire develop out of the self-reflective arguments of its own form and function. Consequently, by encompassing prevailing literary ideologies and attitudes, verse satire is at once able to evolve into a more refined artform that simultaneously allows it to function as more intellectual mode of critical discourse.

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