division much more frankly than do his rationalizings as we paraphrase those works. His heroic plays and his odes are pure Baroque — though in the odes he willfully goes his Pindaric way. On the other hand, his prose is the first modern prose; even while he argues for Baroque ornamentation in the drama — the encrustation of rhyme, as we read in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* — he writes in the middle style of which he is the first master. Finally, his political and religious poems exhibit in purpose, ideas, and technique Dryden’s ambivalence, never fully resolved, except on a religious and hence other-worldly plane, an ambivalence that he confesses as an old man at the end of his life in his last poem, *The Secular Masque*:

’T is well an old age is out,  
And time to begin a new.

**Theseus Grown Old**

The ground is no longer firm under his feet,  
while the village encompasses him like a city;  
neighbors’ houses shimmer and vanish, mirages only.  
Slowly he makes his way in the afternoon downtown to the newsstand (but nothing happens now) and the post office (but no one writes letters any more).  
Strangers live on the street beside him, and children, enemies, jeer at him; boys were different in his day, playing hare-and-hounds over the mountains, (he calls to them now) slashing Mrs. Grimby’s clothesline on Hallowe’en, throwing old shoes at weddings . . . Where is his young wife? The girl with long blond hair passes by, unseeing, crosses under a traffic light, hurries on. Is it she?  
O what town is this, what country? Footsteps pound close behind him, and Something whispers, *Why, this is the Labyrinth.*

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