

Two Lovers: Donne and Rochester

Sam Gilchrist Hall

John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647–1680)

- Libertine, Restoration “wit”
- Extremely brave in battle
- Favourite of Charles II: “We have a pretty witty king,/Whose word no man relies on,/He never said a foolish thing,/ And never did a wise one.
- Lover of Nell Gwyn
- Dies at 33 (of various STIs), with a deathbed conversion to Anglicanism (see Rev. Burnett, *Some Passages of the Life and Death of the Honourable John Wilmot Earl of Rochester* (1681))

John Donne (1572–1631)

- Crypto-catholic
- Womaniser and wit
- Educated at Oxford and Inns of Court, travels
- “he returned not back into England till he had stayed some years, first in [Italy](#), and then in Spain, where he made many useful observations of those countries, their laws and manner of government, and returned perfect in their languages” Isaak Walton.
- Promising diplomatic career ruined by falling in love with Anne More
- Imprisonment and exiled writing of *Biathanatos* (1608)
- 1621 Dean of St Pauls
- 1631 *Death's Duel*

John
Wilmot
Earl of
Rochester
Ob: July 26.
. 1680.

Grandson to S^t John

S^t John Bar^{on}.



The Imperfect Enjoyment

Naked she lay, clasped in my longing arms,
I filled with love, and she all over charms;
Both equally inspired with eager fire,
Melting through kindness, flaming in desire.
With arms, legs, lips close clinging to
embrace,
She clips me to her breast, and sucks me to
her face.
Her nimble tongue, love's lesser lightning,
played
Within my mouth, and to my thoughts
conveyed
Swift orders that I should prepare to throw
The all-dissolving thunderbolt below.
My fluttering soul, sprung with the pointed
kiss,
Hangs hovering o'er her balmy brinks of
bliss.
But whilst her busy hand would guide that
part
Which should convey my soul up to her
heart,
In liquid raptures I dissolve all o'er,
Melt into sperm, and spend at every pore.
A touch from any part of her had done 't:
Her hand, her foot, her very look's a cunt.
Smiling, she chides in a kind murmuring
noise,
And from her body wipes the clammy joys,
When, with a thousand kisses wandering
o'er
My panting bosom, "Is there then no more?"
She cries. "All this to love and rapture's due;

Must we not pay a debt to pleasure too?"
But I, the most forlorn, lost man alive,
To show my wished obedience vainly strive:
I sigh, alas! and kiss, but cannot swive.
Eager desires confound my first intent,
Succeeding shame does more success
prevent,
And rage at last confirms me impotent.
Ev'n her fair hand, which might bid heat
return
To frozen age, and make cold hermits burn,
Applied to my dear cinder, warms no more
Than fire to ashes could past flames restore.
Trembling, confused, despairing, limber,
dry,
A wishing, weak, unmoving lump I lie.
This dart of love, whose piercing point, oft
tried,
With virgin blood ten thousand maids has
dyed,
Which nature still directed with such art
That it through every cunt reached every
heart—
Stiffly resolved, 'twould carelessly invade
Woman or man, nor ought its fury stayed:
Where'er it pierced, a cunt it found or made
—
Now languid lies in this unhappy hour,
Shrunk up and sapless like a withered
flower.
Thou treacherous, base deserter of my
flame,
False to my passion, fatal to my fame,
Through what mistaken magic dost thou
prove

So true to lewdness, so untrue to love?
What oyster-cinder-beggar-common whore
Didst thou e'er fail in all thy life before?
When vice, disease, and scandal lead the
way,
With what officious haste doest thou obey!
Like a rude, roaring hector in the streets
Who scuffles, cuffs, and justles all he meets,
But if his king or country claim his aid,
The rakehell villain shrinks and hides his
head;
Ev'n so thy brutal valor is displayed,
Breaks every stew, does each small whore
invade,
But when great Love the onset does
command,
Base recreant to thy prince, thou dar'st not
stand.
Worst part of me, and henceforth hated
most,
Through all the town a common fucking
post,
On whom each whore relieves her tingling
cunt
As hogs on gates do rub themselves and
grunt,
Mayst thou to ravenous chancres be a prey,
Or in consuming weepings waste away;
May strangury and stone thy days attend;
May'st thou never piss, who didst refuse to
spend
When all my joys did on false thee depend.
And may ten thousand abler pricks agree
To do the wronged Corinna right for thee.



The Sun Rising

Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school boys and sour prentices,
Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long;
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.

She's all states, and all princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus.
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;

This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.

The Apparition

When by thy scorn, O murd'ress, I am dead
And that thou think'st thee free
From all solicitation from me,
Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,
And thee, feign'd vestal, in worse arms shall see;
Then thy sick taper will begin to wink,
And he, whose thou art then, being tir'd before,
Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think
Thou call'st for more,
And in false sleep will from thee shrink;
And then, poor aspen wretch, neglected thou
Bath'd in a cold quicksilver sweat wilt lie
A verier ghost than I.
What I will say, I will not tell thee now,
Lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent,
I had rather thou shouldst painfully repent,
Than by my threat'nings rest still innocent.

Holy Sonnet 19

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begot
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vows, and in devotion.
As humorous is my contrition
As my profane love, and soon forgot:
As riddlingly distempered, cold and hot,
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
I durst not view heaven yesterday; and today
In prayers and flattering speeches I court God:
Tomorrow I quake with true fear of his rod.
So my devout fits come and go away
Like a fantastic ague; save that here
Those are my best days, when I shake with feare.