

Second earl of rochester



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The satirists shared a talent for making other individuals feel uncomfortable, particularly by making them aware of their own moral inadequacies. They used irony, derision, and wit to attack human vice or folly. One method the satirist utilized to catch their readers' attention, while also making them feel uncomfortable, was to describe those things that were deemed inappropriate to discuss openly in society. The classical example of a topic that was discussed behind closed doors, yet the satirist used freely, was sex. Mention of such things as sex can always bring a giggle, excite feelings of hidden passion, or make one's cheeks rosy from embarrassment. John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester, and Jonathan Swift, were two satirist that were noted for using perverse language and graphic depictions to elicit desired emotions from their readers and to wage their attacks on human folly. To understand Rochester's use of sex in his work, one must understand his distaste for reason. This can be seen in his poem, A Satyr Against Mankind, when he comments: " Women and Men of wit, are dang'rous tools, and ever fatal to admiring fools." Rochester viewed reason as a vice rather than an admirable trait in man. When man followed a course of action that was advised by reason he turned into a coward who often betrayed his ideals, his family, and his friends. Rochester believed that to enjoy true happiness one must follow a course dictated by passion. Unlike reason, the passions do not betray one's senses and ideals. According to Rochester, the passions define who an individual is because the passions encompass one's emotions and desires. Reason cannot fully comprehend such a thing. Rochester highlights this belief in his poem's with tales of lust and sexual innuendoes. He uses perverse language and topics not only to mock those that believe reason is the human faculty that can bring about self-satisfaction, but also to describe

to his readers that sensual pleasure is the highest pleasure because sensual pleasure is derived from passion, not reason. Rochester's poems rarely discuss love in the traditional sense; rather, he discusses it in a bodily context. Naturally, this would bring about the ire in any moralist. His poems make reference to ancient figures that draw on images of mass orgies and debauchery. He often uses language that elicits images of human genitalia. In his works, he even discusses how an individual's sexual drive cannot be satisfied or how an individual cannot perform sexually. In Rochester's *Upon His Drinking a Bowl*, Rochester joins the aspect of alcohol with that of sex: Cupid, and Bacchus, my Saints are, May drink, and Love, still reign, With Wine, I wash away my cares, And then to Cunt again. This attitude of sex and drunkenness is often associated with the ancient Greeks and Romans, who Rochester makes reference to through Cupid and Bacchus. The wine serves as a tool to rid oneself of their grasp on reason. It often drives away the feeling of anxiety that often exist between a man and women during times of intimacy. It allows one to satisfy their bodily pleasure. The graphic word "Cunt" not only serves as a symbol of sex and the female genitalia but is also used to bring about the disgust of any moralist or any rational individual. A reasonable man would like to think that men do not view sex and women in such a derogatory manner. According to Rochester, this is not so. Men are crude creatures that do think of sex and women in such a manner.

Rochester's *The Imperfect Enjoyment* is an amusing tale of man's greatest fear - premature ejaculation: Smiling, she chides in a kind murm'ring Noise, And from her Body wipes the clammy joys; When a Thousand Kisses, wander'ring o're My panting Bosome, - is there then no more? ... Apply'd to my dead Cinder, warms no more, Than Fire to Ashes, cou'd past Flames

restore. Trembling, confus'd, despairing, limber, dry, A wishing, weak, unmoving lump The man in this poem is so excited by the exotic allure of his female companion that he climaxes before the sexual moment ever begins. He then gets frustrated that he can not get a repeated erection that instantaneous moment. This poem amuses most readers because most men and women understand the man and most likely the woman's frustration. This poem also serves to symbolize the power of imagination and passion. Imagination and passion can carry a person to the point of sensual ecstasy and agony. It can also serve to destroy a man's pride. A reasonable man would like to think he could suppress his exotic thoughts so that he can perform well sexually. This is not so. Man is not a reasonable creature; he is a passionate one. Rochester's Signior Dildo tells the tale of a woman who plays on the foolishness of her male admirers for the simple use of their bodies: Our dainty fine Dutchesse's have got a Trick To Doat on a Fool, for the Sake of his Prick... The use of the word Dildo in the title is clever and appropriate because a dildo is a simulation of the male penis that women use for masturbation. The woman in this poem is using the male simply for his penis. Rochester also uses other words in this poem that conjure up images of the male penis such as: prick, thumb, carrot, and candle. This poem also draws on the imperfections of women. Women cannot self-subsist. They need the aid of men to satisfy their sensual pleasures. Like men, they do not proceed with sexual intercourse out of respect and an adoring love for their partner. They proceed with sexual intercourse because their partner can satisfy them sensually. Rochester has an almost Hobbesian view towards human nature. He believes that men are naturally selfish and governed by the passions. Men and women do not perform actions for the well being of

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their neighbor. Men and women perform actions because they are self-interested and the actions they do perform they believe will result in their benefit. Through his poem, Rochester is making jest at the moralist belief that man is governed by the faculty of reason and therefore acts in the best interest of the community. He does this by using the most powerful image of all - sex. His crude language and graphic images surely catch the attention of any reader and draws the wrath of any moralist. His words mock the very foundation of the moralist belief system. Like Rochester, Swift's uses foul images and crude language to heighten his attacks on the modern's view of progress. Swift admired the passion and imagination of the ancient world. He believed modern thoughts, particularly science, inhibited imagination and passion. He did not believe reason and science advanced society; rather, he believed such things stifled society's growth. His words were the fist that swung at the order that modern institutions attempted to force on society and culture. Similar to Rochester's style, Swift drew on images that a modern and progressive society would disdain. His masterpiece, Gulliver's Travels, contain many such images. When he is fourteen, Gulliver is taken in by a surgeon, Mr. James Bates. Mr. Bates served as Gulliver's master for four years. A more fitting title for Mr. Bates would then be Master Bates. Gulliver does later refer to his overseer as the " good master Mr. Bates." It does not take much effort of even the purest of minds to derive masturbate from " Master Bates." This is Swift's method of adding humor to his tale, while agitating " proper" individuals of that time. The surgeon's title can be seen as a derogatory reference to all those involved with science at the time. " Mr. Bates" can also be interpreted on a deeper level. Masturbation is of course a means of self-satisfaction. Swift felt those involved with science were too

self-absorbed that they could not possibly be aware of the world around them. The modern mind was a self-interested mind. It did not care for the interest of other individuals nor did it share in their passions. They could not possibly seek and find satisfaction from other individuals. Any satisfaction could only come from their own progress or what they termed as "progress." When Gulliver is stranded on shore by a storm a farmer takes him in. Gulliver describes the inhabitants of this strange land and compares them to his native England. One of the more striking descriptions is of a nurse milking a child. Swift could have used many ways to draw out a comparison between women, but he used a description that he knew would elicit a reaction. He used the breast. Gulliver describes the nurse's breast as "Monstrous." He continued: "It (the breast) stood prominent six foot, and could not be less than sixteen in circumference. The nipple was about half the bigness of my head, and the hue both of that and the dug so varified with spots, pimples, and freckles, that could appear more Nauseous: for I had a near sight of her." A bare breast would offend any proper gentlemen or women; yet, Swift realizes that there is a curiosity, even in the most reasonable of individuals, in a description of the private anatomy. There is an inner desire in every individual to know what others are hiding under their clothes and Swift plays on this desire because reasoned creatures are not suppose to have such thoughts and are ashamed to admit if they do. Swift also amuses the reader with Gulliver's scientific description of the breast. A normal male might respond with such a reply as: "Wow! Get a load of those huge knockers and those silver dollar nipples." Others might describe them as "robust." Gulliver has to use numerical comparisons. Swift is mocking the modern minds scientific approach to describing every facet of life, even the most intimate.

It was not long after Gulliver's description that he tells the readers that the mistress of the farm led him into nature where he "discharged the necessities of nature." He later remarks: "I hope the gentle reader will excuse me for dwelling on these and the like particulars, which however insignificant they may appear to groveling vulgar minds, yet will certainly help a philosopher to enlarge his thoughts and imagination, and apply them to the benefit of public as well as private life, which is the sole design in presenting this and other accounts to the world; wherein I have been chiefly studious of truth, without affecting any ornaments of learning or of style" Swift could not have used a more grotesque and offensive representation of his view of scientific advancement than that of excrement. While many readers may chuckle at such an image, a scientist would be overwhelmed with rage. Gulliver is telling the world, in a serious tone, that his deification in nature will help enlighten the world. Swift realizes that no individual takes a serious interest in another man's bowel movement and would rather that person keep such happenings to themselves. Swift is poking fun at the seriousness by which scientist approach their study. Swift believes these men are consumed by minute facts that will in no manner bring about a revelation in truth or thought. Swift's most piercing jest occurs when Gulliver declares that a study of his feces is a study of truth. Scientist appear to be more ridiculous when Gulliver explains to the reader that it is the "grovelling vulgar minds" that find such incidents to be insignificant. Gulliver is telling the reader that it is the vulgar and uneducated minds that take no interest in such repulsive study as that of the study of feces; yet, the scientist takes great interest and will ensure that they will share their findings with enlightened ones around the world. Swift managed to transform the

prestigious study of science into the laughable pursuit of inconsequential facts with one vulgar description. Swift continued his ridicule of scientist with another tale involving Gulliver's excrement. Using modern math, Gulliver calculated the quantity of water he would need to consume to extinguish a fire. With a sense of pride and satisfaction, he managed to extinguish the fire in three minutes. Swift is turning the scientific world and its exploits into a comedy that should be performed on stage. Urinating contests are for junior high boys expressing their testosterone levels during bathroom breaks, not for mature intellectuals. In a vulgar and witty way, Swift is again calling into question the relevance of scientific study. This incident can also be viewed on a symbolic level of what Swift believes the modern world is doing to society, particularly feeling and emotion. The waste of the modern mind, which Swift would label as science and math, is extinguishes the fires of passion, emotion, and imagination. These were the fires that raged in the ancient world and Swift believes they should have raged during his time. Gulliver and the scientist, however, were of a different mindset and continually see their excrement as progress not destruction. Swift also uses perverse images in Gulliver's Travels to express the lack of lust, feeling, and emotion in the modern world. " The handsomest among these Maids of Honor, a pleasant frolicsome girl of sixteen, would sometimes set me astride upon one of her nipples, with many other tricks wherein the reader will excuse me for not being over particular. but I was so much displeased that I entreated Glumdalclitch to contrive some excuse for not seeing that young lady any more." Through Gulliver, Swift is mocking the modern world's lack of lust for pleasure and the exotic. He is not necessarily condoning widespread eroticism, but he is noting the lack of passion and emotion in the

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world. Most men fanaticize about a beautiful naked woman caressing them. Gulliver does not because these ladies are not like the "proper" girls in England. Gulliver finds such erotic and passionate acts as repulsive. The graphic and perverse images that Swift leaves for his readers in Gullivers Travels not only excite the attention of the reader but they also leave the reader with a very pessimistic impression of the modern world. If Gulliver had left a description of a pile of soil instead of his urination procedure, the reader would perhaps view his work as boring, but not as comedic or repulsive. The tales would have lost their derogatory tone, their satirical edge, and their comedic nature had Swift not used such images. Such images and language are a unique element of satirical writing. Satirist wanted to attack the vices of the community and impress an image on their readers. They, however, could not accomplish this through bland social commentary. Every literary style has certain tools to capture its audiences. The romantics used fruitful language and supernatural images. The realist used images and words that photographed how life really was. The satirist used wit, irony, sarcasm, as well as crude images and language. If they failed to use these tools then their attacks were not heeded and their words were not remembered. Rochester and Swift did not fail to use their satirical qualities and their impression on the literary world remains to this day.