

A Ramble in St. James's Park

You will not be surprised to learn that this has long been one of Rochester's most notorious poems. It was often left out of editions of his work until recent decades because of its extraordinarily frank sexual language. Rochester means to shock, of course; he knows exactly what he is doing, and what effect his words will have. Completely disregarding the boundaries of polite discourse, he implicitly claims his right, even his obligation, to speak the truth about what was really going on in this seemingly-pastoral space.

Rochester has a specific target in mind, a 1661 poem by Edmund Waller entitled ["A Poem on St. James's Park as lately improved by his majesty"](#), which offers an idealized version of the park, a formerly marshy area near the royal palace that became a park in the sixteenth century. In the early 1660s, Charles II turned the area into a formal garden, on the model of the French gardens that had impressed him when he was living in exile there. Where Waller flatters Charles II for having transformed the area into a kind of paradise, Rochester reveals the seamy underside of the sexual assignations that were apparently also commonplace there.

Much wine had passed, with grave discourse
Of who Fucks who, and who does worse
Such as you usually do hear
From those that diet at the *Bear*,
When I who still take care to see
Drunkenness Reliev'd by Lechery,
Went out into Saint. James's Park
To coole my head and fire my heart.
But tho' Saint James has th' honor on 't,
'Tis consecrate to Prick and Cunt. 10
There, by a most incestuous Birth,

Strange woods spring from the Teeming Earth;
For they Relate how heretofore,
When auncient Pict began to whore,
Deluded of his Assignation 15
(Jylting it seems was then in fashion),
Poor pensive Lover, in this place
Would frigg upon his Mothers face
Whence Rowes of Mandrakes tall did rise
Whose lewd Tops Fuckt the very skies. 20
Each imitative branch does twine
In some lov'd fold of Aretine,
And nightly now beneath their shade
Are Buggeries, Rapes, and Incests made.
Unto this all-sin-sheltering Grove 25
Whores of the Bulk, and the Alcove,
Great Ladies, Chamber Mayds, and Drudges,
The Ragg picker, and Heiress Trudges.
Carrmen, Divines, Great Lords, and Taylors,
Prentices, Poets, Pimps, and Gaolers, 30
Footmen, Fine Fops, doe here arrive,
And here promiscuously they swive.
Along these hallowed walks it was
That I beheld *Corinna* pass.
Whoever had been by to see 35
The prowd disdain she cast on Mee
Through charming eies he would have swore
She dropped from Heaven that very Hour,
Forsakeing the Divine abode
In scorn of some despaireing God. 40
But mark what Creatures women are:
How infinitely vile when fair:
Three Knights o' the' Elboe and the Slurr
With wriggling tailes made up to her.
The first was of your *Whitehall* blades, 45
Near kin t' th' Mother of the Mayds;
Graced by whose favor he was able
To bring a friend t' th' Waiters' table,

Where he had heard *Sir Edward Sutton*
Say how the *King* loved *Banstead* mutton; 50
Since when hee'd neer be brought to eat
By 's good will any other meat.
In this as well as all the rest,
He ventures to doe like the best,
But wanting Common Sence, th' ingredient 55
In chooseing well not least expedient,
Converts abortive imitation
To universal affectation.
Thus he not only eats and talks
But feels and smells, sits down and walks, 60
Nay looks, and lives, and loves by Rote,
In an old Tawdry Birthday Coat.
The second was a Grays Inn wit,
A great Inhabiter of the Pitt
Where Critic-like he sitts and squints 65
Steales Pockett Handkerchers, and hints
From 's Neighbour and the Comedy
To Court and pay his Landlady.
The third, a Ladyes Eldest Son
Within few yeares of Twentyone 70
Who hopes from his propitious Fate,
Against he comes to his Estate,
By these Two Worthies to be made
A most accomplish'd tearing blade.
One, in a strain 'twixt Tune and Nonsense, 75
Cries Madam, I have lov'd you long since.
Permitt me your fair hand to kiss;
When at her Mouth her Cunt cries yes.
In short, without much more ado,
Joyfull and pleas'd away she flew, 80
And with these Three Confounded Asses
From Park to Hackney Coach she passes.
So a proud Bitch does lead about
Of humble Currs the Amorous Rout,
Who most obsequiously do hunt 85

The savory scent of salt swoln Cunt.
Some power more patient now Relate
The sense of this surpris'ing Fate.
Gods! that a thing admir'd by me
Shou'd fall to so much infamy. 90
Had she pickt out, to rub her Arse on
Some stiff prickt Clown or well hung Parson,
Each jobb of whose spermatique sauce
Had filled her Cunt with wholesome Juice,
I the proceeding should have prais'd 95
In hope sh' had quench'd a fire I rais'd.
Such naturall freedoms are but Just
There's something Genrous in meer lust.
But to turn a damn'd abandon'd Jade
When neither Head nor Tail perswade 100
To be a Whore in understanding
A passive pott for Fools to spend in!
The Devill play'd booty sure with Thee
To bring a blott on Infamy.
But why am I of all Mankind, 105
To so severe a Fate designed?
Ungrateful! Why this treachery
To humble fond believeing me,
Who gave you Priviledge above
The nice allowances of Love? 110
Did ever I refuse to bear
The meanest part your Lust could spare
When your lewd Cunt came spewing home
Drench'd with the seed of halfe the Town,
My dram of sperm was sup't up after 115
For the digestive surfeit water.
Full gorged at another time
With a vast meal of slime
Which your devouring Cunt had drawn
From Porters Backs and Footmens brawn, 120
I was content to serve you up
My Ballock full for your Grace cupp,

Nor ever thought it an abuse
While you had pleasure for excuse
You that could make my heart away 125
For noise and Colour and betray
The secretts of my tender houres
To such knight errant Paramours
When leaneing on your faithless breast,
Wrapt in security and rest 130
Soft kindness all my powers did move,
And Reason lay dissolv'd in Love.
May stinking vapours Choak your womb
Such as the Men you dote upon
May your depraved Appetite 135
That cou'd in whiffing Fools delight,
Begetg such Frenzies in your Mind
You may go madd for the North wind
And fixing all your hopes upont
To have him bluster in your Cunt, 140
Turn up your longing Arse to the Air
And perrish in a wild dispair.
But Cowards shall forget to rant,
School-Boyes to Frigg, old whores to paint;
The Jesuits Fraternity 145
Shall leave the use of Buggery;
Crab-louse inspir'd with Grace divine,
From Earthly Codd to Heaven shall climb;
Phisitions shall believe in Jesus,
And Disobedience ceace to please us, 150
E're I desist with all my Power
To plague this woman and undoe her.
But my Revenge will best be tim'd
When she is Married that is lym'd.
In that most lamentable state 155
I'll make her feel my scorn and hate:
Pelt her with scandalls, Truth or lies,
And her poor Cur with Jealousies
Till I have torn him from her Breech

While she whines like a Dogg-drawn Bitch; 160
Loath'd, and despised, Kick'd out o' th' Town
Into some dirty Hole alone
To chew the Cudd of misery
And know she owes it all to Mee.
And may no Woman better thrive
That dares prophane the Cunt I swive. 165