

Poems about Sexuality¹

The Imperfect Enjoyment (1680)

By John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester

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, [5]
She clips me to her breast, and sucks me to her face.
Her nimble tongue, Love's lesser lightening, played
Within my mouth, and to my thoughts conveyed
Swift orders that I should prepare to throw
The all-dissolving thunderbolt below. [10]
My fluttering soul, sprung with the painted 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, [15]
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, [20]
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, [25]
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. [30]
Ev'n her fair hand, which might bid heat return
To frozen age, and make cold hermits burn,
Applied to my dead cinder, warms no more
Than fire to ashes could past flames restore.
Trembling, confused, despairing, limber, dry, [35]
A wishing, weak, unmoving lump I lie.

¹ All texts in the public domain.

This dart of love, whose piercing point, oft tried,
With virgin blood ten thousand maids have dyed;
Which nature still directed with such art
That it through every cunt reached every heart — [40]
Stiffly resolved, 'twould carelessly invade
Woman or man, nor aught 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. [45]
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 [50]
Didst thou e'er fail in all thy life before?
When vice, disease, and scandal lead the way,
With what officious haste dost thou obey!
Like a rude, roaring hector in the streets
Who scuffles, cuffs, and justles all he meets, [55]
But if his king or country claim his aid,
The rakehell villain shrinks and hides his head;
Ev'n so thy brutal valour is displayed,
Breaks every stew, does each small whore invade,
But when great Love the onset does command, [60]
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 do rub themselves on gates and grunt, [65]
May'st thou to ravenous chancres be a prey,
Or in consuming weepings waste away;
May strangury and stone thy days attend;
May'st thou ne'er piss, who did refuse to spend
When all my joys did on false thee depend. [70]
And may ten thousand abler pricks agree
To do the wronged Corinna right for thee.

The Disappointment (1680)

By Aphra Behn

ONE day the amorous Lysander,
By an impatient passion swayed,

Surprised fair Cloris, that loved maid,
Who could defend herself no longer.
All things did with his love conspire; [5]
The gilded planet of the day,
In his gay chariot drawn by fire,
Was now descending to the sea,
And left no light to guide the world,
But what from Cloris' brighter eyes was hurled. [10]

In a lone thicket made for love,
Silent as a yielding maid's consent,
She with a charming languishment,
Permits his force, yet gently strove;
Her hands his bosom softly meet, [15]
But not to put him back designed,
Rather to draw him on inclined;
Whilst he lay trembling at her feet,
Resistance 'tis in vain to show;
She wants the power to say -- 'Ah! What d'ye do?' [20]

Her bright eyes sweet, and yet severe,
Where love and shame confusedly strive,
Fresh vigour to Lysander give;
And breathing faintly in his ear,
She cried -- 'Cease, cease -- your vain desire, [25]
Or I'll call out -- what would you do?
My dearer honour even to you
I cannot, must not give -- retire,
Or take this life, whose chiefest part
I gave you with the conquest of my heart.' [30]

But he as much unused to fear,
As he was capable of love,
The blessed minutes to improve,
Kisses her mouth, her neck, her hair;
Each touch her new desire alarms, [35]
His burning trembling hand he pressed
Upon her swelling snowy breast,
While she lay panting in his arms.
All her unguarded beauties lie
The spoils and trophies of the enemy. [40]

And now without respect or fear,

He seeks the object of his vows,
(His love no modesty allows)
By swift degrees advancing where
His daring hand that altar siezed, [45]
Where gods of love do sacrifice:
That awful throne, that paradise
Where rage is calmed, and anger pleased,
That fountain where delight still flows,
And gives the universal world repose. [50]

Her balmy lips encountering his,
Their bodies, as their souls, are joined;
Where both in transports unconfined
Extend themselves upon the moss.
Cloris half dead and breathless lay; [55]
Her soft eyes cast a humid light,
Such as divides the day and night;
Or falling stars, whose fires decay:
And now no signs of life she shows,
But what in short-breathed sighs returns and goes. [60]

He saw how at her length she lay;
He saw her rising bosom bare;
Her loose thin robes, through which appear
A shape designed for love and play;
Abandoned by her pride and shame [65]
She does her softest joys dispense,
Offering her virgin innocence
A victim to love's sacred flame;
While the o'er-ravished shepherd lies
Unable to perform the sacrifice. [70]

Ready to taste a thousand joys,
The too transported hapless swain
Found the vast pleasure turned to pain;
Pleasure which too much love destroys.
The willing garments by he laid, [75]
And Heaven all opened to his view,
Mad to possess, himself he threw
On the defenceless lovely maid.
But oh what envious gods conspire
To snatch his power, yet leave him the desire! [80]

Nature's support (without whose aid
She can no human being give)
Itself now wants the art to live;
Faintness its slackened nerves invade;
In vain th'enraged youth essayed [85]
To call its fleeting vigour back,
No motion 'twill from motion take;
Excess of love his love betrayed.
In vain he toils, in vain commands;
The insensible fell weeping in his hand. [90]

In this so amorous cruel strife,
Where love and fate were too severe,
The poor Lysander in despair
Renounced his reason with his life.
Now all the brisk and active fire [95]
That should the nobler part inflame,
Served to increase his rage and shame,
And left no spark of new desire:
Not all her naked charms could move
Or calm that rage that had debauched his love. [100]

Cloris returning from the trance
Which love and soft desire had bred,
Her timorous hand she gently laid
(Or guided by design or chance)
Upon that fabulous Priapas, [105]
That potent god, as poets feign;
But never did young shepherdess,
Gathering of fern upon the plain,
More nimbly draw her fingers back,
Finding beneath the verdant leaves, a snake. [110]

Then Cloris her fair hand withdrew,
Finding that god of her desires
Disarmed of all his awful fires,
And cold as flowers bathed in morning dew.
Who can the nymph's confusion guess? [115]
The blood forsook the hinder place,
And strewed with blushes all her face,
Which both disdain and shame expressed:
And from Lysander's arms she fled,
Leaving him fainting on the gloomy bed. [120]

Like lightning through the grove she hies,
Or Daphne from the Delphic god,
No print upon the grassy road
She leaves, t'instruct pursuing eyes.
The wind that wantoned in her hair, [125]
And with her ruffled garments played,
Discovered in the flying maid
All that the gods e'er made, of fair.
So Venus, when her love was slain,
With fear and haste flew o'er the fatal plain. [130]

The nymph's resentments none but I
Can well imagine or condole:
But none can guess Lysander's soul,
But those who swayed his destiny.
His silent griefs swell up to storms, [135]
And not one god his fury spares;
He cursed his birth, his fate, his stars
But more the shepherdess's charms,
Whose soft bewitching influence
Had damned him to the hell of impotence. [140]