

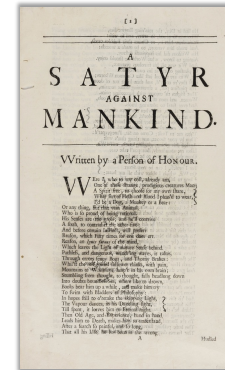
**John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester (1647-1680)**



- precocious son of one of Charles II's most devoted exiled followers
- educated at Oxford and on the Continent; became a courtier at early age of 17
- abducted heiress Elizabeth Malet and imprisoned; later wed her
- controversial satirist of high wit, aiming at Charles II, Dryden, and other luminaries of the day
- became infamous for his libertine conduct; a rake (NAEL C132)



**Rochester, A Satire Against Reason and Mankind (1679)**



- critique of rationalism, based on Boileau's *Satire VIII*, which itself is based on a satire by Juvenal
- one of Rochester's best known works, and the most influential during his lifetime; exists in some 52 manuscripts
- unclear whether the speaker is Rochester himself or a satirised persona
- resulted in numerous poetic responses, by Edward Pococke, Thomas Lessey, John Dryden (in *Religio Laici*), etc. (Wikipedia)

**Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636-1711)**



- born in Paris, leading French poet and critic of the 17thC
- writing in both English and French, strove to uphold Classical standards in his prolific work
- early work consisted mainly of satires attacking well-known public officials
- wrote *L'Art Poétique* (1674), a didactic treatise on writing poetry, which heavily influenced Augustans such as Dryden, Pope, and others (Britannica)



**Boileau, Satire VIII (1668)**

**English Translation (1818)**

Of all the living things, which walk or creep,  
Dart through the air, or cleave the liquid deep,  
From Rome to Ind.—from Paris to Japan,  
The silliest fool, (I do conceive) is man.

"Patience, what next?" some Doctor here exclaims,

"Sure you're not serious, when you call such names;

You do not mean, that worms, and ants, and flies,

The fluttering insect, that but lives and dies,  
The ruminating tribe—the browsing clan—  
The bull—the goat—have better wits than man?"

Yes, Doctor, that I do;—though wild surprise  
Already opes, I find, your saucer-eyes.

You say, with truth, that man is nature's king,  
Lord of the fields, floods, creatures, every thing;

Reason, I grant, is his exclusive lot,  
But hence I argue him that brainless sot.

De tous les animaux qui s'élèvent dans l'air,  
Qui marchent sur la terre, ou nagent dans la mer,

De Paris au Pérou, du Japon jusqu'à Rome,  
Le plus sot animal, à mon avis, c'est l'homme.

Quoi! dira-t-on d'abord, un ver, une fourmi,  
Un insecte rampant qui ne vit qu'à demi,

Un taureau qui rumine, une chèvre qui broute,  
Ont l'esprit mieux tourné que n'a l'homme?

Oui, sans doute.  
Ce discours te surprend, docteur, je l'aperçois.

L'homme de la nature est le chef et le roi:  
Bois, prés, champs, animaux, tout est pour son usage,

Et lui seul a, dis-tu, la raison en partage.  
Il est vrai de tout temps, la raison fut son lot:

Mais de là je conclus que l'homme est le plus sot. (1-14).

## Rochester, *A Satire Against Reason and Mankind* (1679)

rhetorical structure	quotation	rhet. device
opening proposition (1-7)	"Were I ... A spirit free to choose ... I'd be ... anything but that vain animal ... man" (1-6)	circumlocution (Baldick 61)
reason as "ignis fatuus" (12-24)	"Reason, which fifty times for one does err. / Reason, an ignis fatuus of the mind" (11-12)	anaphora (14-15)
reverend interlocutor (46-71)	"Blest glorious man! to whom alone kind heaven / An everlasting soul has freely given" (60-61)	hyperbole (172)
defence of "right reason" (98-111)	"Thus, whilst against false reasoning I inveigh, / I own right reason, which I would obey" (98-99)	antithesis (19-20)
human baseness vs beasts (115-67)	"if you think it fair / Amongst known cheats to play upon the square, / You'll be undone—" (181-83)	aposiopesis (23)
"Addition" (179-25)	"Man differs more from man, than man from beast" (225)	paradox (265)

## heroic couplet

### triplet

- a sequence of three verse lines sharing the same rhyme
- sometimes appears as a variation among heroic couplets of Dryden and other 18thC poets
- often indicated with a brace grouping the three lines together (Baldick 366)
- a rhymed pair of iambic pentameter lines
  - **iambic pentameter**: five pairs of alternating unstressed (x) and stressed (/) syllables
- established by Chaucer as a major English verse form
- named after 17th C heroic drama (drama aiming at epic grandeur) by Dryden and others
- dominated 18th C poetry by Pope and others (Baldick 163-64)

## wit

period	meaning of "wit"
Mediaeval	common sense
16thC	intellectual capacity
17thC	sharpness of thought
18thC	intellectual propriety
19thC	levity ( <i>pejorative</i> )
20thC	intellectual ingenuity

- from the Old English *witan*, meaning "to know"
- a much debated term with numerous meanings involving intelligence, ingenuity, mental quickness, verbal cleverness
- relegated to an inferior position by the 19thC following the rise of the Romantic cult of imagination and genius (Baldick 384-85)

## paradox

### examples

"I must be cruel, only to be kind."  
—Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (1603)

"The Child is the father of the Man."  
—Wordsworth, "My Heart Leaps Up" (1802)

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."  
—Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)

"All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others."  
—Orwell, *Animal Farm* (1945)

- Greek for *beside/beyond opinion*
- an apparently self-contradictory or absurd statement that, on closer inspection, is found to contain a truth reconciling the two conflicting opposites
- two types:
  - **local**: short, pithy statements that deal with a particular idea or image in a work
  - **structural**: a general paradoxical nature integral to a work as a whole (Baldick 265)

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