



# Passion For Living: John Wilmot Earl of Rochester

R. E. Pritchard

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The life of the second Earl of Rochester, John Wilmot, has been much celebrated and dramatised in recent years. His antics have been both admired and condemned throughout the centuries in the writings of poets such as Tennyson, Voltaire, Defoe and Goethe, and his character has been immortalised by the 2004 film portrayal starring Johnny Depp. In this biography, R.E. Pritchard provides an up-to-date, sound and entertaining account of the life and writings of this brilliant Restoration poet; a writer increasingly recognised as one of the most important and interesting of his time. At eighteen, a graceful, charming and modest youth, Rochester entered the court of Charles II. Promptly imprisoned in the Tower of London for attempting to kidnap a beautiful young heiress who later agreed to marry him, John Wilmot is as alluring today as he was during his short life span, served out in the bloody reign of Cromwell and the Restoration period. Condemned and celebrated in both life and death in equal measure, the enigma of his death-bed conversion and uncertainty about his literary corpus make him a fascinating figure to study. Pritchard captures the pithy wit of a man who disguised himself as a mountebank, selling medicine as a guise for discovering court secrets, and as a merchant to ingratiate himself with the merchants wives. Pritchard focuses on the poetry and writings of the Second Earl of Rochester to provide valuable insight into this fascinating, larger than-life character.

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