


EIGHTEENTH-
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LITERATURE



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Preface



Our aim in this anthology is to provide a larger and more prepossessing collection of eighteenth-century writings than has hitherto been available, and to provide them in trustworthy texts without modernization. Our selection has been made with an eye to literary merit, and in trying to determine what constitutes literary merit in the eighteenth century we have allowed the comic and the satiric ample room, while straitening the space customarily allotted to the sentimental. We have also tried to recognize the importance of works of theology, philosophy, criticism, polemic, practical advice, and travel. The reader will thus find here, in addition to the standard authors, selections from writers who have not been represented in anthologies of this kind: Thomas Sprat, John Locke, John Tillotson, Francis Atterbury, John Dennis, Joseph Butler, William Law, Samuel Richardson, and Tobias Smollett. We have begun the book with sufficient writing of the Restoration to imply the genealogy of eighteenth-century achievements, and we have concluded it with that part of Blake's work which strikes us as emanating from eighteenth-century thematic and stylistic concerns. Representing the drama posed a challenge to our criterion of literary merit. The four plays we have included illustrate the generic types of Restoration and eighteenth-century drama and the artistic predicament in which drama found itself: Dryden's *Marriage A-la-Mode* offers the advantage of exhibiting elements of the Restoration heroic play together with elements of Restoration comedy; Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, Fielding's *Tragedy of Tragedies*, and Sheridan's *The Critic*, in addition to presenting their own delights, serve to delineate by satiric implication the kind of tiresome contemporary plays that they so conspicuously are not. For reasons of space we have had to exclude prose fiction.

Most works have been given complete; the few that are not complete are represented by self-contained parts. Believing that it is not satisfactory to present anything but the whole of *Gulliver's Travels* and very substantial parts of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, we have not offered a mere selection from either.

For those who may be curious about the look of eighteenth-century letterpress, we have included fifteen facsimile pages from *The Gentleman's Magazine*. And in the two miscellanies of poems, one for the first half of the century, one for the second, we have brought together a varied group of poems and presented them cheek by jowl in the way Jacob Tonson and Robert Dodsley presented them to contemporary readers in their popular collections.

In our introductions, headnotes, and footnotes we have tried not only to embody the most recent scholarship but also to respond to the most penetrating modern criticism—criticism that has found eighteenth-century English literature to be quite

other than the place of rest and refreshment it was once thought to be. All we have done that is new we have done in a sincere effort to communicate our excitement about the best of eighteenth-century writing.

On the principle that successive printings of a text tend to adulterate it, we have generally chosen the first edition of each work (and, where discrepancies are known, the first state of the first edition) as our copy-text. Thus the authority for accidentals of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation rests on the edition that is presumably closest to the copy originally prepared by the author for the press. When a text has been revised in the author's lifetime, we have introduced into our copy-text the latest substantive revisions clearly ascertainable as the author's own. Where we have been fortunate enough to have a well-edited modern text, we have generally adopted its readings, even though it may not recognize first editions as the authority for accidentals.

Although our aim in general has been a precise transcription of the originals, four systematic departures from this practice seemed necessary: (1) palpable errors of the press have been silently corrected; but we have assumed that the eighteenth-century compositor tended to follow copy, and we have therefore usually imputed variations in spelling, as well as other anomalies, to authors rather than to printers and preserved them unchanged; (2) *s* has been substituted for long *f*; (3) the eighteenth-century convention of repeating quotation marks down the left margin has been discarded in favor of modern practice, and, where confusion might result, we have brought double and single quotation marks into conformity with modern American usage; and (4) decorative initial capitals have been standardized. With these exceptions, our texts reproduce the spelling, capitalization, italicization, and punctuation of the originals. When we have had to depart from these principles we have so indicated in the headnotes, which give the source of every text. Titles (as they appear at the head of the texts), date lines, salutations, and closings reproduce the spelling and punctuation of the originals, but capitalization and type styles have been normalized to establish a consistent style for display elements throughout the book. Titles at the head of texts are given in the form that appeared last in the author's lifetime. All titles not clearly the author's own, as well as all elements that did not appear as part of the original titles, are enclosed in brackets. Where a partial title is more familiar than the full one, we have used the partial title, but with ellipses to indicate omissions. The scrupulous reader should also be warned that occasionally the demands of the context have obliged us to render foreign expressions rather than to translate them literally.

It will be immediately apparent to scholars how deeply we are indebted to the standard works of scholarship and criticism. We cannot here acknowledge all our thefts; we can only express our grateful awareness of all here that is not our own. We owe much to the following library staffs: those of the British Museum, the Bodleian, and the University of London; Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Princeton Theological Seminary, Rutgers, Duke, the University of North Carolina, the University of Illinois, Hamilton College, and the Honnold Library of the Claremont Colleges; the New York and Boston Public Libraries; and the Henry E. Huntington and William Andrews Clark Memorial Libraries.

We wish to thank the many scholars and students who have been kind in donating

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G. T.
P. F.
M. W.
B. R.

Contents

GENERAL INTRODUCTION	I
----------------------	---

Part One

SOME WRITERS OF THE RESTORATION

THOMAS SPRAT

<i>Introduction</i>	21
<i>From The History of the Royal Society</i>	22
Epistle Dedicatory	23
<i>From The First Part</i>	23
<i>From The Second Part</i>	26

JOHN WILMOT, SECOND EARL OF ROCHESTER

<i>Introduction</i>	31
A Satyr Against Mankind	33
The Maim'd Debauchee	36
Upon Nothing	37
Upon His Drinking a Bowl	37
Love and Life, a Song	38
Song (<i>PHillis, be gentler I advice,</i>)	38

SAMUEL PEPYS

Introduction

39

From The Diary of Samuel Pepys

41

March 26, 1660, 41; May 2, 1660, 42; May 23, 1660, 43; May 25, 1660, 44; October 13, 1660, 45; November 3, 1661, 45; August 17, 1662, 45; September 27, 1662, 47; October 24, 1662, 47; December 25, 1662, 48; December 26, 1662, 48; October 20, 1663, 49; November 3, 1663, 50; November 18, 1663, 50; November 22, 1663, 52; August 7, 1664, 53; September 9, 1664, 54; November 15, 1664, 54; December 31, 1664, 54; June 10, 1665, 56; August 22, 1665, 56; May 5, 1666, 57; September 2, 1666, 57; September 5, 1666, 59; September 15, 1666, 60; November 14, 1666, 61; November 15, 1666, 62; December 31, 1666, 63; April 16, 1667, 64; August 16, 1667, 64; November 29, 1667, 65; February 27, 1668, 66; March 4, 1668, 66; March 5, 1668, 66; March 6, 1668, 68; March 12, 1668, 69; May 2, 1668, 69; May 5, 1668, 70; September 4, 1668, 70; September 19, 1668, 71; January 23, 1669, 71; May 24, 1669, 72; May 31, 1669, 72

JOHN DRYDEN

Introduction

73

To My Honor'd Friend, Dr. Charleton	78
Ah How Sweet It Is to Love	79
Preface to <i>An Evening's Love</i>	80
You Charm'd Me Not with That Fair Face	85
Epilogue to the Second Part of <i>The Conquest of Granada</i>	86
Defence of the Epilogue. Or, an Essay on the Dramatique Poetry of the Last Age	86
Marriage A-la-Mode	92
Prologue to <i>Aureng-Zebe</i>	132
Can Life Be a Blessing	133
The Epilogue Spoken to the King at the Opening the Play-House at Oxford on Saturday Last. Being March the Nineteenth 1681	133
Absalom and Achitophel	134
Mac Flecknoe	147
Religio Laici or a Layman's Faith. A Poem	150
To the Memory of Mr. Oldham	163
To the Pious Memory of the Accomplisht Young Lady Mrs. Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the Two Sister-Arts of Poesie, and Painting. An Ode	164
A Song for St. Cecilia's Day	167
To My Dear Friend Mr. Congreve, on His Comedy Call'd the Double-Dealer	168
Alexander's Feast; or the Power of Musique. An Ode, in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day	169
Preface to the <i>Fables</i>	172
Secular Masque	183

JOHN LOCKE

<i>Introduction</i>	186
<i>From An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding</i>	188
Book II, Chapter I	189
Book IV, Chapter XIX	196

JOHN TILLOTSON

<i>Introduction</i>	202
Sermon I	204

FRANCIS ATTERBURY

<i>Introduction</i>	214
Preface to <i>The Second Part of Mr. Waller's Poems</i>	214

Part Two

THE AGE OF POPE

MATTHEW PRIOR

<i>Introduction</i>	221
An Ode (WHILE blooming Youth, and gay Delight)	223
Written at The Hague, in the Year 1696	224
A Fable (IN <i>Æsop's</i> Tales an honest Wretch we find,)	225
To a Child of Quality of Five Years Old, the Author Suppos'd Forty	225
To a Lady: She Refusing to Continue a Dispute with Me, and Leaving Me in the Argument. An Ode	225
In Imitation of Anacreon	226
An Ode (THE Merchant, to secure his Treasure,)	226
Cupid Mistaken	227
A Better Answer	227
Another	228

Written in an Ovid	228
A True Maid	228
A Reasonable Affliction	228
On the Same	229
Phyllis's Age	229
An Epitaph (INTERR'D beneath this Marble Stone,)	229
The Incurable. An Epigram	230
On a Pretty Madwoman	230

DANIEL DEFOE

<i>Introduction</i>	231
The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters: or Proposals for the Establishment of the Church	234
<i>From A Journal of the Plague Year</i>	242
<i>From A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain</i>	261
<i>From Letter II</i>	262

BERNARD MANDEVILLE

<i>Introduction</i>	265
<i>From The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits</i>	267
<i>The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves Turn'd Honest</i>	267
<i>An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue</i>	272

ANTHONY ASHLEY COOPER, THIRD EARL OF SHAFTESBURY

<i>Introduction</i>	278
<i>From Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour</i>	282
<i>From Part III</i>	282
<i>From Part IV</i>	286

SIR RICHARD STEELE *and* JOSEPH ADDISON

<i>Introduction</i>	292
<i>From The Tatler</i>	295
Numbers I, 295; 163, 298; 169, 300; 217, 302; 263, 304; 271, 306	

<i>From The Spectator</i>	307
Numbers 12, 308; 42, 310; 58, 311; 61, 313; 62, 315; 70, 318; 105, 321; 159, 322; 160, 325; 193, 326; 291, 328; 317, 330; 409, 332; 411, 334; 412, 335; 413, 337; 414, 339; 415, 340; 416, 343; 417, 344; 418, 346; 419, 348; 420, 349; 421, 351	

JONATHAN SWIFT

<i>Introduction</i>	354
Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table-Book	359
A Description of the Morning	360
A Description of a City Shower	360
Cadenus and Vanessa	361
The Progress of Beauty	372
The Progress of Poetry	374
A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General	375
Advice to the Grub-Street Verse-Writers	375
Stella's Birth-Day	376
Directions for a Birth-Day Song	377
Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, D.S.P.D. Occasioned by Reading a Maxim in Rochefoucault	381
The Day of Judgement	389
The Beasts Confession to the Priest, on Observing How Most Men Mistake Their Own Talents	389
On Poetry: A Rapsody	393
A Character, Panegyric, and Description of the Legion Club	400
When I Come to Be Old	404
A Meditation upon a Broom-Stick	404
<i>From The Bickerstaff Papers</i>	405
Predictions for the Year 1708	405
The Accomplishment of the First of Mr. Bickerstaff's Predictions	410
A Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff Esq.	412
<i>From The Tatler</i>	415
Number 230	415
An Argument Against the Abolishing of Christianity in England	418
On the Trinity	425
A Letter from a Lay-Patron to a Gentleman, Designing for Holy Orders	430
<i>From The Drapier's Letters</i>	439
Number 1	439
<i>From The Intelligencer</i>	444
Number III	444
A Modest Proposal	447
<i>From Directions to Servants</i>	451
Chapter III	451

<i>From</i> Letters	457
To Alexander Pope, September 29, 1725	457

JOHN DENNIS

<i>Introduction</i>	460
<i>From</i> The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry	462
Epistle Dedicatory	462
<i>From</i> Part I	470

JOSEPH BUTLER

<i>Introduction</i>	473
Sermon V	476

WILLIAM LAW

<i>Introduction</i>	481
<i>From</i> A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life	482
Chapters VII, 483; VIII, 486	

JOHN GAY

<i>Introduction</i>	492
On a Miscellany of Poems. To Bernard Lintott	495
The Shepherd's Week. In Six Pastorals	496
The Birth of the Squire. An Eclogue. In Imitation of the <i>Pollio</i> of Virgil	512
<i>From</i> Acis and Galatea	514
Recitativo	514
Air	514
My Own Epitaph	514
<i>From</i> Fables	515
Introduction to the <i>Fables</i>	515
Fables XXXIX, 516; XLIX, 516; L, 517	515
The Beggar's Opera	518

ALEXANDER POPE

<i>Introduction</i>	550
Winter. The Fourth Pastoral, or Daphne	552
Ode on Solitude	554
An Essay on Criticism	554
To a Young Lady, with the Works of Voiture	564
Messiah	565
The Rape of the Lock	567
<i>From The Guardian</i>	578
Number 173	578
Windsor-Forest	580
Prologue to Mr. Addison's Tragedy of <i>Cato</i>	587
Preface to the <i>Iliad</i> (1715)	587
Upon Cleora's Marriage and Retirement	601
Eloisa to Abelard	601
Preface to the <i>Works</i> (1717)	606
Couplet on Newton	609
Peri Bathous: or, Martinus Scriblerus, His Treatise of the Art of Sinking in Poetry	610
An Essay on Man	635
On a Certain Lady at Court	651
<i>From Moral Essays</i>	651
Of the Characters of Women	652
Of the Use of Riches	656
An Epistle from Mr. Pope, to Dr. Arbuthnot	660
<i>From Imitations of Horace</i>	667
The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace [To Fortescue]	668
The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated [To Augustus]	670
Epistle to Oxford	677
One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty-eight. A Dialogue Something like Horace	678
Epigram (I AM his Highness Dog at Kew;)	681
The Universal Prayer	681
<i>From The Dunciad</i>	682
Book the First	683
The New Dunciad	688

JAMES THOMSON

<i>Introduction</i>	703
<i>From The Seasons</i>	706
Winter. A Poem	706
Winter	712

HENRY FIELDING

<i>Introduction</i>	726
The Tragedy of Tragedies	729
Preface to <i>Joseph Andrews</i>	756
From The Covent-Garden Journal	760
Numbers 55, 760; 56, 762	

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

<i>Introduction</i>	765
From Letters Written to and for Particular Friends	768
Preface	768
Letters XV, 769; XVI, 770; XVII, 770; XVIII, 770; XIX, 771; XX, 771; XXI, 771; XXVIII, 772; XXIX, 772; XLVII, 772; XLVIII, 773; LXV, 773; XCV, 774; XCVI, 775; XCVII, 775; XCVIII, 775; XCIX, 775; C, 775; CI, 776; CII, 776; CIII, 776; CIV, 776; CV, 776; CVI, 776; CVII, 777; CVIII, 777; CXXIV, 777; CXXXVIII, 778; CXXXIX, 778; CLIII, 778; CLXVIII, 779; CLXXII, 780	

Part Three



A MISCELLANY OF POEMS

SIR JOHN DENHAM

Cooper's Hill	785
---------------	-----

EDMUND WALLER

To the King on His Navy	789
Of English Verse	790

THOMAS D'URFEY

I'le Sail upon the Dog-Star	790
-----------------------------	-----

JOHN POMFRET

The Choice	790
------------	-----

WILLIAM WALSH

The Despairing Lover 792

JOHN PHILIPS

The Splendid Shilling 793

ANNE FINCH, COUNTESS OF WINCHILSEA

Adam Pos'd 795

The Atheist and the Acorn 795

A Nocturnal Reverie 795

HENRY CAREY

Sally in Our Alley 796

AMBROSE PHILIPS

The First Pastoral 797

Anacreon, Ode 34 (WHY so Coy, my lovely Maid?) 798

To Signora Cuzzoni 799

To Miss Margaret Pulteney, Daughter of Daniel Pulteney Esq; in the Nursery 799

ALLAN RAMSAY

Polwart on the Green 799

My Peggy Is a Young Thing 800

WALTER TITLEY

The Second Ode in the Third Book of Horace, Imitated 800

A Reply, in the Same Measure and Number of Lines 801

THOMAS PARNELL

Song (WHEN thy Beauty appears) 801

WILLIAM HAMILTON OF BANGOUR

The Braes of Yarrow 802

EDWARD YOUNG

From Love of Fame, the Universal Passion. In Seven Characteristical Satires
Satire I 803

ANONYMOUS

Song (FOrgive, fair Creature, form'd to Please,) 807

JOHN DYER

Grongar Hill [Pindaric Version] 807

Grongar Hill [Octosyllabic Version] 809

The Enquiry 810

MRS. B—LL M—RT—N (?)

The Humble Wish 811

WALTER HARTE

To Mr. Pope 811

ANONYMOUS

Mr. J. M. S—e Catechized on His One Epistle to Mr. Pope 812

On the Gentlemen in *The Dunciad* 812

The Mole 812

AARON HILL

The Progress of Wit: A Caveat 813

Alone, in an Inn, (at Southampton) 816

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU (?)

Lady M. M—'s Farewel to Bath 817

WILLIAM OLDYS

An Anacreontick (Busy, curious, thirsty Fly,) 818

ANONYMOUS

The Vicar of Bray 818

STEPHEN DUCK

On Mites 819

JOHN HOADLY

Chloe Resolved 819

EDWARD MOORE

From Fables for the Female Sex
Fable V

820

SNEYD DAVIES

At Seeing Archbishop Williams's Monument at Carnarvonshire

821

THOMAS EDWARDS

Sonnet V. On a Family-Picture

822

PAUL WHITEHEAD

A Hunting Song (The Sun from the East tips the Mountains with Gold,)

822

HYMNS AND DIVINE SONGS

JOSEPH ADDISON

Ode (The Spacious Firmament on high,)

823

ISAAC WATTS

A Prospect of Heaven Makes Death Easy (There is a Land of pure Delight)	823
Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ (When I survey the wondrous Cross)	824
Man Frail and God Eternal (Our God, our Help in Ages past,)	824
Against Quarreling and Fighting	825
The Sluggard	825

Part Four



FACSIMILES
FROM *THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE*

827