### THE LONGMAN ANTHOLOGY

### BRITISH LITERATURE

VOLUME 2B



THE VICTORIAN AGE

# The Longman Anthology of British Literature



David Damrosch General Editor

**VOLUME 2B** 

THE VICTORIAN AGE
Heather Henderson and William Sharpe



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## The Longman Anthology of British Literature



VOLUME 2B
THE VICTORIAN AGE

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#### PREFACE

This is an exciting time to be reading British literature. Literary studies are experiencing a time of transformation, involving lively debate about the nature of literature itself, its relations to the wider culture, and the best ways to read and understand it. These questions have been sharpened by the "culture wars" of recent years, in which traditionalists have debated advocates of fundamental reform, close readers have come up against cultural theorists who may seem more interested in politics than in aesthetic questions, and lovers of canonical texts have found themselves sharing the stage with multiculturalists who typically focus on ethnic and minority literatures, usually contemporary and often popular in nature, rather than on earlier and more elite literary productions.

The goal of this anthology is to present the wealth of British literature, old and new, classic and newly current, in ways that will respond creatively to these debates. We have constructed this anthology in the firm belief that it is important to attend both to aesthetic and to cultural questions as we study literature, and to continue to read the great classics even as we discover or rediscover new or neglected works. Admittedly, it is difficult to do all this at once, especially within the pages of a single anthology or the time constraints of a survey course. To work toward these goals, it has been necessary to rethink the very form of an anthology. This preface can serve as a kind of road map to the pages that follow.

#### A NEW LITERARY GEOGRAPHY

Let us begin by defining our basic terms: What is "British" literature? What is literature itself? And just what is the function of an anthology at the present time? The term "British" can mean many things, some of them contradictory, some of them even offensive to people on whom the name has been imposed. If the term has no ultimate essence, it does have a history. The first British were Celtic people who inhabited the British Isles and the northern coast of France (still called Brittany), before various Germanic tribes of Angles and Saxons moved onto the islands in the fifth and sixth centuries. Gradually the Angles and Saxons amalgamated into the Anglo-Saxon culture that became dominant in the southern and eastern regions of Britain and then spread outward; the old British people were pushed west, toward what became known as Cornwall, Wales, and Ireland, which remained independent kingdoms for centuries, as did Celtic Scotland to the north. By an ironic twist of linguistic fate, the Anglo-Saxons began to appropriate the term British from the Britons they had displaced, and they took as a national hero the legendary Welsh King Arthur. By the seventeenth century, English monarchs had extended their sway over Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, and they began to refer to their holdings as "Great Britain." Today, Great Britain includes England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, but does not include the Republic of Ireland, which has been independent from England since 1922.

This anthology uses "British" in a broad sense, as a geographical term encompassing the whole of the British Isles. For all its fraught history, it seems a more satisfactory term than to speak simply of "English" literature, for two reasons. First: most

speakers of English live in countries that are not the focus of this anthology; second, while the English language and its literature have long been dominant in the British Isles, other cultures in the region have always used other languages and have produced great literature in these languages. Important works by Irish, Welsh, and Scots writers appear regularly in the body of this anthology, some of them written directly in their languages and presented here in translation, others written in an English inflected by the rhythms, habits of thought, and modes of expression characteristic of these other languages and the people who use them. Important works, moreover, have often been written in the British Isles by recent arrivals, from Marie de France in the twelfth century to T. S. Eliot and Salman Rushdie in the twentieth; in a very real sense, their writings too are part of British literary production.

We use the term "literature" itself in a similarly capacious sense, to refer to a range of artistically shaped works written in a charged language, appealing to the imagination at least as much as to discursive reasoning. It is only relatively recently that creative writers have been able to make a living composing poems, plays, and novels purely "for art's sake," and only in the past hundred years or so have "belles lettres" or works of high literary art been thought of as sharply separate from other sorts of writing that the same authors would regularly produce. Sometimes, Romantic poets wrote sonnets to explore the deepest mysteries of individual perception and memory; at other times, they wrote sonnets the way a person might now write an Op-Ed piece, and such a sonnet would be published and read along with parliamentary debates and letters to the editor on the most pressing contemporary issues.

Great literature is double in nature: it is deeply rooted in its cultural moment, and yet it transcends this moment as well, speaking to new readers in distant times and places, long after the immediate circumstances of its production have been forgotten. The challenge today is to restore our awareness of cultural contexts without trapping our texts within them. Great writers create imaginative worlds that have their own compelling internal logic, built around the stories they tell using formal patterns of genre, literary reference, imagery, and style. At the same time, as Virginia Woolf says in A Room of One's Own, the gossamer threads of the artist's web are joined to reality "with bands of steel." To understand where a writer is taking us imaginatively, it is helpful to know where we are supposed to be starting from in reality: any writer assumes a common body of current knowledge, which this anthology attempts to fill in by means of detailed period introductions, full introductions to the individual authors, and notes and glosses to each text. Many of the greatest works of literature, moreover, have been written in response to the most sharply contested issues of the authors' own times. This anthology presents and groups selections in such a way as to suggest the literary and cultural contexts in which, and for which, they were created.

#### HISTORICAL PERIODS IN PERSPECTIVE

Overall, we have sought to give a varied presentation of the major periods of literary history, as customarily construed by scholars today: the Middle Ages (punctuated by the Norman Conquest in 1066); the early modern period or Renaissance; the Restoration and the eighteenth century; the era of the Romantics and their contemporaries; the Victorian age; and the twentieth century. These names mix chronology,

politics, and literary movements: each period is of course a mixture of all of these elements and many others. Further, the boundaries of all these periods are fluid. Milton should be thought of in the context of Restoration politics as well as of early modern humanism; what is more, selections from *Paradise Lost* will also be found in Volume 2, in a Context section showing Milton's influence on the Romantics and their contemporaries. Reflecting the division of Thomas Hardy's literary life, Hardy appears in the Victorian section as a prose writer, and in the Twentieth Century as a poet. In general, one of the great pleasures of a survey of centuries of British literary production is the opportunity to see the ways texts speak to one another both across periods and within them, and indeed several layers of time may coexist within a single era: many writers consciously or unconsciously hearken back to earlier values (there were medievalists in the nineteenth century), while other writers cast "shadows of futurity" before them, in Percy Shelley's phrase.

Within periods, we have sought a variety of means to suggest the many linkages that make up a rich literary culture, which is something more than a sequence of individual writers all producing their separate bodies of work. In this anthology, each period includes several groupings called "Perspectives," with texts that address an important literary or social issue of the time. These Perspective sections typically illuminate underlying issues in a variety of the major works of their time, as with a section on Government and Self-Government that relates broadly to Sir Thomas More's Utopia, to Spenser's Faerie Queene, and to Milton's Paradise Lost. Most of the writers included in Perspective sections are important period figures, less well known today, who might be neglected if they were listed on their own with just a few pages each; grouping them together should be useful pedagogically as well as intellectually. Perspective sections may also include writing by a major author whose primary listing appears elsewhere in the period: thus, a Perspective section on the abolition of slavery and the slave trade—a hotly debated issue in England from the 1790s through the 1830s—includes poems and essays by Wordsworth, Byron, and Barbauld, so as to give a rounded presentation of the issue in ways that can inform the reading of those authors in their individual sections.

#### WORKS IN CONTEXT

Periodically throughout the anthology we also present major works "In Context," to show the terms of a specific debate to which an author is responding. Thus Sir Philip Sidney's great *The Apology for Poetry* is accompanied by a context section to show the controversy that was raging at the time concerning the nature and value of poetry. Similarly, Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's hilarious seventeenth-century comedy *The Roaring Girl: Or, Moll Cut-Purse* is accompanied by a Context section giving several readings on the virtues and vices of city life. Some of the writers in that context section are not classically literary figures, but all have produced lively and intriguing works, from King James I's *Counterblast to Tobacco* to Thomas Deloney's satiric account of *How Simon's Wife . . . Being Wholly Bent to Pride and Pleasure*, *Requested Her Husband to See London*.

Additionally, we include "Companion Readings" to present specific prior texts to which a work is responding: when Sir Thomas Wyatt creates a beautiful poem, Whoso List to Hunt, by making a free translation of a Petrarch sonnet, we include

Petrarch's original (and a more literal translation) as a companion reading. For Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, companion texts include Conrad's diary of the Congo journey on which he based his novella, and a bizarre lecture by Sir Henry Morton Stanley, the explorer-adventurer whose travel writings Conrad parodies.

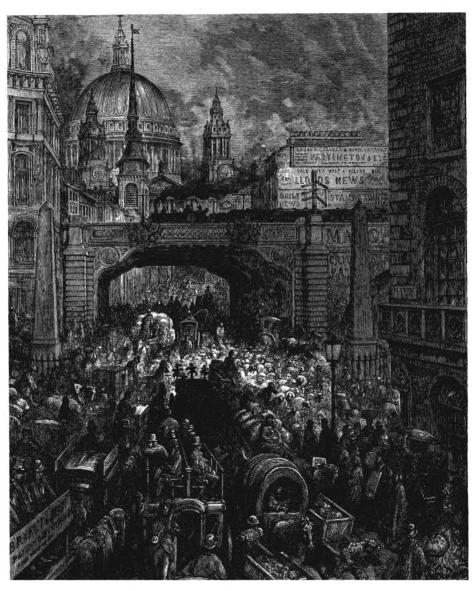
#### ILLUSTRATING VISUAL CULTURE

Literature has always been a product of cultures that are visual as well as verbal. We include a hundred illustrations in the body of the anthology, presenting artistic and cultural images that figured importantly for literary creation. Sometimes, a poem refers to a specific painting, or more generally emulates qualities of a school of visual art. At other times, photographs, advertisements, or political cartoons can set the stage for literary works. In some cases, visual and literary creation have merged, as in Hogarth's series A Rake's Progress, included in Volume 1, or Blake's engravings of his Songs of Innocence and Experience, several of whose plates are reproduced in Volume 2.

#### A NEW AND VARIED FORMAT

For this printing, we introduce a choice of form: the anthology is available in the classic two-volume version, and also in six separate parts, one for each of the historical periods into which the anthology is divided. To preserve full freedom of choice, we have kept the paging the same in both versions, so that either can be used within a single course. The three sections of Volume 1 are thus available separately as Volumes 1A, 1B, and 1C, and the individual sections of Volume 2 can similarly be purchased as Volumes 2A, 2B, and 2C. When bought together, these sets are available at the same price as the two-volume version. The two-volume formate keeps more material together, for ease of comparison and cross-reference; the six-volume version greately increases the portability of the individual sections, and also enables them to be purchased individually for use in period courses. We hope that this innovative format will greatly increase the convenience and flexibility of the anthology; it is a physical embodiment of the variousness of British literature itself.

We hope that this anthology will show that the great works of earlier centuries can also speak to us compellingly today, their value only increased by the resistance they offer to our views of ourselves and our world. To read and reread the full sweep of this literature is to be struck anew by the degree to which the most radically new works are rooted in centuries of prior innovation. Even this preface can close in no better way than by quoting the words written eighteen hundred years ago by Apuleius—both a consummate artist and a kind of anthologist of extraordinary tales—when he concluded the prologue to his masterpiece *The Golden Ass:* Attend, reader, and pleasure is yours.



Gustave Doré. Ludgate Hill, from London: A Pilgrimage, 1872.

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