Eighteenth-Century Poetry
Bibliography: Eighteenth Century


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Political Background
Whigs vs. Tories

Whigs
1) religious toleration for Protestants, incl. dissenting sects
2) limited monarchy, strong Parliament
3) around 1700: split into country and court factions

Tories
1) alliance between a Protestant national church and a hereditary monarchy
2) Anglicans
3) Catholics, excluded from political office

Controversial issues
1) monarchical succession
2) role of the Church of England
3) nature of the English constitution
4) Hanoverian succession (1714): "Just as the whigs hoped to expose the Jacobite face behind the Tory mask, so did Leslie and the Tories hope to reveal a commonwealthman behind the Whig Façade." (P. Backscheider, Daniel Defoe. His Life, 1992, p. 167)
Whigs and Tories

Of course in idealizing England and emphasizing its modernity, philosophes tended to downplay its more traditional aspects and to see political and religious conflict as a sign of liberty rather than of a divided nation. The struggles of the seventeenth century, in which the nation had been plunged into civil war, regicide and irresoluble religious differences, were viewed [...] to be their felicitous consequence: the triumph of English liberty.

Foreign visitors therefore tended to underestimate the depth of divisions that continued to affect every aspect of life from government policy about trade to church music and the patronage of painters. [...] they failed to understand the ferocious quarrels between Whigs and Tories, parties first formed during the attempt to exclude Charles II's Catholic brother from the throne during the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81. The Whigs' commitment to religious toleration (at least for Protestants) and to a limited monarchy, which most philosophes also embraced, was always strongly opposed by the Tory belief in a strong alliance between a Protestant national church and an hereditary monarchy.
Whigs and Tories

Religious differences followed political divisions: the Protestant sects (the so-called Dissenters or Nonconformists, made up of Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and Quakers) which rejected the national Church of England usually supported the Whigs, while Anglicans were usually Tory. Catholics, excluded from political office, remained a small minority (about 80,000 in 1770) whose sympathies were usually Tory, though they were sometimes Jacobite or Whig. The two parties fought over the monarchical succession, the role of the Church of England and the nature of the English constitution; in the first half of the eighteenth century a succession of plots and rebellions (notably the Jacobite Risings of 1715 and 1745) tried to overthrow the Hanoverian dynasty and return the Stuarts, who had been deposed during the Glorious Revolution of 1688, to the throne. The English nation was therefore far more divided than it often appeared to outside observers, and though Whigs and Tories shared a vision of a flourishing commercial society, their views on the political and religious character of the regime differed radically.

JACOBITES
- name given to those who remained loyal to James II (1633-1701), after his expulsion in 1688, or to his son James Francis Edward Stuart (1688-1766 = the Old Pretender; to the Jacobites James III).
- divine right of kings and absolutism (Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha*, 1680; attacked by John Locke in his *First Treatise of Civil Government*, 1690)
- 1714 death of Queen Anne → unsuccessful Jacobite rebellion in 1715-16 under James Stuart
- 1745 rebellion under Charles Edward Stuart (1720-88), the Young Pretender → defeat; end of Highland culture

The Rise of a Literary Public Sphere
The rise of print, professional authorship and the public sphere

- cultures of manuscript and print overlapped and engaged with each other
- used by authors who knew how to define themselves as social institutions (e.g. Alexander Pope)

Approaches to this interplay:
1) 'old' world being replaced by a 'new' one
2) democratized print culture displacing a courtly manuscript culture
3) innovatory ‘Moderns’ battling with traditional ‘Ancients’
4) Poets’ entanglement with the two modes working with, and even mimicking, each other.
Writing in a capitalist market place

London =
⇒ emerging capitalist market
⇒ impolite world talking about politeness
⇒ publishes the private
⇒ cheating and debating
⇒ growing pressures, hence new possibilities.
⇒ writers become 'authors'

Instabilities of a capitalist market place:
⇒ texts can be transformed from private to public
⇒ alterations in readership
⇒ origins and ownership can be disputed
⇒ meanings can be twisted.

new polite literary journals:
⇒ new taste for verse.
⇒ cheap reprints
⇒ new networks and ways of patronage
A Marketplace of Ideas and the rise of intellectual property

By 1739 London had 551 coffee-houses and two thousand clubs

⇒ gatherings of a literary clientele
⇒ distribution of sale catalogues
⇒ book auctions
⇒ concentration of cultural forces
⇒ circulation of ideas

“By visiting four or five coffeehouses one might meet most of the leading scientists, theologians, and writers of the day - and hear talk about the others”.
Institutions and Laws: Freedom of the Press


• “Behold now this vast City; a City of refuge, the mansion house of liberty, encompass'd and surrounded with His protection; the shop of warre hath not there more anvils and hammers waking, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed Justice in defence of beleaguer'd Truth, then there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and idea's wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty the approaching Reformation: others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement.”
Institutions and Laws: Freedom of the Press

- **Licensing Act of 1662** (allowing censorship) was mitigated only after the Great Plague of 1664-65.
- **first lapse in 1679**, revived by James II in 1685
- **second lapse of of Licensing Act in 1695** after the commons had refused to renew it in 1694. (John Locke played an essential role in this process.)
- **first 'Copyright' Act effectual from April 1710**, which for the first time gave authors ownership of their printed work. The printers, however, had been hoping for a confirmation of their perpetual copyright.
- **Stamp Act of 1712**, as a result of which every printed item had to carry the name of a printer or bookseller, and all works under about 100 pages had to be registered at the Stamp Office and a duty of two shillings a sheet paid.
- useful in cases of sedition or libel, when the printer of an anonymous work could face imprisonment, the stocks, or mutilation.
The public Sphere = Öffentlichkeit

- Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1985)
- Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992)


Jürgen Habermas’s idea of the public sphere:

→ emergence of a new ‘representative publicness’ through the combination of new print media, private people and public places
→ 'the bourgeois public sphere’

based on the fictitious identity of the roles of:

a) property owners and
b) mere human beings
Two readings of Habermas – the Chicken-and-hen-question – what was first: the public sphere or the private sphere

major revisions of the idea of domesticity and reassessing the limits and applicability of Jurgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere in Anne K. Mellor *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830*, and Harriet Guest *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810*.

- the transformation Habermas was analyzing involved a public sphere that emerged directly out of a private one.
- The public sphere was a volatile aggregate of active privacies, otherwise called public opinion.
- feminist commentators: domesticity as a private sphere standing over against the public world of men. (see above)
Gender Aspect

inaccuracy of Habermas's assumption that only men were admitted to the coffee-house

“Habermas ... adhered to a historical narrative in which the dominance of aristocratic models (and their implied accessibility to women) gave way to a society characterised by men of the professional and commercial middle classes.”

“Habermas emphasises the role of male property-owners in the formation of the public sphere, omitting women altogether from its developments, as he does in his description of an idealised realm of print culture with clear political functions.”

Gender Aspects of the Split between private and public spheres

Kathryn Shevelow:

- the feminine = the private, reproductive, apolitical area of home and family
- the masculine = productive, political realm of work and society
- Paradox: women were represented as in the private realm by being represented in print, to some extent as writing subjects
- Women Authors do not fit into this pattern
  • e.g. Hannah More, ("the most influential woman living in England“; Mellor, 13), Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Elizabeth Inchbald, Joanna Baillie, Mary Wollstonecraft, Clara Reeve

Discarding this doctrine of separate spheres
The Rise of a Middle Class
The development of a propertied order and the middle-class


Diversity – of Urban Identities

domestic peace and prosperity
  => consumption and print capitalism
  => more people have time and leisure
      - to participate in polite culture and
      - revalue themselves and their place in the world.

=> ever larger numbers of women and provincials,
  - more middle and even lowerclass figures.

The Rise of the Middle Class - Terminology

...in referring to the language of 'middle class' (as a shorthand for representations of society centred around a 'middle class'), the emphasis here is on 'middle' rather than on 'class'. Historians have persistently argued (or rather assumed ideologically) that a fundamental transformation in the articulation of social structure occurred sometime between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, in the shift from non-class terminologies, such as 'middle ranks', 'middle station' or 'middling orders', to the more 'modern' term 'middle class'.
Augustan Poetry
Survey of Eighteenth-Century Poets

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731)
  The True-Born Englishman (1701)
  Hymn To The Pillory (1703)

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)
  A Description of the Morning
  A Description of a City Shower (1710)

Joseph Addison (1672-1719)
  A Letter from Italy, to the Right Honourable Charles, Lord Halifax (1701)

Edward Young (1683-1765)
  The Complaint: or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality (1742-44)
  [in prose: Conjectures on Original Composition (1759)]

John Gay (1685-1732)
  Trivia; or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London (1716)

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)
  An Essay on Criticism (1711)
  Rape of the Lock (1712; enl. 1714)
  Windsor Forest (1713)
  An Essay on Man (1733-4)

James Thomson (1700-1748)
  Rule Britannia (1740)
  The Seasons (1726-1730; rev. 1744)

Thomas Gray (1716-1771)
  Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1751)

Mark Akenside (1721-1770)
  The Pleasures of Imagination (1744)
  Ode to the Country Gentlemen of England (1758)

Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733)
  The Fable of the Bees (1723)

Oliver Goldsmith (1730?-1774)
  The Deserted Village, A Poem (1770)

William Cowper (1731-1800)
  Alone (1782) [Alexander Selkirk]
  The Castaway (comp. 1799)

James Macpherson alias Ossian (1736-1796)
  Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language (1760):
    The Songs of Selma
What are the valid concepts to distinguish different periods of poetry in the 18th century?

- e.g. “Augustan” vs. “Romantic” poetry
- from Classicism to Romanticism
- from satire to sensibility
- wit and politeness vs. imagination

BUT: all these concepts can be found throughout the century
Eighteenth-century poems were not isolated artefacts: they often spoke to each other, sometimes overtly as answers, imitations, or parodies, but also in subtler ways. In a society that valued good conversation, a single voice is usually waiting to become part of a dialogue; and during this period some publishers played their part through miscellanies or pirated collections where texts could be provocatively mixed together. The eighteenth century was a miscellaneous age, when ideas of mixture entered cultural and constitutional debate; [...] high and low, public and private, legitimate and proscribed, the formal and the spontaneous, could work together.
The Augustan Age: A Definition

Augustan Age = Neoclassical Age = Age of Reason

'the Augustan Age' =>
imitation of the original Augustan writers, Virgil and Horace
the period after the Restoration era to the death of Alexander Pope (~1690 - 1744).
major writers: John Dryden in poetry (link between Restoration and Augustan literature)

Alexander Pope (poetry – heroic couplet - and philosophy)
Jonathan Swift (satire)
John Gay
Joseph Addison and Richard Steele (prose: The Tatler (1709-11), The Spectator (1711-12))

Dryden's An Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668 [sic!]) and Pope's Essay on Criticism (1711) insist that 'nature' is the true model and standard of writing.

Pope in his Essay on Criticism:
Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
Are nature still, but nature methodized.
Declaring the new period of Classicism

- fractures in Restoration intellectual life
- tensions resulting from opposed forces give late-seventeenth-century English thought.
- In welcoming Charles II home, Dryden (like others) thought of Caesar Augustus establishing himself on the throne

Oh, happy age! Oh, times like those alone
By fate reserv'd for great Augustus' throne!
When the joint growth of arms and arts foreshew
The world a monarch, and that monarch you.

- In declaring the Augustan Age open, Dryden provides a clear instance of neoclassicism - the desire to associate oneself culturally with the ancients, to be guided by them, and the willingness to be judged by their standards - which would be one of the most persistent impulses of the next century. (Bevis 28)
TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
John Lord Sommers Baron of Evesham

My LORD,
I SHOULD not act the Part of an impartial Spectator, if I Dedicated the following Papers to one who is not of the most consummate and most acknowledged Merit. None but a person of a finished Character can be the proper Patron of a Work, which endeavours to Cultivate and Polish Human Life, by promoting Virtue and Knowledge, and by recommending whatsoever may be either Useful or Ornamental to Society.

I know that the Homage I now pay You, is offering a kind of Violence to one who is as solicitous to shun Applause, as he is assiduous to deserve it. But, my Lord, this is perhaps the only Particular in which your Prudence will be always disappointed.
The Tatler was "to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality."
The Spectator introduced the middle-class public to recent developments in philosophy and literature and educated their tastes: discussions of current events, literature, and gossip; popularizing the philosophy of John Locke (Essay Concerning Human Understanding)

The Spectator (1711-14) by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele innovative publication/ as a medium: Along with The Tatler it was a daily periodical discussing literature and manners, and the whole culture of moral propriety, reason and politeness.

Relation between commerce and culture => emergence of what Jürgen Habermas has called the „bourgeois public sphere“

The Spectator – A Brief Introduction:
The Spectator (1711-14), by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, was an extremely innovative publication; it was enormously influential, not only in the content of its speculations on aesthetics, literary style, and urban life, but also as a medium. It, along with the Tatler, inaugurated the tradition of the daily periodical whose subject was not news, but literature and manners, and they adapted the gentlemanly culture of polite letters to a wide print audience. For scholars studying the relation between commerce and culture or the emergence of what Jurgen Habermas has called the 'bourgeois public sphere,' the work of Addison and Steele is seminal. Moreover, the periodical in general has recently become a great source of interest for literary scholars and academics working on 'the history of the book.'

http://tabula.rutgers.edu/spectator/about.html
The priority of Reason and Understanding
aesthetic form => pleasure of reason

- neo-Platonic idea that emotion corrupts the mind
- René Descartes: emotions are suspicious; rationally discredits the senses; abstract thought constitutes the only infalliable kind of knowledge
- poetry: Fancy (linked with senses) controlled by Understanding (linked with intellect)

→ The pleasure that arises from aesthetic experience is the pleasure of rationality.
“Those Parts of Learning which relate to the Imagination, as **Eloquence and Poetry**, produce an immediate **Pleasure in the Mind**. And **sublime and useful Truths**, when they are conveyed in apt Allegories or beautiful Images, make more distinct and lasting Impressions; by which means the **Fancy becomes subservient to the Understanding**, and the Mind is at the same time delighted and instructed. The **Exercise of the Understanding**, in the **discovery of Truth**, is likewise **attended with great Pleasure, as well as immediate Profit**. It not only **strengthens our Faculties**, purifies the **Soul**, subdues the **Passion**, but besides these Advantages there is also a secret **Joy** that flows from intellectual Operations, **proportioned** to the **Nobleness of the Faculty**, and not the less affecting because **inward and unseen**.”

Eighteenth-century Sentimentalism

- reverses ideas of the Rationalist school
- elevates emotion as a source of pleasure rather than pain
- growth in Sentimentalism $\rightarrow$ School of Taste (e.g. John Dennis)

$\rightarrow$ understanding literary values through subjective and, occasionally, emotional responses.
Kalokagathie
Kalokagathia (Athen):
schön (kalos), edel und geistig gebildet (agathos)

Das Schön Gute
Most important representative in England: Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, who believes in optimistic philosophy and “universal harmony”
Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3. Earl of Shaftesbury, (1671-1713)

A Letter concerning Enthusiasm (1708): against religious fanaticism ("enthusiasm"); suggests the nobler form of "enthusiasm" that nature, as the manifestation of divine order and harmony, can inspire.

Sensus Communis (1709), in The Moralists (1709), and in his Soliloquy (1710): notion of a "universal harmony"

Greek ideal of kalokagathia → concept of virtue perceived as a harmonious balance of man's faculties.

The Moralists (Platonic dialogue by Shaftesbury): figure of Theocles embodies the ideal of the "virtuoso", equipped with an innate "moral sense" that is not determined by any external norms, but is an agent of the all-governing "universal benevolence" (the very opposite of Hobbes's notions).

Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times (1711): applies to his own writings the "test of ridicule", or self-criticism he had proposed earlier as a touchstone of soundness in modern thinking; all philosophy can never be more than the configuration of constantly changing opinions → constantly subjected to the "test of ridicule" as a "test of truth" → new concept of the author's role in society: teacher in the Socratic sense.
Politeness

Lawrence Klein:

'Politeness' = 'the set of attitudes, strategies, skills and devices that an individual could command to gratify others and thus render the social realm truly sociable'.

Those are primarily attitudes and strategies of self-containment: internal sanctions, protocols of speech and behaviour calculated to eliminate conflict and oil the wheels of social intercourse. The making over of the social realm to politeness performed a wide variety of ideological functions that, taken collectively, go a long way towards identifying the nature of dominant culture in the early century.

=> consensus, shared attitudes and values, discipline, negotiated competitiveness etc.

Polite culture used London's resources

- Provincial theatres employed London players, their concerts relied on professional performers from the London pleasure gardens and theatres, portraits hung in provincial parlours were painted by London artists during their summer tours.
- The provinces followed metropolitan fashion: the theatre repertory mimicked that of the London houses, local orchestras bought their scores from London sheet music-sellers, and images from London's printshops affected taste in the graphic arts all over Britain.