

## The Broadview Anthology of British Literature

- The Medieval Period
- The Renaissance and the Early Seventeenth Century
- The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century
- The Age of Romanticism
- The Victorian Era
- The Twentieth Century and Beyond

Volume 3

The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century  
Second Edition

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## The Broadview Anthology of

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Volume 3

## The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century

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## THE RESTORATION AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Between 1660, when the Stuart monarchy was restored, and the close of the eighteenth century, the people of England (then more commonly referred to as “English” than “British,” despite the official creation of Great Britain with the 1707 Act of Union) underwent numerous changes—in how they earned their living, by whom they were ruled, and how they responded to that government, in where they tended to live, and in the ways they envisioned themselves and their relationship with the world around them.

Over the course of the eighteenth century the population of the nation doubled to roughly ten million, with the most significant growth occurring in London, where the population grew from half a million in 1700 to over a million in 1800. Approximately one-tenth of the nation’s population resided in its capital city, which in the seventeenth century had already become the largest city in Europe. Regional migration (from Scotland and Ireland as well as from other parts of the nation) accounted for much of this growth, but international immigrants—from Germany, Poland, Africa, and the Caribbean, for example—made up a significant portion of the city’s new residents, and often formed discrete communities. More than half the city’s

inhabitants were women, many of whom, seeking employment as domestic help, joined the large numbers of those who left their rural homes to earn a living in the city. While developments in medicine and sanitation improved the quality of life and lowered the death rate, the English population remained quite young (with the percentage of the population over 60 never reaching higher than 8 per cent), particularly in London. In the rural areas large tracts of land were enclosed for the cultivation of crops or for grazing livestock as agriculture increasingly shifted from subsistence farming into a business and demands for food from the growing urban population increased.

On average, the English people were significantly wealthier at the end of this period than they had been at its beginning. The national income increased more than fivefold—from 43 million to 222 million pounds. Industrial and financial revolutions spurred the further growth of a hitherto small though highly significant class of people, the merchant middle class, and led to a demand for a plethora of new goods that these people imported, manufactured, and sold. From a nation of farmers England was increasingly becoming, in Adam Smith’s famous phrase, “a nation of shopkeepers.”



Samuel Scott, “Entrance to the Fleet River” (c. 1750). Scott’s style was influenced by that of Canaletto, the Italian master of city painting who lived in London intermittently from 1746 to 1755. The entrance to the Fleet River from the Thames in London is now hidden from view by the Thames Embankment.

Of London's million people, a growing percentage (though still a small one by modern standards) was literate, able to afford books, and in possession of the leisure time necessary for reading. In 1782, bookseller James Lackington claimed that the reading public had quadrupled since the early 1770s. While a substantial proportion of publications continued to be collections of sermons or devotion manuals, the new reading public also demanded news in the form of newspapers and periodicals, and fiction in a new, capacious form, the novel. The first provincial paper was launched in 1701, and by 1760 over 150 had been started. The first public libraries were founded in 1725 in Bath and Edinburgh, and by 1800 there were 122 libraries in London and 268 more in the rest of the country.

In the eighteenth century the term "British" became more and more far-reaching. For centuries the Scots had periodically fought the English to preserve their independence, but with the 1707 Act of Union that struggle ended. The kingdom of Scotland joined with that of England and Wales, and the Scottish people became subjects of the new Great Britain. Because several colonies along the eastern seaboard of North America declared independence during this period, students of American history often have the sense that Britain was a shrinking colonial power during this era; in fact the opposite is true. After the Treaty of Utrecht that ended the War of Spanish Succession, the people of the Hudson Bay Territory, as well as those of Acadia and Newfoundland (in what are now eastern provinces of Canada), became colonial British subjects. The same thing happened to the remaining inhabitants of Canada and many of those of India after the 1763 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Seven Years' War (now sometimes referred to as the first of the world wars). That treaty formalized England's supremacy in Canada and paved the way for an extensive British Empire in India. Under it, England also received control of Grenada, France's American territory east of the Mississippi, and the Spanish colony of Florida.

With the restoration of the monarchy in the late seventeenth century, the English people attempted to move beyond centuries of religious strife that had culminated in a bitter civil war. The animosity between the established Anglican Church, the Nonconformists

and descendants of the former "Puritans," and the "papists," which had dominated political life, did not disappear (laws discriminating against religious minorities, such as Catholics, remained in place), but increasingly these religious debates were subsumed into broader political debates between parties with established party ideologies. Whereas previously any formal opposition to the government was apt to be regarded as treason (as it was in the case of Algernon Sidney and William Russell in 1683), during the eighteenth century the concept of a legitimate ongoing opposition to government began to take root. Political parties were born, and Parliament and the press became arenas for sanctioned political debate. By 1800 England could boast a political system that was the envy of its neighbors for its stability, effectiveness, and perceived fairness.

#### RELIGION, GOVERNMENT, AND PARTY POLITICS

The period began, however, with an attempt to reverse, rather than embrace, change. When Charles II landed at Dover, returning from exile in France and restoring the Stuart monarchy, many English people hoped they could return to the old order that had been shattered by civil war. Charles was crowned King in 1661, but the new monarch governed as if this were the eleventh, rather than the first, year of his rule—symbolically erasing the intervening years of civil war, Commonwealth, and Interregnum. The Act of Oblivion formally forgave many (though not all) convicted rebels, furthering the illusion that the turmoil of the preceding years could be erased. With the restoration of the monarchy came that of the established church, but Charles II promised some changes from the disastrous rule of Charles I before the civil war, including increased tolerance of Protestant dissenters and a monarchy that would rule in conjunction with Parliament, rather than in opposition to it. Underlying religious and constitutional issues continued to threaten the stability of the nation, however. Charles was ostensibly a member of the Anglican Church, but his brother, James, Duke of York, remained staunchly and publicly Catholic, with the avowed aim of establishing his faith as the national one. Though Charles had many children, he produced none with his wife; as a result, James remained next in

line for the throne. These issues came to a head with the "Popish Plot" of 1678, in which Titus Oates presented perjured testimony suggesting that a Jesuit plot existed to assassinate the King and reestablish Catholic rule in England. A sharp divide arose between Successionists, who supported Charles II and his brother James, and Exclusionists, who sought to exclude James from the line of succession and to appoint James, Duke of Monmouth (one of the King's Protestant illegitimate children), in his place. To restore order Charles asserted his absolute monarchical authority, dissolving Parliament and preventing the passage of the Exclusion Bill. (It is this assertion of royal authority that Poet Laureate John Dryden celebrates in his 1681 poem *Absalom and Achitophel*.)



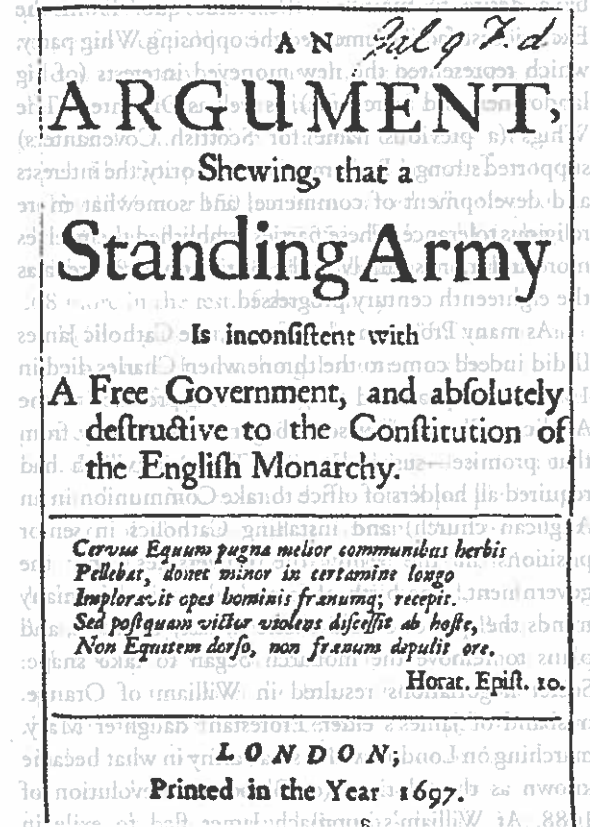
J.M. Wright, "Charles II" (1661).

The division between Successionists and Exclusionists led to a more lasting one between England's emerging political parties—the Whigs and the Tories. The Tories, made up primarily of landed gentry and

rural clergymen, developed out of the Successionist faction; Tories (whose party name was a former term for Irish-Catholic or Royalist bandits) were characterized by their support for the monarchy and for continuing all the privileges of the Anglican Church—that is to say, by a desire to maintain the status quo. From the Exclusionist faction emerged the opposing Whig party, which represented the new moneyed interests (of big landowners and merchants), as well as Dissenters. The Whigs (a previous name for Scottish Covenanters) supported stronger Parliamentary authority, the interests and development of commerce, and somewhat more religious tolerance. These parties established themselves more and more securely in the British political arena as the eighteenth century progressed.

As many Protestants had feared, the Catholic James II did indeed come to the throne when Charles died in 1685. James promised to honor the supremacy of the Anglican Church, but soon began to back away from that promise—suspending the Test Act (which had required all holders of office to take Communion in an Anglican church) and installing Catholics in senior positions in the army, the universities, and the government. The birth of James's son raised in many minds the specter of a Catholic dynasty of rulers, and plans to remove the monarch began to take shape. Secret negotiations resulted in William of Orange, husband of James's elder, Protestant daughter Mary, marching on London with a small army in what became known as the Glorious (or Bloodless) Revolution of 1688. At William's approach James fled to exile in France—though he retained some loyal supporters in England (who were referred to as "Jacobites," from *Jacobus*, the Latin form of "James"). Parliament sanctioned the joint crowning of King William III and Queen Mary II, announcing that, rather than having conquered anything or overthrown anyone, William had simply arrived, found the throne vacant, and installed himself as its rightful occupant. (In fact Mary, as a direct descendant, was first offered the Crown, but she was too dutiful a wife to reign without her husband.) Despite the best efforts of Parliament to paper over the dynastic change, Jacobites continued through the first half of the eighteenth century to affirm that James's son and grandson (known to others as the

“Old Pretender” and the “Young Pretender,” respectively) were the legitimate rulers of the nation, and major Jacobite uprisings threatened the peace in 1715 and 1745.



Title page of an anonymous 1697 pamphlet. The issue of whether or not the government should be allowed to retain a standing army was a highly contentious one in the last years of the seventeenth century—and one that revived many of the strong feelings of the Civil War and Interregnum; until William III's 1697 decision to maintain a permanent army in the wake of the Peace of Ryswick, the only English ruler to have maintained a standing army in peacetime was Oliver Cromwell.

The reign of William and Mary restored a Protestant monarchy, and it was one that promised increased tolerance. The Toleration Act of 1689 granted religious freedoms to some Dissenters (though not to Catholics) if they swore their allegiance to the Crown. Jews during this period were allowed to worship (London's first synagogue was built in 1701) but were deprived of most civil rights. A Bill of Rights reaffirmed the powers of Parliament and limited the control of the Crown. The reign of the successor to William and Mary, Mary's sister Anne (who reigned from 1702 to 1714), marked a period of commercial growth and expansion abroad. During the war with France known variously as Queen Anne's War and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–13), England won a number of victories under John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, which brought the nation new territory in North America, as well as control over the slave trade from Africa to the Caribbean and Spanish America. Anne's reign was the first in which a Tory government ruled (from 1710 to 1714), much to the joy of Tory writers Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, John Gay, and others. However, a rivalry between two important Tory ministers—Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, and Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke—weakened the party, and when George I (James II's Protestant grandson and the first British king from the house of Hanover) ascended the throne in 1714, the Whigs resumed control of Parliament.

The reigns of the first three Hanoverian kings, George I, II, and III, took the nation through the second decade of the nineteenth century and marked a period of continued economic growth, industrialization, expansion of foreign trade—and an important development in the growth of Parliamentary power. Both George I and II were born in Germany and were unfamiliar with the language, culture, or government of their new country. As a result, they intervened little in the day-to-day affairs of the nation. In the absence of a strong monarchy, the political scene was dominated from 1721 to 1742 by Robert Walpole, a Whig minister who had risen to power after the economic bubble and subsequent stock market crash of 1720 known as the “South Sea Bubble.” Many government ministers were among the thousands ruined through overheated speculation in the South Sea Company's shares, but

Walpole remained untainted by the ensuing scandal, and consolidated his hold on the reins of government. The unprecedented degree of power with which he aggrandized himself earned him the derogatory nickname among his opponents of “prime minister”—an insult that had become an official title by the time Walpole left office. The centralization of power proved to have considerable benefits; under his corrupt but firm and efficient rule the government enjoyed a long period of stability. Walpole cultivated commerce and avoided conflict as much as possible.

If Walpole was anxious to maintain the peace, others saw a willingness to wage war as a necessity if Britain wished to continue to increase its wealth and power. Subsequent prime ministers—William Pitt most prominent among them—entered the nation into a series of wars fought to protect their foreign trade against encroachments by France, Spain, and Austria. It was under Pitt (and under George III, who took the throne in 1760 and reigned until 1820) that Britain emerged as the world's most significant colonial power. But George's reign was hardly one of untroubled success. The loss of the American colonies in 1783 was a blow to both British commerce and British pride, and religious intolerance continued to cause problems at home; a partial repeal of the penal laws, which had restricted the freedoms of Catholics, led to the Gordon Riots of 1780, in which a reactionary Protestant mob ruled the streets for ten days, defacing Catholic public buildings, and even threatening known Catholics. George himself suffered from mental instability (likely caused by a metabolic disorder called porphyria), and descriptions of his bouts of madness—such as that given by Frances Burney in her journal—were a source of concern for many of his subjects.

#### EMPIRICISM, SKEPTICISM, AND RELIGIOUS DISSENT

The eighteenth century was an age of great scientific advancement, during which the English people increasingly seemed to possess the capacity to uncover laws governing the universe. Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) was the hero of the age, and vast numbers of scientific advances were either directly or indirectly attributed to him. As Alexander Pope says in a famous

couplet, “Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in Night; / God said Let Newton be! and 'all was Light.” In *Principia Mathematica* (1687), *Optics* (1704), and other works, Newton laid out the laws of gravity, celestial mechanics, and optics. Perhaps as important as the discoveries themselves was the scientific approach to causes and effects that Newton exemplified. In the first of the four rules in the *Principia* for arriving at knowledge he puts the matter succinctly: “We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain the appearances.... Nature is pleased with simplicity, and affects not the pomp of superfluous causes.”

Other scientific advances included improvements in navigation, the successful determination of the shape of the earth and the measurement of its distance from the sun, and improved knowledge of physical and chemical properties—for example, Robert Boyle determined that the pressure and volume of a gas are inversely proportionate (Boyle's Law). In 1752 Benjamin Franklin demonstrated that lightning is an electrical discharge; Franklin, a colonial British subject who lived for much of his adult life in England, was admitted to the Royal Society the following year in recognition of his scientific achievements. Later in the century Linnaeus's system of taxonomy was accepted among naturalists, and increased study of fossils led to the discovery, through the examination of lava-based soil from volcanic eruptions, that the earth was much older than the 6000 years allowed by biblical tradition. Largely as a follow-up to these geological discoveries, comprehensive theories of evolution began to be put forward in the last decades of the century.

More than ever before, citizens felt they could understand the world through logic, reasoning, and close attention to detail, rather than through faith. A plethora of new instruments for observing, measuring, and quantifying (most notably, the microscope and the telescope) opened up whole new realms of the universe, from microscopic organisms to other planets, for examination. The influential Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge, founded in 1662, helped to organize scientific enquiry and championed empiricism—the belief that through observation, experimentation, and experience humans

could ascertain the truth. The Royal Society also helped to spread knowledge of scientific discoveries and advances; the British Museum, for example, was founded in 1759 with the donation of the private collection of a former president of the Royal Society, physician and botanist Sir Hans Sloane. In all walks of life Britons began to experience a desire to keep records of the observed minutiae of their everyday lives. Notable among them was Samuel Pepys, a naval administrator in London who rose to be secretary of the Admiralty, systematically restructured the navy, and became president of the Royal Society—yet is nevertheless remembered primarily as a diarist. His diary provides a unique record of the daily goings-on of his native city, including details of business, religion, science, literature, theater, and music; Pepys brought to the diary form the same sort of passion for detail that James Boswell would later bring to his biography of Samuel Johnson. For the nearly ten years (1660–69) that Pepys kept his diary, he related all that he saw around him, compressing remarkable detail into each page through use of his own private shorthand. When it was finally decoded and certain selections published in 1825, the diary gave readers an extraordinary glimpse of life during the Restoration, including such momentous events as the landing of Charles II at Dover in 1660 and the Great Fire of London in 1666.

Another member of the Royal Society whose career was founded on a fascination for detail was antiquarian and biographer John Aubrey. Aubrey's desire to preserve as complete a record of the past as possible led him to write a natural history of Wiltshire (his home county), a survey of ancient sites across Britain (including Avebury, some twenty miles from Stonehenge, which he is credited with "discovering"), and a scrappy collection of notes which, collected and published after his death as *Brief Lives*, brought together biographical sketches of some of the dominant figures of his time (including John Milton and Francis Bacon). His studies in archaeological history were unique at their time; similarly, his studies in folklore led him to write the first English work entirely devoted to that topic. And Aubrey's inquiry into the ways in which practices and conventions such as prices, weights, measures, dress, handwriting, navigation, and astronomy have changed

over time anticipated the strategies followed in modern historical research.

Rather as a turn toward personal observation increasingly marked secular life in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so too did many people advocate a turn inward in spiritual life, to one's own conscience and personal faith in God. One such thinker was John Bunyan, a preacher who staunchly defended the primacy of one's own conscience over the dictates of organized religion. In 1660 the Anglican Church began to move against dissenting sects, jailing nonconformist preachers such as Bunyan. Though he was offered release if he promised to stop preaching, Bunyan chose to remain in jail, continuing to preach and write religious manuals and a spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), while in prison. He defended his calling and, by remaining loyal to his beliefs, inspired many of his converts to do the same. Released after 12 years, Bunyan was yet again imprisoned in 1675; it was during this second sentence that he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a religious allegory in which Christian is a traveler putting this world resolutely behind him in order to achieve the perilous journey to salvation and the next world. It became the most popular work of prose fiction of the seventeenth century.

The ways of thinking of Bunyan, on one hand, and of Aubrey and Pepys, on the other, epitomize two approaches to interpreting the world—approaches that continued to clash throughout the seventeenth century. The ever-growing belief that through close observation the order of the universe could be uncovered was often at odds with religious beliefs, particularly as a result of the influential theories of philosopher John Locke. Locke, sometimes referred to as the "Newton of the mind," took Newton's theories and scientific reasoning and applied them to epistemological questions, asking how we come to know and understand. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke (drawing on Aristotle) advances the theory that the mind is a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) at birth and acquires ideas through experience. The theory had enormous implications for the study of the human mind and for educational practice, but its impact on theology was also profound. If we have no innate ideas concerning our own existence or the world around us, no more do we



John Michael Wright, *Astraea Returns to Earth*, 1660. This prophecy of the Roman poet Virgil of a golden age ruled over by Astraea, virgin goddess of Justice, is alluded to in the painting. A cherub holds the image of the new monarch, Charles II, as Astraea returns to earth.



Jan Siberechts, *Landscape with Rainbow, Henley-on-Thames*, c. 1690. Siberechts came to London from Flanders around 1675, and played an influential part in the development of an English tradition of landscape art.



Edward Hayley, *View of the Temple Pond at Beachborough Manor*, 1744-46.



John Singleton Copley, *Brook Watson and the Shark*, 1778. Copley (1738–1814) and Benjamin West were the leading British historical artists of the second half of the eighteenth century. This painting depicts a 1749 incident in the West Indies. Watson, a 14-year-old British orphan, was attacked while swimming in Havana harbor; his shipmates came to the rescue and Watson lost a leg but survived. Copley, born and raised in the British colony of Massachusetts, moved to London in 1774 at the age of 28, and never returned to America.



Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs. Susanna Hoare and Child*, 1763–64. The goldsmith Richard Hoare began banking out of his shop in Cheapside in 1672, and the Hoare family became established landed gentry in the eighteenth century. Hoare & Company still operates today as a private bank.



Joseph Wright of Derby, *Sir Brooke Boothby*, 1781. Boothby, sometimes described as epitomizing the "Man of Feeling," was a friend of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and was instrumental in making Rousseau's *Confessions* available in England. The word "Rousseau" appears on the spine of the book that Boothby holds in this portrait.



George Stubbs, *The Reapers*, 1785. This is one of two paired images; a detail of the other, *The Haymakers*, appears on the cover of this volume.





Angelica Kauffmann, *The Artist in the Character of Design Listening to the Inspiration of Poetry*, 1782. The Swiss-born Kauffmann moved to London in 1766, and established herself as a highly successful artist; she was a founding member of the Royal Academy of Arts.



William Hogarth, *Heads of Six of Hogarth's Servants*, c. 1750-55. For an artist to make his servants the subject of his art was highly unusual in the mid eighteenth century. The picture, which Hogarth hung in his studio, is a composite—the figures are painted from unrelated studies rather than posed together.



Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, 1768. In the early 1660s, Royal Society member Robert Boyle used a pump like this one for several experiments involving air and air pressure; the most striking was his experiment examining the effects of air deprivation on animals. Boyle describes the experiment on a hen-sparrow:

*When we put her into the receiver ... she seemed to be dead within seven minutes ... but upon the speedy turning of the key, the fresh air flowing in began slowly to revive her, so that after some pantings she opened her eyes and regained her feet, and in about 1/2 of an hour after, threatened to make an escape at the top of the glass, which had been unstopped to let the fresh air upon her. But the receiver being closed the second time, she was killed with violent convulsions within five minutes....*

By the 1760s, the air deprivation experiment was a mainstay of traveling lecturers, who performed demonstrations in natural philosophy for the entertainment and education of the general public. Wright's painting depicts such an experiment and the varied reactions of its viewers.



Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770. In 1750, General James Wolfe led British troops to a decisive victory over the French forces at Quebec City, dying from battle wounds in the hour of his success. Reproduced again and again in prose, poetry, and painting, his story became a beloved popular legend. Of the many imaginings of the dramatic scene, West's was by far the most famous—it was, in fact, the most reproduced of any image in eighteenth-century England. The work depicts the moment at which the dying Wolfe, concerned only with the outcome of the battle, was informed that the English were winning; upon hearing this, he reportedly expressed his satisfaction, and died.



Anonymous, *Portrait of Dido Elizabeth Belle and Lady Elizabeth Murray*, c. 1777. From the collection of the Earl of Mansfield, Scone Palace, Perth, Scotland. In its portrayal of a black woman and a white woman as equals—or at least near equals—this double portrait is highly unusual for its time. On the left sits Dido Elizabeth Belle, the mixed-race daughter of British admiral John Lindsay and Maria Belle, an African slave. Almost immediately after her birth, Dido was sent to England to be raised by her great-uncle, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield. Growing up with her cousin, Lady Elizabeth Murray (on the right), Dido occupied an unconventional position in the Mansfield household, treated much better than a servant but not as well as Elizabeth (although, because Elizabeth was a legitimate heir and Dido was illegitimate, this unequal treatment might have occurred even if both had been white). Dido and Elizabeth were close companions and moved in the same social circles.

Lord Mansfield is well known for his influential decision on *Somerset's Case* (1772), a dispute in which the recaptured slave James Somerset, with the help of abolitionist activists, challenged the legality of slavery in England. Mansfield ruled in Somerset's favor; the language he uses limits the decision to the particular case, but many interpreted his verdict to mean that slavery was outlawed on English soil (although not in the colonies); the ruling thus had a considerable impact on behavior. Mansfield had great affection and admiration for his great-niece Dido, and it has been speculated that his relationship to her may have influenced his progressive ruling.

possess any innate notions as to the existence of God. Instead, in Locke's view, we must arrive at the idea of God through a chain of reasoning. Through intuiting knowledge of our own existence as humans and of the world around us, we proceed to a knowledge of the existence of God through the logical necessity of a "First Cause" to account for our existence. By emphasizing the role that external evidence can play in finding a path to theological truth, Locke brought about an explosion in Deism, or natural theology. Locke's theories, like those of Newton, offered rational grounds for belief in God. For many, the perfectly ordered universe gave in its very being evidence of the God who had created it, for this order could not have arisen out of chaos without a creator (the cosmological argument), nor could it have been designed with such incomparable artistry (the argument from design). (Joseph Addison poetically summed up this belief in the periodical *The Spectator*, saying the planets are in reason's ear "Forever singing as they shine / The hand that made us is divine.") Popular throughout the later eighteenth century was the concept of God as a mechanic or mathematician who does not necessarily need to intervene in the working of his creation, which he has ordered so that it runs smoothly on its own.

Empiricism brought about new forms of religious belief, but for many the logical end of empiricist thinking was a profound religious skepticism. As geological discoveries challenged the truth of the Scriptures, and as the mysteries of the universe seemed ready to be solved one by one, some began to feel that there might no longer be room for God in this rational, enlightened universe. The leading skeptic of his day was David Hume. As Boswell famously recorded it, Hume was asked on his deathbed if "it was not possible that there might be a future state" after death, to which Hume replied that "it was possible that a piece of coal put upon the fire would not burn." Despite his evident lack of faith in the existence of any afterlife, Hume was not a full-fledged atheist; he stated repeatedly that he accepted the argument from design. "I infer an infinitely perfect architect from the infinite art and contrivance which is displayed in the whole fabric of the universe," he declared. Yet Hume was rightly regarded as the foe of many common manifestations of Christian belief,

including belief in divine Providence as well as faith in an afterlife. In his *Natural History of Religion* (1757), Hume took an almost anthropological approach to religious belief, examining the histories of various religions through the ages and concluding that religions tend to arise from passion, fear, imagination, or desire, and that they are products of various cultures and thus evolve slowly over time. He claimed that any member of humanity who seeks the protection of faith tends to do so "from a consciousness of his imbecility and misery, rather than from any reasoning." And, both in his major work *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and in his most controversial essay, "Of Miracles," Hume voices a thoroughgoing skepticism concerning supernatural claims:

It is a general maxim worthy of our attention, "That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavors to establish. ..." When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself whether it be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact which he relates should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle.

Hume's skepticism was shared by many freethinkers, but Samuel Johnson doubtless represented the majority view in his disdain for Hume, and in his unwavering belief in miracles. In his *Life of Johnson* Boswell records Johnson's view that "although God has made Nature to operate by certain fixed laws, yet it is not unreasonable to think that he may suspend those laws in order to establish a system highly advantageous to mankind."

In the face of increasing skepticism, many Christian apologists sought to defend their beliefs by using the same rational tools employed by the freethinkers. Various mathematical and logistical arguments were also published, endeavoring to provide scientific support for the truth of the scriptures. Joseph Butler, for example, argued for the truth of revelation using historical evidence in *The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed*

to the *Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736). Others responded by disregarding the rational arguments of skeptics altogether, turning instead to powerful appeals to the emotions in their efforts to reaffirm faith. Methodism, an evangelical movement that originated within the Church of England, is perhaps the most important example here. Led by John Wesley, Methodism spread rapidly in new industrial villages and poorer areas. Methodist preachers spoke their gospel to common people—often out in the fields or in barns because they were barred from preaching in churches. With its emphasis on faith as the only path to salvation, its strong reliance on hymns, and its fervent and energetic sermons, Methodism won many converts.

Throughout the century the debate over free-thinking was a heated one in England—citizens heard freethinkers denounced from pulpits, read attacks on them in the press, and even saw them pilloried or imprisoned for blasphemy. Despite public alarm, however, these blasphemous thinkers made up a very small minority of the population, and posed little real threat to the established Church. As Johnson famously said to Boswell, “Sir, there is a great cry about infidelity; but there are, in reality, very few infidels.” The Church continued as an arm of the state, serving as both political body and spiritual leader. “Papists” were a minority, despite the fears their presence evoked among Protestants.

More and more homes contained copies of at least a few books—most commonly the Bible, a prayer book, and John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. After those three, James Thomson’s *Seasons* may well have been the most popular book of the age. Many homes would also have held copies of devotional manuals such as William Law’s *A Serious Call* and a few of the most popular fictional works of the time, many of which—such as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, for example—contained a strong moral message.

#### INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

While religious and secular debates continued, the scientific advances that had helped to incite them changed the physical face of the nation. The first crude steam engine was invented in 1698 by Thomas Savery,

a military engineer, as a means of removing water from mines. In *The Miner’s Friend; or, an Engine to Raise Water by Fire, Described* (1702), however, Savery includes a chapter on “The Uses that this Engine may be applied Unto” that shows a dawning awareness of the far-reaching possibilities for such a device:

(1) It may be of great use for palaces, for the nobilities or gentlemen’s houses: for by a cistern on the top of a house, you may with a great deal of ease and little charge, throw what quantity of water you have occasion for to the top of any house; which water in its fall makes you what sorts of fountains you please and supply any room in the house. And it is of excellent use in case of fire, of which more hereafter. (2) Nothing can be more fit for serving cities and towns with water, except a crank-work by the force of a river.... (3) As for draining fens and marshes ... it is much cheaper, and every way easier, especially where coals are water borne, to continue the discharge of any quantities of water by our engine than it can be done by any horse engines what so ever. (4) I believe it may be made very useful to ships, but I dare not meddle with that matter; and leave it to the judgment of those who are the best judges of maritime affairs.

The steam engine—particularly following Thomas Newcomen’s pioneering use of pistons in 1712 and James Watt’s invention of a condenser (patented in 1769) to make its functioning more efficient—was the driving force behind an Industrial Revolution in Britain that both literally and figuratively gathered steam throughout the eighteenth century. And the fuel that fed it, coal, took a central place in British life. Coal had begun to be used extensively as a heating fuel in the later Middle Ages, as the forests were depleted, and its domestic use accelerated during the “Little Ice Age” that brought colder-than-average winters to Britain through most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The industrial use of coal grew rapidly throughout the era as well; by 1700 Britain was mining and burning far more coal than the rest of the world. In the early years of the eighteenth century, Daniel Defoe marveled at the “prodigious fleets of ships which come constantly in with coals for this increasing city [London],” and at the

vast numbers of coal pits and the “prodigious heaps, I may say mountains of coal which are dug up at every pit” in Newcastle. But if coal made possible warmer dwellings and industrial growth, it was most certainly a mixed blessing. The life of a miner was nasty, brutish, and short. The mines themselves were extraordinarily dangerous, and the mine operators in Newcastle created what may have been the first industrial slums. London by 1700 was already a blackened city; according to the essayist Thomas Nourse, “when men think to take the sweet air, they suck into their lungs this sulphurous stinking powder.” Nourse concluded that “of all the cities perhaps of Europe, there is not a more nasty and a more unpleasant place.”



London firefighters, c. 1720. The machine is filled by hand at the front as the pumping mechanism is operated at the sides.

If coal mining and the steam engine both accelerated the Industrial Revolution, so too did modifications in factory design and in the production process, which enabled goods to be produced more quickly and in larger quantities. And with the industrial revolution came a financial revolution. Today investment banking has become the epitome of a respectable profession, but before the late seventeenth century moneylending was for the most part both informal and disreputable. With the founding of the Bank of England in 1694 the country took a decisive step toward the provision for loans at stable interest rates and toward the creation of a permanent national debt (the bank’s primary purpose was to lend to the government, not to individuals or private companies). Also vital to financing the growth of business and industry was the rise of equity financing,

the division of a company’s ownership into equal shares made available for sale to the general public. Though the London Stock Exchange did not exist on any formally regulated basis until 1801, the exchange dates its existence to 1698, when one John Casting began to issue a list of the current prices of company shares and of commodities on a regular basis from “this Office in Jonathan’s Coffee-house.” The invention of paper money and of checks also helped to facilitate economic fluidity, and virtual free trade resulted from the breaking of a number of government monopolies in the late seventeenth century. Put together, these developments placed Britain firmly on the road toward the system that would come to be known as “capitalism” (the word “capitalism” was not coined until the mid-nineteenth century, but the *Oxford English Dictionary* records the first use of “capital” as occurring in 1708 with the issuance of “An Act for Enlarging the Capital Stock of the Bank of England”). By the early eighteenth century it had become relatively respectable to make money with money, and for the first time moneyed interests dominated landed ones. By the end of the century Britain was the richest nation in the world.

With the extension of trade and the development of more—and more sophisticated—manufactured goods, the nation found itself with a new driving force—one of relentless growth, expansion, and mercantilism. Goods and people could more easily move throughout the nation thanks to developments in transportation. The first Turnpike Trust was passed in 1663, and by 1770 there were 519 trusts, covering nearly 15,000 miles of road. In such trusts, a group of people (usually including a treasurer, a surveyor, and many of the landowners through whose property the road passed) would be granted (by an Act of Parliament) responsibility for managing the road, and would earn money for its upkeep through the establishment and maintenance of toll gates. A canal system was also begun, first to extend natural waterways and then to connect different river systems, bringing more inland coalfields and manufacturing districts within reach. Boats and coaches began for the first time to keep regular schedules, and time-keeping became an exact science as British clock-makers worked to meet the needs of their nation. A new group of consumers was established, as the merchant class

began producing goods not only designed for the aristocracy, but for fellow members of the middle class, who struggled to keep up with the ever-changing dictates of fashion. And for the first time periodicals and newspapers were filled with advertisements for consumer goods.

A booming leisure industry was created to feed the demands of the growing middle class, particularly in London, where urban entertainment flourished. For the first time women from middle-class families entered the public sphere, and the result was something of a cultural revolution. Before 1700 these women (for example merchants' or doctors' wives and daughters) could attend few public social activities, even in larger provincial towns—the only places at which it was proper to be seen included the church, county fairs, and races. By the last decades of the century, however, such a woman's social calendar could include concerts, plays, lectures, debates, balls, exhibitions, and assemblies. Significant architectural changes occurred to feed this leisure industry: shopping streets were laid out, old public buildings were rebuilt, therapeutic spas and bath houses were constructed, and massive pleasure gardens, such as those at Vauxhall and Ranelagh, were laid out. With the advent of town planning, it became fashionable to design town centers in an octagonal pattern, which facilitated movement into the business center at the town core.

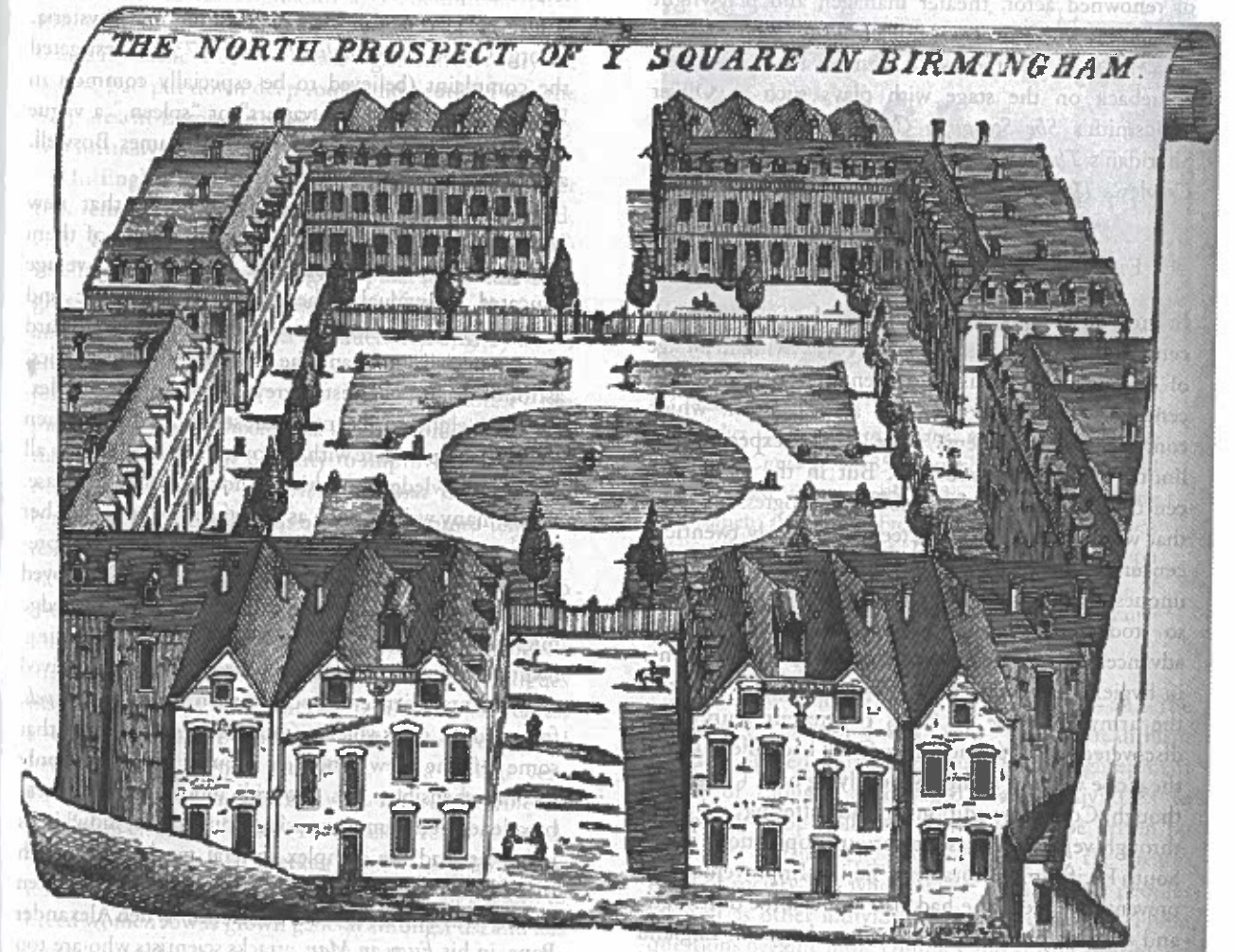
The growing power of the middle class and the influence of its values and ideals were evident in the changes that occurred in the theater between the Restoration and the mid-eighteenth century. The theaters, which had been closed in 1642 by Puritan decree, were reopened with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Charles II, returning from exile in France (the theater center of Europe) and anxious to signal a new era, indulged the public's keen appetite for the theater by licensing two public London theaters. In the atmosphere and layout of the playhouses and in the plays performed, Restoration theater showed a marked difference from its Elizabethan predecessor. While in Elizabethan theater almost every stratum of society could be found, except royalty, this was no longer true of the Restoration playhouses, which, for the first time in history, the King attended. Restoration playhouses

were much smaller and more exclusive; while the Globe Theatre sat between two and three thousand people, Restoration playhouses held between two and three hundred. Prices were therefore significantly higher, and beyond the means of most citizens. The audience consisted almost entirely of young and well-to-do fashionable people from the western end of London (the "Town"), who were closely affiliated with the court. As a group they were united in their Royalist leanings and love of wit, and mostly shared an attitude of skepticism and cynicism coupled with anti-Puritanism. Authors wrote with this audience in mind; they fed their audience's desire for singing, dancing, elaborate costumes, glittering sets, and brilliant spectacles. They also wrote an extraordinary number of scathingly witty and entertaining comedies; the Restoration and early eighteenth century was something of a golden age for the English stage. Among the many comedies from this period that have continued to be revived into our own age are William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), Aphra Behn's *The Rover* (1677), John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1677), William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700), and Susanna Centlivre's *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718), as well as John Gay's ballad opera *The Beggar's Opera*.

While the fashionable set flocked to the theater in these years, members of the respectable middle classes, who leaned more toward Puritan religious notions and who typically resided in the original city of London (now the East End)—while people of rank lived in what was then the separate city of Westminster (now the West End)—tended to avoid the theaters, which were situated in the luminal area between London and Westminster. By the end of the seventeenth century Puritan opposition to the stage was again becoming more vocal. Jeremy Collier's famous attack on contemporary theater, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), was effectively answered in principle by Congreve's "Amendments Upon Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations, etc." and John Dennis's "The Usefulness of the Stage," but the sorts of views that Collier had expressed continued to gain ground among the populace at large, and Congreve, like other playwrights, hastened to pay lip service to the new climate of opinion by, for instance, replacing "Oh God" with "Oh Heaven" in his

characters' lines. Collier's anger was chiefly drawn by bad (that is, irreligious) language and by the representation of either clergymen or ladies as less than exemplary. In 1737 Parliament passed a new Licensing Act, restricting London theater to two tightly controlled venues. Some modern readers may find the raucous,

grossly physical and demeaning satire of such pieces as *A Vision of the Golden Rump* (the play which made Walpole's case for the need for censorship) offensive in itself, but to the eighteenth-century censor the point was the attack on Robert Walpole.



"The North Prospect of the Square in Birmingham," engraving (1732). The Square, an exclusive residential complex, began to be constructed around 1700.

As a result of the Licensing Act restrictions, writers who a generation earlier might have been drawn to the stage began increasingly to try their hand at the novel. The drama that remained gave prominent place to moralizing and sentimentality, and placed considerable emphasis on decorum. The theater continued to sparkle intermittently (the mid-eighteenth century was the era of renowned actor, theater manager, and playwright David Garrick), but it was not until the last quarter of the century that satirical social comedy made a brilliant comeback on the stage with plays such as Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), Richard Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* (1777), and Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780).

#### ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN A CHANGING NATION

In the Middle Ages and through much of the sixteenth century most Britons saw themselves as living in an age of decline or of stasis, and even in the seventeenth century a sense of the world as a place in which continual improvements were to be expected was limited to the well-educated. But in the eighteenth century a sense of the inevitability of progress—a sense that would crest in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—became more and more general. Prosperity unquestionably played its part in fostering this change; so too did various technological and medical advancements. Increased sanitation and improvements in hygiene had reduced the death rate, particularly in the army. The use of citrus to prevent scurvy was discovered in 1754, and James Cook had sailed around the globe without a single sailor dying of it. (Tragically, though, Cook's expeditions spread suffering and death through venereal disease to various populations in the South Pacific, most notably in Tahiti.) Improvements in preventative medicine had also reduced the death rate, and the first preventative injections began in England with inoculation against smallpox, a process popularized largely by the unflagging efforts of woman-of-letters Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who had observed the practice in Turkey. Many new hospitals were founded, while increased understanding of the workings of the nervous system and of psychological or physiological disorders brought about more humane treatment for

those suffering from mental diseases—who were formerly believed to be possessed by demonic spirits, and were therefore locked up in terrible conditions and even put on display for visitors, as at St. Mary's of Bethlehem ("Bedlam"). St. Luke's Hospital in London, where poet Christopher Smart was an early inmate, was founded in 1751. Increased investigations into the relationship between the body and mind led to detailed studies of hypochondria, depression, and hysteria. George Chene's *The English Malady* (1733) investigated the complaint (believed to be especially common in England) known as "the vapors" or "spleen," a vague melancholia and malaise from which James Boswell, amongst others, suffered.

While most English people believed that new advances benefited society, an understanding of them was growing to be beyond the grasp of the average educated individual. The numerous scientific and technological developments led inevitably toward greater specialization, and the new disciplines of physics, astronomy, and chemistry grew increasingly complex. Until the eighteenth century most educated gentlemen could keep up to date with discoveries and theories in all areas of knowledge, but this was now no longer the case. While many writers, such as Margaret Cavendish in her 1666 work *Description of a New Blazing World* (a precursor of the genre we now call "science fiction"), enjoyed speculating about where the path of the new knowledge might lead, for others the effect was far more disorienting. Swift's satire of poorly formulated and ill-conceived experimental science in Book Three of *Gulliver's Travels*, for example, gives voice to the widely shared sense that some of the new lines of inquiry were not only incomprehensible, but also ridiculous. As the world broadened, it became increasingly difficult for individuals to understand the complex societal machine of which they formed a small part—and this broadening was often perceived as a threat to social coherence. When Alexander Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, attacks scientists who are too absorbed in minutiae to see the bigger picture, he reflects a common belief that individuals must keep the interests of society as a whole in mind.

Any references to "the average educated individual" in this period are of course still very far from denoting the whole population. One of the new notions of the

Reformation was the idea that education should be universal—for all classes of society, and for females as well as for males. John Knox, the Scottish Protestant leader, was the first to give practical shape to such radical notions, formulating in the 1560s a plan for incorporating schools into every church. Implementation of such a plan occurred only slowly and fitfully; the Scottish Highlands lagged behind the rest of Britain in levels of education as a result of the lack of books in Gaelic. But by the late eighteenth century the system had put down deep roots, and Scotland was the only area in Europe in which over half of the citizenry was formally educated.

In England it was coming to be considered proper that female members of the gentry should be tutored, and boarding schools, although decried by the intelligentsia, were increasingly popular for middle-class girls. But the idea of universal education for all women and men was given serious consideration only by a few, and higher education for women remained a subject for jokes. Some women did strongly protest the philosophical and theological assumptions that denied that women have the capacity to improve their minds. Mary Astell's 1694 *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (probably the most famous of such early proto-feminist texts) was not only an important call for the education of women but also one of the first works to inquire into the degree to which humans' search for truth may be influenced by prejudice. In this she challenges Locke's theory that we are born as blank slates; Astell argues instead that people are born into families, towns, cities, and countries that provide pre-existing conditions and help to shape human prejudices. In a similar vein Bathsua Makin, in her *Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673) had already declared, "Custom, when it is inveterate, has a mighty influence: it has the force of nature itself. The barbarous custom to breed women low is grown general amongst us, and has prevailed so far, that it is verily believed (especially amongst a sort of debauched sots) that women are not endued with such reason as men; nor capable of improvement by education, as they are. It is looked upon as a monstrous thing to pretend the contrary. . . . To offer to the world the liberal education of women is to deface the image of God in man." At least a few men

shared such views—Daniel Defoe, for example, refers to the denial of learning to women as "one of the most barbarous customs in the world"—but it would be two hundred years before such views became those of the majority.



Susana Highmore Duncombe, *Vignette with Two Ladies Conversing in a Park, with Athena Chasing Away Cupid* (c. 1785). Duncombe's parents held advanced views regarding the education of young women; she learned French, Latin, and Italian, was taught to draw by her father (the painter Joseph Highmore, also remembered as illustrator of Richardson's *Pamela*), and published both translations of Italian poets and her own verse.

The new celebration of mercantilism—and the acceptance of selfishness that this mercantilism implied—posed moral dilemmas that Enlightenment habits of thought encouraged many individuals to explore. If people allowed themselves to be driven by their own self-interest, would they ignore the greater good of society as a whole? How should other peoples (as well as other individual people) be treated? These questions became more complex and vexing as England expanded geographically and its citizens found themselves part of an ever-larger community. With the Seven Years' War Britain became a major colonial power, and its position in relation to the rest of the world changed dramatically. This too was generally assumed to be "progress," both for England and for the areas it came to control. The appropriation of wealth

from India and the Indies, for example, was justified by citing England's supposed cultural and technological superiority, from which it was supposed that the indigenous populations would themselves benefit, and by arguing that the British were saving the Hindus from the oppressive Muslim Mughal emperors. But some English people voiced different beliefs concerning the morality of colonial expansion and trade. While many saw the future of the nation as dependent on aggressive expansion of trade and the colonial empire, others supported international trade but were morally opposed to expansion. Many writers—including Jonathan Swift and Samuel Johnson—have left memorable denunciations of colonial land-grabbing and many more of involvement in the slave trade.

English participation in the slave trade had begun to grow significantly in the seventeenth century, and by the mid-eighteenth century close to 50,000 slaves were being transported across the Atlantic annually by British ships. But by that time stirrings of conscience about the morality of the practice of slavery were also evident. Here is how Samuel Johnson (as reported by Boswell) thought the matter through:

It must be agreed that in most ages many countries have had part of their inhabitants in a state of slavery; yet it may be doubted whether slavery can ever be supposed the natural condition of man. It is impossible not to conceive that men in their original state were equal; and very difficult to imagine how one would be subjected to another but by violent compulsion. An individual may, indeed, forfeit his liberty by a crime; but he cannot by that crime forfeit the liberty of his children. What is true of a criminal seems true likewise of a captive. A man may accept life from a conquering enemy on condition of perpetual servitude; but it is very doubtful whether he can entail that servitude on his descendants; for no man can stipulate without commission for another. The condition which he himself accepts, his son or grandson would have rejected.

As Johnson's thoughts suggest, the questioning of the moral grounds for slavery arose to a significant extent from the consideration of broader inquiries concerning human nature. Many theorists of the time, such as

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, claimed people naturally attained the greatest possible level of happiness by being good to others. Because humanity is inherently sociable, that argument went, those acts and characteristics that are most virtuous are also those that are best for society as a whole. In Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733–34), for example, self-interest is seen as beneficial (through God's foresight) to others as well as to the self. Each individual's "ruling passion" causes him or her to seek "a sev'ral goal"; thus, by gratifying one's own desires, one also works together as part of a larger framework. David Hume also argued, though from a rather different standpoint, that the cultivation of virtue would advance the general good; Hume emphasized the importance of the feelings or "sentiments"—what we would today call the emotions—in leading us to a sense of what is right—and emphasized, too, the role that habit can play in cultivating patterns of good behavior.

There were some, however, who took a more pessimistic view of human nature and society. Bernard Mandeville, the most controversial of early eighteenth-century moral theorists, saw self-interest purely as selfishness, a quality that, in the natural state of human beings, would not allow for the interests of others. Ethical behavior, in Mandeville's view, is in essence a by-product of our vanity. It arises purely from the human desire to be recognized and praised. There is no place in Mandeville's world for appeals to conscience; morality is only driven by pride and shame. According to Mandeville, a wealthy society depends on people having and indulging their vices, such as greed and vanity, because these lead to full employment and a buoyant economy—whereas a pious, self-denying society will lead to unemployment and general poverty. In other words, general Puritan reform would bring economic collapse. Mandeville's defense of the financial benefits of the consumer society is in many ways strikingly modern.

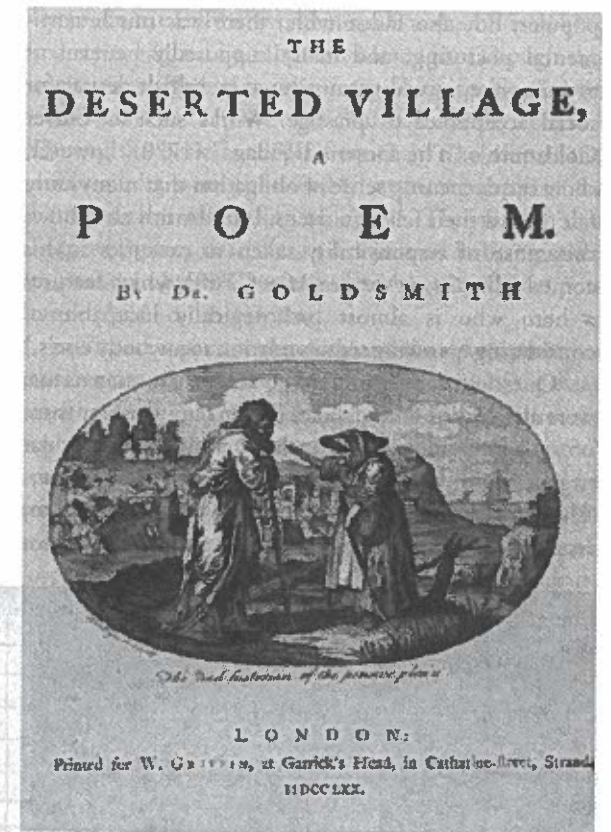
The ideas of Adam Smith concerning human nature are in some respects closely connected with those of Mandeville, but Smith's understanding of both morality and economics is more complex and nuanced. Even as Smith puts forward the notion that self-interest can work to the benefit of all through the mechanism of the

"invisible hand," Smith does not see selfishness itself as a virtue. He accepts that altruism exists, recognizing that, however selfish "man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature that interest him in the fortune of others and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it." And Smith devotes considerable effort to discussing the ways in which selfishness acts *against* the public interest, and must be curbed. Though "civil government" was said to have been instituted "for the security of property," he concluded that it had been "in reality instituted for the defense of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all." Far from giving free rein to commercial interests, Smith concluded that the interests of business people "is never exactly the same with that of the public," and that they "have generally an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public."

Most people accepted the more optimistic view of human nature, and the theories such as those of Shaftesbury and Hume led to a growing cult of sentiment, in which people celebrated what they saw as their natural sympathetic responses to human suffering (and, to a lesser extent, to human joy). Social reform movements grew as the English people sought the pleasure that charitable acts would bring them. As the growing trend of social improvement became not only



*A View of the Poor House of Datchworth*, detail from an engraving in Philip Thicknesse's *Four Persons Found Starved to Death, at Datchworth* (1769).



Title page, Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770). Outrage against extremes of hardship and inequality caused by such "rural improvement" practices as enclosure (of formerly common land) and engrossment (the practice of replacing a larger number of rural tenants with a much smaller number) was stirred in the 1760s by a variety of works, among them Thicknesse's shocking account of an incident in Hertfordshire, and Oliver Goldsmith's long poem lamenting the disappearance of rural and village society in the face of the greed of wealthy landowners: "the man of wealth and pride / Takes up a space that many poor supplied."

popular, but also fashionable, there was much sentimental posturing, and many supposedly benevolent actions were, in reality, motivated by selfish desires for social acceptance or prestige. Works such as Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" (1770), however, show the deepening sense of obligation that many truly felt toward their fellow citizens. (Goldsmith also shows this sense of responsibility taken to extremes in his comedy *The Good-Natured Man* [1768], which features a hero who is almost pathologically incapable of considering his own needs in relation to anybody else's.)

Questions concerning the goodness of human nature were also linked with debates concerning the best form of government—debates that attained particular urgency with the American and French Revolutions. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776) brought the issues of the goodness of government to the forefront for

many eighteenth-century citizens of both England and the colonies. For Paine, an Englishman with limited formal education who moved to the colony of Pennsylvania in 1774, when he was 37, government was at best a necessary evil to be endured, and its dictatorial tendencies must be curbed. The constitution of England was, according to Paine, an amalgam of republican elements with the remains of monarchical and despotic ones. The very idea of a monarch, in his view, went against the principle of human equality: and "'tis a form of government which the word of God bears testimony against, and blood will attend it." Blood was shed over such issues only on the American side of the Atlantic, but *Common Sense* went through five editions in London, with editions also appearing in Newcastle and Edinburgh.



A Coffee House, engraving, 1668. The first London coffee house opened in 1652.

PRINT CULTURE

Whatever British people's opinions on issues of morality, philosophy, government, or technology, they soon found themselves with a multitude of new forums in which to express those opinions, thanks to the booming print trade. The religious controversies of the seventeenth-century English civil wars had done much to fuel a desire for printed information, whether in the form of prophecies, sermons, news, or political controversy. Censorship under the Licensing Act, which had loosened under Charles I at the approach of the civil war, was briefly revived following the Restoration, but in 1695 the old Licensing Act was allowed to lapse. Newfound freedom of the press sparked a rise in writing of all kinds, whether political or religious treatises, satires, or debates. The production of newspapers, journals, miscellanies (what we would call anthologies, with mostly contemporary content), and pamphlets increased greatly, and printed materials began to sell in unprecedented numbers. Short or serial publications were cheaper than novels or volumes of poetry and made information accessible to a much larger portion of the population. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), for example, was far more widely read after it was reprinted in the *Original London Post* in installments three times a week.

Gradually, a new reading public emerged. Though reading had always been a social activity, with literate members of a family reading the Bible or news to others, for example, in the eighteenth century reading and writing became activities that occurred in public spaces that were often designed solely for that purpose. With the rise of coffee houses—of which it was estimated London had roughly 3,000 by the end of the eighteenth century—British subjects could come together to read and debate. Libraries and literary clubs provided alternative spaces for such activities, and ones in which women were welcome (as they were not in coffee houses). Literary clubs such as the Scriblerus Club of Alexander Pope, John Gay, Jonathan Swift, Thomas Parnell, and John Arbuthnot or Dr. Johnson's Literary Club (both all male) originated in the eighteenth century. Many of these groups, such as that gathered informally around Samuel Richardson, were of mixed company or made

up predominantly of women, such as the bluestocking society organized by Elizabeth Montagu. (Though this society included men, the term "bluestocking" soon came to be a derisive term for a bookish woman.) During the period, people frequently read aloud, and many guides were published to instruct people in the best practices of reading to others. The anxiety that Frances Burney describes in her journal at being asked to read to Queen Charlotte demonstrates the importance placed on this new art.

With new print technology and the development of the newspaper, as well as the new popularity of the essay as a literary form and the new social space of the city (where the majority of the reading public was located) came the rise of the periodical—of which by far the most influential was Richard Steele's *The Tatler* and his and Joseph Addison's *The Spectator*. These periodicals organized themselves around the coffee-house culture and embraced the conversation and public debate that they fostered. *The Spectator* (1711–14) advertised itself as being organized around the meetings of a fictitious club, the Spectator Club, which claimed to comprise a country gentleman, a London merchant, a retired soldier, a clergyman, a lawyer, and a gentleman born to a hereditary estate. Addison claimed that each copy of *The Spectator* was read by as many as twenty people as a result of coffee-shop circulation. With this large an audience, Addison greatly influenced the beliefs of his society and the ways in which that society saw itself. He popularized the theories of Newton and Locke, bringing them to the average gentleman (and also explicitly aiming to include strong female representation among his readership), and substantially influenced the aesthetic tastes of his day. Anthologies, miscellanies, and periodicals also provided a forum for women writers. Future bluestocking Elizabeth Carter worked for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and there were numerous women who occasionally contributed to such magazines. Several specifically female periodicals were also published, such as *The Female Tatler*, Eliza Haywood's *The Female Spectator*, and Charlotte Lennox's *The Lady's Museum*. These offered a public space for women writers, editors, and critics.

As a result of these changes in print culture, the individual reader had a sense of him or herself as part of



a larger reading community in which debate was freely engaged, and conversation between various readers and writers was a central part of most publications. Writers frequently responded to, continued, or revised one another's work. Collaborative work became popular, and frequently arose out of literary groups. Meanwhile, booksellers produced anthologies of both poems and prose, such as Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* (1748–58).

During this period criticism came into its own as a separate genre. Though writers had always commented on and responded to one another's work, they often did so more privately. In manuscript culture, for example, texts would be annotated with marginal comments arguing with, supporting, or even summarizing an author's points. Thomas More's *Utopia* contains printed marginal notes of this sort, probably written by his friend and supporter Erasmus. With the decline of manuscript circulation, this sort of private literary conversation became public, separate works of criticism became more common, and Dryden included critical introductions in his own work. With this genre of writing about literature and about authors themselves, some literary personalities approached the status of celebrities. Samuel Johnson, for example, observed to Boswell a few years before his death, "I believe there is hardly a day in which there is not something about me in the newspapers."

All these developments in print culture marked a dramatic change from the previous century, when publishing one's own work had been seen as "vulgar"; it had been thought that the lofty aims of art or high-culture conversation transcended material concerns such as money or a desire for fame. Some seventeenth-century authors had circulated their works in manuscript for years (even if after that they took steps to publish them), and many works were not published at all during an author's lifetime. In the eighteenth century some authors still continued the practice of publishing anonymously, particularly in the first half of the century, even if their identity was commonly known. Samuel Johnson, a bookseller's son who famously declared, "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money," did not sign his name on any of his early work.

Because writers often played with the new print culture, using various means to disguise their authorship, the question of attribution can be a difficult one for scholars of the eighteenth century. Readers at the time generally assumed they could solve the mysteries of authorship, but they were frequently incorrect. Authors carefully avoided publishing any autobiographical or blatantly self-promotional material. Letters were occasionally saved and prepared for posthumous publication by their authors, but in 1739 Pope startled his peers by becoming one of the first literary figures to oversee the publication of his own letters. Pope avoided much of the scandal that this would ordinarily have caused through employing intricate subterfuge. Throughout his career he had an antagonistic relationship with the notoriously immoral publisher Edmund Curll, who frequently attacked Pope in print and published pirated copies of his works and those of his friends, such as Jonathan Swift, John Gay, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Pope arranged for some of his correspondence to fall into Curll's hands, and when the publisher printed this supposedly pirated edition, Pope was justified in releasing the official edition of his letters—an edition that he had significantly doctored (while pretending candor and sincerity) to present himself in a more favorable light.

While it became increasingly socially acceptable for people of high rank to publish their writing, advances in print technology and changes in the publishing industry also made it possible for men and women from various backgrounds to earn a living through writing. Before the eighteenth century, those who wished to support themselves by writing would have had to find themselves a rich aristocratic patron who would support them, and to whom they would dedicate their works. During the Restoration, Aphra Behn and John Dryden also supported themselves by writing for the stage, and in the eighteenth century Alexander Pope was the first to earn a living by subscription writing. His success marked a change in the writing and publishing industries. With subscription printing, all subscribers would make financial contributions in exchange for having their names appear on a page inside the work, just as the patron's name would have previously; in this way, a system of what Terry Eagleton refers to as

"collective patronage" came into effect. By contributing money up front, subscribers helped defray the initial cost of printing. An author's friends often formed the bulk of subscribers, though many others might become subscribers either out of something akin to charity or for the prestige that came with illustrious publications. Dryden's *The Works of Virgil* (1697), which set the standard for the Latin translations that were highly esteemed and successful during this century, was one of the first works by an English poet to be financed in this manner, though in the seventeenth century much legal, scientific, and theological publishing was done in this way. Publishers (who usually doubled as and were known as new booksellers) also formed "congers," or partnerships, to share the costs of elaborate or expensive new works and of existing copyrights (because the copyright of works by dead authors could be sold on from one publisher to another).

The concept of copyright as we know it today first took shape in the early eighteenth century. In England from the sixteenth century onwards, the rights acquired by stationers or printers upon securing from the Stationers' Company a license to print books had been generally assumed to be property rights, with the understanding being that, as with other sorts of property, ownership was ongoing; English practice severely restricted the reproduction of literary works other than by their "owner." No formal copyright protection existed in English law, however, and from time to time editions would find their way into the English market from Scotland or Ireland (where intellectual property was less restricted). English publishers began to agitate to have perpetual "copyright" formalized in law, and the British Parliament eventually decided (in the 1709 Statute of Anne) to recognize and protect copyright. But rather than declaring copyright to be a property right held in perpetuity, Parliament restricted it to 14 years from publication (renewable in certain circumstances for a further 14 years)—after which anyone could publish competing editions of a work. Remarkably, publishers who had "owned" popular works refused to concede, and managed to persuade a succession of judges that the Statute of Anne had improperly authorized the uncompensated confiscation of private property. In

defiance of what was seemingly set out in law, they succeeded for another 65 years in maintaining control over what we would now term "works in the public domain." Ironically, then, the Statute of Anne ushered in what William St. Clair has termed an "age of high monopoly" in the book trade. Together with the ending of official state censorship in 1695 and the gradual withdrawal of some other controls on the content of printed matter in the first half of the eighteenth century, the secure conditions under which British publishers operated fostered the production of large, beautifully produced volumes—and something of a golden era for the spread of Enlightenment culture. But the same conditions that favored the publication of expensive works of history and philosophy with a limited market slowed the spread of popular literature in book form—and the growth of a reading public. It was not until a 1774 legal case finally brought an end to the near-monopoly conditions that books started to become smaller and cheaper. That in turn led to a huge surge in reading across all social classes. In 1791, bookseller James Lackington described the degree to which things had changed: "According to the best estimation I have been able to make, I suppose that more than four times the number of books are sold now than were sold twenty years since.... In short, all ranks and degrees now READ."

An explosive growth in periodicals and newspapers, however, began much earlier. And with it came changes in the community of writers. A new term, "Grub Street," was used to describe the multitude of freelance writers who contributed for pay to the popular press. Many of these writers had little education, worked for meager wages, and lived in rundown apartments on London's Grub Street. With this profusion of "hack" writers (one of whom was Samuel Johnson in his early career), many feared that literature was becoming mired in trivial, everyday concerns. Alexander Pope was without a doubt the writer who most viciously satirized hack writers; his satirical masterpiece *The Dunciad* (1742) depicted a kingdom of dunces that included nearly every minor writer or publisher with whose work Pope had found fault.

Eighteenth-century theories of aesthetics sought to define what should be the lofty aims of true art (in order

to separate the “true” art from the masses of popular writing), and often advocated avoiding the “low” details of the surrounding everyday world. Early in the eighteenth century John Gay wrote poetry of the tradespeople and messengers in the streets of London, with the often dirty or pungent details of their business. Later, in his essay on the theater, Oliver Goldsmith argued that the single word “low” as a term of contempt had made comedy virtually impossible. When he introduced bailiffs into a tea-party of his hero and heroine in *The Good-Natured Man* the audience was outraged, rather as if he had personally introduced them to actual bailiffs. Not only were certain aspects of satire out of bounds, but poets also felt that general principles, abstract propositions, or sensitive feelings were more worthy of their art than the material world. The empiricism of Locke and Hume shaped aesthetic theories according to which the artist’s role was to embody sensory messages (through which individuals receive information about the outside world) in the imagery of his or her work. According to Locke, the mind passively receives impressions through our senses from external objects, and then combines these received simple ideas into complex ideas. Edmund Burke, in his *Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), follows Locke in asserting that the senses are the origin of all our ideas and pleasures. The reader experiences the work as a series of sensations, and its value lies in the emotional effect it produces and the way in which the artist produces this effect. In his treatise, Burke forms a distinction between the sublime and the beautiful—either of which, he maintains, may be the aim of a literary work. Our emotional response to something beautiful is a positive pleasure, or a social pleasure. Ideas that excite terror, on the other hand, and give us impressions of pain and danger, are sources of the sublime. We are impressed and astonished without being troubled by receiving ideas of pain and danger when we are in no actual danger ourselves, and thus we derive delight as a result of our desire for self-preservation.

Theories such as Burke’s endeavored to link principles of aesthetics to those of morality and psychology. Such was also the case with the influential aesthetic theories of Henry Home, Lord Kames. For



Thomas Hickey, *Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox* (c. 1775). A friend in early life of Burke (who is best remembered for his later, conservative views), Fox went on to become a leader in Whig politics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Kames, what we find beautiful in works of art is what improves us morally; for example, tragedy appeals to us in large part because it develops our sympathy for others. It is the nature of fine arts, Kames says in his *Elements of Criticism* (1762), to raise pleasurable emotions. Kames also expanded the definition of the fine arts to include practices not formerly considered, such as gardening (that is, landscape gardening or large-scale garden design, an artistic pursuit that flourished in the eighteenth century). According to Kames, the characteristics of gardens, such as their (loosely) regulated patterns, their color, and their utility, can raise pleasurable emotions such as gaiety, melancholy, surprise, wonder, or a sense of grandeur.

Increasingly as the eighteenth century progressed, those who valued the sublime in art sought the work of a wide variety of ancient societies as models. Alongside the well-established admiration for the complex social organization of ancient Greece and Rome, critics and



Paul Sandby, *Dolbadarn Castle and Llanberris Lake*, c. 1770. In the second half of the eighteenth century interest in travel to the more remote and wild regions of Britain (notably the Lake District, North Wales, and the Highlands of Scotland) greatly increased; Thomas Pennant’s *Tour in Scotland* (1772), for example, went through five editions before 1790. Sandby’s painting shows the ruins of a thirteenth-century castle set among craggy peaks in North Wales, viewed by a touring party.

artists began to celebrate the natural genius of what they saw as primitive and uneducated writers from uncivilized ages: These writers were seen as having created through spontaneous impulse, unimpeded by the conventions of civilization. Influential critics such as Sir William Temple also admired “exotic” cultures such as those of China and Peru. The Goths became another important model, as did the Celts and the Druids, and interest in medieval English literature increased greatly; the works of Chaucer found renewed popularity, and Alfred the Great became an object of admiration. It was during the eighteenth century that a field of genuine medieval scholarship arose, though romantic medievalism was also popular among poets; Thomas Gray was among the prominent poets who looked to medieval literature for inspiration. William Collins, for his part, purported to draw from ancient Persian writing in his *Persian Eclogues* (1742). All things Oriental exploded into fashion in the eighteenth century; the Orient became, in the minds of many English people, a place that embodied all the characteristics found lacking in British society. This led to admiration for the Orient as

an ideal, uncorrupted place of wealth and leisure, but it did not provide the average reader with any understanding of the complex realities of these foreign cultures. Sir William Temple garnered much critical interest when he published an old Icelandic fragment, and Scottish poet James Macpherson captured public attention when he claimed to have discovered and translated primitive epics from the Scottish Highlands written about the legendary hero Ossian. Though *Ossian* was later discovered to have been almost entirely composed by Macpherson himself on the slenderest dependence on traditional ballads, the impact the work had upon the reading public testified to the high demand for works colored with the romantic appeal of antiquity.

#### POETRY

While many writers turned to the exotic or primitive as a source of inspiration or a means of indicating special knowledge (which would distinguish them from the masses of hack writers), there was in general a continued emphasis on Greek and Roman cultures as representing the origins of true art and literature. In the early part of the eighteenth century in particular, a knowledge of Greek and Latin languages and literature was seen as prerequisite for anyone who attempted to write in English. Allusions to Homer and Roman poets Horace, Virgil, Juvenal, and Ovid occur throughout the works of poets such as Dryden, Pope, and Swift, who saw themselves as the eighteenth-century disciples of these venerated ancient poets. In fact, because of the similarities between the creative and political climates of the early eighteenth century and those of ancient Rome during the reign of Augustus Caesar, the first few decades of the century are often referred to as the “Augustan Age.” In the political climate that these poets saw as relatively stable, in comparison to the turmoil of the mid-seventeenth century following the Restoration, poetry was able to flourish—just as during the reign of Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor, patrons in this period of peace following Rome’s civil war had increasingly used their wealth and leisure to enjoy and support the arts. In the Restoration and early eighteenth century, many leading literary figures tried their hands

to the *Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736). Others responded by disregarding the rational arguments of skeptics altogether, turning instead to powerful appeals to the emotions in their efforts to reaffirm faith. Methodism, an evangelical movement that originated within the Church of England, is perhaps the most important example here. Led by John Wesley, Methodism spread rapidly in new industrial villages and poorer areas. Methodist preachers spoke their gospel to common people—often out in the fields or in barns because they were barred from preaching in churches. With its emphasis on faith as the only path to salvation, its strong reliance on hymns, and its fervent and energetic sermons, Methodism won many converts.

Throughout the century the debate over free-thinking was a heated one in England—citizens heard freethinkers denounced from pulpits, read attacks on them in the press, and even saw them pilloried or imprisoned for blasphemy. Despite public alarm, however, these blasphemous thinkers made up a very small minority of the population, and posed little real threat to the established Church. As Johnson famously said to Boswell, “Sir, there is a great cry about infidelity; but there are, in reality, very few infidels.” The Church continued as an arm of the state, serving as both political body and spiritual leader. “Papists” were a minority, despite the fears their presence evoked among Protestants.

More and more homes contained copies of at least a few books—most commonly the Bible, a prayer book, and John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. After those three, James Thomson’s *Seasons* may well have been the most popular book of the age. Many homes would also have held copies of devotional manuals such as William Law’s *A Serious Call* and a few of the most popular fictional works of the time, many of which—such as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, for example—contained a strong moral message.

#### INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

While religious and secular debates continued, the scientific advances that had helped to incite them changed the physical face of the nation. The first crude steam engine was invented in 1698 by Thomas Savery,

a military engineer, as a means of removing water from mines. In *The Miner’s Friend; or, an Engine to Raise Water by Fire, Described* (1702), however, Savery includes a chapter on “The Uses that this Engine may be applied Unto” that shows a dawning awareness of the far-reaching possibilities for such a device:

(1) It may be of great use for palaces, for the nobilities or gentlemen’s houses: for by a cistern on the top of a house, you may with a great deal of ease and little charge, throw what quantity of water you have occasion for to the top of any house; which water in its fall makes you what sorts of fountains you please and supply any room in the house. And it is of excellent use in case of fire, of which more hereafter. (2) Nothing can be more fit for serving cities and towns with water, except a crank-work by the force of a river. . . (3) As for draining fens and marshes . . . it is much cheaper, and every way easier, especially where coals are water borne, to continue the discharge of any quantities of water by our engine than it can be done by any horse engines what so ever. (4) I believe it may be made very useful to ships, but I dare not meddle with that matter; and leave it to the judgment of those who are the best judges of maritime affairs.

The steam engine—particularly following Thomas Newcomen’s pioneering use of pistons in 1712 and James Watt’s invention of a condenser (patented in 1769) to make its functioning more efficient—was the driving force behind an Industrial Revolution in Britain that both literally and figuratively gathered steam throughout the eighteenth century. And the fuel that fed it, coal, took a central place in British life. Coal had begun to be used extensively as a heating fuel in the later Middle Ages, as the forests were depleted, and its domestic use accelerated during the “Little Ice Age” that brought colder-than-average winters to Britain through most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The industrial use of coal grew rapidly throughout the era as well; by 1700 Britain was mining and burning far more coal than the rest of the world. In the early years of the eighteenth century, Daniel Defoe marveled at the “prodigious fleets of ships which come constantly in with coals for this increasing city [London],” and at the

vast numbers of coal pits and the “prodigious heaps, I may say mountains of coal which are dug up at every pit” in Newcastle. But if coal made possible warmer dwellings and industrial growth, it was most certainly a mixed blessing. The life of a miner was nasty, brutish, and short. The mines themselves were extraordinarily dangerous, and the mine operators in Newcastle created what may have been the first industrial slums. London by 1700 was already a blackened city; according to the essayist Thomas Nourse, “when men think to take the sweet air, they suck into their lungs this sulphurous stinking powder.” Nourse concluded that “of all the cities perhaps of Europe, there is not a more nasty and a more unpleasant place.”



London firefighters, c. 1720. The machine is filled by hand at the front as the pumping mechanism is operated at the sides.

If coal mining and the steam engine both accelerated the Industrial Revolution, so too did modifications in factory design and in the production process, which enabled goods to be produced more quickly and in larger quantities. And with the industrial revolution came a financial revolution. Today investment banking has become the epitome of a respectable profession, but before the late seventeenth century moneylending was for the most part both informal and disreputable. With the founding of the Bank of England in 1694 the country took a decisive step toward the provision for loans at stable interest rates and toward the creation of a permanent national debt (the bank’s primary purpose was to lend to the government, not to individuals or private companies). Also vital to financing the growth of business and industry was the rise of equity financing,

the division of a company’s ownership into equal shares made available for sale to the general public. Though the London Stock Exchange did not exist on any formally regulated basis until 1801, the exchange dates its existence to 1698, when one John Casting began to issue a list of the current prices of company shares and of commodities on a regular basis from “this Office in Jonathan’s Coffee-house.” The invention of paper money and of checks also helped to facilitate economic fluidity, and virtual free trade resulted from the breaking of a number of government monopolies in the late seventeenth century. Put together, these developments placed Britain firmly on the road toward the system that would come to be known as “capitalism” (the word “capitalism” was not coined until the mid-nineteenth century, but the *Oxford English Dictionary* records the first use of “capital” as occurring in 1708 with the issuance of “An Act for Enlarging the Capital Stock of the Bank of England”). By the early eighteenth century it had become relatively respectable to make money with money, and for the first time moneyed interests dominated landed ones. By the end of the century Britain was the richest nation in the world.

With the extension of trade and the development of more—and more sophisticated—manufactured goods, the nation found itself with a new driving force—one of relentless growth, expansion, and mercantilism. Goods and people could more easily move throughout the nation thanks to developments in transportation. The first Turnpike Trust was passed in 1663, and by 1770 there were 519 trusts, covering nearly 15,000 miles of road. In such trusts, a group of people (usually including a treasurer, a surveyor, and many of the landowners through whose property the road passed) would be granted (by an Act of Parliament) responsibility for managing the road, and would earn money for its upkeep through the establishment and maintenance of toll gates. A canal system was also begun, first to extend natural waterways and then to connect different river systems, bringing more inland coalfields and manufacturing districts within reach. Boats and coaches began for the first time to keep regular schedules, and time-keeping became an exact science as British clock-makers worked to meet the needs of their nation. A new group of consumers was established, as the merchant class

began producing goods not only designed for the aristocracy, but for fellow members of the middle class, who struggled to keep up with the ever-changing dictates of fashion. And for the first time periodicals and newspapers were filled with advertisements for consumer goods.

A booming leisure industry was created to feed the demands of the growing middle class, particularly in London, where urban entertainment flourished. For the first time women from middle-class families entered the public sphere, and the result was something of a cultural revolution. Before 1700 these women (for example merchants' or doctors' wives and daughters) could attend few public social activities, even in larger provincial towns—the only places at which it was proper to be seen included the church, county fairs, and races. By the last decades of the century, however, such a woman's social calendar could include concerts, plays, lectures, debates, balls, exhibitions, and assemblies. Significant architectural changes occurred to feed this leisure industry: shopping streets were laid out, old public buildings were rebuilt, therapeutic spas and bath houses were constructed, and massive pleasure gardens, such as those at Vauxhall and Ranelagh, were laid out. With the advent of town planning, it became fashionable to design town centers in an octagonal pattern, which facilitated movement into the business center at the town core.

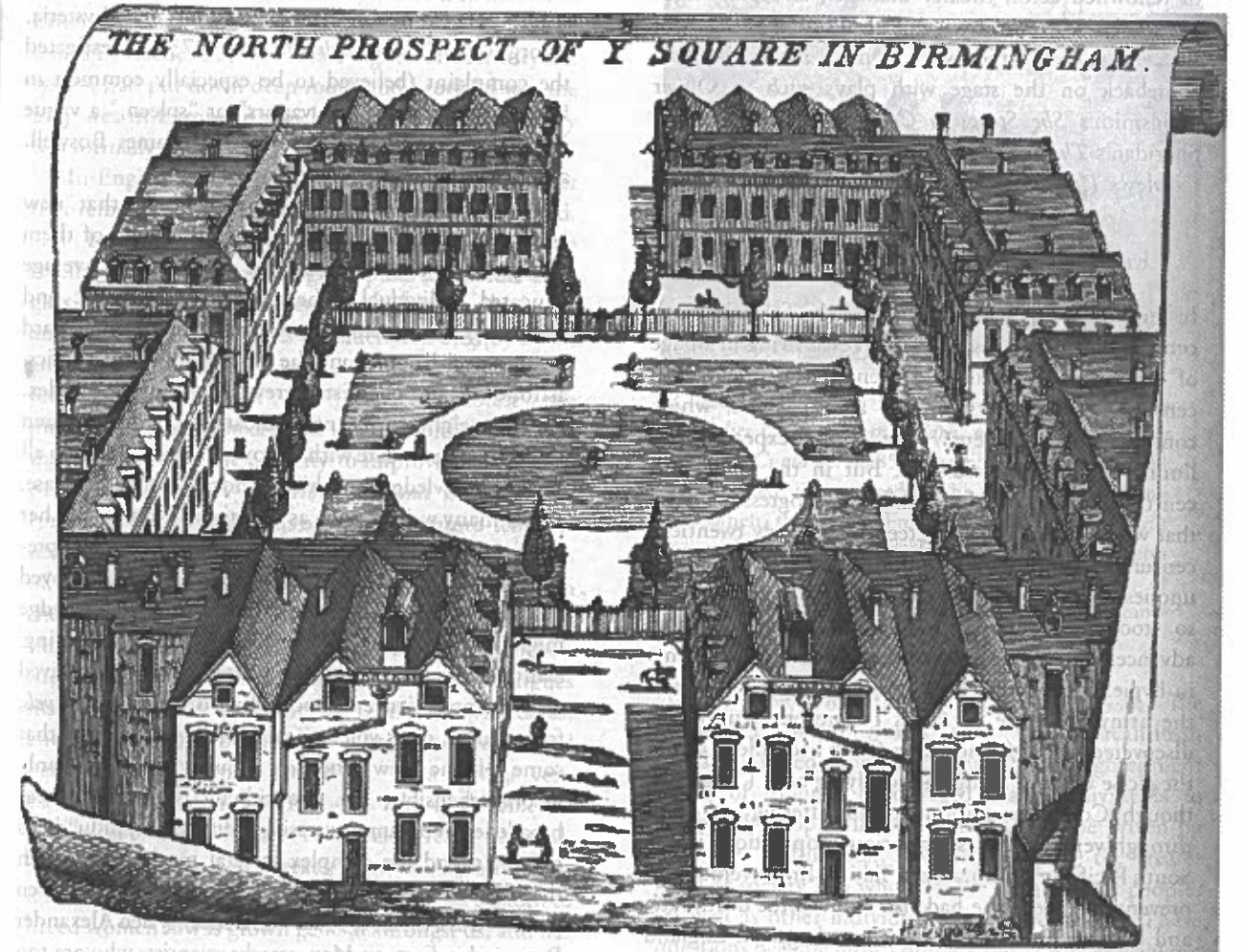
The growing power of the middle class and the influence of its values and ideals were evident in the changes that occurred in the theater between the Restoration and the mid-eighteenth century. The theaters, which had been closed in 1642 by Puritan decree, were reopened with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Charles II, returning from exile in France (the theater center of Europe) and anxious to signal a new era, indulged the public's keen appetite for the theater by licensing two public London theaters. In the atmosphere and layout of the playhouses and in the plays performed, Restoration theater showed a marked difference from its Elizabethan predecessor. While in Elizabethan theater almost every stratum of society could be found, except royalty, this was no longer true of the Restoration playhouses, which, for the first time in history, the King attended. Restoration playhouses

were much smaller and more exclusive; while the Globe Theatre sat between two and three thousand people, Restoration playhouses held between two and three hundred. Prices were therefore significantly higher, and beyond the means of most citizens. The audience consisted almost entirely of young and well-to-do fashionable people from the western end of London (the "Town"), who were closely affiliated with the court. As a group they were united in their Royalist leanings and love of wit, and mostly shared an attitude of skepticism and cynicism coupled with anti-Puritanism. Authors wrote with this audience in mind; they fed their audience's desire for singing, dancing, elaborate costumes, glittering sets, and brilliant spectacles. They also wrote an extraordinary number of scathingly witty and entertaining comedies; the Restoration and early eighteenth century was something of a golden age for the English stage. Among the many comedies from this period that have continued to be revived into our own age are William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), Aphra Behn's *The Rover* (1677), John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1677), William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700), and Susanna Centlivre's *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718), as well as John Gay's ballad opera *The Beggar's Opera*.

While the fashionable set flocked to the theater in these years, members of the respectable middle classes, who leaned more toward Puritan religious notions and who typically resided in the original city of London (now the East End)—while people of rank lived in what was then the separate city of Westminster (now the West End)—tended to avoid the theaters, which were situated in the luminal area between London and Westminster. By the end of the seventeenth century Puritan opposition to the stage was again becoming more vocal. Jeremy Collier's famous attack on contemporary theater, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), was effectively answered in principle by Congreve's "Amendments Upon Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations, etc." and John Dennis's "The Usefulness of the Stage," but the sorts of views that Collier had expressed continued to gain ground among the populace at large, and Congreve, like other playwrights, hastened to pay lip service to the new climate of opinion by, for instance, replacing "Oh God" with "Oh Heaven" in his

characters' lines. Collier's anger was chiefly drawn by bad (that is, irreligious) language and by the representation of either clergymen or ladies as less than exemplary. In 1737 Parliament passed a new Licensing Act, restricting London theater to two tightly controlled venues. Some modern readers may find the raucous,

grossly physical and demeaning satire of such pieces as *A Vision of the Golden Rump* (the play which made Walpole's case for the need for censorship) offensive in itself, but to the eighteenth-century censor the point was the attack on Robert Walpole.



"The North Prospect of the Square in Birmingham," engraving (1732). The Square, an exclusive residential complex, began to be constructed around 1700.

As a result of the Licensing Act restrictions, writers who a generation earlier might have been drawn to the stage began increasingly to try their hand at the novel. The drama that remained gave prominent place to moralizing and sentimentality, and placed considerable emphasis on decorum. The theater continued to sparkle intermittently (the mid-eighteenth century was the era of renowned actor, theater manager, and playwright David Garrick), but it was not until the last quarter of the century that satirical social comedy made a brilliant comeback on the stage with plays such as Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), Richard Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* (1777), and Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780).

#### ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN A CHANGING NATION

In the Middle Ages and through much of the sixteenth century most Britons saw themselves as living in an age of decline or of stasis, and even in the seventeenth century a sense of the world as a place in which continual improvements were to be expected was limited to the well-educated. But in the eighteenth century a sense of the inevitability of progress—a sense that would crest in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—became more and more general. Prosperity unquestionably played its part in fostering this change; so too did various technological and medical advancements. Increased sanitation and improvements in hygiene had reduced the death rate, particularly in the army. The use of citrus to prevent scurvy was discovered in 1754, and James Cook had sailed around the globe without a single sailor dying of it. (Tragically, though, Cook's expeditions spread suffering and death through venereal disease to various populations in the South Pacific, most notably in Tahiti.) Improvements in preventative medicine had also reduced the death rate, and the first preventative injections began in England with inoculation against smallpox, a process popularized largely by the unflagging efforts of woman-of-letters Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who had observed the practice in Turkey. Many new hospitals were founded, while increased understanding of the workings of the nervous system and of psychological or physiological disorders brought about more humane treatment for

those suffering from mental diseases—who were formerly believed to be possessed by demonic spirits, and were therefore locked up in terrible conditions and even put on display for visitors, as at St. Mary's of Bethlehem ("Bedlam"). St. Luke's Hospital in London, where poet Christopher Smart was an early inmate, was founded in 1751. Increased investigations into the relationship between the body and mind led to detailed studies of hypochondria, depression, and hysteria. George Chene's *The English Malady* (1733) investigated the complaint (believed to be especially common in England) known as "the vapors" or "spleen," a vague melancholia and malaise from which James Boswell, amongst others, suffered.

While most English people believed that new advances benefited society, an understanding of them was growing to be beyond the grasp of the average educated individual. The numerous scientific and technological developments led inevitably toward greater specialization, and the new disciplines of physics, astronomy, and chemistry grew increasingly complex. Until the eighteenth century most educated gentlemen could keep up to date with discoveries and theories in all areas of knowledge, but this was now no longer the case. While many writers, such as Margaret Cavendish in her 1666 work *Description of a New Blazing World* (a precursor of the genre we now call "science fiction"), enjoyed speculating about where the path of the new knowledge might lead, for others the effect was far more disorienting. Swift's satire of poorly formulated and ill-conceived experimental science in Book Three of *Gulliver's Travels*, for example, gives voice to the widely shared sense that some of the new lines of inquiry were not only incomprehensible, but also ridiculous. As the world broadened, it became increasingly difficult for individuals to understand the complex societal machine of which they formed a small part—and this broadening was often perceived as a threat to social coherence. When Alexander Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, attacks scientists who are too absorbed in minutiae to see the bigger picture, he reflects a common belief that individuals must keep the interests of society as a whole in mind.

Any references to "the average educated individual" in this period are of course still very far from denoting the whole population. One of the new notions of the

Reformation was the idea that education should be universal—for all classes of society, and for females as well as for males. John Knox, the Scottish Protestant leader, was the first to give practical shape to such radical notions, formulating in the 1560s a plan for incorporating schools into every church. Implementation of such a plan occurred only slowly and fitfully; the Scottish Highlands lagged behind the rest of Britain in levels of education as a result of the lack of books in Gaelic. But by the late eighteenth century the system had put down deep roots, and Scotland was the only area in Europe in which over half of the citizenry was formally educated.

In England it was coming to be considered proper that female members of the gentry should be tutored, and boarding schools, although decried by the intelligentsia, were increasingly popular for middle-class girls. But the idea of universal education for all women and men was given serious consideration only by a few, and higher education for women remained a subject for jokes. Some women did strongly protest the philosophical and theological assumptions that denied that women have the capacity to improve their minds. Mary Astell's 1694 *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (probably the most famous of such early proto-feminist texts) was not only an important call for the education of women but also one of the first works to inquire into the degree to which humans' search for truth may be influenced by prejudice. In this she challenges Locke's theory that we are born as blank slates; Astell argues instead that people are born into families, towns, cities, and countries that provide pre-existing conditions and help to shape human prejudices. In a similar vein Bathsua Makin, in her *Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673) had already declared, "Custom, when it is inveterate, has a mighty influence: it has the force of nature itself. The barbarous custom to breed women low is grown general amongst us, and has prevailed so far, that it is verily believed (especially amongst a sort of debauched sots) that women are not endued with such reason as men; nor capable of improvement by education, as they are. It is looked upon as a monstrous thing to pretend the contrary. . . . To offer to the world the liberal education of women is to deface the image of God in man." At least a few men

shared such views—Daniel Defoe, for example, refers to the denial of learning to women as "one of the most barbarous customs in the world"—but it would be two hundred years before such views became those of the majority.



Susana Highmore Duncombe, *Vignette with Two Ladies Conversing in a Park, with Athena Chasing Away Cupid* (c. 1785). Duncombe's parents held advanced views regarding the education of young women; she learned French, Latin, and Italian, was taught to draw by her father (the painter Joseph Highmore, also remembered as illustrator of Richardson's *Pamela*), and published both translations of Italian poets and her own verse.

The new celebration of mercantilism—and the acceptance of selfishness that this mercantilism implied—posed moral dilemmas that Enlightenment habits of thought encouraged many individuals to explore. If people allowed themselves to be driven by their own self-interest, would they ignore the greater good of society as a whole? How should other peoples (as well as other individual people) be treated? These questions became more complex and vexing as England expanded geographically and its citizens found themselves part of an ever-larger community. With the Seven Years' War Britain became a major colonial power, and its position in relation to the rest of the world changed dramatically. This too was generally assumed to be "progress," both for England and for the areas it came to control. The appropriation of wealth

from India and the Indies, for example, was justified by citing England's supposed cultural and technological superiority, from which it was supposed that the indigenous populations would themselves benefit, and by arguing that the British were saving the Hindus from the oppressive Muslim Mughal emperors. But some English people voiced different beliefs concerning the morality of colonial expansion and trade. While many saw the future of the nation as dependent on aggressive expansion of trade and the colonial empire, others supported international trade but were morally opposed to expansion. Many writers—including Jonathan Swift and Samuel Johnson—have left memorable denunciations of colonial land-grabbing and many more of involvement in the slave trade.

English participation in the slave trade had begun to grow significantly in the seventeenth century, and by the mid-eighteenth century close to 50,000 slaves were being transported across the Atlantic annually by British ships. But by that time stirrings of conscience about the morality of the practice of slavery were also evident. Here is how Samuel Johnson (as reported by Boswell) thought the matter through:

It must be agreed that in most ages many countries have had part of their inhabitants in a state of slavery; yet it may be doubted whether slavery can ever be supposed the natural condition of man. It is impossible not to conceive that men in their original state were equal; and very difficult to imagine how one would be subjected to another but by violent compulsion. An individual may, indeed, forfeit his liberty by a crime; but he cannot by that crime forfeit the liberty of his children. What is true of a criminal seems true likewise of a captive. A man may accept life from a conquering enemy on condition of perpetual servitude; but it is very doubtful whether he can entail that servitude on his descendants; for no man can stipulate without commission for another. The condition which he himself accepts, his son or grandson would have rejected.

As Johnson's thoughts suggest, the questioning of the moral grounds for slavery arose to a significant extent from the consideration of broader inquiries concerning human nature. Many theorists of the time, such as

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, claimed people naturally attained the greatest possible level of happiness by being good to others. Because humanity is inherently sociable, that argument went, those acts and characteristics that are most virtuous are also those that are best for society as a whole. In Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733–34), for example, self-interest is seen as beneficial (through God's foresight) to others as well as to the self. Each individual's "ruling passion" causes him or her to seek "a sev'ral goal"; thus, by gratifying one's own desires, one also works together as part of a larger framework. David Hume also argued, though from a rather different standpoint, that the cultivation of virtue would advance the general good; Hume emphasized the importance of the feelings or "sentiments"—what we would today call the emotions—in leading us to a sense of what is right—and emphasized, too, the role that habit can play in cultivating patterns of good behavior.

There were some, however, who took a more pessimistic view of human nature and society. Bernard Mandeville, the most controversial of early eighteenth-century moral theorists, saw self-interest purely as selfishness, a quality that, in the natural state of human beings, would not allow for the interests of others. Ethical behavior, in Mandeville's view, is in essence a by-product of our vanity. It arises purely from the human desire to be recognized and praised. There is no place in Mandeville's world for appeals to conscience; morality is only driven by pride and shame. According to Mandeville, a wealthy society depends on people having and indulging their vices, such as greed and vanity, because these lead to full employment and a buoyant economy—whereas a pious, self-denying society will lead to unemployment and general poverty. In other words, general Puritan reform would bring economic collapse. Mandeville's defense of the financial benefits of the consumer society is in many ways strikingly modern.

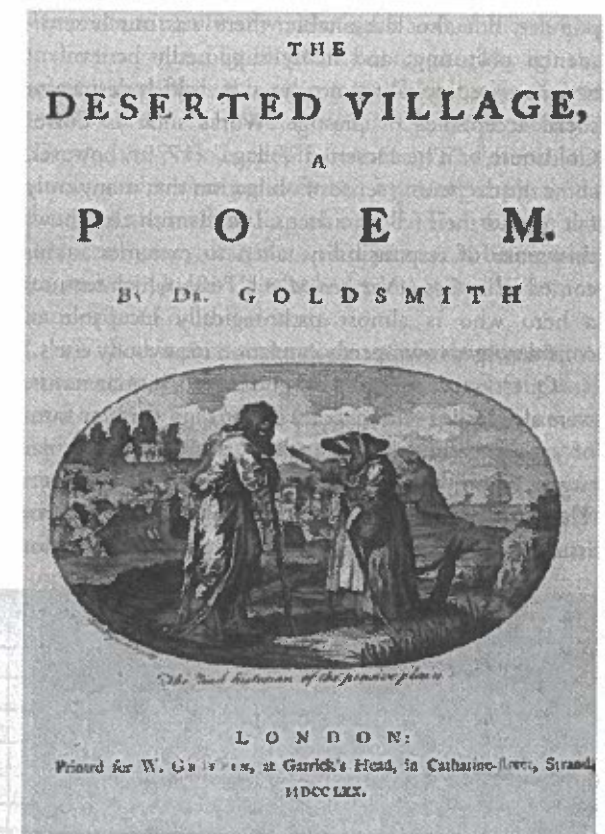
The ideas of Adam Smith concerning human nature are in some respects closely connected with those of Mandeville, but Smith's understanding of both morality and economics is more complex and nuanced. Even as Smith puts forward the notion that self-interest can work to the benefit of all through the mechanism of the

"invisible hand," Smith does not see selfishness itself as a virtue. He accepts that altruism exists, recognizing that, however selfish "man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature that interest him in the fortune of others and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it." And Smith devotes considerable effort to discussing the ways in which selfishness acts *against* the public interest, and must be curbed. Though "civil government" was said to have been instituted "for the security of property," he concluded that it had been "in reality instituted for the defense of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all." Far from giving free rein to commercial interests, Smith concluded that the interests of business people "is never exactly the same with that of the public," and that they "have generally an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public."

Most people accepted the more optimistic view of human nature, and the theories such as those of Shaftesbury and Hume led to a growing cult of sentiment, in which people celebrated what they saw as their natural sympathetic responses to human suffering (and, to a lesser extent, to human joy). Social reform movements grew as the English people sought the pleasure that charitable acts would bring them. As the growing trend of social improvement became not only



*A View of the Poor House of Datchworth*, detail from an engraving in Philip Thicknesse's *Four Persons Found Starved to Death, at Datchworth* (1769).



Title page, Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770). Outrage against extremes of hardship and inequality caused by such "rural improvement" practices as enclosure (of formerly common land) and engrossment (the practice of replacing a larger number of rural tenants with a much smaller number) was stirred in the 1760s by a variety of works, among them Thicknesse's shocking account of an incident in Hertfordshire, and Oliver Goldsmith's long poem lamenting the disappearance of rural and village society in the face of the greed of wealthy landowners: "the man of wealth and pride / Takes up a space that many poor supplied."

popular, but also fashionable, there was much sentimental posturing, and many supposedly benevolent actions were, in reality, motivated by selfish desires for social acceptance or prestige. Works such as Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" (1770), however, show the deepening sense of obligation that many truly felt toward their fellow citizens. (Goldsmith also shows this sense of responsibility taken to extremes in his comedy *The Good-Natured Man* [1768], which features a hero who is almost pathologically incapable of considering his own needs in relation to anybody else's.)

Questions concerning the goodness of human nature were also linked with debates concerning the best form of government—debates that attained particular urgency with the American and French Revolutions. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776) brought the issues of the goodness of government to the forefront for

many eighteenth-century citizens of both England and the colonies. For Paine, an Englishman with limited formal education who moved to the colony of Pennsylvania in 1774, when he was 37, government was at best a necessary evil to be endured, and its dictatorial tendencies must be curbed. The constitution of England was, according to Paine, an amalgam of republican elements with the remains of monarchical and despotic ones. The very idea of a monarch, in his view, went against the principle of human equality: and "'tis a form of government which the word of God bears testimony against, and blood will attend it." Blood was shed over such issues only on the American side of the Atlantic, but *Common Sense* went through five editions in London, with editions also appearing in Newcastle and Edinburgh.



A Coffee House, engraving, 1668. The first London coffee house opened in 1652.

#### PRINT CULTURE

Whatever British people's opinions on issues of morality, philosophy, government, or technology, they soon found themselves with a multitude of new forums in which to express those opinions, thanks to the booming print trade. The religious controversies of the seventeenth-century English civil wars had done much to fuel a desire for printed information, whether in the form of prophecies, sermons, news, or political controversy. Censorship under the Licensing Act, which had loosened under Charles I at the approach of the civil war, was briefly revived following the Restoration, but in 1695 the old Licensing Act was allowed to lapse. Newfound freedom of the press sparked a rise in writing of all kinds, whether political or religious treatises, satires, or debates. The production of newspapers, journals, miscellanies (what we would call anthologies, with mostly contemporary content), and pamphlets increased greatly, and printed materials began to sell in unprecedented numbers. Short or serial publications were cheaper than novels or volumes of poetry and made information accessible to a much larger portion of the population. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), for example, was far more widely read after it was reprinted in the *Original London Post* in installments three times a week.

Gradually, a new reading public emerged. Though reading had always been a social activity, with literate members of a family reading the Bible or news to others, for example, in the eighteenth century reading and writing became activities that occurred in public spaces that were often designed solely for that purpose. With the rise of coffee houses—of which it was estimated London had roughly 3,000 by the end of the eighteenth century—British subjects could come together to read and debate. Libraries and literary clubs provided alternative spaces for such activities, and ones in which women were welcome (as they were not in coffee houses). Literary clubs such as the Scriblerus Club of Alexander Pope, John Gay, Jonathan Swift, Thomas Parnell, and John Arbuthnot or Dr. Johnson's Literary Club (both all male) originated in the eighteenth century. Many of these groups, such as that gathered informally around Samuel Richardson, were of mixed company or made

up predominantly of women, such as the bluestocking society organized by Elizabeth Montagu. (Though this society included men, the term "bluestocking" soon came to be a derisive term for a bookish woman.) During the period, people frequently read aloud, and many guides were published to instruct people in the best practices of reading to others. The anxiety that Frances Burney describes in her journal at being asked to read to Queen Charlotte demonstrates the importance placed on this new art.

With new print technology and the development of the newspaper, as well as the new popularity of the essay as a literary form and the new social space of the city (where the majority of the reading public was located) came the rise of the periodical—of which by far the most influential was Richard Steele's *The Tatler* and his and Joseph Addison's *The Spectator*. These periodicals organized themselves around the coffee-house culture and embraced the conversation and public debate that they fostered. *The Spectator* (1711–14) advertised itself as being organized around the meetings of a fictitious club, the Spectator Club, which claimed to comprise a country gentleman, a London merchant, a retired soldier, a clergyman, a lawyer, and a gentleman born to a hereditary estate. Addison claimed that each copy of *The Spectator* was read by as many as twenty people as a result of coffee-shop circulation. With this large an audience, Addison greatly influenced the beliefs of his society and the ways in which that society saw itself. He popularized the theories of Newton and Locke, bringing them to the average gentleman (and also explicitly aiming to include strong female representation among his readership), and substantially influenced the aesthetic tastes of his day. Anthologies, miscellanies, and periodicals also provided a forum for women writers. Future bluestocking Elizabeth Carter worked for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and there were numerous women who occasionally contributed to such magazines. Several specifically female periodicals were also published, such as *The Female Tatler*, Eliza Haywood's *The Female Spectator*, and Charlotte Lennox's *The Lady's Museum*. These offered a public space for women writers, editors, and critics.

As a result of these changes in print culture, the individual reader had a sense of him or herself as part of

a larger reading community in which debate was freely engaged, and conversation between various readers and writers was a central part of most publications. Writers frequently responded to, continued, or revised one another's work. Collaborative work became popular, and frequently arose out of literary groups. Meanwhile, booksellers produced anthologies of both poems and prose, such as Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* (1748–58).

During this period criticism came into its own as a separate genre. Though writers had always commented on and responded to one another's work, they often did so more privately. In manuscript culture, for example, texts would be annotated with marginal comments arguing with, supporting, or even summarizing an author's points. Thomas More's *Utopia* contains printed marginal notes of this sort, probably written by his friend and supporter Erasmus. With the decline of manuscript circulation, this sort of private literary conversation became public, separate works of criticism became more common, and Dryden included critical introductions in his own work. With this genre of writing about literature and about authors themselves, some literary personalities approached the status of celebrities. Samuel Johnson, for example, observed to Boswell a few years before his death, "I believe there is hardly a day in which there is not something about me in the newspapers."

All these developments in print culture marked a dramatic change from the previous century, when publishing one's own work had been seen as "vulgar"; it had been thought that the lofty aims of art or high-culture conversation transcended material concerns such as money or a desire for fame. Some seventeenth-century authors had circulated their works in manuscript for years (even if after that they took steps to publish them), and many works were not published at all during an author's lifetime. In the eighteenth century some authors still continued the practice of publishing anonymously, particularly in the first half of the century, even if their identity was commonly known. Samuel Johnson, a bookseller's son who famously declared, "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money," did not sign his name on any of his early work.

Because writers often played with the new print culture, using various means to disguise their authorship, the question of attribution can be a difficult one for scholars of the eighteenth century. Readers at the time generally assumed they could solve the mysteries of authorship, but they were frequently incorrect. Authors carefully avoided publishing any autobiographical or blatantly self-promotional material. Letters were occasionally saved and prepared for posthumous publication by their authors, but in 1739 Pope startled his peers by becoming one of the first literary figures to oversee the publication of his own letters. Pope avoided much of the scandal that this would ordinarily have caused through employing intricate subterfuge. Throughout his career he had an antagonistic relationship with the notoriously immoral publisher Edmund Curll, who frequently attacked Pope in print and published pirated copies of his works and those of his friends, such as Jonathan Swift, John Gay, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Pope arranged for some of his correspondence to fall into Curll's hands, and when the publisher printed this supposedly pirated edition, Pope was justified in releasing the official edition of his letters—an edition that he had significantly doctored (while pretending candor and sincerity) to present himself in a more favorable light.

While it became increasingly socially acceptable for people of high rank to publish their writing, advances in print technology and changes in the publishing industry also made it possible for men and women from various backgrounds to earn a living through writing. Before the eighteenth century, those who wished to support themselves by writing would have had to find themselves a rich aristocratic patron who would support them, and to whom they would dedicate their works. During the Restoration, Aphra Behn and John Dryden also supported themselves by writing for the stage, and in the eighteenth century Alexander Pope was the first to earn a living by subscription writing. His success marked a change in the writing and publishing industries. With subscription printing, all subscribers would make financial contributions in exchange for having their names appear on a page inside the work, just as the patron's name would have previously; in this way, a system of what Terry Eagleton refers to as

"collective patronage" came into effect. By contributing money up front, subscribers helped defray the initial cost of printing. An author's friends often formed the bulk of subscribers, though many others might become subscribers either out of something akin to charity or for the prestige that came with illustrious publications. Dryden's *The Works of Virgil* (1697), which set the standard for the Latin translations that were highly esteemed and successful during this century, was one of the first works by an English poet to be financed in this manner, though in the seventeenth century much legal, scientific, and theological publishing was done in this way. Publishers (who usually doubled as and were known as new booksellers) also formed "congers," or partnerships, to share the costs of elaborate or expensive new works and of existing copyrights (because the copyright of works by dead authors could be sold on from one publisher to another).

The concept of copyright as we know it today first took shape in the early eighteenth century. In England from the sixteenth century onwards, the rights acquired by stationers or printers upon securing from the Stationers' Company a license to print books had been generally assumed to be property rights, with the understanding being that, as with other sorts of property, ownership was ongoing; English practice severely restricted the reproduction of literary works other than by their "owner." No formal copyright protection existed in English law, however, and from time to time editions would find their way into the English market from Scotland or Ireland (where intellectual property was less restricted). English publishers began to agitate to have perpetual "copyright" formalized in law, and the British Parliament eventually decided (in the 1709 Statute of Anne) to recognize and protect copyright. But rather than declaring copyright to be a property right held in perpetuity, Parliament restricted it to 14 years from publication (renewable in certain circumstances for a further 14 years)—after which anyone could publish competing editions of a work. Remarkably, publishers who had "owned" popular works refused to concede, and managed to persuade a succession of judges that the Statute of Anne had improperly authorized the uncompensated confiscation of private property. In

defiance of what was seemingly set out in law, they succeeded for another 65 years in maintaining control over what we would now term "works in the public domain." Ironically, then, the Statute of Anne ushered in what William St. Clair has termed an "age of high monopoly" in the book trade. Together with the ending of official state censorship in 1695 and the gradual withdrawal of some other controls on the content of printed matter in the first half of the eighteenth century, the secure conditions under which British publishers operated fostered the production of large, beautifully produced volumes—and something of a golden era for the spread of Enlightenment culture. But the same conditions that favored the publication of expensive works of history and philosophy with a limited market slowed the spread of popular literature in book form—and the growth of a reading public. It was not until a 1774 legal case finally brought an end to the near-monopoly conditions that books started to become smaller and cheaper. That in turn led to a huge surge in reading across all social classes. In 1791, bookseller James Lackington described the degree to which things had changed: "According to the best estimation I have been able to make, I suppose that more than four times the number of books are sold now than were sold twenty years since. . . . In short, all ranks and degrees now READ."

An explosive growth in periodicals and newspapers, however, began much earlier. And with it came changes in the community of writers. A new term, "Grub Street," was used to describe the multitude of freelance writers who contributed for pay to the popular press. Many of these writers had little education, worked for meager wages, and lived in rundown apartments on London's Grub Street. With this profusion of "hack" writers (one of whom was Samuel Johnson in his early career), many feared that literature was becoming mired in trivial, everyday concerns. Alexander Pope was without a doubt the writer who most viciously satirized hack writers; his satirical masterpiece *The Dunciad* (1742) depicted a kingdom of dunces that included nearly every minor writer or publisher with whose work Pope had found fault. Eighteenth-century theories of aesthetics sought to define what should be the lofty aims of true art (in order



to separate the “true” art from the masses of popular writing), and often advocated avoiding the “low” details of the surrounding everyday world. Early in the eighteenth century John Gay wrote poetry of the tradespeople and messengers in the streets of London, with the often dirty or pungent details of their business. Later, in his essay on the theater, Oliver Goldsmith argued that the single word “low” as a term of contempt had made comedy virtually impossible. When he introduced bailiffs into a tea-party of his hero and heroine in *The Good-Natured Man* the audience was outraged, rather as if he had personally introduced them to actual bailiffs. Not only were certain aspects of satire out of bounds, but poets also felt that general principles, abstract propositions, or sensitive feelings were more worthy of their art than the material world. The empiricism of Locke and Hume shaped aesthetic theories according to which the artist’s role was to embody sensory messages (through which individuals receive information about the outside world) in the imagery of his or her work. According to Locke, the mind passively receives impressions through our senses from external objects, and then combines these received simple ideas into complex ideas. Edmund Burke, in his *Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), follows Locke in asserting that the senses are the origin of all our ideas and pleasures. The reader experiences the work as a series of sensations, and its value lies in the emotional effect it produces and the way in which the artist produces this effect. In his treatise, Burke forms a distinction between the sublime and the beautiful—either of which, he maintains, may be the aim of a literary work. Our emotional response to something beautiful is a positive pleasure, or a social pleasure. Ideas that excite terror, on the other hand, and give us impressions of pain and danger, are sources of the sublime. We are impressed and astonished without being troubled by receiving ideas of pain and danger when we are in no actual danger ourselves, and thus we derive delight as a result of our desire for self-preservation.

Theories such as Burke’s endeavored to link principles of aesthetics to those of morality and psychology. Such was also the case with the influential aesthetic theories of Henry Home, Lord Kames. For



Thomas Hickey, *Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox* (c. 1775). A friend in early life of Burke (who is best remembered for his later, conservative views), Fox went on to become a leader in Whig politics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Kames, what we find beautiful in works of art is what improves us morally; for example, tragedy appeals to us in large part because it develops our sympathy for others. It is the nature of fine arts, Kames says in his *Elements of Criticism* (1762), to raise pleasurable emotions. Kames also expanded the definition of the fine arts to include practices not formerly considered, such as gardening (that is, landscape gardening or large-scale garden design, an artistic pursuit that flourished in the eighteenth century). According to Kames, the characteristics of gardens, such as their (loosely) regulated patterns, their color, and their utility, can raise pleasurable emotions such as gaiety, melancholy, surprise, wonder, or a sense of grandeur.

Increasingly as the eighteenth century progressed, those who valued the sublime in art sought the work of a wide variety of ancient societies as models. Alongside the well-established admiration for the complex social organization of ancient Greece and Rome, critics and



Paul Sandby, *Dolbadarn Castle and Llanberris Lake*, c. 1770. In the second half of the eighteenth century interest in travel to the more remote and wild regions of Britain (notably the Lake District, North Wales, and the Highlands of Scotland) greatly increased; Thomas Pennant’s *Tour in Scotland* (1772), for example, went through five editions before 1790. Sandby’s painting shows the ruins of a thirteenth-century castle set among craggy peaks in North Wales, viewed by a touring party.

artists began to celebrate the natural genius of what they saw as primitive and uneducated writers from uncivilized ages. These writers were seen as having created through spontaneous impulse, unimpeded by the conventions of civilization. Influential critics such as Sir William Temple also admired “exotic” cultures such as those of China and Peru. The Goths became another important model, as did the Celts and the Druids, and interest in medieval English literature increased greatly; the works of Chaucer found renewed popularity, and Alfred the Great became an object of admiration. It was during the eighteenth century that a field of genuine medieval scholarship arose, though romantic medievalism was also popular among poets; Thomas Gray was among the prominent poets who looked to medieval literature for inspiration. William Collins, for his part, purported to draw from ancient Persian writing in his *Persian Eclogues* (1742). All things Oriental exploded into fashion in the eighteenth century; the Orient became, in the minds of many English people, a place that embodied all the characteristics found lacking in British society. This led to admiration for the Orient as

an ideal, uncorrupted place of wealth and leisure, but it did not provide the average reader with any understanding of the complex realities of these foreign cultures. Sir William Temple garnered much critical interest when he published an old Icelandic fragment, and Scottish poet James Macpherson captured public attention when he claimed to have discovered and translated primitive epics from the Scottish Highlands written about the legendary hero Ossian. Though *Ossian* was later discovered to have been almost entirely composed by Macpherson himself on the slenderest dependence on traditional ballads, the impact the work had upon the reading public testified to the high demand for works colored with the romantic appeal of antiquity.

#### POETRY

While many writers turned to the exotic or primitive as a source of inspiration or a means of indicating special knowledge (which would distinguish them from the masses of hack writers), there was in general a continued emphasis on Greek and Roman cultures as representing the origins of true art and literature. In the early part of the eighteenth century in particular, a knowledge of Greek and Latin languages and literature was seen as prerequisite for anyone who attempted to write in English. Allusions to Homer and Roman poets Horace, Virgil, Juvenal, and Ovid occur throughout the works of poets such as Dryden, Pope, and Swift, who saw themselves as the eighteenth-century disciples of these venerated ancient poets. In fact, because of the similarities between the creative and political climates of the early eighteenth century and those of ancient Rome during the reign of Augustus Caesar, the first few decades of the century are often referred to as the “Augustan Age.” In the political climate that these poets saw as relatively stable, in comparison to the turmoil of the mid-seventeenth century following the Restoration, poetry was able to flourish—just as during the reign of Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor, patrons in this period of peace following Rome’s civil war had increasingly used their wealth and leisure to enjoy and support the arts. In the Restoration and early eighteenth century, many leading literary figures tried their hands



Thomas Gainsborough, *Robert Andrews and his Wife, Frances* (c. 1748–49). Gainsborough is now regarded as one of the great artists of rural life in the eighteenth century. During his lifetime (1727–88) his portraits were far more in demand than were his landscapes of rural life; the latter came to be far more appreciated after his death. This canvas, which combines the two genres, is unfinished; a small area remains blank on Mrs. Andrews's lap.

at translations of the ancient poets. Dryden was the first writer of the period to tackle this sort of work on a large scale, producing English versions of the works of Virgil, Juvenal, and parts of Horace and Homer. Pope, as an aspiring poet, translated Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and later produced imitations or freely updated adaptations of many poems by Horace. Poets combined these influences with important ones from the English tradition, including Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. (Because they attempted to fuse new elements with the classical, Pope, Dryden, and others were often referred to as "neoclassical" writers.)

Like the ancients, these neoclassical poets sought to convey truths about the world around them by investigating general aspects of human character or striking aspects of the natural realm. In contrast to earlier poets such as Donne and Milton, eighteenth-century poets sought a simplicity of language with

which to convey pleasurable images of nature and the sublime to their readers. Nevertheless, the classical influence often resulted in Latinate syntax and diction, and highly allusive content. Eighteenth-century poetry is also highly visual, frequently relying on detailed descriptions and often personifying abstract aspects of human nature or elements of the physical world.

As in classical Rome, so in Restoration and eighteenth-century Britain, satire was a prominent poetic form and the most common path used by poets to comment on the particulars of their daily lives. Eighteenth-century poets looked back to Juvenal and Horace, the great classical satirists, and imitations of their models provided a forum for sharp yet elegantly styled attacks on the government. Despite this reliance on the ancients, poetry was intimately connected to current political and social events, and wielded a good deal of power. The more witty and technically masterful

the poem, the more damaging the satire, and those who perfected the mode could ruin entire careers and ministries. Political satire in both poetry and prose could also cause trouble for writers in the politically charged climate in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. If well-written, however, such work often had the effect of silencing enemies. When Daniel Defoe was placed in the pillory after pleading guilty to charges of libel for his 1703 *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (a pamphlet parodying extremist High Churchman and facetiously advocating the mass torture of Dissenters), he turned the event to his advantage with his "Hymn to the Pillory," denouncing those who sentenced him. The government so admired his skill in doing this that the ministry hired him to publish a newspaper (the *Review*) that would report the news from a point of view that was sympathetic to the government. Another satirical art form that developed in the eighteenth century in conjunction with poetic satire was the political cartoon or caricature. Until the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries cartoons were usually published anonymously to protect their authors from charges of libel. Nevertheless, the cartoon became a popular and often savage form of propaganda and of satire.

Poetic satire began as a means of political commentary, but it soon branched out to include almost all aspects of public life, and on occasion the minutiae of private life as well. Samuel Garth's *The Dispensary* (1699), for example, used the mock epic form to satirize the war between doctors and apothecaries over who would dispense medicine. Mock epic was a popular form for such ventures; its contrast between elevated style and mundane content accentuates the frivolity of whatever petty disputes or political intrigues are described. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) is probably the most celebrated example of such a genre. Epic conventions such as the description of the battle scene become ridiculous when used to treat trivialities such as the theft of a piece of hair. By using the heroic couplet, writers could pair elevated and common subject matter in one rhyme. In these types of satire, poets had a very clear sense of their audience, which was often very small (in the case of *The Rape of the Lock*, the original audience was only two families, though in print the poem sold extremely well), and spoke directly to it.

(This close relationship between writer and audience can cause difficulty for the contemporary reader who cannot be familiar with the highly specific references to people, events, and places of eighteenth-century London.)

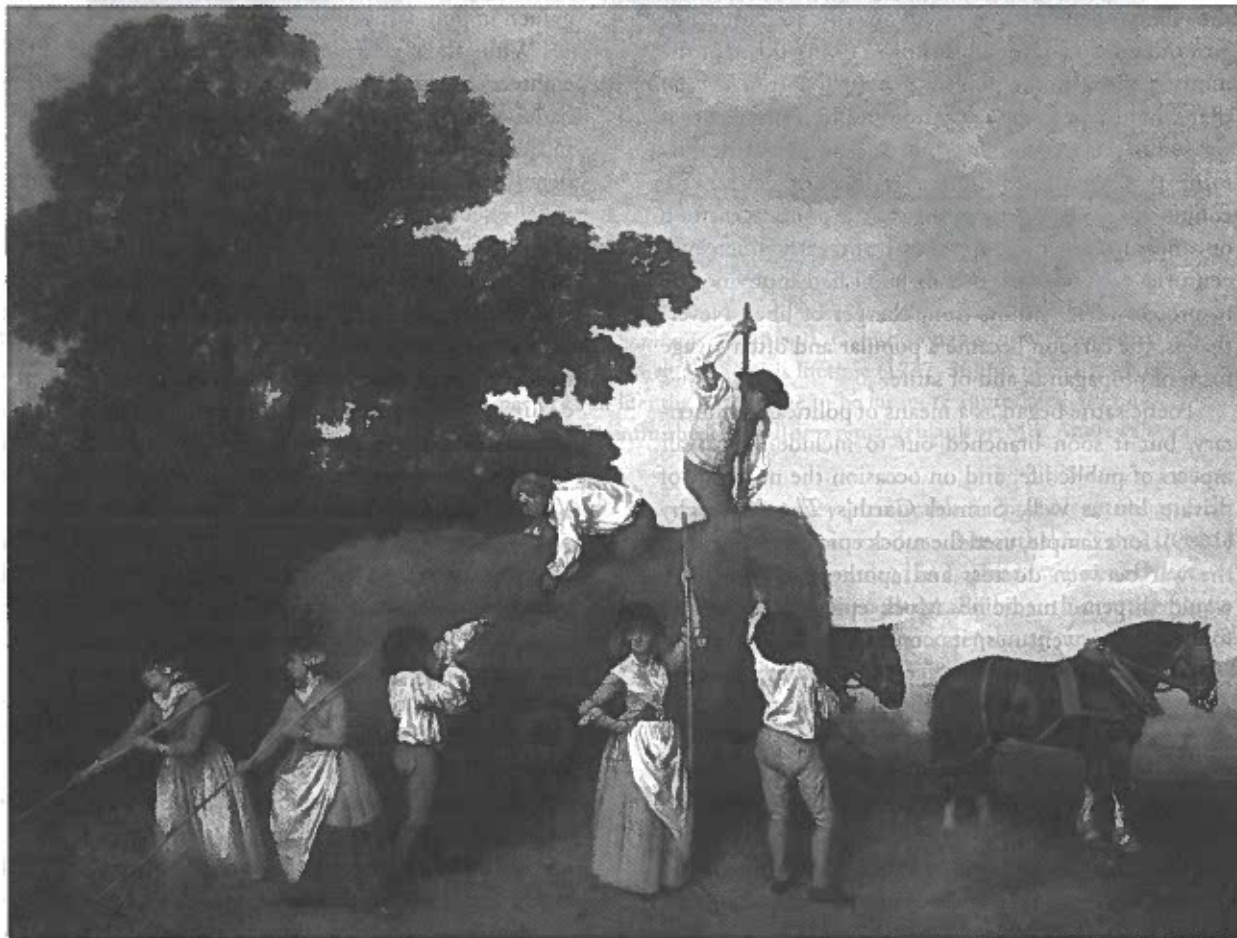
After Pope, who stretched the heroic couplet in new directions, using it with unprecedented virtuosity, the form became less common. Blank verse, the form of James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1727) and William Cowper's *The Task* (1785), was an increasingly popular form that gave writers greater flexibility while still providing a set structure. More "common" poetic forms such as the ballad, hymn, and various stanzaic forms also gained in popularity as the century progressed.

While the neoclassical poets of the early part of the eighteenth century felt that "low" details of common life had little place in poetry (except in the realm of satire), in the later part of the century realism and attention to detail manifested themselves as well in various works, usually set outside the London scene. Wordsworth, in his 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, expressed concern that the novel had taken and sensationalized subjects and language that poetry needed to reclaim. He disliked the classical and what he felt to be the artificial tone of the important body of eighteenth-century poetry dealing with rural life and the world of work. These poems that dealt with the details of common life often took the form of the georgic, a genre named after Virgil's *Georgics*, which Addison defined as "some part of the science of husbandry [i.e., farming] put into a pleasing dress, and set off with all the beauties and embellishments of poetry." Unlike the pastoral, the most common type of poem in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries dealing with nature, the georgic did not idealize nature or rural life, and was not highly stylized. Instead, georgics were digressive, often didactic, and unusually detailed, typically taking one very specific aspect of rustic life as a topic. William Somerville's *The Chase* (1735) described hunting, fishing, and sports, while Christopher Smart's *The Hop Garden* (1752) and James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764)—set in the West Indies—dealt with specificities of agriculture. John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757) was the first such poem to include scenes in an industrial setting, linking traditional husbandry with the new commercialism. Often georgics used burlesque or subtle mockery in their treatment of

their subjects, as in John Gay's *Wine* (1708), *Rural Sports* (1713), and *The Shepherd's Week* (1714). James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730, following the individual appearances of the four poems, "Spring," "Summer," "Autumn," and "Winter," which, combined, make up the larger work), the most famous work to come out of this tradition, remained popular throughout this period and indeed through the nineteenth century.

The authors of many of these poems lacked first-hand experience of rural labor, but rural poets also began to find their own voice in this period. Appearing

in the same year as *The Seasons* was *The Thresher's Labour*, a poem by Stephen Duck, a farm laborer taken up by patrons, which was commissioned as a poem "on his own labors." In contrast to Thomson's poem, *The Thresher's Labour* presents a harsher view of the agricultural cycle as a relentless master. Another poet writing of her own experience was Mary Collier; Collier's *The Woman's Labour* (1739)—written, without patrons, in response to Duck's poem—objected to his depiction of women workers as less important to rural labor than men.



George Stubbs, *Haymakers*, 1785. Stubbs (1724–1806), is known primarily for his equestrian pictures—scenes of hunting and horseracing. He was also active in other genres of painting, however; in the 1780s he began to concentrate largely on portrayals of daily life in rural England.

Some poets writing about the countryside directly challenged the vision of rural happiness so common in pastoral poetry. George Crabbe's *The Village* (1783) is one such poem. With its damning portraits of the failure both of individuals and of institutions to alleviate the suffering of the poor, and its diagnosis of social evils, it brought heightened realism to the genre. Charles Churchill found a similar parody of the pastoral helpful for political satire; his satirical portrait of Scotland, *The Prophecy of Famine: A Scots Pastoral* (1763), parodies the conventions of the pastoral, conveying Churchill's political concerns against a backdrop of waste and disease.

Close observation of nature could sometimes play a part in the introspective poetry of meditation, as in some work by Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea. Clergyman Thomas Parnell favored religious subject matter in his "Meditating on the Wounds of Christ" (1722), "On Divine Love" (1722), and "Hymn to Contentment" (1714). These poems, examining one aspect of human nature, often take the form of the hymn or ode. (William Collins's *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects* [1746], which includes "Ode to Pity" and "Ode to Fear," is an important example.) A school of so-called graveyard poets might claim particular poems by several of these poets, though its leading representatives are Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743) and Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–46). The meditative verse of these poets is suffused with melancholy and often features solitary, brooding figures who wander at night, a type largely inspired by Milton's *Il Penseroso* (1645). Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751), which also employs aspects of this genre, features an isolated poet meditating on the generalities of life and death and lamenting the loss of poetic power and authority. Poetry's loss of force in contemporary society was a common complaint among these poets, and their works evince a lyrical nostalgia for the days when the poet's rich language and imagination held sway. Many were concerned that the true art of poetry would be lost without the flights of imagination and fantastical language they saw as the markers of poetry.

#### THEATER

Following the restoration of the monarchy, English theater showed the influence of the French productions that the court had enjoyed while in exile. William Wycherley and Sir George Etherege composed comedies of wit like those of Molière, but with a narrow focus on the follies of a small class of people, the fashionable wits and beaux who were the theater's primary audience. They treated the particulars of the social life of the time, and satirized the more ridiculous and self-serving aspects of upper-class behavior; as in Molière's work, the humor of these plays relies on exaggeration and a highly stylized view of life, in which comic repartee and artful contrivance dominate. Referred to as "comedies of manners" or "social comedies," these plays often feature a witty, unprincipled, yet charismatic and charming libertine. The libertine-hero is ambivalently presented, generally an object of unmixed admiration to his own male circle and the available young women in the play, though more or less open to criticism from the audience. In Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676) the rake-hero gets off scot-free, rewarded for his heartless infidelities to other women with the hand of the witty and virginal heroine; Behn's rake-hero in *The Rover* (1677) is similarly rewarded, though he is not a cruel character and may be seen as having been (twice) genuinely in love in the course of the action. (After this play Behn arranged the offstage death of her witty heroine, in order to free the hero for fresh adventures in a sequel.) In Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675) a tradesman who marries for love may appear colorless beside the out-and-out rake whose continuing, obsessive pursuit of women leaves him isolated from his peers. Etherege, Behn, and Wycherley belonged to the earlier generation of Restoration playwrights. In the next generation, Vanbrugh (e.g., in *The Relapse* [1696]) and Congreve (e.g., in *The Way of the World* [1700]) opened the possibility of a charismatic rake not only marrying for love but attempting fidelity afterwards. These comedies are highly physical, with duels, disguises, and highly erotic scenes; their language is full of wordplay and sexual innuendo.

In Restoration theater women were hired for the first time to play the female parts. Their presence on stage (and the wide popularity that many of them achieved through the audience's knowledge or supposed knowledge about their private lives—as with Nell Gwynn, who eventually left the stage to become Charles II's mistress) incited playwrights to create provocative roles for them. The degree to which coarse or sexually suggestive language and behavior was being depicted on the stage in the late seventeenth century became a particular focus of complaint, and the portrayal of women was the most common source of outrage. Jeremy Collier's view was that

Obscenity in any company is a rustic, uncreditable talent, but among women 'tis particularly rude. Such talk would be very affrontive in conversation and not endured by any lady of reputation. Whence then comes it to pass that those liberties which disoblige so much in conversation should entertain upon the stage? Do women leave all the regards to decency and conscience behind them when they come to the playhouse? In this respect the stage is faulty to a scandalous degree of nauseousness and aggravation.

Women were not only present on the stage; they were also writing plays for the stage for the first time in history. (Some women had written closet dramas before this, but none had been performed in a public theater.) Aphra Behn was one of the most successful dramatists of the age; her career began with *The Forced Marriage* (1670), a tragi-comedy about sexual relations and power struggles between the sexes. Behn had been preceded by a year by Frances Boothby's *Marcela* (1669). Delarivier Manley, Mary Pix, and Catharine Trotter soon followed in her footsteps, though all four women were considered morally suspect for embracing such an inherently public career. Susanna Centlivre, a leading professional playwright of the next generation, did not attract the censure her predecessors had. Her many published plays include the highly successful *The Busy Body* (1709).

Most of these women wrote more frequently in the genre of sophisticated farcical comedy than in the highly stylized tragedies that were popular at the time (Centlivre's one tragedy, *The Cruel Gift*, was written in

collaboration with Nicholas Rowe). Set in remote times and places with spectacular scenes and effects, such tragedies tended to center on warrior/lovers torn between conflicting obligations in agonizing dilemmas. In this sort of heroic tragedy, the heroic couplet (written in iambic pentameter), championed by Dryden, was the meter of choice. While the heroic-couplets tragedy swiftly grew to enormous popularity, its downfall was just as sudden. George Villiers's famous burlesque *The Rehearsal* (1671), written in parody of Dryden and of the genre of heroic tragedy in general, was said to have helped hasten its end. From this point on, blank-verse tragedies, such as Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved* (1682), gradually became more popular. In the theater, as in poetry, the eighteenth-century interest in (and admiration for) classical culture was prominent; the most popular tragedy of the time was Joseph Addison's *Cato* (1713). Adaptations and imitations of Shakespearean dramas were also common; Dryden's *All for Love* (1678), a revision of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, was the most successful of such adaptations in the period. The "she-tragedy," which detailed the dramatic fall of a heroine, was a popular new form of tragedy that appealed to the audience's sense of pity, especially for helpless women. These she-tragedies were removed from the current political and social scene, but featured historical settings that were often more precise or more recent than those of the heroic drama.

In the eighteenth century a new form of theatrical entertainment, the opera, came to England from Italy and became both a popular form of entertainment and a source of much derision. Critics could not comprehend the audience's desire to forego "legitimate" theater for entertainment featuring songs in languages they did not understand. In a *Spectator* article on the subject, Addison derisively declares that these operas seem to be written according to a rule "that nothing is capable of being well set to music that is not nonsense." With John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), however, a new genre of opera was born—the ballad opera, to which the modern musical can trace its roots. Written in mockery of the rise of Italian opera in England, Gay's work derives its music from ballads and folk-songs. *The Beggar's Opera* became an instant success, inspiring numerous imitations and parodies, as well as a line of

merchandise that included playing cards, fans, plates, and paintings.

One effect of Gay's play was to lessen the popularity of the Italian opera; another was to incur the displeasure of minister Robert Walpole: *The Beggar's Opera* was taken as a satire on the Prime Minister (though Gay never admitted to any such intention). Nevertheless, it was one of many real or supposed theatrical attacks on Walpole during his time in office. Henry Fielding's

*Pasqual* (1736) was one of a series of works with which he targeted Walpole. Perceiving these satires as a threat to the authority of his ministry, Walpole sought to bring them to an end. He pushed through the Theatrical Licensing Act of 1737, the result of which was that the Lord Chamberlain had to approve plays before they could be produced. The political threat posed by the theater was curbed, and Walpole's control over his reputation was asserted.



William Hogarth, *The Laughing Audience* (1733). This etching depicts the audience at a theatrical performance. The three figures in the front are seated in the orchestra. Behind them (and separated by a spiked partition), commoners in the pit laugh uproariously—with the exception of one being jostled by an orange seller. One gentleman in the balcony has eyes only for a competing orange seller, while the interests of another are also engaged elsewhere.

Revivals of earlier plays, which had always been staples of the stage, helped to take the place of new plays. Those new plays that were produced tended to replace political with domestic concerns and biting wit with sentimentality and melodrama; theatrical productions were required to be much more respectful of conventional views, and playwrights had to be acutely aware of the public temper at any given time. The taste for decorum, overt moralizing, and warm human sentiments evident in the new sentimental comedies offered opportunities for female playwrights, who were seen as having authority in these emotional, domestic realms. Elizabeth Griffith and Frances Sheridan—and Elizabeth Inchbald and Joanna Baillie a few decades later—could argue for their inherent expertise in the matters depicted in their plays. Following a lengthy vogue for sentimental comedy in the mid-eighteenth century, new “laughing” comedies such as Oliver Goldsmith’s *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s *The School for Scandal* (1778), and Hannah Cowley’s *The Belle’s Stratagem* (1780) sought to reclaim comedy for satire and fun, though at least the threat of tears was still likely to accompany the laughter, and protagonists were lauded for their private, emotional virtue as well as teased about faults or follies.

#### THE NOVEL

With the rise of the reading public, the decline of literary patronage, and the increasing power and range of the influence of “booksellers,” literature for the first time became a market commodity. As Daniel Defoe put it, writing “is become a very considerable branch of the English Commerce. The booksellers are the master manufacturers or employers. The several writers, authors, copiers, sub-writers, and all other operators with pen and ink are the workmen employed by the said master manufacturers.” Literature was not only more popular and more widely disseminated, it was also to an unprecedented degree subject to economic laws, in which supply was determined by popular demand.

The growth and diversification of the reading public are two frequently cited reasons for the sudden rise of the popular form of the novel. As the century

progressed, the influence of an educated elite who maintained an interest in (and knowledge of) classical letters declined; more and more, reading became a leisure activity undertaken for pleasure. Many of the new readers were females from well-off families. These readers sought increasingly realistic (rather than romantic-fantastical), detailed works that spoke to their own lives and the world around them. The periodical essay, in which the minute details of ordinary lives were described and analyzed, was instrumental in creating tastes to which the novel then catered. Articles gave practical information about domestic and public life and sought to improve the minds and morals of their readers while simultaneously providing entertainment. Novels also represented the new values and lifestyles of eighteenth-century Britain, in which older, rural, land-centered lifestyles were being replaced. The vast majority of novels were either entirely set in London or involved travel to that city. Defoe’s *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders* (1722) features a woman in London underground society without a family, education, or social position. It describes the specifics of the London criminal world as well as the potential for rehabilitation. When Moll is transported to the New World as a convicted felon (where, under the “Transportation Act” of 1718, regular shiploads of criminals were sent), she becomes both rich and penitent. Frances Burney’s novel *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World* (1778), like some of the articles in Eliza Haywood’s *The Female Tatler*, opened up the intimate details of a female world to the public eye, giving male readers a glimpse of what it meant to be female and vulnerable.

The modern conception of “realism,” often considered the novel’s most defining characteristic, was not explicitly formulated as an aesthetic principle until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but owes its origin to the ideas of Descartes and Locke, who worked to advance the theory that truth can be discovered through the individual’s senses. This new emphasis on individual experience and perception of reality lies at the heart of the eighteenth-century novel. Previous forms (such as the epic or pastoral elegy) demanded fidelity to certain set rules of the genre, and the author’s skill was judged by his or her ability to adhere to accepted

traditional models. In contrast, the primary aim of novels was the depiction of individual experience. In order to give primacy to an individual perception of reality, authors did not rely on allusions to or inspiration from classical sources, but sought their material in the actual, familiar world of daily experience. Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson were notable in that they did not take their plots from mythology, history, or pre-existing legend or literature.

The rise of the epistolary form is another important thread in the development of the novel. Aphra Behn pioneered epistolary fiction in the Restoration; her *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (meaning, in this case, sister-in-law) (1684–87), is an epistolary novel that also provides a subjective account of contemporary political events. (The form was also used by Mary Davys in a work published in 1725, but the epistolary novel did not gain wide popularity as a genre until well into the eighteenth century.) The century’s countless newspapers generally had correspondents who wrote in from their various locations, summarizing local events, and publishers of periodicals often found letters—fictitious or otherwise—to be a popular method of creating a sense of sociability and of literary conversation. Late seventeenth-century writers had begun to explore various themes and concerns through collections of fictitious letters; Margaret Cavendish’s *Sociable Letters* (1664), for example, imagines the written communication of two women living a short distance from one another, mixing discursive, serious letters (frequently critiquing marriage) with more comic, anecdotal letters. Travel narratives too began frequently to be cast as a series of letters from the traveler to those at home, describing his or her experiences. Richardson’s first novel, *Pamela* (1740), developed out of a small book of sample letters Richardson wrote in order to educate his readers in the art of letter-writing; eventually he reworked the “sample” and incorporated it into a much larger prose narrative.

Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1688) shows the influence of various forms of non-fiction on the development of the novel. Part novel or romance, part history, and part travel narrative, of novella length, it includes an extended description of natives and slaves in Africa and Guiana, economic details of colonial trade, and various

of Behn’s observations from the time she spent in Surinam in 1663 and 1664. As such works suggest, the development of the novel as a popular genre was a many-faceted process. The term “novel” can be misleading for the contemporary reader; by thinking of the various long prose narratives of the eighteenth century as novels, we unify them into one genre in a way that contemporary readers did not. The use of the term “novel,” which identifies the genre only by its newness, was not in common use until the end of the seventeenth century, and when it was used, it typically denoted a short, romantic tale. (Its first use was to describe the various short tales within Boccaccio’s fifteenth-century *Decameron*.) In the eighteenth century a variety of other names as well were given to what we now call novels, including “romance,” “history,” “adventure,” “memoir,” and “tale.” The current conception of the novel—as a long prose fiction presenting more or less realistic characters—did not solidify until the time of Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott. Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe, and Samuel Richardson—each of whom has been named as the “founder” of the modern novel—each conceived of their fiction in very different terms, came to the novel from different writing backgrounds, and had different goals for their work. Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding each significantly influenced the development of the novel, but these two men wrote in diametrically opposed styles and created works with what they saw as opposing aims. Richardson boasted that his epistolary mode allowed him to provide “familiar letters written as it were to the moment.”

In response to Richardson’s *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1741), Fielding, one of the leading comic playwrights in England in the early part of the century, but at that point a writer who had not previously attempted prose fiction, wrote the anonymous *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741) to mock Richardson’s style. Both *Shamela* and Eliza Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela; or, Feigned Innocence Detected* (1741) question Richardson’s representation of sexuality and class while mocking his style and the generic conventions he establishes for his novel. In contrast to Richardson’s prurience and lack of humor, both works adopt a playful ironic tone that mockingly exposes

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**VOL. I.**

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**LONDON:**Printed for C. RIVINGTON, in St. Paul's Church-  
Yard; and J. OSBORN, in Peter-street Row.**MDCCLXXI.**Title page, *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (1741).**AN  
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**M. DCC. LXXI.**Title page, *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741).

Pamela's virtue as feigned. Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), written about a hero who turns out to be Pamela's brother, works in a similar fashion, using the picaresque, ironic, and anti-romantic style of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* as a model.

These works demonstrate the ways in which novels and the cultural discourse surrounding them were in dialogue with one another as the generic shape of the novel gradually began to solidify. From its outset the novel was often a remarkably self-conscious form, however, and even as the genre was taking shape some writers were keen to play with its nascent conventions. Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, in particular, does this with typographical oddities, direct addresses by author to reader about his difficulties in writing, and chapters printed out of order. Its chronology moves backward as well as forward. The narrator plays with the language through puns and *double entendres*, and frequently interrupts himself for digressions so lengthy that he professes to have difficulty keeping track of his own story. In this novel the narrator's private reality takes control of both the content and the form of the novel. Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), another work influenced by Cervantes, comments on the interrelationships between romance, female desire and social position, and the novel. Her heroine is, like Don Quixote, a dreamer who treats her life as if it were a plot from one of the numerous chivalric romances she reads. Lennox's novel demonstrates the mistakes that can be made if one thinks of life as resembling a popular romance; it also highlights the differences between the emerging novel and a genre from which most novel writers sought to distance themselves—the popular romance.

Many works that were, at the time, written in reaction to the genre of the novel are now regarded as being novels themselves. Jonathan Swift distrusted the individualist psychology, adjustable morals, and the faith in class mobility and commercialism that the novel represented; his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)—which is not a novel, but follows an earlier form of non-naturalistic prose fiction—in some respects, as in the middle-class ordinariness of its protagonist, forecasts the direction of the emergent novel, and in some respects reads like a burlesque of the form. Gulliver can be seen as a parody

of the typical, middle-class fictional subject; while the authority of narratives by early novelists, particularly Defoe, relied on the assumed fitness of a merchant class or low-life narrator (such as Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, or Colonel Jack) to record modern life, Swift employs a naive narrator to obliquely advance social criticisms. Later in the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson, who observed that novels were written "chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle," felt these readers in particular required moral instruction and not the false optimism of a happy-ever-after ending. His *Rasselas* (1759) reacts against the moral ambiguities of the novel by offering a strictly moral and elaborately inconclusive tale meant to educate his readers by forcing them to think.

Women made up an increasing percentage of the novel's new writers, and as they struggled for literary authority they influenced the development of various modes of fiction. Of these female writers, Eliza Haywood (whom Fielding used as the basis of a stage figure named "Mrs. Novel") was the most prolific producer of novel titles before the late eighteenth century. Her first novel, *Love in Excess* (1719), published in the same year as *Robinson Crusoe*, was one of only two works to rival it in popularity. Although her later novels are less erotically charged, Haywood's reputation remained colored by her early work; along with Delarivier Manley and Aphra Behn, she was known for bawdy, sensational novels whose plots foregrounded sexual intrigue. Manley was famous for publishing "secret histories," such as *The New Atlantis* (1709)—for which she was arrested—which detailed scandals about contemporary political figures, passed off as fiction. John Cleland's *Fanny Hill; or, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749) may be one of the most famous of numerous scandalous texts—many disseminated by notorious bookseller Edmund Curll—that celebrated libertine attitudes of sexual behavior. Haywood's *Fantomina* (1725) and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), though they featured far less in the line of seduction or rape, were to some people even more shocking, since it was female sexuality they foregrounded, rather than male.

The new taste for sentiment made itself felt in fiction as in poetry and the theater. The "sentimental" in fiction may mean stories designed to fill the reader

with anguished pity, or stories glorifying the sentimental as morally worthy. Sarah Fielding's *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744) was, like Richardson's *Pamela*, designed to display the elevated, refined, humanitarian feelings of its central characters, while the still fairly heavy incidence of seduction, rape, and false accusation is performed by palpably evil characters, and the moral design of the fiction is obvious. When Fielding added her *Volume the Last* to *David Simple* in 1753, she produced a disturbing tear-jerker in which the good characters are routed and largely destroyed by the bad ones. Sarah Scott's *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1770) claimed to depict "the life of a man more ordinarily good"; while Sir George succeeds in materially reforming at least the small section of the world around him, the sentimental character is often seen in vain opposition to a cruel world to which he or she could not be reconciled. Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), for example, shows a character of sentiment too sensitive for the world. This sentiment was considered edifying and instructive as well as touching; as Johnson told Boswell of Samuel Richardson, "You must read him for the sentiment." The ideal characteristics of both sentimental heroes and heroines were traditionally feminine ones, such as sensitivity, compassion, and private virtue. Some women writers led and some opposed the movement to establish the sentimental, sensitive, often victimized heroine as the ideal model of femininity, often using heroines of this type to engage with political issues. Novels such as Frances Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), or Elizabeth Griffith's three novels about women in unhappy marriages, explore women's virtue and vice, their status in the home, and their use of domestic power within the larger social structure. Often these works also express concern about the double standard of sexual morality.

Courtship novels were also a convenient mode for examining sentiment, sensibility, gender roles, and behavior. Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782), Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791), and Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* (1788) and *Celestina* (1791) all use the tale of a young girl's emergence into social life and the rituals of courtship to convey opinions on manners, fashions, morals, and changing sexual and

national politics. An element of subversion is often built into the courtship genre, as the heroine looks critically upon the process she is undergoing. Jane Austen, who was an avid reader of Charlotte Smith's work, was strongly influenced by Smith's *Emmeline* when she wrote her *Sense and Sensibility* (1811); that novel marks a turn away from the cult of sensibility (upon which *Emmeline* relies) and toward a reassertion of rationalism.

Just as some poets began to feel that realism had robbed their art of its power and creativity, some novelists came to feel the novel's strict fidelity to realistic narrative to be stifling. Horace Walpole, frustrated with the confines of realism and rationalism, attempted in his *Castle of Otranto* (1764) to combine the realism of the novel's psychological representation with the imaginative resources of old romance, in which the supernatural and marvelous were allowed full play. Written as a trifle and in a spirit of pure fun, *Otranto* is now taken seriously as the first Gothic novel; it created a form that became predominant at the turn of the century. Popular Gothic works included Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777), William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon* (1799), and the numerous novels of renowned Gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe, including *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). These novels investigated human responses to seemingly supernatural occurrences, things known (thanks to the advances of science and natural history) to be impossible. In an Enlightenment era, the Gothic examined dark mysteries, and their darkness was even more menacing in contrast to the light that had been thrown on the world around them. The "horror" Gothic associated with Matthew or "Monk" Lewis was strong on graveyard elements and corpses risen from the dead, while the "terror" Gothic associated primarily with Ann Radcliffe turned on the emotions awakened in a rational and balanced person by the threat of the supernatural or the unexplained. The generally formulaic plots of Gothic novels often involve the usurpation of a title or estate, a hidden crime, or a secret pact with the devil. They tend to feature stereotypical characters and take place in worlds temporarily or geographically distanced from England. Many of the elements of Gothic fiction

had been present decades earlier in other genres, such as Alexander Pope's heroic epistle *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717). Like a typical terror Gothic, the poem featured a heroine physically confined, isolated, and subjected to harrowing emotions. The surrounding landscape is highly symbolic, reflecting the psychological world of the character, which dominates the work, and the heroine's plight is rendered in highly expressive rhetoric full of rhapsodic feeling. The Gothic often expresses darker elements of marriage and family life: where the courtship novel offers an attractive young man, the Gothic novel offers a cruel patriarch. Gothic novels provided an ominous view of homes, which tend to be confining, isolating, and ill-omened structures whose occupants are threatened by insanity and hysteria. Forbidden themes (such as incest, necrophilia, and murder) are allowed to surface. The structures themselves often embodied the political and social tensions resulting from the integration of ancient or historical time, preserved in castles or abbeys, into a world which is in other respects modern. The Gothic setting of Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle*, for example, allows Smith to explore social concerns such as English laws of primogeniture and women's social status and identity within the frame of a courtship novel. Her novel illustrates the ways in which the frightening, distorted world of the Gothic could also serve as a forum for social commentary—as it also does in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and in Eliza Fenwick's *Secresy* (1795).

As the British Empire expanded and Britons increasingly looked out beyond the borders of Europe, the scope of the British novel responded to this broader perspective. Restoration tragedy had favored exotic settings including the empires of the Mughals and the Aztecs. In the early eighteenth century, fiction writers like Daniel Defoe and Penelope Aubin made use of both the "East Indies" (roughly today's East Asia) and the West. *Robinson Crusoe* famously takes place on an uninhabited island in the Atlantic; Behn's *Oroonoko* takes its readers to the racially mixed society of Surinam; in Johnson's *Rasselas* the central characters come from Africa and journey through Egypt. An English appetite for non-fiction about the colonies was fed by Mary Rowlandson's narrative of her captivity and ransom by

the Algonquin Native Americans, *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) and by *The Female American; or, The Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield* (1767), which is a novel in the guise of autobiography. Its narrator, the daughter of a Native-American princess and an English settler, is, like Robinson Crusoe, shipwrecked on an island in the Atlantic. This trans-Atlantic examination of issues of race, gender, and empire depicts a feminist utopian society in the cross-racial community its narrator discovers on her island. Fiction in which characters and settings spanned the Atlantic became common. Frances Brooke published *The History of Emily Montague* (1768), set in what is now Quebec, after living there for several years. Among those who more than once set a novel at least partly in the colonies were Charlotte Lennox, who had an American childhood, and Susanna Rowson, who became on balance more American than English, while Phebe Gibbes and Charlotte Smith took an interest in the colonies without ever having gone there. Smith's interest was political, and was shared with other radical or Jacobin writers: the protagonist of Robert Bage's *Hermesprong, or, Man as He Is Not* (1796) is by no means the only English radical hero to have been shaped by an upbringing among Native Americans. Rowson's *Reuben and Rachel* (1798) amounts at least in its earlier parts to an American melting-pot or birth-of-the-nation novel, while Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) continues the examination of Indian culture that Gibbes had launched in *Hartly House, Calcutta*, in 1789 (another novel which was widely taken for non-fiction).

Not only did the imaginary realms of fiction extend out into the world; the books themselves increasingly traveled outside Britain. Popular works such as novels by Fielding and Richardson would be shipped to the colonies or pirated by American printers. Across the continent, British literature was becoming more widely translated, read, and admired. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* were read as far north as the Scottish Highlands, in addition to being sent across the Atlantic to the North American colonies. *Robinson Crusoe* was one of the first works of British literature to be widely acclaimed on the continent; in Germany and France the

novel was more widely read than Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Milton at the time of its publication. The value of these older English writers also began to be more widely recognized internationally, however, as eighteenth-century poets, dramatists, and critics acknowledged their debt to these predecessors, extolling their merits and making international readers aware of the influence their contributions had made to contemporary writing. Johnson's *Dictionary* also contributed to the international recognition of British authors. In his account of the English language, Johnson's quotations from leading English authors from previous centuries not only illustrated the wealth and variety of usage, but were instrumental in the creation of a canon of works of established value. As the *Dictionary* gained international renown, so, too, did the authors Johnson quoted.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

One effect of the growth of print culture was to slow down the rate at which change in the language occurred; another was to make people more aware of the variations that did exist. Many came to the view that change in the language was in itself something to be resisted on principle, on the grounds that change allowed "corruptions" to be introduced to the language, and would make literary works of their present generation less accessible to future generations. In the late seventeenth century Dryden had expressed his desire that the English "might all write with the same certainty of words, and purity of phrase, to which the Italians first arrived, and after them the French"—in other words, a "purity" of linguistic standards set and enforced by the state, as the Accademia della Crusca had done in Italy since 1592 and the Académie française had done in France since 1635. Swift echoed Dryden in 1712 with "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue," which exerted considerable influence on educated opinion. Like Dryden, Swift called for the production of dictionaries and books of grammar that would codify practice and identify corrupt linguistic practices to be weeded out, and that would act as a retarding force against change. Swift wanted to "fix" the English language in two

senses: "fix" in the sense of "repair damage" (he believed that numerous corruptions had been introduced to the language since the civil wars), and also "fix" in the sense of "set in a fixed position." In his view, it was "better that a language should not be wholly perfect, than that it should be perpetually changing."

Before the Restoration, books of grammar in England were generally books on the grammar of Latin. In the late sixteenth century, two short grammars of English had been published, and several more had followed in the first half of the seventeenth. In the late seventeenth century, though, and even more so in the eighteenth century, this trickle became a flood. Perhaps the most influential was Robert Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), which did much to establish a tradition of focusing such works largely on errors in grammar and usage. In the view of grammarians such as Thomas Sheridan (father of the playwright Richard), such errors carried moral weight: the "revival of the art of speaking, and the study of language," in Sheridan's view, might be expected to contribute "in great measure" to remedying the "evils of immorality, ignorance, and false taste." At the other end of the spectrum was Joseph Priestley, the theologian and scientist (discoverer of sulphur dioxide, ammonia, and the gas that was later given the name oxygen); Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761) staunchly resisted the prescriptive, maintaining in startlingly modern terms that "the custom of speaking is the original and only just standard of a language."

In the late eighteenth century the prescriptivists won the day over issues of grammar, and began to entrench a good many distinctions, rules, and standards of correctness that remain with us today. Among these were the creation of distinctions in meaning between the verbs "lie" and "lay," between "between" and "among," and between "shall" and "will"; the prohibition on degrees of such "absolute" qualities as roundness and perfection; and the prohibition of double negatives.

English dictionaries (the first of which had appeared in 1604) included only "hard words" through the seventeenth century. The first dictionary to aim at comprehensiveness was Nathaniel Bailey's *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721). Bailey's work went through 27 editions before the end of the century,



but it was Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) that had the more lasting impact. The decisions Johnson made in writing his *Dictionary*—to include illustrative quotations and to break down definitions of each head word into distinct senses—became conventional for all later dictionaries. Perhaps Johnson's most controversial decision was to make the dictionary primarily descriptive rather than prescriptive in nature; though Johnson noted certain "improprieties and absurdities, which it is the duty of the lexicographer to correct or proscribe," he saw the main purpose of his dictionary as being to record how the language was being and had been used, not to dictate how it should be used.

Johnson agreed with Swift that the pre-Restoration language represented "the wheels of English undefiled," but he disagreed as to the appropriate response. Not only was he willing to record usages of which he disapproved in his dictionary; he also strenuously resisted calls for the establishment of a formal authority to regulate the language, approving of the way in which "Englishmen have always been moved by a spirit of personal liberty in the use of their language." In similar fashion Priestley declared that an academy regulating the language would be "unsuitable to the genius of a free nation." It was this nationalistic argument more than anything that swayed the English in the late eighteenth century against the French and Italian models.

Language, of course, continued to change throughout the period, albeit at a rather slower pace than in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It often changed in ways of which the prescriptivists disapproved—and often resisted change in directions they wished it to follow. Swift and many other prescriptivists had conceived a violent disapproval of the supposedly excessive number of monosyllabic words in English. Swift disapproved strongly of the shortening of words such as "drudged" and "fledged" into a single syllable (initially through the substitution of an apostrophe for the *e* before the final *d*) where formerly such words had been pronounced as two. He disapproved too of the creation of shortened forms of longer words, such as *pozz* for *positive* and *mob* for *mobile*. (This last was long a particular pet peeve of Swift's, but late in life he finally admitted defeat in the face of the linguistic mob that adopted the shortened form.) But English has remained a language

possessing a substantially larger percentage of monosyllabic words than do other European languages.

Perhaps the most important structural change in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the spread of progressive verb forms, and in particular the development of the passive progressive. Where in the seventeenth century one would say "The church is building," in the eighteenth people began to say "The church is being built." This development occurred organically, and (despite what seems to us to be its obvious usefulness) was widely resisted by grammarians.

There were also a number of more superficial changes in the written forms of English. There remained no agreed-upon standards regarding capitalization and italics, but it was common practice to employ both liberally. Many writers made it a practice to capitalize all abstract nouns, and some capitalized virtually all nouns. No conventions existed for the treatment of quotations in print (quotation marks were not commonly used in the modern style before the nineteenth century); some writers used dashes and paragraph breaks to aid the reader, while others left the reader to infer who was saying what, purely on the basis of interpolated phrases such as *he said*, *she replied*, and so on.

The spread of dictionaries—and of publishing itself—helped to "fix" English spelling, but it largely became fixed in a form that represented the English that had been spoken before the great shift in English pronunciation that had occurred in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. Thus were preserved the *t* in *castle*, the *k* in *knight*, the *gh* in *through*, and so on.

The American Revolution was accompanied by dissatisfaction in the new nation at using the language of the defeated imperial power. Noah Webster was among those who preferred to call the language used in the United States "American," and in 1789 Webster introduced a range of spelling changes designed both to rationalize spelling and to make the American variety distinctive from the English; the American spellings of *color*, *favor*, *honor*, *traveling*, and *theater* all took root as a result of Webster's initiative. (Over the following decades Webster came to acknowledge that he had lost the battle to call "American" a separate language, however; his 1828 dictionary was entitled *An American Dictionary of the English Language*.)

Above all, perhaps, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a period of growth for the English language. Words continued to be imported from other languages, perhaps most notably from French; it was a sign of the times that many now found these imports objectionable. In 1711, for example, Addison expressed his hope that "superintendents of our language" might be appointed "to hinder any words of a foreign coin from passing among us; and in particular to prohibit any French phrases from becoming current in our kingdom, when those of our own stamp are altogether as valuable." Even in the face of resistance

such as this, *ballet* and *champagne* made their way across the Channel and entered English during this period, as did *connoisseur*, *dentist*, *negligee*, and *publicity*, along with a host of others. But the greatest growth came not in imports from France but in the coining of new scientific terms (often from Latin or Greek roots), from *abdomen* and *atom*, to *corolla* and *cortex*, to *genus* and *gravity*, on to *zoology*, and including thousands of more specialized terms that have never come into general circulation but have nonetheless contributed to the expansion in the communicative capacity of the English language.