

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-02672-7 - Women's Place in Pope's World
Valerie Rumbold
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
ENGLISH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT 2

Women's Place in Pope's World

How was Alexander Pope's personal experience of women transformed into poetry, and how in turn did he and his writing figure in the lives of the women he wrote about? How characteristic of his age was Pope's attitude towards women? What exactly was the role in his life of individual women such as his mother, Patty Blount, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu?

Valerie Rumbold's is the first full-length study of these important issues. Making use of previously little-known manuscripts, she focuses both on Pope's own life and art, and on early eighteenth-century assumptions about women and gender. She offers readings of some of the well-known poems in which women feature prominently, and follows Pope's response throughout his writings in general. His own alienation from the dominant culture (through religion, politics, and physical handicap), and his troubled fascination with certain kinds of women, make this subject complex and compelling, with wide implications. Dr Rumbold brings to light new information, and shows how the women with whom he dealt can themselves be seen as individuals with presence and dignity.

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-02672-7 - Women's Place in Pope's World
 Valerie Rumbold
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
 ENGLISH LITERATURE AND THOUGHT

General Editors: Dr HOWARD ERSKINE-HILL, Litt.D., FBA,
Pembroke College, Cambridge
 and Professor JOHN RICHETTI, *University of Pennsylvania*

Editorial Board: Morris Brownell, *University of Nevada*
 Leopold Damrosch, *Harvard University*
 J. Paul Hunter, *University of Chicago*
 Isobel Grundy, *Queen Mary College, London*
 Lawrence Lipking, *Northwestern University*
 Harold Love, *Monash University*
 Claude Rawson, *Yale University*
 Pat Rogers, *University of South Florida*
 James Sambrook, *University of Southampton*

The growth in recent years of eighteenth-century literary studies has prompted the establishment of this new series of books devoted to the period. The series will accommodate monographs and critical studies on authors, works, genres and other aspects of literary culture from the later part of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth.

Since academic engagement with this field has become an increasingly interdisciplinary enterprise, books will be especially encouraged which in some way stress the cultural context of the literature, or examine it in relation to contemporary art, music, philosophy, historiography, religion, politics, social affairs, and so on. New approaches to the established canon are being tested with increasing frequency, and the series will hope to provide a home for the best of these. The books we choose to publish will be thorough in their methods of literary, historical, or biographical investigation, and will open interesting perspectives on previously closed, or underexplored, or misrepresented areas of eighteenth-century writing and thought. They will reflect the work of both younger and established scholars on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

Published

The Transformation of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,
 by David Womersley

Women's Place in Pope's World, by Valerie Rumbold

Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650–1850, by Dianne Dugay

Sterne's Fiction and the Double Principle, by Jonathan Lamb

Other provisional titles in preparation

Plots and Counterplots: Politics and Literary Representation, 1660–1730,
 by Richard Braverman

The Eighteenth-Century Hymn, by Donald Davie

The Body in Swift and Defoe, by Carol Flynn

The Reader in Richardson's Clarissa, by Tom Keymer

The Muses of Resistance: Labouring-class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739–1796,
 by Donna Landry

*Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics
 in England, 1660–1780,* by Isabel Rivers

Defoe's Politics: Parliament, Power, Kingship and Robinson Crusoe,
 by Manuel Schonhorn

Space and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel, by Simon Varey

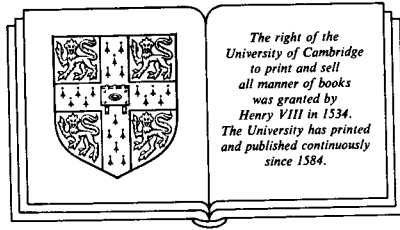
The Rhetoric of Berkeley's Philosophy, by Peter Walmsley

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-02672-7 - Women's Place in Pope's World
Valerie Rumbold
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Women's Place in Pope's World

VALERIE RUMBOLD

*Lecturer in English
University College of North Wales
Bangor*



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
CAMBRIDGE
NEW YORK PORT CHESTER MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-02672-7 - Women's Place in Pope's World
 Valerie Rumbold
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521363082

© Cambridge University Press 1989

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1989
 Hardback version transferred to digital printing 2006
 Digitally printed first paperback version 2006

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Women's place in Pope's world / Valerie Rumbold.
 p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in eighteenth-century English
 literature and thought: 2)
 Bibliography.
 Includes index.

ISBN 0-521-36308-X

1. Pope, Alexander, 1688-1744 – Characters – Women. 2. Pope,
 Alexander, 1688-1744 – Relations with women. 3. Women and
 literature – Great Britain – History – 18th century. 4. Poets,
 English – 18th century – Biography. 5. Women – Great Britain –
 Biography. 6. Women in literature. I. Title. II. Series.

PR3633.R84 1989
 821'.5 – dc19 88-36645 CIP

ISBN-13 978-0-521-36308-2 hardback
 ISBN-10 0-521-36308-X hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-02672-7 paperback
 ISBN-10 0-521-02672-5 paperback

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-02672-7 - Women's Place in Pope's World
Valerie Rumbold
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

*To the memory of
Dorothy May Proctor
1928–1982*

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-02672-7 - Women's Place in Pope's World
Valerie Rumbold
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

But grant, in Public Men sometimes are shown,
A Woman's seen in Private life alone:
Our bolder Talents in full light display'd,
Your Virtues open fairest in the shade. *Characters of Women*

You knew his mother, and how good a woman she was.
Patty Blount to Spence in 1749

Contents

<i>List of plates</i>	<i>page</i> xiii
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xviii
1 Assumptions and ironies	1
2 Women at home	24
3 Reigning beauties	48
4 Rebellious sympathies	83
5 A choice of sisters	110
6 Female wit	131
7 Headstrong Duchesses	168
8 Victims of state	208
9 'I love you upon unalterable Principles'	251
<i>Bibliography</i>	295
<i>Index</i>	307

Plates

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Martha and Teresa Blount by Charles Jervas, <i>c.</i> 1716. Reproduced by kind permission of Mr J. J. Eyston. Print supplied by the Courtauld Institute of Art. | <i>page</i> 114 |
| 2 | Catherine Sheffield, Duchess of Buckingham, and her son Robert, Marquis of Normanby – funeral effigies in wax. Reproduced by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. | 170 |
| 3 | Henrietta Howard, later Countess of Suffolk, by Charles Jervas, <i>c.</i> 1724. Reproduced by kind permission of the Hon. Ian Hope-Morley. | 210 |
| 4 | Mary Caesar (date and artist unknown). Reproduced by kind permission of Charles Cottrell-Dormer. | 232 |
| 5 | Martha Blount in later life (pastel drawing, artist unknown). Reproduced by kind permission of Mr J. J. Eyston. | 252 |

Preface

The aim of this study is to set Pope's writing to and about women in its cultural and personal context, and to ask how he and his writing figured in the lives of the women who appear in it. By relating his attitudes to prevailing assumptions about gender, and showing how in some respects he seeks to challenge or evade them, I hope to balance the sense of Pope as characteristic voice of the age with the more complicated presence of a man alienated from the dominant culture by religion, politics and physical handicap; and by writing in detail about the individual women who mattered to him – women often known to posterity only through the footnotes to his poetry – I hope also to reassert their dignity as people in their own right, who had their views of Pope just as he had his views of them.

This is especially important in respect of the women he most loved, his mother and Patty (christened Martha) Blount, women who make less of a figure in women's history than pioneers like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu precisely because they contented themselves with the 'shade' in which female personality seemed 'fairest' to contemporary taste. They, not the writers and thinkers who insisted on sharing the 'full light' with the 'bolder Talents' of men, represent the majority of gentlewomen in the period; and it would be wrong to ignore the traces, faint as they often are, of these conventional lives. Yet Pope's devotion to women who quietly accepted society's prescriptions was complicated by his attraction to those who, like Lady Mary, shared the verbal energy and public self-assurance that Patty was content to leave to men. Indeed, his troubled fascination with striking and assertive women is a recurring theme both in his poetry and in his personal life.

Rather than giving an exhaustive account of the few major poems in which Pope deliberately sets women in the spotlight, I have tried to trace the pattern of his response through his writing as a whole. Unfortunately, in order to bring the book within a reasonable compass, I have had to leave out some potentially rewarding topics: in particular, I have not considered the question of women as subject and audience in Pope's major translations; I have discussed only a few of the comments on his work by contemporary women readers; and I have not by any means exhausted the possibilities for detailed biography among the lesser-known women members of his circle.

It would have been impossible to write a book of this kind without the generosity of the owners of manuscripts in allowing me to quote from their archives. For material from the Stuart Papers I acknowledge the gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen; for the correspondence of Charles and Mary Caesar I thank Mr and Mrs Charles Cottrell-Dormer, whose kind hospitality made my visit to Rousham one of the high points in my research; and for access to copies of the Blount archives I thank Mr J. J. Eyston, lineal descendant of Patty Blount's brother Michael. Without his generous permission to quote from the papers of his ancestors the book would lack its central core. I am also much indebted to Richard Williams, custodian of the Blount archives, for the patience and enthusiasm with which he has guided me through the collection and answered my numerous questions.

In writing this book I have wandered into several areas which are new to me, and I am grateful to all those who have given me the benefit of their expertise, both in discussing my work generally and in answering particular queries: I should especially like to thank Eveline Cruickshanks, Andrew Hanham, Frances Harris, Anthony Harvey, Ragnhild Hatton, Sheila Landi, Alex Lindsay, Julian Litten, Roger Lonsdale, Nathalie Rothenstein and Stephen Taylor. I have also been made vividly aware of how much I owe to past scholars, especially to Charles Wentworth Dilke, who began in the 1850s the task of sifting a hundred years' accumulation of dubious Popiana, and who, lacking even a reliable edition of Pope's letters, brought to the task a constructive scepticism that is none the less impressive for the passage of another hundred years. In this century, George Sherburn's edition of the *Correspondence* and James Osborn's of Spence's *Anecdotes*, together with the *Twickenham Edition* of the poems, have made thinking about Pope an altogether more practicable undertaking. Amongst scholars of the present I owe a particular debt to Maynard Mack, who gave me as I embarked on this project the incalculable benefit of his support and criticism, and who completed his bounty by publishing, at the best possible time for me, his long-awaited *Alexander Pope: A Life*, which, by clearing away so many untenable theories of chronology, motive and identity, saved me months of labour and my reader many lengthy footnotes. I am also grateful to Isobel Grundy for her thorough and stimulating reading of my drafts and for her many valuable suggestions. Peter Dixon too has kindly given my drafts the benefit of his meticulous attention. My greatest debt, however, is one that will be immediately recognised by readers of Howard Erskine-Hill's *The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope*: his faith in the importance of individual lives and in the feasibility of finding out about them has been a constant inspiration. I am grateful to all those who have read and criticised my work: the most valuable discussions are not always those that end in full agreement; and where I have persisted in error the responsibility is mine alone.

The writing of this book was made possible by a Research Fellowship at

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-02672-7 - Women's Place in Pope's World
Valerie Rumbold
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface

xvii

Jesus College, Cambridge. To the Society I offer my heartfelt thanks for the many ways in which it has supported me. My husband, who has been the principal sufferer by my undertaking over the four difficult and disrupted years it has taken to complete, has nonetheless sustained me by his insistence on the importance of my work. Finally, the dedication remembers one who, though she did not live to see this book begun, would have been its most delighted reader.

Abbreviations

- Corr.* *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, edited by George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956)
- DNB* *Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, 63 vols. (London, 1885–1900)
- EC* *The Works of Alexander Pope*, edited by Whitwell Elwin and William John Courthope, 10 vols. (London, 1871–86)
- HW Corr.* *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, edited by W. S. Lewis, 48 vols. (London, 1937–83)
- Hervey* *Lord Hervey's Memoirs*, edited by Romney Sedgwick (London, 1952)
- LM Essays* *Essays and Poems and Simplicity, a Comedy*, edited by R. Halsband and I. Grundy (Oxford, 1977)
- LM Letters* *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, edited by Robert Halsband, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1965)
- LM Life* Robert Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, corrected edition (Oxford, 1961)
- Lothian MSS* *Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Lothian Preserved at Blickling Hall, Norfolk*, Historical Manuscripts Commission (London, 1905)
- Prose Works* *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope*, edited by Norman Ault and Rosemary Cowler, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1936–86)
- Spence* Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men*, edited by James M. Osborn, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1966)
- Suffolk Corr.* *Letters to and from Henrietta, Countess of Suffolk and her Second Husband the Hon. George Berkeley*, edited by J. W. Croker, 2 vols. (London, 1824)
- Swift Corr.* *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, edited by Harold Williams, 5 vols. (revised edition, Oxford, 1965)
- TE* *The Twickenham Edition of the Works of Alexander Pope*, 11 vols. (London, 1939–69)