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978-0-521-27723-5 - The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered

Margaret Anne Doody

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No weak, no common Wing shall bear
My rising Body thro' the Air;
Now chang'd I upward go.

Horace, *Odes* 11. xx

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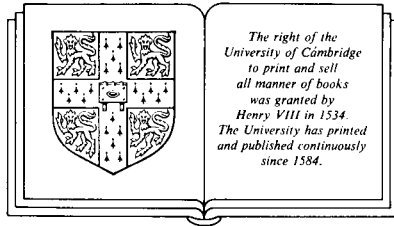
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THE DARING MUSE

AUGUSTAN POETRY RECONSIDERED

MARGARET ANNE DOODY



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*This book is dedicated
to
my sister
Freda*

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Ye sacred Nine! that all my Soul possess,
Whose Raptures fire me, and whose Visions bless

(Pope, *Windsor Forest*)

*Beat not the dirty paths where vulgar feet have trod,
But give the vigorous fancy room*

(Swift, "To Mr. Congreve")

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Figures 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23 and 24 are from works in the collection of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, and were photographed by the Doe Library photographic service.

The frontispiece, the illustration on p. vi and figures 14, 15, 22, 26 and 27 are from works in the Rare Books collection of the Firestone Library, Princeton University, and were photographed by the Firestone Library photographic service.

Figure 28 is from a work in the collection of Robert Taylor, photographed by the Firestone Library photographic service.

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[More information](#)*A note on editions*

The following works by these authors (frequently cited in this book) are quoted throughout as they appear in the modern editions given here. A note will be supplied only when the text referred to differs from that on this list.

- Marvell *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, H. M. Margoliouth, ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927).
- Butler *Hudibras*, John Wilders, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).
- Rochester *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, David M. Vieth, ed. (London and New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968).
- Dryden *The Works of John Dryden*, H. T. Swedenberg, General Editor, with numerous other editors, 19 vols. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1958–).
- Swift *Swift, Poetical Works*, Herbert Davis, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).
- Philips, John *The Poems of John Philips*, M. G. Lloyd Thomas, ed. (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1927).
- Gay *John Gay Poetry and Prose*, Vinton A. Dearing and Charles E. Beckwith, eds., 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).
- Pope *The Poems of Alexander Pope*. A one-volume edition of the Twickenham text, John Butt, ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963).
- Thomson *The Seasons*, James Sambrook, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).
- Gray *Thomas Gray and William Collins, Poetical Works*, Roger Lonsdale, ed. (Oxford University Press, 1977).
- Collins
- Johnson *The Lives of the Poets*, George Birbeck Hill, ed., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905).
- Cowper *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, H. S. Milford, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).
- Chatterton *The Complete Works of Thomas Chatterton*. A bicentenary edition, Donald S. Taylor, in association with Benjamin B. Hoover, eds., 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

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Preface

In this work I have endeavoured to describe and account for the peculiar complexity and strange richness of the poetry of one important period of England's literary history. The "period" is in this work generously defined. There is another kind of profit in cutting the age into segments, but on this occasion I wish to pursue resemblances and connections, to see what can be said to unite Butler and Gray, what threads connect Rochester with Crabbe.

The book is as richly illustrated as I dared to hope; I am indeed grateful to the Cambridge University Press for allowing me to include the illustrations. Augustan poetry is highly (if often oddly) visual. Illustrators during the period interpreted the poems and their images for their contemporaries, and can help us to see what is there. I hope that looking at my book can give the modern reader some idea of what looking at eighteenth-century books of poetry can be like – an experience far removed from the sensation of grey unbroken columns which some anthologies have inflicted as the essential effect of Augustan poetry.

I wish here to express my sense of indebtedness to a number of people. First, I wish to acknowledge the inspiration offered by Rachel Trickett, since I trace the true origin of this book to a seminar she gave in Oxford to graduate students in eighteenth-century studies. I have always admired *The Honest Muse*, and I am sure the Principal of St. Hugh's will be entertained at seeing I have in my title forsaken honesty for daring.

Like all who teach, I am indebted to my students, and in particular to the graduate students who attended seminars on Augustan poetry in Berkeley and Princeton. To the students in the class held at Princeton in the spring of 1982 I am especially grateful.

I am also very much obliged to many librarians, including those in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the Rare Books section of the Green Library, Stanford; the Bancroft Library, Berkeley; the New York Public Library; the Firestone Library, Princeton. I owe my thanks also to Robert Taylor who is always so generous in allowing use of the Taylor Collection, and to Nancy Coffin, his librarian. I would like to express very warm thanks to the Librarians of the Firestone Library Rare Books department, who hunted up works with zeal and held books on "my" trolley for a time generously made boundless to an almost Augustan extent. I wish to mention in particular Charles Greene, Jean Preston and Ann Van Arsdale. I am of course especially obliged

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to those libraries which allowed photographs to be taken of illustrative material, and to the various photographic departments which took the pictures.

I should not wish this book to see the light without inscribing in it the names of those who have so kindly helped me by reading part or all of it in sundry phases. In particular I wish to express my gratitude to the following: Zelda Boyd, Carol Christ, Deborah Laycock, Thomas P. Roche Jr., Steven Shankman, Steven Volentir. Claudia Johnson read the whole manuscript in first draft as each chapter appeared and supplied detailed comments and encouragement at an early stage; I have very much appreciated her continued interest in the project. Florian Stuber has been an acute and supportive reader of the work throughout its progress, offering informed comment on eighteenth-century matters and capably pointing out possible solutions to stylistic problems. I value his contribution as a reader, and hope the final version pleases him. My colleagues and friends have enlightened me as to errors or omissions; any mistakes that remain are my own responsibility.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to my editor, Andrew Brown, for his tact, cheerfulness and encouragement. And I am most grateful to him for putting into my head the notion of writing my projected book on Augustan poetry not in some hazy future but (in true Augustan fashion) in the immediate hazardous present.

Margaret Anne Doody

Princeton, N.J.

March 1984