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0521641276 - Making the English Canon: Print-Capitalism and the Cultural Past,
1700-1770
Jonathan Brody Kramnick
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This book offers an original examination of the formation of the English canon during the first two thirds of the eighteenth century, looking in particular at the treatment of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. Through close readings of periodical essays, editions, treatises, reviews, disquisitions, pamphlets, and poems, Jonathan Brody Kramnick recounts the origins of modern literary study and situates the rise of national literary tradition in the broad context of the making of a public culture. He argues against the consensus view that locates the beginnings of literary criticism comfortably within the rise of the public sphere, and suggests instead that the makings of the canon lie in a combined evolution of publicity and specialization. Much of what we understand as professional criticism, literary language, and national literary tradition, he proposes, received its definitive shape during the mid-eighteenth century, when the century-long effort to define “modern” literature against the earlier achievements of the “ancients” culminated with a new idea of national antiquity.

Jonathan Brody Kramnick is assistant professor of English at Rutgers University..

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JONATHAN BRODY KRAMNICK



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For my parents

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 Frontmatter
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Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> viii
Introduction: the modernity of the past	i
P A R T O N E	
1 The structural transformation of literary history	15
2 The mode of consecration: between aesthetics and historicism	54
P A R T T W O	
3 Novel to lyric: Shakespeare in the field of culture, 1752–1754	107
4 The cultural logic of late feudalism: or, Spenser and the romance of scholarship, 1754–1762	137
P A R T T H R E E	
5 Shakespeare’s nation: the literary profession and the “shades of ages”	193
Afterword: the present crisis	237
<i>Notes</i>	246
<i>Index</i>	282

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The epigraphs for chapter two are from Max Weber, *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 vols., trans. Ephraim Fischhoff *et al.*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1978) 608; and Georg Luckács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971) 137.

The epigraph for chapter five is from Laurence Stern, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (London and New York: Penguin, 1968) 106–107.