

About this Anthology

The goal of this site is to build an anthology of freely-available, fully-edited and annotated texts of texts in English written during the long eighteenth century. There is no consensus on the part of scholars exactly about what years make up this period, but for the purposes of this anthology, we can think of it as the period from the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy on the British throne in 1660 to the start of the French revolution in 1789. The anthology will include texts that were published in the British isles, as well as those published in colonial America in this period, both on the mainland and in the islands of the Caribbean like Jamaica and Barbados. The long-standing separation in print anthologies between “British” and “American” literature is an arbitrary one, and our goal is to break down that boundary by considering the English-speaking transatlantic world of the long eighteenth century as a whole. The site as it stands can be used to teach survey courses in the literature of the long eighteenth century (and in fact will be used in this way in fall 2016 in ENEC 3130, Eighteenth-Century Literature in English, at the University of Virginia). As time goes on, we hope to build on this beginning, filling in a very full archive of texts from this period, and then extending the scope to create a full anthology of open-access literary texts that have been curated, edited, annotated, and supplemented with digitized resources—images, audio files, maps, timelines, etc.—that take advantage of the digital environment in a way that no print anthology can.

These texts are being edited by students at the University of Virginia for the use of other students both here and elsewhere, and for general readers as well. Editing these texts is a valuable pedagogical exercise in its own right, returning students to first principles: where do the texts we read come from? how were they first printed? how did they

change over time? how were they received by contemporary readers? We invite other teachers and students to join in the effort; if you are interested, please contact jobrien@virginia.edu for suggestions as to how to incorporate editing exercises in your own pedagogy, and instructions on producing texts that can be added to this site for the use of others.

Why is this needed? Many of the texts here are now available in free editions on the internet already, from places like Project Gutenberg, the Internet Archive, or Google Books. But most of these digital works have little textual authority, are poorly edited (if they were edited at all), and almost always lack the annotations and contextualization that most modern readers, not just students, need to make sense of them. And the proliferation of such free texts creates its own problem, as it is impossible for a student or general reader to know which (if any) of the many options available online is complete, authoritative, and useful. The odds of a casual reader or student finding a corrupt, incomplete, or otherwise useless digital edition of any of these works far exceeds the chance that they will land upon a good and authoritative one. The texts on this site *are* good ones, and will be getting better all the time. Teachers can assign them with confidence as to their authority, and also with confidence that they will work on any digital device (laptop, tablet, smartphone), or can be printed out for readers who prefer that.

We have edited many of these texts anew. In some cases we are using digital facsimiles of eighteenth-century editions made available to us through the 18thConnect project that aggregates scholarship in eighteenth-century literature and culture online. Most of the other texts have been taken from the Text Creation Partnership's collection of edited texts drawn from the Eighteenth-Century Collection Online and Early English Books Online. In some cases we are using a Project Gutenberg or other existing text, with the intention of

replacing it with something more authoritative eventually. We annotated these texts with an eye to providing information that a general reader would find useful. And, where possible, we have provided supplemental material—pictures, sound files, background information—to enable readers and students to put these works in the context of the period in which they were written. The site is designed to be used on any computer or handheld digital device. Readers can make their own annotations, comments, and ask questions using the hypothes.is plug-in, which is already active on this site.

This site has been produced in WordPress, which has the virtue of being open-access software that is well-supported by a large community of users and thus should be sustainable for the foreseeable future. Eventually, we will produce a WordPress theme that will allow users to construct their own anthology or reading list from the collection of works in this archive.

Please feel free to use and comment on our work; we hope to improve this site based on the input of users at the college and secondary school levels.

General Editor:

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