



Verse in English from Eighteenth Century Ireland

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This pioneering anthology introduces many previously neglected eighteenth-century writers to a general readership, and will lead to a re-examination of the entire canon of Irish verse in English.

Between 1700 and 1800, Dublin was second only to London as a center for the printing of poetry in English. Many fine poets were active during this period. However, because Irish eighteenth-century verse in English has to a great extent escaped the scholar and the anthologist, it is hardly known at all.

The most innovative aspect of this new anthology is the inclusion of many poetic voices entirely unknown to modern readers. Although the anthology contains the work of well-known figures such as John Toland, Thomas Parnell, Jonathan Swift, Patrick Delany, Laetitia Pilkington and Oliver Goldsmith, there are many verses by lesser known writers and nearly eighty anonymous poems which come from the broadsheets, manuscripts and chapbooks of the time. What emerges is an entirely new perspective on life in eighteenth-century Ireland. We hear the voice of a hard working farmer's wife from county Derry, of a rambling weaver from county Antrim, and that of a woman dying from drink. We learn about whale-fishing in county Donegal, about farming in county Kerry and bull-baiting in Dublin. In fact, almost every aspect of life in eighteenth-century Ireland is described vividly, energetically, with humor and feeling in the verse of this anthology.

Among the most moving poems are those by Irish-speaking poets who use amhrán or song meter and internal assonance, both borrowed from Irish, in their English verse. Equally interesting is the work of the weaver poets of Ulster who wrote in vigorous and energetic Ulster-Scots. The anthology also includes political poems dating from the reign of James II to the Act of Union, as well as a selection of lesser-known nationalist and Orange songs. Each poem is fully annotated and the book also contains a glossary of terms in Hiberno-English and Ulster Scots.

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