

A Concise Companion to  
the Restoration and  
Eighteenth Century

Edited by Cynthia Wall



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Century

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the Restoration and  
Eighteenth Century

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# Introduction

*Cynthia Wall*

I would like to introduce this volume of essays on the eighteenth century by introducing *The Eighteenth Century*, as captured by various voices at various times. It was not difficult to come up with mildly inconsistent to violently competing perspectives, not only from different generations but within the same decade:

To the first and second generation after this revolution in taste, the classical species of poetry seemed no poetry at all. Dryden and Pope, who had been enthroned so long in secure promise of immortality, felt their shrines shaken as by an earthquake. It became the fashion to say that these men were no poets at all. (Edmund Gosse, *From Shakespeare to Pope*, 1885)

We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century. (Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," 1888)

Sir Leslie Stephen said that the Century began in 1688 and ended in 1832, and surely he was right; Revolution and Reform are its natural boundaries. . . . And yet, in a sense, the deaths of Pitt and Fox marked the close of the era; for with them – except that Sheridan still lived – ended the race of the great men, the Giants of the Century. Nor has England since seen their like. (O. F. Christie, *England in the Eighteenth Century: Essays in Verse*, 1921)

To many of us the eighteenth is perhaps the dullest and drabest of modern centuries. (The Bishop of Clifton's Foreword to Robert Bracey, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 1925)

Why is it that the eighteenth century so particularly delights us? Are we perhaps simply reacting against a reaction? Is the twentieth century so fond of the eighteenth because the nineteenth disliked it so intensely? . . . There is a divine elegance everywhere, giving a grace to pomposity, a significance to frivolity, and a shape to emptiness. (Lytton Strachey, "The Eighteenth Century," 1926)

There was never a century which did less harm than the eighteenth in England. (George Saintsbury, *The Peace of the Augustans*, 1916)

In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant. (Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1947)

Not surprisingly, every critic as well as every reader has his or her own personal Eighteenth Century, and critics, like readers, employ a vocabulary of praise or distaste according to (or pushing against) the events and attitudes shaping their historical moment. The Eighteenth Century has been seen as a "place of rest and refreshment" (during the First World War); as the source of totalitarianism (after the Second World War); as a distinctly unpoetic time (said the Romantics); as a highpoint of poetic achievement (said themselves). Throw in the Restoration and we have once again the best of times, the worst of times: women on stage freed by new roles, and women on stage newly objectified by the male gaze; sexual equality in wit and sex, but marriages of convenience and sexual profligacy; women in trade, country houses for tradesmen – but the looming specter of the Angel in the House (Elizabeth Bennet disdained for "dirty ancles"); companionate marriage, but subordinated sexuality and increased prostitution; increasing wealth, literacy, and opportunity, but enclosure acts and industrialization. The twentieth century has devised its own characterizations of the period, from a "providence of wit" (Battestin 1974) to "intercultural collision, institutionalized racism, class tension" (Brown 1993: 7). In graduate school I was genially introduced to "Dr Johnson and his Circle" by one professor, and wittily to Grub Street by another. We've seen the rise of the novel, the idea of the bourgeois public sphere, the clamp of colonialism, the explosion of consumerism; various Marxist, deconstructionist, feminist, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, new historicist, and cultural studies approaches shape

our perceptions of and assumptions about “our” eighteenth century. It’s a bewildering cluster of worlds for any of us, and perhaps we can never have too many “companions” to help us negotiate them.

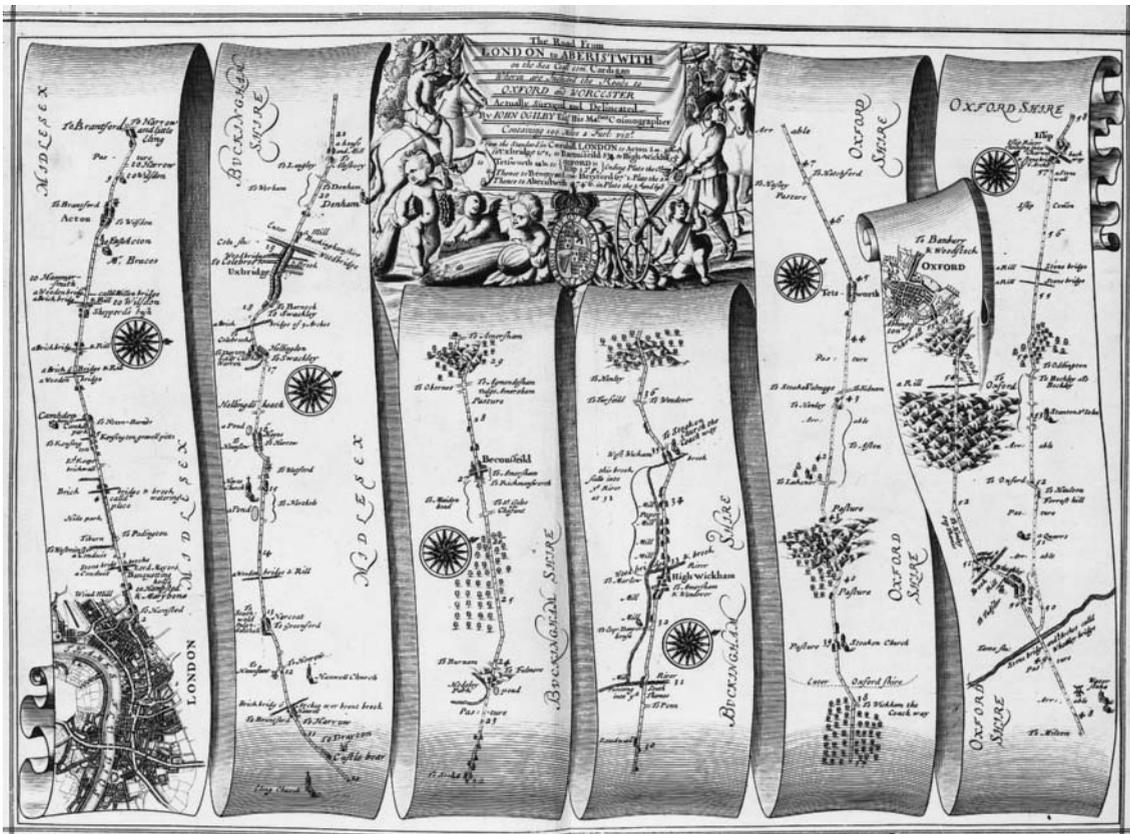
The original title for this series, under which I was approached to commission and edit essays, was *New Perspectives*, and that has been my operating principle. This collection of essays is not an introduction or a standard companion in the sense of laying out the basic territory to the novice pilgrim. To some extent it presumes enough prior knowledge to recognize the “new” in these perspectives. Each of these essays, to a greater or lesser degree, takes on certain widely held assumptions about eighteenth-century cultural contexts or literary practices, and pokes, prods, or overturns them. Each essay is by a scholar – whether well established in or relatively new to the profession – who makes a habit of shaping theses out of thorough research rather than driving research by a thesis. Each of these authors has been for me at one time or another a model for scholarship, textual analysis, conceptual argument, and good writing. This collection will be a companion of new perspectives for the eighteenth-century student and scholar.

My original desire for a dust jacket image was something from John Ogilby’s 1675 *Britannia* – an utterly exquisite and historically influential roadmap (among other things it replaced the old British mile of 2428 yards with the statute mile of 1760 yards, “thus effecting a revolution in customary measurements” (Fordham 1925: 157)). (This desire has been translated into Figure 1.) In the Preface, Ogilby explains how to read the map: “We have Projected [the roads] upon imaginary Scrolls, the *Initial City* or *Town* being always at the Bottom of the outmost Scroll on the Left Hand; whence your *Road* ascends to the Top of the said Scroll; then from the Bottom of the next Scroll ascends again.” It’s a bird’s-eye view, a self-reflexively cartographic enterprise: “the *Capital Towns* are describ’d *Ichnographically*, according to their Form and Extent; but the *Lesser Towns* and *Villages*, with the *Mansion Houses*, *Castles*, *Churches*, *Mills*, *Beacons*, *Woods*, &c. *Scenographically*, or in *Prospect*.” Thus in the first scroll we see London figured as a two-dimensional survey, an upended plan, but as we follow some of the main roads up (west), through Hyde Park and Acton, we cross a “Brick Bridge & Rill,” trees dot the landscape in Buckinghamshire, and hills rise round Oxford. Each scroll has its own compass relating the vertical presentation to the geographic reality. The whole is an art form of perspectives generally, employing several at once, continually reorienting itself, combining large prospects with close detail. In short, it captures *my* image of this collection of some of the best new work in eighteenth-century studies.

The first five chapters cover geographical and conceptual territories of the eighteenth century in Britain – what places were explored, how things were observed, the social, political, and religious realities versus their intellectual representations. The next six range over generic territory and our various assumptions about the author, the novel, drama, and poetry. The final chapter returns to conceptual geography: the critical perception of texts in historical contexts.

The collection opens with a large prospect and a mention of Ogilby in yet another of his roles, as Master of the King's Revels organizing the pageant for the celebration of the restoration of Charles II around a "display of geography and regal authority" (p. 13). In *TRAVEL, TRADE AND EMPIRE: KNOWING OTHER PLACES 1600–1800*, Charles Withers and Miles Ogborn explore the various written forms of "earth writing" and the influence of geographical discoveries and writings on the literature of the period in its peculiar fascination with negotiating between fact and fiction. Ogborn and Withers look at the complexity of "world writing," the competing interests of mercantile lobbyists, politicians, and explorers. They note that "the relationship between geographical knowledge and imperial power should not be drawn too tightly" because "the production of geographical knowledge was part of many different processes, and what was produced was far from being a coherent body of facts, theories or genres" (p. 16). What is often lost in some postcolonial stereotypes of eighteenth-century geographical practice is the possibility of *good* faith, of intellectual engagement and humanitarian principles as something other than a disingenuous front for capitalist and imperialist agendas. Captain Bligh, Captain Cook, and Captain Gulliver had quite different and quite individualized journals for their journeys.

From geography to micrography. Joanna Picciotto looks at scientific experimentalism and its relationship to literature and theology, pointing out that the "one-sided emphasis in recent scholarship on the gentlemanly character of experimental science obscures the extent to which the practice, rather than the mere theory, of mechanical philosophy – widely and correctly viewed as the philosophy of 'mechanics' – required as much social as intellectual experimentation, forcing gentlemen virtuosi into behavior that was, to say the least, unusual for members of their class" (p. 43). She traces the trajectory from the New Jerusalem of Bacon's Eden as the site of innocence as *insight* rather than ignorance, and the Royal Society's microscopes and telescopes as "prosthetic replacements for lost parts of the first man's body" (p. 38), to the machines of the end of the eighteenth century as the "prosthetic extensions of the industrialist's power" (p. 54). Hooke, Sprat, Newton,



**Figure 1** John Ogilby, *Britannia, Volume the First: Or, An Illustration of the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales: By A Geographical and Historical Description of the Principal Roads thereof* (London, 1675). Courtesy of the British Library, London.

Milton, Pope, and Swift intersect in their techniques of observation, their fascination with scale, their perceptions and representations of the favorite trope of *concordia discors*.

Harmony in discord? A geography of the social world emerges next, as J. A. Downie confronts the Habermasian “myth of the bourgeois public sphere.” Habermas, he argues, didn’t really know what he was talking about, at least when it came to English political and social life. On the issues of censorship, social inclusiveness, the Bank of England, cabinet government, the definition of an English “bourgeoisie,” and the “literary” public sphere, Habermas historically misplaces events and influences too early, too late, or too iconoclastically. And “he clearly did not undertake any original research of his own on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English history”, relying instead on outdated secondary sources (p. 75). Downie then goes on to analyze why we have been so smitten with this idea, and how we might adjust our assumptions to reflect not an appealing thesis but a more accurate perception of Restoration and eighteenth-century England. A number of the following essays will continue to demonstrate the more recent pattern of critical breakdowns of the post-Habermasian separation between public and private spheres.

Discrepancies between literary and historical perceptions drive Tim Hitchcock’s analysis of the realities of eighteenth-century street life in London. “Literary” beggars – in the works of Gay, Ward, Mackenzie, Addison and Steele, Defoe, Carew, Barker, and others – often inhabit a romantically free and ingenious underworld, with “lives of adventure, travel, and freedom of movement” (p. 89), and they are very rarely female. In the real streets, women dominated the numbers of beggarly poverty, and “although single, physically fit, adult male beggars could be found, they represent the tiniest minority of the whole” (p. 89). This much may not be surprising; literary scholars aren’t much in the habit of thinking that their texts necessarily correspond to some social reality. But Hitchcock pushes against other assumptions. His careful archival analysis shows a surprising ingenuity and power that these beggarly women exerted on the institutional networks, arguing for “a legacy of pauper agency” such that “by the end of the eighteenth century there was an almost uniform carpet of health and social welfare provision that even the exigencies of war and dearth could not overturn” (p. 98). Hitchcock in effect uses literary stereotypes to dislodge our historical ones about the oppressed-therefore-powerless poor.

Sophie Gee continues the exploration of the streets in their literal and literary spaces. “The eighteenth century did its best to appear polite”

(p. 101), she begins, and that is certainly one of its most common self-presentations as well as a common mid-twentieth-century assumption. But Gee contextualizes the ways that and reasons why the poetry and prose of “towering Augustans” traded so happily in “seeping sewage, brimming chamber pots, vomit, filth, and domestic squalor” – presumably more a milieu for the hack writers of Grub Street than the self-styled culture monitors Dryden, Swift, and Pope (p. 102). She argues the centrality of waste metaphor is grounded in its paradoxical relation to production and recuperation – the etymological, historical, and economic connection between “effluence” and “affluence.” The “excremental vision” of the Augustans in some sense derived literally from the filth of sewers and streets (which Gee details), and has an imaginative precedent in the political representations of the civil war and the interregnum. Through historical contextualizations and close readings of a variety of political writings and the works of Dryden, Swift, and Pope, Gee brings to the surface the rich literary and cultural possibilities in the paradox that on the one hand “remainders are symptomatic of decay and degradation, and on the other hand they maintain a perverse affinity with abundance, with the valuable plenitude to which remnants always provide a shadow” (p. 119).

Deidre Shauna Lynch’s essay, *NOVELS IN THE WORLD OF MOVING GOODS*, looks at the novel from a new perspective – not so much its *rise* as its *motion*, contextualizing its “Englishness” in terms of Georg Christoph Lichtenberg’s 1775 claim that England’s system of roads, mail, and coaches practically *delivered* the possibilities of plot and character interaction. “(He complains that, given the state of the German roads, a German father could overtake a runaway daughter and forestall a would-be novelists’s narrative altogether)” (p. 121). Lynch looks at bodies in motion, identities in circulation, the mobility of property, portable books, French and German influences, cultural interconnectedness and intersubjectivity, and – like Downie, Hitchcock, and Staves – institutional systems and public spaces, as forces in the novel’s implications for cultural change. She reads Manley, Behn, Haywood, Defoe, Barker, Richardson, Gildon, Brooke, and others, considering novelistic characters “not so much as *individuals*” in the traditional history led by Ian Watt, but rather, “first and foremost, as transients who are either shuttled themselves from one location to another or whose correspondence is” (p. 123). She concludes that this novelistic penchant for worlds and modes of transport is “testimony to the gusto with which the novel throughout the eighteenth century defined itself as a machine for social interconnection and reflected on the marketability permitting it to fill that role” (p. 140).

The substructure of streets and motion carries through in Mark Blackwell's essay on the physiology of gothic in Radcliffe's fiction in *MOVING IN THE WORLD OF NOVELS*. He analyzes the sublimity of terror as a "healthful tonic" in Edmund Burke's terms, corroborated by a host of medical authorities and accompanied by various mechanisms from swings to chamber horses designed to produce those therapeutic effects. Its literary manifestation, the Gothic novel, became "a narrative vehicle with an unprecedented power to move its readers" (p. 145). Radcliffe perfected the arts of tension and suspense that "hurr[ied] the reader along," as Sir Walter Scott declared. Blackwell looks at reading practices, aesthetic philosophy, contemporary criticism, and pays a close attention to the rhetorical strategies of Radcliffe's novels (in connection with other gothic fiction), to dissect exactly how and why gothic novels are able (then and now) "to move us without making us leave our seats" (p. 159).

Most of the essays in this *Companion* have at least an indirect bearing on issues of gender, in continuing to record where women appeared and where they disappeared, where literary strategies targeted gendered readers or employed gendered topoi. In "THE ABUSE OF TITLE PAGES": MEN WRITING AS WOMEN, Susan Staves confronts a particular instance of gender manipulation in the book world – in its underworld of spurious authorship in general, and at men posing as women authors in particular. The eighteenth century liked to play with identity for a number of reasons. Men might want to pretend to be women on title pages because as gender differences became increasingly emphasized, "women's experience seemed to have a specific authority that could tempt male writers to appropriate it" (p. 164). Or for commercial purposes: appealing to the growing market of female readers, for novelty or celebrity value. Or educative purposes: introducing or reinforcing modes of conduct. Or for plain flat-out attacks (p. 166). Sometimes the pose was collaborative or at least consensual, but other times it became an act of textual theft or textual rape. Staves concludes her essay by calling for a more stringent methodological and analytical approach to the concept of "authentic" texts generally – within and also beyond eighteenth-century studies: "That we still share the enlightenment concern about the relation between authors and title pages is evident in current controversies over the supposed memoirs of Asian women and Native Americans written by white men and the supposed holocaust memoirs not written by survivors" (p. 181).

John O'Brien similarly tests the connections between gender, culture, and form in his chapter on *GENRE, GENDER, THEATER* and counters the

traditional charge that theater declined in the eighteenth century, showing instead its “continuous adaptation to a culture that was changing more quickly than its inhabitants could easily comprehend” (p. 186). He argues that genre and gender seemed to provide “permanent, seemingly natural categories through which these changes could be managed” (p. 186). Generically, the newly reopened theaters to some extent filled themselves with Renaissance repertoire, but those had a musty smell, so the English theater also washed and aired the classical poetics *à la française*. O’Brien shows the redrawing of the lines, and the various stepping-over-them, in tragedy, in comedy, and in theories of spectatorial relations in terms of gender as well as genre. This chapter reveals how politics can be subsumed in and naturalized by gendered spectacle – which paradoxically signalled lines of divergence from neoclassical models: “For although spectators were surely encouraged to admire and learn from virtue and fortitude in the face of suffering expressed by the heroines of these plays, they were not necessarily being held up as models to emulate” (p. 198). Theater was watching and assessing *itself*, its transition from moral instructor to entertainer, its separation from church and state, its changing position in and importance to eighteenth-century life and culture.

J. Paul Hunter works against the Big Historical Generalizations that we tend to make about eighteenth-century poetry: its fetish for the past, its alleged lack of lyric, its predilection for generalities, its preference for the public over the private. This chapter focuses on “occasional poems,” an under-discussed category in the first place, and a tag which summons up the idea of the political or military or courtly event – *public* occasions of “wars, battles, treaties, activities of the royals, deaths of the famous, births in prominent families, anniversaries or memorials of some earlier major event that still stirs loyalty or dread” (p. 207). But Hunter argues that thousands of contemporary poems dwell emphatically in the private, the local, the ordinary – “moments of shared experience that two or more people need to remember together” (p. 207). He examines the reasons for the critical devaluing and neglect of occasional poems, including genre permeability (conceptually contiguous with Staves’s and O’Brien’s chapters here, in that we tend to rely too much on the integrity of title-pages defining themselves), Romanticism-seeded suspicion of events themselves as worthy subjects of poetry, the whiff of *requirement* about it all – the kinds of things that made Matthew Arnold label Dryden and Pope the founders and priests of *prose and reason* rather than poetry and spirit. In pulling out the rich textures and colors of both public and private occasional poems from behind the reputation of a coerced,

charmless, or offhanded genre, Hunter wants to bring back the *pleasures* of eighteenth-century poetry.

Rachel Crawford's essay adjoins Blackwell's on the sublime and Hunter's on poetic practices. *THE GARDEN, THE GEORGIC, AND THE NATION* looks at estate plans, architectural prefaces, horticultural and agricultural treatises, and the transformation of the georgic to "articulate a distinctive notion of the sublime that is simultaneously subjective and practical, aesthetic and political" (p. 226), and which challenges Burke's careful partition between the beautiful and the sublime in the actual usage of gardeners, aestheticians, and poets. Birmingham industries, the British kitchen garden, the ideas of prospect and enclosure, the innovations in the lyric and the ode, all inform the reappearance of the georgic and shape its position in private, public, and nationalistic domains as the physical idea of "containment" is transformed into "a sign of vastness and power" (p. 243).

We swing back to a bird's-eye-view, as well as to the opening epigraphs of this introduction, to close the volume. Mark Salber Phillips, like Hunter, wants to pull us away from overemphasizing the public nature of eighteenth-century writing; in this case, he reminds us that historical writing is not a monolithic recording of the events of a political nation, but "a cluster of overlapping and competing genres that collectively make up a family of historiographical forms" (p. 249). Literary history in particular began to develop an interest in "the thoughts and feelings of another time" and "often of the most everyday sort" (pp. 249, 250). Phillips notes that the trajectory of English literary history began to interest itself in the possibilities for "wholesale revision" of the Elizabethan and Augustan ages. Literary historians became interested in *why* poetic tastes change, speculating on, among other things, the success of programs of improvements in manners; the influence of other cultures, languages, and literatures; the patriotic invention of a national literature against the rebellions of the French and Americans. Phillips concludes by suggesting that "if we want to understand how contemporary readers thought about books and authors as historical objects, it would be fruitful to consider the kinds of historical descriptions literary texts made possible – including the various forms of affective and ideological engagement to which literature, more than histories of public life, promised access" (p. 263).

Phillips quotes Anna Laetitia Barbauld on the association between literature and culture: "Books make a silent and gradual, but a sure change in our ideas and opinions; and as new authors are continually taking possession of the public mind, and old ones falling into disuse, new asso-

ciations insensibly take place, and shed their influence unperceived over our taste, our manners, and our morals" (p. 262). In 1987, Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown published *The New Eighteenth Century*, in which a number of eminent scholars challenged various mid-twentieth century notions of the eighteenth century as a time and place of order, decorum, design, and Enlightenment. (Not that any of the really eminent mid-century scholars appear quite so simplistic or naive on good rereading, and any good new scholar should of course become familiar with *all* the standard critical repertoire – of all centuries.) The late twentieth-century trilogy of race, class, and gender entered the discourse with essays such as Laura Brown's "The Romance of Empire," John Richetti's "Representing an Under Class," and Jill Campbell's "'When Men Women Turn.'" For 15 years this collection has very perceptibly influenced our critical tastes and shaped many of our new critical assumptions. But it's been 15 years, and the critical discourse has taken new trajectories and reabsorbed in new ways some older interests – making more "silent [or not so silent] and gradual, but sure change[s] in our ideas and opinions." The essays in Nussbaum and Brown "consistently question issues of literary pleasure, aesthetic unity, and coherence" (1987: 3) because of their "historical" (literary critical) collaboration with the dominant, the elite, the agenda of "the preservation and elucidation of canonical masterpieces of cultural stability" (p. 5). The editors declared: "The most important work . . . always insists on the relations between ideology, gender, race, and class, and on the functions of the oppressed and excluded in texts and cultural formations" (p. 20).

The essays in this volume are all unmistakably informed by the issues of ideology, gender, race, and class. But they are also in many cases unabashedly interested in revisiting issues of literary pleasure, aesthetic unity, and coherence. The early twentieth-century's interest in formalism and historicism have combined into a renewed and theoretically informed interest in the relationship between form and culture, formalism and history. "In the beginning," says David Bromwich, "literature was just books" (quoted in Phillips, p. 248); the later eighteenth century critical process started separating out the literary sheep from the nonliterary goats. We've been gradually herding things back together, learning from new historicists to apply close readings to all kinds of texts, to thicken our literary approach with archival thoroughness, to recognize how cultural contexts can in fact better contextualize and refine an interpretation, how a culture shapes (but perhaps never overdetermines) a form. These essays represent just a few of the latest and soundest examples of yet another critical Eighteenth Century – another set of *Houses*,

*Castles, Churches, Mills, Beacons, Woods, &c.* seen from new perspectives, in new *Prospect*.

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## Chapter 1

# Travel, Trade, and Empire

## Knowing other Places, 1660–1800

*Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers*

In his 1661 pageant for the restoration of Charles II, the geographer John Ogilby, who was also Master of the King's Revels, organized the ceremony as a living display of geography and regal authority. The display centered upon four triumphal arches and the themes of nationhood, monarchical power, travel, trade and empire. The first arch symbolized a united Britain, the second Charles's command over the oceans. The third arch offered an animated tableaux of four continents:

[Pedestals] were adorn'd with living Figures, representing *Europe, Asia, Africa,* and *America*, with Escutcheons and Pendants, bearing the Arms of the Companies Trading Into those parts. *Europe* a Woman arm'd antique. . . . *Asia*, on her head a Glory, a Stole of Silk, with several forms of Wild Beasts wrought upon it. *Africa*, a woman, in her Hand a Pomegranate, on her head a Crown of Ivory and Ears of Wheat, at her Feet two Ships laden with Corn. *America*, Crown'd with Feathers of divers Colours; on her Stole a Golden River, and in her hand a Silver Mountain.

On the final arch, Charles II was portrayed between "two Celestial Hemispheres an *Atlas* bearing a Terrestrial Glob, and on it a Ship under Sail," and, in the niches of the arch, four women represented "Arithmetick, Geometry, Astronomy and Navigation" (Ogilby 1661: 2–5). Taken as a whole, Ogilby's pageant performed late seventeenth-century British ideas of *imperium* and of the world as Britain's emporium. Its figurative displays used geographical knowledge to make manifest a set of claims about political and commercial power. Ogilby's depiction of

arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and navigation also symbolized that crucial shift in emphasis during the seventeenth century away from emblematic display and Aristotelian scholasticism towards new rational and mathematical techniques of global investigation.

Our aim in this chapter is to use diverse and changing forms of geographical knowledge, such as those produced by Ogilby, to explore how the world of the Restoration and the eighteenth century was the subject of geography in its literal sense as “earth writing.” We want to show that geographical inquiries into the extent and nature of the globe took different written forms, and did so to reflect different intentions and the demands of different audiences keen to know about other places. Our principal concern is with what we have called “world writing,” that is, with geographical knowledge’s role in travel, trade, and the politics and economics of empire between about 1660 and 1800. We consider some of the different modes of writing that were produced to deal with that expanding world: travel accounts and narratives of a voyage; descriptions of newly encountered lands and peoples; maps; geographical grammars, gazetteers and dictionaries; and works of political arithmetic, political economy, and statistical description. This is not to claim that these types of geographical literature, which all increased in prevalence and popularity in the period, were either ever wholly separate one from another, unchanging over time, or that certain types were more or less “important” than others. It is, rather, to trace in them the different ways in which the world was ordered and written about through geography. Our aim is to show how these different modes of “world writing” – and, in particular, the representational conventions of these forms of inscription and depiction – tried to negotiate the shifting boundaries between fact and fiction. In a final section, “writing worlds,” we conclude by briefly considering the way attention to these forms of writing also shaped the powerful novelistic fictions of travel, trade, and empire presented by Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe in *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe*.

## **World Writing**

Europeans’ experience of travel, trade, and empire changed dramatically in the period from 1660 to 1800, as did the nature of geographical knowledge, the ways in which it was presented, and the audiences that it reached. Travel from Britain became more extensive and took many forms, from the young aristocrat’s Grand Tour of Europe, to the indentured servant’s passage to the North American colonies, or the fortune-seeking

of English artists in Bengal. The myriad forms of travel, impossible to classify and describe, were all shaped by the geographical networks, connections, and forms of governance established by commerce, trade, and imperial expansion. These were changing in important ways too. Over the course of the eighteenth century, and especially after 1750, the volume of Britain's overseas trade with the Americas increased dramatically. The triangular trade – in manufactured goods from Britain's workshops, enslaved people from Africa, and tropical agricultural produce from the Americas – dispatched thousands of ships and their crews to bind together merchants, clerks, warehouse keepers, plantation owners, overseers, and enslaved workers across the Atlantic world. The East India Company, with its monopoly on trade to the Indies around the Cape of Good Hope, entered a period of extraordinary profitability in the late seventeenth century based on the exchange of gold and silver for the Indian calicoes and muslins which became the object of demand among London's fashion-conscious consumers. In both sets of trades there was a need for knowledge about the worlds that were being encountered and the new forms of economy and exchange that were being created. Commercial directories; merchants' guides to trades, commodities, and exchange rates; printed maps and gazetteers; and instruction books on accounting and writing letters and bills of exchange, all sought to codify knowledge as a way of ordering this new world. At the same time, the advocates of different trades and industries, those for or against free trade, mercantilism, or other forms of protectionism, went into print to argue their case to the public and to parliament.

The arguments that the mercantile lobbyists made were, in large part, about how what was understood as an "Empire of Trade" should be organized. Britain's imperial reach both grew and changed shape over the course of the century and a half from the Restoration. Between Oliver Cromwell's capture of Jamaica in 1655 and the end of the Seven Years War in 1763 there was a fivefold increase in the extent of Britain's empire. Through a series of increasingly global military conflicts with Holland, Spain, and France, Britain added territories in North America, India, and the Caribbean to its overseas possessions. By the mid-1760s control extended from Labrador to Florida, across a substantial selection of the Caribbean islands, and over large portions of northern India. This geography was, however, far from static. Islands and territories changed hands. The American War of Independence marked the end of one imperial phase and shifted attention to India and to the Pacific where European navigators were assiduously naming and claiming islands and coastal territories for the crowned heads of Europe.

Geographical knowledge was intimately connected with making and keeping this empire. Cartography and hydrography enabled the organization and administration of territories for taxation and warfare, and of shipping routes for naval and merchant vessels. This conjunction of commerce, navigation and of knowing one's bounds through geography is apparent in works that sought to make geographical inquiry practically useful (see Figure 1.1). Imperial utility was also evident in the collection of information about peoples, plants, and minerals that was used for the "improvement" of empire through a global redistribution of human and natural "resources" (Drayton 2000). This was a world order built on new ways of knowing other places.

Yet while the publication and popularity in the eighteenth century of maps, geography books, works of travel, and narratives of a voyage reflected the developing global geographies of European empires, the relationship between geographical knowledge and imperial power should not be drawn too tightly. The production of geographical knowledge was part of many different processes, and what was produced was far from being a coherent body of facts, theories, or genres. This is readily apparent in the works of John Ogilby, the geographer with whom we started this chapter. Ogilby's geographical activities and writings are illustrative of the diverse forms and changing uses of early modern geography. His *Britannia* (1675), a geographical description of England and Wales, was one part of his intended but never-realized "A Geographical Description of the Whole World." *Britannia* was a road book, a chorographical or regional description, and Ogilby was a key member of that circle of *virtuosi* who helped plan and map London after the Great Fire of 1666. Outside of his British-based mapping work, Ogilby traveled little. His other works – *Embassy to China* (1669), *Atlas Japannensis* (1670), *Africa* (1670), *America* (1671), *Atlas Chinensis* (1671), and *Asia* (1673) – were, largely, compiled from others' writings. Yet, in incorporating the latest travel accounts and using lavish illustrations, Ogilby provided for better-off audiences geography books that helped to describe and depict if not always to define their fast-enlarging world (Chambers 1996: 23–5).

The diversity of forms of geographical knowledge may also be illustrated for the late eighteenth century by the ventures which opened up the new worlds of the Pacific to European audiences. Best known are the three voyages of James Cook, which were represented in Europe through exhibitions of artifacts, contributions to debates in natural science and moral philosophy, theatrical performances, and the publication of the journals of the participants to eager and critical audiences. This variety reflected the mixture of motives that underlay the voyages.



**Figure 1.1** The title page to John Seller's *The Coasting Pilot* (1671) illustrates the importance of the “experience and practice of diverse Able and Expert Navigators” in promoting geographical knowledge as a basis for commercial and political empires. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.