

18th-century British Women Poets' Patriotic Voices

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Right from the beginning to the end of the 18th-century, a large number of British women poets stepped out as outright and eloquent patriots. Through celebration, persuasion, and protest with their poems, 18th-century British women poets voiced out their patriotism, especially in their promotion of the British national identity by building up national confidence, constructing national ideals, and bringing the national ideals closer together with the actual practices during national crises in the War of American Independence, anti-slavery activism, and the French Revolution. The majority of their patriotic poems got published in the 18th-century. Their patriotic voices, especially those of their vigorous construction of the British national identity, have been largely neglected and therefore should be fully acknowledged since that identity they helped to promote remains a key issue for the British even today.

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Literature Review

Academic interest in 18th-century British women poetry has been enlivened in recent years. First of all, various anthologies of 18th-century British women poetry have appeared, such as those edited by Roger Lonsdale (1989), Joyce Fullard (1990), and Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine E. Ingrassia (2009). Poetry collections of particular 18th-century women poets are also available. Numerous articles focusing on topics relevant to 18th-century British women poetry can be found in databases like MLA International Bibliography. Besides these, monographs focusing on 18th-century British women poetry have kept emerging, including those by Moira Ferguson (1995), Paula R. Backscheider (2005), and Deborah Kennedy (2013).

Echoing Margaret Anne Doody's appeal in 2000, "The study of women's poetry has yet to be fully integrated with the study of our poetry in general" (Doody, 2000, p. 218), Suvir Kaul's *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire* (2000) and Dustin Griffin's *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2002) include the study of 18th-century British women poetry in their study of 18th-century British poetry in general on two inter-related public topics: nation and patriotism. Valuable efforts as they are, both books only include a very small number of women poets in their discussion. In Kaul's book, he reads some anti-slavery poems by four or so 18th-century British women poets as the "national sentimentality" (Kaul, 2000, p. 252) of the "national chorus" (p. 32). The "national chorus" seems to be composed overwhelmingly by the numerous 18th-century men poets he reads in the book. In Griffin's book, he mentions numerous 18th-century British men poets as patriots and

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focuses seven of the ten chapters (excluding the "Introduction" and "Conclusion") on particular men poets. Only one chapter of his book focuses on six or so women poets' involvement in the 18th-century British discourse of patriotism.

The scarcity of women poets included in both books is misleading for the recognition of 18th-century British women poets' contribution to the two topics. Since neither Kaul nor Griffin claims to exclude poets from their books for aesthetic considerations, the scarcity of women poets included in both books suggests a lack of relevant women poetic output. Yet, this was not the fact. A fuller reading of various anthologies of 18th-century women poetry together with poetry collections of particular 18th-century women poets in the following essay will find many more women names to add to the list of patriots of the century. In addition, this essay will tell that the majority of the patriotic poems of the 18th-century British women poets were published right in the 18th-century.

According to Griffin, "As early as the 1770s it was relatively rare for a woman poet to step forward as a patriot. Still regarded with suspicion in some quarters if she published at all, the female poet was typically limited (or self-limited) to private or domestic topics" (Griffin, 2002, p. 262). Yet, a fuller reading of 18th-century British women poetry in the following essay will demonstrate that quite a lot of women poets had stepped out as patriots before the 1770s, actually right from the beginning of the 18th-century.

Griffin (2002, p. 294) acknowledges that even if more women poets stepped forward as patriots, it would not be accurate to say that patriotism itself became "feminized" (Guest, 2000, pp. 18, 266), associated with the "private" and "domestic" (Guest, pp. 18, 266) affections, as Harriet Guest suggests in her *Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (2000). Yet Griffin himself frequently describes the patriotic voice of Ann Yearsley, "the female patriot" he picks out as a representative of the 18th-century British women poets, as "implicit" (Griffin, 2002, pp. 274-275, 279). A close reading of poems by various 18th-century British women in the following essay will prove that the patriotic voices of the majority of 18th-century British women poets are not at all "feminized" or "implicit," as Guest and Griffin suggest. Their patriotic voices are outright and eloquent.

Most importantly, the following essay will demonstrate that how, through celebration, persuasion, and protest with their poems, 18th-century British women poets eloquently voiced out their patriotism, especially in their promotion of the British national identity by building up national confidence, constructing national ideals, and bringing the national ideals closer together with the actual practices of governmental misconducts and public imprudence during national crises in the War of American Independence, anti-slavery activism, and the French Revolution. Their patriotic contribution to the nation, especially their contribution to the construction and promotion of the British national identity, is undeniable.

The patriotic voices of the 18th-century British women poets, including their patriotic contribution to the British national identity construction, have been largely neglected not only by the literary critics, but also by the admirable historian Linda Colley. In Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (1992), she acknowledges 18th-century women contribution to the "forging" of the British nation with one out of eight chapters of the book, "Womenpower." Although Colley (1992) asserts that "A woman's power is in the nation," she focuses on the power of morality, social and political efforts, largely ignoring the power of women writing (pp. 273-283). The following essay is going to give a full recognition to 18th-century British women poets' patriotic voices, especially those of their patriotic contribution to the British national identity construction, since that identity they helped to promote remains a key issue for the British even today.

Stepping out as Patriots From the Very Beginning to the End of the 18th-century—Patriotic Poems About Wars

Patriotism is the special love for one's own nation or country. There was a vigorous debate about patriotism in the political and literary circles in 18th-century Britain. The debate focused upon the difference between true patriotism and fake patriotism and the various understandings to true patriotism¹. Robust philosophical and ethical discussions about patriotism went on and have continued until today. For example, there are discussions about variations and virtues of patriotism². This essay will not tangle over the connotations of patriotism, but just refer the word "patriotism" to its basic meaning, the special love for one's own nation or country.

Patriotism is most highlighted when a nation is at war with any other nation. Britain frequently warred against France throughout the 18th-century, from the War of Spanish Succession to the Napoleonic Wars during the French Revolution. As a result, sparkles of women poets' patriotism spurred by wars against France shone from the beginning to the end of the 18th-century.

Catharine Trotter Cockburn's "On His Grace the Duke of Marlborough, a Poem"³ (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 426-428) is related to the War of Spanish Succession, with France as the major foe. In the poem, Cockburn writes about the "Glories of *Ramillia's* Field"⁴ as the "Wonders" that "Anna" (Queen Anne) "design'd" for which "A *Sapho* shou'd for A *N N A* tune her Lyre." Celebrating the British victory, Cockburn establishes Queen Anne and the Duke of Marlborough as the patriotic icons. Elizabeth Boyd's "A Sacred Hymn to the Victory"⁵ (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 428-430) not only celebrates the British victory over France and establishes war heroes as patriotic icons, but also sends the deceased patriotic heroes into immortality. Mary Jones' "In Memory of the Rt. Hon. Lord Aubrey Beauclerk"⁶ (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 475-480) appeals to immortality for deceased patriotic heroes as well and calls upon the deceased hero Beauclerk to set a "fair example of heroic truth" for "the *British* youth."

Mary Barber's "On seeing an Officer's Widow distracted, who had been driven to Despair by a long and fruitless Solicitation for the Arrears of her Pension"⁷ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 126-127) is a patriotic protest against the government's neglect of an officer's widow. The poem first depicts the misery of the officer's widow and then predicts its dispiriting effect upon military morale. The patriotic exhortation at the end of the poem, "Britain, for this impending ruin dread ... Be timely wise; arrest th' uplifted hand, / Ere pestilence or famine sweep the land" (lines: 27-32), is resonant with warning power. Esther Lewis Clark's "On hearing of the defeat of our Troops at the Battle of Val, 1747"⁸ (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 431-435) is a protest about the causes of a defeat during the War of Austrian Succession. Clark's patriotism soars at the end of the poem when she calls

¹ Details of the debate can be found in *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* by Christine Gerrard (1994) and *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Griffin, 7-33).

² Details of the discussions can be found in *Intricacies of Patriotism: Towards a Complexity of Patriotic Allegiance* edited by Maciej Hulas and Stanislaw Fel. in 2015.

³ The poem was published in 1706.

⁴ As Roger Lonsdale explains in the "INTRODUCTION" of his *Eighteenth Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology* (1989), spelling, punctuation, and other accidental features of poetry texts were as often the responsibility of printers as of the poets themselves in the 18th-century (Lonsdale xlvii). The same are those of poem quotations from other various sources.

⁵ The poem was published in 1743.

⁶ The poem was written in 1743 and first published in 1750.

⁷ The poem was published in 1734.

⁸ The poem was written in 1747 and first published in 1789.

on her fellow Britons "From court to cot" to amend the past sin and secure future "conquest."

Elizabeth Tollet's "On the Prospect from Westminster Bridge"⁹ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 101-102), declares her confidence in the "happy Commerce" and her patriotic pride in the British national toughness against alien conquests: "Britain, 'tis true, was hard to overcome, /Or by the arms, or by the arts, of Rome" (lines: 11-12). The fact that the above-mentioned outspoken patriotic poems of Cockburn, Boyd, Jones, Barber, Clark, and Tollet were either written or published in or before 1750 offers to rescue Griffin from the pity in his claim that "as late as the 1770s it was relatively rare for a woman poet to step forward as a patriot."

Joanna Baillie's "The Horse and his Rider"¹⁰ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 444-445) was another patriotic poem about war in the 1790s. In the poem, Baillie depicts the features of the war horse in minute details, including his "chest," "mane," "hoofs," "arched neck," "bits," "nostril," "kindling eyeballs," thundering "mouth," "curving haunches," "sweepy tail," and "plated harness," to show the horse's "vigor," "strength," and "pride." Directly addressing to the horse, Baillie treats the horse as a human. The poet minutely describes the physical features and action of the horse rider as well to highlight his determination and valor. Baillie's patriotism soars when at the end of the poem she deifies the "British soldier" and elevates his patriotic determination to commit ultimate sacrifice to his nation into a kind of heroism:

But lo! What creature, godly to the sight,
Dares thus bestride thee, chafing in thy might,
Of portly stature and determined mien,
Whose dark eye dwells beneath a brow serene,
And forward looks unmoved to fields of death,
And, smiling, gently strokes thee in thy wrath,
Whose brandished falchion dreaded gleams afar?
It is a British soldier, armed for war! (lines: 15-22)

The Mattering Number

In the second half of the 18th-century, many more patriotic poems by British women were either written or published. According to their themes, these patriotic poems fall into four categories: (A) building up national confidence and ideals; (B) bringing the national ideals closer together with the actual practices in the War of American Independence; (C) bringing the national ideals closer together with the actual practices in the anti-slavery activism; (D) bringing the national ideals closer together with the actual practices in the French Revolution.

These poems at least include: (A) Mary Collier's "On the Marriage of George III"¹¹ (Ferguson, 1995, pp. 19-25) and "An Elegy to Norbert Plowlett"¹² (Ferguson, 1995, pp. 19-25), Anne Penny's "Odes Sung in Commemoration of the Marine Society"¹³ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 295-296), Ann Thomas' "To Laura, On the French Fleet parading before Plymouth"¹⁴ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 361-363), Ann Yearsley's "Brutus: A

⁹ The poem was written in 1750 and published in 1755.

¹⁰ The poem was published in 1790.

¹¹ The poem was written in 1761.

¹² The poem was published in 1762.

¹³ The poem was written in 1773.

¹⁴ The poem was published in 1784.

Fragment"¹⁵ (Griffin, 2002, pp. 281-288); (B) Anna Seward's "Verses Inviting Stella to Tea"¹⁶ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 314-315), Jane Cave Winscom's "On the First General-Fast after the Commencement of the late War"¹⁷ (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 438-440), Mary Whateley Darwall's "Ode on the Peace"¹⁸ (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 440-442); (C) Mary Scott's "Messiah: a Poem"¹⁹ (Ferguson, 1995, pp. 41-42), Ann Yearsley's "Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade"²⁰ (Griffin, 2002, p. 273), Helen Maria Williams' "Poem...on the Slave Bill"²¹ (Griffin, 2002, p. 273), Hannah More's "Slavery, a Poem"²² (Griffin, 2002, p. 273), Elizabeth Bentley's "On the Abolition of the African Slave Trade"²³ (Kaul, 2000, pp. 258-259), Anna Letitia Barbauld's "Epistle to William Wilberforce"²⁴ (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 485-489); (D) Anna Seward's "Sonnet: To France on her present Exertions"²⁵ (Fullard, 1990, p. 372), Helen Maria Williams' "To Dr. Moore, in Answer to a Poetical Epistle Written by Him in Wales"²⁶ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 416-418), Mary Alcock's "Instructions, Supposed to be Written in Paris, for the Mob in England"²⁷ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 462-463), Charlotte Smith's "The Emigrants"²⁸ (Backscheider, 2005, p. 352) and "Fragment Descriptive of the Miseries of War"²⁹ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 371-372), Annabella Plumptre's "Ode to Moderation"³⁰ (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 493-495), and Eliza Tuite's "Written at the Close of the Year 1794"³¹ (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 445-447) and "Song. In the Year 1794"³² (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 448-449).

As shown above, from the beginning of the 18th-century to the end, British women poets voiced out their patriotism explicitly with at least 29 poems, with the majority of them getting published right in the 18th-century. This is a number much larger than the literary critics like Ferguson, Kaul, and Griffin have recognized. The large number matters. It matters because it demonstrates a fact that although public and political topics were somehow deemed as taboos for women writing in the 18th-century, a large number of British women poets of the century were bold enough to not only write about public and political topics, but even the lofty patriotic topic. They might be "limited" by external circumstances such as the increasing enmity from male critics to their political poetry writing and publication (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. xxi-xxvii), they were absolutely not "self-limited" internally to private or domestic topics.

¹⁵ The poem was published in 1796.

¹⁶ The poem was written in 1781.

¹⁷ The poem was published in 1783.

¹⁸ The poem was written in 1783.

¹⁹ The poem was published in 1788.

²⁰ The poem was published in 1788.

²¹ The poem was published in 1788.

²² The poem was published in 1788.

²³ The poem was published in 1789.

²⁴ The poem was published in 1791.

²⁵ The poem was published in 1789.

²⁶ The poem was published in 1792.

²⁷ The poem was written in 1792.

²⁸ The poem was published in 1793.

²⁹ The poem was written in 1793.

³⁰ The poem was written in 1795.

³¹ The poem was published in 1796.

³² The poem was published in 1796.

Outright and Eloquent Patriotic Construction and Promotion of the British National Identity

The attempt to accommodate a sense of belonging by relating to the source of identity by which individuals or nations define themselves is pervasive in patriotism. Regardless of their geographical locations and historical contexts, individuals or nations tend to discover their identity instinctively. To be precise, patriotism relates to the source of the identity by which individuals and groups define themselves. As Maciej Hulas puts it, "these origins are a springboard for those who wish to reacquaint themselves with their roots" (Hulas, 2015, p. 7). In 18th-century, with the union of England and Scotland in 1707 and the great expansion of territorial and commercial empire, a British national identity developed. Men poets of the 18th-century participated in the construction and development of the British national identity, as Suvir Kaul shows in his book. Kaul's British "national chorus" seems to be composed overwhelmingly by men poets. Yet, in fact, 18th-century British women poets made their outright and eloquent contribution to the patriotic construction of the British national identity as well.

Through celebration, persuasion, and protest with the above-mentioned c.30 poems, 18th-century British women poets voiced out their patriotism, especially in their construction and promotion of the British national identity by building up national confidence, constructing national ideals (the core of the British national identity), and bringing the national ideals closer together with the actual practices during national crises in the War of American Independence, anti-slavery activism, and the French Revolution. Their patriotic voices are outright and eloquent, not at all "feminized" or "implicit."

Building up National Confidence

The patriotic protest in the poems of Mary Barber and Esther Lewis Clark mirrors the British concerns in the first half of the 18th-century about military morale, social sin, and governmental imprudence in the vicissitudes of wars against foreign adversaries. Besides these concerns, the Britons in the first half of the 18th-century also had to be worried about the problem of insufficient population to man the military forces. To man the military forces, especially the navy, with sufficient numbers of healthy and good-spirited population not at the cost of impressment of merchants who would contribute better to the economy, London's charitable donors initiated various agencies to increase population. One of these agencies, the Marine Society, with the double intended functions both to man the navy more efficiently and to rescue poor boys from a life of crime and idleness, was founded in 1756 by the philanthropist Jonas Hanway. The Marine Society aided the poor boys with free clothes, medical care, Bibles, and even fife-playing training (Andrew, 1989, pp. 54-57, 109-115). The Society worked well to fulfill its intended functions, as is manifested by the publication of a patriotic poem by a British woman twenty-four years after the Society's establishment.

Anne Penny, a navy widow said to be much esteemed by Dr. Samuel Johnson, in 1773 wrote the "Odes Sung in Commemoration of the Marine Society" (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 295-296), which was published in 1780. Both of the two odes include four quatrains in couplets and were meant to be sung by a choir of boys at the Society's anniversary dinner. The first three quatrains of the first ode tell about how "SOCIAL Virtue's liberal plan" raises the poor boys from "Vice's horrid train" and "Chilling penury and pain." This confirms the success of the first intended function of the Marine Society. The first quatrain of the second ode tells that the poor boys have been

made as "happy youths" and "Bulwarks of our wealth and trade," and will use their "Vigorous strength, to quell each foe." This confirms the success of the second intended function of the Society. Confirming the fulfillment of the double intended functions of the Society, the poem works first and foremost as a direct celebration of the initiating and working of the Marine Society.

Success of the Marine Society helped to solve the crucial problem of manning the British navy, bringing hope and confidence to "Commerce" and the empire. Penny's outright patriotic summoning in the second quatrain of the second ode comes up naturally. The poet literally summons the "noble plans" (plans like the Marine Society) to sustain "GEORGE's empire on the main" and "rich Commerce" to adorn England's "swelling tide." Both Anne Penny and Elizabeth Tollet connect "Commerce" with the water image. For example, in Tollet's "On the Prospect from Westminster Bridge," "happy Commerce glads the wealthy streams;" in Penny's poem, she summons "rich Commerce, England's pride" to adorn England's "swelling tide." By connecting "Commerce" with the "wealthy streams" and the "swelling tide," both poets are recognizing that commercial prosperity of 18th-century Britain came from water, either the water of the Thames or the main.

In calling "rich Commerce" as "England's pride," Penny's "Odes" reminds her readers of one of the sources of national confidence of 18th-century Britain. Economic prosperity, resulting from success of empire expansion of territory and commerce abroad, backed up by a strong navy, nurtured a sense of national confidence among the 18th-century Britons. One thing interesting is that when Penny and Tollet are celebrating "Commerce," they both capitalize the word, which shows their cult for commerce. As Linda Colley recognizes, the cult of commerce became an increasingly important part of being British in the 18th-century (Colley, 1992, p. 56). "Whenever our trade perishes," a government pamphleteer warned in 1731, "so must our public dignity and strength" (p. 60). Consequently, not only in Penny's "Odes," but also in other poems, such as Ann Thomas' "To Laura, On the French Fleet parading before Plymouth," commerce and the fleets are frequently celebrated as the sources of national confidence. Obviously, it is the "rich Commerce" that supports the outspoken patriotic confidence of Anne Penny.

The benevolence of the philanthropists of the Marine Society accounts for the passionate celebration of the personified "SOCIAL Virtue" and "Social Love" in the odes. The last quatrain of the first ode hails "Social Love" to shine through Albion and bend Albion's foes under her yoke. In the last two quatrains of the second ode, the poet hails her "Band of patriot-brothers" to tie "The knot of social amity" and bids her "patriot King" to approve "The golden band of Social Love." The celebration of the Marine Society turns into an eloquent celebration of "Commerce," "SOCIAL Virtue," and "Social Love." "Odes" in commemoration of a military and social effort eventually evolves as a passionate patriotic celebration of national confidence and ideals.

Constructing the British National Ideals (the Core of the British National Identity)

In the 18th-century, successes in wars against foreign adversaries and the empire expansion of commerce and territory worked as important dynamics to establish Britain as a powerful global force and so nurtured a sense of national confidence among the 18th-century Britons. During Britain's growth into a global force with the national confidence, 18th-century England witnessed the development of a "British" national identity with the

1707 union of England and Scotland³³, the loyal attachment to the Hanoverians³⁴, great expansion (despite contraction after the American Independence) of territorial and commercial empire, and national economic prosperity. Gradually the 18th-century Britons began to claim "Britain" or "Great Britain" as the names for their nation. 18th-century British women poets made their contribution to the patriotic construction of the British national identity, not only through their anti-slavery poems, as Kaul notes in his book and the following text will show, but also through their poems that try to build up the British national ideals.

Maira Ferguson in her book *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: Nation, Class, and Gender* (1995), reveals Mary Collier and Mary Scott's identifying of some of the British ideals. According to Ferguson, Collier addresses national identity construction in her poems "On the Marriage of George III" and "An Elegy to Norbert Plowlett." Like Anne Penny who calls on "her patriotic King" George III to approve "Social Love," Mary Collier in the first poem urges the Hanoverian protestant George III, the "patriotic king," to serve Britain after praising the king for rescuing Britain from Roman Catholicism and affirming national pride. In the second poem, Collier projects Plowlett as a soldier and patriot who preserves Britain's reputation for "justice," "liberty," and "freedom" (Ferguson, 1995, pp. 19-25). Different from Mary Collier but similar to Anne Penny, Mary Scott promotes a national ideal of "social love" in her "Messiah: a Poem" (Ferguson, 1995, pp. 41-42).

To Collier and Scott's identifying the British ideals as "justice," "liberty," "freedom," and "Social love," Ann Yearsley later adds "social order" and "union." According to Dustin Griffin, Yearsley traces the national ideals of "Liberty" and "Order" from Britain's origin with her "Brutus: A Fragment." Brutus landed Albion safely with his Trojan warriors after driven by a storm, and encountered Dianna, Liberty "goddess of this isle." Liberty declared herself enemy of "The hydra Anarchy" and claimed that "union is my Briton's strongest boast" (Griffin, 2002, pp. 281-288). When Yearsley manipulated Liberty's claims in the poem, very possibly she had the anarchy of the French Revolution happening at that time in mind. The ending of "Brutus" is resonant with confidence in future control of the seas with Britain's glorious establishment of "ORDER." Liberty stood on the cliffs triumphantly when her "sons arose, and call'd for arms," and "seiz'd the trident of the world" as "GODLIKE ORDER FIX'D HER STANDARD HERE."³⁵

Prompted by the national confidence, the 18th-century British women poets participated in the patriotic construction of the British national identity with the core ideals of "justice," "liberty," "freedom," "Social love," "social order," and "union." In the 18th-century when this British identity was still in its formation, it was oftentimes challenged, especially by the actual practices of governmental misconducts and public imprudence during national crises in the War of American Independence, anti-slavery activism, and the French Revolution. The 18th-century British women poets vigorously protected and promoted these national ideals even in the national crises, sometimes by protest, sometimes by persuasion.

³³ As Kaul indicates, "after the 1707 Act of Union, Scottish 'improvers' began the work of producing an English(ed) language and culture that would allow Scottish people to 'play a full part' in the new Britain (Kaul 8).

³⁴ For the majority of the Britons, the Hanoverian kings represented Protestantism which was encoded as the antithesis of indolence and immorality of Roman Catholicism with France as its most provoking advocate (Ferguson 2-3).

³⁵ Quoted in Griffin's *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (285).

Bringing the National Ideals and Actual Practices Closer During National Crises

Patriotism encourages people to serve their compatriots, constructs national solidarity in pursuit of national interests, and preserves national culture and its ideals, especially in national crises. In the 18th-century, successes in wars against foreign adversaries and the empire expansion of commerce and territory worked as important dynamics to establish Britain as a powerful global force. Nevertheless, the growth into a global force was a process mingled with various problems, sometimes even national crises, such as the War of American Independence, anti-slavery activism, and the French Revolution. Patriotism coupled with an awareness of the gap between national ideals and actual public and political practices during the national crises led the 18th-century British women poets to work to bring the ideals and practices closer together by outright protest or eloquent persuasion. By means of protest or persuasion with their patriotic poems, the 18th-century British women poets protected and kept promoting the British national ideals (the core of the national identity) even in the national crises.

(1) The War of American Independence

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries it was common for the British Parliament to declare a general fast, a day of specific prayers and fasting to recognize anything from the earthquake in Lisbon to the "trouble in America" (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, p. 438). Jane Cave Winscom's "On the First General-Fast after the Commencement of the late War" commemorates the first general fast after the beginning of the War of American Independence. Different from the religious Winscom's direct patriotic urge to engage all the British hearts in the fast, Anna Seward's "Verses Inviting Stella to Tea on the Public Fast-Day [During the American War], February, MDCCCLXXXI" (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. 314-315) voices out her sardonic and outspoken patriotic protest against governmental imprudence in the war. Seward's protest mirrors the disputes and controversies about the war among the 18th-century Britons, especially the objections to war against the American colonies, the people of which they thought as their siblings in blood or in religion.

The title of the poem is ironic, suggesting a breach or divergence from the solemnness on a public fast-day. The poem includes five stanzas of varied numbers of couplets. There are two voices in the poem. The first one is of a "poetic daughter," who in the first stanza of the poem is inviting her friend, Stella, to tea, on the evening of the public fast-day. The other one is of a "Patriot," who in the rest four stanzas is trying to dissuade the daughter from tea on the fast-day.

The voice of the "poetic daughter" is sardonic in tone. For the "poetic daughter," the fast is the "pious sorrow" with "The ah's! and oh's!" that "Our Monarch bids us feel." The ironic exclamations of "The ah's! and oh's!" actually work to play down the piety of the sorrow in the fast. The impiety of the "poetic daughter" to the fast is justified, for "The abstinence from beef and whist" is just "Wisely ordained to please the Lord, / And force him whet our edgeless sword, / Till, skipping o'er th' Atlantic rill, / We cut provincial throats at will" (lines: 5-8). The word "Wisely" in line 5 is another instance of Seward's irony in the poem, which actually means—unwisely. Not only the monarch is mentioned ironically, the British army is also satirized as animals that cut throats at will. They are "boasted legions" with "edgeless sword," laid low by the "saucy foe." The sardonic and stunning irony Seward appeals to in this poem is very much in the Augustan tradition of social-political satire, popularized by Alexandre Pope in the first half of the 18th-century.

The voice of the "Patriot" is poignant in tone. It is an anxious outcry to stop the impious "*Tea*." Both of the second and the third stanzas of the poem contain three couplets. In the second stanza, the "Patriot" eagerly cries out to stop the "poetic daughter" from tea, reminding her of how the "fragrant flowers" of the "Indian shrub" had become a drug and "cruel source/ Of sad distrust, and long divorce, /Twixt nations which, combined, had hurled/ Their conquering javelin round the world" (lines: 25-28). Here the "Patriot" is actually mourning the state of division between Britain and the American colonies. The third stanza goes on to tell why the unity had fallen. It is "Tyranny, with impious hand" that had turned the tea into "venom." With the word "Tyranny," which implies the British government's imprudent treatment of the American colonies, the "Patriot" joins the "poetic daughter" in her protest against the governmental imprudence during the War of American Independence.

In the first three stanzas, the "*Tea*" alludes to the lighted fuse of the War of American Independence, the Boston Tea Party; the fourth stanza directly addresses the Boston Tea Party. The patriot's sympathy apparently is with the Tea Party when he recounts how Boston "Saw poison in the perfumed draught, /And caused her troubled Bay to be/ But one vast bowl of bitter tea" (lines: 38-40) "with indignant thought." The aftermath of the Boston Tea Party is depicted with a dire mythical atmosphere, which metaphorically shows the "Patriot" indignation at the slaughter between brothers, children and parents.

In the last stanza, once again the "Patriot" passionately appeals to the "poetic daughter" to refrain from tea on the public fast-day. The last line of the last stanza alludes to the then-recent murder of Sir Theodosius Boughton with "laurel-water" by his brother-in-law, who was seeking a fortune that would pass to his wife's hand after Boughton's death (Lonsdale, 1989, p. 315). The allusion is once again a condemnation against the ones who trigger war between brothers. The imprudence and impotence of George III and the Parliament in the War of American Independence is again criticized here. The patriot's appeal surely will be accepted by the "poetic daughter," who actually shares a common view with him. The two voices, the patriot and the poetic daughter, are actually one, which is of Seward herself. Anna Seward's style is reported to be never natural, or even somewhat affected, but as Roger Lonsdale rightly acknowledges, Seward is "rarely insipid" and "her poetic voice can have intensity and individuality" (Lonsdale, 1989, p. 313).

In the poem, Seward resorts to sardonic irony and satire to implement an eloquent patriotic protest against the governmental imprudence of "Tyranny," which led to "distrust," "divorce" (division) and the War of American Independence. Harriet Guest claims in her *Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (2000) a "feminized patriotism" associated with "private" and "domestic" sentiments for the 18th-century British women poet with Anna Seward's another two patriotic poems "Elegy on Captain Cook" and "Monody on Major André" (Guest, 200, pp. 252-266) as proofs. With the supreme power of sarcastic protest in her "Verses Inviting Stella to Tea on the Public Fast-Day" and the explicit patriotic persuasion in her "Sonnet: To France on her present Exertions," Anna Seward defends herself and the other 18th-century British women poets from this arbitrary blurring labeling. Seward's "Sonnet: To France on her present Exertions" will be read later in this essay.

(2) Anti-slavery activism

Britain's humiliating defeat in the War of American Independence disturbed the British sensibility dramatically. As Linda Colley notes, after the Britons lost the war, they had to work out their ideas of patriotism like never before. Therefore, Mary Whateley Darwall's "Ode on the Peace" contemplates on the various elements

leading to Britain's defeat before its patriotic celebration of the battlefield successes of "Rodney" and "Elliot" beyond America in 1782. After the War, the national morale of Britain was somehow adjusted. As a result, Britain in the 1780s witnessed the resurgence of anti-slavery activism, which Linda Colley notes as a means to redeem the national immorality in slavery sensed after the defeat in the War of American Independence. Besides this, Colley also points out that for some people, humanitarianism, religion, and hatred of oppression are far more important (Colley, 1992, p. 354). Indeed the belief in the international brotherhood of human beings was important for the 18th-century British women poets. As mentioned before, Mary Scott promotes a national identity with the British ideal of "social love" in her "Messiah: a Poem." Scott explicitly counsels the Messiah to "let thy heart" "expand with social love" and insists that love of humanity should not be confined only to the Britons, but also to mankind (Ferguson, 1995, pp. 41-42). Here Scott arrives at a kind of universal humanity or, as Immanuel Kant puts it, a universal morality (Kleingeld, 2015, p. 106).

With the considerations both of a universal morality and of the patriotic redemption of national immorality, the 18th-century British women speak up for the abolition of slavery with their poems, by means of patriotic persuasion, like Mary Scott, Ann Yearsley, Helen Maria Williams, Hannah More (Griffin, 2002, p. 273) and Elizabeth Bentley do, or patriotic protest, like Anna Letitia Barbauld does. Anna Letitia Barbauld's "Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq., on the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade" (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 485-489) was written as a responsive protest to a parliamentary defeat in the abolition cause. In April 1790 William Wilberforce introduced an abolition bill in Parliament and the bill was defeated by a vote of 163 to 88 (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, p. 485).

Rendered in neat heroic couplets with only one or two exceptions, the epistle opens and closes with addresses to Wilberforce. The address to Wilberforce closing the epistle praises the senator's anti-slavery activities and offers moral, religious, and historical justification and reward for his abolition efforts. Peculiar and unconventional is the address to Wilberforce that opens the epistle. Barbauld opens her address by asking Wilberforce to "Cease" "to urge thy generous aim!" This shocking unconventionality in calling a stop to the generous anti-slavery activities is justified by the futility of the continuous efforts of "The Preacher, Poet, Senator," "The Muse" and "Freedom's eager sons," elaborated in the first stanza. In the middle of the second stanza, the poet indignantly and directly exposes all the "seasoned tools of Avarice," "Each flimsy sophistry" and "The artful gloss" that the pro-slavery beneficiaries use to justify their greed and make the anti-slavery efforts futile.

The poet criticizes the "Country" like an indignant daughter criticizing an unfair mother: "Thy Country knows the sin, and stands the shame!" (line 2); "She knows and she persists" (line 15). In the central body of the poem, Barbauld's patriotism penetrates in her scorching warning of the country with minute depictions of different scenes of a barren Britain and its colonies, infected by Britain's depravity and immorality. In cities of Britain, "Beauty" is "pale," "faint," "delicate," "infirm," "languid;" she unites at once "the Scythian" (known for their barbarity) and "the Sybarite" (known for their luxury); she joins indolence with fierceness, "Contriving torture, and inflicting wounds." In British rural countryside, the "lone Poet" finds no "rural Pleasure," therefore "the Muses fly" from the "sensual riot." Britain's colonies are no exception from the contagion of the luxurious vice. Barbauld's patriotic eloquence culminates in her mourning of the fall of the British ideals of independence and freedom, due to the pervasive contagion of depravity and immorality, and her warning Britain of the revenge of the enslaved:

Corruption follows with gigantic stride,
 And scarce vouchsafes his shameless front to hide:
 The spreading leprosy taints ev'ry part,
 Infects each limb, and sickens at the heart.
 Simplicity! most dear of rural maids,
 Weeping resigns her violated shades:
 Stern Independence from his glebe retires,
 And anxious Freedom eyes her drooping fires;
 By foreign wealth are British morals chang'd,
 And Afric's sons, and India's, smile aveng'd. (lines: 96-105)

In the years after Barbauld published her "Epistle to William Wilberforce," the fervour of British anti-slavery activism was met with a setback. The setback was caused by the French Revolution, especially after Britain went to war with France in 1793. Nevertheless, in 1807, British Parliament abolished the slave trade in the British Isles. In 1833, Britain provided for the emancipation of three quarters of a million slaves in its West Indian colonies. Five years later, Britain completed the slaves' liberation (Colley, 1992, p. 351). Impressively, before the House of Commons agreed in 1833 to abolish slavery as an institution in the British West Indies, they received a ladies' petition against slave trade which stretched for half a mile and bore 187,000 signatures. Five years later, close to half a million women signed another single-sex petition of Parliament, insisting that full liberation should be given to the slaves (Colley, 1992, p. 355).

(3) The French Revolution

The Britons of the mid-18th-century lived in a liberal and free political environment. As Emma Vincent Macleod reports, by mid-18th-century, ordinary British people enjoyed civil liberties which included right to petition the crown and parliament, and freedom of expression (Macleod, 2002, p. 112). As a result, British women poets of the century in their patriotic poems frequently refer to social love, social order, justice, liberty, and freedom as high British ideals. Yet the French Revolution started in 1789 not only put the developing British identity as a country of "justice, liberty, freedom, social order, unity, and social love" under test, but also brought the Britons a sinister foreboding of physical invasion from outside. It provoked a crisis in Britain by providing an example of constitutional, political, social and religious upheaval which in Britain inspired some and appalled others (Macleod, 2002, p. 117).

During the French Revolution, the Britons were generally divided into three groups according to their responses to it. The first was Edmund Burke's royal condemnation against its subversive assault on the established institutions. The second was liberal politicians' admiration of the early stage of the Revolution and disapproval of its later violence and extremism. The third was Thomas Paine's radical argument for the application of revolutionary principles to British politics and society. Generally speaking, the Britons welcomed the rise of the French constitutional monarchy from 1789 to 1792. With the September massacres of 1792 and the execution of the king in January 1793, however, British public opinion turned sharply against the Revolution. The British government ushered in a series of counter-revolutionary repressive measures that amounted essentially to a "state of emergency" (Craciun & Lokke, 2001, pp. 10-11). When the French offered to export their revolution by force of arms and later the War between Britain and France did break out, British patriotism underwent an intricate evolution. Likewise, women poets' responses to the Revolution exhibit a complexity of patriotism.

According to Colley, during the French Revolution, especially when the British-Franco war broke out and the physical threat of French invasion seemed very probable, the British women were highly patriotic. They were enthusiastically engaged in public wartime subscriptions, doing local charity work, making flags and banners, collecting flannel garments, and urging British men to fight (Colley, 1992, pp. 256-261). The more insightful 18th-century women poets' attitudes to the French Revolution were more intricate and complex. Mary Alcock, Anna Seward, Charlotte Smith, Annabella Plumptre and Helen Maria Williams, with their patriotic poems echo the three different British responses to the French Revolution.

Anna Seward, who creates the sarcastic voices in her "Verses Inviting Stella to Tea," celebrates the French Revolution in her "Sonnet: To France on her present Exertions" (Fullard, 1990, p. 372), published in 1789, the year of the break-out of the Revolution. The sonnet abounds with optimism and force, the typical British response to the first stage of the Revolution and one of the characteristics of Seward's writing style. The rhyming scheme of the sonnet seems to follow in a Petrarchan style, but the rhymes of the second quatrain diverge from the strict Petrarchan sonnet. This variation of rhyming in one way shows Seward's individuality in writing.

The octet first metaphorically recounts the French triumph of "Freedom" over the feudalism which is the "cankering spots" on France's "long drooping lilies." The impact of the Revolution is enormous and far-reaching, for it "sprung effulgent, tho' with crimson stains, / On transatlantic shores, and widening plains" (lines: 2-3). Under the sweeping transatlantic influence of the Revolution, the "English veins" are exultant to see France's spurning of its "deeply-galling chains." Addressing to France, the sonnet is interwoven with outspoken patriotic consideration about Britain. In the sestet, first the poet recounts the blessing and fraternal wishes to the revolutionary France from "Britannia's free born sons." Then she calls on France to share the "blessings" of the Revolution with the British "civic wreaths," ending the sonnet in a positively, even aggressively masculine tone with the "bright sword" unsheathed:

France, we bid thee share
The blessings twining with our civic wreaths,
While Victory's trophies, permanent as fair,
Crown the bright sword that Liberty unsheaths. (lines: 11-14)

Although their opinions about the French Revolution might be different and their patriotism might be complex, the 18th-century British women poets were all searching for an appropriate means either to further the highly cherished British ideals or to protect sovereignty and prosperity of Britain from alien invasion. Oftentimes they were doing both. After the British-Franco war broke out in 1793, the most reasonable choice for the Britons of the time was to repulse the alien foe and maintain national sovereignty with progressive domestic political reforms. Eliza Tuite's poem "Song. In the Year 1794" (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, pp. 448-449), published in 1796, works as a reflection of this British patriotic choice. The title of the poem shows that it was written in 1794, one year after the British-Franco war broke out.

The "Song" includes six quatrains in couplets, with the same sonorous patriotic refrain "Britons, Strike home" attached to each quatrain. "Britons, Strike home" is excerpted from the words "Britains, Strike home: Revenge your Country's Wrongs," which comes from a military inspirational song played on board British ships as they sailed into battle and before the Horse Guards charged into battle throughout the 18th-century (Backscheider & Ingrassia, 2009, p. 448). Lamenting the British defeat in the continental battlefield against

France despite its war feats on the ocean, Tuite condemns the British "traitor" or "alien children" "Who under Freedom's sacred name, /Would play a tyrant's part ... do but flatter to ensnare, /And sell her³⁶ to her foe" (lines 13-17). Here Tuite might be alluding to the British radicals who wanted to follow the French example at home. With the condemnation of the "traitor" who tries to sell Briton to her foe, the "Song" works as a patriotic protest. Yet it is also a patriotic persuasion. Reflecting the officially constructed patriotism which stressed attachment to the monarchy, and the desirability of strong and stable government after the American Independence, Tuite boldly exhorts Britain's "gen'rous sons" to defend British sovereignty by maintaining the "monarch's rights" and shielding "Brunswick's head" (the king's):

Awake, arise, defend your laws,
Your monarch's rights maintain;
So may your blood, in England's cause,
No more be shed in vain.
Britons, Strike Home.

So may fair Peace, round Albion's throne,
Her choicest blessings shed;
While Heav'n approving guards its own,
And shields your Brunswick's head.
Britons, Strike Home. (lines: 21-30)

In the 18th-century when Britain was growing as a powerful global force with its expansion of territorial and commercial empire, British women poets eloquently voiced out their patriotism and made their contribution to the construction and promotion of the British national identity. With their patriotic poems, they built up and celebrated national confidence in commerce, the fleets, and the empire; they constructed the national ideals of "justice," "liberty," "freedom," "Social love," "social order," and "union" as the core of the British national identity; they kept promoting the British national identity even during national crises in the War of American Independence, anti-slavery activism, and the French revolution by bringing the national ideals closer together with the actual practices of governmental misconducts and public imprudence by means of protest or persuasion. Their patriotic contribution to the nation, especially their patriotic contribution to the construction and promotion of the British national identity, is undeniable.

Conclusion

In the 1814 Taunton March of Somerset for celebration of peace from War against France, six women societies joined not as spectators but as participants, which enabled the British women to proclaim that they were also patriots who made an active contribution to the nation's welfare and progress (Colley, 1992, pp. 237-238). This early 19th-century public acknowledgement of women's patriotic contributions was a result of the patriotic efforts of the 18th-century British women. Unfortunately, the patriotic efforts and contribution of the 18th-century British women poets didn't get their due recognition.

From the beginning of the 18th-century to the end, a large number of British women poets voiced out their outright and eloquent patriotism, not only in the poems about wars against alien adversaries, but also in their

³⁶ Britain.

poems that construct and promote the British national identity. Through celebration, persuasion, and protest with their poems, 18th-century British women poets made their patriotic contribution to the construction and promotion of the British national identity by building up national confidence, constructing national ideals, and bringing the national ideals closer together with the actual practices of government misconducts and public imprudence during national crises in the War of American Independence, anti-slavery activism, and the French revolution.

Their full participation throughout the 18th-century, the large number of their patriotic poems, the eloquence of their patriotic voices, and the fact that the majority of their patriotic poems got published in the 18th-century showcase their undeniable patriotic contribution to the nation, especially to its construction and promotion of the British identity. Yet their patriotic contribution to the nation has been largely neglected by later generations both of their day and nowadays.

The oblivion of the 18th-century British women poets in general because of the increasing male critic enmity at the end of the 18th-century towards the power of women poetry writing about political topics, the deliberate publication exclusion of women poets from voluminous compilations of 18th-century poetry in the late-18th-century and early-19th-century, and the change of poetry fashion into Romanticism (Lonsdale, 1989, pp. xxi-xlvi) had led to the neglect of the 18th-century British women poets' contribution to the nation, especially their patriotic contribution to the construction and promotion of the British national identity, by the later generations of their day. Yet with the 18th-century British women poetry rediscovered in recent years, it is high time to restore their legitimate place in the 18th-century British poets' patriotic contribution to the nation. As the British national identity remains a key issue for the British even today, it is important not to forget those patriotic voices of the 18th-century British women poets that had helped to construct and promote the national ideals for the British identity in the time of its formation.

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