

Introduction

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This twenty-nine-poem anthology is the product of a third-year university course in English literature of the long eighteenth century at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC, Canada, located on the traditional and unceded lands of Coast Salish peoples of the Səḥilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and xʷməθ kʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations. ENGL320 offered undergraduates both experiential and authentic learning, emphasizing hands-on skills in academic research, writing, and editing. The class chose a theme for the anthology—youth and aging—then each student chose a poem from the *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive* that illustrated the theme and had not (or rarely) been published since the long eighteenth century. Each student was responsible for researching their poet, writing a headnote, editing their poem, and writing footnotes for twenty-first-century readers.

Another feature of the course was peer support. Our process involved online single-blind peer reviews and peer editing, as well as working in pairs or groups in class time. Students added to their skills in revision and editing, making their work of publishable quality, consistent, accessible to a reader, and pleasant to look at. I gave numerous lessons on English grammar to the class, anticipating that knowing why a grammar-correcting AI makes certain choices and how to adjust its output to be clearer and more concise are now valuable skills and will soon become even more so.

While I set up the parameters for the anthology project, much of the course depended on student decisions. In addition to the theme and their poems, students chose the CC license, title, and editorial principles. Our title, “*Blossom, Fade, and Die Away*”: *English Poetry of Youth and Aging in the Long Eighteenth Century* quotes the poem Sara Corradi chose, Nathaniel Cotton’s “To a Child of Five Years Old.” Caitlin Kingsmill’s cover image illustrates not only the life cycle of living things, but also hints at the ways in which the botanical metaphor of transience is applied more often to women’s bodies (and bodies of writing) than to men’s.

Looking at these poems as a group, we see that English poets of this period valued young adulthood as the peak of life but recognized that death can take anyone at any time. Several of our poems stress how quickly girls and women lose their beauty, advising them to cultivate more lasting virtues. Many of the poems look back fondly on childhood friendships, and more look forward to death, viewing it through the lens of an expected and positive afterlife.

The poems included in this anthology range in their publication date from 1728 to 1842, though some were written well before their publication. They include odes, sonnets, meditations, addresses, rants, verse epistles, and occasional poems. Eleven are by female-identifying and eighteen by male-identifying poets. Among the individual poets, we have a number of lawyers, priests, and teachers, as well as those who wrote for their livelihood. Within the anthology, the poems are divided into the period of life their student editors felt they focused on. Within each section, the poets are in alphabetical order by family name.

I would like to thank Ioana Liuta from SFU Digital Publishing and Jennifer Zirkee from our copyright office for visiting the class and telling us about CC licenses. The students would like to

thank me for the effort I put into making this a valuable learning experience for them and giving them the opportunity to publish their work. Collectively, we appreciate Alexander Huber and various contributors to the *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive*.

We hope you enjoy reading our work!

Our Editorial Principles

We decided to keep the text of the poems in this anthology close to how they appear in their original publication, for example by using original spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and indentation patterns, except in cases where we judged something might be confusing to a twenty-first-century reader. Apostrophes to indicate elision are maintained when they make a difference to the rhythm of a line of poetry, but we gave them footnotes if we thought the elision might confuse our readers. Because the earlier poems in this anthology are from a time when nouns were capitalized in English but the later ones come after the shift away from that, and because the poems are not in chronological order, there may seem to be more inconsistency in capitalization patterns than if we had arranged the whole anthology chronologically.



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