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Gay, John
To a lady on her passion
for old china

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1725a



John Gay
To a Lady on her Passion
for Old China

1725

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22.7.27

*Five hundred and fifty copies have been printed
of which five hundred are for sale*

Printed by Frederick Hall M.A.
at the Clarendon Press
Oxford England
1925

And sold by
Humphrey Milford M.A.
Publisher to the University
of Oxford



RAY'S Epistle *To a Lady on her Passion for*

Old China was published anonymously in

1725. The present reprint is from Mr.

Thomas J. Wise's uncut copy, which,

when he compiled the Catalogue of his library, Mr.

Wise believed to be unique. A copy has since been

unearthed in the British Museum, and the reprint has

been checked by it.

The pamphlet consists of a half-sheet of two leaves


followed by a sheet of four leaves. The last leaf is

blank.



John Gay
To a Lady on her Passion
for Old China

1725



TO A
L A D Y

ON

Her PASSION *for old* CHINA.



T O A

L A D Y

O N H E R

P A S S I O N

F O R

O L D C H I N A.

by

John Gay



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. TONSON in the *Strand*. 1725.

Facsimile
Printed from type at the
Clarendon Press
1925

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TO A
L A D Y
O N

Her P A S S I O N for old C H I N A.



W H A T ecstasies her bosom fire !
How her eyes languish with desire !
How blest, how happy should I be,
Were that fond glance bestow'd on me !

New doubts and fears within me war :

What rival's near ? a *China Jar.*

B

China's

China's the passion of her soul ;
 A cup, a plate, a dish, a bowl
 Can kindle wishes in her breast,
 In flame with joy, or break her rest.

Some gems collect ; some medals prize,
 And view the rust with lovers eyes ;
 Some court the stars at midnight hours ;
 Some doat on Nature's charms in flowers !
 But ev'ry beauty I can trace
 In *Laura's* mind, in *Laura's* face ;
 My stars are in this brighter sphere,
 My lilly and my rose is here.

Philosophers more grave than wife
 Hunt science down in Butterflies ;
 Or fondly poring on a Spider,
 Stretch human contemplation wider ;
Fossiles give joy to *Galen's* soul,
 He digs for knowledge, like a Mole ;

In shells so learn'd, that all agree
 No fish that swims knows more than he !
 In such pursuits if wisdom lies,
 Who, *Laura*, shall thy taste despise ?

When I some antique Jar behold,
 Or white, or blue, or speck'd with gold,
 Vessels so pure, and so refin'd
 Appear the types of woman-kind :
 Are they not valu'd for their beauty,
 Too fair, too fine for household duty ?
 With flowers and gold and azure dy'd,
 Of ev'ry house the grace and pride ?
 How white, how polish'd is their skin,
 And valu'd most when only seen !
 She who before was highest priz'd
 Is for a crack or flaw despis'd ;
 I grant they're frail, yet they're so rare,
 The treasure cannot cost too dear !

But Man is made of courser stuff,
 And ferves convenience well enough ;
 He's a strong earthen vefsel made,
 For drudging, labour, toil and trade ;
 And when wives lofe their other felf,
 With eafe they bear the lofs of *Delf*.

Husbands more covetous than fage
 Condemn this *China*-buying rage ;
 They count that woman's prudence little,
 Who fetts her heart on things fo brittle.
 But are thofe wife-men's inclinations
 Fixt on more strong, more fure foundations ?
 If all that's frail we muft despife,
 No human view or fcheme is wife.
 Are not Ambition's hopes as weak ?
 They fwell like bubbles, fhine and break.
 A Courtier's promife is fo flight,
 'Tis made at noon, and broke at night.

What pleasure's sure? The Mifs you keep
Breaks both your fortune and your sleep.
The man who loves a country life,
Breaks all the comforts of his wife;
And if he quit his farm and plough,
His wife in town may break her vow.
Love, *Laura*, love, while youth is warm,
For each new winter breaks a charm;
And woman's not like *China* fold,
But cheaper grows in growing old;
Then quickly chuse the prudent part,
Or else you break a faithful heart.

F I N I S.



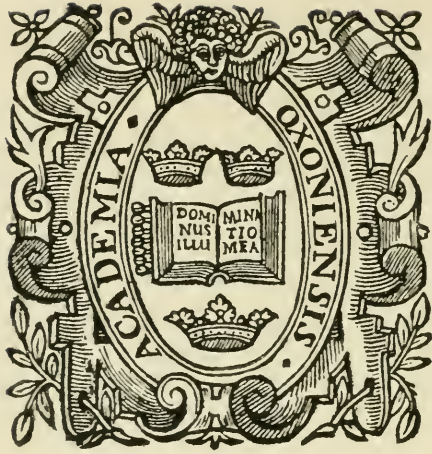




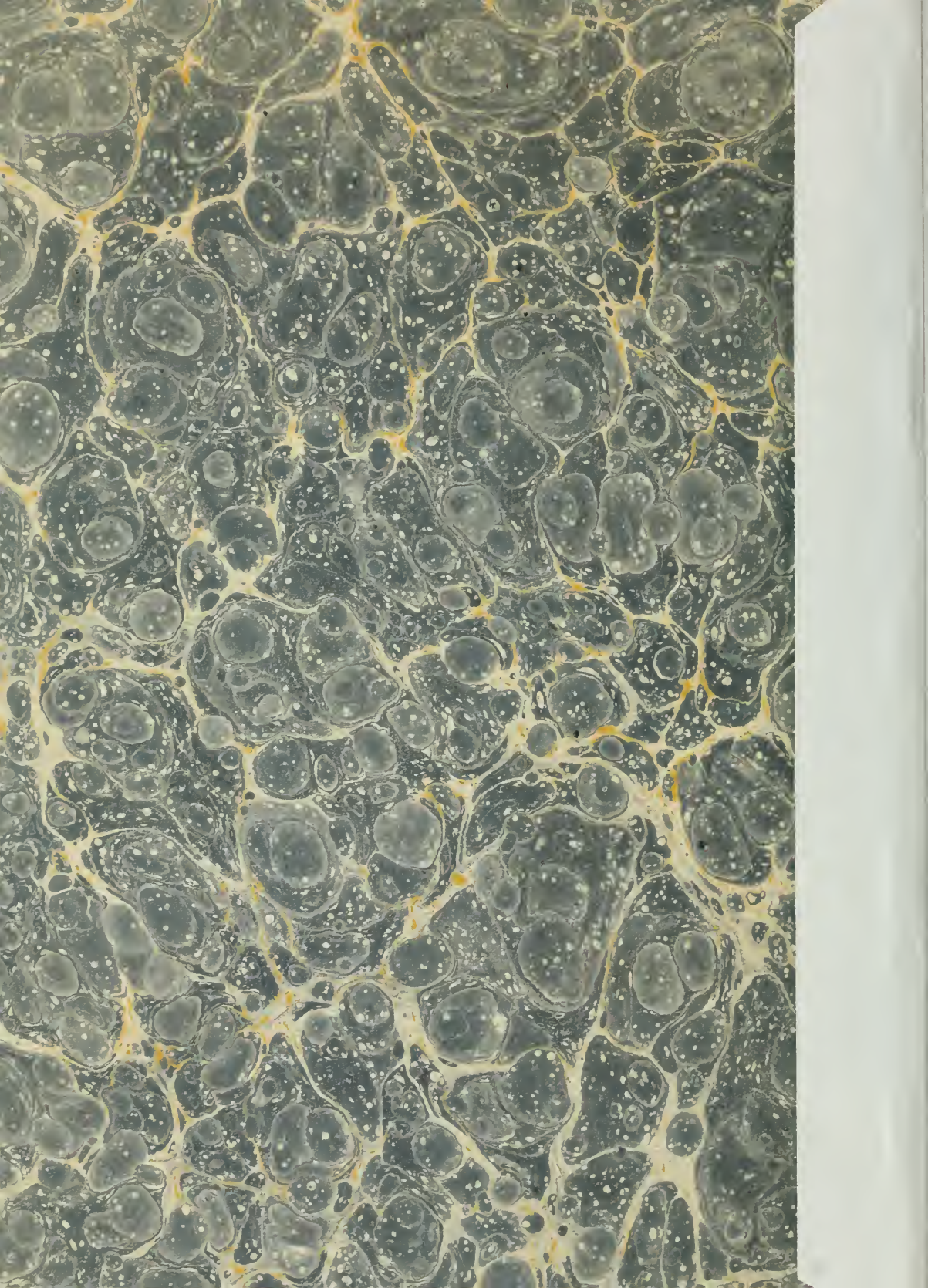
NOTE

For the question of authorship see the forthcoming edition of Gay's Poems by Mr. G. C. Faber in the *Oxford Poets*, p. xxvii.









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