



Henry Fielding - Plays, Volume II, 1731 - 1734: 2 (The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding)

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This is the second of three volumes representing the only modern edition of Fielding's dramatic works. Most of these plays have not appeared in print for a century, and never previously in fully-edited form. Fielding is best known as a classic novelist and the author of Tom Jones, but like his great model Cervantes, he came to novel-writing from an important first career in professional theatre. He wrote twenty-eight plays, including comedies, satiric extravaganzas, and ballad operas. He was the leading playwright of his generation, an experimentalist and entrepreneur of dramatic form who sometimes also brought contemporary politics and public figures onto his stage with results even more dramatic off-stage.

This volume presents nine plays from one of the most productive and successful periods of Fielding's theatre career. One of them, The Grub-Street Opera, is a ballad opera cheerfully mocking various public characters including the Prime Minister, Prince of Wales, and even King and Queen. Another, The Modern Husband, is a dark comedy attacking the cynical merchandising of sex, marriage, and influence among what passes for polite society in 1730s London. Most of the plays in this volume were major hits with long stage lives in repertory, including The Lottery, The Intriguing Chambermaid, and two of the great Molière adaptations of the century, The Mock Doctor and The Miser. Fielding wrote all four of those plays as star vehicles for the great Drury Lane musical actress Catherine Clive.

The plays are given in critical unmodernized texts based on careful collation of the original editions, with explanatory notes and commentary on sources, stage history, and critical reception. All music is included, with appendices giving complete accounts of textual variation and bibliographic history for each play.

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