

Classic Poetry Series

Sarah Fyge
- poems -

Publication Date:
2004

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Sarah Fyge(1670 - 1723)

Sarah Fyge, English poet, writer, and feminist, born in Winslow, Buckinghamshire, 1670. Fyge was one of six daughters, her father Thomas Fyge, an apothecary and physician, and her mother, Mary Beecham Fyge.

Fyge, a feminist from a young age, began writing from the age of fourteen. Where her first work entitled "The Female Advocate" was published without her consent, in 1686, a piece which argued that women were superior to men and an in response to Robert Gould's "A Love Given O'er" Or, "A Late Satyr Against the Pride, Lust and Inconstancy, etc. of Women". This led to her banishment from her parents home to relatives. Undaunted, Fyge revised the piece and had the second, expanded edition reprinted, in 1687.

Shortly thereafter, Fyge married against her will, a London Attorney, Edward Field, (from whom she may have obtained her knowledge of law). Fyge, after a short time was left a widow due to the death of Field sometime prior to 1700, though she was left childless she was left well off. Her poems later speak of the growing love for her late husband and her grief at her loss. Her second volume of work, entitled "Poems on Several Occasions" published in 1703.

In 1700, Fyge married for a second time, to her second cousin the much older Reverend Thomas Egerton, Rector of Ad stock, whom was also a widower, with grown children of his previous marriage. This marriage appears to be of an unhappy one for not more than three years later amid mutual recriminations (Fyge accused of adultery, which she counter sued on grounds of cruelty), they both sued for divorce. The divorce was denied and the couple remained married til the death of Thomas Egerton, in 1720.

Fyge, followed her late second husband to the grave some three years later; she died in her birthplace in Winslow, Buckinghamshire, England, in 1723.

Throughout her lifetime, Fyge continued to write feminist tracts and poetry.

The Emulation

Say, Tyrant Custom, why must we obey
The impositions of thy haughty Sway;
From the first dawn of Life, unto the Grave,
Poor Womankind's in every State, a Slave.
The Nurse, the Mistress, Parent and the Swain,
For Love she must, there's none escape that Pain;
Then comes the last, the fatal Slavery,
The Husband with insulting Tyranny
Can have ill Manners justify'd by Law;
For Men all join to keep the Wife in awe.
Moses who first our Freedom did rebuke,
Was Marry'd when he writ the Pentateuch;
They're Wise to keep us Slaves, for well they know,
If we were loose, we soon should make them so.
We yield like vanquish'd Kings whom Fetters bind,
When chance of War is to Usurpers kind;
Submit in Form; but they'd our Thoughts control,
And lay restraints on the impassive Soul:
They fear we should excel their sluggish parts,
Should we attempt the Sciences and Arts;
Pretend they were design'd for them alone,
So keep us Fools to raise their own Renown;
Thus Priests of old their Grandeur to maintain,
Cry'd vulgar Eyes would sacred Laws Profane.
So kept the Mysteries behind a Screen,
There Homage and the Name were lost had they been seen:
But in this blessed Age, such Freedom's given,
That every Man explains the Will of Heaven;
And shall we Women now sit tamely by,
Make no excursions in Philosophy,
Or grace our Thoughts in tuneful Poetry?
We will our Rights in Learning's World maintain,
Wit's Empire, now, shall know a Female Reign,
Come all ye Fair, the great Attempt improve,
Divinely imitate the Realms above:
There's ten celestial Females govern Wit,
And but two Gods that dare pretend to it;
And shall these finite Males reverse their Rules,
No, we'll be Wits, and then Men must be Fools.

Sarah Fyge

The Repulse To Alcander

What is't you mean, that I am thus approach'd,
Dare you to hope, that I may be debauch'd?
For your seducing Words the same implies,
In begging Pity with a soft Surprise,
For one who loves, and sighs, and almost dies.
In ev'ry Word and Action doth appear,
Something I hate and blush to see or hear;
At first your Love for vast Respect was told,
Till your excess of Manners grew too bold,
And did your base, designing Thoughts unfold.
When a Salute did seem to Custom due,
With too much Ardour you'd my Lips pursue;
My Hand, with which you play'd, you'd Kiss and Press,
Nay, ev'ry Look had something of Address.
Ye Gods! I cry'd, sure he designs to woo,
For thus did amorous Phylaster do.
The Youth whose Passion none could disapprove,
When Hymen waited to complete his Love;
But now, when sacred Laws and Vows confine
Me to another, what can you design?
At first, I could not see the lewd Abuse,
But fram'd a thousand Things for your Excuse.
I knew that Bacchus sometimes did inspire
A sudden Transport, tho' not lasting Fire;
For he no less than Cupid can make kind,
And force a Fondness which was ne'er design'd;
Or thought you'd travel'd far, and it might chance,
To be the foreign Mode of Complaisance.
Till you so oft your amorous Crimes repeat,
That to permit you would make mine as great;
Nor stopt you here but languishingly spake,
That Love which I endeavour'd to mistake:
What saw you in me, that could make you vain,
Or any thing expect, but just Disdain?
I must confess I am not quite so Nice,
To Damn all little Gallantries for Vice
(But I see now my Charity's misplac'd,
If none but sullen Saints can be thought Chaste):
Yet know, Base Man, I scorn your lewd Amours,

Hate them from all, not only 'cause they're yours.
Oh sacred Love! let not the World profane
Thy Transports, thus to Sport, and Entertain;
The Beau, with some small Artifice of's own,
Can make a Treat, for all the wanton Town:
I thought my self secure, within these Shades,
But your rude Love, my privacy invades,
Affronts my Virtue, hazards my just Fame,
Why should I suffer, for your lawless Flame?
For oft 'tis known, through Vanity and Pride,
Men boast those Favours which they are deny'd;
Or other's Malice, which can soon discern;
Perhaps may see in you some kind Concern.
So scatter false Suggestions of their own,
That I love too: Oh! Stain to my Renown;
No, I'll be Wise, avoid your Sight in time,
And shun at once the Censure and the Crime.

Sarah Fyge

To Philaster

Go perjur'd Youth and court what Nymph you please,
Your Passion now is but a dull disease;
With worn-out Sighs deceive some list'ning Ear,
Who longs to know how 'tis and what Men swear;
She'll think they're new from you; 'cause so to her.
Poor cousin'd Fool, she ne'er can know the Charms
Of being first encircled in thy Arms,
When all Love's Joys were innocent and gay,
As fresh and blooming as the new-born day.
Your Charms did then with native Sweetness flow;
The forc'd-kind Complaisance you now bestow,
Is but a false agreeable Design,
But you had Innocence when you were mine,
And all your Words, and Smiles, and Looks divine.
How proud, methinks, thy Mistress does appear
In sully'd Clothes, which I'd no longer wear ;
Her Bosom too with wither'd Flowers drest,
Which lost their Sweets in my first chosen Breast ;
Perjur'd imposing Youth, cheat who you will,
Supply defect of Truth with amorous Skill :
Yet thy Address must needs insipid be,
For the first Ardour of thy Soul was all possess'd by me.

Sarah Fyge