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WORLD ENGLISH

THE WOMAN'S LABOUR

MARY COLLIER

- The only edition in print of a hugely important work.
- A unique collection of *The Woman's Labour* and all the texts associated with it: Stephen Duck's *The Thresher's Labour* and Collier's 'An Epistolary Answer to an Exciseman Who Doubted Her Being the Author of *The Woman's Labour*' and 'An Elegy Upon Stephen Duck'.
- Inexpensive, highly annotated edition – perfect for students.

Eighteenth-century poetry was dominated by men of education and wealth, and bookcases sagged under the weight of volumes by Swift, Johnson and Pope. When Stephen Duck's *The Thresher's Labour* was published in 1730, however, it was a sensation – highlighting the plight of the working class in verse was hereto simply unthought of.

Duck's poem came to the attention of Mary Collier, a washerwoman working in Hampshire, who was astounded to read Duck's dismissal of women as work-shy layabouts who indulged in 'noisy prattle', and she penned a stinging riposte, *The Woman's Labour*, which reframed Duck's relation of harvest-time toil from a woman's perspective.

This edition of *The Woman's Labour* seeks to give a wider view of the conversation, and includes *The Thresher's Labour*, 'The Three Wise Sentences' (which Collier included in the first publication of her reply), 'An Epistolary Answer to an Exciseman Who Doubted Her Being the Author' and the elegy she wrote for Stephen Duck after he died.

'Collier's writing... represents an instance of resistance to oppression both gendered and class-based.'

DONNA LANDRY,

THE MUSES OF RESISTANCE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Mary Collier (c.1688–1762) was an English poet and labourer. Born in Midhurst, West Sussex to poor parents, she was educated at home, and went on to become a washerwoman, brewer and manual labourer. She is best known today for her stinging riposte to Stephen Duck's portrayal of working-class women in his *The Thresher's Labour*, which she had published herself as *The Woman's Labour*.



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