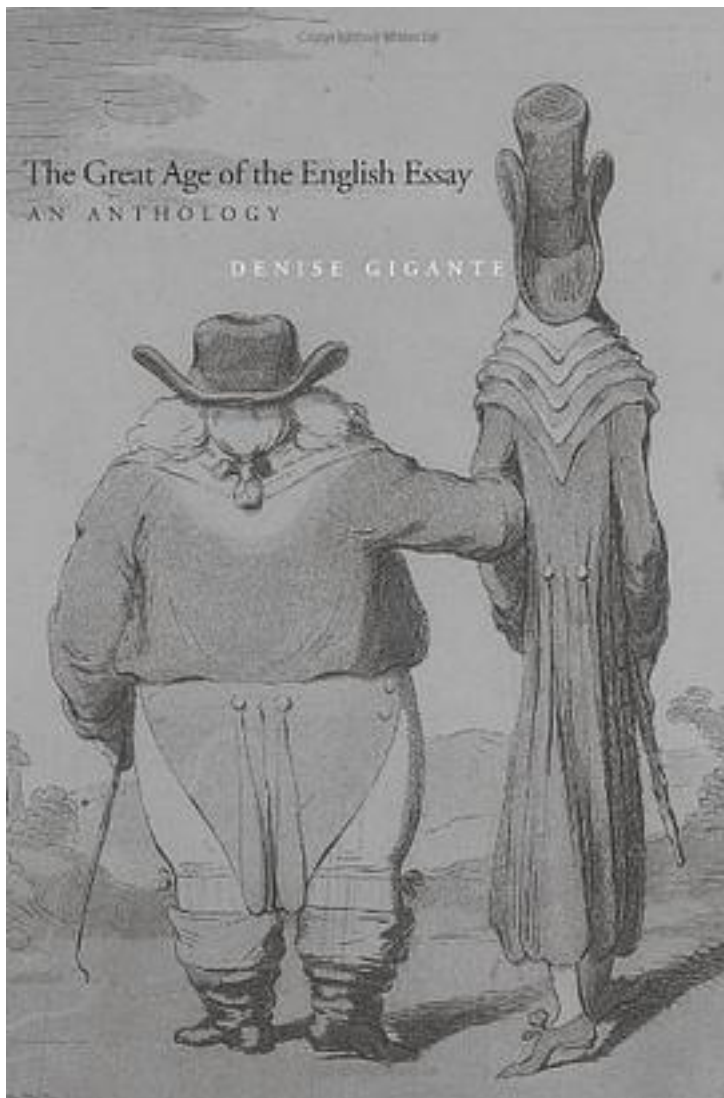


The Great Age of the English Essay



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出版者:Yale University Press

出版时间:2008-9-9

装帧:Paperback

isbn:9780300141962

From the pens of spectators, ramblers, idlers, tattlers, hypochondriacs, connoisseurs, and loungers, a new literary genre emerged in eighteenth-century England: the periodical essay. Situated between classical rhetoric and the novel, the English essay challenged the borders between fiction and non-fiction prose and helped forge the tastes and values of an emerging middle class. This authoritative anthology is the first to gather in one volume the consummate periodical essays of the period. Included are the "Spectator" co-founders Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, literary lion Samuel Johnson, and Romantic recluse Thomas De Quincey, addressing a wide variety of topics from the oddities of virtuosos to the private lives of parrots and the fantastic horrors of opium dreams. In a lively and informative introduction, Denise Gigante situates the essayists in the context of the contemporary Republic of Letters and highlights the stylistic innovations and conventions that distinguish the periodical essay as a literary form. Critical notes on the essays, a chronology, descriptions and a map of key London sites, and a glossary of eighteenth-century English usage complete the anthology - a uniquely pleasurable survey of the golden era of British essays.

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