

# A Song: Lying is an occupation

By Laetitia Pilkington

Lying is an occupation,  
Used by all who mean to rise;  
Politicians owe their station,  
But to well concerted lies.

These to lovers give assistance,  
To ensnare the fair-one's heart;  
And the virgin's best resistance  
Yields to this commanding art.

Study this superior science,  
Would you rise in Church or State;  
Bid to Truth a bold defiance,  
'Tis the practice of the great.

Source: *English Women's Poetry, Elizabethan to Victorian* (edited by R.E. Pritchard) (Fyfield Books, 1990)



Laetitia van Lewen was born in Ireland. Her father was a respected surgeon, her mother was of aristocratic descent, and the family lived comfortably in Dublin. Alone and destitute after her divorce from Matthew Pilkington, she began to make her living from writing, penning poems, petitions, plays, billets-doux, and sermons, often for male writers who passed them off as their own. Pilkington's *Memoirs* provide an invaluable glimpse into 18th-century literary society and the ironies, struggles, and disappointments of female writers attempting to make their way through it.

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