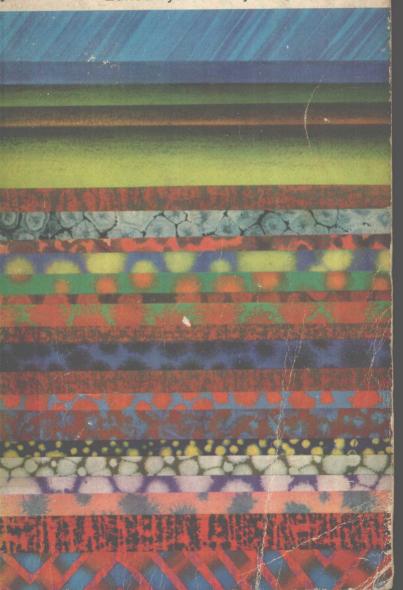
The Penguin Book of English Verse Edited by John Hayward



THE PENGUIN BOOM

OF

ENGLISH VERSE

EDITED BY JOHN HAYWARD

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THE PENGUIN POETS D32

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF ENGLISH VERSE

TO THE READER

The chief, if not the only end of poetry, Dryden said, is to delight. It is with this end always in view that the following selection of English poetry has been made. A choice from all the poetry written in English verse during the past four hundred years necessarily involves compromise of one kind or another if a satisfactory balance is to be maintained between rival claims and interests. In order to achieve this, certain restrictions had to be imposed if, in the first place, the selection was to be contained within a volume of manageable and economic size and, in the second, was to be as well-proportioned and as representa-

tive as possible within its limits.

The range in time has therefore been set to exclude poets born before 1500, the upper limit being fixed by the publication in 1557 of Tottel's Songes and Sonettes (the first anthology of recognizably modern English verse), and the lower around the year 1940 when the poets who had grown up between the two World Wars of this century were reaching maturity. The field of choice within these dates has been further reduced by the exclusion of anonymous poems, dramatic verse (but not songs from plays), and dialect verse. To have attempted to do justice to traditional ballads, Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, and – to quote the title of Burns's first book – 'poems in the Scottish dialect' – would have left too little room for an adequate representation of poets with a prior claim to inclusion.

Even so, long poems of the first order such as *The Faerie Queene*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Prelude* have had to be curtailed to a few extracts – a compromise which does at least enable them to be sampled along with all the other kinds of English verse exemplified in this collection. Although this particular form of compromise was unavoidable if a proper balance was to be preserved in the collection as a whole, it is unfortunately bound to do injustice to poets for whom the long poem is the most satisfactory medium of poetic expression. Such, indeed, were the principal poets of the eighteenth century from Pope to Crabbe; but there are also a few in every generation whose characteristic poems are too long to be given in full and lose in selection much of the peculiar value and interest inherent in their length.

Subject to these limitations, I have tried to concentrate in the

To the Reader following pages as much as possible of the richness and variety of intellectual and emotional appeal made by the principal poets – some 150 in all – who have written in English throughout the four centuries dividing the first Elizabethan age from the second.

An anthologist must always be indebted to the accumulated taste and judgement of the many critics of the past and of his own time who have insensibly influenced him, not forgetting what he owes to 'the common sense of readers uncorrupted by literary prejudice' by which, according to Dr Johnson, 'must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours'. I am grateful for the help they have indirectly given me. More particularly I wish to thank Mr W. H. Auden, Mr T. S. Eliot, Mr George Fraser, Miss Helen Gardner, and Miss Kathleen Raine for their advice; Mr J. M. G. Blakiston (Moberly Librarian, Winchester College), Mr David Foxon (The British Museum), and Mr John Sweeney (Harvard College) for their assistance in obtaining texts; the Duke of Bedford for the loan of his unique copy of Chapman's Eugenia; and Messrs McLeish, Pickering & Chatto Ltd and Bernard Quaritch Ltd for the loan of other volumes.

JOHN HAYWARD

NOTE ON THE TEXT

The poets represented are in chronological order. The texts reproduced are those of the earliest (usually the first) edition published either with the poet's authority, or, in the case of posthumous publication, from authoritative manuscript sources. Exceptionally, certain texts have been taken from later editions, revised by the poet during his lifetime or subsequently by his editors in the light of additional textual evidence. The original spelling, punctuation &c. of the copy-texts have been preserved, not for their extrinsic quaintness, but because, after due allowance has been made for the quirks and aberrations (not to mention simple carelessness or ignorance) of compositors before the nineteenth century, they serve to point sense and sound and rhythm. They illustrate, moreover, the evolution of the printed word. Obvious misprints have, however, been corrected and confusing archaic usages ('then' for 'than', the long f, u for v, and i for j) abandoned.

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