

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
BRITISH
POETRY
1603–1660



EDITED BY JOHN P. RUMRICH
AND GREGORY CHAPLIN

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

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SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
BRITISH POETRY:
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Edited by

JOHN P. RUMRICH
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

and

GREGORY CHAPLIN
BRIDGEWATER STATE COLLEGE

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Preface

Seventeenth-Century British Poetry: 1603–1660 succeeds two earlier Norton Critical Editions: *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets* (ed. Hugh Maclean) and *George Herbert and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Poets* (ed. Mario A. Di Cesare). Ben Jonson and George Herbert charted new directions for English poetry during the early seventeenth century, and these volumes have long served as valuable guides to their poetry and their influence on the next generation of poets. But ideas about seventeenth-century literature have developed rapidly over the last twenty years: the poets in these volumes have remained central, but they now inhabit a literary landscape recognized to be richer and more crowded than it once was. Not only has the canon expanded, but the range of texts that constitute seventeenth-century literature has grown. Our response to these changes has been to fashion a single Norton Critical Edition that encompasses the poets and poems essential to the study of British poetry from 1603 to 1660. The rich diversity of the poetry in its topical concerns and forms reflects an extraordinarily eventful period of English history: the end of the long reign of Elizabeth I and of the Tudor dynasty, the increasingly absolutist reigns of the first two Stuart monarchs, the outbreak of civil war, the levelling of church hierarchy, the trial and execution of Charles I, the rule of Cromwell, and finally, the Restoration of the monarchy.

Readers familiar with *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets* and *George Herbert and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Poets* will find that we have retained the majority of the poems from those volumes and that we have added newly edited selections from Aemilia Lanyer, John Donne, Lady Mary Wroth, John Milton, Anne Bradstreet, Margaret Cavendish, John Dryden, and Katherine Philips. In doing so, we have sought to provide ample selections by the poets most frequently taught in courses in seventeenth-century literature. The result is a volume with over six hundred poems by nearly thirty poets. Other poets might well have been included and quite properly so, but including them would have forced us to undermine one of the distinctive strengths of the earlier editions—their balance between depth and diversity. So while some readers may find their favorite poem or poet missing, they will also find, for many of the poets we have included, the most extensive selection of their poetry available in a single anthology: almost half of Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*, all of the poems from Jonson's *The Forest*, over a third of Herbert's *The Temple*, and eighty poems from Herrick's *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers*. We have also included rarely anthologized pieces—for example, Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis," Cowley's "Ode. Upon Dr. Harvey," and Cavendish's atomic poems—that enrich our understanding of subjects as culturally salient and topically diverse as early modern eroticism and scientific speculation.

Our primary goal has been to provide modernized and well-annotated

texts of the poems; details concerning our editorial practices, the copy texts of the poems, and substantive variants can be found in the Textual Notes. Choosing critical essays for this volume has been especially difficult. A representative selection of major essays on individual poems in this edition—Jonson's "To Penshurst," Herbert's "The Collar," or Milton's "Lycidas," for instance—would fill a volume of its own. In general, rather than studies of individual poems, we have provided essays that treat multiple poets, illustrate different critical approaches, and open avenues of discussion. As a primer in seventeenth-century assumptions about the mind and body, we have also included Lawrence Babb's concise "The Physiology and Psychology of the Renaissance." The Select Bibliography provides a starting point for research in the period.

We are indebted to Mario Di Cesare for providing us with updated texts for the poets included in his original edition—although we take final responsibility for how these poems appear in this volume. The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, particularly the helpful staff of its reading room, has been an indispensable resource throughout the long preparation of this volume. Gregory Chaplin would like to thank the Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching at Bridgewater State College for supporting this project, and he is deeply grateful to Kathleen Vejvoda for her advice and support. John Rumrich wishes to acknowledge the substantial assistance of Mary Maddox, Suzanne Penuel, Matthew Tucker, and Roger Rouland in preparing this edition. The College of Liberal Arts and Office of Graduate Studies at the University of Texas at Austin subsidized this assistance, for which we are much obliged. Finally, Rumrich wishes to thank Alicia, Gabriel, and Nathaniel; his part in this work is dedicated to them.

JOHN RUMRICH
GREGORY CHAPLIN

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