

# The Norton Anthology of Poetry

SHORTER  
FOURTH EDITION



Margaret Ferguson

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

Mary Jo Salter

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

Jon Stallworthy

OXFORD UNIVERSITY



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## Preface to the Shorter Fourth Edition

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A poem is a record of remarkable language, written or spoken; in the case of a good poem, a record undamaged by the centuries and continents it may have crossed since poet or scribe put pen to paper. This Shorter Fourth Edition of *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* brings together more than one thousand such records from “the round earth’s imagined corners.” We have set out to provide readers with a wide and deep sampling of the best poetry written in the English language. That previous editions have succeeded in this endeavor, within the limits of the pages available in a single volume, seems manifest in the acceptance of those editions by teachers and students alike. But, as our friend and advisor M. H. Abrams has said in another context, “a vital literary culture is always on the move,” both in the appearance of new works and in the altering response to existing texts: hence, a Fourth Edition, which broadens and refines that cultural tradition. Our efforts have been crucially helped by the practical criticism and informed suggestions provided to us by the many teachers who have used the anthology in their classes. In the best sense, then, the vitality of our literary culture has been demonstrated by this collaboration.

In assembling the new edition we, like our predecessors, have worked toward a balance between the older and the newer. Thus, while more than sixty twentieth-century voices are heard here for the first time, thirty-four earlier poets are also new to the book. This signal increase in poets and poems reflects the book’s strengthened geographic and ethnic diversity: the many traditions of American poetry are more fully represented by better than double the number of African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian-American poets (nine newly included). In addition to twenty-eight new English poets, the anthology includes thirty-five poets from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Caribbean, and South Africa. The work of women poets, with special attention to the early periods, is dramatically expanded with thirty-eight new voices, sixty-one in all. Even so, we would have wished to include many more voices in every category, had space permitted, and regretted having to exclude poets born after 1960.

The broadened representation of poets in the Shorter Fourth Edition speaks as well to greater historical and formal range and expanded pedagogical possibilities. The beginnings of poetry in English are now richly represented by Old English selections, including Caedmon’s “Hymn,” selections from *Beowulf*, *The Seafarer*, and popular riddles; and the Middle English selections newly include selections from the great long poems *Pearl* and *Piers Plowman*. These additions enable the study of the history of the English language and English poetic meters from Anglo-Saxon times to the present day.

The vernacular tradition, in which the poet “Anon” has spoken eloquently over the centuries, is now brought forward from medieval lyrics and Elizabethan and Jacobean poems to African-American spirituals and popular ballads of the twentieth century, two new clusters of poems. Teachers can trace the history of the epic by comparing openings and selections from *Beowulf*, *The*

*Faerie Queene* (which we now represent with the complete first canto of book 1), *Paradise Lost*, Pope's (mock-epic) *The Rape of the Lock*, and Wordsworth's *Prelude*.

In addition, the Shorter Fourth Edition opens up intertextual "dialogues" within a traditional form, as in the way Jean Elliot's eighteenth-century ballad "The Flowers of the Forest" resonates in C. Day Lewis' song "I've heard them lilting at loom and belting" and Pete Seeger's ballad "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?"; across centuries and cultures, as, for example, William Wordsworth's "Nuns Fret Not at Their Convent's Narrow Room" and Gwendolyn Brooks' "birth in a narrow room" meditate on the limits and possibilities of the sonnet form; or in response to a common text, as in the three versions of Psalm 58 (Mary Sidney's, that of *The Massachusetts Bay Psalm Book*, and Christopher Smart's). To bring these potential dialogues to readers' attention, we have added a number of cross-referencing annotations.

The Fourth Edition includes many longer poems, since these belong in a collection representative not merely of the lyric and epigrammatic, but of the entire range of poetic genres in English. Among the longer poems new to this edition is Richard Howard's "Nikolaus Mardruz to his Master Ferdinand, Count of Tyrol, 1565," as well as teachable excerpts from John Skelton's "Philip Sparrow," Charlotte Smith's "Beachy Head," Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, William Carlos Williams' "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," and James Merrill's *The Changing Light at Sandover*. Although it is impossible to include all of *The Faerie Queene*, *The Prelude*, *Song of Myself*, or *The Dream Songs*, students will find representative and self-sufficient selections from each of these works.

In addition to expanding representation, we have made a special effort to reconsider, and in some instances reselect, the work of poets retained from earlier editions. Almost all poets who have produced important works since our last edition have been updated; among them are Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott. But Chaucer has been reexamined, too; so also, to name a few of the many other poets of the past, have Spenser, Shakespeare, Bradstreet, Tennyson, Dickinson, and Moore.

## Editorial Procedures

The order is chronological, poets appearing according to their dates of birth and their poems according to dates of publication (estimated dates of composition in the case of Old and Middle English poets) in volume form. These dates are printed at the end of the poem, and to the right; when two dates are printed at the end of the poem, they indicate published versions that differ in an important way. Dates on the left, when given, are those of composition.

We have in several areas reconsidered texts with an eye to restoring spellings and punctuation that are subtly integral to metrical and visual character of the poem. In editing the Middle English poems, we have retained as many old spellings as possible to give the modern reader a sense of the period's difference from our own in matters orthographical. The forms "thorn" (used for the "th" sound) and "yogh" (used for "g," "gh," and "y" or "z" depending on the context) have been replaced by their appropriate modern equivalents. The letters "u/v" and "i/j" and "i/y," which are often used interchangeably in manuscripts, have been regularized according to modern usage. Because there was no standard English spelling, it varies from manuscript to manuscript and is affected by the marked variations in dialects spoken in different parts of

Britain. For the early modern texts, we have modernized spellings and punctuation except where there is a clear semantic dimension to the original spelling and/or punctuation practices, as in Wyatt's poems (many of which appear in his own handwriting in manuscript form) or Spenser's (which are replete with graphic puns). Beginning with Emerson for American poets and Hardy for British poets, we have started the ongoing project of restoring original spelling and punctuation, in the belief that the poets' choices, when they pose no difficulties for student readers, should be respected.

Annotation in the Shorter Fourth Edition has been thoroughly revised. In keeping with recent developments in editing, we have introduced notes that mention significant textual variants. These are intended to spark classroom discussion about poems whose multiple versions challenge and problematize the idea of textual "authority." We have added many new notes that provide contextual information and clarify archaisms and allusions; however, as in previous editions, we make a special effort to minimize commentary that is interpretive rather than, in a limited sense, explanatory. Marginal glosses for archaic, dialect, or unfamiliar words have been reconsidered and, for many poems, increased in number. For the convenience of the student, we have used square brackets to indicate titles supplied by the editors and have, whenever a portion of a text has been omitted, indicated that omission with three asterisks.

Two other features within the anthology facilitate its usefulness in the classroom. Jon Stallworthy's *Essay on Versification* has been selectively expanded to give students a valuable grounding in rhythm, meter, rhyme, and poetic forms. Versification terms, indicated in boldfaced type within the essay, are now integrated within the primary index. A new appendix of biographical sketches situates the poets' lives and works in brief compass.

The Course Guide to accompany *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, by Mark Jeffreys and Debra Fried, makes available to instructors varied reading lists that help shape a course or courses along a number of lines—according to form, figurative language, traditions and counter-traditions, and topics—and to establish relationships among poets and poems of different genres, periods, and concerns. A new electronic ancillary, *The Norton Poetry Workshop* CD-ROM, edited by James F. Knapp, contains texts and recordings of thirty of the most-taught poems from the anthology, supported by a rich array of multimedia, exercises, and study aids. Information for ordering these materials may be obtained from the publisher.

We are indebted to our predecessors, the editors emeriti of *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, whose presence on the title page signals their ongoing contribution, and to M. H. Abrams, advisor to the Norton English list, for his wise and ready counsel. We also thank the staff at Norton who helped this book come into being: Julia Reidhead used her remarkable resources of energy, intelligence, and good humor to keep the book on course; Marian Johnson gave us important editorial advice early in our labors; Diane O'Connor guided the book through production; Tara Parmiter gracefully facilitated communications and meetings; Fred Courtright handled the massive task of securing permissions; and Anna Karvellas made the dream of a CD-ROM accompaniment come true. Finally, our project editor, Kurt Wildermuth, paid attention to (and in many cases perfected) the book's "minute particulars" in ways that William Blake would have admired; Kurt also kept a steady eye on the book's larger shape and primary goal: to bring English-language poems originating in different times and places to modern readers—who will, we hope, find pleasure within these covers.

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