

Seventeenth-century Poets
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ENGL 2323
British Literature I

John Donne (1572-1631)

- Born in London to Catholic parents - Jesuit educated
- Went to Oxford and Cambridge, but did not take a degree at either place because he would not take the Oath of Supremacy
- 1591-92 - law school - preparing for legal or diplomatic career
- 1593 - brother dies - questions his beliefs
- writes *Satires* and *Songs and Sonnets* about this time
- “Jack Donne” persona - young, wealthy, prodigal, a rake
- Naval expedition vs. Spanish, 1596
- Private secretary to Lord Egerton, 1598

Donne and Anne More

- 1601 - Marries Lady Egerton’s niece and is thrown in prison
- 1604-1610 - taken in by Anne’s cousin; writes several anti-Catholic tracts and works, and the *Divine Poems*
- 1609 - reconciliation with Anne’s father
- 1615 - takes orders, appointed royal chaplain to James I
- 1617 - Anne Donne dies; takes a very spiritual turn in his life

Donne’s sacred works

- *Holy Sonnets* - pub. 1618
- 1621 - named dean of St. Paul’s
- *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* - 1624
- 1624 - named vicar of St. Dunstan’s due to ill health
- 1625 - preaches before Charles I; possibly in line for a bishopric, but is passed over due to his health
- Dies 1631

Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

- Born to Julia and Nicholas Herrick (goldsmith by trade)
- Educated at Merchant Taylors School, Westminster
- Apprenticed as a goldsmith but left to attend Cambridge (St. John’s College)
- Ordained in C of E in 1623 and became vicar at Dean Prior in Devonshire in 1629
- Lost his vicarage after the Civil War in 1647 for rejecting the Solment League and Covenant (alliance between England and Scotland, which implicitly promoted Presbyterianism); regained it in 1662 after Restoration of Charles II
- Never married; all the women he names in his verses are probably fictional

Herrick’s works

- Poems circulated in MS until *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers* (1648) – about half of his

2500 poems

- Early poems tended to be more sensual and physical; later verse more toward the spiritual
 - Had spent time studying in London, so many urbane poems (circle of Ben Jonson)
 - Carpe diem genre – fleetingness of life
 - Pastoral poetry – the countryside and idealized life
- A number of his works have been set to music

George Herbert (1593-1633)

- Born in Montgomery; father Richard was an MP and justice of the peace; mother Magdalen was a daughter of Sir Richard Newport
- Related to the Earls of Pembroke
- Wealthy and well-connected in both local and national government
- Attended Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge; earned a BA and MA and became Reader of Rhetoric in 1616, Public Orator in 1627
- Became MP in 1624 with the help of the Third Earl of Pembroke and may have been aiming for a court career, but Pembroke and a couple of his patrons died untimely
- Became a prebend (canon) in the Diocese of Lincoln while still teaching at Cambridge
- Married Jane Danvers in 1629; ordained a priest and made rector of Fugglestone St. Peter and Bemerton near Salisbury (possibly with help of Pembroke family)
- Dies of tuberculosis in 1633

Herbert's works

- Wrote equally well in English, Greek, and Latin
 - *Musae responsoriae* (defense of Anglican rites), *Passio discerpta* (religious verse on Christ's passion), and *Lucas*, a collection of Latin epigrams, during his time at Cambridge
- *The Temple* (1633) – all of his English poems, published posthumously
 - All on religious topics
 - Often used shape and layout of the poems to make a point
- Prose *A Priest to the Temple* (sometimes called *A Country Parson*) was written as a guide to new, young clergy); published posthumously as *Herbert's Remains* by Barnabas Oley (1652), along with *Outlandish Proverbs* (i.e. foreign)

Richard Lovelace (1617-1657)

- Son of Sir William Lovelace and Anne Lovelace, wealthy landowners in Kent
- Charterhouse School in London (1629), then Gloucester Hall, Oxford (1634); M.A. in 1636, begins study at Cambridge 1637 but doesn't take his doctorate
 - Served with Lord Goring in expeditions against the Scots Presbyterians (the Bishops' Wars), a precursor to the Civil War
 - Sided with Anglican and Royalist elements in the lead-up to the Civil War
- Twice imprisoned (1641, 1648) for Royalist and Anglican sympathies
- 1642-48 – fights in France with Lord Goring; wounded and returns to England
- Impoverished on his return to England; has to sell off family property
- Dies 1657 in London

Works of Lovelace

- Writes about 200 short poems while at Oxford
- Comedy *The Scholars* (1635)
- 1638-39 first printed poems appear
- 1642 “To Althea, From Prison” and “To Lucasta, From Prison”
- 1649 *Lucasta*, first major book of poetry, published; a second version with posthumous poems is published 1659

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

- Son of an Anglican clergyman in Winstead, Yorkshire
- Family moved to Hull when his father became a lecturer at Holy Trinity Church; educated at Hull Grammar School
- Earned BA at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1638 or 1639; met and became friends with Milton
- Was overseas from 1642-47, missing a good part of the Civil War
- 1650-52 tutor to Lord Fairfax’s daughter at Nun Appleton Hall near York; 1653 tutored William Dutton, Oliver Cromwell’s ward
- 1657 became assistant to Milton as Cromwell’s Latin Secretary
- 1659 elected as MP for Kingston on Hull
- 1660 Restoration of Charles II; avoids prosecution for his support of Cromwell and convinced Charles not to execute Milton
- 1660-78 Agent for Hull shipmasters’ guild; went on two trade missions to Holland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark

Marvell’s key works

- Many poems were written and circulated in manuscript; a few published in some anthologies, but his nephew was not able to find a publisher for *Miscellaneous Poems* until 1681 (his complete works made up about four volumes)
- Several anonymous pro-Puritan prose satires against the monarchy, Catholicism, and censorship, but also against excesses of the Parliamentarians
 - Had a great talent for survival in a politically charged atmosphere – supported the party in power but maintained friendships across the aisle

Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1651 or 1653)

- Niece of Mary Herbert and Sir Philip Sidney; father was the governor of Flushing in the Netherlands, so she was practically raised around her aunt
- Well-tutored and had a good classical background
- Came to court under Elizabeth I and became a friend of Queen Anne under James I
- Married Sir Robert Wroth in 1604 – not a happy marriage, with disputes over dowry, drinking, gambling, affairs
- Danced in some of Ben Jonson’s masques at court – noted for her musical and dancing talents
- 1614 – bears Wroth’s son, but Wroth dies a month later and her son in 1616
- Deeply in debt, lives with the Pembrokes; has an affair with her cousin, William Herbert,

and has two children by him

Wroth's major works

- 1620 *Love's Victory* – pastoral drama
- 1621 *Countess of Montgomery's Urania* – disguised story of her affair with Herbert; got her exiled from court, as it made Queen Anne seem like she pushed out Wroth to have Herbert, and Herbert left her
- 1621 *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* – one of only a few sonnet sequences by women at the time – influenced by *Astrophil and Stella* and inverts convention by having an unattainable male character

Katherine Philips (1631-1664)

- Daughter of John Fowler (cloth merchant) and Katherine Oxenbridge
- Precocious with languages; solid memory, could read the KJV by age four
- 1640-45 – Mrs. Salmon's boarding school; began to write poetry
- On her father's death, her mother married Sir Richard Philips and moved to Wales in 1647
- Marries her stepfather's cousin James Philips, who was MP for Cardigan during the Interregnum
- 1663 Went to Ireland to help with her husband's lawsuit over ownership of certain land parcels; translates the play *Pompey* from French and has it successfully staged in Dublin
- Returns to London in 1664 but contracts smallpox and dies

Philips's major works

- Has a circle of literary friends called the Society of Friendship, dedicated to Platonic love and the importance of female friendship; many of her poems are written to or about this circle and had circulated individually in print or in MS
 - *Letters of Orinda to Poliarchus* published posthumously in 1705 (2nd edn. 1709), to Sir Charles Cotterell, Master of Ceremonies at Charles II's court – some suggestion of attraction to some of the Society's female members
- 1664 *Poems by the Incomparable Mrs. K.P.* - unauthorized collection of poems published posthumously
- 1667 Authorized *Poems...by the Matchless Orinda* published posthumously