

Sixteenth-Century Poetry

An Annotated Anthology

Edited by

Gordon Braden

Sixteenth-Century Poetry

BLACKWELL ANNOTATED ANTHOLOGIES

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Edited by Gordon Braden

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To the memory of Richard S. Sylvester

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Chronology of Poems and Historical Events

The right-hand section below gives a chronology for the works included in this anthology. Unless otherwise specified, the date is that of the first appearance in print, which is sometimes much later than the date of composition. In most cases, the dating of poetry that did not move quickly to print is possible only within quite vague boundaries: for example, Wyatt's

lyrics would have been written mostly in the 1520s and 1530s, Donne's from the mid-1590s on into the first decade of the next century. When more specific information or informed guesses are available, they are given here. Not every poem in this collection is covered by this list; some were not printed until the nineteenth, or even the twentieth, century.

Historical and Cultural Events

- 1500 Epidemic in London, possibly the plague.
- 1502 Columbus begins his fourth and last voyage to the New World.
- 1503 Construction finished on Canterbury Cathedral.
- 1509 Henry VIII becomes king of England, marries Catherine of Aragon.
- 1510 St. Paul's School, London, founded.
- 1512 College of Physicians founded.
- 1513 Henry campaigns with the Emperor Maximilian I against France; wins the battle of the Spurs. Battle of Flodden Field between England and Scotland, the latter allied with France; defeat and death of King James IV of Scotland, husband to Henry's sister Margaret. Their 18-month-old son becomes King James V.
- 1514 Peace with France and Scotland.
- 1515 Thomas Wolsey, favorite to Henry, becomes Cardinal and Lord Chancellor; Francis I becomes king of France.
- 1516 Birth of Mary, daughter to Henry and Catherine of Aragon.
- 1517 Martin Luther nails his ninety-five theses to a church door in Germany and initiates the Protestant Reformation.
- 1519 King Charles I of Spain, cousin to Catherine of Aragon, elected Emperor Charles V.
- 1520 Meeting between Henry and Francis I on the Field of the Cloth of Gold near Calais.
- 1521 Execution for treason of the Duke of Buckingham, grandfather to the Earl of Surrey. Henry writes *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments*, an attack on Luther, and receives the title "Defender of the Faith" from the Pope. War begins between Francis I and Charles V.
- 1524 Extensive peasant revolt begins in Germany, under the leadership of Thomas Münzer.

Poems

- 1505 Skelton, *Philip Sparrow* composed (?)
- 1509 Skelton, "Addition" to *Philip Sparrow* composed
- 1523 Skelton, *The Garland of Laurel* (with a passage from *Philip Sparrow*)

<i>Historical and Cultural Events</i>	<i>Poems</i>
1525 Francis I taken prisoner after the battle of Pavia. German peasant revolt ends; execution of Münzer.	
1526 Francis released after consenting to the Treaty of Madrid, but resumes hostilities against Charles. Publication in Germany of William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament.	
1527 Henry, in love with Anne Boleyn, begins efforts to divorce his first wife. Rome sacked by imperial troops.	1527 Skelton, <i>Against a Comely Custron</i> (?), <i>Divers Ballads and Ditties Solacious</i> (?)
1529 After Wolsey's failure to obtain a papal nullification of his marriage to Catherine, Henry removes him as Lord Chancellor and appoints Thomas More. Peace of Cambrai between Francis I and Charles V.	
1532 Submission of the Clergy acknowledges Henry's power over ecclesiastical legislation in England. More resigns as Lord Chancellor.	1532 Wyatt, "Sometime I fled the fire that me brent" composed
1533 Henry marries Anne Boleyn in secret; his marriage to Catherine is declared void by Thomas Cranmer, the new Archbishop of Canterbury; Henry is excommunicated by Pope Clement VII. Birth of Elizabeth, daughter of Henry and Anne Boleyn.	
1534 Act of Supremacy makes the English monarch "protector and only supreme head of the church and clergy of England." Anabaptist kingdom proclaimed in Münster, under the leadership of Jan van Leiden; city besieged by episcopal forces.	
1535 Execution of More. Publication of Miles Coverdale's Bible, the first complete translation into English. Storming of Münster and slaughter of Anabaptists.	1535 More, <i>Louis, the Lost Lover</i> and <i>Davy, the Dicer</i> composed
1536 Beginning of the dissolution of the monasteries in England and the transfer of their resources to the Crown. Fall and execution of Anne Boleyn; Elizabeth declared illegitimate by Parliament; Henry marries Jane Seymour. Thomas Cromwell becomes Lord Privy Seal and Henry's chief minister. In the north of England, Robert Aske leads a Catholic rebellion known as the Pilgrimage of Grace; believing himself to have won concessions from the Crown, Aske helps to dissolve the movement. Tyndale executed as a heretic by Charles V.	1536 Wyatt, "Who list his wealth and ease retain" and "Mine own John Pains, since ye delight to know" composed (?)
1537 Execution of Aske; birth of Edward, son to Henry and Jane Seymour, followed quickly by his mother's death.	1537 Surrey, "When Windsor walls sustained my wearied arm" and "So cruel prison, how could betide, alas" composed
1539 Statute of the Six Articles, authored by Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, defining heresy in terms very close to those of Roman Catholicism. The Great Bible,	1539 Wyatt, "Tagus, farewell, that westward with thy streams" composed

<i>Historical and Cultural Events</i>	<i>Poems</i>
based on Coverdale's translation, authorized for use in English churches.	
1540 Henry marries and soon divorces Anne of Cleves; fall and execution of Thomas Cromwell, who had arranged the marriage. Henry marries Catherine Howard, cousin to Anne Boleyn and the Earl of Surrey.	1540 Wyatt, "The pillar perished is whereto I leant" composed
1541 Ireland proclaimed a kingdom.	1541 Surrey, "From Tuscan came my lady's worthy race" composed Wyatt, "Lucks, my fair falcon, and your fellows all" and "Sighs are my food, drink are my tears" composed (?)
1542 English victory over Scotland at the battle of Solway Moss; death of King James V. His 6-day-old daughter Mary becomes queen of Scotland. Execution of Catherine Howard.	1542 Surrey, "Divers thy death do diversely bemoan" composed
1543 Henry marries Catherine Parr.	1543 Surrey, "London, hast thou accused me" composed
1545 Lending of money at interest legalized. First session of the Council of Trent, beginning the Catholic Counter-Reformation.	1545 Surrey, "Wyatt resteth here, that quick could never rest" (?) Skelton, <i>Philip Sparrow</i>
1546 Execution of Askew. Ivan IV crowned as the first Tsar of Russia.	1546 Askew, <i>Ballad</i>
1547 Execution of Surrey; death of Henry, succeeded by his 10-year-old son, who becomes Edward VI, with the Duke of Somerset as Lord Protector. Repeal of the Six Articles; Gardiner imprisoned. Death of Francis I; Henry II becomes king of France.	
1548 Mary Queen of Scots sent to France to be raised.	1549 Wyatt, <i>Certain Psalms</i>
1550 Fall of Somerset, replaced by the Duke of Northumberland.	
1551 War resumes between France and Charles V.	
1552 Execution of Somerset. Legalization of lending at interest revoked.	
1553 Publication of the Forty-Two Articles of Religion, the basis for a more Protestant Anglican church. Death of Edward. Northumberland proclaims his daughter-in-law Jane Grey queen; both are soon arrested and Mary I becomes queen. Mary retains her Catholic allegiances, and makes Gardiner Lord Chancellor. Execution of Northumberland; brief imprisonment of Elizabeth. A rebellion headed by Sir Thomas Wyatt, son of the poet, is suppressed and Wyatt executed. Commercial relations established with Russia.	
1554 Execution of Jane Grey; marriage of Mary to Prince Philip of Spain, son of the Emperor Charles V. Royal supremacy over the Church revoked.	

- | <i>Historical and Cultural Events</i> | <i>Poems</i> |
|---|---|
| 1555 Act of Reconciliation re-establishes Catholicism in England. Extensive persecution of English Protestants begins; as many as 300 eventually executed. Muscovy Company chartered. | |
| 1556 Execution of Cranmer; Reginald Pole becomes Archbishop of Canterbury. Abdication of Charles V; Mary's husband becomes King Philip II of Spain. | |
| 1557 War with France, in alliance with Spain; France defeated at the battle of St. Quentin. Stationers' Company chartered. | 1557 Tottel, <i>Songs and Sonnets</i> (poetry of Wyatt, Vaux, and Surrey)
More, <i>Works</i> (<i>Louis, the Lost Lover</i> and <i>Davy, the Dicer</i>) |
| 1558 Loss of Calais, England's last remaining possession in France. Death of Mary and Pole; Elizabeth I becomes queen. Mary Queen of Scots marries the French dauphin. | |
| 1559 Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy revoke papal authority in England; Matthew Parker becomes Archbishop of Canterbury. A one-shilling fine is legislated for failure to attend Sunday services. Elizabeth declines a marriage proposal from Philip II. Shane O'Neill's rebellion in Ireland begins. Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis ends the war between France and Spain. Henry II dies from wounds received in a tournament during the subsequent festivities; the dauphin becomes King Francis II, and his wife assumes the title Queen of England and Scotland. | |
| 1560 Treaty of Edinburgh secures the withdrawal of French troops from Scotland; Presbyterianism established in Scotland. Publication of Geneva Bible in Switzerland, with a dedication to Elizabeth. Death of Francis II; his brother becomes King Charles IX at the age of 10. | |
| 1561 The widowed Mary returns to Scotland, and comes into conflict with the Calvinists under John Knox. Merchant Taylors' School founded in London. | |
| 1562 Civil war begins in France; Elizabeth sends an occupation force to Le Havre in support of the Huguenots. Shane O'Neill comes to England and officially submits to Elizabeth, but on his return to Ireland continues his rebellion. Sir John Hawkins makes his first slave-trading voyage to the Caribbean. | 1562 <i>The Whole Book of Psalms</i> |
| 1563 The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion published; establishment of the independent Church of England completed. Potatoes introduced from America. Plague in London. Conclusion of the Council of Trent. | 1563 <i>Mirror for Magistrates</i> , 2nd edn (Sackville, <i>Induction</i>)
Googe, <i>Eclogues, Epitaphs, and Sonnets</i> |
| 1564 Peace of Troyes with France; final renunciation of English claims to Calais. | |

- | <i>Historical and Cultural Events</i> | <i>Poems</i> |
|---|---|
| 1565 Sir Henry Sidney (father to Philip) made Lord Deputy in Ireland. Controversy over vestments marks the first clear dispute between the established Anglican Church and the Puritan movement. Probable first appearance of tobacco in England. | |
| 1567 Rebellion against Mary's rule in Scotland; she is defeated at the battle of Carbury Hill and abdicates in favor of her 1-year-old son, who becomes King James VI. Shane O'Neill killed and his rebellion ended. Sir Thomas Gresham's Exchange, modeled on the Antwerp Bourse, opens in London; Rugby School founded. Rebellion begins in the Netherlands against Spanish rule. | 1567 Turberville, <i>Epitaphs, Epigrams, Songs, and Sonnets</i>
Whitney, <i>The Copy of a Letter</i> |
| 1568 Mary flees from Scotland to England; placed in confinement. English College at Douai founded for the training of Jesuits. Publication of the Bishops' Bible as the authorized English Bible. | 1568 Elizabeth, "The doubt of future woes exiles my present joy" composed |
| 1569 Rebellion of the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland in support of Mary; on its failure, Westmorland flees to Spain and Northumberland to Scotland. Rebellion in Munster. | |
| 1570 Elizabeth excommunicated by Pope Pius V, an act which frees Catholics from loyalty to her. She visits Gresham's Exchange and names it the Royal Exchange. | |
| 1571 Discovery of a plot by the Italian banker Roberto di Ridolfi to free Mary and place her on the English throne leads to the arrest of the Duke of Norfolk (the Earl of Surrey's son). Henry Sidney resigns as Lord Deputy of Ireland. Lending of money at interest legalized again. Harrow School founded. Defeat of Turkish fleet by European forces in the battle of Lepanto. | |
| 1572 Execution of Norfolk, and of Northumberland, who had been returned to the English by the Scots. St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of Protestants in France. | |
| 1574 Death of Charles IX; his brother becomes King Henry III. | 1573 Gascoigne, <i>A Hundred Sundry Flowers</i> |
| 1575 Death of Parker; Edmund Grindal becomes Archbishop of Canterbury. Henry Sidney reappointed Lord Deputy of Ireland. | 1575 Gascoigne, <i>The Posies</i> |
| 1576 The Theatre, the first London playhouse, built at Shoreditch. Grindal comes into conflict with Elizabeth for refusing to suppress Puritan prophesyings. | |
| 1577 Sir Francis Drake sent on an extended voyage to plunder Spanish shipping. | |
| 1578 Elizabeth begins serious negotiations to marry the French Duc d'Alençon, brother | |

<i>Historical and Cultural Events</i>	<i>Poems</i>
with English ships in a battle off Gravelines and been driven into the North Sea by bad weather, it returns to Spain with heavy losses. Martin Marprelate tracts – anonymous Puritan attacks on Anglican clergy – begin to appear.	
1589 Henry III assassinated; the Protestant Henry of Navarre claims the title of King Henry IV, but the civil war continues.	1589 George Puttenham, <i>The Art of English Poesy</i> (Elizabeth, “The doubt of future woes exiles my present joy,” and quotations from Raleigh, “Fortune hath taken thee away, my love,” and Elizabeth, “Ah, silly pug, wert thou so sore afraid?”) Lodge, <i>Scylla’s Metamorphosis</i>
1590 James VI personally involved in witchcraft trials in Scotland.	1590 Spenser, <i>The Faery Queen</i> Books I–III (with Raleigh, <i>A Vision upon this Conceit</i>)
1591 The Earl of Essex sent with English troops to support Henry IV in Normandy. Tea introduced in England. Trinity College, Dublin, founded. Roanoke Island colony found to have disappeared.	1591 Sidney, <i>Astrophil and Stella</i>
1592 Plague in London.	1592 Daniel, <i>Delia</i> Greene, <i>A Groatworth of Wit</i> Nashe, <i>Summer’s Last Will and Testament</i> composed Raleigh, <i>The Ocean’s Love to Cynthia</i> composed (?)
1593 Failure to attend church services made punishable by banishment. Plague continues in London. Henry IV converts to Catholicism.	1593 Marlowe, <i>Hero and Leander</i> composed (?) <i>The Phoenix Nest</i> (Raleigh, “Would I were changed into that golden shower”) <i>The Tears of Fancy</i> (“Those whose kind hearts sweet pity did attain”) Barnes, <i>Parthenophil and Parthenophe</i>
1594 Irish rebellion under Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, begins.	1594 Drayton, <i>Idea’s Mirror</i>
1595 A small Spanish force lands in Cornwall and burns several towns; rumors of a new Armada. Execution of Southwell. Raleigh leads an expedition to Guiana.	1595 Barnfield, <i>Cynthia</i> Chapman, <i>Ovid’s Banquet of Sense</i> Spenser, <i>Amoretti</i>
1596 Second English raid against Cadiz.	1596 Spenser, <i>Faery Queen</i> Books I–VI
1597 Unsuccessful naval expedition against the Azores and other Spanish islands; a second Spanish Armada dispersed by bad weather on approaching England.	1597 John Dowland, <i>First Book of Aires</i> (“Come away, come, sweet love”)
1598 Edict of Nantes, granting toleration to French Protestants and ending French civil war. The Theatre torn down, and its timbers used in building the Globe. Bodleian Library endowed. Death of Philip II.	1598 Marlowe, <i>Hero and Leander</i> Marston, <i>The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion’s Image</i> , <i>The Scourge of Villainy</i>
1599 Earl of Essex sent to suppress the Irish rebellion; negotiates a truce and returns to England, where he is briefly imprisoned and permanently banished from the court. Whitgift orders the burning of satirical and other offensive books.	1599 Marlowe, <i>Ovid’s Elegies</i> , with Davies, <i>Epigrams</i> (?) Mary Herbert, <i>To the Angel Spirit</i> composed (?)
1600 First East India Company chartered.	1600 <i>England’s Helicon</i> (Marlowe, <i>The Passionate Shepherd</i> , and Raleigh, <i>The Nymph’s Reply</i>)

Historical and Cultural Events

- 1601 Essex attempts to mount a rebellion against the government; convicted of treason and executed. Poor Law Act establishes the first uniform system of parish care for the poor.
- 1602 Bodleian Library opens.
- 1603 Death of Elizabeth; James VI of Scotland becomes King James I of England. O'Neill surrenders in Ireland. Plague in London.

Poems

- Thomas Morley, *First Book of Aires*
("Absence, hear thou my protestation")
- Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*
- 1602 Southwell, *Saint Peter's Complaint*
(expanded edition, with *The Burning Babe*)
- 1604 Anthony Scoloker, *Diaphantus* (Raleigh,
The Passionate Man's Pilgrimage)
- 1609 Spenser, *Two Cantos of Mutability*
- 1610 *A Poetical Rhapsody*, 2nd edn (Raleigh,
The Lie)
- 1612 Orlando Gibbons, *First Set of Madrigals and Motets* (Raleigh, "What is our life? The play of passion")
- 1618 Richard Brathwait, *The Good Wife* (Raleigh, "Even such is time, which takes in trust")
- 1633 Donne, *Poems*
Greville, *Caelica*

Introduction

In Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* the young Claudio, believing himself betrayed by Hero, denounces her and makes a threat: "Out on thee seeming! I will write against it." The moment tends to pass without emphasis in modern performance, or at least without the original stress on "write" as the dangerous word. Claudio certainly wants it to be a dangerous word, and he is reaching for a recognized weapon in the contemporary arsenal: those around him do not need to be told that he is threatening to broadcast his beloved's shame to a wider world by composing a satire against women (like the "sharp satires" that, according to Christopher Marlowe, disappointed lovers of another Hero compose). Claudio is, however briefly, contemplating the start of a literary career. He is disabused of his inspiration before he can follow through, but we find out later that two other members of the cast have taken steps in that direction. Friends of Benedick's produce "a halting sonnet of his own true brain," and a similar production by Beatrice is revealed; their piratical publication ("A miracle! Here's our own hands against our hearts") forces the happy ending from which the two budding poets had started to back away. The scene is supposed to be Sicily, but what shows through in these brief references is the literary world of London in the 1590s, in which both satires and sonnets were important currency. The development of that world over the course of the century is one of the stories inhabiting this anthology.

The roster of participants is by some criteria remarkably diverse. Two of them have since been canonized by the Catholic Church. Two ruling monarchs are here, Henry VIII for a probable attribution and Elizabeth I for three definite ones – the first English monarchs since Alfred the Great to qualify for such representation. Both Henry and Elizabeth headed courts in the Renaissance mold, where literary activity was an honored and – especially so in Elizabeth's time – expected component of graceful self-promotion; a fair amount of the material presented here is rooted in that milieu, written by people of high rank and privilege, intended primarily for one another's eyes, and circulating almost exclusively in manuscript. That milieu persisted and remained important into the next century, but it was gradually amplified by other possibilities. Part of the significance of George Gascoigne's career in the 1570s was the way in which he turned his very failure to make inroads into courtly circles into one of his great subjects, while directing his writerly ambitions to a larger reading public. The printing press had had an appetite for poetry in English as early as William Caxton's first edition of Chaucer in 1477; John Skelton published verses of his own devising during the 1520s, including a kind of *Collected Poems* in 1523. At key moments in the sixteenth century the sudden public dissemination of what had been coterie literature had a galvanic effect on a wider field of contestants. In 1557, some seventeen months before Elizabeth's accession, Richard Tottel's *Songs and Sonnets* made the poetry of her father's court generally available; reissued steadily over the next half century, his collection stimulated the production of a series of print anthologies (with names like *A Handful of Pleasant Delights* or *The Paradise of Dainty Devices*) that helped secure a broadly based taste for the kind of lyric poetry that has come to be thought of as Elizabethan. (One of Elizabeth's own poems appeared in print in 1589 to illustrate a point in a treatise on poetry-writing.) In 1591 the printing of Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, five years after his own widely celebrated death, sparked the specific, intense craze for sonneteering that snags Benedick and Beatrice and was one of the leading edges of Elizabethan poetry in its self-consciously high style. More than half the poetry in this collection comes from the fabulously busy last ten years of the century; the literary scene which generated it was a messy business of overlapping centers, in which the court and the book trade shared territory with the Inns of Court – medieval law schools which had come to function as a kind of *de facto* urban

university for young men of ambition – and of course the theater, which had been flourishing since the late 1580s.

At no point in the century did the practice of letters bring any particular safety with it. Six of the poets in this anthology were executed by the state, by beheading, burning, or drawing and quartering; another was stabbed to death in a tavern, and a number of others (including Elizabeth herself) found themselves in prison at one time or another. That record is without parallel in any other period of English literary history. The mid-century *Mirror for Magistrates*, a popular collection of cautionary tales about the downfall of the powerful, included in its roster the story of one William Collingbourne, executed in the late fifteenth century for authoring a satirical epigram about Richard III; his story resides between those of a duke and a king as a warning about the riskiness of being a poet: “I had forgot how newfound tyrannies / With right and freedom were at open war.” There is a margin of professional self-glamorization in this; Collingbourne himself was a poet only for the duration of a tetrameter couplet, and we have no serious evidence that in the sixteenth century it was ever poetry as such which sent anyone to the block or the gallows. The mortality rate among poets is primarily testimony to the dangerousness of the period generally and the brutality of its politics, and to the fact that they were usually involved in courtly or public life in other ways than as writers. Yet the sense of something specially dangerous about poetry becomes real enough in the combativeness of the poets with one another; by the 1590s that combativeness reaches a sometimes parodic pitch, and the decade is marked by a succession of literary feuds, often pursued in open print. It is here that verse satire – “the cankered muse” – blooms into abundance, and was finally felt to be enough of a public nuisance that the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1599 ordered the collection and burning of as much of it as could be found and forbade the printing of any more (an act which terminated at least one significant literary career). The century ends with confirmation from one of the highest authorities in the realm that Claudio’s threat to resort to satire was indeed not something to take lightly.

The tumult that conditions the production of poetry in the century, however, is not as visible in the poetry itself as we might perhaps expect. The pugnaciousness of writers as a guild is on view in poems such as the satire of John Marston’s included here; four of the poets who died at the hands of the state left poems about their imprisonment and the prospect of execution, to the point that we can almost talk of an established genre (at least three more examples could be added to the ones in this collection). Yet the sixteenth century is not one of the great ages of political or religious poetry – not by the standard of, say, the century that follows. There are individual exceptions to this generalization, and the most distinguished one occupies more space in this anthology than any other single work; Edmund Spenser’s *The Faery Queen* is a uniquely ambitious attempt to provide Tudor England with its summary epic, in which (among other things) the momentous and often violent public events of the time are represented and interpreted. That representation, though, is also an encryption into one of the most complicated allegorical structures ever mounted, and the reader has to work for it. A key element in the encryption, moreover, involves fitting the whole narrative within the armature of what is by a fair margin the dominant topic of sixteenth-century non-dramatic verse: poetry means, more than anything else, love poetry.

The profile of love among the topics for poetry is always high; in the sixteenth century it was made especially prominent by the extraordinary prestige and popularity of a particular species of love poetry: that marked by the formal and thematic imitation of the Italian poet Francesco Petrarca (1304–74), known in English as Petrarch. Beginning in the late fifteenth century, such imitation becomes a prominent feature of almost every vernacular literature in western Europe; when Sir Thomas Wyatt introduced both the sonnet and some of the characteristic sentiments and rhetoric of Petrarchism into English, he was making a move toward repairing his own country’s belatedness in Renaissance high culture. His Petrarchan poems were among the most

important works broadcast to a general readership by Tottel; *Astrophil and Stella* in turn achieves its great influence in part by giving English its first fully successful version not just of individual Petrarchan poems but of the Petrarchan lyric sequence, and inspiring a new round of imitation at that level. At every stage of this progress there are striking incongruities. In particular, the conventional Petrarchan situation of prolonged unsatisfied desire for an idealized woman – according to his own sequence, Petrarch loved the unattainable Laura for twenty-one years until her own death, and for another ten years after – can fit uneasily with the very different situation in which the new poet writes (as is the case with Wyatt), or can chafe painfully against some very un-Petrarchan impatience and lustfulness (as in Sidney's sequence). The whole business repeatedly opens itself up to mockery and abuse (a poem by Sir John Davies is perhaps the most economical example). Yet the abrasions themselves generate some memorable poetic energy – including the florid sensuality for which the 1590s have become notorious – and the enterprise takes the whole century to play itself out.

Petrarchism had a sufficiently tenacious hold on life in sixteenth-century Europe generally that special factors are not required to explain its durability in England; but England's experience does take special energy from the country's unparalleled historical accident of being ruled, successfully and for almost fifty years, by an unmarried woman. Elizabeth herself was no kind of feminist, except as far as her own case was concerned; her presence on the throne certainly did not do much to animate poetic ambition in other women. England sees nothing during her reign like the female Petrarchists active in sixteenth-century Italy, and must wait until Mary Wroth (Robert Sidney's daughter; 1587–ca. 1651/3) for someone to join their number. What Elizabeth's presence does do is instantiate at the summit of the political and social hierarchy an uncanny version of the classic Petrarchan situation, that of a charismatic woman simultaneously visible and unreachable, commanding in her chastity. Elizabeth seems to have recognized the coincidence and knowingly exploited it in various ways, especially in her careful dealings with the ambitious men who surrounded her at close range; for a half century the profession of courtier could be unusually hard to distinguish from the glamorous and maddening endeavor of Petrarchan courtship. In an even more intimate merger of the literature of private passion with the reality of political power, this courtship was at times conducted in verse; we do not know as much about the details as we would like to, but some evidence does survive. Included in this anthology is one reciprocal exchange of poems – they present themselves as love poems – between Elizabeth and the most talented poet among her favorites, Sir Walter Raleigh. We also have tantalizing information that Raleigh composed or meant to compose an epic poem about his relationship with the queen; its ruling conceit – the Ocean's longing devotion to the moon goddess Cynthia – seems to align a Petrarchan love narrative with England's early imperial ambitions. That alignment does not happen only in the inner circles; the love story that frames Spenser's big poem is itself a kind of Petrarchan idealization of the erotics of Elizabeth's court, with the absent title character meant to be recognized as an explicit figuration for the monarch to whom the poem is dedicated by one of her distant worshippers. Adoration from afar of a powerful woman could look like the key to understanding everything.

* * *

This anthology inevitably trifles to some extent with its chronological boundaries. Several of the earlier poems, including some of Skelton's, may very well date from the late fifteenth century. At the other end I have reached into the seventeenth century when there seemed a compelling reason to do so (such as following Raleigh's story to its conclusion). English literary life does begin a significant change of mood around 1600, but there is no kind of clean break. A number of careers straddle the century mark; I have followed convention in, for instance, allotting Ben Jonson and Thomas Campion to the seventeenth century (they may indeed be

found in Robert Cummings's anthology in this series). I thought it important, however, to provide a generous selection from John Donne, including poems that we are fairly confident date from 1602 and later; the story of English sixteenth-century love poetry looks very different with Donne at the end, and it seemed to me that that transformative event needed to be fully on view here. Perhaps disappointingly, I have not gone so far as to include any of Donne's religious poetry, which has less in the way of precedent in the sixteenth century but finds its natural company with the great devotional lyrics of the seventeenth. The most momentous literary career to bridge the two centuries is, for merely practical reasons, not represented at all: Shakespeare's poetry is widely accessible in numerous first-rate formats, and to do him justice would take up considerable space. It would be in the spirit of this anthology to read his *Venus and Adonis* and the entirety of his sonnets in conjunction with what is provided here.

In making my selection, I have followed the admirable (and unusual) precedent set by Richard S. Sylvester's *Anchor Anthology of Sixteenth Century Verse* (1974) of giving, as far as possible, complete works, or at least complete units from longer works. Doing so has meant reducing the number of worthy but more or less generic poets represented (no Thomas Churchyard, no Nicholas Breton) in favor of allowing the poetry that is here the proper elbow room to go about its business. To illustrate the growing fascination with the Petrarchan notion of a connected sequence of lyric poems, I include three such sequences in their entirety: Gascoigne's Green Knight poems, Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, and Samuel Daniel's *Delia*. (The last of these is given in what is to my knowledge its first reprinting in its most effective form, that of the second edition of 1592; if I had had more room, I would have followed it with the narrative poem to which Daniel always attached it.) Probably the most extreme choice has been to include the complete third book of *The Faery Queen*. I give the entire book because experience has taught me the folly of trying to trim Spenser's narrative sprawl from within; I give Book III, rather than the more traditional I or II, both for the sake of the thematic linkages with the other love poetry in the anthology and because its narrative diversity and lack of closure are I think truer to the experience of the poem as a whole. I have tried to give enough information for readers to pick up the relevant threads, but the difficulty of doing so is itself part of the point.

Spelling and punctuation have been modernized for all texts. Modernization can never be entirely complete or consistent; a few old spellings have been allowed to stand, usually for metrical reasons (though metrical intent can sometimes be difficult to determine; the question is a famously vexed one for Wyatt). When it appears that a vowel silent in modern pronunciation should be sounded, I have added a grave accent ("termèd"); I have preserved vowels that would disappear in modernization when it is clear that they indicate a separate syllable (i.e., "termes" is a two-syllable word, the equivalent of either "terms" or "term's"). Modernization has the advantage of helping the modern reader and reducing the number of glosses, and also of forcing the editor to come to some decision as to just what is supposed to be going on in a particular passage; but the modern reader should keep in mind that those decisions can of course be wrong, and that some momentous ambiguities (such as the popular quibbling on "fain" and "feign") can become almost invisible in the process. After some thought, I have decided not to insert quotation marks into the texts; in most cases it is not difficult to detect a change of speaker without them, but there are also occasions where some uncertainty on this score is a deliberate effect, and one worth preserving. I supply references to authoritative old-spelling editions, or to the nearest equivalent, when they exist. My own editorial choices do not always correspond to those in these editions. I cite variant readings when they are particularly credible or interesting, and also by way of continually reminding the reader of the indeterminate nature of most of these texts; these citations make no pretense at thoroughness.

Anonymous

Western wind, when will thou blow,
The small rain down can rain.
Christ, if my love were in my arms
And I in my bed again.

From Royal MSS, Appendix 58 (British Library), 1503 or later; a collection of song lyrics, with musical settings, presumably for court use. (The setting for this poem was taken over by three Tudor composers for use in the Mass.) For a transcription of the texts, see Ewald Flügel, "Lieder-

sammlungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts," *Anglia*, 12 (1889), 256–72.

2 The manuscript is unpunctuated; some editors end this line with a question mark.

In a goodly night, as in my bed I lay
Pleasantly sleeping, this dream I had.
To me there came a creature brighter than the day,
Which comforted my sprites that were afore full sad.
To behold her person, God knows my heart was glad,
For her sweet visage, like Venus' gold it shone.
To speak to her I was right sore afeared,
But when I wakèd, there was I alone.

5

Then when she saw that I lay so still,
Full softly she drew unto my bed's side.
She bade me show her what was my will,
And my request, it should not be denied.
With that, she kissed me, but and I should have be dead,
I could not speak, my sprites were so far gone.
For very shame my face away I wried,
But when I awoke, there was but I alone.

10

15

Then spake I, and goodly words to her said.
I beseech your nobleness on me to have some grace;
To approach to your presence I was somewhat afeared,
That caused me now to turn away my face.
Nay, sir, quod she, as touching this case,
I pardon you, my own dear heart, anon.
With that I took her softly and sweetly did her bass,
But when I awoke, there was but I alone.

20

Then said she to me, O my dear heart,
May I content in any wise your mind?
Yea, God knows, said I, through love's dart
My heart forever to have ye do me bind.
You be my comfort, I have you most in mind;

25

This poem and the next are from Rawlinson C.813 (Bodleian), a manuscript anthology, primarily of love poems, apparently compiled between 1522 and 1534, probably by one Humphrey Welles. Some of its entries (including passages from Chaucer) date from as early as the fourteenth century, though others refer unmistakably to current events. The whole collection has been edited by Sharon L. Jansen and Kathleen

H. Jordan as *The Welles Anthology* (Binghamton, NY: MRTS, 1991).

6 *Venus' gold* Possibly "Venice gold."

13 *and if* (i.e., I could not have spoken to save my life).

23 *bass* kiss.

Have on me pity and let me not this moan. 30
Leave, said she, this mourning, I will not be unkind.
But when I awoke, there was but I alone.

I prayed her heartily that she would come to bed.
She said she was content to do me pleasure.
I know not whether I was alive or dead, 35
So glad I was to have that goodly treasure.
I kissèd her, I bassed her out of all measure;
The more I kissed her, the more her beauty shone.
To serve her, to please her, that time I did me dever,
But when I awoke, there was but I alone. 40

Such goodly sports all night endurèd I,
Unto the morrow that day gan to spring.
So glad I was of my dream verily
That in my sleep loud I began to sing,
And when I awoke by heaven king, 45
I went after her and she was gone;
I had no thing but my pillow in my arms lying,
For when I awoke, there was but I alone.

39 *dever* endeavor.

O lusty lily, the lantern of all gentleness,
O rose most ruddy, the root of all womanhead,
O gillyflower gentle, O primrose peerless,
Exceeding sugar in savor and sweetness,
O daisy delicious full many a fold, 5
When that ye be in your most gladness,
Amongs your new lovers remember your old.

Full filled with favor, the flower of all fairness,
It is no doubt when ye most jocund be;
Your prisoner is pained in piteous pensiveness, 10
That when ye laugh full sore weepeth he.
It fareth by him as doth the sea
That never hath rest in hot nor cold.
Wherefore, fair mistress of mercy and pity,
Amongs your new lovers remember your old. 15

The rhyme scheme implies that the first line of the poem is 5 *full many a fold* many times over.
missing.

John Skelton (1460?–1529)

Little is known about Skelton's early years. In 1488 Oxford entitled him "laureate," a designation which he later received from Cambridge and Louvain as well. A modest postgraduate certificate in rhetoric, it had the aura of an ancient pedigree – the crown given to poets in ancient Rome and to Petrarch in the fourteenth century – and Skelton kept it close to his name for the rest of his life. He was at court around the turn of the century, writing poems on important personages and serving as tutor to the young Prince Henry. He was ordained a priest in 1498 and ca. 1503 became rector of Diss in Norfolk; he held that position for the rest of his life, though after 1512 he returned to London and received the title Orator Regius from his former pupil, now Henry VIII. In the early 1520s he published a series of fierce satires on Cardinal Wolsey, Henry's chief minister, but was subsequently reconciled with him. *A Garland of Laurel*, a lengthy poem of self-praise, incorporating numerous individual poems of Skelton's and listing and excerpting others, was published in 1523. Many of Skelton's poems have more or less ordinary prosody, but as a poet he is most famous for the antic meter that bears his name: Skeltonics. Lines of (usually) two or three beats, with great variation in syllable count, are rhymed successively for, it seems, as long as the poet can keep a particular rhyme going. The vehicle of some remarkable effects in Skelton's own work, the meter has found almost no use at the hands of any other writer.

The most consequential poem in Skeltonics is *Philip Sparrow*. It begins as the lament of a young girl for the death of a pet. The girl was real – Jane Scrope,

living with her widowed mother, Lady Eleanor Wyndham, at Carrow Abbey in Norwich – and the occasion was presumably real as well, sometime before Lady Wyndham's own death in 1505. There is the germ of classical precedent, poems of Catullus (3) and Ovid (*Amores* 2.6) mourning in exaggerated terms the death of their mistress' birds, but Skelton quickly leaves any models behind. For about half the poem's length Jane proceeds with a kind of sophisticated childishness, interweaving her own hyperbolic lament with Latin phrases from the Office for the Dead and other liturgical texts – a mock elegy that is never really a joke. As the poem continues, it becomes a review of Jane's own reading, and in particular a survey of English vernacular literature and the state of English as a literary language at the beginning of the sixteenth century; Jane herself comes to stand for that language and its attractiveness, a mourning daughter tongue with an unknown future ahead. Then in the course of a Latin epitaph the speaker changes from Jane to Skelton the laureate, who goes on to praise Jane with an ardor that can alarm modern readers: a 40-year-old priest in love with the child for whom he has been pretending to speak. Contemporary readers seem to have been taken aback as well; Alexander Barclay attacked the poem for "wantonness" in his *Ship of Fools* (1509), and the "addition" which now ends Skelton's poem appears to be an aggrieved reply.

Edition: John Skelton, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Scattergood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983).

From *Against a Comely Custron*

Skelton laureate, upon a deadman's head that was sent to him from an honorable gentlewoman for a token, devised this ghostly meditation in English: convenable in sentence, commendable, lamentable, lacrimable, profitable for the soul.

Your ugly token
My mind hath broken
From worldly lust,
For I have discussed
We are but dust
And die we must.
 It is general
To be mortal;

5

Custron kitchen boy.
ghostly spiritual.

convenable in sentence suitable in meaning.
4 *discussed* decided.

I have well espied
No man may him hide 10
From Death hollow-eyed,
With sinews withered,
With bones shidered,
With his worm-eaten maw
And his ghastly jaw 15
Gaspng aside,
Naked of hide,
Neither flesh nor fell.
 Then by my counsel
Look that ye spell 20
Well this gospel;
For whereso we dwell,
Death will us quell
And with us mell.
 For all our pampered paunches, 25
There may no fraunches
Nor worldly bliss
Redeem us from this.
Our days be dated
To be checkmated, 30
With draughts of death
Stopping our breath:
Our eyen sinking,
Our bodies stinking,
Our gummes grinning, 35
Our soules brenning!
To whom then shall we sue
For to have rescue
But to sweet Jesu
On us then for to rue? 40
 O goodly child
Of Mary mild,
Then be our shield,
That we be not exiled
To the dun dale 45
Of bootless bale,
Nor to the lake
Of fiendes black.
 But grant us grace
To see thy face 50
And to purchase
Thine heavenly place
And thy palace,
Full of solace,
Above the sky 55
That is so high,

13 *shidered* shattered.18 *fell* skin.20 *spell* read.24 *mell* meddle.26 *fraunches* franchise, i.e., exemption.31 *draughts* The word designates both the drawing of breath and the moving of chessmen.33 *eyen* eyes.35 *gummes* gums.36 *brenning* burning.46 *bootless bale* pain without relief. An alternate text reads "bottomless bale."