

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION  
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY  
BRITISH POETRY:  
1603-1660



AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS  
CRITICISM

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And found (ah me!) this flesh of mine  
More like a stock<sup>4</sup> than like a vine.

### Discontents in Devon

More discontents I never had  
Since I was born, than here:  
Where I have been, and still am sad,  
In this dull Devonshire:  
5 Yet justly too I must confess,  
I ne'er invented such  
Ennobled numbers<sup>5</sup> for the press  
Than where I loathed so much.

### Cherry-Ripe

*imitating street vendors*  
"Cherry-ripe, ripe, ripe," I cry,  
"Full and fair ones; come and buy."<sup>6</sup>  
If so be you ask me where  
They do grow, I answer, "There,  
5 Where my Julia's lips do smile;  
There's the land, or cherry-isle,  
Whose plantations fully show  
All the year where cherries grow."

### His Request to Julia

Julia, if I chance to die  
Ere I print my poetry,  
I most humbly thee desire  
To commit it to the fire;  
5 Better 'twere my book were dead  
Than to live not perfected.

### Dreams

Here we are all, by day; by night, we're hurled  
By dreams, each one, into a sev'ral<sup>7</sup> world.

4. "Hardened stalk or stem of a plant" (OED).  
5. Verses. *His Noble Numbers*. Herrick's collected religious verse, was published in 1648 (together with *Hesperides*), the year following the poet's expulsion from his vicarage in Dean Prior, Devonshire.  
6. The street vendors of London cried their wares in such terms as these.  
7. I.e., separate and distinctly individual. Plutarch reports the view of Heraclitus that "men while awake are in one common world; but asleep, each man has a world to himself" (*De Superstitione*, iii).

To the King,  
Upon His Coming with His Army into the West<sup>8</sup>

Welcome, most welcome to our vows and us,  
Most great and universal Genius!<sup>9</sup>  
The drooping west, which hitherto has stood  
As one in long-lamented widowhood,  
5 Looks like a bride now, or a bed of flowers,  
Newly refreshed both by the sun and showers.  
War, which before was horrid,<sup>1</sup> now appears  
Lovely in you, brave prince of cavaliers!  
A deal<sup>2</sup> of courage in each bosom springs  
10 By your access, O you the best of kings!  
Ride on with all white<sup>3</sup> omens, so that where  
Your standard's up, we fix a conquest there.

● Delight in Disorder<sup>4</sup> ●

~~seize~~  
A sweet disorder in the dress  
Kindles in clothes a wantonness;<sup>5</sup>  
A lawn<sup>6</sup> about the shoulders thrown  
Into a fine distraction;<sup>7</sup>  
5 An erring lace, which here and there  
Enthralls the crimson stomacher;<sup>8</sup>  
A cuff neglectful, and thereby  
Ribbons to flow confusedly;  
A winning wave (deserving note)  
10 In the tempestuous petticoat;  
A careless shoestring, in whose tie  
I see a wild civility paradox, oxymoron. Its not being  
Do more bewitch me than when art  
Is too precise in every part. *seasily "Not de being  
the soul in the  
body"*

Dean-bourn, a Rude River in Devon,  
By Which Sometimes He Lived

Dean-bourn, farewell; I never look to see  
Dean, or thy warty incivility.

8. Charles I came to Exeter in the summer of 1644, before marching on into Cornwall.  
9. Cf. Jonson, *The Forest*, XIV, line 20n, p. 118. Herrick identifies Charles I as the guardian spirit of all England.  
1. I.e., hideous to behold.  
2. I.e., a great amount.  
3. I.e., auspicious. Cf. Jonson, Epigram XCVI, line 8n, p. 88.  
4. Cf. Jonson's "Still to be neat," p. 154.  
5. I.e., an unfettered gaiety (with the secondary sense of "unruliness").  
6. I.e., a scarf of fine linen.  
7. Confusion.  
8. I.e., an ornamental item of dress worn under the lacings of the bodice.

Since which, believe the rest,  
The roses first came red.

### How Violets Came Blue

Love on a day, wise poets tell,  
Some time in wrangling spent,  
Whether the violets should excel,  
Or she, in sweetest scent.

5 But Venus having lost the day,  
Poor girls, she fell on you,  
And beat ye so, as some dare say,  
Her blows did make ye blue.

### A Nuptial Song, or Epithalamie, on Sir Clipsby Crew and His Lady<sup>3</sup>

What's that we see from far? the spring of day  
Bloomed from the east, or fair enjewelled May  
Blown out of April, or some new  
Star filled with glory to our view,  
5 Reaching at heaven,  
To add a nobler planet to the seven?  
Say, or do we not descry  
Some goddess in a cloud of tiffany<sup>4</sup>  
To move, or rather the  
10 Emergent Venus from the sea?<sup>5</sup>

'Tis she! 'Tis she! or else some more divine  
Enlightened substance; mark how from the shrine  
Of holy saints she paces on,  
Treading upon vermilion  
15 And amber; spice-  
ing the chafed<sup>6</sup> air with fumes of Paradise.  
Then come on, come on, and yield  
A savor like unto a blessed field,<sup>7</sup>  
When the bedabbled morn  
20 Washes the golden ears of corn.

See where she comes, and smell how all the street  
Breathes vineyards and pomegranates: O how sweet!  
As a fired altar is each stone,

3. Sir Clipsby Crewe (1599–1649) married Jane Pulteney on 7 July 1625.

4. I.e., of fine silk or muslin.

5. Venus was said to have sprung from the sea foam; cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV.537.

6. Warmed.

7. Cf. Genesis 27:27: "the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed."

### Upon a Child That Died

Here she lies, a pretty bud,  
 Lately made of flesh and blood;  
 Who as soon fell fast asleep  
 As her little eyes did peep.  
 5 Give her strewings; but not stir  
 The earth that lightly covers her.

### To Daffodils

Fair daffodils, we weep to see  
 You haste away so soon;  
 As yet the early-rising sun  
 Has not attained his noon.  
 5 Stay, stay,  
 Until the hasting day  
 Has run  
 But to the even-song;  
 And, having prayed together, we  
 10 Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you;  
 We have as short a spring;  
 As quick a growth to meet decay,  
 As you, or any thing.  
 15 We die,  
 As your hours do, and dry  
 Away,  
 Like to the summer's rain;  
 Or as the pearls of morning's dew,  
 20 Ne'er to be found again.

### Upon Master Ben Jonson: Epigram

After the rare arch-poet Jonson died,  
 The sock<sup>9</sup> grew loathsome, and the buskin's pride,  
 Together with the stage's glory, stood  
 Each like a poor and pitied widowhood.  
 5 The cirque<sup>1</sup> profaned was, and all postures racked,  
 For men did strut, and stride, and stare, not act.  
 Then temper flew from words, and men did squeak,  
 Look red, and blow and bluster, but not speak;

9. Sock (the high shoe worn by actors of comedy in ancient times) and buskin (the high boot worn by actors of tragedy) in this context symbolize English comic and tragic drama.

1. Circus (i.e., theater).

## Kissing and Bussing

Kissing and bussing differ both in this:  
We buss<sup>9</sup> our wantons, but our wives we kiss.

## Art above Nature: To Julia

When I behold a forest spread  
With silken trees upon thy head,  
And when I see that other dress  
Of flowers set in comeliness;  
5 When I behold another grace  
In the ascent of curious lace,  
Which like a pinnacle doth shew  
The top, and the top-gallant<sup>1</sup> too;  
Then, when I see thy tresses bound  
10 Into an oval, square, or round,  
And knit in knots far more than I  
Can tell by tongue, or true-love tie;  
Next, when those lawny films I see  
Play with a ~~wild civility~~  
15 And all those airy silks to flow,  
Alluring me, and tempting so:  
I must confess, mine eye and heart  
Dotes less on nature, than on art.

## His Prayer to Ben Jonson

When I a verse shall make,  
Know I have prayed thee,  
For old religion's<sup>2</sup> sake,  
Saint Ben, to aid me.  
5 Make the way smooth for me,  
When, I, thy Herrick,  
Honoring thee, on my knee  
Offer my lyric.  
Candles I'll give to thee,  
10 And a new altar;  
And thou, Saint Ben, shalt be  
Writ in my psalter.

9. Although "buss" and "kiss" are synonyms, Herrick suggests a distinction.

1. I.e., the platforms at the heads of the mainmast and mizzenmast.

2. I.e. (primarily), for the sake of our old friendship, implicitly a sacred bond; but the expression glances also, very aptly, at a classical ideal of duty as well as at the faith and ceremonies of Roman times.

With others to the dreadful Doom;  
 I do believe the bad must go  
 From thence to everlasting woe;  
 I do believe the good, and I,  
 10 Shall live with Him eternally;  
 I do believe I shall inherit  
 Heaven, by Christ's mercies, not my merit;  
 I do believe the One in Three,  
 And Three in perfect Unity;  
 15 Lastly, that Jesus is a deed  
 Of gift from God. And here's my creed.

### Another Grace for a Child

Here a little child I stand,  
 Heaving up my either hand;  
 Cold as paddocks<sup>9</sup> though they be,  
 Here I lift them up to Thee,  
 5 For a benison<sup>1</sup> to fall  
 On our meat, and on us all. Amen.

### The Bellman

Along the dark and silent night,  
 With my lantern, and my light,  
 And the tinkling of my bell,  
 Thus I walk, and this I tell:  
 5 Death and dreadfulness call on  
 To the gen'ral Session,<sup>2</sup>  
 To whose dismal bar, we there  
 All accounts must come to clear.  
 Scores of sins we've made here many;  
 10 Wiped out few, God knows, if any.  
 Rise, ye debtors, then, and fall  
 To make payment, while I call.  
 Ponder this when I am gone;  
 By the clock 'tis almost one.

### The White Island, or Place of the Blest

In this world, the isle of dreams,  
 While we sit by sorrow's streams,  
 Tears and terrors are our themes,  
 Reciting;

9. Toads.

1. Blessing.

2. I.e., the Last Judgment.

FROM LUCASTA<sup>1</sup> (1649)

To Lucasta. Going Beyond the Seas.  
Song. Set by Mr. Henry Lawes<sup>2</sup>

If to be absent were to be  
    Away from thee;  
    Or that when I am gone,  
    You or I were alone;  
5 Then, my Lucasta, might I crave  
Pity from blust'ring wind or swallowing wave.

But I'll not sigh one blast or gale  
    To swell my sail,  
    Or pay a tear to 'suage<sup>3</sup>  
10 The foaming blue-god's<sup>4</sup> rage;  
For whether he will let me pass  
Or no, I'm still as happy as I was.

Though seas and land betwixt us both,  
    Our faith and troth,  
15 Like separated souls,  
    All time and space controls;  
Above the highest sphere we meet  
Unseen, unknown, and greet as angels greet.

So then we do anticipate  
20      Our after-fate,  
    And are alive i'the skies,  
    If thus our lips and eyes  
Can speak like spirits unconfined  
In heaven, their earthy bodies left behind.

To Lucasta. Going to the Wars.  
Song. Set by Mr. John Lanière<sup>5</sup>

Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,  
    That from the nunnery

1. Lovelace and Suckling have traditionally been paired as in some sense archetypally representative of the "Cavalier" spirit. There is a measure of truth in this view, but the two poets are not, after all, much alike. If Suckling's verse is often lighthearted, his friend's poems are regularly serious and thoughtful, struck through with somber undertones. Suckling as a rule employs relatively simple diction, while that of Lovelace's poetry is often hard to disentangle. Much of Lovelace's verse, in fact, reflects its author's determination to present a cool and unruffled countenance to the world, betraying little of the terror induced by the spectacle of a disintegrating society.
2. The identity of Lucasta ("chaste light") has not been established. Henry Lawes (1596–1662) composed the music for Milton's *Comus* in 1634, and for Carew's masque, *Coelum Britannicum*, presented at Whitehall in the same year.
3. Assuage.
4. I.e., Neptune's.
5. The Lanière (Lanyer) family had been musicians to the royal household for several generations; John Lanière died in 1650. Cf. *Aemilia Lanyer*, p. 3.