

# Introduction

## Women poets of the English Civil War

This anthology brings together extensive selections of poetry by the five most prolific and prominent women poets of the English Civil War: Anne Bradstreet, Hester Pulter, Margaret Cavendish, Katherine Philips, and Lucy Hutchinson. Some of these women are more familiar to students and teachers than others. Katherine Philips and Margaret Cavendish have enjoyed fame (or endured notoriety) as women poets since the first publication of their work in the 1650s and 1660s, and brief selections of their poems have appeared for a number of years in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Anne Bradstreet is relatively well known as America's first woman poet, after her emigration to New England with her deeply religious family in the 1630s. Hester Pulter's and Lucy Hutchinson's poetry has come to light only very recently, as manuscripts have been discovered. Before that, Hutchinson was familiar to students and scholars of the English Civil War as the author of one of the period's most important historical documents, the *Memoirs* of her parliamentarian husband, Colonel John Hutchinson. Hester Pulter was not known at all. Whether their work has been known for centuries or only a couple of decades, however, all five women whose poetry is collected in this anthology are attracting new and concerted attention as poets at the centre of a rich and diverse culture of poetry by seventeenth-century women.

For women writers, the decades of the English Civil War were of special importance. Women's literacy increased exponentially over the seventeenth century as a whole, and it is that century (rather than the conventional literary-critical period of 'The Renaissance', from 1500 to 1640 or 1660) that sees a great burgeoning in the volume of literary writing by women. A relaxation of the licensing of published writing

during the years of the Civil War itself meant that a larger number of women than ever before entered into print, from the radical prophetess Anna Trapnel to the Quaker Margaret Fell and to the poets Elizabeth Major, An Collins, and the anonymous (but presumably female) author of *Eliza's Babes*. Women's writing also thrived in networks and communities of manuscript writing and exchange, but these manuscript-based texts have been far less visible to literary history than the printed tradition. Hester Pulter's and Lucy Hutchinson's poems exemplify the extent and depth of women's poetry in manuscript culture, as do the extensive manuscript-based activities of Katherine Philips. This anthology presents these manuscript poems alongside those that were printed in the volumes of Anne Bradstreet (*The Tenth Muse*, 1650; *Several Poems*, 1678), Margaret Cavendish (*Poems and Fancies*, 1653 and 1664), and Philips (*Poems*, 1664 and 1667). Together, these texts reveal the diversity and complexity of women's poetry in the mid-century, and enable a more comprehensive understanding of a seventeenth-century women's poetic culture that traversed political affiliations and material forms.

Prominent male poets and their complex works loom large in seventeenth-century literary history. Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace, and John Suckling are known for the delights of poems that invite us to 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may', rallying a Cavalier poetics of friendship and pleasure against political defeat. Andrew Marvell's poetry is famously oblique, his 'Horatian Ode' on Cromwell's return from Ireland epitomising his nuanced celebration – or critique – of the revolutionary general. John Milton, author of *Paradise Lost*, is perhaps the greatest poetic heavyweight of all, his poems tackling politics and theology, boldly attempting 'to justify the ways of God to men'. *Paradise Lost* was not published until 1667, but it is a poem of the English Civil War in that its ideas and intensity bear a strong relationship to the turmoil of the English mid-century, and its multiple revolutions in political and religious thought. Some historians have called the English Civil War 'the last of the European wars of religion', indicating the extent to which religious ideas and religious disagreement created the conflict of the 1640s.<sup>1</sup> Others emphasise the radical experiment of political republicanism, almost 150 years before the French Revolution. Of equal importance are the associated epistemological and philosophical revolutions out of which, arguably, emerge the early modern self as an individual and a public entity. For all of these reasons, the poetry of the canonical, male Civil War writers is well known for the intensity of its political and philosophical thought, as well as for its poetic and stylistic qualities. In some aspects, these poets are not just male but masculinist, in the Cavaliers' reputations for libertinism and their lyrics about homosocial drinking and heterosexual

erotic love, while Milton's sexual politics remain a topic of fervent critical debate.

Like the poetry of their male contemporaries, that of Bradstreet, Pulter, Cavendish, Philips, and Hutchinson is closely tied to the ideas and conflicts of the English Civil War. Philips, Cavendish, and Pulter were royalists of varying stances, and express their support for the king and his allies. Anne Bradstreet wrote as a puritan in the New World who had fled religious persecution, and she recalls in ideal terms the good old days of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Lucy Hutchinson was a fervent republican and, like *Paradise Lost*, her Restoration poems evoke the bitter disillusionment of personal and political loss. Each poet also deploys poetic forms and modes that were fashionable at the time, writing elegies, dialogues, panegyrics, and epic. Each of these five women also felt, geographically, the impact of Civil War, writing from locations as diverse as Hertfordshire in England, Cardiganshire in Wales, Antwerp on the European continent, and Massachusetts Bay in the New World. Abraham Cowley famously wrote of the English Civil War and republic that 'A warlike, various, and tragical age is best to write *of*, but worst to write *in*.' The women whose verse is collected in this anthology felt the privations of war in diverse and multiple ways, but their poetry attests to a rich literary response to the political events of the century.

This anthology presents a complex and rewarding poetic culture that is both uniquely women-centred and integrally connected to the male canonical poetry for which the era is justifiably famous. In subsequent sections, the Introduction will delineate the historical contexts in which – and about which – these poets write: the English Civil War; the relationship between religious conflict and poetry; the networks and communities within which these women situated themselves; the transformative scientific and philosophical culture of the seventeenth century; the genres in which these poets wrote; and the physical forms taken by their poetry, in print and manuscript.

## The English Civil War

The earliest poem in this anthology, Anne Bradstreet's elegy on Sir Philip Sidney, dates from 1638, and by that year the events that would lead to the outbreak of Civil War in England were already in motion. In 1625 James I of England (James VI of Scotland) died and was succeeded by his son Charles. During the first few years of his rule Charles became frustrated with the checks on his power by parliament, particularly its objection to some of his religious and economic policies, and in 1629 he

suspended parliament altogether. During the subsequent period of 'personal rule', over a decade, he continued to raise taxes and implement controversial religious policy.

The Scots were increasingly troubled by Charles's attempts to impose religious conformity and, faced with a major uprising in the late 1630s, Charles decided to send in troops. Requiring further levels of taxation to fund this military action, and hoping for support, he called parliament (the 'Short Parliament') but dismissed it again when it refused his demands. Another parliament that was called in 1640 (the 'Long Parliament'), when Charles was faced with a successful Scottish army occupying the north of England, became a mouthpiece of opposition to the king, which was now strongly motivated by both religious and political principles.

In 1641 a rebellion of Irish Catholics in which many Protestant settlers were killed was both provoked by fear at the increasing power of puritan parliamentarians in England and inspired by the Scots' uprising. After an unsuccessful attempt to have leading parliamentarians arrested, Charles raised his standard in Nottingham in August 1642, effectively initiating the Civil War. After a series of indecisive military clashes, in 1645 parliament established the very effective 'New Model Army' led by Thomas Fairfax with Oliver Cromwell as his cavalry commander, and at the Battle of Naseby Charles's forces were defeated. The king fled and surrendered himself to the Scots. 1648 saw a renewal of military action often known as the Second Civil War, culminating in the powerful New Model Army enforcing a purge ('Pride's Purge') of parliament, which resulted in a 'Rump' of MPs sympathetic to its demands. On 30 January 1649, after a trial for treason, Charles I was executed (the 'regicide'), sending shockwaves around Europe. As this discussion makes clear, this was a conflict involving Scotland, Wales, and Ireland as well as England. Indeed, England, Scotland, and Ireland had only been united under the same monarch since 1603. As neither 'Britain' nor 'United Kingdom' were terms used in this period, though, 'English' is a useful, if problematic, shorthand for the Civil War.

In 1650 parliament passed an act obliging all men to take the Oath of Engagement: 'I do declare and promise, that I will be true and faithful to the Commonwealth of England, as it is now established, without a King or House of Lords'. In a further consolidation of power, parliamentary commander Oliver Cromwell led an offensive in Ireland which brutally suppressed rebellion by killing thousands of Catholics. Meanwhile Charles I's son had himself crowned King of Scotland. In 1651 Cromwell's forces defeated him at the Battle of Worcester and Charles fled to Europe, thus ending the Civil War.

## *Introduction*

Oliver Cromwell was made Lord Protector in 1653 and dismissed the Rump Parliament. From July to December 1653 Cromwell and the army nominated a ruling assembly (variously called the 'Barebones Parliament', or the 'Parliament of Saints') before the calling of the First Protectorate Parliament. This period saw further polarisation of views about Cromwell's rule. He was strongly supported by the army, and he was offered the crown by those who hoped he would be a more unifying force if he became the monarch. Even though he refused the crown, his title and increasing state powers led many of the opposite political persuasion to fear that he was becoming increasingly monarchical in his rule (and a protector was actually less limited by common law than a king).

In 1658 Cromwell died and was succeeded by his son Richard. A combination of dynastic succession in a non-monarchical state, Richard's relative lack of charisma, increasing economic disarray, and faction-fighting resulted in a state of chaos, and in April 1660, after fresh elections had been held, parliament invited Charles II to return and assume power. In May 1660 Charles officially became King Charles II at the 'Restoration'. His return was greeted with widespread celebration, though dissenting voices were appalled by the apparent failure of the country's republican experiment.

While Charles I's last word is reputed to have been 'Remember', one of Charles II's early acts was of enforced forgetting. The Act of Indemnity and Oblivion made it illegal to mention 'any name or names, or other words of reproach tending to revive the memory of the late differences or the occasions thereof'. The poems in this anthology represent many of the various means by which writers attempted to preserve memories of the conflict, to rewrite these into narratives coloured by their own principles, or to erase these through recourse to seemingly non-political modes or subjects. Writers also represented political events through contemporary discourses of international expansion, science, philosophy, and gender politics, as well as the profoundly personal losses of family, friends, land, and religious autonomy.

Critics have debated whether royalist or republican, Catholic or puritan, or other positions in between these, were more sympathetic ideologies to women's autonomy. Certainly women of all persuasions became more publicly articulate in this period, with publications attributed to women rising steeply. For many women, any cultural prohibitions against women writing were outweighed by the impulse to speak out in their other identities as royalists, parliamentarians, Levellers, nobles or Catholics.

## Religion, war, and poetry

Religious debate was central to the English Civil War. The absolutism of Charles I's personal rule may have aggravated parliament over a number of years, but it was conflict over forms of worship and church governance in Scotland and in England that led to outright conflict. After Henry VIII's initial break in the 1530s, Elizabeth I had cut ties between England and the Roman (Catholic) church once and for all, and confirmed Protestant worship as the form of the Church of England, but tension between milder and 'hotter' Protestants simmered through the later decades of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth. Puritans, broadly speaking, were the more purist Protestants who desired plainer and more individualised modes of worship than the Church of England offered, disdaining elaborate ceremonies and ornaments, and, especially in Scotland, arguing against church governance by a hierarchy of bishops. English puritans met their *bête noir* in the 1630s in Archbishop William Laud, whose views on ceremonial worship and on theology were antithetical to those of puritans; many were also uneasy about the openly Catholic affiliations of Charles I's Spanish wife, Henrietta Maria, and her circle. When the Scottish Bishops' War erupted in 1638, then, the tone was set for a prolonged conflict, in which Anglican royalists – those who were loyal to the king and to the Church of England – were pitched against parliamentarians and more radical puritans, whose religious views ranged widely from Scots-style Presbyterians to Quakers, Baptists, and sects such as the Ranters, Diggers, and Levellers.

If religious debate was central to the Civil War, so was religious expression central to the writing of the period. The Reformation of the western Christian church from the early sixteenth century was in part precipitated by a desire for closer individual interaction with the words of the Bible; Reformation Christianity was inherently a religion of words. The English Reformation was accompanied by a proliferation of religious translations, prayers, and treatises in vernacular languages, including striking female-authored examples such as *The Mirror or Glass of the Sinful Soul* (1544) by Princess Elizabeth (later Elizabeth I) and Queen Katherine Parr's *The Lamentation of a Sinner* (1547). Much of the writing by men and women that proliferated in the Civil War years was religious in nature, and included multiple poetic modes: Psalm paraphrases and translations, devotional lyrics, and occasional meditations – meditational poems focusing on a particular moment or occasion in everyday life, or of public prominence – biblical epics (such as Cowley's  *Davideis*), and meditational retreats from the world. Even the latter can be seen as highly politicised. The meditational poems of Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne have

been described as ‘poetry of Anglican survivalism’, retreating from the political world that threatened them;<sup>2</sup> at the other end of the religious and political spectrum, Anne Bradstreet’s ‘David’s Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan’, a delicate poetic paraphrase of 2 Samuel 1:19, carries political connotations as oblique as any poem of Andrew Marvell’s. Its ambiguity is illustrated by readings which see it, alternatively, as a lament for the death of King Charles I or as ‘a reminder of Charles’s role in bringing about his own destruction’.<sup>3</sup>

The women poets in this anthology came from and allied themselves to a full range of positions on the religious and political spectrum. Anne Bradstreet’s birth and marital families were among a group of devout puritans who emigrated from Lincolnshire to Massachusetts Bay in 1630 in order to escape persecution for their dissenting religious views, and to found an ideal religious community. Bradstreet spent her adult life in Massachusetts Bay, where her father, Thomas Dudley, and her husband, Simon Bradstreet, both served as early governors. Hester Pulter, in contrast, was an ardent Anglican and royalist, associating religion strongly with her deposed monarch and his queen, and it is possible that her royalist and Church of England allegiances saw her isolated from her husband and her immediate community during the Civil War years. Her husband, Arthur, was the patron of a Presbyterian minister in their local parish church, and some of Pulter’s religious lyrics suggest that she felt herself to be excluded from communal worship. Katherine Philips’s allegiances were also royalist and Anglican, and she wrote a number of religious poems that have been read as important expressions of loyalty to Anglicanism in Wales, where, in the 1650s, it had a tenuous hold.<sup>4</sup>

Margaret Cavendish is arguably the most secular of the poets featured in this anthology: religion does not appear for her to have been a motivating force, ideologically or poetically, and she was disparaging about the extensive religious writings of her stepdaughters, Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley. For Lucy Hutchinson, however, independent puritan religion is at the forefront of her politics and her poetic expression. Hutchinson and her parliamentarian husband, like Anne Bradstreet’s, dissented from the high Anglicanism of the Church of England, and were in favour of the right of Protestant congregations to form voluntarily and freely. After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Hutchinson continued to be closely allied to Nonconformist preachers in London (those who did not conform to the Act of Uniformity in religion of 1662).

Given the centrality of religion to identity and affiliation in the seventeenth century, it might be expected that religious outlook would determine the networks and communities in which women wrote. To a large extent it did: Bradstreet was particularly deeply entwined in the

small New English puritan community in which she lived, and Hutchinson's dissenting alliances had a close bearing on her writing in the 1660s and 1670s. However, the fault lines of religious and political conflict in the period often ran directly through families, marriages, and communities, in complex and unpredictable ways. Katherine Philips, for example, was a royalist while her husband James was a parliamentarian; the royalist Hester Pulter's sister was a close associate of the republican Milton; and Lucy Hutchinson's brother, Sir Allen Apsley, was a prominent royalist. The communities (or lack thereof) in which women poets wrote are often complex and diverse.

### Networks and communities

One of the most intriguing questions about the Civil War poetic culture in which the women in this anthology engaged is the extent to which it developed in isolation or in conversation with other poets. Some of the social environments in which male poets wrote were closed to women poets, such as professional institutions (the Inns of Court) or academic institutions (the universities or the Royal Society), though women poets also often gained more oblique access to such circles. Lucy Hutchinson's literary commonplace book shows her collecting poetry which circulated among Inns of Court poets, probably through her brother, the royalist Sir Allen Apsley. Margaret Cavendish visited the Royal Society and corresponded with some of its members, while Philips associated with the circle of the royalist musician Henry Lawes in the 1650s, and had one of her plays performed during a very successful trip to Dublin. Anne Bradstreet's poetry seems to have circulated reasonably widely in the settler community in Massachusetts Bay, and even Hester Pulter, supposedly shut up in her country grange, had connections to London networks and even possibly to Milton.

**Anne Bradstreet's** education was, like that of most women in this anthology, received at home – in her case, in the home of the Earl of Lincoln, to whom her father, Thomas Dudley, served as a gentleman steward. Her stay in the home of the earl, however, was short: after time in the market town of Boston, Lincolnshire, Dudley and his family sailed for Massachusetts Bay in April 1630, part of a group of Lincolnshire puritans helping to establish a colony in the New World. Anne was eighteen years old, newly married to Simon Bradstreet, a Cambridge graduate and a fellow puritan emigrant, and in the fledgling Massachusetts Bay community, she seems to have found a readership for her poems among a small but highly-educated coterie of puritan men and women.



She addressed her poems explicitly to her father, describing him as the author of a quarternion poem (a poem on a theme in four parts) like her own, and asking this poet-patriarch to bestow his 'mild aspect' on her 'ragged lines' ('To her Most Honoured Father Thomas Dudley Esquire, these Humbly Presented'). Other readers included Nathaniel Ward, who returned to England in 1646, and her brother-in-law John Woodbridge, who returned to England in 1647.

Bradstreet's poems appeared in London, printed in *The Tenth Muse* (1650), after Woodbridge took her manuscripts with him, probably without her permission, when he travelled there in 1647. The volume's title celebrates Bradstreet as *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America*, but it is to an English Civil War audience that the publication is directed. Bradstreet's declared poetic and political heroes are Sir Philip Sidney and Elizabeth I, and her greatest poetic influences are her father and Guillaume de Saluste Du Bartas, the French writer whose extended religious poetry was enormously popular (in Josuah Sylvester's translation) in England in the first part of the seventeenth century. Several of her poems speak directly to the circumstances of the English Civil War, not least *A Dialogue between Old England and New, Concerning their Present Troubles, Anno 1642*, in which Old England laments her social and political woes, and her daughter (New England) offers sympathy and relief. Bradstreet lived her entire adult life in New England, and later poems that are included in the posthumous *Several Poems* (Boston, 1678) speak to a more domestic context; but via *The Tenth Muse* and its publication in London in the first year of the English republic, she is emphatically a woman poet of the English Civil War.

**Hester Pulter's** birth family also appears to have been one in which girls received a high level of education. Her father, Sir James Ley, was Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland, and went on to become Lord Chief Justice and Lord High Treasurer of England; he was himself a writer, and is described by Milton as 'that old man eloquent' in a sonnet written to Pulter's sister Lady Margaret Ley in the 1640s. Pulter repeatedly describes her writing context, at the country estate of Broadfield, Hertfordshire, in the 1640s and 1650s, as one of isolation, insisting that she is 'shut up in a country grange' and 'tied to one habitation'. It is clear that Broadfield was a site of melancholy for her, not least because of the absence of her adult daughters, whom she repeatedly exhorts in her poems to leave London and to visit her there, but there are records of her visiting London during these years. Her poems attest to an acute awareness of contemporary literary culture, echoing the court and country poetry of Carew and Herrick; the prolific culture of royalist elegies on Charles I's death; and the emblem traditions of George Wither and

Francis Quarles. Resonances between several of her poems and those of Marvell have led to speculation that she may have known Marvell's poems in manuscript.

Of all the works in this anthology, however, Pulter's poems appear to have had the least impact on contemporary readers. Pulter addresses numerous poems to her adult daughters, inviting them to join her in the country; and her series of emblem poems is didactic, addressed to her children and to royalist women more broadly. She evokes the trope of royalist friendship that is central also to Katherine Philips's verse, but there is no evidence of her poetry circulating beyond the sole existing manuscript of her work. This manuscript has been annotated by an early eighteenth-century antiquarian, whose notes suggest an interest in her family connections as much as her poetry; and some later additions to the volume indicate that it was passed down the family line. Beyond these familial readers, there appears to have been no audience for her verse, its reception history reinforcing the poetic trope of isolation that runs through much of it.

**Katherine Philips** describes her literary life in Wales in similar terms of isolation, and Cardiganshire was, indeed, remote from London, but much of her life was spent in, or influenced by, city culture and specifically that of London and Dublin. Philips was educated at a London girls' school (rather than at home, as were all the other poets in this anthology), and mingled in some court circles, probably partly through her school friend Mary Aubrey. She married James Philips of Cardiganshire, Wales, at the age of sixteen in 1648; in contrast to life in London, married life in Cardigan may have seemed quiet, but Philips corresponded widely and actively, cultivating her 'Society of Friendship' and circulating her poetry among friends and wider circle of acquaintance. She wrote often to Sir Charles Cotterell, master of ceremonies for Charles II, and he provided a key link to court circles, presenting copies of her poems in manuscript and in print to the Duchess of York and Charles II. Such correspondence was a lively and critical form of literary engagement for many women, as well as men, in the seventeenth century, and provided for Philips a way of selecting an appropriate coterie of readers for her poems. At the same time, she also explored and exploited her rural location in developing a distinctive poetry of retreat in poems such as 'A Country Life', 'Invitation to the Country', and 'A Retired Friendship, to Ardelia, 23 August 1651'.

Philips travelled to Dublin in the early 1660s, and this trip was to prove remarkably fruitful. Philips's contact with an Anglo-Irish elite including Robert Boyle, Earl of Orrery, and Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, saw her translating a play by the French dramatist Corneille.

Under her title of *Pompey*, Philips's play was performed and printed in Dublin in 1663. Her correspondence tells of her rivalry with an English court circle including Edmund Waller, who was also translating Corneille's play at this time. The prominence given to *Pompey* in both Dublin and London no doubt contributed to the publication of her *Poems* (1664), a volume about which she loudly protested. Whether or not that publication was in fact approved by her, there was a market for the poetry of 'Orinda', her sobriquet.

**Margaret Cavendish** had access to some of the most prominent social circles and experienced some of the most wide-ranging European travel of any writer, let alone woman writer, in the mid-seventeenth century. Her works both bear the marks of these people and places and also reject these as Cavendish claims to prioritise unlearnedness and natural wit over social interaction and cultural engagement. This is as much a carefully constructed identity as Philips's 'Orinda', though, as we will see from the evidence of her actual participation in intellectual culture.

Margaret Cavendish was born to the Lucas family in Essex. She moved to Oxford with her sister and there became a maid of honour to Charles I's wife, Queen Henrietta Maria, following the court into exile in Paris. It was here that she met her husband, William Cavendish, a royalist commander and widower whose daughters were also poets and who was himself a minor Cavalier poet and a very significant patron of other poets and writers. As royalists in exile the couple lived first in Paris and then Antwerp, moving into the house of the painter Rubens (who had died some years previously). In both cities they mingled with some of the most prominent thinkers of their day, both English émigrés and continental Europeans, including the royalist political theorist Thomas Hobbes, the philosopher René Descartes, and William's brother the prominent mathematician Charles Cavendish. Though Margaret writes with some ambivalence about her interactions with many of these men, the discussion in the Cavendish household must have fostered her interests particularly in natural philosophy, and after they had returned to England she would visit the Royal Society in 1667. Though they lived abroad, the political events of the later 1640s and 1650s touched the Cavendishes sharply. In 1648 Margaret's brother Charles Lucas was executed after the siege of Colchester, and in 1651 she suffered some humiliation when she returned to England with her brother-in-law to try to regain Cavendish land sequestered by the new regime. Nor were Margaret and her husband rewarded at the Restoration for their loyalty to the new king's father in the ways she had evidently expected. Poems such as 'A Dialogue between a Bountiful Knight and a Castle Ruined in War' show that Cavendish

felt the degradations of Civil War had indelibly marked the places she inhabited. She and William lived both at Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire (where dramas by Ben Jonson were put on for Charles I before the war), and Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire (making them almost neighbours of the Hutchinsons, and the husbands seem to have shared mutual respect despite their opposing political views).

**Lucy Hutchinson** was born into the royalist Apsley family, though her mother's puritan inclinations may have instigated her own later puritanism and shift away from royalism. Her father was lieutenant of the Tower of London, so she was brought up in an unusual setting, and one which may have provided surprising access to intellectual circles rather than seclusion from them; she recounts how her mother assisted Sir Walter Raleigh with some of his scientific experiments when he was imprisoned in the tower. Her brother Sir Allen Apsley was a royalist officer and MP (notorious for a drunken episode in the House of Commons) and perhaps had a formative influence on his sister through his access to London literary circles. Her religious and political views were one of the features that attracted her husband, John Hutchinson, to her, and her to him, and Lucy Hutchinson's marriage only further developed her opposition to aspects of state religion and the court. She and her husband were activist republicans and Independents in religion. Their circles were of high social standing but diverse in political persuasion, from the Apsley family and their Wilmot relatives (Anne Wilmot, Lucy Hutchinson's cousin, was the mother of the notorious libertine poet John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester) to the Earl of Anglesey (to whom she dedicated her Lucretius translation) and the Nonconformist preacher John Owen, whose sermons both Hutchinson and Lady Anglesey attended and whose Latin theological treatise Hutchinson translated. After the Restoration, Hutchinson felt her intellectual and social circles disintegrating around her, though this period seems also to have seen renewed productivity in her poetic career. Hutchinson's most personal (and also arguably, most political) poems are the elegies on her husband, which instead of bolstering the kind of community represented by Katherine Philips in defeat, represent a poetry of isolation. These are poems profoundly connected to place, as they meditate on the bereaved wife's experience of the estate where she had lived with her husband. These poems turn inside out many of the tropes of country house poetry (most prominently used by Ben Jonson in 'To Penshurst'), which often presents the richness, plenitude, and order of the estate ruled by the perfect master. With her husband gone and her hopes for a godly republic shattered, Hutchinson represents Owthorpe as an elegiac and dystopian landscape.

## Philosophy and science

While the Civil War wrought damage across the landscapes in which these poets lived, their perspective on the world around them was also transformed by the period's rapid developments in natural philosophy. John Donne wrote that 'new philosophy calls all in doubt',

And freely men confess that this world's spent,  
When in the planets, and the firmament  
They seek so many new; they see that this  
Is crumbled out again to his atomies.<sup>5</sup>

As this famous quotation suggests, philosophy in the period was both profoundly revolutionary and profoundly poetic. Donne gives a vivid sense of the loss as well as gain that came with scientific discoveries, and his words would also come to reflect the country's mixed feelings about the triumphs and devastations of Civil War and political revolution some three decades later.

The terms 'philosophy' and particularly 'new philosophy' would come in the seventeenth century to represent something closer to what we now call science. The word 'science' derives from the Latin for 'knowledge', and 'philosophy' from the Greek for 'love of knowledge'. The term 'natural philosophy' was used to describe investigation of the natural world – what we now think of as biology, chemistry, and physics – but while these modern disciplines probably would not identify themselves with philosophy, the early modern discipline incorporated more imaginative and conjectural approaches. The mid-seventeenth century saw a shift to 'experimental philosophy'. Again, the terms 'experiment' and 'philosophy' may seem divergent today, but convey the nature of scientific enquiry in this period. The work of scholars including Francis Bacon earlier in the century had led to a focus on empirical methods, on evidence and observation rather than book learning or enquiry through imagination. The Royal Society was founded in 1660 on Baconian principles, becoming England's first scientific institution. It was granted a royal charter by Charles II in 1663 and the full title 'The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge'. As its name and charter make clear, the society was connected to the Restoration court, with Charles as its patron, and he may have seen it as an important step in building national pride after the Civil War period. The Curator of Experiments was Robert Hooke, and he put on a dazzling display of experiments for Margaret Cavendish's famous visit to the society in 1667. Her poems on telescopic and microscopic vision ('Of Stars' and 'A World in an Earring') are inspired by contemporary use of optical instruments as well as critical

of their presumption to truth; rejecting Royal Society principles, she often concludes that the imagination can be as precise and productive a tool as vision or reason.

The terms that are now often used for this period's philosophy, 'the scientific revolution' and 'the new science', are as value-laden as those used for its political phases, such as 'Interregnum' and 'Restoration'. Both 'revolution' and 'new' suggest what their proponents (and later scholars) have wanted to see occurring, but the period saw continuity as well as transformation in thinking about the natural world. Writers like Hester Pulter, Margaret Cavendish, and Lucy Hutchinson bridge these aspects of seventeenth-century philosophy, both prescient and nostalgic. Pulter's poetic depictions of her garden and surrounding landscape owe much to the moralistic and religious view of the natural world propounded in Pliny's *Natural History*, translated by Philemon Holland in 1601; at the same time, 'A Solitary Complaint' reveals a strikingly modern understanding of Copernican astronomical theory, as confirmed by Galileo. When Lucy Hutchinson translated the Roman poet Lucretius' *De rerum natura* ('Of the nature of things'), she was reworking an ancient poem which still shocked her contemporaries. Cavendish was somewhat retrograde in her rejection of experimentation and instruments, but also very modern in her critique of the objectivity claimed by contemporary scientists and also in her environmental consciousness. She ventriloquises the hare, stag, and oak in order to assert their equal claim to subjecthood and sensibility.

Early modern philosophy and science also raised questions about poetic language. Thomas Sprat, in his 1667 history of the Royal Society (which was also a kind of manifesto), saw the society's members as having resolved 'to reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style' and to promote 'a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness: bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness'. Hutchinson's Lucretius translation, her *Order and Disorder*, and Cavendish's atomist poems in *Poems and Fancies* all defend the poet's choice to write in verse for subjects that might seem better suited to prose. Pulter's occasional and religious poems, such as 'A Solitary Complaint' and 'The Circle ["Those that the hidden chemic art profess"]', are often surprising in the extent to which contemporary scientific theory becomes the basis of extended poetic tropes, with Donne's metaphysical poems likely to be one influence on her.

The gendering of early modern natural philosophy has been much debated, and its formal institutions were indeed exclusively male in membership; the Royal Society allowed Cavendish to visit but did not admit female members to its fellowship until 1945. But the philosophical

poems by these women poets suggest another story, one dominated by powerful female figures, such as Venus in the *De rerum natura* and Nature in Cavendish's poems. Pulter is, again, a striking case, as her protestations of isolation belie a familiarity with contemporary alchemical thought and Galilean astronomical theory that she puts to detailed and sophisticated use. It is difficult to know exactly what her sources were (for example, if she read Galileo she would have had to do so in Latin or Italian), but her poetry illustrates both the diffusion of new scientific ideas in the period and women poets' interest in them.<sup>6</sup>

## Genre

The range of poetic genres in which these women wrote testifies to the diversity of their education, environment, and influence, as well as religious and political leanings. Some choices of poetic genre – for example, religious lyrics and elegies – are particularly prevalent, and reflect the particularities of women's education and cultural capital. At the same time, however, and just as intriguingly, the women represented in this anthology participate in a full spectrum of seventeenth-century genres, including philosophical poems, dialogues, political complaints, and epics; and they do so as innovatively as their male counterparts. Poetic fashions also changed across the decades covered, and we will see each poem representing a particular and distinctive manifestation of any one genre, with continuities as well as changes revealing much about seventeenth-century women's engagements with poetic forms and about the most popular Civil War genres.

Women's close relationship to the Bible, through education and reading practices, is evident in the wide and various range of religious genres that they use. Katherine Philips's '2 Corinthians 5:19', written on Good Friday 1653, is a kind of verse that was based on devotional practice, advocated by many influential churchmen such as Bishop Joseph Hall and widely popular among male and female poets. Such meditations, along with the devotional lyrics represented in Hester Pulter's work, often bear a close relationship to the meditational lyrics of Donne and Herbert, favourites of women readers in the seventeenth century. (Donne's secular love lyrics also influenced both Philips and Hutchinson; see, for example, Philips's 'Friendship in Emblem or the Seal, to my Dearest Lucasia' and Hutchinson's 'Another on the Sunshine'). Women's religious lyrics may once have been regarded as a lesser sort of writing, 'private' and personal, but the religious nature of the conflict during the Civil War also means that these poems' languages of devotion are often highly

politicised. Pulter's 'Must I thus ever interdicted be?', for example, expresses a personal experience of God's love, but also seems to make a statement about being excluded from communal worship at her local parish church.

Women also wrote longer-form biblical poems, in part under the influence of Guillaume de Saluste Du Bartas, whose long poems on sacred and secular history, the *Divine Weeks and Works*, were enormously popular. Anne Bradstreet is explicit about her poetic debt to 'great Bartas', whose name recurs throughout her verse. Her longest poem, *The Four Monarchies*, is a lengthy verse explication of the Assyrian, Persian, Greek, and Roman monarchies using them to interpret the history of the world and to reflect obliquely on the central political events of the English mid-century. Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder* is a lengthy poetic retelling of Genesis that can be most easily compared to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but its deliberately plainer language and closer adherence to Scripture also reflect its relationship to Du Bartas's work and to a wider culture of poetic biblical paraphrases.

Elegy is another favourite genre for women writers, and the poets in this anthology put it to an intriguingly wide range of uses. It has been said of elegy and its popularity with women writers that 'grief provided a position from which women could speak',<sup>7</sup> and its basis in child-loss poetry is illustrated in this anthology in poems by Bradstreet (on the death of her granddaughter Elizabeth), Pulter (on the death of her daughter Jane), and Philips (on the death of her infant son Hector). Elegy is, however, put to many and various uses. Bradstreet's 'elegies' for Sir Philip Sidney, Elizabeth I, and Du Bartas are really retrospective encomiums, harking back to the 'halcyon days' of English Protestantism; they are different in kind from Pulter's elegies for King Charles I, which were contemporaneous to his death, and deeply influenced by an outpouring of royalist elegies on his death in 1649. Margaret Cavendish's 'Upon the Funeral of my Dear Brother, Killed in these Unhappy Wars' is personal as well as political, as are Lucy Hutchinson's elegies on the death of her husband. These poems radically revise the genre again, appropriating what had become a royalist form (through its identification with mourning of the king) and using it to republican ends.

Poems of friendship, of retirement, and of invitation to rural retreat are also common across the royalist lyrics of Pulter and Philips. Philips circulated poetry in a 'Society of Friendship', her articulations of friendship to Lucasia, Rosania, and Ardelia often delineating a space outside the tumult of state politics; see, for example, 'Invitation to the Country' and 'A Retired Friendship, to Ardelia, 23 August 1651'. Friendship in these poems coincides with a call to rural retreat that echoes the classical



retirement poetry of Horace, in a Horatian stoicism that became associated with royalists in the Civil War period. Pulter, too, addresses her poems to royalist ‘friends’, and advocates a retreat from the city to the country (see, for example, her ‘Invitation into the Country, to my Dear Daughters’). These poems can be read in relation to each other as well as to poems of a similar nature by Cowley and Marvell; each speaks to the poetic ‘mainstream’, and also illustrates ways in which these tropes are, in some cases, feminised, enabling an expanded exploration of that central, evolving trope in seventeenth-century personal and political poetry.

The women in this anthology write in a wide range of other genres, many of which have very particular political resonances in the period. The female-voiced complaint poem has classical and biblical precedents, as well as medieval and early modern histories of use for political commentary. Hester Pulter’s ‘The Complaint of Thames, 1647’ is in this mode, as is Bradstreet’s female-voiced dialogue poem *A Dialogue between Old England and New*. But Bradstreet’s ‘The Flesh and the Spirit’, like Margaret Cavendish’s ‘A Dialogue between the Body and the Mind’, is in the medieval tradition of dialogues between body and soul rather than in the vein of the contentious dialogue poem that was a popular Civil War genre. Cavendish’s dialogues between mankind and hare or oak tree are different again, drawing on literary traditions of a moralised landscape and its animal inhabitants and placing her as a leading voice of environmental consciousness.

Hester Pulter’s emblem poems are also indebted to a moralised reading of the natural world, drawing heavily in her case on Pliny’s *Natural History*, in its English translation by Philemon Holland (1601), and similar sources. Emblems were popular in England from the 1580s, drawing on European models and consisting of three parts – a motto, an image, and a poem – in order to draw a moral from the natural world or from religious belief. Pulter’s emblems are purely poetic (without image or motto) but they draw on previous models and encapsulate divine and moral ‘truths’ for her children and for royalist readers.<sup>8</sup> These are unapologetically didactic poems, drawing on images from the natural world in order to correct the ills of English republican society. Lucy Hutchinson’s translation of Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*, excerpted in this anthology, takes a radically different approach to the world. It is the first translation into English of a linguistically difficult, ideologically radical Latin poem that is instructive yet also allusive and epic; it can be read alongside Cavendish’s different, but equally materialist, ‘A World Made by Atoms’ and ‘Nature Calls a Council’, and alongside Pulter’s philosophically speculative lyrics.

What emerges in our selection of poems – approximately twenty lyrics or extracts of longer poems for each author – is a corpus of poetry by mid-seventeenth-century women that is extensive, complex, and formally diverse, showing that women poets used all the genres adopted by their male peers, and indeed led the way in the formation of some key Civil War genres.

### Forms of publication

The decades of the English Civil War and the Cromwellian republic saw an unprecedented number of women writers enter into print. The publication of Anne Bradstreet's *The Tenth Muse* in 1650 exemplifies the printing of poetry for political ends: her historical verse spoke directly to religious puritans and political republicans in the year after the regicide, and *A Dialogue between Old England and New* could be seen as a metaphor for exactly the way in which Bradstreet's political voice spoke back to the country from which she had emigrated. The publication of *The Tenth Muse* also illustrates the questions concerning authorisation to publish which surround a number of prominent women's printed texts in this period. Bradstreet's brother-in-law John Woodbridge is believed to have taken her manuscript poems to London without her knowledge: certainly, she later wrote that the poems of *The Tenth Muse* were 'snatched' from her side 'by friends less wise than true, / Who thee abroad exposed to public view' ('The Author to her Book'). Katherine Philips also publicly decried the printing of her *Poems* in 1664, claiming that the volume was not authorised. It is, however, unclear whether Bradstreet and Philips were entirely ingenuous in their public expressions of violation.

These reactions indicate the extent to which print publication was often still regarded in the mid-seventeenth century as inappropriate for women, although these are important transitional decades when even prominent male writers such as Andrew Marvell demurred from publishing their poems in print. Women of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had written prevalently in manuscript, circulating and 'publishing' their works in coteries and networks that ranged from the very small to the more extensive. Anne Bradstreet's poems circulated in a relatively small family and community coterie in New England, and Hester Pulter's poems seem to have circulated within her family first and foremost. Katherine Philips, however, was an enormously successful and prolific manuscript poet, cultivating an audience for verses that ranged from friends she knew well to readers of whom she knew little. When Philips's *Poems* (1664) was printed, her work was already widely known, and

indeed the printed volume may have been a pirate edition, provided to the printers by an admiring reader.

The examples of Bradstreet and Philips illustrate the ways in which manuscript circulation and print publishing existed in a continuum with each other in this period (and, indeed, well into the eighteenth century). The first five cantos of Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder* were printed anonymously in 1679, and several copies of the other fifteen cantos seem to have circulated in manuscript. Her elegies, however, seem to have remained private, perhaps on account of their great political sensitivity. It is important to remember that politically sensitive male authors' poetry often remained unprinted in this period, too. The poetry of Andrew Marvell, for example, was unprinted until 1681, and even then, 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland' was cancelled from most copies, probably because its apparent praise of Cromwell was out of step with prevailing political sentiment.

Margaret Cavendish is alone among the poets in this anthology in boldly prioritising the print publication of her work. Her folios represent a thoroughgoing monumentalisation of herself as they foreground her name and title and her authorial voice, through the many prefaces addressing various components of her readership. Her work was also promoted by her husband, William Cavendish, both during her life and after her death, when he published a collection of letters and poems about his wife. Nor did she regard the printing of her work as bestowing an inviolable fixity upon it. Cavendish probably keenly oversaw, if not conducted, the editing of her own work. *Poems and Fancies* was first printed in 1653, and she made large numbers of amendments to it before its second printing in 1664.

The final seventeenth-century publications of Katherine Philips's and Anne Bradstreet's poems were posthumous: *Poems by the Most Deservedly Admired Mrs Katherine Philips* (1667) was published three years after Philips's death of smallpox, and *Several Poems, Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning* (1678) was published six years after Bradstreet's death. All of these volumes claim, less and more explicitly, that the revisions to the poems that they contain were made by the author, but it is hard to be sure of the extent to which this is the case. *Poems* (1667) is a handsome folio volume, prefaced with a bust of the poet and a plethora of celebratory poems: the volume begins the celebration of Katherine Philips as 'The Matchless Orinda', and her poems were read, circulated, and copied to a greater extent than any other early modern woman writer. Bradstreet's *Several Poems*, printed in Boston, established her as America's first poet, a context in which she has primarily been read ever since. With these posthumous editions begins another story, one of the reception and

reading of Civil War women's poetry from their deaths until the present day – and one in which this anthology seeks to intervene.

Women's poetic engagement in the political, social, and literary cultures of seventeenth-century England has long been elided, rendering only partial our sense of Civil War poetics. Much women's poetry of the period, underrepresented in the print culture, became invisible to future centuries, and its participation in the social, poetic, and political cultures of its time was lost from view. 'Women's poetry' of the English Civil War is, in the formulation of this anthology, simply that authored by women: this point of genesis aside, the poems are as diverse in genre, poetics, and political sentiment as those by men, and they provide as rich and as varied an experience of seventeenth-century poetic culture as those hitherto better-known texts. Drawing on the multiple material contexts in which women's poetry occurred, and on the immediate, revised, and posthumous versions of these poems, this anthology presents the works of women poets whose works emerge out of, reflect upon, and contribute to Civil War poetic culture. Here, Bradstreet, Pulter, Philips, Cavendish, and Hutchinson can be read in depth alongside each other, and can take their places in the poetic canon of Civil War and seventeenth-century England.

## Notes

- 1 David Loewenstein and John Morrill, 'Literature and Religion', in David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller (eds), *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 664–713 (p. 664).
- 2 See Claude J. Summers and Michael Schoenfeldt, 'Herrick, Vaughan, and the Poetry of Anglican Survivalism', in John R. Roberts (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1994), pp. 46–74.
- 3 See Elizabeth Wade White, *Anne Bradstreet: The Tenth Muse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 250; and Mihoko Suzuki, 'What's Political in Seventeenth-Century Women's Political Writing?', *Literature Compass*, 6 (2009): 927–41 (p. 935).
- 4 John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics, 1603–1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 5 John Donne, *An Anatomy of the World* (1611), lines 205, 209–12.
- 6 See Sarah Hutton, 'Hester Pulter (c. 1596–1678). A Woman Poet and the New Astronomy', *Etudes Epistémè*, 14 (2008): 77–87.
- 7 See Danielle Clarke, *The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing* (London: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 166–67.
- 8 See Alice Eardley, *Lady Hester Pulter: Poems, Emblems, and The Unfortunate Florinda* (Toronto: Iter Inc. and the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2014), pp. 27–29.