

Preface

How does one begin to study poetry? This volume, derived from the fourth edition of the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, provides a rich store of technical and conceptual information, and invites its readers to commence their study with fundamental ideas, facts, and practices. Poetics, the discipline out of which this book comes, is concerned with the nature of poetry across times and cultures. Those of us who are committed to the discipline often find ourselves trying to balance the kind of technical, highly particular materials collected here with larger questions that open outward from them: What is the character of the poetic? How does poetic description change the world it represents? Who speaks in a poem, and who listens? While these are broad, durable questions, our consideration of them is indivisible from our knowledge of rhythm and meter, rhyme and its shadings, line and stanza, scheme and trope, or a fixed form and its history. To make that knowledge attainable, this *Handbook* gathers authoritative accounts of basic, essential terms.

The entries selected for this volume are chosen for their value in a classroom, a reading community, or a personal experience of poetry. For some readers, the *Handbook* will be a threshold across which they will move in search of greater knowledge. The *Princeton Encyclopedia* includes not only the entries collected here but many more that complement them and lend them context; moreover, the bibliographies for every item in the *Handbook* and the *Encyclopedia* make a virtually boundless resource for further exploration.

The present volume maintains several conventions of the *Princeton Encyclopedia*. Translations are generally given within parentheses, without quotation marks if no other words appear in the parenthetical matter, but set off within quotation

marks when some qualification is needed, as in the form of many etymologies: for example, *arsis* and *thesis* (Gr., “raising and lowering”). Translated titles of works generally appear in the most comprehensive articles; entries of smaller scope often give original titles without translation, although some contributors have translated titles where doing so clarifies the argument. (We tolerate inconsistency that reflects to some degree the field at hand: thus some entries, such as “eclogue” or “ode,” rarely translate titles because many readers of those genres are familiar with the original languages; others, such as “love poetry,” give only translated titles.) Translated titles of books are italicized when the title refers to a published English translation: for example, Joachim du Bellay’s *Les Antiquités de Rome* (*Ruins of Rome*). For poems, translated titles are given with quotation marks when the translation has been published under that title, but without quotation marks when the translated title is ad hoc.

This convention sometimes entails reproducing a nonliteral rendering that appears in a published translation, such as Francisco de Quevedo’s *Canta sola a Lisi* as *Poems to Lisi*. We believe that the value of indicating an extant translation outweighs the occasional infelicity. At the same time, it is likely we have overlooked some published translations, and many new ones will appear over the life of this book.

Dates of the lives and works of poets and critics often appear in the most comprehensive entries on a given topic (e.g., “lyric”), showing up less often as topics become narrower (“alba,” “envoi”). Dates of works in the age of print refer to publication unless otherwise indicated.

Articles contain two types of cross-references: those that appear within the

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body of an entry (indicated with asterisks or in parentheses with small capitals), and those that follow an entry, just before the bibliographies. The former are often topics that extend the fabric of the definition at hand; the latter often indicate adjacent topics of broader interest. Of course, both kinds of cross-reference hold out the danger of infinite connection: nearly every entry could be linked to many others, and the countless usages of terms such as *line*, *metaphor*, and *poetics* cannot all be linked to the entries concerned with those terms. Accordingly we have tried to apply cross-references judiciously, indicating where further reading in a related entry really complements the argument at hand.

The bibliographies are intended not only as lists of works cited in the entries but as guides to relevant scholarship of the

distant and recent past. The bibliographies have been lightly standardized, but some entries—say, those that narrate the development of a field—gain from citing works of scholarship in their original iterations (John Crowe Ransom's essay "Criticism, Inc." in its first appearance in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* of 1937) or in their original languages, while many others choose to cite later editions or translations into English as a convenience for the reader.

At a time in which poetry is thriving as an art, and poetics is gaining fresh disciplinary force, the study of poetry at the secondary and college level depends on maintaining a living connection to these scenes of renewal. With hundreds of contributors active in the field (including many poets) and access to advanced thinking, this *Handbook* is that connection.