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THE METAPHYSICAL POETS

JOAN VAN EMDEN

palgrave
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CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>		vii
<i>General editor's preface</i>		viii
1 Introduction	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 Poetic style	2
	1.3 Conclusion	6
2 Lives and literary contexts	2.1 Education and scholarship	8
	2.2 Drama, poetry and prose in the seventeenth century	9
	2.3 John Donne (1572–1631)	11
	2.4 George Herbert (1593–1633)	12
	2.5 Henry Vaughan (1621–95)	14
	2.6 Andrew Marvell (1621–78)	14
	2.7 Conclusion	16
3 Themes and issues	3.1 Contemporary themes	17
	3.2 Historical and religious background	18
4 Selected poems: summaries and commentaries	4.1 John Donne	33
	<i>The Good-morrow; The Sunne Rising; Song; Twickenham Garden; A Nocturnall upon St Lucies Day; A Valediction: forbidding mourning; The Extase; The Funerall; Satyre iii; Holy Sonnets i, x, xiv; Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse; A Hymne to God the Father</i>	
	4.2 George Herbert	57
	<i>The Pearl; Redemption; Easter Wings; The Collar; Love</i>	
	4.3 Henry Vaughan	65
	<i>The Retreate; The Morning Watch; The World; Man; Quickness</i>	

4.4 Andrew Marvell	74
<i>On a Drop of Dew; Bermudas;</i>	
<i>To his Coy Mistress;</i>	
<i>The Definition of Love;</i>	
<i>The Picture of little T. C. in a</i>	
<i>Prospect of Flowers; An Horation</i>	
<i>Ode upon Cromwell's Return</i>	
<i>from Ireland</i>	
5 Critical reception	89
<i>Revision questions</i>	92
<i>Further reading</i>	93

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JOAN VAN EMDEN

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The aim of the Macmillan Master Guides is to help you to appreciate the book you are studying by providing information about it and by suggesting ways of reading and thinking about it which will lead to a fuller understanding. The section on the writer's life and background has been designed to illustrate those aspects of the writer's life which have influenced the work, and to place it in its personal and literary context. The summaries and critical commentary are of special importance in that each brief summary of the action is followed by an examination of the significant critical points. The space which might have been given to repetitive explanatory notes has been devoted to a detailed analysis of the kind of passage which might confront you in an examination. Literary criticism is concerned with both the broader aspects of the work being studied and with its detail. The ideas which meet us in reading a great work of literature, and their relevance to us today, are an essential part of our study, and our Guides look at the thought of their subject in some detail. But just as essential is the craft with which the writer has constructed his work of art, and this is considered under several technical headings – characterisation, language, style and stage-craft.

The authors of these Guides are all teachers and writers of wide experience, and they have chosen to write about books they admire and know well in the belief that they can communicate their admiration to you. But you yourself must read and know intimately the book you are studying. No one can do that for you. You should see this book as a lamp-post. Use it to shed light, not to lean against. If you know your text and know what it is saying about life, and how it says it, then you will enjoy it, and there is no better way of passing an examination in literature.

JAMES GIBSON