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John Dryden, Poet Laureate to Charles II and James II, was one of the great literary figures of the late seventeenth century. This Companion provides a fresh look at Dryden's tactics and triumphs in negotiating the extraordinary political and cultural revolutions of his time. The newly commissioned essays introduce readers to the full range of his work as a poet, as a writer of innovative plays and operas, as a purveyor of contemporary notions of empire, and most of all as a man intimate with the opportunities of aristocratic patronage as well as the emerging market for literary gossip, slander and polemic. Dryden's works are examined in the context of seventeenth-century politics, publishing and ideas of authorship. A valuable resource for students and scholars, the Companion includes a full chronology of Dryden's life and times and a detailed guide to further reading.