

THE
Songs and Sonets
OF
JOHN DONNE

+

An *Editio minor* with
Introduction and Explanatory Notes by

THEODORE REDPATH

*Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge
and Lecturer in English in the
University of Cambridge*

METHUEN AND CO. LTD

36 ESSEX STREET • STRAND • LONDON W.C.2

NOTE ON THE SECOND IMPRESSION

In the above-mentioned letter Mr Sparrow also urges that the canon of the *Songs and Sonets* should include *Elegy X: The Dream*. He rightly indicates that this poem has a quite different rhyme-scheme from all the other Elegies, which are in rhymed couplets. He also points out that the transfer would have the authority of one group of MSS. Mr Sparrow's case seems to me strong; and had I not to restrict changes to a minimum I should have printed the poem with notes. This would, however, have involved many consequential changes, and I must therefore postpone doing so.

January 1959

T. R.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	vii
INTRODUCTION	xv
NOTE ON THE USE OF THE SLUR	li
SONGS AND SONETS:	
The Good-morrow	2
Song	5
Woman's Constancy	6
The Undertaking or Platonic Love	8
The Sun Rising	11
The Indifferent	12
Love's Usury	14
The Canonization	16
The Triple Fool	20
Lovers' Infiniteness	22
Song	24
The Legacy	26
A Fever	28
Air and Angels	30
Break of Day	34
The Anniversary	36
A Valediction: of my name, in the window	38
Twickenham Garden	42
A Valediction: of the book	44
Community	49
Love's Growth or Spring	50
Love's Exchange	52
Confined Love	55
The Dream	56
A Valediction: of weeping	58
Mummy or Love's Alchemy	62
The Flea	64

SGo p. 5

SSweet p. 24

CONTENTS

The Curse	66
The Message	68
A Nocturnal upon St Lucy's Day; being the shortest day	70
Witchcraft by a Picture	75
The Bait	76
The Apparition	78
The Broken Heart	80
A Valediction: forbidding mourning	82
The Ecstasy	88
Love's Deity	94
Love's Diet	96
The Will	98
The Funeral	102
The Blossom	104
The Primrose	106
The Relic	108
The Damp	112
The Dissolution	114
A Jet Ring Sent	116
Negative Love or The Nothing	118
The Prohibition	120
The Expiration (A Valediction)	123
The Computation	124
The Paradox	126
Farewell to Love	128
A Lecture upon the Shadow	132
(Sonnet) The Token	134
The Rejection or Self-Love	136
APPENDIX I: A textual conundrum	138
APPENDIX II: 'Specular Stone' (The Undertaking, l. 6)	139
APPENDIX III: Air and Angels (ll. 24, 26-8)	140
APPENDIX IV: Farewell to Love (ll. 23-30)	145
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	150
INDEX OF FIRST LINES	155

INTRODUCTION

I. THE STATUS OF THE 'SONGS AND SONETS' IN ENGLISH POETRY

DONNE's *Songs and Sonets* are among the three or four finest collections of love-lyrics in the English language. Such a high valuation still requires emphasis, despite the fact that these poems are read and appreciated far more than they were, say, fifty years ago. Too many readers of poetry, even in England, would still omit Donne's name from a list of the supreme love-lyrists of England, while readily including the names of Herrick, Shelley, Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne. This is probably partly because the *Songs and Sonets* still remain comparatively little known:¹ but there are other reasons. One reason is the lingering prejudice that love-lyrics should be expressions of feeling unalloyed with any marked degree of cerebration. Donne's love-lyrics spring partly from a strong and ingenious head. They are therefore liable to give the impression of being merely brain-spun. In fact, that is very seldom the case, since they also come from a passionate heart. Another reason is that many people are put off by the sheer difficulty of the sense of many passages. Ben Jonson prophesied that the poetry of Donne would perish for lack of being understood. It has not yet perished, but though it is read now perhaps much more than at any time since the seventeenth century, it offers much difficulty, and it is doubtful how far even the bare sense of some of the poems is really understood. In the case of the *Songs and Sonets*, however, trouble taken in trying to understand the sense is almost always amply rewarded. A further obstacle to the just evaluation of the poems is the fairly widespread conception of Donne as a merely flippant, cynical love poet. Among the causes of the spread of this

1. In a widely circulated anthology (*The Oxford Book of English Verse*) only 7 pages are allotted to Donne (as compared with 21 to Herrick, 19 to Shelley, 23 to Tennyson, 20 to Browning, and 12 to Swinburne). Moreover, of the seven poems ascribed to Donne, one is probably not by him at all; and only four of the *Songs and Sonets* are given. Again, in the last edition of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1941, reprinted 1954), not a single poem by Donne is included.