

The Complete English Poems (Penguin Classics)

By John Donne

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The Complete English Poems (Penguin Classics) By John Donne

'The first poet in the world in some things', is how John Donne was described by his contemporary Ben Jonson.

Yet it is only this century that Donne has been indisputably established as a great poet—and even, many feel, the greatest love poet of them all. Jonson went on to remark that 'That Donne, for not keeping of an accent, deserved hanging', yet Donne's rhythms, once thought 'unmusical' are now recognized as the natural rhythms of the speaking voice; his 'eccentricity' as a complex self-doubt; his 'obscurity' the reflection of a brilliantly learned and allusive mind. Poets such as Eliot and Empson have found Donne's poetry profoundly attuned to our modern age, while Yeats' glowing comment will always be true: 'the intricacy and subtlety of his imagination are the length and depth of the furrow made by his passion.'

This volume, superbly edited by Professor Smith, is the first complete edition to make a serious attempt to guide the reader closely through the complexities of Donne's poetry. Considerable attention has been paid to the text, and a selection of the important manuscript variants are included. This edition is also the first to make use of the newly discovered manuscript of the verse letter to Lady Carey and Mistress Essex Rich.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
John Donne was born into a Catholic family in 1572. After a conventional education at Hart Hall, Oxford and Lincoln's Inn, he took part in the Earl of Essex's expedition to the Azores in 1597. He secretly married Anne More in December 1601 and was imprisoned by her father, Sir George, in the Fleet two months later. He was ordained priest in January 1615 and took a Doctorate of Divinity at Cambridge the same year. He was made Dean of St Paul's in London in 1621, a position he held until his death in 1631. He is famous for the sermons he preached in his later years, as well as for his poems.

A.J. Smith was Professor Emeritus of the University of Southampton. His book include Literary Love (1983) and Metaphysical Wit (1992). He died in Salisbury in 1991.

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