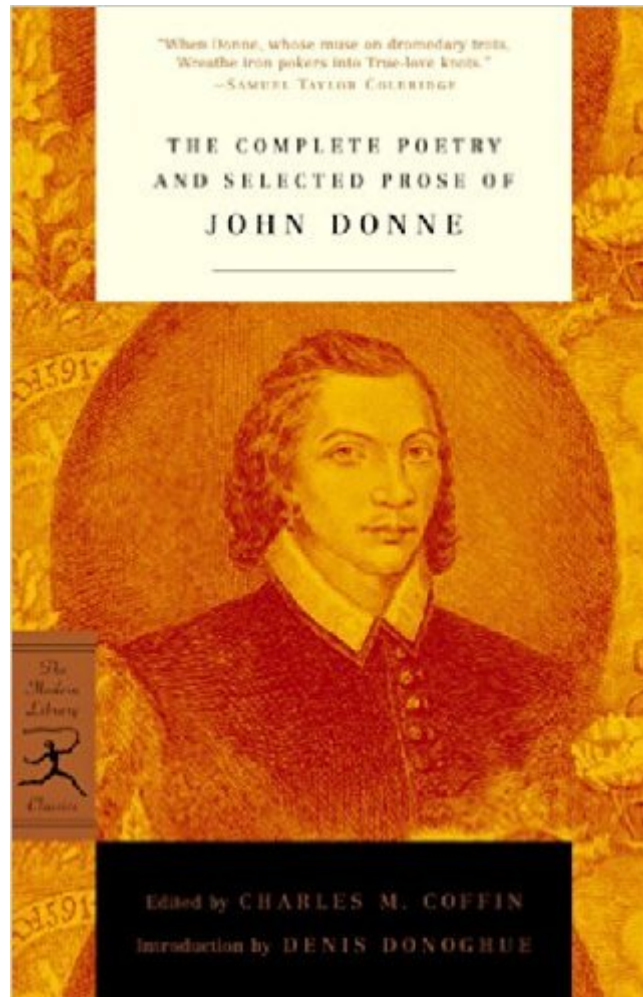


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The Complete Poetry And Selected Prose Of John Donne (Modern Library Classics)



Synopsis

This Modern Library edition contains all of John Donne's great metaphysical love poetry. Here are such well-known songs and sonnets as "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," "The Extasie," and "A Nocturnall Upon S. Lucies Day," along with the love elegies "Jealousie," "His Parting From Her," and "To His Mistris Going to Bed." Presented as well are Donne's satires, epigrams, verse letters, and holy sonnets, along with his most ambitious and important poems, the Anniversaries. In addition, there is a generous sampling of Donne's prose, including many of his private letters; Ignatius His Conclave, a satiric onslaught on the Jesuits; excerpts from Biathanatos, his celebrated defense of suicide; and his most famous sermons, concluding with the final "Death's Duell." "We have only to read [Donne]," wrote Virginia Woolf, "to submit to the sound of that passionate and penetrating voice, and his figure rises again across the waste of the years more erect, more imperious, more inscrutable than any of his time."

Book Information

Series: Modern Library Classics

Paperback: 736 pages

Publisher: Modern Library; Modern Library edition (August 14, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0375757341

ISBN-13: 978-0375757341

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1.2 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #53,037 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Literature & Fiction > Poetry](#) #30 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Ancient & Medieval Literature > Ancient & Classical](#) #49 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Poetry](#)

Customer Reviews

John Donne is the most controversial poet to ever write in English, the focus of controversy for four centuries. He put out almost no poems in life, but they were widely circulated in manuscript, and their publication a few years after his death immediately made him a major poet. His status remained high until Samuel Johnson dismissed him in the late eighteenth century. The Romantic Era saw a mini-revival, and he always had at least a cult following, but obscurity seemed poised to engulf him until T. S. Eliot extolled him in the early twentieth century. This initiated a renaissance

possibly making Donne more popular than ever, and though the fever pitch has died down somewhat, he remains in the upper echelon of English poets - one of the handful to have truly entered world literature - and shows no sign of moving. Debate has always centered on Donne's wildly inventive tropes, particularly what became known as metaphysical conceits. Johnson famously condemned them by saying, "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together," and many have agreed, finding Donne overly flashy and prosaic while lacking high seriousness and beauty. However, at least as many have thought the opposite, finding him brilliantly creative, ever-inventive, and resoundingly fresh. Donne is indeed one of the most original poets in modern times. His metaphors are certainly attention-grabbing, highly imaginative, and - against all odds - superbly executed, but they are hardly his only brilliant yet controversial feature. For instance, he is also notable for choppy rhythms closely approximating everyday speech. This truly made him stand out in an era when formal classical models were the norm and even prompted contemporary Ben Jonson to quip that he deserved hanging.

If all you want is a single volume collection of Donne's poetry, my recommendation is the Everyman's edition of John Donne, but if you also want a significant selection of Donne's prose - and if you don't, why not? - you can't do better than this Modern Library edition. I recommend the Everyman's volume for the poetry simply because it is such a gorgeous edition. This Modern Library also contains nearly 300 pages of Donne's prose, which is easily some of the most breathtaking in the language. I have only two complaints with this volume. One is that it contains only 40 pages of the DEVOTIONS UPON EMERGENT OCCASIONS. Luckily, Vintage publishes them in their entirety as a standalone volume, which I strongly recommend for lovers of Donne. The other complaint is that the spine of this particular edition is not strong. I had to return the first copy I got from because the glue was so thin that it split and creased immediately upon opening. This is a problem I've noted in a number of the Modern Library paperbacks. Still, if you want only one book of Donne's work, this is the one I recommend. If you want even more, I would recommend the aforementioned Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions and Death's Duel. I also like John Donne - The Major Works: including Songs and Sonnets and sermons (Oxford World's Classics), which includes some prose that the Modern Library edition omits.

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