



An Anthology by Geoffrey G. Hiller

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METHUEN & CO LTD LONDON

to Diana

First published in 1977 by
Methuen & Co Ltd

II New Fetter Lane London EC4P 4EE
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Printed in Great Britain by
Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press) Ltd
Bungay, Suffolk

ISBN 0 416 83200 8 (hardbound) ISBN 0 416 83210 5 (paperback)

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Preface

This anthology seeks to represent the poetry of the Elizabethan age by a selection of poems written in five of the literary genres which were highly popular at the time: the sonnet, lyric, satire, pastoral and Ovidian romance. An arrangement of the poems by their genres rather than in simple chronological order has several advantages. It avoids the risk of bewildering the reader with what is likely to appear an amorphous and diverse poetic miscellany. More importantly, it enables the conventions of style and subject matter appropriate to each genre to be the more readily appreciated; accordingly, it encourages a fuller understanding of individual poems because each one is placed in a significant literary context. Indeed, it is the way the Elizabethans themselves, who were so conscious of literary genres, would have wished their poems to be read. Within each genre-section poems by individual authors appear in chronological order so that a general sense not only of the development of the genre but also of an individual poet's skill in it is maintained.

Some few poems have been included chiefly for their historical interest (the extract from Gascoigne's The Steel Glass

xvii

and from Turbervile's translation of Mantuan, the poems in quantitative measure by Sidney and Campion), but all others have been selected for their literary merit alone. This means that many works which might usefully have demonstrated the variety within each genre have been excluded on the grounds of inferiority. Rather than to offer a completely representative survey of each genre, the anthology is designed to enable the best poems of the Elizabethan period to be read in the best possible light.

The design of the anthology has necessarily involved some difficult decisions of classification, and it is hardly to be expected that the reader will always agree with the inclusion of a particular poem in a particular section. The Elizabethans themselves, while they classified poetry as fervently as they classified everything else in the cosmos, were also aware of overlapping. There was nothing to prevent a poem in one genre from employing elements of another. 'If severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful', as Sidney wrote of heroic and pastoral poetry. Many of the pastorals here are also lyrics; some have elements of satire; the Ovidian romance has a strong pastoral flavour. It must be emphasized that while this anthology is intended to draw attention to the Elizabethans' awareness of the 'kinds' of poetry, its categorization of poems is not inflexible and each section is not to be considered completely self-contained. Naturally the reader is free to disagree with the category in which a poem has been placed, since he may prefer to read it in a totally different context. But it is hoped that he may appreciate too the reasons why it appears where it does in this anthology.

The selection of poems is intended to represent the 'high period' of Elizabethan poetry, from the late 1570s, when Sidney was writing his *Arcadia* and when Spenser published his *Shepheardes Calender* (1579), to the end of Elizabeth's reign. However, a few poets who wrote earlier in the Queen's lifetime have been included: Wyatt and Surrey, both for their individual worth and because they were regarded as the 'two

chief lanterns of light' illuminating the way for those who followed; Turbervile and Gascoigne, who were lesser poets but whose works are nevertheless of much interest, particularly in relation to the greater that were to come. The last year of Elizabeth's reign, 1603, is taken as marking the end of the Elizabethan period of literature, and the boundary has been overstepped on very few occasions and only for reasons which are fairly evident (the best sonnets of Drayton, for instance, were not published until 1619, but it would surely be improper to omit them). The lyrics of Jonson and Donne have not been fully represented, partly because their complete works are readily available, but chiefly because they are usually, and rightly, considered poets of a new age, even though their early works were written in Elizabeth's reign: their subjects, attitudes and techniques belong to the seventeenth not to the sixteenth century. Consequently only their early lyrics and those which are most 'Elizabethan' in style have been represented here.

Texts have been taken from early editions or manuscripts, as indicated after each poem or before each group of poems. Emendations of the copy texts have been made sparingly, and in every instance they have been recorded in footnotes. Only obvious misprints in the original texts have been corrected silently. In a few cases variants which are possibly superior, or are otherwise interesting for the interpretation of a poem, have also been recorded in footnotes. In these instances, if the work in which the variant occurs bears the same title as the copy text, it is designated simply by its date of publication, placed in parenthesis. In all cases an indication of the date of composition of a poem has been given in a footnote if it differs significantly from the publication date. Titles which have been given to extracts from longer poems are placed in square brackets, as they are the editor's own.

Since the orthography and punctuation of Elizabethan poems is so varied (and often not the poet's own in any case), spelling and punctuation of the text and of variant readings

have been modernized for the sake of uniformity and clarity. However, the original spelling in Spenser's poems has not been altered. Just as Spenser's deliberate use of 'olde and obsolete wordes' (as E.K. wrote) brings 'great grace' and 'auctoritie' to the verse, so too does his spelling, and the archaic flavour of his poetry would be greatly reduced were it to be modernized. Spenser's original punctuation has also been retained, but in a few instances, when the meaning would otherwise be obscure, it has been silently emended. The use of i, j, u, v and f has been regularized, ampersands have been expanded, and (as elsewhere) diphthongs have been replaced by separate letters.

Except in Spenser's poems, the final suffix -ed has always been printed in full, with the e marked with an accent when it is intended that it should be sounded. If the e is sounded in normal pronunciation it is left unmarked. This policy has the virtues of simplicity and consistency, and should be helpful in reading the lines as their scansion requires them to be read.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to acknowledge the help I have received from many of my friends and colleagues in the Department of English at Monash University. My thanks are due in particular to Professor David Bradley, Professor Arthur Brown, Dr Harold Love, and Mr Philip Martin for their valuable criticism and advice during various stages of the anthology's preparation. I am indebted also to Miss Elizabeth Cook of Homerton College of Education, Cambridge, for making useful suggestions on some detailed matters. My grateful thanks go also to Miss Gail Ward and Mrs Sheila Wilson for producing the final typescript.

I should like to thank the Bodleian Library, Oxford and the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington for permission to reproduce illustrations used in the text.

Preface

Preface	xvii
Introduction	I
SONNETS	
WYATT	
Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind	29
My galley charged with forgetfulness	30
Divers doth use, as I have heard and know	30
SURREY	
A complaint by night of the lover not beloved (Alas, so all things now do hold their peace)	31
Set me whereas the sun doth parch the green	32
SIDNEY	
Leave me, O love which reachest but to dust	33
From Astrophil and Stella:	
1 Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show	34
3 Let dainty wits cry on the Sisters nine	35
5 It is most true that eyes are formed to serve	36
77	

7 When nature made her chief work Stella's eyes	36
15 You that do search for every purling spring	37
31 With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the skies!	38
39 Come, sleep, O sleep, the certain knot of peace	38
45 Stella oft sees the very face of woe	39
47 What, have I thus betrayed my liberty?	40
53 In martial sports I had my cunning tried	40
54 Because I breathe not love to everyone	4 I
71 Who will in fairest book of nature know	42
74 I never drank of Aganippe well	42
103 O happy Thames, that didst my Stella bear!	43
FULKE GREVILLE From Caelica:	
Fie, foolish earth, think you the heaven wants glory	44
The nurse-life wheat, within his green husk growing	44
DANIEL	
From Delia:	
I once may see when years shall wreck my wrong	45
These plaintive verse, the posts of my desire	46
Fair is my love, and cruel as she's fair	46
Look, Delia, how w' esteem the half-blown rose	47
When winter snows upon thy sable hairs	47
Let others sing of knights and paladins	48
FLETCHER	
From Licia:	
In time the strong and stately turrets fall	48
SPENSER From Amoretti:	
13 In that proud port, which her so goodly graceth	49
-3 From Lord warm not so Soom) Bracon	12

15 Ye tradefull Merchants, that with weary toyle	50
23 Penelope for her Ulisses sake	50
54 Of this worlds Theatre in which we stay	51
63 After long stormes and tempests sad assay	52
67 Lyke as a huntsman after weary chace	52
68 Most glorious Lord of lyfe, that on this day	5 3
71 I joy to see how in your drawen work	54
75 One day I wrote her name upon the strand	54
79 Men call you fayre, and you doe credit it	55
BARNES	
From A Divine Century of Spiritual Sonnets:	
The world's bright comforter, whose beamsome light	56
DRAYTON	
From Idea:	
To nothing fitter can I thee compare	57
An evil spirit, your beauty, haunts me still	58
To the Critic (Methinks I see some crooked mimic jeer)	58
Whilst thus my pen strives to eternize thee	59
Dear, why should you command me to my rest	59
To Time (Stay, speedy time; behold, before thou pass)	60
How many paltry, foolish, painted things	60
Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part	61
SHAKESPEARE	
From Sonnets:	
I From fairest creatures we desire increase	62
12 When I do count the clock that tells the time	6
15 When I consider everything that grows	64
16 But wherefore do not you a mightier way	6
••	

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18	Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?	66
19	Devouring time, blunt thou the lion's paws	66
23	As an unperfect actor on the stage	67
29	When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes	68
30	When to the sessions of sweet silent thought	68
33	Full many a glorious morning have I seen	69
34	Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day	70
35	No more be grieved at that which thou hast done	70
53	What is your substance, whereof are you made	71
55	Not marble nor the gilded monuments	72
57	Being your slave, what should I do but tend	72
65	Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea	73
7 I	No longer mourn for me when I am dead	74
73	That time of year thou mayst in me behold	74
94	They that have power to hurt and will do none	75
102	My love is strengthened, though more weak in	
	seeming	76
104	To me, fair friend, you never can be old	76
116	Let me not to the marriage of true minds	77
121	'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed	78
127	In the old age black was not counted fair	79
128	How oft, when thou, my music, music play'st	80
129	Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame	80
130	My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun	81
138	When my love swears that she is made of truth	82
141	In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes	82
146	Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth	83

DAVIES

DHVIDO	
From 'Gulling Sonnets':	
The lover, under burden of his mistress' love	84
The sacred muse that first made Love divine	85
LYRICS	
WYATT	
They flee from me that sometime did me seek	89
Once, as methought, fortune me kissed	90
My lute, awake! perform the last	91
In eternum I was once determed	92
With serving still	93
SURREY	
Complaint of the absence of her lover being upon the sea	94
A praise of his love	96
GASCOIGNE	
Gascoigne's Arraignment	97
SIDNEY	
My true love hath my heart and I have his	100
Why dost thou haste away	100
The nightingale, as soon as April bringeth	101
From Astrophil and Stella:	
Doubt you to whom my muse these notes intendeth	102
Only joy, now here you are	104
FULKE GREVILLE	
From Caelica:	
You little stars that live in skies	106

When all this All doth pass from age to age	106
You that seek what life is in death	107
Chorus Sacerdotum	108
LYLY	
Song by Apelles (Cupid and my Campaspe played)	109
GREENE	
In time we see that silver drops	109
When gods had framed the sweet of women's face	110
TICHBORNE	
Tichborne's Elegy	ш
SOUTHWELL	
Look Home	II2
Upon the Image of Death	113
ANONYMOUS	
I joy not in no earthly bliss	115
ANONYMOUS	
A Sonnet (His golden locks time hath to silver turned)	116
CAMPION	
Hark, all you ladies that do sleep!	117
When to her lute Corinna sings	118
Follow your saint, follow with accents sweet	119
The man of life upright	119
When thou must home to shades of underground	120
Come, let us sound with melody the praises	121

NASHE

Molle	
Song (Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king)	122
Song (Adieu, farewell earth's bliss)	123
OXFORD	
What cunning can express	124
what cuming can express	167
RALEGH	
Praised be Diana's fair and harmless light	126
Nature, that washed her hands in milk	127
What is our life? a play of passion	128
PEELE	
Song (Hot sun, cool fire, tempered with sweet air)	129
SPENSER	
Epithalamion	130
SHAKESPEARE	
Song (Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more)	145
O mistress mine, where are you roaming?	146
When that I was and a little tiny boy	147
DEKKER	
Song (Virtue's branches wither, virtue pines)	148
Song (Golden slumbers kiss your eyes)	149
BRETON	
Say that I should say I love ye	149
ANONYMOUS	
Love winged my hopes and taught me how to fly	150
A.W.	
To Time	151
•	

ANONYMOUS

A Madrigal (My love in her attire doth show her wit)	152
ANONYMOUS	
Weep you no more, sad fountains	152
JONSON	
On My First Daughter	153
Song (Slow, slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears)	153
Song (Oh, that joy so soon should waste!)	154
Hymn (Queen and huntress, chaste and fair)	154
Song (If I freely may discover)	155
On My First Son	156
Song: That Women are but Men's Shadows	157
DONNE	
Song (Go and catch a falling star)	157
Song (Sweetest love, I do not go)	159
Break of Day	160
Woman's Constancy	161
The Apparition	162
The Broken Heart	163
The Good-Morrow	164
SATIRES	
SATIRES	
WYATT	
Of the courtier's life	169
GASCOIGNE	
[Avarice and Self-advancement], from The Steel Glass	173
xii	

DONNE

DONNE	
Satire I	175
Satire III	180
LODGE	
A Fig for Momus, To Master E. Dig[by]: Satire I	185
HALL	
Virgidemiarum, Book II, Satire iii	188
Book II, Satire vi	190
Book III, Satire vi	191
MARSTON	
The Scourge of Villainy, Satire VII: A Cynic Satire	192
GUILPIN	
Skialetheia, Satire IV	200
PASTORALS	
TURBERVILE	
[The Difference Between Town and Country], from The Eclogues of the Poet B. Mantuan	207
SIDNEY	
From The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia:	
My sheep are thoughts, which I both guide and serve	211
Ye goatherd gods, that love the grassy mountains	211
O sweet woods, the delight of solitariness!	215
[The Song of Philisides], from 'As I my little flock on	
Ister bank'	216
SPENSER	
[Elegy on Dido], from The Shepheardes Calender	221
The Dance of the Graces], from The Faerie Queene	227
xiii	