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ELIZABETHAN PRECURSORS OF DONNE'S

"DIVINE MEDITATIONS"



William L. Stull

In the two decades since the appearance of Dame Helen Gardner's edition of *John Donne: The Divine Poems* and Louis Martz's *The Poetry of Meditation*, most critics have approached Donne's "Holy Sonnets" as "spiritual exercises" in Ignatian meditation rather than as participants in the tradition of the Elizabethan religious sonnet.¹ While commentators have occasionally examined the poetics of individual Donne sonnets in isolation, much more critical energy has been devoted to demonstrating the influence of the meditative tradition on the "Holy Sonnets" than to exploring the literary background of the poems.² When Donne's religious sonnets are considered in their literary setting, however, the practice of late Elizabethan religious sonneteers such as Barnabe Barnes, Henry Constable, and Henry Lok both anticipates Donne's sonnet form, specifically its complex logical structure, and establishes a precedent for his adaptation of the secular sonnet to religious themes. In varying degrees English sonneteers from Wyatt onward foreshadow Donne's techniques, although such literary antecedents have been overlooked while critics have carefully examined the religious traditions which Professors Martz and Garner identified.

As sonnets, the "Divine Meditations" are written in an Italian form that had undergone fundamental structural transformations when adapted into English by Sir Thomas Wyatt. With few exceptions, the Petrarchan or Italian sonnet consists of two quatrains rhyming *abba* and two tercets forming a sestet rhyming in various ways, *cdcdcd* (Sicilian sestet), *cdecde* (Italian sestet), or *cdccdc*, but rarely ending in a final couplet. This avoidance of an epigrammatic final rhyme is characteristically Italian, as is a second feature of the Petrarchan sonnet, the "turn" of *volta*

between the octave and the sestet. In effect, the turn is the cognitive equivalent of the introduction of a new rhyme sound, "a logical or emotional shift by which the speaker enables himself to take a new or altered or enlarged view of his subject."³ The Italian sonnet's first quatrain presents a problem for consideration, the second develops it, and—after the turn—the sestet points toward a solution. Such is Petrarch's sonnet CXL:

Amor, che nel penser mio vive e regna
 e 'l suo seggio maggior nel mio cor tene,
 talor armato ne la fronte vène;
 ivi si loca et ivi pon sua insegna.

Quella ch' amare e sofferir ne 'nsegna,
 et vòl che 'l gran desio, l'accesa spene,
 ragion, vergogna e reverenza affrene,
 di nostro ardir fra se stessa si sdegna.

Onde Amor paventoso fugge al core,
 lasciando ogni sua impresa, e piange e trema;
 ivi s' asconde, et non appar più fore.

Che poss' io far, temendo il mio signore,
 se non star seco infin a l' ora estrema?
 ché bel fin fa chi ben amando more.⁴

But when this sonnet was translated into English by both Wyatt and Surrey and appeared in Richard Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* (1557), it emerged with significant structural alterations which became models for later English sonneteers. While following Petrarch's rhyme scheme in the octave, Wyatt employs a sestet which ends in a couplet, *cdccdd*:

The longe loue, that in my thought I harber,
 And in my hart doth kepe his residence,
 Into my face preaseth with bold pretence,
 And there campeth, displaying his banner.
 She that me learns to loue, and to suffer,
 And willes that my trust, and lustes negligence
 Be reined by reason, shame, and reuerence,
 With his hardinesse takes displeasure.
 Wherwith loue to the hartes forest he fleeth,

Leauyng his enterprise with paine and crye,
 And there him hideth and not appeareth.
 What may I do? when my maister feareth,
 But in the field with him to liue and dye,
 For good is the life, endyng faithfully.⁵

While the final couplet of this sonnet does not really create a second turn at the end of the poem, the word "But" opening line thirteen at least suggests one, and Wyatt himself began to capitalize on the epigrammatic possibilities of the closing rhyme in several of his other sonnets. Here, however, he is careful to imitate Petrarch's logical structure closely, translating *onde* into a corresponding conjunctive adverb to denote a subordination of ideas, a change of attitude at line nine. Such is not the case in the version by Surrey:

Loue, that liueth, and reigneth in my thought,
 That built his seat within my captiue brest,
 Clad in the armes, wherin with me he fought,
 Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.
 She, that me taught to loue, and suffer payne,
 My doutfull hope, and eke my hote desyre,
 With shamefast cloke to shadowe, and refraine,
 Her smilyng grace conuerteth straight to yre.
 And cowarde Loue then to the hart apace
 Taketh his flight, whereas he lurkes, and plaines
 His purpose lost, and dare not shewe his face.
 For my lordes gilt thus faultless bude I paynes.
 Yet from my lorde shall not my foote remoue.
 Swete is his death, that takes his end by loue.⁶

Here Surrey comes near to taking Wyatt's innovation, the final rhyme, to its logical conclusion, nearly transforming Petrarch's sestet into a third quatrain plus an epigrammatic couplet. As Surrey introduces a rhyme scheme that accomodates the comparative paucity of rhymes in English, three open quatrains rhyming *ababcdedef* and a final couplet, *gg*, he also eliminates the turn at line nine, translating *onde* as a simple conjunction, "And." While in this poem he maintains some sense of the balanced tercets in the original Petrarchan sestet, his practice in the majority of his sonnets—and the practice of those who most closely followed his innovation—was to eliminate the octave turn and replace it with a *volta* after line twelve, thereby striving for a resolution in two lines after developing a problem in twelve.

Was neuer file yet half so well yfiled,
 To file a file for any smithes intent,
 As I was made a filyng instrument,
 To frame other, while that I was begiled.
 But reason, loe, hath at my foly smiled,
 And pardoned me, sins that I me repent
 Of my lost yeres, and of my time mispent.
 For youth led me, and falshod me misguided.
 Yet, this trust I haue of great apparence:
 Sins that disceit is ay returnable,
 Of verye force it is agreable,
 That therwithall be done the recompence.
 Then gile begiled playnd should be neuer,
 And the reward is little trust for euer.⁷

This structure adds a new dimension to the Petrarchan model, a second logical or emotional shift which can accomodate a highly complex turn of thought. Wyatt established it in the book which introduced the sonnet into English, although not every English poet who wrote in the sonnet form capitalized on its resources for solving difficult problems in the space of fourteen lines. In effect, Wyatt had created a *fourfold* sonnet. As in Petrarch, the first quatrain presents the subject and the second, often introducing a new metaphor, develops it. In "Was neuer file," the word "Yet," opening line nine, signals the first classically Italian *volta* as the speaker discovers some "trust" for "recompence" to come. Having considered this for four lines, however, he is sufficiently resolved to turn again, closing with a couplet that has a satisfying finality, an almost epigrammatic terseness and logic pivoting on the apodictic word "Then."

The interaction of rhyme scheme and logical structure in poetry is a complex matter that involves both phonology and semantics. In his essay "One Relation of Rhyme to Reason," W. K. Wimsatt demonstrated that verse and rhyme necessarily "impose upon the logical pattern of expressed argument a kind of fixative counterpoint of alogical implication," which necessarily affects meaning:

In literary art only the wedding of the alogical with the logical gives the former an aesthetic value. The words of a rhyme, with their curious harmony of sound and distinction of sense, are an amalgam of the sensory and the logical, or an

arrest and precipitation of the logical in sensory form; they are the icon in which the idea is caught.⁸

Thus, the three possible quatrain forms, *abab*, *abba*, and *aabb*, indicate variant logical as well as sound patterns, as do the several sestet forms. Wyatt's practice of ending the sonnet with a couplet which became the hallmark of the English or Shakespearean form had serious implications for poets who followed the proverbial injunction to link rhyme with reason.⁹

Donne begins all nineteen of the "Holy Sonnets" with the standard Italian octave composed of two quatrains rhyming *abba*, but following Wyatt's lead and the practice of many of his own contemporaries, he abandons both the true Italian sestet, *cdecde*, and the Sicilian version, *cdcdcd*, that rhyme in balanced tercets.¹⁰ In the sestets of eleven poems he uses the pattern *cdcdde*; in seven, *cdcdce*; and in one, "If poysonous mineralls," a stricter version of the second form, *accadd*.¹¹ But rhyme is only one aspect of sonnet structure; Donne's manipulation of the *volta* shows him to be in the mainstream of writers who continued Wyatt's experiments with two turns. In fifteen of the "Holy Sonnets" there is a turn after the octave, where the pull of rhyme on structure is strong as the "a" rhymes resolve before the introduction of a new rhyme sound in line nine. In fifteen of the poems Donne turns the sonnet at the final couplet.¹² In two poems, "If faithfull soules" and "Batter my heart," he moves the final turn one foot back into the twelfth line to avoid a facile epigram, in the former sonnet making the word "turne" itself the rhyme word that pivots the speaker toward a final resolution:

Then turne
O pensive soule, to God, for he knowes best
Thy true grief, for he put it in my breast.

But what is most striking in Donne's sonnets is the number of poems that have *both* a turn after the two quatrains have fully developed the octave and again at the final couplet, the *fourfold* structure Wyatt first created.

Donne fuses the English and Italian forms in more than half of the "Holy Sonnets," utilizing a structure that is capable of accomodating meditation, deliberation, or even forensics, as in the final sonnet in the edition of 1633, "Father, part of his double interest." In more personal, meditative terms, "O my blacke Soule" exemplifies the vigor and

"masculine expression" that Thomas Carew praised so highly in his elegy on Donne. The poem opens with a vividly imagined scene and a tentative simile:

Oh my blacke Soule! now thou art summoned
 By sicknesse, deaths herald, and champion;
 Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
 Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee is fled,

But the image of the pilgrim unable to turn back develops into a new simile in the second quatrain revealing the soul's *inner* vascillation, imprisoned in the body:

Or like a thiefe, which till deaths doome be read,
 Wisheth himselfe delivered from prison;
 But damn'd and hal'd to execution,
 Wisheth that still he might be imprisoned;

In the first eight lines of the poem, the speaker has succeeded in developing a situation of complete entrapment; like the thief, at once hoping and fearing to be delivered, the soul has reached a logical impasse. Then in line nine he turns to a new factor, Divine Grace, and with the word "Yet" signals a turn in the poem's logical structure as the sestet begins:

Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lacke;
 But who shall give thee that grace to beginne?
 Oh make thy selfe with holy mourning blacke,
 And red with blushing, as thou art with sinne;

Despite the turn toward grace in line nine, the speaker, by line twelve, has not reached a solution for the problem of his soul's "blackness" with which the poem opened. It is only as he turns again to the symbol of mercy, Christ's blood, as an alternative to self-imposed humiliation, that the poem reaches a satisfying resolution in the final couplet:

Or wash thee in Christs blood, which hath this might
 That being red, it dyes red soules to white.

Thus, Donne's sonnet is structured in four major sections, and a second turn at the couplet denotes that what the speaker began to realize at

line nine is in fact a certainty, underscored by the strong rhyme of "might" and "white." In addition to "O my blacke Soule" and "Father, part of his double interest," the fourfold structure appears in ten other "Holy Sonnets": "This is my playes last scene," "At the round earths imagin'd corners," "If poysonous mineralls," "Spit in my face yee Jewes," "Why are wee by all creatures," "What if this present," "Batter my heart," "Wilt thou love God," "Thou hast made me," and "Since she whome I lovd."

But if Wyatt introduced this fourfold sonnet form into English poetry nearly a century before the "Holy Sonnets" appeared, how was it transmitted to Donne? Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* went through at least nine editions in the first thirty years after it appeared, so some direct transmission of Wyatt's innovation is possible. In all thirty-two sonnets now generally accepted as Wyatt's, either original or translated, he uses a sestet made up of a quatrain and couplet, although both Italian practice and Trissino's criticism were against his doing this.¹³ Twenty-nine of his sonnets begin with the standard Italian octave Donne uses in all the "Holy Sonnets," and, of these, twenty-four rhyme *cddee* in the sestet while only two, "If waker care" and "The pillar perished is," use Donne's favorite pattern for the sestet, *cdcdde*. Since of those two only the former was included in Tottle, the only sure transmitter of Wyatt's poems, his direct influence on Donne would at first appear slight. However, five of Wyatt's sonnets included in the *Miscellany* do exhibit the fourfold structure seen in "Was never file."¹⁴ But sonneteers of the 1590's more than Wyatt himself capitalized on the structural resources he had disclosed years before.

The other poet generally associated with *Songes and Sonettes* is, of course, Surrey, who modified Wyatt's innovations by regularly abandoning the *volta* at the octave and throwing the sonnet's full weight onto the couplet. Since not one of his sonnets follows the regular Italian octave and nine have seven rhyme sounds instead of Donne's usual five, his contribution to the structure of the "Holy Sonnets" is negligible except for his having established the epigrammatic closing couplet as a typically English device.¹⁵

In her "Introduction" to *The Divine Poems*, Dame Helen Gardner footnotes a stimulating comparison between the structure of Donne's "Holy Sonnets" and Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* (1591, 1598), the cycle that triggered the outburst of sonnet writing in the 1590's:

Donne would naturally be drawn to Sidney's, rather than to the looser "Elizabethan" form of the sonnet. Sidney combined the final couplet, which suits his and Donne's natural rhetorical gift so well, with a stricter organization of the whole poem. Donne could find in the Sidneian form, as he did in his own complex stanzas, the artistic pleasure of overcoming "Rimes vexation."¹⁶

The similarities between Donne and Sidney are indeed immediately impressive. In broad terms, both have "that forcibleness or *energia*" Sidney called for in his *Defense of Poesy* (1595); both create moving dramatic metaphors rather than static or merely decorous figures in their sonnets. But a close examination of the two poets' sonnet structure qualifies the apparent likenesses. Sidney does use Donne's favorite sonnet form, the Petrarchan octave with a *cdcdde* sestet, in sixty of the one hundred and eight poems in *Astrophil and Stella*, but his use of the *volta* differs radically from Donne's.¹⁷ As Jean Robertson has pointed out, the only turn in most of Sidney's sonnets follows not lines eight or twelve, but line thirteen. Throughout *Astrophil and Stella* the thrust of one energetic sweep is compressed into the final line:

Even when a new sentence begins at the sestet, there is seldom a break or turn in the thought (often detectable in Spenser or Shakespeare where the sestet [or third quatrain] will begin with a "Yet," "But," "Now"). Most of Sidney's sonnets are single movement poems.¹⁸

This practice, which may owe something to the sonnets of Antonio Tebaldeo, is absent from the "Holy Sonnets," where Donne makes the most of the full dynamics of both the Italian and English forms.¹⁹ But if Sidney's effect on Donne's practice is indirect, he nevertheless must be credited with bringing the sonnet into the mainstream of English literature, and, more to the point, with inspiring three poets whose work has special importance for the study of Donne's. Dame Helen Gardner has dated several of the "Holy Sonnets" as early as 1609, a time when the vogue for amatory sonnets was waning as many poets turned to religious verse; and far from being anomalous or unaccountable in their form and matter, Donne's sonnets seem to represent the flowering of a now forgotten but once well established literary tradition of religious poetry in "secular" forms such as the sonnet.²⁰

Henry Constable is best remembered for his imitations of Sidney in *Diana* (1592, 1594), but he was also the author of seventeen "Spirituell Sonnettes To the honour of God and hys Sayntes" preserved in Harleian MS. 7553.²¹ Although this manuscript is undated, the poems were probably not written before 1593, and cannot have been composed later than 1612.²² While Constable's religious poems were unpublished during his lifetime, the common practice of manuscript circulation in both Sidney's and Donne's literary circles makes direct influence possible, although indirect transmission through the tradition of Elizabethan religious verse is more likely. Compared with the "Holy Sonnets," the "Spirituell Sonnettes" are rather thin and rhetorical, if equally fervent, but in structure they are very similar to Donne's work. Ten of Constable's religious sonnets follow Donne's favorite rhyme scheme, as do more than half of the secular sonnets in *Diana*. Overall, Constable lacks the dramatic energy of Sidney and Donne, and his sonnets are not really problem-solving poems. Nevertheless, in their organization they occasionally exhibit the turn and turn again movement found in the "Holy Sonnets." The similarity was great enough to prompt the editor of the 1635 volume of Donne's *Poems* to ascribe Constable's sonnet "To our blessed Lady" to the author of the "Holy Sonnets":

In that (O Queene of queenes) thy byrth was free
 from guylt, which others doth of grace bereave
 when in theyr mothers wombe they lyfe receive:
 God as his sole-borne daughter loved thee.
 To matche thee lyke thy byrthes nobillitye,
 he thee hys spyryt for thy spouse dyd leave:
 of whome thou dydd'st his onely sonne conceive,
 and so was lynk'd to all the trinitye.
 Cease then, O Queenes who earthly crownes do weare
 to glory in the pompe of worldly thynges:
 if men such hyghe respect vnto yow beare
 Which daughters, wyves, & mothers ar of kynges;
 What honour should vnto that Queene be donne
 Who had your God, for father, spowse, & sonne.²³

Despite Constable's reliance on expletives and inversions, the ascription of this poem to Donne is not really farfetched. Compound epithets, such as the one Constable uses in line four, are common in both Sidney and Donne, and the poem's structure, turning after line eight and then again after line twelve, to end in an almost metaphysical epigram, clearly anticipates Donne's practice.

Barnabe Barnes, another of Sidney's early imitators, also turned to religious verse in sonnet form, although the quality of his work is not such as to call Donne to mind immediately. Unlike Barnes's earlier cycle of erotic poems, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593), *A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets* (1595) displays neither technical innovation nor significant variety of tone.²⁴ The one hundred religious sonnets are largely expository petitions for mercy, only rarely exploiting the dynamics of the sonnet form. Despite these faults, there is a good chance Donne would have encountered the volume, since it appeared while he was in London and rode on the crest of Barnes's secular reputation. Significantly, all but four of the poems in the *Divine Centurie* use the rhyme scheme Donne follows most often in his religious sonnets; the four that do not, seem to have resulted more from carelessness than an attempt at artistic variation. Barnes, for the most part, gives the impression of a man performing a grueling penance under duress, but when he forsakes apostrophe in favor of dramatic metaphor, he produces striking resemblances to Donne's work:

I feele my soule in combat with the dust
 Of sinfull flesh, and ready to breake out
 From loathsome bondage, dreadlesse of all doubt:
 I feele my soule (by shaddowes) sever must
 From that base prison of terrestriall rust
 Where it shall triumph in celestiall route
 Of my forefathers Angels round about
 That glorious throne of the faithfull and just.
 But yet my feeble flesh (surcharg'de with guilt)
 Trembleth at thought of death, but why should it
 Feare coward death, since for my soule was spilt
 His blood, that shall for mee in triumph sit?
 Death doe thy worst, but yet (Lord) thine eare give,
 Why I with David would not die but live. (XLIX)

Barnes's sonnet has the same rhyme scheme and double *volta* that Donne uses with a poetic skill which is greater in degree but similar in kind. "I feele my soule in combat" is probably the best sonnet in *The Divine Centurie* rather than a merely representative sample, but despite his lack of vitality, Barnes may well have been a much more influential poet than his current reputation would suggest.

A third religious sonneteer of the 1590's rests in deeper obscurity than either Constable or Barnes. Henry Lok was haunted by a reputation

for dull piety in his lifetime and is now remembered more as a unsuccessful courtier and spy than as a poet. In the second part of *The Return from Parnassus* (1601), the character Iudicio, who has only praise for "Sweete Constable," expresses what was probably the typical estimate of Lok (and religious poetry in general) among the Innes of Court wits:

Locke and Hudson [the translator of Du Bartas's *La Judit*], sleepe you quiet shauers, among the shauings of the presse, and let your bookes lie in some old nooke amongst old bootes and shooes, so you may [happ to] auoyde my censure.²⁵ (11.233, 260-63)

Yet as a poet, Lok was more successful than his critics make him appear. His *Sundry Christian Passions Contained in Two Hundred Sonnets* was published by Richard Field in 1593, and a second printing—expanded to 388 sonnets plus a paraphrase of *Ecclesiastes*—followed in 1597, making Lok the most prolific of the Elizabethan religious sonnetters, and the only one to go into a second edition.²⁶ Although Lok's interests are almost equally divided between sincere piety, intricate prosody, and sycophantic praise for Elizabeth and her court, for sheer technical virtuosity, he is probably unequalled by any other Elizabethan sonnet writer. If intricacy alone made great poetry, he would surely be better remembered.

As it is, however, Lok's experiments in a wide variety of complex rhyme schemes often seem more like ends in themselves than attempts at expressive form; only a very strong theme or metaphor can survive the pushing and pulling of fourteen lines held together by only four rhyme sounds. The *least* complex form Lok uses is the difficult Spenserian sonnet, rhyming *ababbcbccdcdee*; such structural feats take their toll in expletives and inversions for rhyme's sake. Nevertheless, a number of Lok's poems do use the fourfold structure and dramatic metaphors which Donne was to bring to perfection a few years later. In "I iustly am accusde" Lok anticipates both the theme and structure of Donne's "Oh my blacke Soule," with a similar image of a prisoner called to judgment developed in the octave:

I iustly am accusde, and now am brought
By law and gilt of conscience (I confesse)
Before thy throne, conuict by deed and thought,
Of sinfull lust which did me so possesse,

That quickning graces thine I did suppress
 By fading loue of world procliue to ill,
 Whose dome eternall death and nothing lesse,
 My soule doth see, to threaten to me still.

Compared with Donne's treatment of the same situation, Lok's is deficient.²⁷ The expletives and inversions are egregious, but, more important in terms of structure, Lok has not really developed the situation in the second quatrain, and has introduced the motif of Divine Grace prematurely, giving his first turn after line eight a *tu quoque* ring rather than the sense of discovery Donne evokes:

But since that frailtie so the world doth fill,
 That no one fleshly wight thereof is free,
 For mercy Lord to thee repaire I will,
 Who seest the hart, and canst best comfort me:

As Lok's sonnet continues in the sestet, the opening situation of the prisoner summoned to the bar fades into a somewhat prosy exposition of a commonplace rather than a dynamic apprehension. Nevertheless, Lok clearly turns again after line twelve, stating his petition directly with an opening spondee that signals resolution:

Quit me from death, grant I may fall no more,
 But remnant of my daies thy grace implore.²⁸ (Part I, Son. LII)

Perhaps known more for his faults than his virtues, Henry Lok was familiar to Donne's circle at the Innes of Court, and Donne himself may have been able to winnow the wheat from the chaff in Lok's work.

That the poets who serve as Donne's precursors lack his skill and subtlety does not diminish the strong evidence that in the "Holy Sonnets" he was *unoriginal* in everything but genius. The fourfold logical structure he uses with such effectiveness originated with Wyatt's translations of Petrarch and was transmitted to Donne by a substantial group of minor religious sonneteers of the 1590's who anticipated his application of the secular form to religious thought. To consider the "Divine Meditations" from a religious point of view alone, as principally shaped by the meditative tradition, is to discount the notable literary ancestry of the "Holy Sonnets."

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NOTES

1. Dame Helen Gardner, ed., *John Donne: The Divine Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). Subsequent quotations from Donne follow this text. Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962). The precise role of the Ignatian meditation which Professor Martz found in Donne's sonnets, "a threefold structure of composition (memory), analysis (understanding), and colloquy (affections, will)" (43), was debated early on even by those who considered the meditative influence strong. For example, where Professor Martz at first argued that the sonnets "I am a little world made cunningly," "At the round earths imagin'd corners," "Spit in my face yee Jewes," and "If poysonous mineralls" exhibited all three parts of the formal meditation (pp. 49-53), Dame Helen Gardner found only one or two parts of the Ignatian exercise (pp. l-liv). In the "Preface" to the revised edition of *The Poetry of Meditation* Professor Martz concluded that "the sonnets may be validly approached from either point of view" (p. xxiv), although Stanley Archer called the entire "meditative" approach into question on the basis of such seeming inconsistencies in his essay, "Meditation and the Structure of Donne's 'Holy Sonnets'" (*ELH*, 28 [1961], 137-47). At present, Dame Helen Gardner's comment that Ignatian practice informs Donne's religious poetry, "not as a literary source, but as a way of thinking" (liv) remains sound and generally accepted, although no satisfying literary source has yet been demonstrated. Professor Martz himself proposed that the work of Robert Southwell could have provided Donne with an earlier literary adaptation of the "threefold" structure of meditation (pp. 39-43), but Southwell's never having written in the sonnet form casts some doubt on any direct influence he may have had.
2. Sensitive analyses of individual "Holy Sonnets" appear in Reuben A. Brower's *The Fields of Light* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951) and J. B. Leishman's *The Monarch of Wit* (London: Hutchinson, 1951). *A Bibliography of Studies in Metaphysical Poetry*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964) lists many explicative articles on the "Holy Sonnets."
3. Paul Fussell, Jr., *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (New York: Random House, 1965), 120. I am also indebted to a seminal essay by Walter L. Bullock, "The Genesis of the English Sonnet Form," *PMLA*, 38 (1923), 729-44.
4. Francesco Petrarca, *Rime, Trionfi, e Poesie Latine*, ed. F. Neri, G. Martellotti, E. Bianchi, and N. Sapegno (Milano: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1951), 205.

5. Hyder E. Rollins, ed., *Tottel's Miscellany (1557-1587)*, revised ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), I, 37. Although Tottel himself often "regularized" Wyatt's versification, he generally left the poet's structure intact. I have followed this text rather than the less corrupt Egerton MS. because *Songes and Sonettes* is the only sure transmitter of Wyatt's poetry.
6. *Ibid.*, 6. A comparison with F. M. Padelford's *The Poems of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*, revised ed. (New York: Haskell House, 1966), 57, reveals that Tottle slightly altered Surrey's versification.
7. Rollins, *op. cit.*, 39.
8. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 153, 165.
9. M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), R. 98.
10. I have omitted from my discussion the seven sonnets in "La Corona," since they function as stanzas in another Italian form, the "crown of sonnets."
11. The eleven sonnets with *cdcdde* sestet are "Thou hast made mee," "O might those sighes," "Oh my blacke Soule," "I am a little world," "This is my playes last scene," "At the round earths imagin'd corners," "Spit in my face yee Jewes," "Batter my heart," "Since she whome I lovd," "Father, part of his double interest," and "Show me deare Christ." The *cdcdde* pattern occurs in "As due by many titles," "If faithfull soules," "Death be not proud," "Why are wee by all creatures," "What if this present," "Wilt thou love God," and "Oh, to vex me."
12. A turn occurs after the octave in "Thou hast made me," "As due by many titles," "O might those sighes," "Oh my blacke Soule," "This is my playes last scene," "At the round earths imagin'd corners," "If poysonous mineralls," "Spit in my face yee Jewes," "Why are wee by all creatures," "What if this present," "Batter my heart," "Wilt thou love God," "Father, part of his double interest," "Since she whome I lovd," and "Oh, to vex me." There is a turn before the final couplet in "Thou hast made me," "Oh my blacke Soule," "This is my playes last scene," "At the round earths imagin'd corners," "If faithfull soules," "If poysonous mineralls," "Death be not proud," "Spit in my face yee Jewes," "Why are wee by all creatures," "What if this present," "Batter my heart," "Wilt thou love God," "Father, part of his double interest," "Since she whome I lovd," and "Show me deare Christ."
13. For an examination of Wyatt's actual practice I have relied on *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, ed. Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson (Liverpool University Press, 1969). My tally has been checked against H. B. Lathrop's essay, "The Sonnet Forms of Wyatt and Surrey," *Modern Philology*, 2 (1904-5), 463-70. In an appendix to her edition of *The Poems of Sir Thomas*

Wiat (New York: Russell & Russell, 1913), A. K. Foxwell examined "Trissino's Influence on *Wiat's* Versification" and quoted a remark from *La Poetica* that puts Wyatt's innovation in a broader context:

Ne me è nascoso, che in alcuni antiquissimi autori avanti la eta di Dante si truovino qual che sonetti che hauero *tre base* (i.e. 'three quatrains') di tre quaternarii: non dimeno giudice che questi cotali base non siano molto da imitare percio che Petrarca e Dante et li altri buoni autori di quella eta mai non usorano.
(fol. XXXIII; quoted II, 251)

14. The other four are "How oft haue I," "Lyke vnto these," "If amorous fayth," and "My hart I gaue thee."
15. Surrey's "I neuer saw youe" (Padelford, 57) looks like a botched Italian sonnet. See also Lathrop, 468.
16. Gardner, *op. cit.*, xxiii n.
17. I have checked my tally aginst that in Sherod M. Cooper's *The Sonnets of Astrophel and Stella: A Stylistic Study* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968).
18. "Sir Philip Sidney and his Poetry," in *Elizabethan Poetry*, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, No. 2 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), 125.
19. On the structure of Tebaldeo's sonnets see John A. Scott's essay "Lyric and Pastoral Poetry" in *The Continental Renaissance*, ed. A. J. Krailshaimer (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), 142.
20. Janet Scott briefly considered "sonnets chrétiens" in *Les Sonnets Élisabethains*, *Révue de Littérature Comparée*, LX (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1929), 217-27. Joseph B. Collins devoted a chapter to "The Mystical Sonneteers" in *Christian Mysticism in the Elizabethan Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), 137-44, as did Lily B. Campbell in *Divine Poetry and Drama in Sixteenth-Century England* (1959; rpt. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), 130-38. The only full-length study to date, however, is an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation by John Wesley Dickinson, "The Elizabethan Religious Sonnet," University of California at Los Angeles, 1960.
21. These are included in *The Poems of Henry Constable*, ed. Joan Grundy (Liverpool University Press, 1960).
22. Joan Grundy concludes that "it is impossible to date them," although "Sir Sidney Lee assumed that they were written about 1593 [*Life of William Shakespeare* (1898), p. 440]," 59. Constable died in 1613.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 185. This poem is included in Herbert J. C. Grierson's edition of *The Poems of John Donne* (1912; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1963) among "Poems attributed to John Donne," I: 427.

24. My text is a microfilm copy of *STC* 1467, although the *Divine Centurie* was reprinted by A. B. Grosart in *Occasional Issues of Very Rare Books* (privately printed, 1871), vol. I.
25. *The Three Parnassus Plays (1598-1601)*, ed. J. B. Leishman (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1949).
26. I have relied on microfilm copies of the original editions, *Sundry Christian Passions Contained in Two Hundred Sonnets* (London: Richard Field, 1593), *STC* 166697; and *Ecclesiastes, Otherwise Called the Preacher . . . Whereunto are annexed sundrie Sonets of Christian Passions . . . now corrected and augmented, with other affectionate Sonets of a feeling conscience* (London: Richard Field, 1597), *STC* 166696. A. B. Grosart reprinted the 1597 edition in *Miscellanies of the Fuller Worthies' Library* (Printed for Private Circulation, 1871) vol. II: 137-449. Lok's prosodic virtuosity in the expanded volume of 1597 is worth noting. The first one hundred sonnets, "consisting chiefly of Meditations, Humiliations, and Prayers," are in Spenserian sonnet form, *ababbcbccdcdee*. The next hundred, "of Comfort, Joy, and Thanksgiving," follow an even more strict variant, *abbaaccacbcbdd*. Then come another hundred "sonets of a feeling conscience" where Lok again varies his stanza, still preferring internal couplets over open quatrains, rhyming *abbacdcdbbdee*. Twenty "Peculiar Prayers" follow, cast in the (unprecedented?) form *abbaab[turn]cdccdee*. Lok caps these off with sixty sonnets in diverse forms to various court personages.
27. Lok takes the motif of the prisoner called to judgment from Jeremiah 12:1-3, translating the Vulgate almost literally: "Justus quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum . . . Et tu, Domine, nosti me, vidisti me. et probasti cor meum tecum." See also Psalm 119: 137.
28. The text here follows the 1597 volume.