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Patterns and Patterning: A Study of Four Poems by George Herbert (Book Review)

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instance, that he does not follow up his few remarks on Lope de Vega's use of *romance* metres (p. 249). In English theaters, "popular dramaturgy" seems to come to little more than the clown's direct address to the audience. At one point (p. 276) Cohen cites the lord's rebuke on the use of such address from Brome's *The Antipodes* (1638) as a sufficient sign that the dramaturgy of the public theaters was outmoded, while ignoring the fact that a closely similar rebuke had been uttered by Hamlet.

Nevertheless, Cohen's alert attention to the contradictions latent in a dramatic genre can often lead to valuable insights, as in his discussion of the "disjunction" between plot and moral standpoint in satire, or of the utopian elements in seventeenth-century romance. Even if his enterprise is questionable in detail, the scale and ordering of it, the possibility of viewing two great national theaters together in perspective, is bound to place other scholars in his debt. A particularly valuable feature of it is the way Cohen draws attention to the resonance of major works beyond their own time. In a fascinating postscript, he closes the book with the record, from 1780, of a Swiss peasant's appreciation of the lower-class characters in Shakespeare.

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Leo Salinger

Bart Westerweel. *Patterns and Patterning: A Study of Four Poems by George Herbert*. (Costerus, n.s., 41.) Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984; distr. Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 45 pls. + xiv + 274 pp. \$37.

Bart Westerweel's study *Patterns and Patterning* is an encyclopedic and adventurous ramble through four key poems by George Herbert—"The Altar," "Easter-wings," "The Pilgrimage," and "Love" (III)—and a variety of backgrounds upon which they may depend. If I am tempted to say that we find out more than we ever wanted to know about possible emblematic, classical, biblical, and contemporary contexts for these poems, it is not out of disrespect for Westerweel's demonstrated erudition: he is a patient, diligent, knowledgeable researcher, and the sheer volume of material that he surveys is impressive. At the very least he will save future critics of Herbert a great deal of time and effort: in his discussion of such obviously patterned poems as "The Altar" and "Easter-wings," for example, he reviews at length the wealth of classical and contemporary models and analogues for such shaped verses and also neatly summa-

rizes modern scholarship on this subject. (He neglects two studies that would have been particularly useful—J. Max Patrick’s speculations on the variety of Herbert’s subtly shaped poems in “Critical Problems in Editing George Herbert’s *The Temple*” and Barbara Lewalski’s discussion of “Protestant emblematics” in *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*—but calls attention to and relies heavily on unpublished but valuable dissertations by Margaret Church and Eleanor James, on pattern poems and emblems in metaphysical poetry respectively.) Equally important, he reprints the relevant illustrations, so one need not go from one volume to another to examine the altar poems from the *Greek Anthology* by Dosiados and Vestinus, or the many emblematic plates (picturing the heart, the conversations between Amor and Anima, and so on) that Westerweel rightly assumes are central to Herbert’s poetic imagination.

There is much of value in the book apart from the secondary material he gathers and the illustrations he reprints. He defends his broader assertions quite successfully—for example, that Herbert’s pattern poems are subtle, imaginative, and effective transformations of traditional materials, and that “The emblem in the broad sense of the word is a cohesive factor in Herbert’s work as a whole” (p. 8). And many of his incidental comments are particularly intriguing, covering a wide range of topics including possible iconographic contexts for the “chair” and the gold coin (“one good Angell”) in “The Pilgrimage,” and a possible debt to Spenser in this same poem, which takes on new meaning when read as a parody that “seems to suggest that the allegorical view will not suffice for a presentation of true eternal life” (p. 148).

But the major flaw of the book is simply that it follows byways as relentlessly as highways. Even allowing for the fact that analogues and useful glosses may turn up in unexpected places, Westerweel runs the risk of frustrating his reader with all-too-frequent excursions into subjects that neither further his argument nor add relevant background to a study of Herbert. The discussion of the use of the pelican in *King Lear* and *Physiologus* (pp. 10–14), and the section on Ganymede and the eagle (pp. 129–33) are only two of numerous instances where the material presented is either distracting or superfluous. Furthermore, despite Westerweel’s attempt to have it otherwise (he mentions on a number of occasions the dangers of unassimilated and uncontrolled source-hunting), *Patterns and Patterning* is much in need of synthesis to complement the abundant analysis and docu-

mentation it presents. Westerweel's approach tends to fragment the poems into shards of images and phrases; or, to use a more fitting metaphor, he gives us the hewn stones of the poems, but not the cement. He is well aware of Herbert's great skill in unifying his poems, and the book concludes with a fine statement on Herbert as a "transformer, who had the ability to reshape and remake any material or subject-matter available to him" (p. 252) into poems that leave their sources and analogues far behind. But the book never moves toward supplying extended readings of the four poems, and as a result it seems to be somewhat more of a preparation for criticism than a fully elaborated critical study itself.

We should not, however, underestimate the value of this scholarly spadework. Westerweel notes quite rightly that Herbert's poems and a study of his poetic method require an "applied scholarship" (p. 252): "A true appreciation of the finished products, . . . the poems, should take account of what fed them" (p. 252), the "traditions and conventions, literary and other" (p. 251) that Herbert was immersed in. In an age of system-building criticism, Westerweel's concluding *apologia* is refreshing and candid: "I hope I have expanded the Herbert dictionary, albeit in a modest way" (p. 253). It is no backhanded compliment to say that he has succeeded in his aim, which after all is not so modest: his book will prove to be very handy for students and scholars examining these four poems in particular and the visual dimensions of Herbert's poetry in general.

SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

Sidney Gottlieb



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