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978-0-521-17442-8 - The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in Early Modern England

Gary Kuchar

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THE POETRY OF RELIGIOUS SORROW IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

In early modern England, religious sorrow was seen as a form of spiritual dialogue between the soul and God, expressing how divine grace operates at the level of human emotion. Through close readings of both Protestant and Catholic poetry, Kuchar explains how the discourses of “devout melancholy” helped generate some of the most engaging religious verse of the period. From Robert Southwell to John Milton, from Aemilia Lanyer to John Donne, the language of “holy mourning” informed how poets represented the most intimate and enigmatic aspects of faith as lived experience. In turn, “holy mourning” served as a way of registering some of the most pressing theological issues of the day. By tracing poetic representations of religious sorrow from Crashaw’s devotional verse to Shakespeare’s weeping kings, Kuchar expands our understanding of the interconnections between poetry, theology, and emotion in post-Reformation England.

GARY KUCHAR is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. He is the author of numerous articles on early modern literature and of *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England* (2005).

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*For Erin E. Kelly
and in memory of Sylvia Bowerbank, 1947–2005.*

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An early version of Chapter 3 appeared as "Andrew Marvell's Anamorphic Tears," *Studies in Philology* 103.3 (2006), 345–81; Chapter 4 appeared as "Aemilia Lanyer and the Virgin's Swoon: Theology and Iconography in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," *English Literary Renaissance* 37.1 (2007), 47–73 and Chapter 5 appeared as "Petrarchism and Repentance in John Donne's *Holy Sonnets*," *Modern Philology* (February 2008); I am grateful to the editors of these journals for permission to reproduce this material and to the anonymous readers for their helpful comments.

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OED *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edn)

SD *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. and introd. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957). References are given in the text by volume and page number.

The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw, ed. George Walton Williams (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970). References to “The Weeper” are from this edition and are given in the text by stanza number. Except when noted otherwise I cite the 1648 version of “The Weeper.” Other references to Crashaw’s poems are from this edition and are indicated as either line or stanza numbers in the text.

The Complete English Poems of John Donne, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Dent, 1985). Except when noted otherwise, references to Donne’s *Songs and Sonets* are from this edition and are given by line numbers.

The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne, volume 6: *The Anniversaries* and the *Epicedes and Obsequies*, ed. Gary A. Stringer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). References to *An Anatomy of the World. The First Anniversary* are given in the text by line numbers. I have modernized the use of u and v in citations of this text. Citations from the critical apparatus of this edition are given by page numbers and are cited in the notes as *Variorum Edition: Anniversaries*.

The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne, volume 7 part I: *The Holy Sonnets*, ed. Gary A. Stringer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). Except when noted otherwise, references to the *Holy Sonnets* are from this edition and are given in the text by sequence (Original, 1635, Westmoreland, or Revised) and by line numbers.

George Herbert: The Complete English Works, ed. Ann Pasternak Slater (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995). Except when noted otherwise,

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references to Herbert's poetry are from this edition and are given by line numbers in the text.

Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, ed. Susanne Woods (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1993). References to Lanyer are from this edition and are given in the text by page and line numbers. Page and line numbers are separated with a semi-colon.

Andrew Marvell: The Complete Poems, ed. George deF. Lord (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984). References to Marvell's poetry are from this edition and are cited in the text by line numbers.

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd edn. (London: Longman, 1998). References to *Paradise Lost* are from this edition and are cited in the text by book and line numbers.

William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. Charles Forker, Arden 3rd Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2002). References to the play are from this edition and are given in the text by act, scene, and line numbers.

William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets and Narrative Poems*, ed. Sylvan Barnet (New York: Signet, 1964). References to *Venus and Adonis* are from this edition and are cited in the text by line numbers.

The Poems of Robert Southwell S.J., ed. James H. McDonald and Nancy Pollard Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967). References to Southwell's poems are from this edition and are given in the text by line numbers.

Except when noted otherwise, references to the Bible are from a modern spelling edition of the King James version.

All italics in quotations are original except where marked.

This article is focused on English-language literature rather than the literature of England, so that it includes writers from Scotland, Wales, the Crown dependencies, and the whole of Ireland, as well as literature in English from countries of the former British Empire, including the United States. However, until the early 19th century, it only deals with the literature of the United Kingdom, the Crown dependencies and Ireland. It does not include literature written in the other languages of Britain. He is the author of *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England*; *The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in Early Modern England*; and co-editor of *The Return to Theory in Early Modern English Studies Vol. 2*. Show all. Reviews.Â (Naya Tsentourou, *Modern Language Review*, Vol.113 (2), April, 2018) â€œAn essential inclusion on any Herbert bibliography â€| . The ultimate payoff of George Herbert and the *Mystery of the Word* is not just a deep sense of Herbertâ€™s commitment to mystery, but the realization that this may be a root cause of the blossoming of seventeenth-century religious poetry. â€|