John R. Roberts, ed. *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century English Religious Lyric*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1994. Pp. viii, 335.

No period in English literary history offers a more generous and varied array of religious poetry than the seventeenth century. Approaches to the religious lyric in particular were as diverse as cultural ethos, denomination, and personality would allow. This collection of twelve original essays edited by John Roberts verifies the extraordinary breadth of religious experience articulated by notable poets of the lyric form: Marvell, Herbert, Herrick, Vaughan, Donne, Milton, and Crashaw. Roberts's introduction advances some salient questions concerning its subject: ". . . is the religious lyric truly a distinct genre . . . What do we mean by 'religious' in this context? . . . Is our understanding of 'religious' too narrow and restricted? . . . To what extent did the religious lyric participate in, and how was it shaped by, the political, social, theological and cultural contexts in which it was written?" (p. 2).

Helen Wilcox's lead essay, "'Curious Frame': The Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric as Genre," addresses the issues of genre definition by evocatively using Marvell's "The Coronet" as an epigraph for her study. The "curious frame" of which Marvell writes is analogous to the poet's artifact that, woven to crown his Lord, would at best "crown [his] feet, that could not crown [his] head." Wilcox's invocation of Marvell's analogue serves as an epigraph for the whole volume. This enigmatic Christian paradox informs the process of lyric making and the brilliantly resourceful, frustrating, and heroic efforts of human beings intent upon composing poetry to and about God. Wilcox provides clear and practicable delineations for the religious lyric: its being verbal incarnation, often in form of a speaking picture, emblematic in function, and having a discrete text which frequently defers to a larger collection, hence transcending its own specificity. Yet as Wilcox concludes: "Although the lyrics in themselves surprise the reader and transcend some of the normal limitations of the familiar, they can only ever, as Marvell concludes, achieve their spiritual goal — to 'crown' the 'feet' of Christ — by being trampled upon. Real transcendence, the implication is, comes through sacrifice" (p. 26).

The book as a whole exemplifies the creative potential of this spiritual inversion. Achsah Guibbory's "Enlarging the Limits of the Religious Lyric" treats Herrick's *Hesperides* and argues for his understanding of "religious" as a more "inclusive" and "holistic" concept (p. 31). Guibbory shows how Herrick's poems blur the distinctions between the domains of body and spirit. Such an expansive reading of Herrick, engaged as he is in the struggle between Puritan strictures and Anglican Incarnation, is to be welcomed. Claude J. Summers's essay, "Herrick, Vaughan and the Poetry of Anglican Survivalism," continues the re-interpretation of Herrick's work, with the application of what Summers calls the "hermeneutics of suffering" (p. 68). Summers argues convincingly for a possible influence of *Noble Numbers* (1647/48) upon Vaughan's later volume, *Silex Scintillans* (1650 and 1655). For example, Summers

notes that Herrick's "The Widdowes teares" (N-123) and Vaughan's "The British Church" (SS) are both laments, each portraying Anglicanism as a brutalized woman; in Herrick's poem she is "a dead widow," in Vaughan's "a ravished bride" (p. 48). Though composed and published before the execution of Charles I, *Noble Numbers* nevertheless anticipates Vaughan's more frequently noted grief in *Silex Scintillans*. Moreover, both volumes, argues Summers, "emphasize and are significantly shaped by a felt experience of marginalization and persecution" (p. 49). The emphasis which Summers places upon Herrick's response to "the dolorous state of affairs in England in the late 1640's" (p. 62) also offers a useful perspective on the preoccupation with "godly sorrow" or "teares," so prevalent in England throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Michael C. Schoenfeldt's new historicist essay, "The Poetry of Supplication: Toward a Cultural Poetics of the Religious Lyric," re-contextualizes the works of various poets, each grappling with self and circumstances in a radically revolutionary England. Schoenfeldt's interpretations — of Donne's "spiritual hypochondria" and "social precariousness" (p. 85), Herbert's struggling sense that even the private is public, Vaughan's "hermeticism cultivated in deliberate opposition to the social" (p. 96), and Herrick's imagination of God as "informed ultimately by a kind of *via negativa*" (p. 99) — all align (though methodologically different) with Stella Revard's intriguing reading of Milton in "Christ and Apollo in the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric." In the culminating section of her study, we glimpse Milton's *via negativa*, as he daringly exorcizes Charles I's alter ego (Phoebus Apollo) from his Nativity Ode of 1629.

Continuing the theme of spiritual struggle, Anthony Low's reading of "John Donne: 'The Holy Ghost is Amorous in His Metaphors'" portrays impressively Donne's gender agon as he strives toward union with God. As "both an insistently masculine seeker after mistresses or truths and the necessarily feminine and passive recipient of God's love," Donne is beset by "conflicting roles" (p. 207). Three of the poet's most startling accommodations are, in one case, the altering of God's sex from male to female, in another, his envisaging of a "*ménage à trois*" among Christ, himself, and the Church, and the most famous of all these in "Batter My Heart," his proposition of divine rape. Donne's poetry, like that of other poets in this collection, amply illustrates how generative spiritual combat can actually be to the process of writing religious lyrics. R. V. Young, Jr.'s "Donne, Herbert, and the Postmodern Muse" demonstrates the wide range of lyrical strategies adopted by poets working amid the social, religious, and political controversies of their time. According to Young, this process is parallel to the current quest for ultimate signification within theoretical circles. In effect, then, seventeenth-century poets themselves were engaged in an activity anticipatory of their postmodern critics. As Young argues, both parties address essentially the same issue: "the capacity of the speaking self to define its identity in meaningful utterance and the relationship between words of its discourse and an absolute source of significance" (p. 187). Like the deconstructionist, writes Young, the

devotional poet attacks the facile notion of absolutes, what Young calls, "the secular humanist's illusion of self-sufficiency" (p. 187).

No such illusions rest between the covers of this volume, neither among the poets themselves, nor the scholars who critique them, both attentive to the complex and humanly irresolvable concerns of living in or writing about the seventeenth century. Though less evidently engaged with the social problems which frequently inspire religious poetry in the period, Judith Dundas's and Christopher Hodgkins's studies of rhetorical motives in poetic texts nicely complement Young's argument. "'All Things are Bigge with Jest': Wit as a Means of Grace," with Dundas's captivating vision of the poet's rhetorical "play before the Lord" (p. 142, and "'Showing Holy': Herbert and the Rhetoric of Sanctity," with Hodgkins's use of *The Countrey Parson* as a gloss on Herbert's poetic intent to "profoundly subvert the language of conventional piety" (p. 229), both offer the reader postmodern concerns though approached from traditional perspectives.

Dundas's essay especially, like Paul Stanwood's "Liturgy, Worship, and the Sons of Light," offers an antidote to the spiritual tensions which prevail throughout the volume. Stanwood's provision of various connections between sermons, devotional works, and certain Prayer Book liturgies and the poetry of Southwell, Alabaster, Donne, Herbert, and Milton, in its turn, looks ahead to the concerns of Eugene R. Cunnar's "Opening the Religious Lyric: Crashaw's Ritual, Liminal, and Visual Wounds." Cunnar attends in particular to the liturgies and theology of Christ's wounds, read in conjunction with Victor Turner's theory of liminality in ritual process. This resourceful study serves as a fitting final essay for the volume and attests to the applicability of a variety of critical tools to seventeenth-century texts; intertextual application of theological and liturgical documents, biographical data, historical evidence, and theoretical material together provide a substantially enriched reading of Crashaw's work.

Last, but by no means least, I would commend Louis L. Martz's retrospective account in "The Poetry of Meditation: Searching the Memory." As the critic who so thoroughly pioneered the territory of the seventeenth-century lyric, Martz's recounting of the origins, intentions, and method of his widely influential book, here redefined as a work of "New Critical Historicism," is valuable. For all engaged in critical discourse of the seventeenth century, Martz's research has been seminal. His recontextualizing of his major contribution is itself formative to the present and future process of scholarship in the area. Finally, what should also be of considerable use to researchers is John Roberts's 48-page "The Seventeenth-Century English Religious Lyric: A Selective Bibliography of Modern Criticism (1952-1990)," the concluding contribution in this collection.

In company with a number of valuable books on seventeenth-century poetry to appear in recent years, Roberts's collection securely establishes the religious lyric as a highly efficacious form used by all major poets of the period. With its own generic integrity, the religious lyric served its poets well as a vehicle infinitely flexible to their

aesthetic and spiritual claims. This sophisticated genre encapsulates the interior and cultural life of the seventeenth century, riddled with contradictions, paradoxes, and ironies not far from those of our own time. As several of the contributors have suggested, the relevance of this study to late twentieth-century readers significantly exceeds the academic. In reading *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century English Religious Lyric*, we can affirm its editor's prefatory remark: "as we approach the twenty-first century, these poets continue to attract some of the best minds currently engaged in literary study" (p. 1).

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Jean-Paul Barbier. *Ma bibliothèque poétique*. Troisième partie: *Ceux de la Pléiade*. Avec un tableau chronologique des oeuvres de Joachim du Bellay. Genève, Droz, 1994. Pp. 588.

Avec l'aide de son bibliothécaire Thierry Dubois, Jean-Paul Barbier décrit dans cet imposant volume sa collection de recueils de poésie produits par les membres de la Pléiade (sauf Ronsard, à qui la deuxième partie de cette *Bibliothèque*, parue en 1990, était consacrée). Son introduction contient des remarques intéressantes sur Dorat et le Collège de Coqueret — remarques qui tiennent compte des recherches récentes de Madeleine Jürgens et de Michel Simonin — et examine "la guerre contre l'ignorance" ainsi que la politique française en Italie sous Henri II, qui sert d'arrière-plan à bien des textes de du Bellay. Est reproduit ensuite le chapitre 6 du Livre VII des *Recherches de la France* d'Étienne Pasquier, qui traite de la Pléiade. L'inventaire proprement dit est divisé en sections correspondant aux auteurs: Jacques Peletier, Joachim du Bellay, Pontus de Tyard, Jean-Antoine de Baïf, Guillaume des Autels, Étienne Jodelle, Jean de la Péruse, Remy Belleau et Jean Dorat. Chaque section est précédée d'une notice biographique. La section traitant de du Bellay est la plus longue, puisque non moins de 37 volumes de ce poète sont en la possession de Jean-Paul Barbier — y compris la *Deffence et Illustration* de 1549 en reliure d'époque.

La description matérielle des volumes est méticuleuse, comprenant toujours une reproduction photographique de la page de titre et, fréquemment, des illustrations qui mettent en valeur d'autres aspects du recueil en question. Il y a également neuf belles photographies en couleur permettant d'apprécier la qualité de la reliure d'un petit échantillon des livres décrits. Sont notés pour chaque volume le format, l'emploi des caractères italiques ou romains, le foliotage et la pagination éventuelle, le contenu (relevé avec beaucoup de précision), le nombre de vers à la page pleine, la reliure, et d'autres particularités. L'exactitude de la transcription rendra service à tous les chercheurs. Le relevé des variantes d'une édition à l'autre peut être fascinant, comme dans le cas de Tyard.