



1993

Review Essay: Heffernan, Thomas. *Art and Emblem: Early Seventeenth-Century English Poetry of Devotion*

Thomas Spaulding Willard
University of Arizona

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra>

 Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [History Commons](#), [Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Renaissance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Willard, Thomas Spaulding (1993) "Review Essay: Heffernan, Thomas. *Art and Emblem: Early Seventeenth-Century English Poetry of Devotion*," *Quidditas*: Vol. 14 , Article 25.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra/vol14/iss1/25>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Quidditas by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Alan Haynes's *Invisible Power*, an important step forward in the study of the Elizabethan 'secret services', provides historians with the first coherent overview of the workings of Elizabethan espionage in discovering and defusing those major conspiracies aimed at reestablishing Catholicism and overthrowing Elizabeth and her chief ministers. Focusing on the triumvirate of Burghley, Walsingham, and Leicester, Haynes compares and contrasts the scope and effectiveness of their individual espionage organizations and concludes Walsingham was the greatest of the three spy masters. His secretaryship alone is known to have employed from 100 to 500 domestic and foreign correspondents. Add the large numbers of informants found in Burghley's, Leicester's, Robert Cecil's, and Essex's employ, and one begins to appreciate the scope of the Privy Council's efforts to protect the Elizabethan settlement.

Together these men sized up the unfinished nature of that settlement, the queen's unmarried status, and her lack of a clear successor, concluding that a first-rate intelligence network was not only the most certain but also the safest and most economical defense weapon for protecting their vulnerable queen. Wedding state and ruler as one and the same, the Privy Council concluded that any threat to the body of the queen was a threat to the nation as a whole.

The book begins with William Cecil's successful foiling of Dr John Stoy's dreams of royal murder and an invasion of England and ends with the fall of Essex. Taking exception to some of Conyers Read and Penry Williams's more recent conclusions that the Elizabethan Privy Councilors failed to create anything resembling a 'sophisticated' spy system, Haynes concludes that Elizabeth's espionage underlay much that was central to the policy formulations of the queen and her ministers.

Haynes cites additional reasons for this expansion of espionage, including the efforts to fill the gaps created by a contracting diplomatic service that left England with few resident ambassadors and a royal parsimony that saw spies as 'the cheapest, handiest substitute for resident diplomats' (p 157).

Haynes's reliance on eighty-nine secondary sources, while referencing only three original and ten calendared manuscripts, leaves one wondering what a careful and systematic study of all the original manuscript sources would have revealed. Many paragraphs that are filled with important conclusions fail to footnote any of the sources consulted. Nevertheless, this book lays a significant foundation for that brave soul who will someday spend half a lifetime shuffling through the early modern manuscript collections of the British Isles and western Europe in order to provide a more definitive account of Elizabethan espionage. Haynes is to be thanked for preparing this well-summarized handbook on the long-neglected Elizabethan secret services which he concludes made England 'a sour authoritarianism' rather than a 'truly secret state' (p 156).

F. Jeffrey Platt
Northern Arizona University

The nature of the emblem book is such that it tends to tell you what you know already, if you belong to the same tradition as the author, but to put it so succinctly that you get a fresh perspective on the whole tradition. Images and epigrams and mottos are inserted in the original emblem book of Alciat, in the root sense of *emballain*, as though the 'hieroglyphics' of Horapollo were interleaved with poems from *The Greek Anthology*, and Bible verses are inserted in the devotional books that developed on his model. Thomas Heffernan is concerned with the 'poetry of devotion' and uses the Jesuit emblem books of the early seventeenth century (along with the theology of de Sales) much as Louis Martz used the exercises of Loyola in *The Poetry of Meditation*. In addition to the well-known *Emblemes* of Frances Quarles (1635), he discusses the *Parthenia Sacra* of Henry Hawkins (1633), which treated two dozen emblems associated with the Virgin Mary. From there he moves the great poets of the English church, George Herbert and John Donne. *Art and Emblem* is modest in scope, compared with the influential studies of Mario Praz and Ruth Wallerstein, but his aim seems to be that of the emblem book authors, who give him his lead: to say much in little. Even his prose is epigrammatic. Explaining the Augustinian attitude toward pagan learning, he writes of Hawkins's poems: 'rhetorical "Varietie" is used in the interest of devotional "Pietie"' (p 38).

Heffernan's monograph is a pleasure to read and reread, full of fascinating quotations and keen insights. The central chapter on the devotional poets is framed by chapters on the *liber mundus* theme in Renaissance literature and the rhetorical figure as forming and unifying principle in the devotional poetry of the age. Traditionally, God and (hu)man principle were immersed in each other: God had made man *ad imaginem suam* (Genesis 1:27) and had written his law *in corde* (Jeremias 31:33), yet the Christian's life was *abscondita cum Christo in Deo* (1 Colossenses 3:3). The emblem books offered images and words to help one glimpse 'the divine image' in the little world of man and to explore 'the divine analogy' between God's will and his works in the great world of nature. (I should note that I have taken the phrases 'divine image' and 'divine analogy' from William Blake, whose meditative method has long ago been traced back to the English Renaissance.) Indeed, they converted the very notion of the image as surely as their author's hoped to convert readers, so that in the new mimesis of religious reformation the *imago agens* of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* became the *figura* of pious devotion, the still turning point where revelation could occur. The extent to which this devotional tradition ended with the Enlightenment, as Heffernan contends, is of course open to interpretation. Heffernan's book may be hard to find, but it pulls much together and should prove well worth the search.

Thomas Spaulding Willard
University of Arizona

Holt, Mack P., ed. *Society and Institutions in Early Modern France*. University of Georgia Press, Athens 1991. 242 pp. \$35.00 / \$15.00.

Society and Institutions in Early Modern France, a welcome collection of essays by friends and former students of J. Russell Major, addresses the questions that were,