

G.R. WECKHERLIN'S SONNETS

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A THESIS

Presented to  
the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
and Research  
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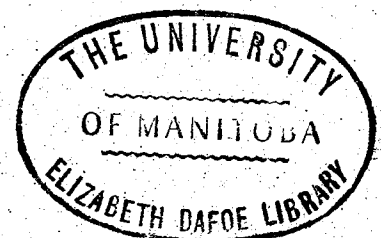
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by

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G A R D A

"Sie ist die gröseste Reichtumb."

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I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. P.M. Daly whose "open door" policy has alleviated many frustrations.

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### AN ABSTRACT

Georg Rodolf Weckherlin (1584-1653) wrote, as far as we know, a total of sixty-four sonnets. These sonnets have attracted little attention in spite of the fact that Weckherlin is considered one of the most important poets of the early German Baroque. Literary historians of the sonnet have long recognized Weckherlin's primacy and ability, but Germanists in general have been slow to acknowledge him as a sonneteer. In part, this may be due to Opitz's influence, which, rightly or wrongly, has overshadowed the efforts of his contemporaries. Weckherlin was also isolated from the mainstream of German life and letters, not only by his attempts at resisting Opitz's theory, but also by his living most of his adult life in England.

This thesis is an attempt to understand the nature of Weckherlin's sonnets. After an examination and analysis of the sixty-four sonnets, it was decided that the sonnets were basically and thematically grouped into two categories: "Liebessonette" and "Lobsonette". An examination of the motifs, themes, and attitudes of the love sonnets revealed that in all cases, except one, the sonnets were petrarchistic. The fact that Weckherlin wrote a cycle of petrarchistic sonnets has been previously noted by many scholars, but no one, to my knowledge, has made a detailed study of the cycle in order to reveal the nature of Weckherlin's petrarchism or to verify that the cycle was, in fact, a cycle. It was decided, after careful consideration, that Weckherlin's petrarchism was conventional, if not restrained. That is, the description of the beloved contained no outrageous hyperbole or extensive mythological association. The effect of the beloved on the lover was found to be more pleasurable than painful as there were more sonnets in praise of

the beloved than sonnets that described the suffering of the lover. It was also decided that the cycle was, in fact, a cycle, but only in the sense of a series of sonnets collected, quite arbitrarily, around the central theme of love.

The "Lobsonette", or "Heroische Sonnet" to use Weckherlin's words, revealed that they were not so much praise of a particular hero, but rather praise of the Protestant cause, and were comments on the Thirty Years' War. The political and war motifs were found to play a dominant role, even in those sonnets that were addressed to Weckherlin's friends. War was also discovered to be an extremely important motif in the petrarchistic sonnets.

Finally, Weckherlin's use of the sonnet form was examined in order to ascertain if there was any correlation between outer form and inner movement. It was discovered that indeed there was not only a correlation, but a remarkable union of form and content.

This thesis concludes, then, that the sonnets of Weckherlin, who is generally considered the oldest German sonneteer of worth, deserve to be one of the measures for later German sonnets.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	vii
 Chapter	
I. WECKHERLIN'S PETRARCHISTIC SONNET CYCLE. . . . .	1
Petrarchism. . . . .	1
Physical Beauty of the Beloved . . . . .	15
Spiritual Beauty . . . . .	23
The Attitude of the Beloved. . . . .	25
The Attitude of the Lover. . . . .	27
The Suffering of the Lover . . . . .	30
The Motif of War . . . . .	38
The Power and Significance of the Beloved. . . . .	41
An Uncommon Petrarchistic Commonplace. . . . .	46
The Significance of the Names "Myrta" and "Filodor". . . . .	49
An Anti-Petrarchistic Sonnet and an Unpetrarchistic Sonnet. . . . .	52
The Cycle as a Cycle . . . . .	56
II. "HEROISCHE UND ANDERE SONNET". . . . .	59
Weckherlin's Heroes. . . . .	59
Weckherlin's Friends . . . . .	79
Miscellaneous Sonnets. . . . .	88
III. WECKHERLIN'S USE OF THE SONNET FORM. . . . .	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	116

## INTRODUCTION

This study is an analysis and interpretation of all the known sonnets written by Georg Rodolf Weckherlin (1584-1653). Weckherlin, after studying at the University of Tübingen, embarked upon a career as a secretary and diplomat. He was first employed at the court of the Duke of Württemberg, but later settled in England where he became naturalized. Most of his adult life was spent in the service of the English court, but

in spite of his amazing command of the language and his understanding of all things English, he was never assimilated, but remained a German at heart . . . . His outstanding characteristic is a profound patriotism, . . . which for him was identical with the cause of Protestantism.<sup>1</sup>

Weckherlin wrote a total of sixty-four sonnets. For the purposes of this investigation, all poems titled "Sonnet", and poems comprising fourteen lines and similar in form to those labelled "Sonnet" have been included. Sixty-one of these sonnets are contained in Fischer's three volume edition of Weckherlin's works.<sup>2</sup> Two handwritten sonnets were discovered and transcribed by Forster,<sup>3</sup> as was one other.<sup>4</sup>

1

Leonard Forster, "G.R. Weckherlin in England", GLL, III, 2 (Jan. 1939), 115.

2

Hermann Fischer, Georg Rudolf Weckherlins Gedichte, III vols., (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968). In future footnote references this source will be abbreviated to either Fischer I, Fischer II or Fischer III.

3

Leonard Forster, "Ein viersprachiger Gedichtzyklus G.R. Weckherlins: Für Henry Lüdeke", Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft I, 1957, 11-29. In future footnote references this source will be abbreviated to Forster, "Gedichtzyklus".

4

Leonard Wilson Forster, Georg Rudolf Weckherlin, zur Kenntnis seines Lebens in England, Basler Studien zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur 2, (Basel: Benno Schwabe & Co. Verlag, 1944), p.134. Future footnotes will refer to this source as Forster, Weckherlin.

Weckherlin's favourite genre, numerically, was the sonnet.<sup>5</sup> His first sonnet, "Sonnet. Die spiegelmacher an das Frawenzimmer." (3),<sup>6</sup> appeared in his earliest publication Triumpf (1616), and his last known poem was a sonnet, "An Herren Ehrenhold Falken, von Traubenberg, Sonnet." (416), which was dated "Decemb. 1648." Weckherlin is not renowned for his sonnets; yet literary historians do note that he is the first name-worthy German sonneteer. In spite of this acceptance on the one hand, Germanists, in general, have been slow to acknowledge him.

The aim of this study is to examine the content of Weckherlin's sonnets in order to determine their motifs, themes, and attitudes. These terms will be used in a very general, if somewhat simple way. The intention of this study is not to enter into a discussion of motifs, themes, and attitudes per se, but to use them only as tools. The word "theme" will refer to the general subject matter of the particular sonnet, and "motif" will refer to the means by which this is illustrated. "Attitude" will refer to the pose adopted by or towards the speaker in the sonnet. As a practical example, in "Die Lieb ist Leben und Tod" (317) the theme is that of love, the motif is the typically petrarchistic, antithetical pair of life and death, and the attitude of the speaker is acceptance of his suffering. After the content has been examined, it will be related to the sonnet form.

Weckherlin's sonnets tend towards two main groups in terms of

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5

Fischer II, p.515.

6

Fischer has numbered most poems, and the number in brackets immediately following a poem is consistent with his numbering.



theme. The first group that will be examined is the cycle of love sonnets, and the second is a group of "Lobgedichte" or "Heroische Sonnet." This thesis will attempt to demonstrate that the love sonnets are predominantly petrarchistic, and the "Lobgedichte" are mainly political. The thesis will be divided into three main sections, which will encompass discussions on the cycle of love sonnets, "Heroische und andere Sonnet", and Weckherlin's use of the sonnet form.

Finally, if Weckherlin's sonnets should reveal that he did not merely impose a rhyme scheme upon a fourteen-line poem, but instead conceived the sonnet as a two-part structure with a meaningful relationship between outer form and inner movement, then, as the oldest German sonneteer, Weckherlin's norms would deserve to be one of the measures for later German sonnets.

## CHAPTER I

### WECKHERLIN'S PETRARCHISTIC SONNET CYCLE

#### Petrarchism

In 1641 Johan Jansson of Amsterdam published a book of poetry entitled George Rodolf Weckherlins Gaistliche und Weltliche Gedichte. This book contains, as the title suggests, two main sections. The second section, Weltliche Poesyen, is subdivided into six headings. The third heading is that of Buhlereyen Oder Lieb-Gedichte, and it is here that we find nineteen sonnets, numbered 1-19 by Weckherlin, under the particular heading of Etliche Sonnet oder Kling geseng von seiner Liebsten.<sup>7</sup> In the 1648 edition these same nineteen sonnets are reproduced with minor alterations, and the addition of another three changes the original order slightly. Thus there are twenty-two love sonnets out of a total of sixty-four sonnets.

In order to appreciate Weckherlin's love sonnets fully, it is necessary to understand the tradition in which they were written. "Defining the tradition used by a poet is the most precise tool we have for distinguishing the immediate from the peripheral in his art."<sup>8</sup> Weckherlin's twenty-two love sonnets are, for the most part, typically petrarchistic. This on the one hand says much and on the other hand says little. Most of the love poetry of this period was, in one way or another, petrarch-

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<sup>7</sup>  
Fischer I, pp.462-476.

<sup>8</sup>  
Donald Guss, John Donne, Petrarchist: Italianate Conceits and Love Theory in the "Songs and Sonets", (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966), p.15.

chistic, and if the label is to be at all meaningful it must be precise. If the label "petrarchistic" is understood to mean a shallow imitation of anything and everything that was once written by Petrarch, then it is not only incorrectly understood, but meaningless as a literary label because it says very little. Even the most superficial reading of Weckherlin's love sonnets will leave one with the impression that they are petrarchistic, but this has to do with the nature of petrarchism and not with Weckherlin. Petrarchism is easily recognizable, because it is a convention with clear concepts, concrete images, and traditional limits. What might seem, to the modern reader, to be insincere and exaggerated love poetry in Weckherlin, is really an example of excellent petrarchism.

9                    10                    11                    12                    13  
 Pacini, Kastner, Berent, Naumann, Forster, among others, have all made occasional references to the Petrarchan and petrarchistic influences in Weckherlin's work, but no one, to my knowledge, has made a thorough study of Weckherlin as a petrarchist. For that matter neither

9

Lidia Pacini, Petrarca in der deutschen Dichtungslehre vom Barock bis zur Romantik, Italienische Studien 1, (Petrarca-Haus Köln: Kommissionsverlag Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart, 1936), p.7.

10

L.E. Kastner, "Georg Rudolf Weckherlin's Models", MLR, X, (1915), p.369.

11

Eberhard Ferdinand Berent, Die Auffassung der Liebe bei Opitz und Weckherlin und ihre geschichtlichen Vorstufen, Cornell University, Ph.D., 1960, (Mic 61-731, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1969), p.110.

12

Walter Naumann, Traum und Tradition in der deutschen Lyrik, Sprache und Literatur 32, (Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1966), p.103.

13

Leonard Forster, The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1969), p.49. Hereinafter referred to as Forster, Icy Fire.

does this study, as it is concerned only with Weckherlin's sonnets.

The one in-depth study of all of Weckherlin's love poetry is Berent's doctoral thesis.<sup>14</sup> Berent carefully describes and documents Opitz's and Weckherlin's concepts of love in their historical context. However, he does not discuss petrarchism as fully as one would expect. Berent does not differentiate between Petrarch and petrarchism, and feels that it is not his responsibility to discuss these aspects of Opitz's and Weckherlin's love poetry:

Da es nicht im Interesse dieser Darstellung liegt, aufzuzeigen, in welchem Grade und in welcher Weise Petrarka und seine Schule von Opitz und Weckherlin aufgenommen wurde, sei hier auf die Arbeit von H. Souvageol, Petrarka in der deutschen Lyrik des XVII. Jahrhunderts, Ansbach 1911, verwiesen, in der allerdings nur äußerlich die einzelnen Übertragungen und Adaptionen mit dem Original verglichen werden, ohne die viel interessantere Frage nach der inneren Wesensverwandtschaft, die zwischen Petrarka und den deutschen Barockdichtern besteht, anzuschneiden.<sup>15</sup>

Berent's main interest is revealing his poets' thoughts on love: ". . . die Aufgabe dieser Arbeit ist, . . . allein festzuhalten, welche Gedanken und Anschauungen diese Dichter über die Liebe zum Ausdruck brachten, . . ."<sup>16</sup> Yet it is questionable whether this can be satisfactorily done without discussing petrarchism fully. Berent is in an excellent position to define the tradition in which Weckherlin wrote, as half of his thesis is devoted to historical concepts of love, but he states that:

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<sup>14</sup>

Berent, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>

Ibid. p.167, n. 1.

<sup>16</sup>

Ibid. p.112.

Es soll hier nicht untersucht werden, auf welche Weise die genannten Dichter /Opitz und Weckherlin/ mit den Liebestheorien vertraut wurden: durch die direkte Beschäftigung mit den italienischen Autoren oder auf dem Umwege über die italienische, französische und niederländische Renaissancedichtung, in welcher die Liebesauffassung Italiens weitgehend ihren Ausdruck gefunden hatte, . . . .<sup>17</sup>

Berent's observation that: "Die neue deutsche Lyrik von Opitz und Weckherlin ist ohne eine Kenntnis der Liebesauffassung der italienischen Renaissance nicht zu verstehen"<sup>18</sup> is correct, but not precise enough.

This thesis is in agreement with Pyritz's contention ". . . dass auch die Liebesdichtung des deutschen 17. Jahrhunderts, soweit sie überhaupt in diesen Bereich gehört, nicht unter dem Zeichen Petrarca's, sondern unter dem des Petrarkismus steht."<sup>19</sup> Berent, unfortunately, was not aware of,

or decided not to use Pyritz's study, for it is neither mentioned in his thesis nor listed in his bibliography. In a later article on a similar topic to his thesis, Berent makes no mention of his own doctoral thesis,<sup>20</sup> but does mention Pyritz briefly, if somewhat insignificantly. In his

Anmerkungen to this article, he dates Pyritz's P. Flemings deutsche Liebeslyrik as if it were 1923.<sup>21</sup> This, of course, is incorrect and should

<sup>17</sup>  
Ibid. p.91.

<sup>18</sup>  
Ibid. pp.90-91.

<sup>19</sup>  
Hans Pyritz, Paul Flemings Liebeslyrik, zur Geschichte des Petrarkismus, Palaestra Band 234, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), p.157.

<sup>20</sup>  
Eberhard Berent, "Frauenverehrung und Frauenverachtung in der Dichtung des frühen Barock", New York University Department of German Studies in Germanic Languages and Literature, 1968, 21-34.

<sup>21</sup>  
Ibid. p.34, n.5.

read 1932. In fairness to Berent, I must add that this could quite easily be a typographical error.

Any examination of the love poetry of the seventeenth century must automatically take petrarchism into account, for as Newald says: "Aus der deutschen Liebeslyrik des 17. Jahrh.s ist der Petrarkismus nicht wegzudenken."<sup>22</sup> Weckherlin's cycle of twenty-two love sonnets represents the total known love sonnets that he wrote, and they are predominantly petrarchistic. Fechner has already noted that in the cycle "ist der petrarkistische Ideen-und Bildkatalog in geschickter Weise ins Deutsche übertragen."<sup>23</sup> Weckherlin does not use all of the possible petrarchistic motifs, themes, and attitudes as there are only twenty-two sonnets, but he certainly uses a great many of them. Perhaps what is refreshing about Weckherlin's cycle is that there is only a limited number of sonnets and thus he avoids the trap of constantly harping on the same theme which, in the end, must deaden this type of poetry.

The whole question of influences, models, and sources has lost the charm it once had and the intention is not to enter into this maze. Besides, early Weckherlin scholars have done much of the initial research in this area. At times, in their eagerness to find a model, they have been overzealous. For example:

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22

Richard Newald, Die deutsche Literatur vom Späthumanismus zur Empfindsamkeit, 1570-1750, Vol.5 of Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, ed. by H. de Boor and R. Newald (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), p.186.

23

Jörg-Ulrich Fechner, Der Antipetrarkismus: Studien zur Liebes-  
satire in barocker Lyrik, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag,  
1966), p.53.