In Her Father’s House: Gwen Harwood as a Sacramental Poet
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Abstract

This article considers the ways in which it is possible to interpret Gwen Harwood’s poetry not only through the lens of what has been termed “the sacred”, but more specifically as sacramental poetry whose form and content pursues the grace of the Eucharist. While the Eucharist brings with it notions of received power - and a male and Eurocentric locus of that power - this article considers the ways in which Harwood’s poetry reconfigures and recentres the sacraments to render them distinctly female and distinctly Australian. This article goes further to suggest that Harwood’s poetry could be said to be more theologically orthodox in this pursuit than a first guess might suggest, tracing Harwood’s sacramentalism to other writers for whom a serious consideration of the Eucharist necessitates local and corporeal iterations of the Last (and first) Supper. A consideration is given to several of Harwood’s poems, bearing out a discussion of Harwood’s interest in the sacraments as not only epistemological and phenomenological, but fundamentally poetic.

Keywords

Gwen Harwood; the sacred; sacramental poetry

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