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Guido Gezelle and George Herbert: Curious Poetic Parallels

During most of his life the nineteenth-century poet-priest Guido Gezelle met with considerable opposition from various literary critics. They criticized his poetry for its regional and dialectal language use, its somewhat limited subject matter and almost exclusively religious orientation, and its departure from contemporary and previously established poetic norms. Gezelle's detractors especially disliked the fact that he did not conform to the stylistic practices of those Netherlandic poets who were then in vogue.¹ But Gezelle also had many loyal supporters who often came to his defense. One of these, a man named Frans De Cort, in a letter dated December 2, 1860, showered praise on Gezelle's poetic accomplishments, adding this noteworthy compliment: "Men ziet wel, dat gij niet bij die stijve, pedante Hollandsche magisters in de leer zijt geweest, welke den meesten onzer Vlaamsche dichteren tot modellen dienen!"² This remark is interesting because it raises questions regarding poetic influence. Who were Gezelle's models of inspiration? From whom did he learn his poetic techniques? If not entirely from Netherlandic writers, as De Cort's remark might imply, then which foreign poets might have inspired him? Specifically, which English poets might he have read? And which of these might have exerted some influence on his own work? Since these questions have never been fully answered, they deserve further investigation.

Regarding the English influence on Gezelle's poetic career, the eminent Gezelle scholar Frank Baur, already in the 1920s, had made this important and entirely correct observation: "vooral de Engelsche orienteering van Gezelle moet aanzienlijk zijn litterair vergezicht hebben verruimd."³ Although Baur did not explore this suggestion further, other literary critics did and, since that time, have noted various poetic links between Gezelle and a number of English writers. These critics have concentrated almost exclusively on nineteenth-century poets, such as Burns, Wordsworth, Hardy, and Hopkins, by tracing certain verbal echoes from their verse in Gezelle's own.⁴ It seems curious, however, given Gezelle's great interest in the distant past, that no critics, except by way of brief reference, have turned their attention to that much earlier group of English poets with whom Gezelle would almost certainly have felt a special kinship, namely those rich devotional poets of the seventeenth century of whom George

Herbert (1593-1633) was the greatest. For Gezelle, Herbert would also undoubtedly have had the most appeal. Herbert, after all, despite his wealthy aristocratic background and chances for a prestigious post in Church or Court, ultimately found his greatest happiness at the end of his career as the humble poet-priest of rural Bemerton. Likewise, Gezelle found his greatest happiness at the end of his career as the simple poet-priest of rural Kortrijk. Though interesting, these coincidental parallels do not, of course, indicate that Gezelle had read Herbert. However, a striking number of other curious coincidences do suggest this possibility.

To begin with, *The Temple*, Herbert's collection of English poems, was immensely popular during Gezelle's time, frequently re-edited and often anthologized. Given Gezelle's great interest in English poetry, it does not seem farfetched to assume that he might have read, if not in its entirety, at least part of *The Temple*. Baur tells us that already by 1860 Gezelle had read a number of English poets.⁵ Although he does not mention Herbert in his list, it is entirely possible that Gezelle found some Herbert poems in poetry collections his English friends had begun to send him as early as 1854, and would continue to do for years; or that he himself came across such poems on his frequent trips to England, the first one undertaken in 1861.

The likelihood that Gezelle read Herbert becomes greater, however, when we look at a number of peculiar similarities. For example, the title "Een bonke kersen" (1858) could have been inspired by Herbert's equally unusual title "A Bunch of Grapes." Gezelle's unique portrayal of himself as an "arme [...]riet" in "O 't ruisen van het ranke riet" (1857) might be directly borrowed from Herbert's similar peculiar self-depiction in "Employment (I)" as a "poor reed." The spelling game dominating Gezelle's "Aan H. K. E." (1859) may perhaps derive from the spelling lesson strategy dominating Herbert's "IESU". The meaning of the title *Kleengedichtjes*, as explained in its 1860 prose introduction, seems exactly the same as part of the subtitle given Herbert's *The Temple*. Herbert's subtitle reads, *Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*. Gezelle explains that *kleengedichtje* is allied to *kleingebedje* and, hence, means "spiritual ejaculation."⁶ And what about the similarity between Gezelle's expressed wish

for these *Kleengedichtjes* and Herbert's well-known deathbed wish accompanying *The Temple*? Gezelle wrote: "Aanveerd dan met jonsten, duid mij ten goede en gebruik t' uwen beste."⁷ Herbert said: "if [...] it [*The Temple*] may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul let it be made public."⁸ Are these expressed sentiments concerning the spiritual benefit to be derived from these poems simply customary phrasings, or do they hint at more direct influence? In addition, is it not somewhat curious that while Herbert wrote a book entitled *Outlandish Proverbs*, a collection of over a thousand proverbs which he valued and published for their instructiveness, Gezelle would adopt a similar practice of collecting numerous proverbs and unpretentious folk sayings and, like Herbert, later publish them for daily instructiveness in his monthly publication *Duikalmanak*? And might there not be a hint of Herbert's poem "The Flower" in the title, if not in part of the content,⁹ of Gezelle's well-known mystical poem "Ego Flos" (1898)? Of particular interest here, and what makes the link between Herbert and Gezelle perhaps even more plausible, is that John Keble, whom we know Gezelle had read,¹⁰ had imitated part of Herbert's "The Flower" in his own poetic work *The Church Year*.¹¹

Of course, none of these examples when considered in isolation from the others points to more than sheer coincidence, and none of them proves that a poetic link exists between Herbert and Gezelle. Yet when taken together as a group, they constitute more than conjectural evidence and, in fact, present a fascinating picture that points in the direction of more persuasive proof. The case becomes even more convincing when we investigate the internal, or textual, evidence presented by the content, imagery, and phrasing of certain poems. The findings indicate that in addition to "De Ramen" which, as we argued in a previous article, was no doubt modelled on Herbert's "The Windows,"¹² Gezelle wrote other poems as well which resemble aspects of certain Herbert poems. Of specific interest are "Non Praevalebunt" (1862) and "Zomenig' blomme" (1859?), from the collection *Gedichten, Gezangen en Gebeden*, and "Mijn hert is als een blomgewas" (1883), from the collection *Tijdkrans*. These three Gezelle poems concern themselves with the place of suffering in life. "Non Praevalebunt," like Herbert's "Affliction (V)," treats this topic in relation to the Church; while "Zo menig' blomme" and "Mijn hert is als een blomgewas," like Herbert's "Paradise" and "The Flower" respectively, treat this topic as it concerns the individual. In these poems, both poets not only come to terms with affliction intellectually, but they also learn to accept emotionally, sometimes even to appreciate, the shaping force of God's will as they realize that all divine acts are pieces of a meaningful design.

On the surface, "Non Praevalebunt"¹³ may perhaps not seem to resemble "Affliction (V)"¹⁴ very much at all. Gezelle's poem is an enthusiastic and confident endorsement of the Church's invincible might; Herbert's poem is a reasoned process by which its speaker must learn to arrive at a similar truth. Gezelle states his case in objective terms, focussing his attention on the church as an institution; Herbert makes his case more personally by referring first to himself and then to the community of which he is a part, focussing his attention on the individuals who comprise the Church. Gezelle immediately begins with great assurance, in the strength of his firm belief; Herbert proceeds more tentatively and ultimately gathers strength from the case the poem itself presents. Despite these different emphases, however, both poems arrive at exactly the same conclusion: The Church, both as an organizational structure and as a body of individual believers, can and will endure the various afflictions assailing it. The message in both poems is thus the same: *non praevalebunt*.

These poems also share similar imagery and wording. In these two respects, "Non Praevalebunt" seems to echo especially the first and the last stanza of "Affliction (V)." The water and storm imagery occurring in these two stanzas of Herbert's poem might, in fact, have provided the basic image pattern for all of "Non Praevalebunt." Specifically, in the opening stanza of his poem, Herbert portrays the Church as the "floating Ark," thereby commenting on the Church's protectiveness, vulnerability, and flexibility. As God's Ark, the Church is certainly a place of shelter; yet it is also open to attack by being exposed to dangerous "waves" and "tempests." At the same time, the Church also has the ability to float, as it must in fact be able to do in order to endure. And precisely because God is its only "stay/ And anchor," it will neither sink in the "waves" nor split apart in the "tempests." In Gezelle's poem, likewise, the Church is portrayed as a place of enclosure which can, though under constant attack, withstand onslaughts through all time. Gezelle depicts the Church as a net which, because of its exposure to the "dolle zee," is perilously placed on "'s werelds zand" yet which, at the same time, is also firmly fixed to "een stok in 't zand," namely, God. Thus, like Herbert's Ark, Gezelle's Church, too, can stay afloat when buffeted by storms: "Het net beweegt" in the waves, yet also stands "rustig" in "het zeezand," the reason being that, like the divine anchor mooring Herbert's Ark, "de stok staat pal" and, hence, there is "geen zee die hem beroeren zal."

Even though in Gezelle's poem it is St. Peter who, as head of the Church, plants his net in the world's strand, ultimately it is Christ, as Fisher of Men, who has

preceded him in doing so. At one point in Herbert's poem, God is shown to be that Fisherman, casting a "double line" with "sev'ral baits." Because baits represent both pleasure and pain, this image highlights in a poignant way the reason for affliction in life. Herbert suggests that God uses a "double line" with the "sev'ral baits" of joy and grief so as to lure man to Himself. In like manner, Gezelle in his poem suggests that only if man feels the pain of being caught can he also experience the pleasure of being safe in the "net." The Christian life, in other words, is not just filled with joy but also often fraught with grief. Basically, then, both poems provide the same explanations for the presence of affliction: it not only pulls the individual to God - into God's safety net, in Gezelle's terms, "To make us thine," in Herbertian terms - but it also strengthens Christ's Church. In the final stanza, Herbert states: "Affliction then is ours;/ We are the trees, whom shaking fastens more." Gezelle, likewise, ultimately states:

de dolle zee, hoe meer zij woedt,
hoe vaster zij het net daar doet
en staan en vis vergaren!

This assessment of suffering in relation to the church is so similarly worded in the final stanza of both poems that it points up another similarity - namely, their phrasing of ideas. For example, Herbert's phrase "waves do rise" is repeated almost exactly in Gezelle's "de zee[...] komt op." Likewise, the phrase "tempests rage" seems suspiciously close to "luid bulderend losgevoegen." Furthermore, Herbert's use of the word "planted" in the phrase "planted Paradise" reappears, it seems, in Gezelle's line "Zo plantte een net Sint-Pieters hand." Finally, Herbert's assertion that affliction strengthens the church "in ev'ry age" bears some resemblance to Gezelle's comment that St. Peter's net has stood for "duizend jaren." All these similarly worded phrases, in addition to thematic likeness and parallel imagery, would seem to suggest that "Non Praevalebunt" at least partially echoes "Affliction (V)."

Further hints of Herbertian influence are evident in "Zo menig' blomme."¹⁵ Of its fifteen stanzas, the last five in particular seem to imitate very closely the subject matter, imagery and wording found in Herbert's short poem "Paradise."¹⁶ Although both poems concern themselves with nature, neither is essentially a nature poem; for the trees dominating "Paradise" and the flowers governing "Zo menig' blomme" are ultimately symbols for the human soul. External nature in both poems functions as the medium for exploring human nature. Thus the titles of both poems stand for something other than what their surface meaning might suggest. Specifically, Herbert's paradise, while reminiscent of

the garden of earthly delights, Eden, ultimately concerns its spiritual counterpart, Heaven. Likewise Gezelle's flowers, while resembling those found outside, ultimately represent the various inner conditions and capabilities of mankind. From the very outset of the poem, in fact, these flowers can speak and feel. And in the crucial last five stanzas, they apparently can also grasp the poet's explanation for their being pruned. Similar personifications appear in Herbert's poem as well; for amidst the neatly ordered trees in paradise, Herbert is himself the dominant tree which, like Gezelle's flowers, can speak and feel and understand. In addition, it also renders its own praise for being pruned.

Pruning is, in fact, the central issue in both poems. In "Paradise" it even dictates form as the initial letter of the end rhyme words in each stanza is consistently removed. Thus this poem is a "clear example of poetic discipline,"¹⁷ its very form a visible sign of the disciplined spiritual state the poem suggests should be achieved. Although "Zo menig' blomme" lacks this external feature, its last five stanzas do address exactly the same questions and provide exactly the same answers as those in "Paradise." What does pruning entail? Who is in charge of its tasks? What effects does pruning have?

In both poems, the pruning process consists of such activities as binding unsupported growth, trimming unhealthy shoots, lopping off dead matter. While such actions may seem drastic, they are essentially protective ones; for without these measures, neither trees nor flowers can continue to grow, to blossom, and to bear healthy fruit. The person performing these various tasks is the same in both poems. He is the gardener to whom all of "Paradise" is addressed and who is mentioned by name in the final section of "Zo menig' blomme." As the proper nouns "Lord" and "Hovenier" suggest, he is obviously God, whose primary function is to prepare mankind for Paradise. Thus, like the tree and flower imagery, this gardener and his skills function as symbols carrying spiritual meaning. God as gardener must assist man by blocking unhealthy tendencies, thwarting sinful plans, punishing evil deeds, and sometimes, for no apparent reason, even striking with grief and pain.

The discipline involved in and required by spiritual pruning relates, of course, directly to the afflictions of this life. Paradoxically, the effects such pruning has on man are both painful and sweet. Herbert states: "Such sharpness shows the sweetest FRENDS:/ Such cuttings rather heal than REND." Gezelle, likewise, states that this gardener, despite his sharp treatment, performs a benevolent task: "Wanneer Hij [...] en altijd even zoet niet spreekt.../ Hij heeft en weet zijn reden"; for with his

pruning knife, he is busy refining and readying souls for Heaven. This preparation involves obligations on both sides, God's and man's. The gardener by pruning not only wishes to protect his vegetation from outer threats and inner disease - Herbert's "open force" and hidden CHARM, Gezelle's "vlinderstrik" and "wormenstraal"; but he also seeks to strengthen and improve upon his vegetation by making it bear healthy and more abundant fruit. Gezelle states, "Dan zult gij, naer zijn wijs beschik,/beloofde vruchten dragen." Herbert, likewise, states that on account of such pruning "Ev'n fruitful trees more fruitful ARE." Painful pruning, then, reaps positive results: it enables man to comply with the mandate "Be fruitful and multiply," as he learns to bear fruits of righteousness in this life; and it also transforms him into a new product which is ripe for Paradise. That is the personal understanding Herbert reaches as he joyfully accepts affliction in his closing statement: "such beginnings touch their END." And that is also the final message Gezelle leaves with his flowers, though stated in less personal and more didactic terms:

Dan bloeit en blinkt gij blank en blij,
zo lang gij blom zult wezen,
en niets dat u te wachten zij
als vrede en vreugd nadezen.

The pairs of quotations just cited illustrate that Gezelle's wording, at least in these instances, closely parallels parts of Herbert's phrasing. In addition to these examples, Herbert's line "To thee both fruit and order OW" seems vaguely echoed in Gezelle's phrase "beloofde vruchten dragen." And the thought expressed, as well as the use of the word "prune" in Herbert's line "And with thy knife but prune and PARE," seems repeated in "Wanneer Hij [...] somtijds valt aan 't snoeien." This similarity of phrasing, in addition to the similarity of themes and images in these two poems, suggests once again the likelihood that Gezelle was familiar with Herbert.

Additional Herbertian echoes can be found in "Mijn hert is als een blomgewas."¹⁸ Like Herbert's "The Flower," this poem concerns itself with the variability of life. In both of these very personal and emotive poems, the inconstancy of life in general is exemplified by the poet's own particular moods. These moods, in both poems, are projected onto nature and, in their very changeableness, are shown to reflect something of the rhythmic flow of life. While Herbert derives comfort from knowing that his wavering moods are shared by all mankind and are part of God's unwavering design, Gezelle feels oppressed by his inconstancies as he stays preoccupied with his own vacillating temperament. These differences notwithstanding, both poets reach

the same conclusions about life's innate unsettledness. Herbert states his thought in general terms: "We say amis,/This or that is." Gezelle repeats this sentiment in more personal terms: "mijn hert is krank, en broos,/en onstandvastig in't verblijden."

The fact that Gezelle voices the same sentiments and engages in similar self-depictions as are expressed in Herbert's poem does not, of course, provide any evidence that therefore Gezelle was familiar with "The Flower." Numerous other poets have voiced similar sentiments and shown their mood swings to correspond to the cyclical patterns found in nature itself. Yet the fact that "Mijn hert is als een blomgewas" not only incorporates some of the same images as occur in Herbert's poem but also, more importantly, employs some remarkably similar wording does raise the teasing question as to whether Gezelle might have read "The Flower." The fact that Gezelle's poem, in the compressed space of only eight lines, reveals a number of similarities to Herbert's poem is indeed noteworthy. And the fact that the poet Keble, whom we already noted Gezelle had read, had imitated a part of Herbert's poem gives us even more reason to entertain the possibility that Gezelle might have read "The Flower" and, consciously or unconsciously, employed some of its imagery and phrasing in his own "Mijn hert is als een blomgewas."

In "The Flower," Herbert likens his joy over God's "returns" to the arrival of "flowers in spring" after "late-past frosts." He equates himself with the flower, as he refers to his "shrivelled heart" having "recovered greenness," able in age to "bud again." Thus the flower in its various stages of growth and decline - from early bud, to dead blossom, to "mother-root" beneath - mirrors the poet's own internal states. Similarly, in the first two stanzas of "Mijn hert is als een blomgewas," Gezelle likens his joys to such nature phenomena as "stralen van de zonne" and "dauw des morgens." He likens his heart in its alternating joys and griefs to a flower in bloom which either welcomes the sun or languishes, and to springlike green which is either dewdrenched or parched.

More noteworthy than these similar images is their similar wording. In the first stanza of Gezelle's poem, the likening of his heart to "een blomgewas" which is "opengaande" is remarkably similar to Herbert's portrayal of himself when he states, "now in age I bud again." The description of this "blomgewas" as being "toegeloken" and "gebroken" seems to parallel the condition of Herbert's flowers "when they have blown." And the way in which Gezelle's "blomgewas" actually "kwijnt en pijnt" might bring to mind Herbert's "shrivelled heart", while in the second stanza the comparison "Mijn hert gelijkt het jeugdige groen" sounds

very much like that heart having "recovered greenness." In addition, the joy with which this "jeugdige groen" apparently "asemt in de dauw des morgens" seems to echo the ecstasy of Herbert's line, "I once more smell the dew and rain." And finally, the sad state of this "jeugdige groen" as it is "vol stof, vol weemoed en vol zorgens," on account of sin, seems somewhat reminiscent of, if not Herbert's actual phrasing, at least the thought about his own sin and resultant tears in the lines

Nor doth my flower
Want a spring-shower,
My sins and I joining together.

The similarities noted in these poems pose a challenge for one literary critic's enthusiastic claim that Gezelle was such a "unique phenomenon" that he simply could not be compared with any other poet.²⁰ By their sheer number, these poetic similarities suggest otherwise; they point up the likelihood that, at least in the instances

cited, Herbert's poetry exerted some influence. That is not to say that Gezelle consciously borrowed images and phrases from Herbert's poetry in order to incorporate them in his own. Rather, these poetic parallels suggest that Gezelle seems to have read some of Herbert's poems, absorbed certain facets, and in some of his own poems given unique expression to the Herbertian imagery and phrasing he had perhaps unconsciously retained. Rather than diminishing Gezelle's own greatness, such poetic "borrowings" must be viewed as an inescapable aspect of the process of poetic creation itself. Invention, as Herbert preferred to call it, is after all a complex mixture of conscious and unconscious forms of energy. Like any other poet, Gezelle too made conscious and unconscious use of many sources to create his own verse. And if he had not received his inspiration from those "stiff, pedantic Dutch masters," as De Cort described them, then perhaps the English devotional poet George Herbert belongs among the models he did imitate.

APPENDIX

Affliction (V)

My God, I read this day,
That planted Paradise was not so firm,
As was and is thy floating Ark; whose stay
And anchor thou art only, to confirm
And strengthen it in ev'ry age,
When waves do rise, and tempests rage.

At first we lived in pleasure;
Thine own delights thou didst to us impart:
When we grew wanton, thou didst use displeasure
To make us thine: yet that we might not part,
As we at first did board with thee,
Now thou wouldst taste our misery.

There is but joy and grief;
If either will convert us, we are thine:
Some angels used the first; if our relief
Take up the second, then thy double line
And sev'ral baits in either kind
Furnish thy table to thy mind.

Affliction then is ours;
We are the trees, whom shaking fastens more,
While blust'ring winds destroy the wanton bowers,
And ruffle all their curious knots and store.
My God, so temper joy and woe,
That thy bright beams may tame thy bow.

Non Praevalebunt

De visser slaat een stok in 't zand,
waaraan hij zijne netten spant
op visvangst uitegetogen;
de zee, die 't ziet, komt uit, komt op,
en schudt haar witgeschuimde kop,
luid bulderend losgevolgen.

Zij scheurt de witte duinen stuk,
zij zwelgt heur schoot vol ongeluk,
zij spuwt het strand vol rampen,
om met een stok, en weinig draên,
die rustig in het zeezand staan,
de reuzenkamp te kampen.

Het net beweegt, de stok staat pal,
geen zee die hem beroeren zal,
de wakkre visser weet het;
hij komt, wanneer 't is uitgewoed,
hij vindt hetgeen hij vinden moet,
en 't ander hij vergeet het.

Zo plantte een net Sint-Pieters hand,
op Gods bevel, in 's werelds zand;
het stond er duizend jaren:
de dolle zee, hoe meer zij woedt,
hoe vaster zij het net daar doet
en staan en vis vergaren!

Paradise

I bless thee, Lord, because I GROW
Among thy trees, which in a ROW
To thee both fruit, and order OW.

What open force, or hidden CHARM
Can blast my fruit, or bring me HARM,
While the inclosure is thine ARM?

Inclose me still for fear I START,
Be to me rather sharp and TART,
Than let me want thy hand and ART.

When thou dost greater judgements SPARE,
And with thy knife but prune and PARE,
Ev'n fruitful trees more fruitful ARE.

Such sharpness shows the sweetest FREND:
Such cuttings rather heal then REND:
And such beginnings touch their END.

The Flower

How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
Are thy returns! ev'n as the flowers in spring;
To which, besides their own demean,
The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
Grief melts away
Like snow in May,
As if there were no such cold thing.

Who would have thought my shrivelled heart
Could have recovered greenness? It was gone
Quite under ground; as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they have blown:
Where they together
All the hard weather,
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

These are thy wonders, Lord of power,
Killing and quick'ning, bringing down to hell
And up to heaven in an hour;
Making a chiming of a passing-bell.
We say amiss,
This or that is:
Thy word is all, if we could spell.

Zo menig' blomme (st. 11-15)

O blomkes, maar de Hovenier,
die weet van blom en planten,
laat doen en denken, noch een zier
en wil hem tegenkanten.

Wanneer Hij bittere alsem breekt
in 't water van 't besproeien,
en altijd even zoet niet spreekt
en somtijds valt aan 't snoeien,

u bindt en rond een stokske nijpt,
en strekt en leidt uw leden,
gevoeg u, of gij 't niet begrijpt:
Hij heeft en weet zijn reden.

Dan zult gij, naar zijn wijs beschik,
beloofde vruchten dragen,
dan hebt gij noch van vlinderstrik
noch wormenstraal te klagen.

Dan bloeit en blinkt gij blank en blij,
zo lang gij blom zult wezen,
en niets dat u te wachten zij
als vrede en vreugd nadezen.

Mijn hert is als een blomgewas

Mijn hert is als een blomgewas,
dat, opengaande of toegeloken,
de stralen van de zonne vangt,
of kwijnt en pijnt en hangt gebroken!

Mijn hert gelijkt het jeugdig groen,
dat asemte in de dauw des morgens;
maar zwakt, des avonds, moe geleefd,
vol stof, vol weemoed en vol zorgens!

Mijn hert is als een vrucht, die wast
en rijp wordt, in de schaûw verholen,
aleer de hand des najaars heeft,
te vroeg, eilaas, de boom bestolen!

Mijn hert gelijkt de sterre, die
verschiet, en aan de hoge wanden
des hemels ene sparke strijkt,
die, eer 'k heraëm, houdt op van branden!

Mijn herte slacht de regenboog,
die, hoog gebouwd dóór al de hemelen,
welhaast gedaan heeft rood en blauw
en groen en geel en peers te schemelen!

O that I once past changing were,
Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither!
Many a spring I shoot up fair,
Off'ring at heav'n, growing and groaning thither:
Nor doth my flower
Want a spring-shower,
My sins and I joining together.

But while I grow in a straight line,
Still upwards bent, as if heav'n were mine own,
Thy anger comes, and I decline:
What frost to that? What pole is not the zone,
Where all things burn,
When thou dost turn,
And the least frown of thine is shown?

And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing: O my only light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night.

These are thy wonders, Lord of love,
To make us see we are but flowers that glide:
Which when we once can find and prove,
Thou hast a garden for us, where to bide.
Who would be more,
Swelling through store,
Forfeit their paradise by their pride.

Mijn hert ... mijn hert is krank, en broos,
en onstandvastig in 't verblijden;
maar, als 't hem wel gaat éne stond,
't kan dagen lang weer honger lijden!

NOTES

¹P. Allossery, "De bundel *Gedichten, Gezangen en Gebeden*: Bio-bibliographische inleiding," in *Jubileumuitgave van Guido Gezelle's Volledige Werken*, II, Part II (Amsterdam: L. J. Veen's Uitgeversmaatschappij, N.V., 1930), 22-50, discusses in detail the critical reception of *Gedichten, Gezangen en Gebeden*.

²Allossery, p. 25.

³Frank Baur, *Uit Gezelle's leven en werk* (Louvain: Davidsfonds, 1930), p. 137.

⁴J. Decroos, "Guido Gezelle en de Engelsche Letterkunde," *De Nieuwe Gids*, June 1928, pp. 689-97; Franz de Backer, "William Wordsworth en Guido Gezelle," *Tijdschrift voor levende talen*, 16 (1950), 242-50; J. Keunen, "Guido Gezelle en G. M. Hopkins," *Dietsche Warande en Belfort*, 112 (1967), 702-11; C. Bittremiex, "Gezelle, Hardy en Psalmen," *Gezellekroniek*, 5 (1968), 17-19; Christine D'Haen, "Verwantschap tussen Engelse poëzie en Gezelles poëzie," *Gezellekroniek*, 6 (1970), 59-64; Bernard Kemp, "Preface," in *Guido Gezelle: Poems/Gedichten*, tr. Christine D'Haen (Deurle: Colibrant, 1971), pp. 11-18.

⁵Baur, pp. 137-39, mentions that Gezelle regularly received (and presumably read) the newspapers *The Times*, *The Atheneum*, *The Lamp*; and had in his possession poems by Edw. Waugh, Thomas Parnell, Longfellow, Moore, Burns, Arnold, and Frederick William Faber.

⁶Karel de Busschere, ed., *Guido Gezelle: Volledige Dichtwerken* (Antwerpen/Utrecht: Standaard Uitgeverij, 1971), p. 385.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Mario A. Di Cesare, ed., *George Herbert and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Poets* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978), p. 243.

⁹Both by its title and its expression of intense longing to be freed from earth to be with God, "Ego Flos" echoes "The Flower." Gezelle states metaphorically "Ik ben een blom"; while Herbert uses the plural form, "we are but flowers." Gezelle impatiently requests: "Haal op, haal af!.../ ontbind mijn aardse boeien"; Herbert muses: "O that I once past changing were, / Fast in thy Paradise."

¹⁰Frank Baur, "Introduction," in *Guido Gezelle's*

Dichtwerken, I (Amsterdam: L.J. Veen's Uitgeversmaatschappij, N.V., 1949-50), p. xxii.

¹¹F.E. Hutchinson, ed., *The Works of George Herbert* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 535.

¹²Hermine J. van Nuis, "Reflections from George Herbert's 'The Windows' on Guido Gezelle's 'De Ramen'," *Gezelliana*, 15 (1986), 47-54.

¹³"Non Praevalebunt" is quoted from de Busschere, ed., pp. 454-55.

¹⁴"Affliction (V)" is quoted from Louis L. Martz, ed., *George Herbert and Henry Vaughan* (Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 85-86.

¹⁵"Zo menig 'blomme" is quoted from de Busschere, ed., pp. 326-28.

¹⁶"Paradise" is quoted from Martz, ed., p. 119.

¹⁷Sharon Cadman Seelig, *The Shadow of Eternity: Belief and Structure in Herbert, Vaughan, and Traherne* (The University of Kentucky Press, 1981), p. 15.

¹⁸"Mijn hert is als een blomgewas" is quoted from de Busschere, ed., p. 727.

¹⁹"The Flower" is quoted from Martz, ed., pp. 150-51.

²⁰Miel Kersten, "Gezelles *Ego Flos*," *Gezellekroniek*, 6 (1970), 93, calls Gezelle "een aparte verschijning" and states, "Met niemand kon hij vergeleken worden."