

# Recent Studies in the English Renaissance

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It is a myth that criticism is a disinterested or objective act and that objects of literary criticism — in this case, Renaissance non-dramatic texts — offer settled and stable meanings which it is the critic's business to discover. Truth is not our domain. In the pages that follow, I can only offer an interested account, and it is therefore best for me to declare those interests. My recent work on Spenser and on early Jacobean representation follows from a conviction that criticism cannot stabilize texts, and that it must account for textual production in terms of dynamic interchanges. In the first half of this century, criticism developed two major strategies for dealing with Renaissance texts, historical criticism and, more recently, New Criticism. In contemporary practice, these have tended to coalesce in attempts to fix textual activity as the containment of ambiguous utterance, or to locate textual activity by giving it a stable referent in history. Both strategies belie the nature of the dynamic of the text, as every reader knows, for texts resist our attempts to fix them and give the lie to our designs upon them; history is no privileged ground of stable meaning, but subject to rewriting. My own work has drawn upon structuralism and post-structuralism, not because these are fashionable modes in certain quarters, but because they seem to me to restore to criticism the possibility of dealing honestly with our experience of the excess of texts, the ways in which we cannot appropriate them, the ways in which their production is involved in processes which deny texts easy limits or ease of access. I believe that texts are not indeterminate, but overdetermined, and that a criticism practiced in an awareness of its limits is best suited to describe the ways in which texts always go beyond what critics can do with them.

My review falls into three parts. First, I consider a number of books that open the field of textual study; considerations of Spenser, who figures in many of these broader studies, close the section. Next, I

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turn to groups of books that identify historical fields, and proceed to review critical works dealing with prose writers. Finally, the last section pursues books on seventeenth-century poets including Milton. Reviews of editions appear in appropriate sections. Limitations of space have precluded reviews of research tools, reprints, and facsimiles.

## I

In his dense and strongly written *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, Thomas Greene advances a powerfully eloquent and profoundly moving thesis about imitation; for him, the very center of humanism. This belief inscribes the critical method of the inquiry he launches and what he finds in the texts he examines. He terms his fundamental concept historical solitude, crediting Renaissance humanists with the discovery of the irrecoverability of the past in the idea of history that they invented. Imitation is bent, in all its pathos, on a doomed attempt, and Greene details the methods by which "Renaissance imitation . . . became a technique for creating etiological constructs, unblocking—within the fiction of the work—the blockages in transmission which created humanist pathos." Greene provides categories of imitation ranging from the reproductive or sacramental to a more eclectic contamination, the higher reaches of heuristic imitation (in which distancing is part of the imitative act) and, finally, the ultimate type of imitation, a dialectical response. From initial chapters in which the theory and history of imitation are presented, he moves to Petrarch, Poliziano, Ronsard, DuBellay, Wyatt, and Jonson. The readings he offers, mainly of Renaissance lyrics, are extraordinary although, at times, the attempt to correlate texts with his categories seems based on discriminations that I am not sure will stand up to scrutiny. This tension is built into the recuperative act Greene attempts to perform.

For there is a conflict in this book between the sense of the impossibility of its task and the need to affirm the enduring value of the objects the critic seeks to recover. In current critical terms, which Greene himself engages, it is the war between radical deconstruction and phenomenology, between the "ultimate groundlessness and historicity" of the text and the "momentous search for a self-expression that was, then as always, self-discovery," as Merleau-Ponty puts it. When Greene reads Renaissance texts, he is sometimes in danger of positing the stability of the classical texts his authors engage or of asserting for his own imitative categories more than heuristic value. Perhaps the most perplexing critical issue his study raises is whether historicity and a study of models can be reconciled conceptually. Yet, such large questions in no way diminish the remarkable intensity and

brilliance of this book. Rarely has so much learning been conveyed with such passion. Greene's book seems to me, as I am sure it will seem to most readers, a central text for the definition of our own critical activity and what we mean by Renaissance humanism and imitation.

A different perspective on critical activity is offered by Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand in their preface to *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture* as they celebrate *The Courtier* for the relativism and equivocations of its multiple viewpoints (Platonic, Aristotelian), forms (Ciceronian, Boccaccian), and themes ("male vs. female, political vs. social, earnest vs. game"), swirling around manifold strategies of authority (displacements of power leading to an aestheticized praxis bordering on the cynicism of Ovid and the realism of Machiavelli). They attempt to banish the Castiglione of earlier studies, the writer of a book of beautiful behavior; the essays that follow offer instead the pluralism of modern criticism.

Thomas Greene opens with a fine essay on the games played in Urbino which contain and express perils encroaching on urbanity, revealing "the insecurities and inconsistencies" of an authorized idealization, exposed, tested, strained, and contained. Greene's balanced performance — walking a tightrope akin to the itinerary in *The Light in Troy* — is not always imitated in subsequent essays. Daniel Javitch pushes hard on the determining despotism that shapes the court's performance. Dain Trafton is equally limiting in reading clearcut political meanings veiled beneath the idealized woman of book 3. On the other hand, Eduardo Saccone diffuses the key terms of the book in a turgid lexicon. Wayne Rebhorn (although nodding in the direction of Greene's historical solitude) insists on the idealizing abilities of art to transcend time in memorializing the past. David Rosand disagrees in his study of Renaissance portraiture (provoked by Castiglione's description of his book as a portrait) as attempts to evoke an absent subject; these living monuments are suffused with death. Or, rather, as Robert Hanning argues, the book-as-portrait rivals the painter's claims; for Hanning, the significant absence is the author's and the multiple self-reflexive frames of *The Courtier* edge the book closer to Rebhorn's idealization. J. R. Hale pits real against ideal, examining the slim actualities of Castiglione's military career with his habitual praise of the combination of arms and arts; James Haar takes an opposing position, discounting Castiglione's theoretical knowledge of music, but regarding him highly for the information about practice and performance he gives. Fittingly, Louise George Clubb closes the volume in an essay written with her usual brilliant eye for the contaminations of form on which the Renaissance fondness for mixed forms depends; she describes Castiglione's as a humanistic art pointing the way towards Italian vernacular drama of the sixteenth century and

ultimately to Shakespeare. "What I am calling humanistic art," she writes, "is the art that sets out to have it both ways . . . . The humanistic art I mean tries to reconcile in creative tension what is held to be unreconcilable." The whirlwind of her analysis may be, in relation to this text (as a number of these essays suggest), around an absent center. The text figures it as Duke Guidobaldo, the ruler of Urbino who never appears in the conversations. His absence, explained by disease and impotence, figures for these critics the specter of death and fortune, the absent power of the real which sets the limits on the play of *The Courtier* and opens it for criticism.

Humanism is also the theme of the essay by A. Bartlett Giamatti that opens *Poetic Traditions of the English Renaissance*, a collection honoring Louis Martz. He considers Petrarch and the early humanists attempting to make a culture-in-exile, strongly aware of the distance from a lost origin capable of reconstitution and revival in loss; midway in the volume Thomas Greene echoes these shared notions in a consideration of Shakespeare's sonnet 129 and the strains it places on historical and textual criticism. Harry Berger Jr.'s essay on *The Shepherdes Calender* is equally alive to such issues as he discovers in the confrontation of old and young in Spenser's eclogues the culture's dialectic of desire for paradise faced in the text's "deconstructive literary act." More modestly, Judith Anderson here (as in a recent essay in *Acts of Interpretation*) focuses on some strongly disquieting moments in *The Faerie Queene* where praise of Belphoebe sours and Spenser's fiction swerves away from the sovereign he supposedly supports. Read together, these essays describe a humanism confronting the mangled shards of past and present in the strong awareness of the fragmentary nature of human creativity.

The remaining essays seem blind to these issues and imagine that historical criticism easily recovers the past and that Renaissance texts offer stable and straightforward meanings. These essays exemplify that vitiated meetings of modern critical methods that I mentioned at the opening of this review. They are tired performances. Although there are occasional bits of information that readers will be pleased to have — Alastair Fowler's citations for the *silva* tradition, for instance, or William Frost's list of translations of Virgil — there is not much to be said for Cleanth Brooks's piece on Marvell's reconciliation of classical and Christian ambiguities through serious wit, or Helen Gardner's circular attempts to make Donne's life fit her notion of his development towards deep reaches of sincerity, or Frank Manley's discovery that Herbert's sincerity reflects the "mind's own complexity" with its "significant tensions." Even weaker is Alastair Fowler's numerologically-based argument for the thematic unity of Jonson's *Forrest* as a *scala* of types of love (profane/spiritual), or Alvin Kernan's

confused piece on court and public theater, which manages to misunderstand the purpose of the play scene in *Hamlet* by failing to see that it is not only a replay of the murder of the old king but also a threat to the new one. I doubt that many will find much use in G. K. Hunter's simplistic account of Renaissance drama as a move toward the psychological realism of *Othello* unless they think that Renaissance plays are nineteenth-century novels. The nadir is perhaps in B. Rajan's piece on Milton's piety, in which Rajan finds at several points that it is too painful to confront what Milton wrote and offers instead the generosity of a revision that allows Milton to emerge as the great reconciler of opposites.

Most of these essays, in short, lack any sense of historical distance, and they rewrite Renaissance texts into comfortably dated modern ones. While some of these pieces might not be inappropriate as after dinner speeches (Talbot Donaldson's, in those terms, is quite charming), there is an occasional abrasiveness and defensiveness here that is quite offensive, a close-mindedness that is painful to see in scholars who once were regarded highly. Thus, when Alastair Fowler laments because criticism has made Jonson unpleasant, or when Lowry Nelson closes a piece of what used to be called poetry appreciation by attacking structuralism, I wince, in embarrassment and regret for the generation of Louis Martz.

The opening chapters of Anne Ferry's *The "Inward" Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne* appear directed precisely against the ahistorical tendencies represented by the marriage of New Criticism to old-fashioned historicism. Noting that criticism has too readily assumed a post-Lockean definition of a "real self" with an "inner life" in analysis of Renaissance texts when such terms were not available in the sixteenth century, she offers a dictionary of inwardness derived from English texts (conduct books, theological treatises, psychologies), glossing such terms as "*individuum*," "the closet of the heart," "secrets," the pairing of "inward and outward," the meaning of the dictum "know thy self." About these terms, she makes numerous acute observations, that interiority was regarded as available to scrutiny and display, that the inner life was discontinuous (a place of retreat akin to the private rooms in grand houses), that even in private, self-scrutiny was often externalized in utterance (outer and utter being indistinguishable), always imagined as capable of being opened and revealed; at the very least, the secrets of the soul could not be hidden from God. Armed with this material, and insisting that she will proceed using only old-spelling texts in order to guard against the falsifications introduced by modernized punctuation (a position like Greene's in his analysis of Shakespeare's sonnet 129), Ferry then proceeds to her sonneteers.

Once there, Ferry abandons her thesis. For, the real underlying assumption is not that critics err in their readings of Shakespeare; rather, Shakespeare, drawing upon Sidney, who, in turn, replicated certain tendencies seen in Wyatt, conceived of the self in modern ways if not in a modern vocabulary. Hamlet, we are assured, does have an inner life, and the route to his invention lies in the practice of sonneteers. Thus, when Ferry examines the handful of Wyatt's sonnets that seem to her to reveal these precursive tendencies, she looks — surprise! — to the ambiguities that Wyatt activates in his closing couplets. The desire to preserve old-spelling texts feeds into the New Critical strategies of reading. Wyatt forces a wedge between what the heart feels and what the poet can say; in that space, modern inwardness is born in the full resources of ambiguity. For Ferry, Wyatt's involvement with the sonnet form and his explorations of the potentiality within figurative language explain how this came about. As she proceeds to Sidney, the point is hammered home with deadening repetition. A typical transition shows how the chapter is organized around the reiteration of a single idea: "In addition to literary allusion, parody and self-parody, and burlesque, Sidney uses structural devices that also point to inner states as distinct from their outward show in poetry." Here, as in the chapters on Shakespeare and Donne that follow, the space between such moments is filled with paraphrases in which Ferry recasts poems into the various opposing and ambiguous sentences which the art of the sonnet contains. There are occasional insights along the way; she does, for instance, argue well for Shakespeare's awareness of Sidney's sequence beyond the random borrowings usually tallied. But from this point, she insists that Shakespeare learned a "new conception of human nature" from Sidney, and extended his awareness of the cleavage between heart and poetic utterance to the young man and the dark lady. Ferry is fond of describing this move as "radical," or "cynical." Curiously, these terms, usually reserved for Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*, do not appear in a final chapter, where Donne's practice as a sonneteer — in his religious verse — is regarded as his sole domain for Shakespearean experimentation with the cleavage of heart and utterance.

At best, Ferry's study might be described as an elaborate gloss on Hamlet's first response to Gertrude, a demonstration of the intimate connection between his language of suit and woe, being and seeming, and the laments of sonneteers. Yet, she is not content to make this argument, for she distrusts convention intensely, and is really bent on showing the powers of poetry to transcend history. To do this, there are remarkable falsifications even of literary history (the only sort recognized in the book). Petrarch, for instance, is continually compared invidiously to Wyatt so that the English poet's greater complex-

ity can be praised. Ferry's insistence on the historical situation of the English language in the sixteenth century is part of her critical xenophobia; she wants English experience to invent itself. Moreover, she appears to make similar grand claims for her own practice. Here are two telling instances: Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* is dismissed in a sentence as merely one of any number of modern books applying the term "self" to the Renaissance. In fact, Greenblatt discusses Wyatt's inwardness (his term, not Ferry's) with such a profound understanding of the historical and formal limits on self-expression (and, incidentally, with remarkable acuity about the complexity of Petrarch transformed into a different kind of complexity in Wyatt), that one can only assume that Ferry's dismissal is rooted either in ignorance or fear. At the same point in her text, she also waves away a book she refers to as Jacques Lacan's *The Language of the Self*. In fact, this is Anthony Wilden's translation of Lacan's *Discours de Rome* which originally appeared as "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse." Lacan is no vulgarizer of post-Lockean conceptions of the self; Ferry's misapprehension about the title of his piece no doubt has deeper roots. This book asserts a notion of the self in Renaissance sonnets that is in fact a brand of commonsense enshrined in nineteenth-century novels.

Ferry follows one tendency of the Martz celebration; the problems of imitation and invention that are central to Greene and Giamatti are illustrated (a bit ironically) by Margaret W. Ferguson's *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry*, which, in the space I have, could sound very much like the work of her Yale mentors. Yet there is a paleness and predictability in Ferguson's work, a neatness in the marshalling of ambivalences and tensions that devitalizes her terms. More successful than the close analyses of DuBellay, Tasso, and Sidney that fill most of the pages of the book is the attempt to correlate poetic defenses with other motives—nationalistic, psychological. Although she sanitizes the impurity of the critical task somewhat by labelling it as interdisciplinary, Ferguson argues forcefully that Renaissance poetic treatises are knowingly contaminated by their intertextual relations and their historicity. She offers an enormously provocative account of DuBellay's view of the text as property, a notion that hovers over questions of owning a text, relationships between past and present, questions of national purpose and social aspirations involving DuBellay's sense of displacement. A long and somewhat willed and overwritten treatment of Tasso nonetheless provocatively plays off family romance and literary relations arguing for the duplicities of filiation. Doubleness is also the theme with Sidney, and most interesting are some speculations on Sidney's narcissistic strategies and their relation to the specter of the self-perpetuating text. Ferguson is

attempting to open these texts in ways that are important; unfortunately her defensive strategies narrow the impact of her work.

John Guillory prefaces *Poetic Authority: Spenser, Milton, and Literary History* with large and fascinating claims. To arrive at the essential historicity of poetic authority and to regard its congruence with political and social developments, he explores the gap in literary history in which poets' claims to inspiration were replaced by claims for the primacy of the imagination, and in which the notion of the sacred was secularized. The method of the study, he announces, has to do with acts of acknowledgement rather than influences, a genealogy in which Milton's refusal of Shakespeare is as significant as his acknowledgement of Spenser.

Nothing, for me, is as stimulating as these prefatory remarks, written, I assume, when the book was completed and Guillory saw an argument he could make. The book itself is shapeless, arch and self-involved, conducting arguments with invisible opponents; to make matters worse, what they are arguing about is never said. Typical paragraphs assemble sentences whose relationship is unarticulated; transitions are always eschewed, summaries a vulgarity. The book refuses to explain itself or to define its terms. Manner is matter. The trope of the book is ellipsis.

Still, there are insights along the way: for instance, some acute remarks about the secondariness of origins in Spenser and the generation of his epic in loss. The importance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Milton is sporadically but suggestively traced. A section on Milton's suppression of his proper name as a strategy to assert authority in the prose is one of the few completely lucid passages in the book; there is also some illumination on the nature of Milton's prophetic claims.

Nonetheless, even when he clarifies an argument, as he does when he attacks Bloom's reading of Milton's misreading of Spenser in *Areopagitica*, Guillory's prose remains opaque. He opens the argument this way: "If, as I shall argue now, Milton is writing to *decrease the distance* between himself and Spenser, it is with great respect for the revisionary genius of Bloom's argument. It is difficult to believe that Guyon is anyone's 'giant model,' Abdiel's or Milton's, neither of whom suffers from the weakness of his precursor. Milton's desire to co-opt this example for an argument in which it does not quite fit gives us a passage quoted, as it were, 'out of context,' and the result is quite different from the effect of allusion. It is all the more remarkable, then, that the passage introduces Bloom's analysis of transumptive allusion in *Paradise Lost*." Almost every sentence here cries out for elucidation, definition of terms, provision of examples, explanation of what is at stake, and a willingness to own arguments rather than to put them in quotation marks and as-it-weres. The passage is repre-



sentative. And, two pages later, when Guillory concludes, I cannot tell why the passage was necessary. He writes: "Milton must 'bring in' the Palmer even as he brings Spenser into his argument, because it is the absence of both that signifies danger." This only looks complicated; in fact, it appears to say what anyone might have assumed, that Milton includes the Palmer because descent into the cave is something that he fears.

In *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source*, a study which owes much to Greene, as David Quint acknowledges, a wide range of texts—including Sannazaro, Ariosto, Tasso, Bruno, Spenser, Rabelais, Milton, and Erasmus—is summoned to explore conflicting claims about originality: that it depends upon access to a transcendent origin, that it manifests itself in original acts possible only in history. To explore this tension, Quint draws upon the resources of a favorite trope, rooted in Plato and Virgil and recapitulated in the Bible and its commentaries, the originary Ocean and the streams that flow from it. In a resolutely historical stance opposed to the criticism that regards tropes as ahistorical (represented at its best in Curtius, at its worst in C. A. Patrides' recent *Premises and Motifs in Renaissance Thought and Literature*), Quint shows enormous tact and learning in resituating the central trope and in testing out its varied implications.

Yet, something of the war between allegorical transcendence and historical immanence is played out in Quint's pages. On the one hand, he pursues a history that culminates in Milton, whose claims to have returned to the origin easily became (after him) a way of validating Satanic claims to originality, a tension enacted in *Paradise Lost*. On the other hand, the book is circumscribed within a circle traced by Erasmus and Rabelais, who stand close to its beginning and end, exemplary reconcilers of the urge to historicize and the desire for transcendence. Quint gives in to this recurrence of a unifying design in a resolutely programmatic and logical disposition of his materials, as if the trope offered a limited number of possibilities and his texts could be disposed to reveal this typology. Thus, he announces a rather straitening thesis: "The opposition allegory/history is repeated in different ways by each of the authors whose version of the source is analyzed in the following chapters: Sannazaro's opposition of epic authority to pastoral autonomy, Tasso's Platonic response to Ariosto's attack on allegory, Bruno's abolition of history in favor of allegory, Spenser who conversely makes allegory dependent upon and thus vulnerable to the events of history, the Rabelaisian poetics of the Spirit which counter the threat of Babelic autonomy and historical dispersion." These pairings summarize accurately what can come to seem a thesis-ridden book. Yet, there are riches here beyond the frame: a

brilliant reading of Sannazaro's pastoral as one whose very claims to transcendence only further point to its timebound qualities, and a telling investigation of Ariosto's original stance and its *reductio ad absurdam* of Renaissance historicism and its virtual travesty of claims to biblical authority as debased acts of patronage. More problematic and symptomatic is the treatment of Spenser, initially locked into a nature/grace frame, ultimately allowed his provisionality. Quint will often spend time establishing a thesis only to go beyond it. This is true of the book as a whole; it ends twice, first resolved in Rabelais, then with Milton. The last few pages are especially brilliant in suggesting that the Renaissance concern to define the autonomous text is a signal event in western intellectual history, a legacy that complicates our relationship to those texts. With such insights, Quint invigorates historical criticism. Something of the promise of Guillory's book is fulfilled in these pages; on the other hand, like Ferguson, Quint is haunted by a great original.

Readers of Richard Helgerson's important essays on the laureate claims of Spenser and Jonson will find them extended and enlarged in *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System*. Like Guillory, Helgerson's concern is the institution of literature and the transmission of authority, but rather than focusing on intertextual matters, Helgerson argues for a literary system garbed in semiotic terms. Laureates emerge as they differ from prevailing social models of the literary career, shaped by generational habits—Spenser vs. the amateur pose of literary depreciation and the professional versifiers, Jonson against the example of Spenser as well as his generation's satiric bent and the contemporary dramatists, Milton as a belated poet in a belated generation of easy and stylish versifiers.

These are challenging and provocative views, and Helgerson is at his best in tracing the emergence of his three laureates and contextualizing their advertisements for themselves. Yet, curiously, for all his insistence on facing down modern estimates of the autonomy or uniqueness of genius, Helgerson reinscribes rather traditional estimations and accounts of these poets, and even his systemic contexts have an odd way of becoming New Critical positions of ambivalence, ambiguity, and uncertainty. The historical frame is also problematic in its own terms, a Hegelian dialectic of generations that can blur the contemporaneity of such phenomena as the publication of *The Faerie Queene* and the younger generation's satires. The privileging of certain generations means, too, that here as in older historians, certain figures (such as Drayton and Daniel) get short shrift, although there are illuminating discussions of Cowley and Davenant. By granting so much to authorial assertion, Helgerson slights the ways in which the period institutionalized its authors, the significance (as Richard

Newton argues) of the printed book upon which Jonson's authority rests, but which was equally important for authors like Cartwright whose claims we no longer recognize. Helgerson's laureates, in short, may not be the canonized texts of the early seventeenth century. Important as Helgerson's contribution is to our understanding of the historical conditions of textual production, there is an attachment here to old-fashioned historical categories, even to a New Critical disdain for history (as when Book V of *The Faerie Queene* is judged as ruined by its political concerns, or Milton is praised for the magnificence of his solitary achievement) that blunts the revolutionary claims of this book.

Andrew Fichter's *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance* pretends to concerns about history and intertextuality (the Renaissance transformations of the Virgilian vision of empire). In fact, history and literary history are regarded through a Robertsonian eye, measured by *cupiditas/caritas*, and the overgoing of Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser involves the dissolution of time into the consolations of heaven. To accomplish readings that ignore Ariosto's ironies and nullifications (so ably described by Quint), Tasso's ambivalences (see Ferguson) and the disturbances of Spenser's unfinished epic, Fichter invites his readers to dismiss the material reality of words on a page for the greater clarity of faith. Wholesale distrust, outrageous denials (as when we are asked to regard Ruggiero's attempted rape of Angelica as "backsliding," or to see the marriage of Britomart and Arthegall — which never occurs in the poem — as the culmination of a providential plan) turn texts into consoling, untroubling, and ultimately trivial simulachra of a reality which has no need of them. It is hard to understand, if one were to take Fichter's views seriously, why anyone would write literature — or literary criticism, for that matter. And, from that perspective, this book can only be judged an act of bad faith.

Such views frame volume 3 of *Spenser Studies*, edited by Patrick Cullen and Thomas P. Roche, Jr., which opens with a turgid and facetious 50-page piece by Seth Weiner that makes a leap of faith through numerology to read "Rose-cheekt Laura" as a praise of the Virgin, and closes with an equally long essay by Roche that reads *Astrophil and Stella* as a lurid, pornographic, and blasphemous sequence preaching a body hatred that the "moral Elizabethans" would faithfully comprehend. Between these, Andrew V. Ettin presents Spenser as the purveyor of moral commonplaces fit for *Reader's Digest* and Donald Stump finds Mercilla's mercy the "last word" on justice by conveniently ignoring the brutal evasions in the death of Duessa. Just a bit more enlightening are essays by Eamon Grennan on the politics of *A View of the Present State of Ireland* and Dennis Moore on Sidney (a portion of his

recent book, *The Politics of Spenser's Complaints and Sidney's Philsides Poems*); both are best on points that others (Greenblatt, McCoy, Montrose, all unacknowledged) have made, and each has very limited views of the relation of literature and politics—Eamon, that the first misrepresents the second, Moore, that literature is only politically significant when it is transparent. The successful essays in this volume are Harold L. Weatherby's modest and learned demonstration of Spenser's familiarity with Greek lexicons and Donald Cheney's provocative and richly suggestive contemplations of Roman terms in the language and politics of early Shakespeare. These essays are complemented by John Hollander's final elegant remarks on the genesis of poetry from the complex mix of politics, belief, desires, and other books.

*Spenser at Kalamazoo 1982*, edited by Russell J. Meyer, offers another essay by Harold L. Weatherby; this time the Greek connection is doctrinal, not lexical, and startling in its revelation of the fierce syncretism of Spenser's epic. J. M. Tobin assembles evidence for the haphazardness of Spenser's borrowing from Apuleius, but has no convincing explanation for his practices; Brenda Thaon is similarly weak considering Spenser as a translator. Several essays on political aspects flounder on simplistic notions about the monolithic nature of absolutism and the supposed one to one relations of texts and events. Susan Fletcher, responding to an essay by John Moore, catches it imposing a veiled measuring rod of *cupiditas/caritas* on *The Shepheardes Calender*, and Thomas Roche closes the proceedings quoting scripture.

Building on the arguments of Frances Yates and Roy Strong, who see the iconography of the Virgin Queen as a transformation of the cult of Mary, Robin Headlam Wells turns the argument around in *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Cult of Elizabeth* by finding Marian images everywhere in the poem as clues to Spenser's Christian humanist epideixis of his sovereign. Erasmus or Elyot are assumed to be guides to Spenser's ideas, the Elizabethan World Picture is taken to be his, and characters in the poem are read as unproblematic reflections of moral commonplaces or as mirrors of majesty. To maintain these dated views, Wells simply ignores the kind of evidence Judith Anderson points to about Spenser's ambivalent attitudes towards the queen, blithely declares that Book V is a failure because it sinks from the usual moral loftiness into nasty politics, and that Book VI is "by general consent the most attractive book"—so long, that is, as the reader forgets about the erosion of the quest, the bankruptcy of courtesy, the ravages of the brigands, or the final unleashing of the Blatant Beast. Wells promises an historical account; the book offers a fantasy that is hard to recognize as Spenser's.

In *Spenser and the Motives of Metaphor*, A. Leigh DeNeef argues that Spenser practices a Platonic — or, as he calls it, a Sidneyan — poetics in which metaphors lead to reading and behavior that is right to the degree that the ability of metaphor to shadow transcendent truth is grasped, wrong insofar as it is literal. However, essential to the argument is the inadequacy of metaphor to embody Ideas, and the provisionality of the text and the response it demands. Thus, by the end of the book, DeNeef is willing to call into question the categories of right and wrong reading that he rigidly applies throughout, even to drop his insistent (and extraordinarily literalistic) use of Sidney as a guide to Spenser. As he says finally, “the work to which his poetry calls us . . . is always endless and only just begun,” a perception that he fears will send him into the “Derridean void” and which necessitates that the *a priori* moral categories DeNeef uses can only be heuristic devices.

At his worst, DeNeef can sound like Dr. Johnson complaining that Milton and King kept no sheep; at his best, he offers acute insight into the ways in which the poem thematizes its reading, particularly in the pervasiveness of textual activity in its vocabulary of human action. DeNeef is nagged by the metaphoricity of Spenser’s text and he invites the reader to transcend it; such transcendence forces false closures on the poem, however, and can protect it from history and its embeddedness in textuality. The answer to this is not to distance reading from the text, not to dematerialize the words so that they can be grouped into comfortable categories, but to face the abyss, recognizing that it is a productive and playful void and the space of all the meaning we are capable of finding in this world.

## II

Alan Sinfield delivers a telling assault on Christian humanism in *Literature in Protestant England, 1560–1660*. Arguing that a fiercely Calvinist protestantism was the official view in the period, one that caused deep anxiety and, eventually, its own dissolution, Sinfield dismisses and sees through those who have advanced the claims of Christian humanism. That outlook, he claims, “is not foreign to the period, but most of the important writers manifest a far more complex and anxious attitude, strongly aware of its latent contradictions as they were foregrounded by orthodox protestantism. The appeal of ‘Christian Humanism’ to many modern interpreters is that it is either close to their own outlook or can without too much strain be reconciled with it. Thus they appear to confirm their ideology from celebrated literature, and to ratify their idealist assumptions.” Instead, Sinfield insists on the assaultive quality of Renaissance protestantism, on the differences that refuse modern attempts to make Renaissance culture

a monolithic compendium of comforting beliefs. Harsh paradoxicality, not soft accommodation, is the nature of Calvinism; beliefs enact social contradictions. Pugnaciously calling Spenser, Sidney, and Milton "Puritan humanists," he looks to the strains in their works, not Christian humanist balance, and records their characteristic displacements and duplicities. Although at times Sinfield's exposition can seem rushed or somewhat crude, the views he offers are bracing and provocative, not least when he argues (convincingly) that Spenser cannot be labelled either a Christian or a humanist. It is therefore surprising to find that Sinfield will sometimes too easily accept rather questionable critical assumptions (the pertinence of married love in Spenser, or Donne's revolutionary poetics). A chapter on the strains within conflicting discourses of love offers valuable insights into the workings of ideology as "a piecemeal and shifting process" in which such opposing ends as "mutuality and authority," as Sinfield terms them, allow for a range of possibilities—from the disguising of authoritarian claims in a language of mutuality (in Spenser) to the subversive uses of authoritarian claims (in Donne). Two chapters on Renaissance drama that follow argue that "the theatre, of which so many protestants complained, is just where we should expect subversive thought to emerge." Sometimes the methodology in these chapters can be remarkably old-fashioned, especially in view of the radical argument; Sinfield is as fond of quoting Calvin as Christian humanists are of Erasmus and Elyot, often to the same effect, as if the relation of texts was transparent duplication, background and foreground.

At his best, Sinfield does not draw these simplistic parallels: for instance, in the final chapter the growth of secularism in the seventeenth century is "not just a counter-movement to protestantism, but . . . actually a response to inherent contradictions." In describing the "fragile protestant ideological hegemony," he is more finely responsive than when he attempts to perform more conventional acts of historical interpretation; the chapter is certainly correct in its view that contradictions in Milton make "impossible . . . the traditional claim that he represents some central and enduring Christian orthodoxy." Nonetheless, a bit disturbing in a book so committed to the radical historicity of Renaissance protestantism is its closing remark: "Whilst divines erected elaborate theological structures and writers wrestled to accommodate them to a wider intellectual tradition and to human life, most men and women probably made sense of existence on a reasonable day to day basis, as they always had." The timeless proletariat seems to me the kind of dream not even a liberal, bourgeois critic (let alone a Marxist) should let by unexamined.

John King opens *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of*

*the Protestant Tradition* with large claims that could appear congruent with Sinfield's: "The English Protestant literary tradition emerged and flourished during the radical Reformation in the middle of the sixteenth century." King, however, is unable to prove his point, in part because his notions of "literary tradition" are flaccid; in the course of the book, we are told, for instance, that Baldwin and Ben Jonson embrace "the same doctrine" in virtually identical meter, that Lynne's *de casibus* tragedies impose "on his materials the same formal pattern that Shakespeare would employ in the history plays." King writes a history of "the same," possible only when forms and ideas are rendered as vague and superficial general themes, variants of a single message: "*Doctor Faustus*, the least avowedly religious drama in Renaissance England, dramatizes the dilemma of nature and grace that Cranmer had discussed in the *Book of Homilies*."

A history of "the same" is no history at all, and the feeble quality of the literary judgments undermines the value the book might nonetheless be said to have — an attempt to rehabilitate mid-century authors such as Bale, Crowley, Baldwin, Grimald, and their radical protestant beliefs. King is baffled, for instance, when he tries to explain why the reign of Edward VI was conducive to radical thought; it would mean facing squarely the politics of Protector Somerset's stance, upsetting King's mythmaking. The best he can do is call paradoxical Somerset's view that the texts he licensed he regarded as trivial; it is both more and less than that. If Somerset allowed texts to be printed because he thought they would enhance his image and, at the same time, were not powerful in themselves, he cannot be seen as a true believer in the literal power of the word. King is also not much of a proselytizer for his texts; he offers paraphrase supplemented with inflated claims. The evidence does not bear him out.

This bulky book is an imposition on the reader. Sadly, there is evidence here of enormous scholarly work, reams of manuscripts and obscure publications dutifully perused. There is material here for a few modest articles summarizing mid-century careers and the extraordinary number of documents printed in the period. These articles, in fact, exist; King wrote and published them over the past few years. The book is an attempt to inflate small claims, testimony of a scholar's desire to divest himself of years of notetaking. The book is badly written, frequently jumbled and illogical, disorganized, and repetitious. Princeton has produced a handsome volume marred, however, by the consistent misspelling of the name of Rosemond Tuve.

Sinfield's arguments about the uses of humanism are demonstrated by George M. Logan's *The Meaning of More's "Utopia"*. The title, in fact, suggests a major defect, that More's book is capable of a single

meaning. That meaning is, not surprisingly, humanism. Logan recognizes that the book has called forth a diversity of responses; his answer, simply, is that the diversity constitutes humanism. Through paraphrase and summary, Logan rewrites the *Utopia* so that it sounds like a piece of sociology worthy of Daniel Bell; a “comprehensive application of the systemic approach to the ordering of the state,” is what Logan calls it. More’s humanism turns out to be modern pluralism and liberalism, his state a precursor to “the modern welfare state.” Although Logan pretends to be investigating humanism as a historical phenomenon, the term is a timeless catchword. Why is *Utopia* ironic? Because “complex tone . . . is a humanist characteristic.” Why does More fuse political theories? Because “this attempt is . . . typical of the most interesting humanist work, which is often energized by attempts to resolve tensions among . . . diverse materials.” How was More able to think beyond classical positions? Answer: “the theoretical advances that More effects are characteristically humanist.” The term is a value judgment; Logan’s pluralism is, in fact, coercive: “Until the theorist can devise a commonwealth in which such blessings can coexist with at least some of the desirable things sacrificed to attain them in Utopia, he has no right to depreciate More’s model.”

One corrective to Logan appears in Richard A. Lanham’s essay, “More, Castiglione, and the Humanist Choice of Utopias” (in *Acts of Interpretation*). Lanham too easily accepts as the truth about More’s book a reading like Logan’s but at least he sees through what such a thesis entails: “*Utopia*’s literary form allows More to suggest and get credit for an open society, to make us feel that he understands the value of one, without formally admitting such a society to his argument. The greatest artist of this con game is Plato, but More is not far behind.” Another corrective is offered in Elizabeth McCutcheon’s *My Dear Peter: The Ars Poetica and Hermeneutics for More’s Utopia*, a somewhat overstated reading of the letter to Peter Giles which nonetheless argues for the irreconcilable open-endedness of More’s discourse, and grounds these claims in careful textual analysis and full historic support. (There are, for example, five wonderful pages on how many different things the phrase “*de Utopiana republica*” can mean.)

Thomas Wilson’s *Arte of Rhetorique* was last printed in a 1909 edition which, as Thomas Derrick points out in his new edition, falsely represents itself as a version of the 1560 edition when, in fact, it reprints the corrupt 1585 text. Derrick’s copy text is the first edition (1553) except for those additions made by Wilson in 1560. He argues cogently that most of the other emendations to the text are the printer’s, and he emends conservatively, explaining in his commentary any departures from his copy text. The commentary also provides sources (complicated, as Derrick notes, by the transmission of classical rhetoric



through such figures as Erasmus), definitions of terms, identifications of obscure figures.

An introduction traces Wilson's life, places his book in its critical context, and details its textual history. Derrick is particularly cogent in suggesting Wilson's attempt to transcend his country origins, his involvements with powerful patrons, and the necessary mixture of educational advancement with political expertise. Although Wilson's intellectual context may be called Christian Humanism, Derrick shows that it was bred of the experience of the Lincolnshire Rebellion and his own experiences in exile during the reign of Mary. Wilson returned to England in 1560 to begin a slow advancement to his final position of Secretary of State. The humanism of his writings, Derrick shows, always comes from an awareness of social, political, and religious concerns. Wilson displays a "divided mind": "His humanistic optimism for the moral efficacy of eloquence entwines with his Protestant doubt of the perfectability of mankind." "Conflicting feelings about freedom and restraint" explain his educative stance (divided between the claims of nature and art), his social conservatism, and his interventionist policies. Derrick uses Gabriel Harvey's marginalia in the 1567 edition of Wilson to suggest that Wilson's readers found in him a guide to public and private practice; his "hearty prose and Protestant sentiments" appealed to those making a way for themselves in the 1560s. By the time the eighth edition of the *Rhetorique* appeared in 1585, Ramus, Derrick argues, was replacing Cicero; what is clear, too, is a shift in the historical situation that had produced Wilson.

Sandra Clark's *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets, 1580-1640* considers a wide range of Elizabethan prose covered by the term *pamphlet*, a genre, she suggests, better described by its members than in any more rigorous fashion. Much of the book (a good deal more than is admitted in the preface) constitutes a descriptive catalogue—of rogue and prison literature, news pamphlets, social satire—since the announced analytic portions (on conventions of subject matter, style, and presentation) continue as a descriptive listing of conventional forms and themes. Clark's insistently repeated thesis is that conservative moralism was central to Elizabethan readers and writers, that the forms and attitudes in these various tracts share a medieval heritage. "Conservative, backward-looking" in attitude, the pamphlets, Clark contends, were nonetheless new, not in social thought but in style. Yet, even here, what is new is largely a mixture of the old, a folding of allegory into estates satire, of sermon exempla into dialogue. Variety is all. Indeed, Clark claims, endorsing C. S. Lewis on Nashe, this is a body of texts without a subject, lacking a factual relation with the times (a compendium of shopworn tropes), written because writers "liked writing and they wanted to interest and delight their readers with the variety of devices they could use to dis-

play their material." With this as her thesis, Clark defines her critical job as the description of conventional elements and appreciative delight in their various mixings.

This is both limited and questionable critical activity. For one thing, Clark admits that the burgeoning of pamphlets in the late 1500s (despite the dates in her title, emphasis is firmly Elizabethan) is a new phenomenon. A new audience and a new kind of writer emerge; although Clark is initially careful about the definition of this audience (refusing commonplaces about the rising middle class), she essentially endorses this definition, save for those moments when the pamphlets' appeal is ascribed to "the eternal foundation of popular gossip," that is, to the timeless truths they inscribe. Clark never asks why conservative attitudes should be paraded by a new breed of hack writers, what contemporary social purposes such expressions serve. She has no way of accounting for these texts or authors in terms of the social conditions that produced these new readers, no way of seeing these deeply social texts except as works of art aspiring to an autonomy of conservative themes and pure stylistic effects plausible in any age. Clark's account, in short, extends New Critical values, but rather than offering close readings (the only real contribution of New Criticism), Clark produces lists, not analyses, assertions, not arguments. Even as a guide to this literature, Clark's book is extremely limited; its appreciative summaries distort in their search for "strongly felt writing."

More than a corrective to Clark is offered in Jonathan V. Crewe's *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship*, for he takes as the Nashe problem the description of Nashe as a writer who is all rhetoric, no content. Crewe's investigation, informed by a Derridean awareness of language, confronts the equation of content-as-rhetoric, but refuses either to say that style offers a coherent world (as has been argued for Lyly or Jonson) or to argue that the world merely is rhetoric. Rather, Crewe focuses on the dialectic between logic and rhetoric (as all that logic must suppress) as it informs Nashe's career: rhetoric poses the possibility of an "antiworld," Crewe argues, not simply dualistic, but also parasitic, undermining and generative, calling into question but not replacing "reality" with the specter of a world of performance and negative energy. Nashe's performances, always in language and yet never identical to each other—or to themselves—are for Crewe the excessive paradigm for an understanding of the place of rhetoric in Renaissance culture. Menacing, marginal, scandalous, excessive: yet, Crewe hints, Nashe may be an extreme case that would allow for a revaluation of the author we most prize in the period, Shakespeare.

Crewe pursues Nashe's career with such economy that it is difficult to recast the argument briefly. At each step, Nashe's relationship to

writing (and authorship) is problematic, whether, at first, in his most humanistic phase, where the enunciation of the notion of style-as-clothing casts dark insinuations on the nature of language, or in his late anti-poetically conceived *Unfortunate Traveller*, where Crewe hears in the punning history of a page the violence of a subversion that feeds upon itself and is sustained by the models of order it seeks to deny. Artifice — rhetoric — appears to be the slippery ground of being. Everywhere Nashe testifies to the lost illusion of humanistic subordination of rhetoric to truth and to the illusion of poetic power embodied in Sidney's golden world. These are not replaced by Nashe's rhetoric, however, for that rhetoric depends — parodically, parasitically, violently — on an antithesis that is not merely an opposition.

No summary can capture the almost obsessive logic of Crewe's argument; nor can I do more here than acknowledge the formidable suggestiveness of his tightly coiled hundred pages. At times, I think Crewe distorts to make his case. Sidney and High Renaissance poetics are treated too easily as really or merely offering what conventional criticism has said about them. Occasionally, one feels that Crewe's Shakespeare, especially in his late "romance" stage (the term is also a modern invention) is being sentimentalized. Crewe achieves his deconstructive reading of Nashe in part by not using his insights elsewhere. There are some straw men in his arguments. Not for this reason alone, this is one of those rare books one wishes were longer, for, as Crewe indicates, this study of Nashe is prolegomena to one that well might change the shape of Renaissance literature as it is viewed presently, replacing the center with the margin of an insidiously violent and arbitrary power — the power of the page — and troubling with its political and poetic conceptions of order, power, authority, and truth. Or, as Crewe says, "Nashe's career reveals some of the dilemmas of his 'rhetorical' contemporaries and . . . his repeated staging of the scandal of authorship exposes some of the lacunae in a highly idealistic 'Renaissance' conception of literature."

Volume 4 of *The Works of Richard Hooker* is devoted to an attack — the 1599 *A Christian Letter* — and Hooker's response — marginalia in the *Letter*, a manuscript of notes, and a set of fragmentary essays also in manuscript. Authorship of the *Letter* is unknown (the book appeared unlicensed and anonymous); John Booty, editor of the volume, presents the inconclusive evidence that connects it with Andrew Willet, and summarizes: "whoever wrote *A Christian Letter*, the author or authors were conforming Puritans, Calvinist, antipapal, anti-Armenian, alarmed by the new teachings at Cambridge and in Hooker's *Laws*." The 1599 *Letter* came after 20 years of attacks on Hooker from those who deeply suspected his orthodoxy; it is on matters of doctrine that he is questioned and to which his notes and marginalia

respond. Death prevented Hooker from completing his reply, although the three fragments on Grace and Free Will, the Sacraments, and Predestination are close to finished and represent a working up of the notes and marginalia as well as materials Hooker had been putting together since the 1580s when his views came under criticism. There is, Booty claims, nothing really new here, but some clarification of views presented in the *Lawes*. The commentary tends to point out such correspondences and to provide translations, identification of sources, and explanations of doctrinal matters. The text is beautifully printed, although the decision to interline Hooker's marginalia with the text of the *Letter* is (despite distinctions in typeface) a bit unsettling; an *en face* layout would probably have been better. The editorial work is scrupulous. Publication of this volume is particularly welcome with its reminder that Hooker's views were not accepted easily by his contemporaries, or, as Alan Sinfield puts it more radically, that "the centrality in Elizabethan thought which modern Anglicans have accorded to Hooker's work is quite unjustified." In the 1599 *Letter* we hear a normative voice from the period, and the uncharacteristic vituperativeness of Hooker's marginal gloss, while perhaps justified by the conventions of controversy in the time, suggests, too, that the anonymous attacker occasionally hit home.

Based on the undeniable assertion that Joseph Hall was an important figure in his day—as satirist, character writer, and man of religion—Richard A. McCabe chooses to focus on "the positive and negative aspects of . . . one outlook" in *Joseph Hall: A Study in Satire and Meditation*, finding the sermons as the meeting ground of this double stance. This place McCabe identifies as an essential moral and religious position, and he orders his study by continually assuring the reader that despite the apparent fragmentation of Hall's career, he never wavered from his middle ground. The evidence suggests otherwise. Hall's blend of Calvinism and episcopacy, for instance, was hardly unproblematic. McCabe is at his best when he admits such difficulties or faces the complex social situation of Hall's writing. More often, however, he places Hall in the most traditional matrices (the Elizabethan World Picture, for instance). When even these frames jostle, McCabe assures us of Hall's rationality. What this means, of course, was that Hall was an intense rationalizer and self-justifier; McCabe simply accepts his words at face value. This defines critical procedure (such as it is) in the book, paraphrase and summary interspersed with appreciative analyses of rhetorical effects and structuring devices. Commonplaces about metaphysical poetry or the meditative tradition are repeatedly invoked but, by the end, McCabe assigns Hall to a balancing mysticism that transcends questions of history. Hall is, finally, a belated Elizabethan unsuited to his times—a really extraordinary and thoroughly unconvincing conclusion.

Jonquil Bevan offers an edition of Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler* in the Oxford English Texts notable for the welcome decision to print the original 1653 edition as well as the final edition revised during Walton's life (1676) and one and a half times as long as the original. Apparatus accompanying the 1676 text makes it possible for the reader to reconstruct the intervening editions of 1655 and 1661. Bevan allows the manifold differences to emerge ("the book develops from an angling manual-cum-pastoral into a kind of prose anthology or common-place book"). Like others of the time (Montaigne, Burton), Walton clearly had no sense of a final text. The impulses towards anthology as form are important and characteristic, perhaps more so than the taste of the period Bevan would locate in Walton's preference for smooth rather than strong verse. Bevan gives Walton fairly high marks for accuracy of quotation and fidelity to sources; yet the strong retrospective and literary additions that mark successive editions seem to undermine an original intention for the straightforwardly factual. Before one agrees that Walton's "distinctive personality" and his chronological-topographical organization of his material shape the book (as is claimed in the introduction), the opposing tendency to proliferation must be kept in mind. Bevan's introduction and commentary do straightforward work, tabulating sources, making identifications, occasionally pausing over a difficult word. Some interesting things are said, for instance the fact that few inscribed copies of the work survive (compared to many such of *The Lives*). Bevan reads this as a sign of Walton's relative indifference to the book; the revisions tell against that conclusion as does its immense popularity (there have been some 400 editions). The multiple concerns of the book (nostalgic retreat, poetic anthology, moralism) explain its longevity for Bevan. This is fine so far as it goes, but hardly describes the complexities of the work's genesis, in terms of its sources and Walton's place in history (and not merely in literary history). With Bevan's edition, work on these questions will be made easier. It has been handsomely produced along the familiar lines of the series, although one could wish for paper of better quality.

N. H. Keeble describes *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* as introductory, emphasizing Baxter's views on writing and style and his significance to literary history. This summarizes the first third of the book, and it makes fascinating reading. In his 40 years as a publishing author, Baxter wrote some 140 books. He claimed necessity as his cause but, as Keeble says, the career was "self-perpetrating." Actually, the evidence suggests more, a man writing because of compulsions scarcely under his control, in the grips of the autonomy of language — its ability to call forth responses (Baxter was enormously popular and enormously controversial) and to trigger more writing. Baxter's writing, Keeble says, is styleless, unrevised, unedited, not

even proofread, a tumult of words committed to plainness and perspicacity. Yet Baxter never felt that he had written enough; better to say more than to leave anything out. When he proposed a poor man's library, he listed 1000 titles (the 1400 books catalogued from Baxter's collection are clearly the tip of the iceberg). Godliness was literariness, words the means to salvation. Yet Baxter, living in continual pain and illness, haunted by death, feared that literary elegance was a sin and was convinced that self needed to be rooted out for the sake of selflessness. Keeble does a good job of marshalling these and other tensions—a passion for order at war with the impulse to proliferate, pedantry vying with popularity, dogmatism refusing to be categorized. Keeble would like these oppositions to point to some middle path, an open way between armed camps, and he is convincing in his appreciation of “the most sustained attempt in English to apply the doctrines of Christianity to the ordinary lives of common people.” Nonetheless, excess, not moderation, seems to lie at the center of Baxter; indeed, it explains the intimacies of self-revelation in this supposedly selfless author. Keeble too easily suggests containment; he is at his weakest in several passages in which he attempts to normalize Baxter by allying his plainness with Herbert's, for instance, or his communing with landscape with Wordsworth. Luckily, the critical modesty of the book allows readers access to the extraordinary deluge of Baxter's prose. Surely the amazing spectacle here is that of someone who did not consider himself an author, had no regard for words, and nonetheless lived in language.

Retha M. Warnicke's *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* and Hilda L. Smith's *Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists* are complementary studies. Warnicke charts the accomplishments of learned women over the four generations beginning with the time of Sir Thomas More. Smith picks up about a generation after Warnicke leaves off, reviewing the writings of a dozen women between 1650 and 1710. Warnicke describes the diminishing effects of Christian humanism on women's education after its initial impetus; the founders of schools excluded women; ideals of protestant marriage endorsed subordination. Smith seems to support these claims; her authors tend to be Anglican and conservative politically, drawing their inspiration from Descartes's rationalism rather than from Puritan revolution. Both books tend to appreciative summary, and Smith's claim that authors (beginning with Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle) can be called feminist because of their recognition of social oppression as the source of sexual differentiation is suspect—as she recognizes—since social analysis is quite slim in such texts, and the points of view offered can also be found in the writing of contemporary men. Both authors offer a group of (for the most part) noble—even royal—

women (the Countess of Pembroke, Lady Mary Wroth, Lady Elizabeth Carey) who emerge against a “backdrop of stark illiteracy,” as Warnicke puts it. Warnicke corrects the rosier pictures offered by an earlier generation of scholars; Smith contributes a few acute analyses of the ways in which women shaped male conventions to their aims. Both books present information and documentation that future scholars will draw upon; the history of English women and their writing in the Renaissance remains to be written.

### III

*Classic and Cavalier: Essays on Jonson and the Sons of Ben*, edited by Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, arises from a conference held in Dearborn, Michigan, in 1980. The editors set the tone in their prefatory remarks, applauding Jonson’s idealism and his feats of reconciliation. Flaccid introductory essays on Jonson’s use of sources, by C. A. Patrides and Stella Revard, follow; for neither is imitation a complicated matter. At a wholly other level of critical sophistication, Richard C. Newton concludes the introductory section arguing for Jonson as the formulator of the notion — made possible by print — of the classic text. Newton sees in Jonson’s desire to print, order, revise, and comment upon his poems, an attitude towards text and canon which continues into our own times, shaping scholarly and critical activity. He locates the historical moment in which a shift in the understanding of the text occurs, thereby explaining the meaning implicit in the critical use of “the poet” as a term of value as well as the attraction to Jonsonian polish as a product of the book that he invents. Newton beautifully demonstrates the act of investment that Jonson performs and demands of his readers. Like Thomas Greene or David Quint, Newton guides us to the radical historicity of the Jonsonian text.

Few of the remaining essays on Jonson and his literary relations come close to Newton. Rather, the stock-in-trade here, once again, is that tired and unselfconscious mixture of New Criticism and old-fashioned historicism watered down into lists of thematic oppositions and meetings, smoothed over with platitudes about the function of art and ideals. Some of the essays are even more modest, merely appreciations. Martin Elsky contributes some interesting pages on the function of names and their textual and philosophical implications (correcting the reductive arguments of Susanne Woods); Roger Rolins attempts (using Bloomian terms) to see beyond Jonsonian concision and restraint; Ilona Bell argues for similar strategies that Jonson and Herbert impose on their readers by making endings call beginnings in question; this may, in fact, be a quality shared by many authors in the period.

*Patronage in Late Renaissance England* brings together French R. Fogle's "'Such a Rural Queen': The Countess Dowager of Darby as Patron" and Louis A. Knafla's "The 'Country' Chancellor: The Patronage of Sir Thomas Egerton, Baron Ellesmere." Fogle's essay is slim in all respects, and rehearses familiar knowledge about the relations between the countess and Spenser and Milton in a romantic vein. Knafla, on the other hand, waves aside Fogle's perspective (quickly showing that Ellesmere regarded his marriage to the countess as a financial drain) and presents patronage in its complex social settings—for Ellesmere, the universities and the legal profession in addition to a range of governmental institutions are important, as are, too, his intellectual, moral, and religious ties. Although Knafla perhaps stresses a court-country opposition which many revisionist historians would question, and tends throughout to treat direct political patronage as a separate matter, the final pages argue convincingly for the interweaving of patronage networks that met in Egerton; readers less concerned with the details of Knafla's presentation will want to read these pages for one of the best statements of the role of patronage in Jacobean society.

In *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, Josephine A. Roberts offers the sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (including those poems found only in the holograph Folger MS.), poems from the printed 1621 *Countesse of Montgomery's Urania*, and poems from the manuscript of its sequel and from one of the manuscripts of Wroth's play, *Love's Victorie*. An appendix includes all the extant letters, drawn from a range of manuscripts. The introduction describes the life, the poems, and the texts; although it reveals thorough knowledge of printed and manuscript materials, it is unsatisfactory critically. The separation of life/poems/text points to a scientific dream shared by many bibliographers and belied by their practices. A refusal to interpret or explain produces lame descriptions, for example, when a letter of Sir Robert Wroth's complaining (unspecifically) about his wife's scandalous behavior is never connected to the evidence that Lady Mary bore two illegitimate children fathered by William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. The genesis of poems is attributed to genealogy (Lady Mary was the niece of Sir Philip Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke) or to travel ("This opportunity to travel in Europe and acquire a second language was likely to have had a strong influence on Lady Mary's subsequent literary activities"). In short, facts are explanations for Roberts so long as they are inert; she warms to a discussion of the poems when she reads them *à clef*, or can list their "specific borrowings" (without considering what it might mean for poems to be Petrarchan, metaphysical, and plain—labels Roberts throws in their direction). Wroth's pastoral poems are said to represent retreat, despite evidence



(presented elsewhere in the introduction) that Sir Robert seemed interested in little else but hunting; he frequently hosted King James, and his wife appeared in court masques — pastoral becomes politics in these contexts, as Ben Jonson knew in his poem to Sir Robert. Roberts is surprised to find that Wroth's sonnets lack "a steady progression of attitudes" and thinks they rise above Petrarchan tradition in their "intensely ambivalent response to love." Although there is some justice in her view that a particular feminine viewpoint emerges in the poems, it is not the gushy and sentimental voice that Roberts describes.

When Roberts has but a single text upon which to rely, her work is unexceptionable. But in the case of the sonnet sequence, the scientific dream of the bibliographer falters. Although she uses the Folger MS. as her copytext, she also believes that the 1621 printed edition appended to the *Urania* is superior on all author-supervised matters. Thus, when words were changed, her text prints 1621 words and spellings in the midst of manuscript lines. Further, much as she would like to preserve the lightly punctuated manuscript, she cannot ("I have tried to follow Lady Mary's punctuation wherever possible," she confesses), and, once again, the 1621 text supplants the copytext. Moreover, the 1621 ordering of the poems is printed (that it represents Wroth's intentions is purely hypothetical). In short, the reader is faced with a composite text and must scrutinize the back of the edition to determine what is being read. Since there is a modern edition of the 1621 sequence, Roberts might well have printed her Folger copytext. The accompanying notes to the edition are weak; Roberts always insists that everything is "traditional," and guides the reader to image patterns and offers banal paraphrases, glossing under the illusion that single word substitutes are adequate. Roberts believes that so long as she preserves the original/authorial text (but she doesn't), she can arrive at meaning by modernization.

William Zunder's brief book, *The Poetry of John Donne: Literature and Culture in the Elizabethan and Jacobean Period*, claimed as "suitable for students," offers as its "original contribution" an ignorant and biased view of Donne and his times. Zunder argues that early Donne voiced the theology of Thomas Aquinas, but later swerved from the glories of the Elizabethan World Picture into the mercenary individualism and political absolutism of the Jacobean era, although not so far as the degenerate Webster. To measure Donne's positions, Zunder summons Shakespeare as a yardstick for the tradition; he, we are told, roundly condemns Antony's attachment to his Egyptian temptress, and applauds Fortinbras or Edgar in their triumphs over fools like Hamlet or Lear. At his best, as in "The Canonization," Donne knows that earthly love is foolish, we are told, but sometimes he lapses

by praising friends too much in verse letters, or despairing of the world too much, when one should always be cheered by faith. I am amazed by this book, and not only because it is so outdated and ill-informed; it seems to suggest (it is not the sole example of the type) that in criticism as in much else, there is a new conservatism these days. That is the only reason why the book is even worth mentioning here.

M. Thomas Hester presents yet another Christian reading in *Kindred Pity and Brave Scorn: John Donne's Satyres*. Like Roberts, Hester wants (despite recent evidence to the contrary) Donne's satires to be a sequence, a progress in "growing awareness," "the dramatic portrait" of a "journey from innocence (I), to darkness and despair (II), and finally to self-knowledge (III), suffering and God-given knowledge (IV), and obedience (V)." This Hester calls a "mythic" pattern identical with the "Christian structure of human history as it was delineated in such influential Christian humanist works as Erasmus' *Enchiridion*." I have said enough in previous pages to pass over a detailed criticism of these misguided views. As a mark of the cheerful literalness of the book, however, I note that Hester may be the first reader to fall for the closing lines of the fourth satire asking "to esteeme my writs Canonically."

Trivialization of Donne, but from a New Critical perspective, is Patricia Garland Pinka's contribution in *This Dialogue of One: The Songs and Sonnets of John Donne*, "a synthetic study . . . through the personae in the poems" that aims to treat them "exclusively and comprehensively." Predictable close readings follow; the personae (we are assured they have nothing to do with the poet) plot the drama of forms of love, not, of course, to present a view of love. Rather, these are poems of the vagaries of the mind ("To sound the whole chorus of love's voices, Donne has not only his lovers but all who profess or pretend to be lovers sing their songs, go through their acts, show their stuff—whatever it is"—I hardly need comment on the sentimentality and vulgarity of the point), best taken as "fun." That last word I take from Pinka on "The Canonization." *Caveat lector*.

The work of William Empson and Helen Vendler suggests what the New Criticism managed when confronted with George Herbert; in *Costly Monuments: Representations of the Self in George Herbert's Poetry*, Barbara Harman offers close readings of half a dozen poems as the center of a study whose method is New Critical, but whose guiding assumption is not. For, unlike Pinka (to take an extreme example), Harman argues for the real investment of Herbert in his speakers. Unlike such historical critics as Tuve or Summers, Harman refuses to allow the poems to fuse into some communal Christian meaning. Representation matters to Herbert, and it is a problem that the poems repeatedly confront. For Harman, the poems do not close in on artful solutions,

nor do they collapse (as they do, for different reasons, in Fish or Tuve); rather, they engage, from various perspectives, a central problem, that the articulation of lived experience is never the same as the experience; writing is a re-presentation of the self. Harman presents this insight without much in the way of theoretical trapping, as common sense. Indeed, part of the appeal of this book lies in a strategy of direct address. Harman never lets go of the reader.

This also makes the book peculiarly airless. Although these are powerful readings that displace others, they are also insistently literalistic. Harman starts with an assumption about the continuity of the self and its fragmentation in texts, and works to find a relation between that assumed self and its representation. Yet, much in the history of self-representation would suggest that the coherent self is a phenomenon later than Herbert (see C. B. MacPherson on “possessive individualism,” or even Ferry’s opening chapter). Harman seeks a self in the poems that may not ever be found. When she looks to the model of Christian history that Herbert had, she sees it merely as a reductive and disabling paradigm that robs the self. Yet, surely the point about typology is that it posits a present burdened by loss; if it gives a Christian a story, it is never one that can be possessed entirely. Indeed, the conditions for representation which Harman creates through her readings can be found in the model of history she repudiates. What she denies Herbert, she denies herself. Harman’s book is about the fictions of discourse that preserve speech against its own vulnerability. The costly monument erected on these pages achieves its value (there is no denying the force of these readings) at great expense: the denial of history, the refusal to articulate a theoretical base for the definitions of self and representation that would stand up to Renaissance discursive practices, a narrowing of Herbert to a handful of poems that serve the author’s purpose.

R. V. Young draws attention to an overlooked historical connection in *Richard Crashaw and the Spanish Golden Age*. The relationship seems true in general, but unconvincing in the particulars, since Young aims to normalize Crashaw by giving him antecedents. The book has no critical vocabulary (Crashaw, for instance, is described as “concrete”; Young looks at “atmosphere” or the “essential import” of poems). Thematization and paraphrase pass for critical acts; “there is little question over what Crashaw’s poems are about, or what they mean,” we are assured. Thus, if at its best Young’s book shows that had Crashaw been a Spanish poet, his poems might well have found an immediate context in the work of Gongora, Santa Teresa, San Juan de la Cruz, or Fray Luis de Leon, he has no vocabulary to describe the migration of these models to an English poet, no sense of historical difference or textual difference that would make his historical argument a meaningful one.

Jonathan F. S. Post also claims to be on the side of history in *Henry Vaughan: The Unfolding Vision*. He attempts an "integrative view" of Vaughan's career (giving the poet a continuous and coherent history); he argues, moreover, that its shape was dictated by history. Yet, as the book proceeds, Vaughan's place in history, whether as a writer of cavalier verse or as a latter-day Herbert, is no place; he is always in retreat. Post enshrines mid-century poetry as escapist and apolitical, a largely discredited view. For him, Vaughan converts his poetry to the model of Herbert as the fulfillment of his retreatist designs. In short, what Post calls history is no history at all; and what he leaves himself as a critical task is a series of close readings, volume by volume, of the poet's oeuvre. Although he attempts to make these readings look new through an occasional bit of Bloomian vocabulary ("crossing" or "revision," for instance) or by mining in the "seams" of verse, the resolution of conflict is his repeated point, the balancing of secular and religious in the non-history of a poet's retreat into poetry. Poetic technique is really Post's interest; the book is about rhyme and meter, and the reader will encounter many discussions like this one of the opening lines of "The Brittish Church": "Urgency is again achieved in the way Vaughan uses the stanzaic form to heighten the stress of thought. After the initial, disyllabic exclamation, 'Ah! he is fled!' the poet mutes the cry slightly by following it with a longer, reflective pentameter line of another (b) rhyme and then repeats this process of gathering and restraining energy as he brings the thought to a pause." New Criticism or the heresy of paraphrase?

Dudley, Fourth Lord North (1602-1677), is a figure almost lost to history, unmentioned in guides to the seventeenth century or confused with his father or son. In *Gentle Flame*, Dale B. J. Randall attempts to restore him by providing a record of his life, and an extensively glossed edition of his previously unpublished poems, transcribed from a manuscript in his wife's hand but reorganized to show the generic categories in which North worked. The life is told in a rather dry and factual account, drawing on the elder North's miscellaneous publications, the son's biographies of family members, contemporary letters and documents, often from archival resources. Randall makes no large claims for this history, save that all lives are interesting, and this family moved in powerful circles; the most significant interpretive paradigm he derives from Lawrence Stone, and he charts the conspicuous consumption and economic manoeuvrings of several generations and gives some focus to the tyrannical and obsessive father before whom North bent his will until his sixty-fourth year, when he became the fourth Lord North at his father's death. In those late years, North did publish a treatise on household economy and a narrative of his service in Parliament (a posthumous collection of reli-

gious works also appeared); at this time, too, his wife undertook to copy his writings (Randall argues that the manuscript he transcribes was probably put together in 1676 for North's elder son). The dutifulness and moderation of North is a constant theme in Randall's account, and this, too, is what he finds in the verse, a subscription to conventions (many quite timeworn by the seventeenth century — Petrarchan, pastoral, satiric) that binds his life and art and yet leaves puzzled any modern attempt to locate a recognizable "self" in these materials. North reveals for Randall the ability of convention to make and record experience. "From a base somewhere behind the lines of his complex cultural heritage, he could speak safely as a representative of a class, a sex, a faith, a place, a time. Yet room was still left for individual expression. Just as North's subject matter deals overtly with the tension between conventional authority and individual autonomy, so his writing in general embodies that dualism in more subtle and elusive ways." As Randall notes, the strongest influence on his verse came from his father. The great-grandson of the owner of the Ellesmere manuscript of Chaucer (*his* brother was Sir Thomas North) has now been given his modest place in history. Randall's work suggests that "minor" lives (or "minor" poets) occupy the tensions and gaps which official histories (including literary histories) obscure. It is perhaps a chief merit of Randall's work that it is at heart thoroughly conventional political and textual scholarship devoted nonetheless to a small rewriting of the corpus of learning capable of raising large questions.

Alexander Brome circulated poems written in the 1640s and 50s, occasionally appeared in printed miscellanies or a dedicatory poem, acquired a modest reputation, and gathered his verse in print in 1661, 1664 (and posthumously in a final edition in 1668). Roman R. Dubinski, in his edition of the *Poems*, takes the first printed edition (in most instances 1661) as his copytext. His introduction offers the few facts known about Brome's life (he was a lawyer and a staunch royalist) and groups the poems thematically — love poems, drinking songs, political satires. Dubinski would like Brome to epitomize the shift from metaphysical to neoclassical and he emphasizes the plain style. Although he dutifully cites critics who argue for the politics of Cavalier verse, he prefers to stress literary values, the original twists (as he puts it) and conventional themes Brome's work reveals. The glosses in the commentary serve this end and provide comparisons with contemporary poets as well as definitions from the OED and historical-factual information. Dubinski's textual procedures are not clear; his description of the relationship between the two surviving manuscripts and the first edition is just about impenetrable, but the full collation offered does not suggest that there was much to choose

between. Dubinski is so apologetic in the introduction, it seems worthwhile simply to endorse his remark that "the social and political context of Cavalier love poetry is important and deserves more detailed attention than can be provided here." Brome's poems suggest that their value lies in such connections, that it would be worth taking the occasional verse seriously (rather than dismissing it, as Dubinski does), and that such commonplaces as Cavalier elegance, escapism, and conservatism (endorsed in this edition) too easily domesticate the fear, savagery, and crudity that can also be read in these pages.

In *The Poet's Time: Politics and Religion in the Work of Andrew Marvell*, Warren L. Chernaik aims to show a Marvell always committed to timeless truth, whether as a writer of lyrics or political works. Although he dismisses Annabel Patterson's book in a footnote as being concerned with rhetoric, not politics, his aims are the same, and the book works to a final chapter on the satires, which Chernaik admires for their wit ("in all of them, heterogeneous materials are yoked by violence together," he says with a straight face), and reads for thematic unity. An earlier chapter on politics argues for Marvell's liberalism, dismissing Wallace's conservative poet by mere assertion; to prove Marvell a liberal, he quotes Locke and declares their positions the same. Similar sleights of hand equate Marvell's religion and Milton's. Simple-minded moralisms and blanket comparisons are Chernaik's favored critical modes: Marvell, we are told, has but one subject, the fall of man; "Marvell's muse, like Swift's, is Truth." Within pages of each other, we are told that Marvell is essentially Puritan, essentially Anglican, essentially Protestant, essentially conformist, essentially nonconformist. Like many others who claim to be writing about politics and poetry, Chernaik can find no meeting ground; specious political analysis is followed by hollow poetic analysis; politics and art are explicitly divided, and stubborn and sordid reality, as Chernaik is fond of calling it, does not triumph over "the power of the artistic imagination." Despite his admiration for Marvell's wit, Chernaik bludgeons texts into thematic summaries. He is not the first critic to be defeated by Marvell's silent judgment. This pedestrian book, however, does manage something other books on Marvell have achieved rarely: it makes the poet dull.

*Spirit of Wit: Reconsiderations of Rochester*, edited by Jeremy Treglown, is a slim volume arising from a 1980 Oxford conference; most of the essays are introductory and appreciative. Critical vocabulary rarely strains beyond a tally of oppositions that Rochester is said to contain or transcend; high marks are accorded for honesty and realism. Occasionally, the essays unspeak each other—one critic's object of praise is slighted by another, or a narrow insistence on Rochester's politics is answered by a narrow rejoinder. Sarah Wintle has

some interesting things to say on attitudes towards women (on “the problematic implications of a considered female libertinism”) and, although her critical principles are no more sophisticated than others’, Barbara Everett delivers some stunning readings of the ‘nothing’ that undermines Rochester’s surface. Her essay alone is written with real style and with a sense of the obtuseness of categories like irony, satire, or society when dealing with this slippery poet.

In *Milton and the Science of the Saints*, Georgia B. Christopher is concerned to describe what she calls Milton’s “literary” theology. The quotation marks are hers and are part of a persistent stylistic habit in this rather convoluted book: key terms are designated, not defined. The method is akin to what Christopher believes obtains in Milton’s texts where language is capable at any point of an “epiphany” in which doctrine blazes through, Christ is present as speech, and faith is revealed. This “literary” notion Christopher finds in Luther and Calvin, who are read as Milton’s geniuses. Christopher aims to correct those who have found Milton’s Christian poetic in modes (symbolic or typological) that she feels are more properly Anglican or Catholic. Although not an overt challenge to Christian humanism, Christopher’s book, like Sinfield’s, insists on the radical protestantism of Milton’s texts. Yet, because Christopher is also a believer, she tends to think that revelation of doctrine suffices as a critical act. At her worst, in her reading of *Comus* as a *masque-à-clef*, she merely makes equations (everything in the *masque* turns out to be faith or one of its antagonists); she is more comfortable with the major poems (she, in turn, thinks Milton is more comfortable and less “murky” in them) and with them more insightful. She shows how the Reformers (her term for Luther and Calvin) read classical epic as valuable as a “third scripture” in its understanding of human affairs, but not to be compared with the true book (Satan’s career in her reading reveals the “madness” that is counterpart to the virtue of Aeneas). She demonstrates that Milton’s God is not amenable to reason and shows the limits of reason in the experience in the Garden. She insists that man and God are connected verbally; this explains Adam’s education in the last books of *Paradise Lost* and Christ’s victory in *Paradise Regained*, a demonstration to all believers of what it means to be visited by the Spirit. This, too, is what she makes of Samson’s final moment; as she says, what we inherit from Samson is his story and it is one in which Milton himself inexactly but undeniably participates, a model for the inherence of Christ in the text.

In some senses, Christopher’s is an intensely literalistic reading of Milton, recognizing that all meaning is literally there in the words as they intersect with doctrine. Her reading is extremely cautionary about the possibilities of reason or of love, squarely putting human-

kind in the place that Reformation theology permits (a far more compelling view than the jolly and companionable Milton offered in A. N. Wilson's new biography). Yet, hard-nosed as these procedures are, they are made in a prose that is difficult, allusive, and often rather offputting in its fancifulness (and sometimes in its grammatical lapses): "In Milton's tradition, the Spirit clings, not to bodies, but to language itself and skips like Ariel along the tucks and gaps in the syntactical chain forming metaphor, metonymy, and other tropes." Following this will-of-the-wisp, Christopher arrives again and again at doctrine and faith, scripture affirming scripture. She sees no need to investigate her procedures or even to define her terms, and although much that she sees no doubt is true, she appears to believe that it is the Truth.

Once again, Princeton has produced a physically beautiful book marred with the misspelling of Rosemond Tuve's name.

In *Milton's Eve*, Diane Kelsey McColley quite correctly perceives that it is an error to regard Eve as fallen before the Fall, but she refuses to see all the ways in which readers are encouraged to make this mistake. Her cheerfulness about the prelapsarian state and the possibility of regeneration (or, for that matter, about the possibilities for women that Puritans espoused, which hardheaded critics like Warnicke and Smith have seen more cogently) virtually wipes the Fall out of the picture — yet it infects our responses to Milton's lines. For McColley, however, "all of Eve's prelapsarian acts, as well as Adam's, prefigure her regeneration and promote the reader's." From this book, we cannot tell why *Paradise Lost* ever made anyone uncomfortable. Although the thesis occasionally yields insights (by reminding us that Eve's naming of the flowers displays intelligence like Adam's, or by stressing the activity in Eden), these essays are relentless in their desire to make difficulties disappear: "the separation colloquy not only shows Eve 'yet sinless,' but also, while displaying the 'liability to fall' that is their growing-edge, engages Eve and Adam in just the informed and active liberty, responsibility, truth-seeking, magnanimity, and love that form the gist of any paradise." Although Milton is sometimes allowed traffic with rough theological traditions, he is more often presented as unique ("Among the plenitudes of Eves, Milton's is the only one whose motives spring naturally from God's word"), a consoler beyond the dreams of many Christian humanists who have written before. This book proves beautifully the validity of Alan Sinfield's argument; for all the learning and close reading it appears to display, its sole subject is the consolation of comfortable beliefs.

Claes Schaar's *The Full Voic'd Quire Below: Vertical Context Systems in Paradise Lost* is, in essence, an extended gloss. "Does this passage suggest some other passage?" and, if so, 'How does this other passage



affect it” is the question asked. Schaar’s vocabulary comes from Eco and the reader is drawn to consider “infracontexts” displayed at length. Yet, in fact, the point of view is not at all complex despite the daunting vocabulary, a tally of echoes to demonstrate “paradoxical tension, ironic or not” implying the fortune of the Fall. The lack of a proper index compromises the usefulness of the book for a reader who might want to pursue more complicated paths through literary history. On the other hand, Schaar’s glosses derive largely from the work of editors and can be reconstructed easily, while his most unusual glosses (from contemporary continental texts) tend to be the least convincing ones.

The study of prose style is apt to be little more than impressionism. To counter such tendencies, Thomas N. Corns, in *The Development of Milton’s Prose Style*, relies upon computer-assisted analyses of quantifiable aspects of style (word frequencies, sentence lengths and patterns) for more objective (as he terms them) results. Further, to establish the unique qualities of Milton’s prose, he collates it with contemporary pamphlets. This results, as Corns admits, in some modest negative conclusions which show that in most respects Milton and his contemporary polemicists are indistinguishable syntactically; Milton’s prose differs in density of subordination and in imagery. These qualities are most evident in the 1640s; later writings are sparer.

The main difficulty with this study, as Corns admits, is that the most interesting aspects of style resist quantification; when Corns turns to them, his vocabulary abandons the dream of scientific objectivity for sheer impressionism; Milton is said to be more *interesting* than other writers, he is praised for “wit and sparkle” while others are dull. Flaccid, too, is the book’s organization; after 50 pages comparing early and late Milton, Corns proceeds to 50 more on middle Milton only to show that in all respects save imagery early and middle Milton produce the same statistics. Backing and filling and repetitions characterize the book, leaving no room to develop the few speculative points raised in the conclusion – the suggestion, for example, that a study of prose style should not be divorced from the conditions of printing. On that point, one must note that this book is littered with typographical errors. Corns laments “our inadequate and incorrect stylistic expectations”; his book does little to remedy the situation.

With volume 8, the Yale *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* comes to its conclusion; these volumes have been admired widely for the fullness of their annotations, the care taken in editing, the expertise displayed in introductions. Volume 8 is no exception, and deserves applause; this will be the definitive edition of Milton’s prose for many years.

Nonetheless, volume 8 raises some teasing questions. It presents

works from the final years — or so it announces — although an appendix prints the early (1639–1642?) outlines for tragedies from the Trinity MS. As the introduction to the volume explains, the editors have reconsidered an earlier decision to omit the notes; now, they are regarded as a “work.” Questions about that label are raised, however, by much that the volume includes. The prose prefaces and arguments to *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, for instance, appear as if they had claims to being independent works. Eighty percent of the *Art of Logic* is a verbatim transcript of Ramus and various commentators (especially George Downham); Father Ong, its editor, explains the impossibility of finding any way of printing the *Logic* that would disentangle Milton’s “own” text from those he borrows. George Parks, introducing the *Moscovia*, suggests that because it is unfinished, “one may prefer not to think of it as a book at all. It is in fact a collection of notes.” What these works represent is complicated also by what their various editors make of them. Thus, Father Ong offers a supersonic view of the “age of logic” and gives a Jungian prospect on the history of consciousness to link Ramist method with computer technology before he settles down to relatively sober introductory matters (even here, he checks an impulse to identify the logic of Milton’s poems with Ramus by finally noting signs of Milton’s reservations). On the other hand, David P. French introduces Milton’s *Grammar* with a long discussion of Lily’s official grammar and Milton’s place within a history of attempts to modify it. For French, Milton’s work reveals his strong empirical tendencies. Park, in a somewhat similar vein, stresses a Baconian scientific impulse in the *Moscovia*. John M. Steadman, on the other hand, introducing the notes for tragedies, finds signs of Milton’s Christian humanism. Obviously, such attempts to constitute Milton also dictate what appears in the full glosses of someone like Keith Stavelly, who is convinced that *Of True Religion* can be dated within a span of three months in 1673. At the opposite extreme, French gives no notes for the *Grammar* because of its full reliance on the grammars he describes. Moreover, the materials gathered in volume 8 are troublesome in other respects. All appeared within 1666–1682, but many were written earlier, some considerably so (the *Grammar*, *Logic*, and *Moscovia* may be related to Milton’s pedagogical programs of the late 1640s). Previous volumes have arranged the prose chronologically and have ignored date of publication. In this volume, genuinely late prose (like the curious translation of the announcement of the 1674 election in Poland) stands side by side with much earlier “works.” And, finally, one more problem. This edition of complete prose by Milton prints Latin works in modern English translations and does not supply Milton’s Latin texts. How are these translations Milton’s prose works?

All these matters suggest, of course, that the questions “what is a text?” and “what is an author?” are not merely for critics. The various attitudes of the editors of this volume point to an irreducible problem — whatever *we* call a text, we cannot be sure that it constitutes the Miltonic text. For Parks, Milton’s transcriptions and redactions of Purchas and Hakluyt are reasons for the limited status of *Moscovia*; French half agrees about the *Grammar* and declines annotation since it would misrepresent Milton’s contributions; Father Ong’s sights embrace a large panorama, and Milton’s *Logic* can be glossed as the product of a cultural moment (not the same as Staveland’s historical moment) in which texts function in a world of moveable type that may transcend questions about the author and the work. The irreducible question here is a version of Thomas Greene’s: can modern categories bridge the historical distance to the Renaissance text?

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