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BOOKS: REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

ARTICLES: ABSTRACTS AND NOTICES

SPENSER AT MLA

SPENSER AT MLA - - 1976

SPENSER AT KALAMAZOO



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BOOKS: REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

o F. McNeir and Foster Provost. *Edmund Spenser: An Annotated Bibliography 1937-1972*. Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1975. xxxi + pp. \$US 25.00. (Special price to authors of items cited: \$ 15.00.)

McNeir and Provost, whose previous bibliography of Spenser, published in 1962 and covering items which appeared from 1937 to 1960, has had a valued place in scholars' lives for over a decade, have now issued an expanded edition. Where the first edition listed 1185 entries for a period of twenty-four years, this edition adds another dozen years but brings the total number of entries to a staggering 2608. Depressing as such statistics may be from one point of view, they should at any rate make it unnecessary to ask whether a book like this was really needed. The editors have very sensibly kept to the format of their earlier volume, changing it only by putting two columns to the page and relegating their item numbers to a subordinate position in each entry. As a result, the usefulness of the volume is greatly enhanced by cross-references, index, and above all by a brief, objective indication of the content of each item. This last fact, with its astonishing implication that someone born of woman has actually read all these books, articles, and dissertation abstracts, must bring as much joy to the authors of the 2608 items published today as it provides welcome surcease from ungrateful toil to the authors of the next 3000 items to be included, hopefully, tomorrow.

Perhaps as a deliberate relief from the tone of cautiously neutral helpfulness which dominates the bibliography as a whole, the editors have included a frankly subjective and playful foldout frontispiece depicting Faerie Land. Perhaps they are hoping to beguile unwary graduate students into a pleasant maze of unprofitable speculation (Where is the dial on the House of Pride? and how can its foundations be sand when it perches so high on that craggy peak? ...), and thereby lessen their own chores in time to come. In any case, their labors thus far will have earned them the unqualified blessing of all Spenserians by trying to keep abreast of scholarship. Anyone who finds *Spenser Newsletter* useful will find this volume essential. [D.C.]

throp Frye. *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1976. 188 pp. \$US 8.95.

The final paragraph of *The Secular Scripture* asserts that "The greatest romance in English literature, and one of the supreme romances of the world, is Spenser's *Faerie Queene*." This slim volume (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard for 1974-75) is basically theoretical in its approach, and Spenser is mentioned only illustratively, in the company of so many other examples of romance that the reader is frequently

overwhelmed. But the very range of Frye's erudition, here as in his earlier works, is an eloquent illustration or embodiment of his central theme that any individual romance assimilates its predecessors and predicts its successors. Spenserians may find their view of the *Faerie Queene* taking new shape and/or focus as they follow Frye's argument, which proceeds from the hypothesis that the purpose of the romance-poet is "an imaginative uprooting" (p.186) of his reader.

Frye attempts a radical revision or reconsideration of the genre. All writers are story-tellers. All literature tells a story. And the teller, not his devices, is the focus of the tale. Romance is, of all the literary forms, the one that has been stable for the longest. It reaches from folktales and *marchen* to the modern western and science fiction and expands from these more naive forms to what Frye calls the sentimental romance. The latter are essentially literary expansions whose main device is allusion or reverberation. The imaginative worlds of romance interact with realistic projections of the everyday world and with the ancient domains of myth that lie behind even the oldest fairytale. Hence naive and sentimental romances alike share a legacy of allusion.

While the mythological writer's task is explicitly to transmit that legacy, the writer of romance strives to form a secular scripture in which the original legacy is recovered, recreated. Thus

Romance is the structural core of all fiction; being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect of literature to the sense of fiction, considered as a whole, as the epic of the creature, man's vision of his own life as a quest. (p.15)

Or again:

As we make the first great move from projection to the recovery of myth, from return to recreation, the focus of interest shifts from heroes and other elements of narrative toward the process of creating them. The real hero becomes the poet, not the agent of force or cunning whom the poet may celebrate. In proportion as this happens, the inherently revolutionary quality in romance begins to emerge ... (p.178)

A poet like Spenser creates a model world celebrating the orderer of the original, God and/or Elizabeth. The model becomes a record of the spiritual and social vision toward which the poet aspires. Beginning as a descent into the past, it completes the cycle by an ascent, an upward journey. The climax of that journey finds the poet in possession of his "ancestral voices" and faced with the decision of either remaining, thus achieving the individual glorification he had sought, or turning back, ostensibly to share what he has recalled with readers he knows are still amnesiac. That decision is preceded by a Sabbath vision in which the poet, like the God of Genesis, achieves a distance from which to contemplate what he has made (p.185). There is

a striking parallel between Frye's final thrust and the main line of the theory of creation clarified in Harold Bloom's *Kabbalah and Criticism* (New York, The Seabury Press, 1975), for what the poet who decides to return embarks upon is "the quest for origins that goes against the poem's own intentions" (Bloom, p.85). Much of this revisionary quest, by necessity, is transferred to the reader.

Sexuality and violence (Bloom's toxic primal anxiety) are basic to the romance process. They serve initially as a common denominator, necessitating no intellectual or class distinctions among readers. Spenser, Frye reminds us, was criticized by his peers for "pandering to a middlebrow appetite for stories about fearless knights and beautiful maidens and hideous ogres and dragons, instead of following the more sober Classical models" (p.28). More significantly, sexuality and violence are, on reconsideration, a return to the primitive or naive roots of romance. They slough off convention and normative values, clearing the air for a reexamination and a reordering: revision. So romance becomes the storehouse of human memory from which the archetypal images and encounters are recovered and reactivated in the common imagination.

In a further parallel to Bloom, Frye maintains that the process of recreation is accompanied by a necessary anxiety which a poet feels when he sees that his role as pilgrim or disciple has forced him to become the voice of a particular predecessor, or tradition. But Frye's emphasis is on the romance pattern or structure borrowed from the predecessor while Bloom points to a more mysterious influence that resides in "stance" rather than in structure. Despite this very real distinction, these two seminal theorists walk much the same path. Frye sees the anxiety of influence itself to be a necessary part of the romance pattern and consequently imaginative (cf. Chaucer's *Lollius*) as often as real. It is necessary to convince the reader that the tale has been hard come by and is, therefore, of value. Like Bloom, Frye sees the tale as a misprision of the predecessor but suggests that even the misprision is a part of the fictional convention rather than a real psychological anxiety experienced by the poet as a person. Certainly in terms of the contorted series of masking personae who people British Renaissance fiction, Frye's theory seems plausible. And perhaps it is the *conscious* use of conventional devices on the part of pre-Miltonic poets that makes Bloom begin his theory of anxiety with Milton. These are questions Spenserians have yet to wrestle with.

At any rate Frye argues convincingly that the structure of romance has remained unvaried. What changes is context: the units, metaphors are archetypal. The poet displaces them, adjusts them to a context which will seem convincing to his audience. Thus, the novel is simply a displacement of the romance, a parody-romance in which the characters struggle in a supposedly real world with assumptions easily seen as the assumptions of a romance-world (romantic love, identity as essence).

Don Quixote is the beginning of the displacement but Frye traces it from Cervantes through Pirandello. What remains consistent throughout the panorama of contexts discussed is that none of the displacements clarify the relation of their own fiction to "reality" any more successfully than did the romance tradition they rebelled against. Instead Frye sees them as proof of what conventions of story-telling are most persistent (or "obsessive"). Since he discovers a number of such persistent conventions, the logical step -- and this has been his argument throughout -- is to examine the conventions rather than the shifting contexts which contain and/or order them.

Frye (p.45; like Bloom, p.124) credits Oscar Wilde's *The Decay of Lying* with inspiring his approach and, like Wilde, makes clear that what is not achieved in romance-displacements (definition of the relation between reality and fiction) simply cannot be achieved. Reality has no shape. Literature is all shape. The logic and causality which we so dearly love in fiction is man-made. It is the map of the human imaginative process rather than of the creative process of God. In that human process, the pattern of quest is basic (One might caution that it is basic to the Judaic-Graeco-Christian traditions but not necessarily to all traditions). The goal is the achievement of a new context (a Heavenly City, a new world which recaptures the Golden Age, a distant planet whose inhabitants surpass humans in their attainment of Eden). Further, the daemonic world seen at the beginning of the pattern is a parody version of what is glimpsed at the conclusion or cessation of the journey: from parody to Promised Land. To the initiate, the action of the romance moves constantly on a vertical as well as a horizontal level. The latter is the plot itself, what Frye calls the "And then".

The vertical movement is the process by which the poem itself is being created in the mind of the reader. Although not specifically mentioned in this context, Spenser's England and fairyland correspond well to these two movements or dimensions of romance; the hierarchic structure of the poem lends itself to being interpreted in vastly different ways in these two geographies. As a number of Spenser's readers have noticed, characters and setting are simultaneously parts of the tales and parts of the Narrator's mental landscape.

However, the implication is that the *Faerie Queene* too begins with the descent to the daemonic and concludes with the return to the idyllic (or a symbol of the idyllic such as marriage or vision). Indeed the cycle seems to be present many times over in the poem. But what is primary is the journey not of the individual tale's hero, but of its narrator-poet. Details provide a "symbolic spread" which is not allegorical in the usual sense of that term because the spread is controlled by the reader rather than by the writer. If the reader does not hear the reverberations of other romances, he cannot sense the tension or anxiety between the narrator's conviction that he can order a world and the poet's feeling that its shape is already inherent in the convention,

indeed in the language and fact of storytelling itself. To sense the vertical dimension of a work, the reader must feel the struggle of the secular against the sacred scripture that precedes it. The two scriptures "have to keep fighting each other like Jacob and the angel, and it is through the maintaining of this struggle, the suspension of belief between the spiritually real and the humanly imaginative, that our own mental evolution grows ... The improbable, desiring, erotic, and violent world of romance reminds us that we are not awake when we have abolished the dream world: we are awake only when we have absorbed it again." (p.61)

When Spenser's narrator abolishes the realm of fairy, his reader is left to absorb it. Its heroes and heroines are the archetypes of romance. The virgin at its center is a symbol of the retention of immortality, of one's fragile integrity or selfhood. In her numerous manifestations (including the non-virginal virgin Venus), she possesses the mysterious "secret of invulnerability that eludes the tragic hero" (p.86). Married, she shares part of her secret. It may be forced from her in part. So through ritual or violence she may become a redemptive figure. But still she holds something back: guile (disguise or invisibility) is as basic to her as force is to her male counterpart. The Dantesque categories of *forza* and *froda*, violence and guile, are in fact at the heart of Frye's vision of literature (or of man's vision of himself). Their function is to wrestle the reader's consciousness from the rhythms of life that lull him, and to expose him to the "dreaming experience of the night, with its erotic resonance" (p.99). Like the poet before us, we become the dreamer and the character in the dream which we create but despair of controlling. Our own resources of eroticism carry us into the same labyrinthine caves of the earthmother where the poet found himself. We experience uneasy clues as to our origin, knowledge of self which Frye feels is more terrible than death. (One cannot help noting that Frye's masculine perspective determines his concept of the experience of the reader-poet. Perhaps Spenser's questing females suggest a simultaneous feminist reading, with quite different reactions to the landscape of labyrinths.)

The travelling hero determines the mythological framework; the framework determines the devices available to the storyteller. Frye's hero must translate the threatening labyrinth (Orgoglio's prison, beast's lair) into a womb conducive to rebirth. (Perhaps this explains why, once we desert the conventional patterns of Books I and II, Britomart is a more successful guide than Arthur.) Metamorphosis is, in fact, a basic component of romance and is often, particularly in the phases of descent and early ascent, related to *froda*, as Dante's thieves illustrate. Its ultimate goal is a casting off of disguise to reveal one's real identity, essential self (psyche) and in a male world like that of *The Tempest*, it is accompanied by the loss of virginity. While virginity remains, the protective -- albeit sometimes deceptive -- magic remains. The hero is threatened but survives. Ironically, success must mean the perception of one's mortality.

The reader too must gain this perception: success has "a great deal to do with escaping from the alleged 'reality' of what one is reading or looking at, and recognizing the convention behind it" (p.166). If its purpose is to burst the assumptions of society and religion, romance is *implicitly* revolutionary, disruptive, displacing. It leads readers to imagine new, more successful orders. It can, however, lead a reader beyond such defenses to what Frye sees as the romance archetype of successful completion, the Sabbath vision: "how the world looks after the ego has collapsed" (p.187). Recalling Wittgenstein's aphorism, "in such an act of possession there are no more words, only the silence that marks the possession of words," Frye concludes that "it is not until we have shared something of this last Sabbath vision in our greatest romance that we may begin to say that we have earned the right to silence" (p.188).

But somehow this neat and dramatic rounding out of a lecture series provides too easy, Christian, and high-minded a conclusion. It satisfies the pattern of Frye's argument, but it intimates an achieved vision in Spenser's poem that even the *Mutabilitie Cantos* leave tantalizingly unresolved. Still, if Frye's goal is to send his auditors out of the lecture hall and back to Spenser, perhaps he may be forgiven this bit of *froda*. [M.W.C.]

William V. Nestruck, "Spenser and the Renaissance Mythology of Love," in *Literary Monographs*, volume 6, edited by Eric Rothstein and J. A. Wittreich, Jr. (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), pp. 35-70, 161-66.

Discussion of a group of mythological motifs appearing in Book III of the *Faerie Queene*, with comparisons drawn from other authors. 1. The Hue and Cry after Cupid. This theme deriving from Moschus lacks a conclusion and so has eluded encyclopaedic treatment: authors were free to manipulate traditional materials in individual ways. Spenser draws on Tasso's treatment (in his epilogue to the *Aminta*), which uses *amor fugitivo* to explore the roots of nature in a Panic and chaotic primitivism. But Spenser mutes the debate between town and country, or that between Venus and Diana: the country need not lead to voluptuous sensuality; the court need not lose its natural ties.

2. Myths in the Garden of Adonis. Where Tasso removes his envisioned world governed by Pleasure to a different time, the golden age, Spenser sees a spacial removal, to the earthly paradise of a Garden of Adonis. It is impossible to say whether Spenser knew Apuleius or relied on Boccaccio for his view of Cupid and Psyche; but though he does see Pleasure as born from their union (in traditional Platonic terms) he first emphasizes the emotional struggle in their adventures. Where Valla considers Pleasure twofold, earthly and heavenly, Spenser relies on the mysterious location of his garden -- both in the world and yet transcending it -- to avoid the need for such dichotomies.

3. Venus and Adonis. The Ovidian tale attracted both seasonal and cautionary morals: Dolce, Marino, and Parabosco variously develop the sentimental, libertine, or moralistic elements by expanding or adding some details to the exclusion of others. Shakespeare's essentially dramatic approach simplifies the narrative but complicates any allegorical or psychological response to the story. 4. Spenser and the Perversion of Venus and Adonis. Spenser adds elements from Ovid's story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, possibly like Dolce sensing the *alma* hidden in the name of Salmacis. The tapestry in the Castle Joyous combines two myths with opposite spiritual implications; the simile at the end of Book III (1590) then fuses the myths of Salmacis/Hermaphroditus and Psyche/Cupid.

5. Blind Cupid. The fortunes of Britomart throughout Book III refer repeatedly to the theme of Cupid's bandaging. Spenser revitalizes a conventional mythology by adding thematic weight in the conflict between fate and fortune, order and chance. The tapestries at Busyrane's house offer a perverted interpretation of Cupid: as at the Castle Joyous, art is presented as a lie, and Britomart must unmask it. Though she has trouble comprehending Busyrane's vision, she enacts the three-fold nature of Prudence in her boldness and so avoids the tragic fate of over-bold Adonis. In his transformations of myth, Spenser frequently personalizes or humanizes traditional motifs; when more rarely (as in his figure of a conflict between Cupid and Jove) he turns to myth as religious allegory, he treats this also as a poetic problem and introduces a parallel treatment of a conflict between competing representations of the real world.

Kathleen Williams, "Milton, Greatest Spenserian," in *Milton and the Line of Vision*, ed. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1975. xxi + 278 pp. \$US 17.50), pp. 25-55.

This essay, a companion piece in some respects to the same author's "The Moralized Song" (*ELH*, 1974; *SpN*, 6, p.50), discusses the community and continuity of a poetic line extending from Spenser through Milton. This line is characterized by a generous insistence on one's poetic ancestry (as shown in Spenser's tributes to Chaucer, especially the Chaucer of the *Squire's Tale*, itself a frank if playful tribute to the romance-epic), and by its involvement with prophetic or visionary modes, as those modes have been defined in terms of images of temple and labyrinth by Angus Fletcher. The common concerns of both poets are seen to be human conditions of wandering in darkness with occasional, luminous but ambiguous perspectives of prophetic vision. The inwardness of the prophetic speaker, his frequent employment of the topos of reluctance, and his increasing sense of conflict between understanding and action, have been explored by such Spenserians as Berger, Fletcher, and Murrin in ways which shed light on Milton. The final cantos of the *Faerie Queene* express the heavy and even sorrowful responsibility of the prophet-poet who is heir of St. John as well as Orpheus; yet Spenser and Milton have at the same time the intense energy of the visionary

maker, and take the same joy in the rich fertility of God's world which they celebrate and imitate.

[Another essay in this same volume may also be of interest to students of Spenser: S.K.Heninger, Jr., in "Sidney and Milton: The Poet as Maker," pp. 57-95, discusses the *Defence of Poesy* as the extant document which best propounds the poetic of Sidney and Spenser alike. *The Shepheardes Calender*, dedicated to Sidney, is adduced as an example of a maker's poem, creating in its form an icon of the time which is its subject. Here and in his later works, Spenser's fore-conceit shapes and clarifies the multiplicity of his lesser statements. Similarly, Milton's works must be read as making simultaneously a personal and a universal statement.]

SHORTER NOTICES:

Derek Attridge. *Well-Weighed Syllables: Elizabethan Verse in Classical Metres*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974. viii + 258 pp. £ 7.70.

This is probably the fullest account we are likely to get of the Elizabethan experimentation with quantitative verse in English on the Latin model. Spenserians who have been uncomfortably aware that this is one aspect of their poet's activity which they had better look into will find what they need in Attridge's study. The quantitative movement is derived from the historical circumstances surrounding the teaching and reading of Latin in Elizabethan schools, and it is presented both in terms of accentual and quantitative theories and in terms of the actual practices of such writers as Stanyhurst, Sidney, Spenser, Harvey, Fraunce, Puttenham, and Campion.

Abraham Fraunce. *The Third Part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch Entitled Amintas Dale. (1592)* Edited by Gerald Snare. Northridge, California State University, 1975. (Renaissance Editions, No. 8.) xxiii + 181 pp. \$US 8.00.

This most recent addition to the useful and attractively priced series of Renaissance Editions from Northridge, California, appears with an introduction and notes. Spenserians will find much of interest in this pastoral and mythological melange by a member of the Spenser/Sidney world of the 'eighties and 'nineties.

Rigby Graham. *Edmund Spenser's Kilcolman*. Brewhouse Private Press (The Orchard, Wymondham, Leicestershire), 1975. [24 pp., illus.] \$US 15.00.

An attractively designed little book containing a description of the ruins of Kilcolman. The author includes reproductions of several

drawings and watercolours by himself, as well as one nineteenth-century illustration and a map of the site.

A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton. Walter MacKellar, ed., Volume 4, *Paradise Regained.* New York, Columbia University Press, 1975. xxiv + 379 pp. \$US 22.50.

Echoes of Spenser in *Paradise Regained* are conveniently noted (and indexed) in this latest volume of the Columbia *Variorum*. Spenserians who have labored for some years in the presence of their own variorum will not need to be told how convenient, and yet how frequently disappointing, such a tool can be, especially in view of the concerns with broader issues of interpretation as opposed to annotation of specific lines which have characterized most writing on both poets in recent decades.

Frances A. Yates. *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in The Sixteenth Century.* London and Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975. xvi + 233 pp. £ 6.95.

This collection reprints Dr. Yates's familiar essays on Elizabeth as Astraea and on the Accession Day Tilts, combining them with other unpublished or less known works on Imperial, Tudor, and French myths. The volume is less a gathering of fugitive pieces than a creative synthesis which illuminates the whole field of imperial imagery in the sixteenth century. Spenser's name figures prominently in the index; but Spenserians may be better advised to read the book straight through.

ARTICLES: ABSTRACTS AND NOTICES

James Neil Brown, "The Shepherdes Calender, 'October,' 26," *The Explicator*, 34 (Nov. 1975), Item 21.

Piers' description of Cuddy's audience as "the rurall routes" derives from Golding's three references to the Orpheus-destroying Bacchantes as a "rout" in his 1567 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XI. 4, 18, 36). Spenser's use of "routes" immediately precedes the comparison of Cuddy's music with that of Orpheus ("Oct." 28-30); but by using Golding's noun for the Bacchantes in describing Cuddy's followers, he also links Cuddy with "Bacchus drunken rout" (Golding, XI. 18), the killers of Orpheus. Cuddy is not a new Orpheus, then, and his subsequent admission that his poetic inspiration comes from "Bacchus fruite" ("Oct." 106), preparatory to his abdication of his vatic civilizing role at the end of the eclogue ("Oct." 116), further indicates his association with the wine-maddened Bacchantes. Cuddy is no true Orpheus: not for him but "For Colin fittes such famous flight to scanne" ("Oct." 88), and Colin Clout is revealed as the only potential neo-Orpheus in the *Calender*. [J.N.B.]

Charles Clay Doyle, "Christian Vision in *The Faerie Queene*, Book I," *College Literature*, 3 (1976), 33-41.

Book I of *The Faerie Queene* cannot be read or taught meaningfully as a purely secular poem. *The Legende of Holinesse* reveals twin defects in the Red Cross Knight, that of vision or discernment and that of Christian faith. These appear in Spenser's allegory as a single problem. The connection between vision and faith is implicit in numerous passages from the Gospels, St. Paul, and St. Augustine. The Red Cross Knight's many lapses in perception -- in the Wandering Wood, at Archimago's hermitage, in his encounters with Fidessa, Fradubio, and Despair -- allegorically show his deficiency in faith. At the House of Holiness Fidelia's symbolic opening of the knight's eyes marks the instilling of sufficient faith, the reward of which is his prophetic view of the New Jerusalem from atop Mt. Contemplation, after which he can fulfill his quest. The Red Cross Knight's career coincides with St. Augustine's four stages of spiritual life. [C.C.D.]

Robert F. Fleissner, "Scaling Down that 'Balanced' Engine," *Milton Quarterly*, 9 (1975), 82-83.

Suggests that one possible source of Milton's "two-handed engine" may be Spenser's description of Neptune at the marriage of Medway and Thames (*F.Q.*, IV.xi.11). Neptune's "threeforkt mace" is seen as anticipating the Petrine keys as crossed and functioning as a fatal weapon, scissors-wise. The same passage may be a basis for the description of Camus as well, and the reference to "dewy lockes" may have suggested to Milton the possibility of punning on locks as both hair and keyholes.

S. K. Heninger, Jr., "Gloriana at the Crossroads: Some Recent Readings of *The Faerie Queene*," *The British Studies Monitor*, 5 (1975), 3-23.

Heninger contends that the New Criticism began a crisis in Spenser studies although new critics themselves were incapable of dealing with so extensive a work as the *Faerie Queene*. Their successes with Shakespeare and Donne forced Spenserians to discover equally exciting methods of analysis which would do as much to bring the twentieth century reader to Spenser as the New Criticism had done to bring the reader to other "classics." His article traces critical attempts to revitalize Spenser, suggesting that the challenge itself was a major revitalizing force. Essentially efforts took one of three approaches: (1) to emphasize, as does New Criticism, the centrality of reader response; (2) to reject new-critical method and theory and continue traditional Spenserian tracing of sources; and (3) to attempt new directions, many of which now seem closely related to the first two possibilities (numerology, iconography).

Besides learning that in the 1973 MLA interest survey Spenser ranked sixth (after Shakespeare, Chaucer, Milton, Joyce, and Dickens), one can find the article a useful review of those major Spenserians who fall into Heninger's summary: Parker, Hamilton, Hough, Nelson, Fowler, Roche, Kathleen Williams, Alpers, Freeman, Hankins, Fletcher.

John M. Steadman, "Iconography and Methodology in Renaissance Dramatic Study: Some Caveats," *SRO*, 7-8 (1972/74), 39-52.

The initial tableau of Una with her two symbolic beasts is presented as an illustration of the difficulty of identifying specific sources when visual and verbal traditions provide a multiplicity of possibilities. The white donkey represents a fusion of Biblical hermeneutics (the "asini candidi" of the Book of Judges) and Renaissance emblems of Isis (illustrating the motto *asinus portans mysteria*; see Steadman, "Una and the Clergy," *JWCI*, 21, 1958). On the other hand, the milk-white lamb derives from the St. George-Cleodolinda legend, though Spenser has apparently invested this detail with sacramental, and possibly apocalyptic significance, evoking the Biblical and liturgical connotations of the *agnus Dei*. Spenser's fusion of two different iconological motifs establishes a tension between the unreal and incredible surface meaning and the credible realities of dogma which it conceals. Most of Spenser's audience, however, would probably have referred Una's attributes to visual representations of the St. George legend, and so been less aware of the discordances in his treatment which appear from a comparison with the written hagiographic tradition.

John Webster, "Oral Form and Written Craft in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," *SEL*, 16 (1976), 75-93.

Although Spenser is not an "oral-formulaic" poet, he does imitate many of the stylistic traits of oral poetry as defined by Milman Parry: paratactic organization, lack of enjambment, repeated use of epithets in similar metrical contexts, a generally loose texture to the poem's language. Yet as a written work the poem makes an opposite set of demands from those of an oral poem. The result is a curious double sense. *The Faerie Queene* seems clear in its meaning if and as we "hear" it, in C. S. Lewis' phrase, as long as we are "an audience who have settled down to hear a long story." But as we read the poem we are repeatedly tempted to reread or reconsider the possible ambiguities which may lie hidden in this same formulaic language, while still uneasy in the knowledge that such ambiguities may well be accidental. [Perhaps Milton was speaking more technically than he knew in speaking of such songs "Where more is meant than meets the ear." --ed.]

SPENSER AT MLA

The only Spenserian activity announced in the program for the December 1975 meeting of the Modern Language Association in San Francisco was Seminar 176, Shorter Poetical Works of the English Renaissance, chaired by Abbot Jay Mendelson. Four papers devoted to *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* were submitted for discussion. In "Love's Mighty Mysteries: Colin's Cosmogony," Karen Bowden (Univ. of California,

Berkeley) argues for the thematic unity of the poem. Too often discounted by critics as ornament or afterthought, the cosmogony near the conclusion of the poem serves as an emblem of the poet's range and power. Colin's oration on love and Cuddy's response to it suggest that, though in exile in a savage land and deprived by a corrupt court of traditional sources of inspiration, the poet still has a calling in the revelation of eternal truths. Like the Neoplatonic Orpheus, Colin is a priest and poet whose primary teaching, expressed in divinely inspired poetry, is Love's cosmogonic power. Like Orpheus', moreover, his poetry is mystery and his mode is oxymoron. In the cosmogony Spenser adapts the convention of love's contrariety and applies it to the god, immanent and transcendent, creative and destructive, who rules the world. Colin's creation myth thus provides a momentary perspective within the poem on the place of strife and pain in the nature of things. The balanced vision of the creation myth and the limited perspective of the rest of the poem complement each other. Together they constitute a characteristically Spenserian whole which, while flawed, reveals the "deep insight" of Spenser's verse.

Although taking a structuralist approach, Abbot Jay Mendelson (Univ. of Pittsburgh) similarly argues, in "The Structure of Mutability in *CCCHA*," that balance is the goal and achievement of the poem. It is the poet rather than the cosmogony's Love (or the equally supernatural forces in Book V of the *Faerie Queene* or in the final stanzas of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*) who mediates between the claims of mutability and permanence. Such mediation is precisely the task of the mythic hero, according to Levi-Strauss. Colin, as that hero, must not only present opposing units of experience (court vs. pastoral; metaphysical vs. temporal) which remain unresolved in any linear way. He must also resolve or become the medium through which the reader resolves the resulting dilemma. The units of experience evolve from an opposition between social and natural to that between personal and universal. And while *para oxes* remain, Colin can be seen to reach a logical solution with which he can live. Where Bowden has seen the poem achieving balance through its poet's absorption into the Orphic tradition, Mendelson sees its order emerging from rational powers of the mind -- something closer perhaps to English common sense than to the Orphic mystery.

Allen Ramsey (Central Missouri State Univ.), in "Pastoral and the Theme of Order in *CCCHA*," posits an order much more closely related to Bowden's Orphic reading. He suggests that the poem's two major digressions -- the "morall laie" of Bregog and Mulla and the cosmogony -- provide a thematic frame around which the other segments fit. They illustrate a theme of order through myth and philosophy while the rest of the poem dramatizes the importance of order. The pastoral world as a setting mediates between Cynthia and her worshipers as the Court cannot. The pastoral world, moreover, is reinforced by the presence of Cynthia's poet/priest, Colin, "the Orphic voice that while participating in natural order masters and surpasses it" (Cullen, *Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral*, pp. 85-86).

Colin's Orphic role can be achieved only by moving from the sea where Cynthia is the direct ordering force, to the self-serving world of the Court. Colin returns understanding that he must serve the mystery of Love selflessly. His transition demands the controls of reason (cf. lines 867-68), so reason serves in this interpretation (as in Mendelson's) as the mediator which finally induces beauty and order. The poem seeks to reform the Court, its own structure providing an example of the order and balance Spenser felt were lacking in Elizabeth's immediate circle.

John W. Moore, Jr. (Pennsylvania State Univ.) traces similar themes in "How the Theme of Love Structures *CCCHA*." Moore sees the comparison of pastoral and Court, together with Colin's choice of the pastoral, as the central issue of the poem and the measure of its final worth. The process is dramatic. It begins with Colin's recognition that the Blatant Beast rules the Court, and that men there blaspheme Cupid by becoming "Vaine votaries of laesie love." The pastoral world may seem equally lazy in its attention to love and *otium*; but in the essential note of pastoral -- a yearning for the unattainable -- Colin senses a hint of the proper relationship to the god of love that can provide a foundation for his function as poet-priest.

Moore sees the poem as more than a synthesis of Spenser's other writings on love. Where resolution is reached elsewhere by the protagonist's attaining at least the vision of what he yearns for, Colin must become the priest of the wholly unattainable. Moore's underlying assumption seems to be that *CCCHA* is a process poem in which the poet at first attempts to resolve his human predicament (the dilemma of the mediator is always to be between that which is rejected and that which is desired) without resorting to the antirational solutions of the Orphic mysteries. To Colin (and for Spenser, since Moore argues for the intensely personal nature of the poem), becoming the priest of love is a matter of personal adjustment and is contingent on the proper balance and control of reason and passion.

Colin's passion for the unattainable (Rosalind) becomes a positive psychic force for the poet, through a process of reordering which begins with the translation of the feminine generative powers from alien terms (Venus/Rosalind) to benevolent (Cynthia). But its most dramatic step translates these powers which the poet must serve into a reflection of himself (Cupid), a demystifying which seems to deny any Orphic modality to the poem. Though he is closer to Mendelson's position, Moore sees reason, with its capacity to control passion, as part of the problem rather than its solution. Neither rationalization nor mystification but recognition of man's role in nature as mediator -- mid-way -- brings man into harmony with the fundamental rhythm of the universe and into cooperation with the essence of all matter. It is easy for Colin to accept Lucid's point that his attitude toward Rosalind's indifference has made him an agent of the Blatant Beast, a blasphemer of the divine beauty which is manifested in women, and so a bad poet, a Malfont.

Dramatically, the indictment allows for purgation and the triumphant concluding Praise of Rosalind which announces his new role as love's poet/priest. But what the poet teaches is that one cannot possess what one worships. Unlike Bregog or Cynthia's courtiers, Colin learns to accept that he can neither unite with nor manipulate Cupid's force. Colin's fusion of the roles of poet, priest, and shepherd can occur only when Colin recognizes that his natural function is as mediator -- the force that leads the reader to consider his own relation to the divine.

SPENSER AT MLA -- 1976

A seminar entitled "Spenserian Poets of the Seventeenth Century" will be held at the 1976 MLA Convention. The seminar will focus on relationships between Spenser and Milton, but will treat some of the minor Spenserians as well. The seminar will deal primarily with the use that poets make of Spenser, as they adapt and transform what they take from him. Papers are being accepted by William Oram, English Department, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. 01060.

SPENSER AT KALAMAZOO

A special session on "Spenser and the Middle Ages" will be held at the Eleventh Conference on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 3 and 4, 1976. Meetings on both days will consist of recapitulation of the scheduled papers, prepared commentary, and open discussion. Participants in this session should request specific abstracts (by number, author and title) from David A. Richardson, Department of English, Cleveland State University, Cleveland Ohio 44115. The following papers are scheduled:

1. Shepherds in Love: An Analysis of the Love Theme in *The Shepheardes Calender*, Gerard J. Gross, Pennsylvania State University (Commentator: C. Roger Davis, Smith College)
2. The Serpent and the Siren in Books I and II of *The Faerie Queene*, Joan Larsen Klein, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Commentator: D'Orsay W. Pearson, University of Akron)
3. "Briton Moniments" and "Antiquitie of Faerie": Spenser's Commentary on Medieval and Renaissance Ideas of History, Robert E. Bourdette, Jr., University of New Orleans (Commentator: Brenda Thaon, Concordia University)
4. Artegall as Salvage Knight: Use of the Medieval Wild Man Tradition in Books III and IV of *The Faerie Queene*, Carol E. Dooley, New Mexico State University (Commentator: Anne Shaver, Denison University)
5. Spenser's Satire of Courtly Love and the Romance of Britomart and Artegall, Donald V. Stump, Cornell University (Commentator: Russell J. Meyer, University of Minnesota)
6. Sir Calidore and "The Sacred Nursery of Vertue," Mary Ellen Jordan, University of Minnesota (Commentator: Linda Galyon, Iowa State

University.)

7. *The Canterbury Tales* in *The Faerie Queene*, A. Kent Hieatt, University of Western Ontario (Commentator: Michael Holahan, Southern Methodist University)
8. "With Cunning Hand Pourtrahed": Mural Decorations in Spenser, Ovid, and the Middle Ages, Michael L. Donnelly, Kansas State University (Commentator: Patrick G. Hogan, Jr., University of Houston)
9. *Moralis quid agas*: Spenser and the Exegetical Tradition, Bernard Beranek, Duquesne University (Commentator: Philip Rollinson, University of South Carolina)
10. Dreamscape and Dream Vision: Spenser and the Medieval Allegorical Tradition, Cherie Ann Haeger, Gannon College (Commentator: John C. Ulreich, Jr., University of Arizona)
11. The Allegory of Contradiction in *Everyman* and *The Faerie Queene*, John M. Webster, University of Washington (Commentator: Richard B. Davidson, Idaho State University)
12. *Piers Plowman* and *The Faerie Queene*, Joan Heiges Blythe, University of Kentucky (Commentator: Judith H. Anderson, Indiana University)

Alice S. Miskimin (Yale University) has agreed to prepare a report on this conference for *Spenser Newsletter*.

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Sherman Hawkins (Wesleyan), "Virtue and Kingship in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*"

W. Speed Hill (CUNY), "Marriage's Destiny: An Essay on *All's Well That Ends Well*"

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