

delight in verbal ornament detract from the narrative's structure or obscure the topics it examines, and he is careful at each stage to appeal as much to his readers' intellects as to their emotions. From this we should, I think, conclude that some Elizabethan writers of prose fiction were much better craftsmen than commentators have been willing to recognize, and that they read one another's work with intelligent attention. If Parry, whose powers as a writer are as moderate as the name of his protagonist, is nevertheless capable of organizing his narrative with skill and cunning, we should perhaps look afresh for evidence of equally clever plotting in the works of his contemporaries.

This edition of *Moderatus*, then, does just what the inaugural volume in a series ought to do. It makes us think again about the genre it represents, and look forward with eagerness to the other discoveries awaiting us as the series progresses. Ashgate and John Simons should be applauded for getting the series started, and every good library should subscribe to it.

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EDMUND SPENSER, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. HAMILTON; text ed. HIROSHI YAMASHITA and TOSHIYUKI SUZUKI. Pp. xix + 787. Harlow: Longman, 2001. Paperbound £39.99 (ISBN 0 582 09951 X).

THIS is more than simply a second edition of A. C. Hamilton's classic 1977 Longman Annotated edition of *The Faerie Queene* – it is the first full edition of the poem since the Variorum, and as such it is likely to become the new standard. Hiroshi Yamashita and Toshiyuki Suzuki have prepared a freshly collated text of the poem that is a pleasure to read, and Hamilton's notes remain as comprehensive and valuable as ever. With the addition of a full and detailed list of characters by Shohachi Fukuda, this will be an essential text for all scholars and students of the poem and the period.

Hamilton's introduction presents a phlegmatically polemic survey of critical trends regarding the poem without going into too much interpretative detail. He is clearly opposed to the New Historicist and psycho-

analytic readings which have dominated Spenser studies over the quarter century since the first edition, seeing them as inattentive to the poem itself. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this attitude, it makes for a sound editorial approach, enabling him to avoid the broad cultural arguments that would clog up annotation. Instead, he wants to 'set the stage for the reception of *The Faerie Queene* in this millennium by focussing on the virtues' (5) – this is an approach that he followed in 1977 and it still holds good at least as a primary reading for undergraduate students. There is now perhaps more focus on the historical position of the poem's virtues, both in the introduction and in the notes, but the disputably or at best tangentially relevant texts that New Historicists tend to bring alongside the poem are not admitted. He argues that 'the poem was meant to be read as a verse in the Bible was read in Spenser's day: any stanza is the centre from which to reconstitute the whole' (6). Whilst this may not take much account of Spenser's changing intentions as his poem evolved, it is a principle that focuses the annotations on the text itself, which must be understood on its own terms before it can be used as an object for theoretical discussion. Rightly having no truck with concepts such as social energies, Hamilton insists that the poem's moral perspective derives from the experience of reading it: 'finally nothing outside the poem is needed to understand it except (for us) the shared primary culture of its first audience' (7). There will be many who will dispute the availability or existence of such a monolithic concept as a shared primary culture, but I for one am happy to accept it as a theoretical fiction that we must rely on if we are to get on with the business of interpretation. Hamilton argues that Spenser tries to restore words to their primal meaning and the principles of annotation focus on Spenser's sense of linguistic purity, though they perhaps give less attention to the poet's parodic impulses, the silliness, basically, that makes Spenser so sage and serious.

Given the focus on reading the poem as an experience, what is it like to read the poem in this new edition? It is certainly a more attractively presented text than it was in 1977. Firstly, the typeface is much easier on the eye. It is larger and clearer (the first edition

used a copy of the 1909 Oxford edition). Secondly, the notes are presented below the text rather than distractingly wrapped around it. We also get more of a feel for the poem as it was originally printed. The woodcut of St George killing the dragon at the end of Book I is presented here, as it was not in 1977, and facsimiles of the titles to the books give the full ornamentation. The only slight flaw is that the use of columns (a consequence of putting the notes at the bottom of the page) frequently divides the stanzas in half.

The major difference of this text from previous editions is that it takes the text of Books I–III from the 1590 rather than the 1596 edition. This is a soundly based decision, though the Letter to Raleigh (only found in 1590) might consequently be placed at the end of Book III in order to give us the poem as originally presented. The return to the original punctuation is a particularly welcome feature of this edition, and one which, oddly enough, makes the poem feel less alien. All in all, it is a major work of scholarship, combining a meticulously prepared text with splendid annotation. It will last, and will help to inspire new generations of readers.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Colin Burrow. Pp. ix + 750 (The Oxford Shakespeare).. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, £65.00 (ISBN 0 19 818431 X)

IF there is something disquieting about contemporary Shakespeare criticism – apart from its magnitude – it is that a growing number of publications seem intent to demonstrate, above all, their own originality. This is, of course, no novelty: C. S. Lewis once expressed his pity for those unfortunate (foreign, he kindly added) academics who are forced to keep producing startling new interpretations of literary works in order to maintain their tenure at university. The words of the dead poets are inevitably modified in the guts of the living and Shakespeare is no exception; modern trends of textual criticism, however, have extended this further than just literary analysis. Parallel to an endemic hermeneutic instability we have

discovered the instability of Shakespeare's text. It follows that we can now find editions which purport, most of all, not to present us with a text, but to be sensational at all costs – being shockingly *à la mode*, perhaps, but frequently no more useful than a pink dinner jacket.

This book, instead, proves that sensible editing and inspired criticism are still possible, presenting readers with a new concept of Shakespeare's poems, but without any sensationalism. It is original without editorial extravagance, shrewdly innovative in its presentation of these works, and exceptional in its careful handling of evidence. As Colin Burrow states in the introduction (1–2) this edition is informed by the question 'what sort of poet was Shakespeare?'. Readers are allowed to form their own opinion by reading not only all of the canonical non-dramatic works but also those poems which contemporaries could have believed to be Shakespeare's. Thus, the *Complete Sonnets and Poems* include here *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece* (this title for *The Rape of Lucrece* is adopted here from the title-page of the first Quarto of 1594), the entire series of poems which appeared in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, 'Let the bird of loudest lay' ('The Phoenix and the Turtle' has been replaced with this first-line title since it has no connection with Shakespeare), *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, a *Lover's Complaint*, the much-disputed 'Shall I die' and other scattered verses attributed to Shakespeare in the seventeenth century (excluding those attributed to 'W.S.', and therefore also the spurious *Funeral Elegy*).

Burrow's edition, then, provides a selection hitherto unavailable in a single volume. It is noteworthy that placing all these poems together is far from disorienting. First of all, every effort is made to summarize the intricate debate on the authorship of these texts (including the rejected *Elegy*), and – with admirable scholarly honesty – unascrivable poems are allowed to remain *dubia* (see e.g. the discussion on 'Shall I die?', 148–52). Secondly, reading these texts together has the almost paradoxical effect of making one perceive the dramatic dimension of Shakespeare's poems. Moving from *Venus and Lucrece* to the *Sonnets* (even via the *Passionate Pilgrim* poems and 'Let the bird of loudest lay') one is allowed to perceive