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Since 1986, the *Spenser Newsletter* has been published three times a year, Winter, Spring-Summer, and Fall, by the Department of English at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. After publication of this issue, however, it will move. Please address all communications to: *Spenser Newsletter*, Department of English, 122 Denison Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

The editor solicits letters containing news of any sort which would be of interest to Spenserians, and will make an effort to print any legitimate query. He also solicits abstracts and/or offprints of articles (with full publication data, please), the receipt of which may reduce the time between the publication of the article and the report on it.

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TO OUR READERS

92.1 As readers who attended the Spenser Society luncheon in San Francisco last December will already know, the *Spenser Newsletter* is moving to a new home. Hereafter, it will be published by the Department of English at Kansas State University, where Professor Jerome S. Dees has generously agreed to become the new editor. The outgoing editor wishes to extend deep gratitude to the substantial number of people -- graduate students and colleagues at Chapel Hill, indefatigable former editors, helpful associate and corresponding editors, devoted (and patient) subscribers and readers -- for enabling the *Newsletter* to prosper during the past six years. Kathy Pories has been especially diligent and adept in preparing the *Newsletter* for this transition; Hugh Maclean passed it on to us in exceptional good health and conscientiously offered needed advice and much-appreciated moral support; Tony Esolen and Kevin Farley have repeatedly supplied important reviews, abstracts, and less tangible necessities; the Department of English at Chapel Hill has done all it could during hard economic times; Penn Corbett and his staff at Universal Printers and Publishers have done excellent production work; and John Moore has faithfully provided the all-important Spenser Bibliography Updates. Thanks, too, to Mary Floyd Wilson, Ed Hardin, and Kathy G. Pories for abstracts that appear in this issue.

Without the support of all these good people, I would have been unable to keep the *Newsletter* going while my administrative, scholarly, and pedagogical activities have escalated to a quite remarkable degree. Because of all this support, the task has not only been in the main manageable; it has also been educative and, often, fun. It has taught me a lot about Spenser, about the Renaissance, and about the extraordinary scholarly community that our remarkable author remains able to bring together. That community will be extremely well served by Professor Dees's new editorship. Well may he and the *Newsletter* prosper.

The *Newsletter's* new address is: Department of English, 122 Denison Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

BOOKS: REVIEWS AND NOTICES

92.2 Dasenbrock, Reed Way. *Imitating the Italians: Wyatt, Spenser, Synge, Pound, Joyce*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991. xiv + 282pp. \$35.95.

Reed Way Dasenbrock's distinguished and wide-ranging career as a literary critic owes an important debt to the fact that his teachers included both Stanley Fish and Hugh Kenner. Combining his knowledge of the English Renaissance and Modernism with a deep interest in Italian literature and culture, he brings together a wealth of material in *Imitating the Italians* and shapes it into a provocative and insightful thesis.

Broadly put, Dasenbrock's claim is that English writers of the sixteenth century freely assimilated the traditions and literary techniques of the Italians in a

way that, for largely nationalistic reasons, was not evidenced again until the modernist period. Drawing a parallel to Edward Said's notion of Orientalism, he asserts that during the intervening three centuries -- roughly from John Webster to Henry James and E. M. Forster -- Italy served as one of the cultures "against which England defined itself" (2).

The art of imitation is itself the primary technique that the Elizabethans and the modernists appropriated from the Italian humanist tradition. Though the particular objects of imitation vary (Petrarch presides over the Renaissance, Dante over modernism), Thomas Wyatt, Edmund Spenser, John M. Synge, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce share "a common orientation toward Italian culture as a source of forms" (4). For the latter three artists as well as for the Renaissance poets, literary creation is intimately bound up with imitation; the artist works through traditional forms in order to *transform* them. Citing Petrarch as authority, Dasenbrock says that "[c]orrect imitation is creative imitation" (22).

In focusing on imitation as an affirmative act, Dasenbrock situates himself against Harold Bloom and the claim that influence is necessarily anxiety-ridden. Although such an idea finds legitimate support among romantic poets writing in English, he argues, it does not universally apply -- certainly not to writers who know more than one language and more than one national literature, as his exemplary writers do. But Dasenbrock is not totally at odds with Bloom: he has not given up the concept of authorial agency. Rather more defensively than necessary, he distances himself from theorists such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault who tend to speak less of "writers" and more of "writing" (10). What results from his decision to avoid the language of poststructuralist theory (though not all of its insights) and to emphasize the historical situation of each author is a book that is gracefully written, well-supported, and persuasive.

A brief first chapter confirms Wyatt's status as "the first great English Petrarchan" (19) and, further, takes on the more difficult work of making sense of his varied approaches to the task of translation. To critics baffled by a lack of consistency in Wyatt's faithfulness to the sense of the poems, Dasenbrock responds that the notion of a "faithful" translation is itself a romantic idea unknown to Wyatt and Petrarch. Rather, Wyatt uses Petrarch's example as springboard to his own voice. Unable to share his confidence in God's ability to heal love's wounds, Wyatt replaces Petrarch's generalized, hopeful conclusions with more "realistic . . . self-centered" turns, transforming the work into "highly personal poems of lament and reproach" (30-31). If it happens, as it does with "My galy charged with forgetfulness" ("Passa la nave mia colm d'oblio"), that the substance is closer to that of the source than is the case with other translations, that is because Petrarch's own sentiment is closer to Wyatt's than usual (29).

Spenser's more complex relation to Petrarch merits three chapters, beginning with a discussion of the *Amoretti*. Again disputing received critical notions, Dasenbrock claims that the often-criticized flatness of this sonnet sequence is a deliberate strategy by which Spenser "runs . . . counter to the established English form of the sonnet . . . in order to run . . . counter to the values expressed in and by that form" (33). That is, Spenser opposes the Petrarchan notion -- at least as refined

by Sidney and his followers -- that the self was a constantly fluctuating entity, that the love story at hand must be hopelessly deadlocked in "instability and discontinuity" (34).

But in doing so, Spenser was arguably more faithful than Wyatt or Sidney to Petrarch's *Canzoniere* as a whole. The emphasis on instability had grown out of attention to the first half of the work, which focuses on Petrarch's love for the unattainable Laura, at the expense of attention to the second half, in which the poet's thoughts turn toward the ultimate, victorious stability of death. In moving toward the stability of marriage, Dasenbrock argues, Spenser establishes a deeper kinship with Petrarch than do his contemporaries. Even more important, the replacement of Dante's unconsummated but divinized courtly love scheme by a notion of holy marriage demonstrates that Spenser has his own transformation to make (50).

The broader political implications of Spenser's use of the Petrarchan technique of imitation in order to challenge the Petrarchan view of love are drawn out in two chapters on *The Faerie Queene*. Concentrating on the highly social Books 3 and 4, Dasenbrock reads a severe critique of the system of "Petrarchism" that pervaded Spenser's culture. Timias' domination by Belpheobe finds its equally undesirable opposite in Scudamour's domination of Amoret: Belpheobe is exhibiting the "pathological dominance" of the Petrarchan "lady" (63), whereas Scudamour "is committed to a destructive ideal of sexual mastery" growing out of his continuing to treat Amoret "as if she were nothing more than the prize that he had initially won the right to woo" (66).

Spenser rejects the Petrarchan dominance game, according to Dasenbrock; ideal love exists in the space between the Belpheobe-Timias and the Scudamour-Amoret plots. Proper sexual love (following Aristotle's ideal of friendship) "would be marked by an equality of position and an equality of desire" (67). Britomart and Artegall, as well as Florimell and Marinell, evince relationships in which neither party is consistently dominant -- the balance swings back and forth. Though not perfect, this solution indicates that "there is a way out of the landscape of paradoxical binds and abduction and rape found in these books." Employing Petrarchan paradox at the heart of his critique of Petrarchism, Spenser suggests that the way out is to "be bold, be bold," and yet to "be not too bold" (68).

Dasenbrock acknowledges that this balance is difficult -- particularly in a country whose monarch cultivates an image of herself as Laura. The tension evident in Spenser's direct praise of Elizabeth in the guise of Belpheobe and his indirect critique of the Petrarchan scheme through his use of Britomart to represent ideal love reflects a tension inherent in Spenser's own political position. His emphasis on marriage as a holy institution, as opposed to the Catholic association of chastity with celibacy, is part of a larger Protestant ideology that was to become increasingly nationalistic: England stopped "seeing itself as . . . imitator of Renaissance Italy and [began] to see itself as a Protestant opponent to Catholic Italy" (83). Accordingly, literary images darkened; Italy became the locus of a menacing Other, a place of unbridled sex and violence, against which English morality began to rail.

Significantly, when Dasenbrock turns to the modernist period, he highlights not English but Irish and American writers. Claiming access to Italian literature and culture involves for them a complicated filtering through systems of British domination and influence -- international entanglements that characterize modernism as a whole. Their Italian "imitations" are positive assimilations, much as the Renaissance poets' were, and the effects they achieve are just as widely varied. Dasenbrock first looks at Synge, who translated Petrarch with a freedom similar to Wyatt's as a step away from his peasant dramas toward the larger project of dramatizing the Dierdre myth. He then examines at length how Dante's legacy affected the aesthetics and politics of Pound and Joyce -- "the two modernists with the most complex engagement with Italy" (101).

For both (in contrast to the Victorians' attitude), Italy is a living culture; the interest of each extended to every century from the *trecento* forward. Both came to an early appreciation of Dante, followed by a greater knowledge of his cultural context, followed in turn by a new admiration for him and deeper understanding of their own credos. But similarities soon end: Pound's Dante sees himself as celebrator and advisor of Henry VII, the last Italian monarch to attempt to revive the Holy Roman Empire -- a position Pound attempted to replicate (with no more success than Dante) with respect to Mussolini. Joyce's Dante, in contrast, is the "architectural master" of the *Commedia* (125) whose theatricality encourages Joyce's impulse in *Ulysses* to make self-conscious use of masks and role-play in order to deflate the "Cuchulainoid" pretensions of the Irish Renaissance.

Dasenbrock's discussion of Joyce's use of masks, of the insertion of ironic space between character and role, raises one major complaint: he neglects to relate this point to the substantial body of feminist criticism that similarly finds within Joyce a "divided subject shaped by the socio-sexual experience of others," as Bonnie Kime Scott has put it. Moreover, his roster of modernists, though extending to T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, and other canonized men, includes no women -- even though Djuna Barnes' subversive appropriation of Elizabethan drama (with its Italian roots) was praised by Eliot, even though H.D., in addition to being close to Pound, constructed her own feminist mythic systems that included an appreciation of Leonardo da Vinci. This oversight becomes even more troubling on the realization that Dasenbrock cites the same flaw in Bloom's genealogy of romantic poets (8).

Nevertheless, he does at least note that Spenser's "theory of marriage can arguably be called feminist" (75). Not even Virginia Woolf would argue with that. *Imitating the Italians* is a useful, informative contribution to the understandings that Renaissance and modernist scholars share of their interlocking worlds -- worth imitating in the best Petrarchan way.

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92.3 Gibbs, Donna. *Spenser's Amoretti: A Critical Study*. Brookfield: Scolar Press, 1990. ix + 208pp. \$49.95.

First a brief description of the book. An Introduction provides a Cook's tour of the current state of *Amoretti* studies, though unfortunately much excellent work has been published since Gibbs' book went to press. The chapter on the structure of the sequence shows how, beneath the apparent gaps and inconsistencies, a cogent psychological trajectory is described: "the underlying pattern of the developing courtship gives shape and direction to the sequence" (28). "The Mistress" argues that Spenser does not "present a fully rounded characterisation of the mistress," but an image of her does emerge as "a person of intelligence, spirit and wit" (57). The argument proceeds by descriptions of the "ways in which the impression of a character is conveyed in the sequence." Chapter Three draws a distinction between the author and the persona of the lover, and considers their relation. The putative persona is analysed in the following chapter, and this raises questions about his attitude to Neo-Platonic doctrines, discussed in the final chapter.

Dr. Gibbs writes clearly; each chapter opens with a prospective introduction and closes with a summary conclusion. A scholar wishing to "rip the heart out" of the book could do so by reading the first and last pages of each chapter. Others might read the rest with more profit. Gibbs' book falls between the worn horns of a familiar dilemma: to write for beginners or the professional scholar? As a beginner's text it is seriously misleading. The scholar may find that, despite references to other critics, there is a lack of engagement with their work, and a curious flatness about some of the conclusions. It is worth pointing to some of the issues over which this book stumbles, not because it stumbles but because while more self-possessed criticism covers false steps, irregularities on the ground are real and treacherous.

On page 124 of the lover-persona chapter, Gibbs suggests that "language appropriate to religious experience," in for instance the first sonnet, "is being used in a metaphorical way to describe experiences of secular love." Indeed it is. But the phrases were as much clichés in the sixteenth century as they are now and to generate a critical point from such an observation the supporting analysis must be more subtle and historically aware. Is there something characteristically Spenserian in these stock (but often transfigured) images and phrases; something which makes his usage, or that of his persona, unique? Until that question has been answered, there is no point in, let alone solid grounds for, using religious imagery to establish a potentially rewarding distinction between lover-persona and Spenser-poet, as Gibbs does in a discussion of the Lenten sonnet (XXII). Here Spenser's lover refers to his mistress as his "saynt" and (or so we are assured, despite a resonant ambiguity in Spenser's "as" left outside the given quotation) "as 'th'author of my blisse."

Gibbs discovers this to draw "attention to the pagan element of worship," for two reasons. Firstly because of "the building of an altar to appease the divinity's wrath" (126) in line 10. This can only be called pagan in so far as Moses, Gideon and Solomon can be considered "pagan," and forgets that just such an activity forms the roots whence springs the christianisation of Lent. Gibbs' point could certainly be argued, but there is no suggestion given of richer possibilities or firmer

foundations. Secondly, the pagan element is highlighted because "it sounds distinctly heretical to have shown a secular figure as a saint for lenten worship" (127). The critic is right to record her own responses to a word or phrase, but this particular piece of analysis fails to show that Spenser used the image, as unremarkable in itself as any tired rose or coral, to provide a comment on the emotional state of his lover-persona -- a task it is apparently required to perform, for on the basis of this and similar analyses Gibbs remarks that "Spenser is hinting that the lover has not yet reconciled his devotion" to both God and mistress (127).

The point of registering such disagreements is that they represent a failure to locate the appropriate register of the *Amoretti*, a failure not confined to this book; and that they expose a common and damaging carelessness of expression. Is Spenser actively "hinting" (as the mood of Gibbs' verb suggests), as he must if he has in fact created a persona; or is it a passive occurrence which reveals not the deliberate intention of a persona-proliferating poet, but the inescapable consequence of writing down the state of his thought or feeling, a consequence of which the poet may or may not be aware, but which it is right for the critic to uncover?

Was it Spenser's intention to create a persona? To clarify: did Spenser make a *deliberate attempt* to create a persona different in some degree to himself? If he did at least Gibbs' analysis is on firm footing. But the answer to the question requires careful and particular demonstration, which is not provided. If on the other hand (whatever was in Spenser's mind -- a variable it is wisest to leave out of analysis unless absolutely necessary), a persona appears, in some or many or all respects, different from the subject of biographies of Spenser, but which is the passive or indeliberate and inevitable result of giving form to experience (irrespective of whether the form pretends to autobiographicity), then the persona must be analysed quite differently. In the latter case the question of intentionality alters its hue. If a persona who is not the poet will inevitably appear whenever a poet selects, let alone forms the facts his life, then its mere presence (like the mere presence of the religious imagery) is unremarkable. It is the nature of the persona present in the poetry which rewards analysis. But to argue from the fact, or even the nature of, a persona to facts about the poet's psyche or intentions -- this may not always be invalid, but it certainly requires a developed sense of balance and tact.

Nor does it necessarily follow that because Spenser is sometimes (apparently) self-conscious in the *Amoretti* -- seeing himself as a lover, say ("playing the role" of a lover if we must) -- that he is therefore deliberately, actively, creating a persona. To argue thus is an abuse of logic and common sense; an abuse which has vitiated many books besides this one. Nor, by itself, does it suggest that Spenser never talks in his own voice with what used to be called sincerity (a better term might be "thin," as opposed to thick or dense, language, or "ingenuous" -- in its neglected meaning opposed to disingenuous or deceptive). A critic may well become aware of or create more ironies and inconsistencies in an originally ingenuous remark or attitude than the poet who initially made the remark or struck the attitude. Such ironies and inconsistencies do not by themselves imply the deliberate, active intention to create a persona; they do not by themselves even imply ironies and patterned inconsistencies handled with care and skill by the poet -- patterns perhaps, but their

original intentions remain obscure. In a different set of functions of the term "intention," as used in philosophy most famously by Frege, any remark by a poet is intentional; but that is quite different from saying that any given remark and its implication (or persona) was actively and deliberately intended by the poet in the way that a prospecting critic in fact reads it.

In this particular case the blurring of critical distinctions seems to be caused by a failure to judge the tone of the poetry. For the present I can only report this as a difference of opinion. To take two examples: of LXXVII Gibbs remarks that "the confessional tone suggests guilt, though [Spenser] makes it clear he is not guilty in any way" (117), and that "his thoughts behaved wantonly, or at least expressed a desire to behave in an untoward way" (118). I cannot bring myself to read the sonnet in this way; it seems a travesty of the poem qua poetry, to misregister it completely. It is as though we have forgotten that physical contact or communion with, pleasure in, or physical desire for, a loved one can be a guilt-free expression of a love which is wholly compatible with a pure, even spiritual, devotion -- something I had always thought the *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion* in their most pervasive registers made abundantly clear, to say nothing of the original ending of *Faerie Queene* III, the Garden of Adonis, and the dance of the Graces. In turn this blindness may originate in a refusal to see that sex and desire to Spenser are not one thing but many -- some good, some ill, some creative and fulfilling, some destructive and embittering -- a blindness suggested by this remark: "the ambivalence of Spenser's attitude towards sexual love is everywhere apparent in his poetry" (122). What sort of love? What sort of sex?

In this narrowness Gibbs is in good company. Perhaps finally it is a more simple failure of analytic imagination: of the image "Her goodly bosome like a strawberry bed," the critic observes that it is "difficult to think about in visual terms" (121).

Julian Lethbridge
London

92.4 King, John N. *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990. xv + 271pp. \$39.50.

The manner and some of the matter of *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* will be familiar to readers of John N. King's earlier books, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton UP, 1982) and *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton UP, 1989). King presents *Spenser's Poetry*, in fact, as a sequel to *English Reformation Literature* (xi). The earlier book describes an English Reformation literary culture as it developed during the reign of Edward VI; *Spenser's Poetry* is offered as "the first extended treatment of Edmund Spenser's place in the Reformation literary tradition and his employment and redefinition of artistic practices, iconographic formulas, and royalist praise associated with Protestant poets and apologists." Whereas many scholars have stressed the classical and Italian influences on Spenser's works, King demonstrates that these works draw something of their distinctive richness from the author's syncretic "habit of drawing upon and

transforming a variety of conventions, topoi, and iconographical devices from English Protestant literature and art" (3).

The Shepheardes Calender supplies a persuasive illustration of this thesis, for the *Calender* at once "pays homage to Virgil's *Eclogues*" and yet also draws on "an alternative Renaissance tradition of pastoral satire" deriving from Petrarch and Mantuan and their English imitators (15). More specifically, King argues that an English Protestant satirical tradition exerted a powerful influence on the *Calender*. Evidence for this view appears in the *Calender's* echoes and invocations of Chaucer, which King reads in light of "the Reformation belief that the medieval master was a religious radical" (20), a conviction King attributes in part to the publication of the pseudo-Chaucerian *Plowman's Tale* in sixteenth-century editions of the *Carterbury Tales* (24). Although phrases like "Reformation belief" and recurrent agent-obliterating passives (e.g., "Chaucer's Plowman . . . was seen to represent . . . *Piers Plowman*, in particular, amalgamated simple colloquial speech and subjective inward piety in a manner that was thought compatible . . . This masterpiece was commonly accepted . . .," 23) seem too confident about how "Tudor readers doubtless . . . would have applied" (18) this or that, King's treatment of *The Shepheardes Calender* provides an wealth of potentially illuminating contexts from which modern readers can construct historically grounded interpretations of the poem.

That valuable service is what *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* consistently provides. Like most traditional historical scholarship (including my own), King's project leads him eagerly to pursue extrinsic analogues to the materials he finds in the literary texts he seeks to interpret. As a result, he often displays greater readiness to perceive similarity than difference. The methodological guides which King's Introduction invokes (Claudio Guillen, Alastair Fowler, Stephen Greenblatt, *inter alia*, 5-7, 13) seem at first to promise a more pronounced scrutiny of the subtle and dynamic processes by which authors produce poems and readers construct interpretations. King's argument that Spenser was no Puritan, for instance, rests too easily on the conviction that the language cited as evidence of Puritan attitudes "falls into the area of consensus among progressive Protestants who thought of themselves as 'godly' and obedient Christians" (18). This may well be the case, but the scholar whom King is debating here (Anthea Hume) has cited Piers' suggestion that godly pastors ought in some way to separate themselves from the ungodly ("Maye," 164-69). The point deserves more systematic attention, even if one then wishes to assign the implied separatist notion to Piers rather than to the poet.

Elsewhere King convincingly promotes the view that Spenser's allegory is "dialectical" or "polyvalent." Kirkrapine's plundering of churches, for example, "gives him the appearance of a Protestant iconoclast" while he can at the same time represent "the misappropriation of ecclesiastical wealth by the monks of old" (55-56). Here too, though, King rules out another level of potential polyvalence, apparently assuming that Spenser is more likely to adopt conventions than adapt them to new uses: "Spenser's insight into the negative potential of the English Reformation need not imply any form of vestigial Roman Catholic sympathy, because his stance is conventional in Protestant satire" (56-57). The demonstration

of this conventionality is itself useful, as King's wide reading enables him in the course of a paragraph to summon Milton, Simon Fish, Henry Brinkelow, Hugh Latimer, Thomas Lever, and Robert Crowley as persuasive witnesses for the point.

This easy command of pre-Elizabethan literary and extraliterary materials contributes much to the usefulness of *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition*. It pays off most fully in the chapters whose central aim is to illustrate the many ways in which Spenser transforms materials he inherits, employing conventions not as guarantors of sameness but as structures of invariants against which novelty becomes perceptible. Chapter 5 does this most effectively while promoting the argument that *The Legend of Holiness* "offers a critique of the Renaissance hierarchy of genres" (183), successively invoking received genres -- romantic epic, hagiographical narrative, pastoral, tragedy, georgic, and comedy -- and elevating them in ways acceptable to sixteenth-century English Protestantism. This pattern of adaptation and elevation is pervasive concern of the book, beginning in chapter 2, "Spenserian Iconoclasm," and continuing in chapter 3, "Spenser's Royal Icons." King's belief that "Spenser's poetry is inherently iconoclastic" (65) provides occasion for one of his book's useful, and for me, perhaps its most enjoyable feature, the reproductions of sixteenth-century woodcuts. These 20-odd illustrations draw into illuminating interpretive contexts some striking sixteenth-century ways to imagine the most graphic religious images upon which Spenser draws (see, e.g., Holbein the Younger's *Whore of Babylon*, figure 11).

John King's book can reward patient readers with enjoyment as well as illumination. It provides, as I noted above, an abundance of illuminating contexts from which modern scholars can construct historically grounded interpretations of Spenser's poetry. Having worked at an adjoining table at the Folger Library for a summer, I know, too, that Professor King accumulated the voluminous information reported in this book with extraordinary diligence and with excitement of a kind that only fellow "historical scholars" can fully share. That excitement can also sometimes prove communicable to students, and I expect that conscientious teachers of Spenser will find in *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* an abundance of ore which the energies of the classroom can enable them to transform into gold.

Ed.

ARTICLES: ABSTRACTS AND NOTICES

- 92.5 Belt, Debra. "Hostile Audiences and the Courteous Reader in *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI." *SSt* 9 (1991): 107-35.

The echoes from contemporary prefatory addresses to the reader that fill Book VI supply a conceptual framework from within which to approach a book remarkable for its diversity of incident. These prefatory allusions and cross-references not only link the Blatant Beast to the figure of the observer critical of what he sees and hears, but act unmistakably to add the concept of "the courteous reader" to the poet's anatomy of courtesy. Focusing on the Priscilla-Aladine episode and the confrontation between Calidore and Colin Clout, it is demonstrated that

prefatory definitions of courteous behavior serve alternately to justify the actions of the knight of courtesy and to pin down what he neglects to do when confronted with the vision on Mt. Acidale. Viewed from this perspective, Canto ix emerges not as an expression of despair that conditions essential to the practice of poetry are unavailable but as an effort to set forth a working model for the relationship between audience and piper that appears to the poet most likely to be mutually productive. Such efforts are consistent with Spenser's overall strategy in Book VI: simultaneously to supply the receptive reader with examples of proper and improper ways to respond to the kinds of incidents that comprise the narrative and to drive home to him the potential consequences that adopting unfriendly or prematurely judgmental postures can carry. This strategy of accommodation marks Book VI as an attempt to deal reasonably with the series of critical audiences with whom Spenser has skirmished throughout the epic, an effort abandoned only in the poem's closing stanzas, where he assumes a more confrontational stance amounting to an outright declaration of war. (D.B.)

- 92.6 Christian, Margaret. "The ground of Storie': Genealogy in *The Faerie Queene*." *SSt* 9 (1991): 61-79.

This paper approaches the "chronicle history" canto of *The Faerie Queene* as two alternate genealogies for Queen Elizabeth. By examining contemporary commentaries on the Biblical "begats" and sermon references to the queen's family tree, it identifies Elizabethan methods of constructing and interpreting genealogies. The two uses Spenser's contemporaries had for genealogy were to establish a claim to the throne and to analyze a contemporary figure's character and place in history. These make excellent panegyric sense of "*Briton monuments*" and "*Antiquitie of Faerie lond*," freeing a commentator from the burden of distilling a consistent moral and political message from these pages, while still allowing them to be read as praise. (M.C.)

- 92.7 Dempsey, Joanne T. "Form and Transformation in Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser." *CRCL* 18, no. 2-3 (June-Sept. 1991): 323-26.

Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser, as makers of Renaissance epic-romances, use the concept of *imitatio* as an ordering principle in locating themselves in literary tradition stretching back to Homer and Virgil. Two fundamental paradigms, or "forms" describe their narratives: "epic," which is " 'rational,' that is properly motivated from within the narrative," and "romance," the "*aventure*, or unmotivated episode" (323-24). At certain moments in the epic-romances of Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser, as when "the hero discovers direction in his wayfaring through the world's wilderness" (325), these poets transform and transcend the apparent contradictions between the two paradigms. These moments in the narratives turn our eyes away from the specific circumstances of the episode to images of another time and place, embodying a hope for "human transcendence or transformation," or new degrees of self-knowledge within the questing knight and, by extension, the reader. (K.W.P.)

- 92.8 Fukuda, Shohachi. "The Numerological Patterning of *Amoretti and Epithalamion*." *SSt* 9 (1991): 33-48.

Increasing awareness that numerological analysis is crucial to an understanding of Spenser's work has led to an extension of this approach to the jointly-published *Amoretti and Epithalamion*. The latter poem, previously considered separately in Heatt's seminal analysis, is now shown to be integrally related to the former in a complex pattern of pairs, symmetries and symbolic numbers whose significance is here explored in detail. This underlying structure is seen to have influenced -- dictated, even -- the form of the poems and, arguably, some elements of their content. (S.F.)

- 92.9 Greene, Thomas M. "Ritual and Text in the Renaissance." *CRCL* 18, nos. 2-3 (June-Sept. 1991): 179-97.

The significance of ritual performances or the "ceremonial sign" has undergone a "process of waning" in the history of western culture. In the Middle Ages ritual shaped one's identity and daily life. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the debate over the sacraments and the questioning of "ceremony" mark the performative sign's loss of status as it "enter[s] a long decline." This shift affected the "literary imagination." In Dante's *Purgatorio*, ritual has an exalted status; ritual moves to more precarious grounding in Boccaccio, Brunetti, and Erasmus, and in Rabelais and Ronsard, ceremonies are parodied and demystified. Shakespeare's histories explore the limitations of ceremonial power, and Cervantes's *Don Quixote* anticipates the "death of ceremonial symbolism." In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser appropriates the ritualized past "for new contexts." (M.F.W.)

- 92.10 Hannay, Margaret P. " 'My Sheep are Thoughts': Self-Reflexive Pastoral in *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI and the *New Arcadia*." *SSt* 9 (1991): 137-59.

Conscious that direct speech risked the queen's disfavor, Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser attempted to teach Queen Elizabeth to read their pastoral fictions aright. In the *New Arcadia* and in *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI they mirror the queen's act of reading within the narrative by dramatizing the process of teaching a princess to read a pastoral fiction. In the *New Arcadia* there are three knights who present self-conscious fictions to princesses: Pyrocles, Muisdorus, and Amphialus. In Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser ignores the tale of the Amazonian Pyrocles entirely, echoes the tale of Musidorus, and incorporates an ironic element from the tale of "the courteous Amphialus" which may help to explain the dubious success of Calidore, the knight of courtesy. As each shepherd/knight wishes to demonstrate his real status to the princess to win her heart, so the poet/courtier wishes to demonstrate his real worth to the queen to win a position at court. For both poets the problem of Right Reading is given urgency by their own experience of envy and resultant slander, embedded in the narrative by Sidney through the Cecropia/Amphialus plot, allegorized by Spenser in the Blatant Beast. (M.H.)

- 92.11 Heberle, Mark. "Aristotle and Spenser's Justice." *SN* 63, no. 2 (1991): 169-73.

Numerous scholars have established various Christian and classical sources for Spenser's treatment of justice in Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, but none have given Aristotle due credit for being the fundamental source for Spenser's definition of justice. John Wilkinson's *The Ethiques of Aristotle* (1547), the only contemporary English translation of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, contains important parallels to Spenser's "Letter to Raleigh," as well as to the characterization of justice in Book V. An even more specific source, though, is *Secretum Secretorum* (1528 and 1572), attributed to Aristotle, which near its closing presents a "mildly imperative" set of assertions for good government. Aristotle's elevation of justice at this point is very close to what Spenser writes in the Proem of Book V. While no evidence proves that Spenser read these editions of Aristotle, in his demonstration of the pre-eminence of justice, Spenser is "quite deliberately following Aristotle as he would have understood him" (172). (K.W.P.)

- 92.12 Herman, Peter. "The Shepherdes Calender and Renaissance Antipoetic Sentiment." *SEL* 32, no. 1 (1992): 15-33.

Throughout the English Renaissance there persisted a strong antipoetic tradition having its roots in the writings of earlier Protestants such as Tyndale and John Foxe. The *SC*, in the way it presents different arguments about the value of poetry, registers Spenser's anxieties "in reconciling poetic ambitions with the antipoetic strain within Protestantism" (15). Although "E.K.'s epistle proclaims that the New Poet has the very highest of ambition" (15), Spenser's conflicting allegiances to Protestantism and to poetry compel him not to praise the "amatory, pedagogical, and political successes of poetry" (17). Spenser sets up "inversions of expectations" as one way of revealing the ambiguous views he has of the value of poetry; he for instance "paradoxically begins his bid for vatic glory with a poem illustrating a renunciation of poetry" (17). Early in the poem Spenser "explores . . . various specific failures of poetic rhetoric" (20), particularly in the exchange between Cuddie and Thenot in the "February" eclogue, and in "October" Spenser "demonstrates how the ideals of Renaissance poetics have little material reality" (20). The "October" dialogue between Piers and Cuddie concludes with the "suggest[ion] that poetry can thrive only in a small, coterie atmosphere, an assessment of poetry's limits which is radically different from the ambitions suggested by . . . E.K.'s epistle to the reader" (22).

Spenser sets up the "June" eclogue as the most extensive discussion of poetic ambition in the poem. Colin, despite his ambitions, refuses to pipe for an audience, for "to go public entails literary competition, and that strikes Colin as an act of pride he wants to avoid" (27). Furthermore, "Colin refuses public performance because he has assimilated and agrees with the Muse-haters' arguments against poetry; but Spenser then subverts Colin's rejection of ambition by turning him into precisely the prideful, self-absorbed poet the Muse-haters despised" (29) -- another example of Spenser's "inversion of expectation" in the poem. The doubts Spenser held about the social value of poetic performance are manifested throughout the *SC*, and the

antipoetic strains of Protestantism affect the development of the poem throughout. (E.H.)

92.13 Maley, Willy. "Spenser and Ireland: A Select Bibliography." *SSr* 9 (1991): 225-42.

Spenser's Irish experiences have traditionally been considered as tangential to his poetics, even to his politics. As the more familiar sources of Spenser criticism begin to dry up, a turn towards the poet's Irish context suggests itself as one way of sustaining interest in his work. The purpose of the present survey of material on Spenser and Ireland is to help bring in from the margins of the literary canon an aspect of the poet's life hitherto confined to specialist monographs in learned journals, namely the question of his planter status and the manner in which it impinges upon his writings. Taken as a whole, this material allows for a broad contextual view of an author whose Englishness has always been qualified to a certain degree by his close involvement, for the entirety of his literary career, with England's first colony. The bibliography offered here comprises five basic types of evidence: contemporary descriptions of Ireland and the Irish; modern historiography of the period; secondary criticism of Spenser and Ireland; items relating specifically to Munster, the province with which the poet was most intimately associated; and, finally, biographical information on patrons and acquaintances of Spenser active in Elizabeth's viceregal administration. (W.M.)

92.14 Morey, James H. "Spenser's Mythic Adaptations in *Muiopotmos*." *SSr* 9 (1991): 49-59.

After obtaining the raw materials for *Daphnaida* from the *Book of the Duchess*, Spenser imitates the structure of the same work in his own mythopoeic poem, *Muiopotmos*. The poems need to be considered in tandem as different responses by Spenser to his reading of Chaucer. The Ovidian materials in *Muiopotmos* appear in Chaucer's characteristic panel structure. I propose that we read Spenser's poem in the same way we must read Chaucer's -- with attention to how the mythic adaptations relate to one another and to the poem as a whole. Changes in Ovidian and Virgilian material identify human envy and presumption as the main themes of *Muiopotmos*. Each of the perplexing first two stanzas corresponds to the one of the two Ovid panels. The "mightie ones" are Athena and Arachne, and the "debate" is the weaving contest retold in the poem. Divine and mortal orders of being conflict, invariably to the disadvantage of the latter. The substitution of the "rancour in the harts of mightie men" (line 16) for Virgil's "resentment in the minds of gods" (*Aeneid* I.11) signifies the human application of the poem. Aragnoll is another Arachne, consumed by envy, and Clarion is another Astery both victims of envy. The themes of human envy and of the folly of imitating the divine are replayed in the story of Clarion. Aragnoll, the new source of envy, slays Clarion, the new imitator. Clarion is doubly doomed because he is a victim of the envy of a malignant power and because he aspires to the divine; here Spenser successfully combines his two Ovidian subjects, Astery and Arachne. (J.M.)

92.15 Shaver, Anne. "Rereading Mirabella." *SSr* 9 (1991): 209-26.

Attention to the lengthy but generally neglected Mirabella episode of Book VI of *The Faerie Queene* reveals discomfort with any challenge to accepted hierarchies of class and gender. Surrounded in the Book of Courtesy by numerous erring women who are rescued, forgiven, and reformed, she alone is not only punished for her particular discourtesy, but is punished in such a way as to leave no hope for redemption. Even so, she refuses Prince Arthur's offer of help for fear of some "greater ill" than the endless penance imposed on her by Cupid. Tradition suggests this ill to be the dependency in marriage, also avoided by Elizabeth: thus lowborn Mirabella is made to suffer for gender transgressions unpunishable in a queen. (A.S.)

92.16 Stewart, Stanley. "Spenser and the Judgement of Paris." *SSr* 9 (1991): 161-209.

For centuries critics have recognized a link between Spenser and the Judgment of Paris tradition, which was very popular in Elizabethan literature, especially in renditions of Ovid's *Heroides*. In finely nuanced versions of the narrative, Spenser reverses many thematic arrangements well-established in literature and iconography of the subject, especially as they treated motifs of marriage and legitimacy. Spenser not only recreates Paris as a father, but as an exile from pastoral innocence who willfully abandoned the poetic craft as well. Paridell's claim that he is descended from Oenone would link him with Britomart, whose ancestry also leads back to the first family of Troy. In Spenser's retelling of the story, the situation is, compared to that in *Heroides*, morally ambiguous, eliminating, for instance, the ethical claims of Ovid's Helen. Spenser handles the elements of betrayal of craft and wife with masterful subtlety in the *August* Eclogue and in the Pastorella episode. In the latter instance, the familiar tableau of the Judgment of Paris -- as represented by Cranach, Rubens, Carracci, and many others -- emphasizes Spenser's emerging theme of the poet's need to transcend insular dependence on a single kind of love and a single kind of song. The Judgment of Paris is the inciting incident of a Fall -- indeed, this is how we see it in George Peele, Richard Barnfield, Thomas Heywood, John Trussell, and many others late in Elizabeth's reign -- a Fall from pastoral into moral and poetic error. But where Paris and Colin suffer only the necessary costs of misguided choice, the true poet transcends their limitations to explore in cosmic scope the full power of legitimate Love, whose "substance is eterne." He is the uncompromised heir to the region of Mount Ida: Edmund Spenser. (S.S.)

92.17 Stump, Donald V. "The Two Deaths of Mary Stuart: Historical Allegory in Spenser's Book of Justice." *SSr* 9 (1991): 81-105.

Scholars have suggested that in Book V of *The Faerie Queene* Spenser twice presents the death of Mary Stuart: once when Britomart strikes down Radigund and again when Mercilla allows the execution of Duessa. It seems more likely, however, that the Radigund episode is altogether concerned with the early years of Mary's career, from Queen Elizabeth's aid to the Scottish Protestants in their rebellion against Mary's mother in 1559-60, to Mary's abdication and flight into England in

1567-68 and her subsequent role in the Rebellion of the Northern Earls and the Ridolphi Plot. Thus interpreted, the episode emerges as the first part of a consistent, chronological account of Elizabeth's long struggle with Mary. It serves not just as an illustration for the moral allegory of justice, but also as a major innovation in the genre of the epic: the representation of a living monarch as the subject of heroic myth. (D.S.)

92.18 Thornton, Bruce. "Rural Dialectic: Pastoral, Georgic, and *The Shepherdes Calender*." *SSt* 9 (1991): 1-20.

The distinction between pastoral and georgic has not been observed rigorously enough by critics writing on literature that takes the rural world as its subject. This confusion has led to the inaccurate categorization as pastoral of works more accurately described as georgic. If we redefine these two modes as they are understood in Hesiod, Virgil, and Theocritus, we discover that each mode has a vision of the natural world and a corresponding ethic that contrasts with the others'. Pastoral sees the natural world as harmonious with human desire, making possible an ethic of *otium* or leisure conducive to love and art. Georgic, on the other hand, sees the natural world as fraught with potentially destructive forces requiring from humans an ethic of labor, the work that makes civilization and human identity possible. Most works on the rural world put both these modes in a dialectical relationship in which the attractions and strengths of one counterbalance the inadequacies and weaknesses of the other. Spenser's *Shepherdes Calender*, universally categorized as pastoral, uses just such a rural dialectic to develop the various concerns of religion, morality, and art. (B.T.)

92.19 Waldman, Louis. "Spenser's Pseudonym 'E.K.' and Humanist Self-Naming." *SSt* 9 (1991): 21-31.

The use of the "E.K." to designate the author of the critical apparatus of *The Shepherdes Calender* can be explained by referring to the practices of self-naming prevalent among sixteenth-century literary scholars. The most favored of these was hellenization of the literal meanings of surnames. If Spenser had chosen to hellenize his own name, then in everyday use as a synonym for "steward," he would probably have translated it as "Edmundus Kedemon," which, abbreviated, would be "E.K." Though such a device would have been obscure to all but his intimate circle, Spenser's correspondence with Harvey reveals several similar transmutations of their names. Contemporary sources reveal that onomastic riddles were highly fashionable in Elizabethan England, at court and in all classes of society. Spenser's use of such a name as his pseudonym clearly alluded to Renaissance editions of the classics, thus affirming his symbolic poetic lineage (like his other pseudonym, "Immerito") and his self-proclaimed position as the new English Virgil. (L.W.)

SPENSER AT MLA, 1991

92.20 The annual convention of the Modern Language Association of America, held in San Francisco on 27-30 December 1991, proved, if proof were needed, that

Spenser studies have become the touchstone for the best that is thought and known about Elizabethan literary culture.

While Spenserians forgave San Francisco's weather -- it is the nature of the place to be cold, cloudy, and wet -- they were less forgiving of the enigmatic scheduling of sessions. Past MLAs have committed various scheduling misdemeanors, but the crimes against time -- and nature -- at this MLA were found extreme and inexcusable. On Friday, for instance, a day when most participants were still en route, two Renaissance sessions featuring Spenser were scheduled, one at the dead hour of 3 PM, the other at the 7 PM dinner hour. The program records a general marginalization of Spenser sessions, such as Monday morning's (early) session on Spenser and the Scriptural Tradition. And in the ultimate revisionist coup, Spenser was reCanonized to the Seventeenth Century. Accordingly, William Oram (Smith College) suggested that members of the Spenser Society compose letters of complaint to the scheduling committee in a Sisyphean labor to improve next year's handling of our sessions. We hope our requests will not be "in wand'ring mazes lost."

And here I come to a place where I may, for once, drop the formal editorial tone of the abstracter and express my gratitude for the opportunity to read these essays as well as the many others I have abstracted in the last four years. I wish to thank Darryl Gless for this privilege, and for his patience, support, encouragement, and scholarly example. And I thank the writers of these articles for an invaluable education in scholarly method. The abstracter's motto comes, appropriately, from Spenser, who writes of Zele: "hee Did labour liuely to exprese the same."

Session 19, *Spenser I: An Open Session*. Program arranged by the Spenser Society. Presiding: William A. Oram (Smith College).

92.21 In "'Still wayting to Preferment up to Climbe': Spenser's Complaints and the Remodelling of a Virgilian Career," Richard Rambuss (Kenyon College) examined the dedicatory sonnets appended to *The Faerie Queene* and their relation to the *Complaints*. These sonnets, which characteristically invoke imagery of "premature harvesting," suggest that Spenser's epic is "a continuation of poetic apprenticeship rather than its culmination" -- that is, an inversion of the Virgilian career (pastoral to epic) typically ascribed to Spenser's work. The harvest seems, moreover, a false one, or a harvest of unwholesome fruits, as in the Oxford, Ormond, and Raleigh sonnets, where Spenser's labors (undertaken in the unyielding and wild soil of Ireland) are "vnsauory and soure."

92.22 In "'Time's Advantage': Imperial Occasion and Feminine Tragedy in *The Faerie Queene*," Michael Steppat (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität) traced the connotations of chaotic tempests in *The Faerie Queene* in order to contrast Guyon and Britomart. Both can be shown to seize time's opportunity to answer the threat of tempestuous mischance, yet Britomart is distinguished from Guyon by her trust in male prophecy's magic potency against passional chaos -- a trust that is tragically misplaced. Merlin's rationalizing *telos* of epic and dynastic linearity is exposed as a form of temptation in the later parts of *The Faerie Queene*, as exemplified among

other places in Mirabella's *de casibus* satire on the virgin queen's lordship over male subjects.

92.23 In "Jurisprudence in *The Mutabilitie Cantos*," Elizabeth Fowler (Harvard University) argued that the unfinished cantos are a focal point for Spenser's Jurisprudential thought as it was developed in Spenser's knowledge of the legal history of the war in Ireland. The English policy of "surrender and regrant," a process of legal personification, appears in the Cantos as a solution that Mutability refuses. In this and other ways, the allegory can be seen as a treatment of *dominium* -- a disputed concept central to the history of both constitutional and colonial law. The poem stages a meta-trial that tests the relative merits of differing sets of laws in terms of the question of *dominium*. Convening on Munster plantation land before the bar of natural law (in the person of Dame Nature), the trial sets the civil law (the right of conquest claimed by Jove) against the common law (the system of property rights argued by Mutability). Despite the elaborate arguments of the litigants and the epic momentum of the trial, Spenser does not provide a set of conclusive rulings, but retreats into jurisprudence. He places the various issues into the "proper" jurisdictions, noting the limits of those domains, and appeals the important questions raised by the trial to the trump court of Judgment Day. The movement from deliberative, public jurisprudence to the elegiac, apocalyptic, and personal sublime of the last stanzas is not, curiously, a movement away from jurisprudential discourse. The invocation of jurisprudence shows Spenser facing the twin difficulties of his project: first, the problem of the lack of fit between Irish culture and English law, and second, the problem of the conflict between "ethice" and "politice," in other words, between the theory of the personal virtues of the gentleman or noble person, and the exercise of those virtues in their political aspect, under the requirement of virtuous government. It was in the history of the war in Ireland that Spenser found the gap between the social construction of person and the legal form of governance intractable. (E.F.; adapted by K. F.)

Session 87, *The History of Reading I*. Program arranged by the Division on Linguistic Approaches to Literature. Presiding: Eugene R. Kintgen (Indiana University, Bloomington).

92.24 In "Reading and the Construction of Gender: Fashioning Gentlemen and Gentlewomen in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," Eve Rachele Sanders (University of California, Berkeley) noted that in his prefatory letter to Raleigh, Spenser writes that his "end" in writing an allegorical epic "is to fashion a gentleman or noble person"; yet Spenser also is concerned with fashioning the gentlewomen whom he addresses directly in books three and six. Gender-specific practices of reading help to fashion male and female selves in *The Faerie Queene*. In book one, Redcrosse develops into an exemplary gentleman reader as he learns "to descry cunning," to discern between the epic's allegorical representations of Truth and Falsehood in accordance with a method of reading developed by Augustine. Reading also engenders gender in the case of Serena, Calepine's companion in book six. The method of reading she typifies originated in conduct manuals written for women by sixteenth century humanists such as Juan Luis Vives. The examples of Redcrosse and Serena provide evidence that what Spenser's gentlemen and gentlewomen read in books and took

away from them was shaped, in part, by the distinct interpretive techniques in which they were instructed.

Session 98: *Inventing Elizabethan Literature I: Privacy and Periodization*. Presiding: Richard Helgerson, University of California, Santa Barbara.

92.25 In "Spenser and the Domestic Domain," Louis Montrose (University of California, San Diego) argued that the creation of "the Author selfe" in Spenser's works is at once the creation of a literary domain that, reifying that word's etymology, is a demesne that encodes the poet's socio-economic place within Elizabethan cultural politics. The medium of print, that is, becomes Spenser's social demesne, his supplement for the inherited demesne of Sidney. The social circulation of print seeks to repair Spenser's marginal places: geographically (Ireland) and socially (his commoner background). Via print, Spenser "exploited the resources of an emergent commercial mode of cultural production so as to enhance his symbolic capital in ways that princely or aristocratic favor alone could not." *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* and the *Amoretti* particularly underscore Spenser's effort; these poems, usually considered marginal to Spenser's larger work, conjoin "literary authority" with "a thematics of property, marriage, and lineage that enhances his social authority."

Session 605, *Spenser II: Spenser and Misunderstanding*. Program arranged by the Spenser Society. Presiding: Joseph F. Loewenstein (Washington University).

92.26 In "'Owles, fooles, louers, children, Dames': Alma's Faculty of Misunderstanding," Dorothy Stephens (UC Berkeley) argued that the confusion of masculine understanding with feminine misunderstanding in Alma's castle enables us to read the contradictory self-conceptions of Spenserian allegory neither as differences calling for resolution nor as endless repetitions of failure but as a culturally significant flexibility.

The petrarchan idea that the feminine images which invade a poet's mind both inform and threaten his artistic self containment becomes allegorized in Alma's turret-brain, when the narrative begins to read the disorder of feminine understanding into its own most intimately enclosed spaces. Although Alma's servant Phantastes is male, and although the poem presents Phantastes as a generic figure who represents human imaginations in general, the combination of his masculine identity with the explicitly effeminate disorder of his fantasies becomes problematic. Alma's faculty of misunderstanding unsettles the oppositions between dreamer-subject and dreamed object, between masculine and feminine, between inner chastity and outer threats to that chastity. It unbalances these oppositions not by destroying difference but by setting it on the move, just out of our line of vision at any given moment. This is not a matter of androgyny; instead, in Alma's house, difference is always where we are not looking.

The reason that Alma fails to maintain distinctions between her walled interior and the outer forces that threaten her are not only that her fantasies emigrate or that Captain Meleger attempts a military takeover with his monstrous crew of passions, but that the heroic Guyon and Arthur enter Alma's castle-body as

guests. By displacing these knights' "infinite desire" for an inaccessible *Faerie Queene* onto Alma, who graciously gives them a tour of her body when they demand shelter for the night, the poem makes Alma's fortress into two rather different types of enclosure: Alma figures the two knights' own bodies in that she figures all human bodies assailed by sensory data; but she also represents a femininity quite separate from them, a source of bounty which they desire to disclose and know. Perhaps this is masculine reappropriation of the feminine, but insofar as Guyon's and Arthur's desires for entry are reproduced in Maleger's ghostly regiment, and insofar as Maleger's crew of owls, apes, and fiends are projections of the similar monsters swirling chaotically through Alma's imagination, the two knights become, in some sense, the foolish and empty delusions of foolish and wavering "dames." Yet whatever fear the poem registers about the possibility of discovering its own debt to a monstrous, feminine faculty of misunderstanding is mingled with an investment in the erotic exchanges between this feminine misunderstanding and the masculine borders that would wish to contain it. (D.S.; adapted by K.F.)

92.27 In "Orality and Chaucerian Textuality in *The Faerie Queene* 4.1-3: Spenser's Quest for Mothers to Think Back Through," Theresa M. Krier (University of Notre Dame) argued that the romance motifs of book 4, and their narrative disruptions, "unfold into a story about poetic origins and the risks attending the extension of Chaucer's beloved spirit into Spenser's own age." Spenser's revision of Chaucer's Canace (as Agape) accomplishes such extension and relocates it within female aurality. "When Canacee and Agape turn away from the pressures of the insistent knights, and toward learning the powers of nature, they emblemize Spenser's wish . . . for a release from the pressures of poetic activity understood as textuality, with the precarious and patrilineal descents of texts, into an oral and aural linguistic culture, associated with women . . ." Oral culture, Spenser finds, escapes the temporal corruption of the narrative and its reification as fragile books consumed by time and envy.

Session 750, *Edmund Spenser and the Scriptural Tradition*. Presiding: Margaret P. Hannay (Siena College).

92.28 In "'Now lettest thou thy servant depart': Scriptural Tradition and the Close of *The Faerie Queene*," Margaret Christian (Penn State University, Allentown) argued that the *Mutabilitie Cantos* belong to the *nunc dimittis* tradition. The poet speaks for an Elizabeth who looks back over her long reign, finding her successes threatened by a troubled succession, glorying in her achievements but seeing them assailed by Mutabilitie. Specifically, Mutabilitie's usurpation of Cynthia's throne is a victory only over appearance, not substance: "Mutabilitie has the power to corrupt only the surface of things, not their essence. According to this formulation, the queen's death would confirm, rather than cancel, her place in history." The Mutabilitie cantos allow Elizabeth to depart in peace from her glorious age, a perfecting and perfect silence that Elizabeth's name itself suggests, as, in a Hebraic pun, Elizabeth signifies "Sabbath God."

92.29 In "Renaming the Red Crosse Knight," Donald Stump (Notre Dame University) engaged the customary readings of Spenser's method of naming his characters, a method that significantly delays, or defers, the character's name until

the properties, qualities, etymologies, and varieties of that name have been allegorically unfolded in moral, or immoral, action. The method, Stump noted, is typically read as a narrative device, and for the most part such readings are in keeping with Spenser's project. The naming of Redcrosse Knight, however, is a notable exception and one with important theological implications. Red Crosse -- whose actual name is George, patron saint of England -- is not referred to by his true name until canto x; in that address, by the hermit Contemplation, the name is projected beyond Red Crosse as a pronomial he will achieve in the future (specifically, the name he will be given after death): "thou Saint George shalt called be." Unlike other figures who are named within the temporal progression of the narrative, Red Crosse is unnamed, Stump argued, because "until canto x, the Red Crosse Knight has no real personal identity." Even his secondary, or temporary, identity as Red Crosse Knight is comprised of "tenuous identifiers," such as his borrowed armor (which he loses in Orgoglio's prison) which feebly signify his "name." Most importantly, the name Red Crosse will be given does not designate a "personal identity," a point, Stump reminds us, that requires careful consideration of Spenser's theology. The etymological tension of "Sant George" exemplifies the relationship between personal and universal identity: "the Greek etymology of the name 'George' connects the hero with all human beings who are condemned to labor in the earth in a body formed from the earth, and the title 'Saint' restricts this large general class to the subset of those who have been redeemed."

92.30 In "Spenser's Rhetorical and Semiotic Strategies Amid Sixteenth-Century Religious Controversies," Bryan Berry (University of Michigan) examined the contiguity of opposing dogmas in Spenser's signifying practices: "The poet makes use of the semiotic values associated with the zealous Protestant, the conformable Protestant, and the Catholic positions and addresses audiences of all these persuasions in order to synthesize the values into a merely Christian signification." In, for example, the infusion of anti-papist, and then pro-protestant, signification into the sign of rosary beads in book I, Spenser recuperates a corrupted sign (the beads) and (re)places it within a larger, and holier, protestant context of "grace" and "godly exercise." By rendering theological / Saussurean difference a thing indifferent, Spenser "invest[s] outwardly Catholic signs with inwardly Protestant significations and synthesizes the two into the signs of a community" that will accept the reformed signs as neither catholic or protestant, but as "merely Christian."

Session 248: Annual Meeting and Luncheon of the Spenser Society.

92.31 The annual luncheon of the Spenser Society was held at the Four Seasons Clift Hotel on Saturday, December 28th. President William Oram (Smith College) presided there.

After the business meeting and the cordiality of crabcakes, Maureen Quilligan (University of Pennsylvania) entertained us with a Chaplinesque address that will, we are sure, long be remembered. Choosing the improbable topic of comic laughter in *The Faerie Queene* -- "So . . . you've heard the one about the graduate student who decided to write a dissertation about Spenser's humor because he wanted to get it over with quickly" -- Quilligan showed that humor does indeed infiltrate the poem's defenses (Ben Jonson, of course, thought it was a funny poem --

funnily written, that is) and, as Freud argued, with great Freudian deadpanness, humor is often at someone else's expense. Spenserian humor, Quilligan said with more seriousness, has its own politics, a politics that too often laughs at, and only sometimes with, the poem's women.

Female laughter invokes the Penthean fear of the violence against men that such laughter potentially represents (the Bergsonian dictum that we always laugh self-servingly at the absurdities and quotidian tragedies of others is at work here). Cultural exigencies, however, paradoxically ensure that women's laughter is often self-deprecating, as women are frequently the joke's subject. Where, Quilligan asked, could equitable laughter, women's laughter, be found, "where could one find that laughter represented in a way that captured its festivity as opposed to the social horror with which it is usually viewed? Would there be any echo of good maenad laughter in *The Faerie Queene*?"

Laughter, Quilligan remarked, creates, and may destroy, community. The laughter of women (the genitive's ambiguity illustrates the vexed nature of such mirth) is also tertiary laughter authorized by men. When, for example, Merlin tweaks Britomart's anxious love for Arthegall, Britomart's potential power "is laughed into its proper, contained position at the margins." Perhaps the most interesting instance of laughter authorized by women, and its subversiveness, is the comical retribution Diana exacts from the "sniggering" Faunus in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*. Seeing Diana's naked "somewhat," Faunus "breaks forth in laughter." His punishment becomes Diana's amusement, as he is chased, dressed as a deer, by Diana's maidens. By "rewriting the Actaeon myth" -- and its allusion to Orpheus' fate -- Spenser refigures the laughter of the "would-be dismembering maidens" into festive laughter. "The scene is a comical version of a story about male terror in the face of female power." The episode is rare, however, in its allowance of the "delight" of female laughter. Spenser's poem ends, after all, with the decidedly unfunny demands of transgressive *Mutabilitie*.

Kevin Farley
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

92.32 The abstract of Masaru Kosako's article, "Spenser's Poetic Devices for the Rhyme Words in *The Shepheardes Calender*," which appeared in the previous issue (91.70), was supplied by Sharon Spangler. The editor regrets the omission of Sharon's name.

92.33 CALL FOR PAPERS. Spenser at Kalamazoo, 1993. Papers on any topic dealing with Spenser. Deadline for abstracts is 15 September 1992. Send five copies to Jerome S. Dees, Department of English, 122 Denison Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506. FAX: 913-532-7004.

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