Moins intéressant peut-être pour le lecteur moderne, *L'Épithalame* est un poème de circonstances de 324 vers, composé de huitains octosyllabiques et de dizains heptasyllabiques, qui témoigne de l'habileté métrique de son auteur autant que de son adresse dans les jeux de mots et dans la manipulation du mythe néo-platonicien de l'androgynie, mais qui n'apporte qu'une vision du mariage conventionnelle pour l'époque.

L'annotation des deux textes est discrète et en même temps admirablement complète. Dans la liste des auteurs modernes de la bibliographie sélective, il aurait été utile pour le lecteur de pouvoir reconnaître les contributions de chercheurs anglophones qui se sont penchés sur la question de l'éducation de la femme à la Renaissance. Sans que la liste soit exhaustive, on pense à R. Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (1956), S. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640* (1982), et M. L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (1991).

Amplement appuyée par une excellente introduction et des notes judicieusement constituées, cette édition de deux oeuvres du XVI^e siècle est une contribution solide qui permettra une meilleure reconstitution de l'histoire de la femme à la Renaissance.

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Patricia Fumerton. *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Pp. xii, 279.

The "trivial" aesthetic ornaments of Elizabethan and Jacobean aristocrats (says this book) define a forced renegotiation of uneasy, conflictful private and public selfhood. Malinowski's Kula gift ring, by which two orders of gifts pass in opposite directions around a ring of islands, parallels usefully the interchange of children among Elizabethan families in the Graces' sequence of giving, receiving, and thanking: generous civility, not pugnacious acquisitiveness. So also a poet's giving his creation to a patron in return for favour attempts "to guarantee continued life during the death-threatening transformation of [Spenser's] age from gift, or patronage, to market society" (p. 63). The English, however, felt threatened by the pattern of Irish child exchange. (Here Fumerton probably builds upon New Historicist preoccupations with colonialism, rather than harking to the stronger English attentiveness to Continental cultural patterns). Spenser's Garden of Adonis combines Irish and English notions of fosterage, and culminates in Venus and Adonis's peaceful interchange of form and matter, masculinity and femininity (and Englishness and Irishness).

This commonality of social life collapses (we hear) in Jacobean times in “a kind of counter-commonality of *debased* bric-a-brac” – a cultural destructiveness comparable, not to the Kula ring, but to self-magnification through destruction of goods in the Kwakiutl potlatch. To see this we must first expose the retreat of the aristocratic self into a privacy which, constantly violated, removes all reality from the still perpetuated fiction of gift-exchange. This occurs in terms of viewings or gifts of painted miniature portraits, which are secreted/displayed in private rooms or are enclosed in (often abortively) secretive lockets. Or it occurs in gifts of sonnets. Both miniatures and sonnets convey/conceal the subject’s private individuality, amounting to an emptiness at the hollow core of public existence.

Jacobean “voids,” however (punning on the pauses in banquets occasioned by “voiding,” or clearing, tables), express this emptiness most poignantly. These final courses of symbolically shaped and inscribed confectionary (peaking in the “subtlety”), were often spun out of sugar and spices of supposedly only medicinal, not nutritional value, were served, for the privacy of select guests, in separate rooms or specially designed buildings; were wantonly destroyed by eating or in a terminal mob scene. The Jacobean masque, too, was a void, presented in James’s Banqueting House, whose privacy was often violated by crowds of commoners. Principally, however, privacy was created and then violated by discovery scenes, as in *Oberon*, where James, in the audience, saw his privacy embodied by the revelation of a shut innermost chamber but then poignantly violated, as a simulacrum of himself moved thence outward into public view. Fumerton bolsters her case here with paintings of the Annunciation, where purportedly the privacy of the numinously divine is guarded by walls and a background door (although in the Tintoretto it is inexplicably Mary’s privacy, not the Godhead’s, which is violated). As a last step, the attempt in *Neptune’s Triumph* to render the new mercantilism as idealized giving, receiving, and thanking, is destroyed by Jonson’s rending his allegory and revealing royal complicity in the new market economy.

One criterion for what precedes: phenomena associated with an age’s specific characteristics ought to be specific to that age. What specifically links to the Elizabethans the idealized bestowal of children on other families? It was a constant feature in Western Europe from early medieval times up to the growth of the aristocratic practice of sending boys away to school, and the popularization of the bourgeois nuclear family. How can it be usefully compared with Kula interchange of necklaces and bracelets, when the aristocratic child, once grown, remained principally connected with his biological family? While apart, child and family maintained loving or dutiful communications (Cf. the Lisle correspondence, 1533-40). What specifically links with the Elizabethans the idealized exchange-relationship of author and patron? A kneeling author presenting his book to a gracious magnate is constantly illustrated in medieval books, which in turn claim to benefit the recipient and the public.

It is true that in England (not elsewhere) highly subjective sonnets tend to date from ca. 1585-1600, but what is specifically "English Renaissance" about diminutive likenesses purporting to reveal individuality, and kept in secret chambers or in lockets? Many of our grandmothers possessed such things. How is it that sugar subtleties, destroyed in eating, were nearly as common a feature of medieval as of Jacobean banquets? Why should a nervously preserved but uncertainly aborted self be held to be the motive for Jacobean artistic concealment? Throughout medieval and early modern times, what is repeatedly given as the motive for allegorical or other veiling devices is the need to withhold knowledge from those unsuited for it. Why should Annunciations preserving the privacy of the numinous be singled out to support a theory of aborted privacy in Jacobean masques? Other equally appropriate Renaissance paintings proffer unembarrassedly the full panoply of Godhead (Cf. the Sistine frescoes, Dürer's *Assumption of the Virgin*, etc.). If, on the contrary, James I was indeed threatened with the exquisite pain of having his nervous, private self violated in a masque, why did he endure it? Didn't Jonson and Inigo Jones need to cater to his pleasures?

This study of a leisured elite's ornaments is, incidentally, very informative. It is also dexterous beyond other New Historicist work in deploying the telling episode or anecdote. The personalization of style, the management of continually shifting points of view, the exploitation of syntactical devices remind us more urgently here of narrative history's need for the resources of fictional composition. Fiction, however, is safer. Reading *Cultural Aesthetics* I was often reminded of Penelope Lively's *Moon Tiger*, in which the present-day fictional female historian-protagonist, of great but suspect conceptual reach, tries implacably, nervously, but unsuccessfully to hide from her nearest and dearest a locket-like ring, given to her by the central male in her life and containing what he has put there as a memento of their secret selves.

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C. Lauvergnat-Gagnière. *Lucien de Samosate et le Lucianisme en France au XVI^e siècle. Athéisme et polémique*. Genève, Droz, 1988, Pp. 434.

Dans son ouvrage, C. Lauvergnat-Gagnière avance l'hypothèse gratuite que même si Lucien n'avait jamais existé, Rabelais aurait écrit ce qu'il a écrit et qu'il n'a exercé aucune influence sur la Renaissance française. Le livre de Mme Lauvergnat-Gagnière étant tout entièrement consacré à cette "démonstration" et étant donc négatif, l'auteur est obligée d'employer nombre de méthodes grâce auxquelles il devient possible de faire une part plus que considérable à la coïncidence, puisque tous les écrits où des critiques et érudits, y compris moi-même, ont vu une véritable influence de Lucien sont présentés comme sensibles à de simples coïncidences.