David Lee Miller. *The Poem's Two Bodies. The Poetics of the 1590 Faerie Queene*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. Pp. xiii, 297. \$29.50 U.S.

Reading Miller's book is like trying to negotiate one's way through a mirrored labyrinth. While progress is difficult and disorienting, the book succeeds in revealing previously invisible or unnoticed aspects of its subject: the figure of the human body in the first three books of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The title, *The Poem's Two Bodies: The Poetics of the 1590 Faerie Queene*, refers, primarily but by no means exclusively, to the text we have and read in its relation to the ideal closure that it endlessly and teasingly promises.

Miller's sense of Spenser's dual poetics is based, again primarily but not exclusively, on two models. One, invoked obviously in the title of the book, is Ernst Kantorowicz's exposition of the medieval theory that the monarch is simultaneously a natural person, with all the weaknesses of the natural condition, and the flawless epitome of the state, which miraculously dissolves those weaknesses (*The King's Two Bodies: A Study of Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). The other model is the psychoanalytic paradigm propounded in Jacques Lacan's famous essay on the formation of the infantile ego ("The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I," *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Norton, 1977, 1-7). Lacan proposes that the infant's sense of identity originates with the sight either of its own reflection in a mirror or of another body, typically the mother's. (Thus the ego is always already alienated because the sense of the self is inseparable from the sense of the other.) The association of the self with the image of (any)body begins a lifelong struggle between an ideal of wholeness and the weakness and dependence first and most conspicuously of the infant in particular and then of the human being in general.

The psychoanalytic model lends itself to Miller's work because psychoanalysis is a uniquely physical mode of thought: it attaches to the body and its parts symbolic values prior to the acquisitions of language. As well it enables Miller to assimilate parental and political authority to one another. Thus it converges with Kantorowicz's model and with Miller's own historical and political interests.

According to Miller, the resulting map figures the experience of the text of *The Faerie Queene*, of its readers, and of its protagonists. All find recompense for their respective senses of inadequacy, frustration, and loss in a dream of fulfilment that advances relentlessly into a future beyond the text, where temporal and transcendental rewards coalesce. Miller argues that Spenser's "aesthetic theology" depends on an economy of the "negative moment": repudiation becomes the condition of a higher mode of being. The process resembles the experience of the Neoplatonic lover who rises by contemplation of the physical beauty of the beloved to knowledge of the soul, only eventually to lose interest in the physical beauty with which he started. Analogously the second two of Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes* retract, by extending them, the first two, in which they obviously originate. Spenser's self-effacement

as poet of *The Faerie Queene* is the price he pays for his public role as prophetic laureate; Arthur's erotic wound is the price of his vision of Gloriana; the Red Cross Knight's sufferings in the House of Holiness are the price of the vision he experiences on the Mount of Contemplation. All alike are "'precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation' through an open-ended series of displacements, a series that repeatedly abandons what is literal or bodily in quest of a higher unity whose closure is terminally deferred" (144: the interior quotation is from Lacan).

In *The Faerie Queene*, Miller writes, the human figure "naturalizes an authoritarian image of restraint, fulfilling one of the classic functions of ideology: to derive political structures from nature or God" (155). Thus Spenser's male protagonists are emasculated; and in the allegory of the human body in Alma's house the genitals are displaced first to the heart (the parlor where Guyon and Arthur meet Shamefastnesse and Prays-desire) and then to the head, where the repressed feminine begins its return in anxiety about the royal succession expressed in the two chronicle. The feminine emerges again, duly subordinated to the masculine Logos, in the Garden of Adonis, with its allegory of fertility in nature and the imagination.

The Faerie Queene, Miller proposes "reflects a poetics of incorporation that could have been formulated only *after* the Reformation in England had hastened the long-term process through which the national state assumed the role of preeminent corporate entity in political life, and *before* the idea of the state had detached itself from the person of the monarch" (17). He argues that the allegory of *The Faerie Queene* is continuous with the social, political, and economic organization of its environment: the form of the poem is shaped by the historical forces acting on it and in turn shapes them. If the Queen and her courtiers can make or break the career of an aspiring laureate, he empowers them as well by contributing to the mythology that situates them in their respective relationships of authority.

While I have tried here to emphasize the large contours of Miller's complex argument, I must also stress that that argument is based on a close and remarkably perceptive reading of *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Fowre Hymnes*, as well as of *The Faerie Queene*, not to mention an encyclopedic array of historical, political, philosophical, and physiological works. Miller writes that: "In turning this book over to such readers as it may find, I hope it complicates their work in ways that prove fruitful" (28). In the opinion of this reader, his book repays the considerable effort it requires.

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