remains disappointingly out of focus. This is also a point at which the policy of translating extracts other than the French is frustratingly inconsistent.

The final chapter, "Peace and the Animal Kingdom," is a kind of appendix, on the *topos* of the animals not killing their own species in quantity the way humans do, and in that respect being less 'bestial' and more rational. There is a fluency of reference in this essay, from Pliny and Gregory Nazianzen on one page to Calvin and Milton (the only English poet who rates more than a mention), before, in a kind of recapitulation and conclusion to the whole book, he links Ronsard and Erasmus. There is a very useful appendix in which Hutton analyses twenty-five major *topoi* in poetry on peace of the period.

It would be idle to criticise Hutton for ignoring the magisterial work of Silver on Ronsard, for example; the transformation of Renaissance French studies that has occurred since the book was effectively finished has not rendered the book obsolete, because its ambitions are so different. It remains an example of an admirable kind of old-fashioned scholarship. The kind of searching for sources and topics that Hutton does so effectively is, in a way, something that Renaissance writers themselves would have recognised, indeed been trained for, although for different ends. The book functions best as a kind of reference work, a quarry, rather than a work of criticism. And could not Cornell have put French somewhere in the title, just for clarity's sake?

ROGER POOLEY, *University of Keele*

Annabel Patterson. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984. Pp. ix, 283, illus.

In Chapter One of *Censorship and Interpretation*, Annabel Patterson summarizes Edwin Greenlaw's 1913 political and historical reading of Sidney's *Arcadia*, and then surveys subsequent textual and generic approaches to the work – approaches designed to shake the clay of history from their critical boots. The example illustrates very effectively how the new critics and their descendants have closed the door on history and historicist readings of literature. It also shows succinctly and tactfully how fundamentally close poststructuralist methods are to their new-critical antecedents, despite rhetorical protestations to the contrary, and, finally, how current antihistorical critical modes are, in the original sense of the word, reactionary and impose restraints on themselves that limit the fullness of their critical analysis.

Patterson's own approach to the relation between censorship and interpretation in the Renaissance is resolutely historical and political in focus, although it does not reject the tools of textual and genre criticism or the methods of the deconstructionists. Fully aware of recent Marxist, psychological, rhetorical, and cultural theories of censorship by Leo Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Hans-Georg Gadamar, and Michel Foucault, Patterson draws on their contributions to textual and cultural analysis to explicate what she perceives as a clearly understood rhetoric of censorship that informed the relationship between author, reader, and authority

during the English Renaissance. Without underestimating the difficulties we have come to expect in finding meaning or intention in texts, Patterson nevertheless defines what she means by "censorship" with a candor unusual in contemporary criticism. From the mid-sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, political censorship was pervasive; it was a problem (she argues, p. 18) foremost in the minds of literate people, and from it arose subtle but recognized methods of encoding politically sensitive meaning within texts.

Biography, intention, allegory, persuasion, and politics – ashes in the mouths of exegetes who hold that there is nothing outside the text itself – are words which form the working vocabulary and methodological assumptions of *Censorship and Interpretation*. Patterson breaks the critical paralysis caused by the indeterminacy of language and proposes a "hermeneutics of censorship" in which functional ambiguity is one of several recognized methods used by authors such as Sidney, Jonson, Donne, Cowley, and Milton to encode the meanings of and intentions behind their work. Working, then, from carefully documented historical assumptions that censorship is part of the rhetoric of an authoritarian age, she studies the ways in which the creation, publication, reception, and suppression of books are part of the dynamics of power by which a culture interprets, directs, and redirects itself.

In thus reconciling historicists' and post-structuralists' methods, *Censorship and Interpretation* is itself an act of self-conscious, politically engaged critical writing meant, in part, to persuade readers that literature is not disengaged from life, but is always an act of political expression. As we read Patterson's analysis of how writers such as Sidney, Jonson, Shakespeare, and Cowley (her strongest sections) use methods of concealment, indirection, and discovery to influence their society, and in turn, how society and its authorities perceive their work, we get a clear sense of how subtle the protean forms of censorship were and are – "are", for we also sense Patterson's awareness of the political decorum of scholarly writing. Learning from the authors she writes about, she is careful to be self-censoring: her intentions are explicit but understated, and generally "encoded" in sound and useful scholarship, and a subversive but effective methodology which combines the heterogeneous elements of practical criticism, hermeneutics, and historicism. Tactfully avoiding academia's own censoring strictures which insist on the "disengagement" of scholarly writing, Patterson writes with the same "principle of moderate reformism" that she finds (p. 41) in Sidney's *Arcadia*.

No one will doubt the reality of censorship in a society that instituted the Stationer's Register, legislated against satire and eventually closed the theatres, branded Ben Jonson, imprisoned many, and mutilated and occasionally executed others for their writings. Some will feel that Patterson has overemphasized the politics of the period, and that she loses sight of more important aspects of works by reading them exclusively in terms of their occasional, political content. Such criticisms are not without merit: surely something is at work in the quarto version of *King Lear* (not exactly a thin-blooded work) that exceeds the interest Shakespeare might have had in the Scottish union. Certainly Jonson was painfully aware of the politics of literature – and Patterson's account of the political transformations of *Sejanus* between 1608 and 1616 is in itself completely convincing – but he

also admired art for its own sake, and not just as a means of reform, as we sense in his late plays and increasingly in the *Underwood* poems.

If Patterson has made too little concession to the sensibilities of the apolitical, it may be that this is necessary to her other purpose, which is to demonstrate how some of these texts and indeed some genres (particularly the familiar letter and the romance) were in fact vulnerable to political interpretation because of their indeterminacy. That is, their political implications – or applications – were invented, magnified, or otherwise reassessed by succeeding generations. Hence Patterson's title: *Censorship and Interpretation*. Often what is of interest or importance is not that a work has political designs, but that it is perceived to have them; it acquires political meaning in a Borges-like fashion as it is rewritten by history. In this sense, then, the politics of interpretation presented here, as part of cultural censorship, is of continued importance: all literary works lose their political self-determination when they become public, and whatever Shakespeare's interest in the Scottish union, our present cultural climate has seen fit to politicize the quarto version of *King Lear*.

Literary genres are also subject to such political changes in interpretation, and some of the most original contributions of *Censorship and Interpretation* take the form of genre criticism. The rhetoric of censorship overflows into a politics of genre, and Patterson's argument has important implications for the way in which we traditionally read Renaissance literature. In contextualizing her material, Patterson stresses the public nature of Renaissance writing and prepares the way for a richer understanding of genres, such as the familiar letter, the romance, and the lyric. In the historical scope of her study, we see the vernacular literature of the period increasingly transformed by the conventions of political consciousness, as private letters (for example) become imbued with a polyvalent public rhetoric, and forms such as the romance become politically more specific in the light of their past associations. Thus, measured against Sydney's *Arcadia*, the revival of interest in romance forms during and after Charles's reign (seen, for example, in King Charles's *Eikon Basilike*, Barclay's *Argenis* which Jonson translated, and even in Milton) acquires a political significance which adds considerably to our understanding of the genre.

Patterson's approach to genre – particularly lyric and romance forms – raises questions about modern, or more correctly, postRomantic assumptions about the private dimension of literature, and suggests the need to establish new criteria for measuring the success of (and the aesthetic of) Renaissance literature. In her chapter on "Lyric and Society" we are particularly aware of the inadequacy of contemporary methods of analysis which posit the same sort of relation between author and text that we expect of a poem by (for example) Wallace Stevens. Relatedly, current views of romance, Foucault's for example, which see the genre as preoccupied with the "study of fictionality itself" (p. 164), and with the problems of a "textuality that is sufficient unto itself" seem, at least in the light of Patterson's approach, naive and inadequate to the cultural problems of the genre. Although not rejecting these readings or methods, Patterson suggests that we look at this literature not only for the epistemology of its discursive texts (p. 164), but semiotically, as signifiers of ideas *outside* itself.

Censorship and Interpretation is particularly successful in its attempt to offer alternatives to currently antagonistic critical methods. Its more specific objectives, defining and analysing the "hermeneutics of censorship," are realized with originality and sound scholarship. There is occasionally a conflict between the demands of illustration and analysis which arises from attempting too much, and which occasionally results in fragmented readings of major works. It may be that in politicizing the Renaissance without making concessions to other kinds of readings, the author runs the risk of offending readers otherwise likely to be sympathetic to her staunchly humanistic position. After all, eluding the censor, whether internal or external, is not an end in itself – and there are higher authorities than prince and parliament. Nor should we forget that aesthetic delight and the pleasures of the text are also aspects of the art of poets from Sidney to Marvell. But in its understated way *Censorship and Interpretation* takes an important position: that rhetoric and "textuality" are never decontextualized; to accept the view that they are, or should be, is to allow that literature and the humanities are culturally unimportant. Such self-censoring, it is suggested, is politically naive and self-defeating. For Canadian readers, the argument is especially cogent in the context of the Federal Government's cynical move to impose heavy taxes on imported English language books, and the Provincial Government of Ontario's plans to introduce rigid prescriptions on what is and is not pornographic (following academia's example in decontextualizing expression). Clearly we continue to live by rules of free expression which do not always originate in the artistic imagination.

W.H. HERENDEEN, *University of Windsor*

Anthony Low. *The Georgic Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985. Pp. xii, 370.

Anthony Low has written a remarkable book, which is interdisciplinary in an exemplary fashion. *The Georgic Revolution* provides a genuinely novel approach to a number of familiar writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the sort of attention to social and political questions characteristic of the new historicism. At the same time, Low writes with clarity and vigor and fulfills the canons of traditional scholarship in a way that affirms the central role of literary study in a liberal education:

Even in our time poetry is a valuable indicator of cultural patterns, and it anticipates cultural transformations almost as often as it closely follows them. In an age when political and social leaders regularly read and often wrote poems themselves, poetry provides us with an even more significant means of investigating attitudes and especially of digging into those underlying assumptions that are too basic for any culture to discuss openly or in some cases even to bring to conscious awareness. (p.5)

The study begins with the observation that, despite the great influence and prestige of Virgil, the middle phase of the *rota Vergili* was curiously neglected. Pastoral