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

remained very popular throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and epic was at least revered by those poets who did not attempt it; but the period produced few georgics and little poetry in a broadly georgic mode. Following Raymond Williams and James Turner, Low traces this neglect to a general aversion to manual labour among the cultured classes. "Resistance to georgic" is thus complementary to pastoral glorification of rural otium. Of course this was not always the case. "The husbandman is often a prominent and sometimes a sympathetic figure in Medieval poetry," Low observes. "One thinks of Chaucer and of that prototypical figure, Piers Plowman" (p.28). One of the surprises Low turns up is that a literary contempt for work emerges just as the "Protestant work ethic" is ostensibly beginning to dominate England.

Low suggests that a georgic appreciation for the value and dignity of labour is more a product of a generally reforming spirit than of the Protestant Reformation, of which "one unforeseen result" was "the enhancement of secular power and secular ideals" (p.196). Although St. Thomas More and Hugh Latimer, for example, were martyrs on opposite sides of the religious conflict, both were Christian reformers who believed in the moral value of work. They shared "a habit of affronting royal power by daring to give, or to represent in their persons, uncomfortable advice" (p.200).

The georgic mode affords an illuminating perspective on the poetry of the English Renaissance. Read in terms of georgic, Spenser emerges as a far more unconventional, even radical, poet than he usually appears. Acknowledging the seminal work of William Sessions, Low argues that the poet of *The Faerie Queene* is also sixteenth-century England's poet of work. At first this seems surprising since Spenser, author of a set of eclogues and an epic, wrote no formal georgic. In the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, however, "Spenser reveals that the premier knight of England, the patron of the chivalric society at the court of Elizabeth, derives his honorable name from the Greek word for husbandman" (p.40); and the georgic mood of the poem deepens in the later books, written as Spenser became "progressively disillusioned with the values represented by the Elizabethan court and society" (p.43). The "pastoral" sixth book is, in some ways, a rejection of pastoral in favour of a georgic devotion to labour. Low finds little of the georgic spirit in Donne, Herbert, and Vaughan. Donne is generally scornful toward manual labour and the countryside, and Herbert and Vaughan manifest more of a Protestant quietism than a Protestant work ethic. Spenser's true georgic heir in the seventeenth century is Milton, who shares his reformer's zeal and whose *Paradise Regained*, as "heroic georgic" (p.352), is a fitting consummation of the georgic revolution.

The Georgic Revolution is an interesting and important book. It gives a new angle of vision for the interpretation of particular poems, and it provides a fresh vision of poetry's role in the interpretation of culture. Low gives us a fine model for the reciprocal significance of poetry and its social matrix: "The revolution mentioned in the title of this study was a real one, with social, ideological, economic and technological ramifications as well as literary consequences. Therefore the aim of this book is both to describe a social history as it is revealed in the barometer of poetry and in turn to elucidate poetry by placing it more accurately in a living context" (p.12).

R.V. YOUNG, *North Carolina State University*