plays to show his response to an age when "there was not one theatre, but many, and they took to parody and jest of one another, without necessarily feeling rancour." Finally, in place of D.F. Rowan's paper (not delivered because of illness) Professor Hibbard has included his paper, "Love, Marriage and Money in Shakespeare's Theatre and Shakespeare's England." He agrees that Shakespeare responded (albeit indirectly) to the Jacobean age's concerns — here with marriage as a means to wealth and power. For direct treatment of these social concerns, Middleton is singled out for his use of a contemporary London setting. Contrasting the two playwrights, Professor Hibbard concludes: "Middleton is a master of dissection, but he does not know how to breathe life into a dream. Shakespeare does, and into no other idea did he breathe more life than that of love as an absolute value."

Of the conference as a whole, one is impressed at once by the speakers' impressive powers of dissection and their regard for the Elizabethan Theatre as a living art.

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Alastair Fowler. *Conceitful Thought: The Interpretation of English Renaissance Poems*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975. Pp. viii, 152. \$11.00.

The now Regius Professor of English at Edinburgh has established a public personality through a large number of works. To whatever literary problem he has brought his attention, a boldly original rearrangement of its mastered constituents has produced answers — not merely numerological ones — which daunt less cerebral readers by their intellectual power and complexity. Rooted as he is in the historical discipline of Renaissance literary studies, and gifted with sensitivity, he cannot be faulted, like many adventurous structuralists and sociological or psychologizing writers about literature, for ignorance of the facts or outrageous textual imperceptivity. He is often applauded or condemned for the wrong reasons, because fundamental comprehension of his unconventional and complex writings is so demanding for students of literature. The effort to comprehend ought, however, to be made. His is one of the most original and valuable minds in our field, although his self-confident boldness often leads him up many storied-towers of inference to conclusions which merit intelligent opposition.

The present book, which contains material on the earlier Tudors, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, the Metaphysicals, and Jonson's *To Penshurst*, begins unaccustomedly under the sign manual of uncertainty, with a chapter on Wyatt. Truth is theoretically attainable concerning 16th- and 17th-century lyrics, Fowler says, but is much more difficult to reach than most critics think: in the case of Wyatt because of our ignorance of the courtly context to which each poem may have been a response, and because of our inability to imagine our way into a courtly ethos of love (this latter is a little overstated). More generally, he asks, how far should we dare to press our iconographical analyses and our interpretations in terms of other symbolic means which we know were shared in the Renaissance? Often not so far as we do push them, answers Fowler disarmingly. All the more strongly, however, the truth

(he is sure) will not come unless it is assisted by "impure" criticism — study of lyrics in relation to their time and their authors' occasions.

A number of poems are examined following these criteria, which are considerably sharpened in his discussion of "Who so list to hunt". Careless, impressionistic assumptions and insufficiently laborious investigation of the lexical content and the poetic tradition behind its conceit have concealed from us what, after reading Fowler, seems obvious. The poem is a compliment to a lady who is being described as chaste (the most available meaning of "wild" as against "tame" and of a deer marked as belonging to Caesar). The area of private meaning about which we can only speculate is the degree, if any, of complimentary reference to the ownership of the lady by the sovereign, and of reassurance to him about the lady's chastity, supposing, for instance, a reference to Anne Boleyn.

The obligatory passage through "They flee from me" is well worth following for its summing up of the present state of the poem's interpretations, although three paraphrases of the closing words of the poem offer solutions of increasing difficulty: "a strange fashion of forsaking" as a strange fashion of refusal, denial, without, in terms of "courtly love", the assumption of a breaking off of the semi-contractual character of the relationship, is quite possible; "leave to go" as permission to depart without the actual performance of departing as yet, seems possible, although the litotic undertone of "I have leave to go" seems to me unavoidable, and the alternative seems not simply legalistic as in a courtly *demande d'amour* but antipoetically pettifogging; "I would fain know what she hath deserved" as "I wish to know [in light of the foregoing] what kind of treatment it is appropriate for me to render to her" seems impossible in the light of the present perfect tense (entailing the strained conversion '... in the light of what she has been doing, what it is that she has come to deserve').

The latter part of the book, which contains its most interesting and fruitful idea, takes up where Rosemond Tuve left off. As she and others said, there is in principle no difference between the position of the Elizabethans and that of the 17th century in regard to metaphor. Notwithstanding, there is a difference in practice. According to Fowler this is not, as is still claimed, that Elizabethan lyrical imagery is loose, merely decorative, simple-minded, and uninteresting, and that Metaphysical imagery is more precise, and central to the meaningful movement of the Metaphysical lyric. It is that the imagery of Sidney, Spenser, and (Fowler insists) Shakespeare (quicker and more intense imagery than Spenser's, but out of the same stable) is equally interesting in its use of complex "discourse sets", "compound or multiple metaphors", "mixed allegoria", "vehicular chains", while the Metaphysical kind of image (except in devotional lyrics, a very large exception) must move more simply, within one discourse set, to make plain its more startling, single point. In one respect, Donne seems to be on the way to Neoclassicism. As Fowler sums it up (p. 113),

... The different styles not only overlapped, but coexisted in the same author. Nevertheless, a broad movement is observable, around 1600, in the style of extended metaphors. This was not a movement from simple to complex. It would be nearer the truth (though still an oversimplification) to say that one sort of complexity, suitable for sustained meditation and large imaginative construction, gave way to another sort, adaptable to quick striking effects. The witty, immediate point of the Metaphysical conceit might be accompanied by less immediate, more demanding figurative effects. Or it might not.

Other-minded readers may answer that it is precisely the compound nature of some earlier conceits that suggests their limitation: the old material had to be subtilized to be at all useful. Yet with regard to the extreme example, the most deliberately complex of Spenser's conceits, this does not seem a telling objection. When attentively considered they have a kind of intellectual completeness which is very satisfying. They have been thought through to the end, and the poetic material is evenly irradiated with mental light. They have to be read quite differently from Donne's. Altogether, a reviewer must regret most the impossibility of exemplifying Fowler's conceptually precise, clear, but necessarily complex demonstration of these matters in the chapter "The Shakespearean Conceit". It will be important to more readers than will anything else in the book.

The foregoing, partly synoptic description of Fowler's book gives an imperfect picture of its essence unless one adds that a large part of the work proceeds alternately by two quite different paths. The first entails a singularly patient teasing out of poem after poem, often with a conceptual grasp and a clarity of terminology useful to all of us, and with a startlingly complete demonstration of the inanity of many a long-received and unexamined interpretation. Along the second path the old, unregenerate Fowler of *The Numbers of Time* and later books shows his colours in architecturally awe-inspiring schemes of numerological symbolism in Surrey, Sidney, and Spenser. The initial (and official) emphasis of the book on uncertainty of conclusions, and the demonstration of the unreliability of many interpretations of many poems according to our accepted, traditional practice, have the incidental advantage of suggesting that numerical analysis ought not to be more distrusted than the old, impressionistic, hit-or-miss methods with which we have lived so long. It is an engaging and novel experience to watch Fowler's use of an intelligent variant of the humility-topos as a transition or coda in the intervals and chapter-endings which separate the two kinds of material.

One of the more attractive of his numerical schemes repays close examination. In discussing Sidney's double sestina "Ye goatherd gods" Fowler points to a remarkable circumstance in the pattern of repeated words in successive stanzas of the form, as first developed by Arnaut Daniel (as far as we know) and continued down to Sidney and later. It is well known that, if the last words of a preceding stanza in this form are numbered in sequence, the patterns of these recurring end-words in the immediately following stanza will be 615243, because these words are selected alternately from the last and first, next-to-last and next-to-first, and finally two middle lines of the preceding stanza. What is astonishing is that this order corresponds exactly to the order of signs of the zodiac when these latter are arranged, as in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, in their usual circular pattern in such a way that they are made to correspond (for reasons of Ptolemy's own) to the planets: the two highest signs in the northern sky to the brightest luminaries, Sol and Luna; the next two lower signs, on the east and west of these, to the nearest planet not yet accounted for (Mercury); the next two (now low down on opposite sides of the northern hemisphere) to the next nearest planet, Venus; and so on through the southern hemisphere (the northern and southern hemispheres are absent-mindedly reversed in the diagram on p. 41 and in the discussion, p. 41 *supra*). If one numbers the signs on the western side of this diagram, beginning from the north, 123456, according to the annual progress of the sun along the zodiac, then it is true that by alternating

these signs from extreme south and north until one reaches the western horizon, one emerges with 615243.

Fowler does not claim that the inventor of the sestina or many users of the form perceived this. What he does contend is that in the first Italian sestina ("Al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d'ombra") Dante may well have drawn on the macrocosmic analogy of the sun's movement (the poem "may be meant to render in its stanzaic structure the sun's annual course around the ecliptic", p. 41) because he mentions the winter solstice and dwells on imagery of light and dark; that, further, Petrarch does much the same; and that "Ye goatherd gods" hints in the semantic opposition of its end-words at the same procedure: mountains-valleys, morning-evening, forests-music (this latter pair signifying nature, wildness, passion, material *hylē* against art, immaterial harmony, civilization); mountains, valleys, and forests as spatial, and morning, evening, music as temporal; mountains-valleys as natural categories assigned to Strephon as speaker, morning-evening as temporal to Klaius, in the folio editions of the *Arcadia*.

As readers of some of his earlier books will recognize, this planetary-zodiacal scheme with earthly correspondences is a typically Fowlerian one. For certain generous minds, it is likely to be immediately acceptable because it enriches: it is so beautiful and it gives such striking multiplicity of reference to Sidney's poetry. There are, however, certain difficulties. The scheme works most dramatically if solar movement is being directly mimed, yet only in the eastern heavens, or solar semicircle, from Solar Leo through Saturnian Capricorn, does the numbering 123456 correspond to the sun's annual movement; in the west, from Lunar Cancer to Saturnian Aquarius, the count is retrograde to the sun. It is true, however, that the numbering may stand, even if not corresponding to solar movement, for astrologically one talks of both "following" and "leading" orders of the signs. Notwithstanding, this latter being the case, an alternating count like Fowler's produces 162534 (retrograde in the east, planigrade in the west) as easily as the required 615243.

In order to rescue the theory at this point by very precise formulation, then, one would have to say that in writing a sestina Dante preferred, or felt constrained, to compose strictly in the traditional end-word pattern inherited from Arnaut Daniel, and saw that in one (but not the other) of two possible ways it corresponded beautifully to a macrocosmic pattern depending upon a combination (perceived, as far as we know, only by him up to this point) of Ptolemy's planetary-zodiacal scheme with a symmetrical alternation of the zodiacal signs above and below the horizon. He proceeded to embody this association in *Al poco giorno*; further, Petrarch and Sidney, unlike many, if not all, other writers of sestinas, followed him in this.

There is the further difficulty, however, that the semantic opposition between end-words in Dante's, Petrarch's, and Sidney's sestinas only occasionally has the diurnal or seasonal character that might be suggested by the zodiacal and solar correspondences. Fowler's discussion moves rather rapidly from them to opposites of an equally impressive quality but of a different kind, as appears from the instances above. One looks in vain for a more pedestrian and consequently more demonstrable instance of the tradition to which the three great poets are apparently alluding.

The theory is undoubtedly mind-expanding. The present reviewer would in one sense like to give his assent to it, because it has affinities with certain advanced features of his own theory concerning *Epithalamion*, as Fowler generously points

out. But if asked to advance beyond the affirmation that this theory is suggestive, to the further position that it is more likely than the notion that Dante, Petrarch, and Spenser accepted the striking permutations of the sestina-stanza as a formal symmetry, not an astronomical one (except in the most general Renaissance sense that poetic patterning was analogical to Nature's), and that they proceeded to invest the form with various monumental polarities which Fowler himself acutely observes, then many sober readers will have to stand fast. Fowler might answer that given the atmosphere of zodiacal and planetary correspondences with which he has in earlier work enveloped Spenser, for instance, the present theory is the more natural one. But not all of us will yield the premise.

It is only fair to add Fowler's additionally corroborative point that in two phases of the barley-break game recounted by Lamon in the 1593 *Arcadia*, the three pairs of six players move from the order 123456 to 615243 (if one can forget that Sidney specified no order within the pairs, and why would he not have been careful to do that?). The game is said to be played during the time of the sun's entry into Leo, i.e., at the beginning of the zodiacal series which works properly in Fowler's scheme. The symbolic and macrocosmic reference of dance and ballet in the Renaissance is of course well documented, but the point about this particular positional game remains doubtful.

Similarly if not sometimes more so with Fowler's other numerical, temporal, astral schemes in this book. In Surrey's "Wyatt resteth here", the seven central stanzas are associated by Fowler with the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, the seven corresponding Virtues, and the seven Beatitudes, in the way that Rosemond Tuve showed that these abstractions were sometimes correlated. However, in order to fit the stanzas, the Gifts have to be changed radically from their normal order. Fowler admits that this is most unusual (perhaps it is unique). This leads him, however, to another *trouville*: Tuve's correlation of the Gifts with the days of the week as well shows that in the order of the Gifts in these stanzas the days of the week are in perfect reverse order, and this, naturally, signifies in connection with Wyatt's death mortal decay.

Whatever one may think of this chain of demonstration, it is easiest to investigate the initial premise. The sixth of the central stanzas, in the poem's blazon-like style, moves on to Wyatt's heart, and is said by Fowler to refer to the Gift *timor domini*:

A heart, where dread was never so impressed
To hide the thought, that might the truth advance:
In neither fortune loft, nor yet repressed,
To swell in wealth, or yield unto mischance.

How can the dread that might have led him to cover up the truth, but never did, be related to fear of the Lord? The textually unsupported leap from proper fearlessness before man to proper dread of God seems too great a one. And similarly with almost all the other correspondences: there is something jagged and uneven about them. As Dante should have been able to do better in constructing a zodiacal sestina, so Surrey should have done better than this.

I refrain from examining Fowler's analyses of Surrey's Epitaph on Thomas Clere and Spenser's *Prothalamion* on similar lines. They are informed by a wealth of

iconographical knowledge and an acute observation of incidental symmetries which seem convincing. The second of these two makes great play with one of Fowler's recent favorites: Mannerist sophistication and confusion of numerical patterns in a way, given the period, which may well accord with the facts. But the over-arching generalizations themselves concerning formal numerical organization depend on weak chains of demonstration.

There is a characteristic Fowlerian approach to these matters which entails astral and temporal significances and the counting of classes of entities within a poem, as well as the central numerological practice of counting the poem's divisions — lines and stanzas. On the other hand, for instance, there is a principally German school of verse numeracy which puristically insists on non-symbolic numerical symmetries, counting lines forward and backward in a poem. There are other schools, including ones for Classical scholars. Probably they cannot all be right. Certainly numerical structure in some Medieval and Renaissance poems has come as close to being demonstrated as anything is, ever, in literary studies, yet there remains an awkwardness. The majority of numerical analyses of individual poems are in my opinion without much substance as yet, and the total subject has not yet been systematized. We are not much closer to an imaginatively convincing picture of the role of numerical symbolism in older poetry than we were twenty years ago, although considerable energy has been expended on analysis. (I have examined this problem at somewhat greater length in a paper in a collection on numerological subjects and the like, edited by Caroline Eckhardt and shortly to be published by Bucknell University Press.)

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A.C. Hamilton. *Sir Philip Sidney: A Study of his Life and Works*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977. Pp. viii, 216. \$13.95.

This slim volume announces itself as a "Life and Works," but it is rather what the preface declares, a general survey of Sidney as writer. The subtitle is justified by a persistent and explicit attempt to relate the life to the work. The historian may thereby be warned about the extent to which the book is meant for him, but the literary student should also be put on his guard. While I am gratified to know that "there is no man apart from the legend, no face under the mask" (p. 8), I am disquieted by the statement that the writings "are always centrally concerned with the business of a man (and that man is Sidney)" (pp. 11-12). Professor Hamilton assures us that the relationship between Sidney's life and writings "is not direct: the writings do not reveal his actual life — whatever that may have been like" (p. 12), but he also says, quite astonishingly, I think, that to understand *Astrophel and Stella* 33 ("I might, unhappy word, O me, I might, / And then would not, or could not see my bliss"), "one must know that marriage had once been proposed between Sidney, when he was almost 22, and the 13-year-old Penelope Devereux" (p. 94). Why should the poem be tied down to these specific facts (would it not equally suit a story like that of *Eugene Onegin*?), and how is it incomprehensible without them?