Judith M. Kennedy and James A. Reither, eds. *A Theatre for Spenserians*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973. Pp. lx, 144. \$10.00

The Spenser colloquium held in Fredericton in 1969 was memorable for many reasons. For a start, the proceedings took place in the bosom of Duesse (St. Thomas University was the unstintingly generous sponsor: the Babylonians still know how to fill a golden cup) and that alone gave the affair a peculiar piquancy. And then there was that one hilarious moment when an overseas visitor took a stunned and very British look at the orgiastic and multifarious events in the offing—six papers, a panel discussion on the state of Spenser scholarship, the establishment of the *Spenser Newsletter*, a banquet, a reception, parties galore—and dazedly pronounced the whole business a Spenser freakout. (Lest any one wonder, that list of events was Spenserianly hierarchical.)

Something of the same sense of overindulgence in Gloriana's banquet remains in the elegant little volume in which the six papers are now printed, if only because the fare is so varied and so rich. Though they range over wide areas, they fall into two immediately separable groups: the first and the last deal with the *Complaints* and the *Amoretti*, the others with the *Faerie Queene*. Millar MacLure's is an allusive and poetic consideration of Spenser's lifetime concern with time, mutability and history. Meditative and evocative rather than analytic, atmospheric rather than assertive, it works very well as an introduction. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for G.K. Hunter's quirky piece as a conclusion. He sees the *Amoretti* as an aberration from the English sonnet tradition embodied in Wyatt, Sidney and Drayton, a tradition that is dramatic and less concerned with elaboration of language; in other words, the expansive language of narrative (Spenser's major concern) is thought of as interposing itself between lyric emotion and the expression of that emotion. But we seem to have heard some of this before, from Yvor Winters for one, and then again, Professor Hunter casts an unsympathetic and impatient eye upon any notion of structure in the sequence, according it all too cavalier a dismissal. One is left with the feeling that a simple matter of taste, not susceptible of being disputed, has been unsuccessfully enlarged into a matter of artistic principle.

The remaining four papers are notable first and foremost for their great diversity of approach to Spenser's major poem. A. Kent Heatt's reading of Book II is an interesting, perceptive, provocative paper, but it is also overlong and defensive in its constant reference to the work of other critics, a tactic that vitiates its strength. This has the effect of making the issue seem less like one between the author and Spenser than one between the author and other critics. To my mind at least, the concentration on numerology which introduces and closes this otherwise traditional paper is something of a red herring. Does the discovery of a recurring phrase like "in the midst" in a mathematically significant position really alter the fact that the Cave of Mammon, Garden of Adonis, and Orgoglio passages have always been recognizable as central or "middle" parts of their respective books? Surely a sense of that centrality is antecedent to the discovery of a well-concealed phrase embedded in a passage and discoverable only by a laborious count? Increasingly, it seems that numerology, still fresh from the first excitements of its discovery, and therefore in some sense still specialized and partisan, has simply not yet found its place in the hierarchy of Spenser's interests. Like Egyptian or Cabalistic lore to the Medicean group, it may always have been caviar to the general; but then fish eggs have a way of retaining the smell of fish.

Another long-concealed aspect of Spenser's art, his humour, is currently struggling toward the light, and William Nelson works valiantly to help it grow. Sometimes Professor Nelson reveals a more highly developed sense of humour than does Spenser, for the latter is clearly no Ariosto; but it is good to see that he is combing Spenser not simply for jokes, but rather for evidence of a distinctive narrative posture, an artistic distance from his inherited romance materials which allows him, in a manner that horrifies those with the modern novelist's sense of narrative integrity, to be witty at the expense of his vehicle. This distance is something that Spenser shares with Ariosto, and if we hear less from this time on of Spenser's high seriousness and Ariosto's contrasting cold cynicism, we shall have come far. (Professor Nelson, by the way, has just published an extension of this material in the form of a book, *Fact of Fiction: The Dilemma of the Renaissance Story-teller*.)

Playing seriously is a notion that Spenser inherited from the Neoplatonism of the Renaissance, and it is with the importance of the various Neoplatonic triads of the Florentine school that Alastair Fowler is concerned in a splendidly learned and exciting contribution. This expansive and elaborate material looks rather cramped in its present form; perhaps only an art historian of the calibre of Panofsky or Wind is capable of making it seem effortlessly human, personal, intimate and momentous, but there is no one else currently working in the field who can approach Fowler in his control of its complexities.

Finally, in direct contrast to Fowler's emphasis on large patterns of thought and overarching structures, A.C. Hamilton deals microscopically and precisely with certain selected passages of Spenser's epic and reveals a wealth of rhetorical word-play that will enhance any reader's enjoyment and understanding of the poem. He is concerned with the surface (which is to say the inner heart) of the poem, and with what its etymologies, puns, positioning of adjectives and adverbs, and spelling tell us about its meaning. Here he follows Martha Craig's seminal treatment of similar materials, but rarely has the work emerged as the joyous polyphonic thing it is as in these pages. The essay is remarkable for tact, sureness of touch, and rock-solid learning.

In short then, an admirable if centrifugal collection. We note the continuing vitality of the various critical approaches at the same time that we feel the need for a criticism that will hierarchize, reconcile and assimilate them. In any case, if Spenser's juvenile productions of 1569 evoke so interesting a series of essays, we can all look forward to the celebrations of 1990.

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Paula Johnson. *Form and Transformation in Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972. Pp. ix, 170. \$8.50

Mrs. Johnson argues that the great forms in poetry and music do not emerge full-blown in the English Renaissance but are the product of decades of cultural habits and preferences undergoing trial and error transformation. The mature works of Shakespeare, Spenser, Dowland and Weelkes both reflected and advanced a general spirit of artistic experimentation, by which cultural preference for one compositional model was gradually replaced by another. The early Renaissance favoured an episodic, "segmental" form, whose "foundation is a series of discrete parts," as the associative progression of *Tamburlaine*, *Cam-*