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-*

paspe, and Byrd's *Civitas sancti tui* demonstrate. In the 1590's and later more unified, "climactic" compositional techniques, whose model was a rising "curve of expectation" (illustrated by *Venus and Adonis* and Weelkes's *Cease sorrows now*) superseded segmental form. The period 1575-1620, one of rapidly changing formal assumptions about the structures which art may achieve, serves then as the ground for Mrs. Johnson's study.

But the book attempts more than an historical discussion of style. It also inquires into the nature of "serial art": those forms which, like music and poetry, "determine the sequential order of their own apprehension." How do we give shape and form to objects presented to us in time? Do music and poetry share more than the temporality of their presentation? Mrs. Johnson begins with the claim—by no means a new one—that music and poetry are similar in their formal organization, and further, that this organization may be described in terms applicable to both arts. Yet a musical orientation dominates the book, both with regard to the preferment given composers and, more damaging, with regard to the formal assumptions underlying its critical methodology.

Mrs. Johnson applies to literature a practice occasionally detrimental to musical criticism, which assumes that a work's greatness and emotive power stem entirely from the complexity of its formal elements. While she is not without interesting speculation, her actual analyses reify their subject matter to its most obvious structural constituents: "even visually, Bull's variations show a series of discrete patterns, each contained between two of the periodic double bars"; "imitative analogues serve to mark off as a part the material they govern."

This tendency to limit criticism to the material and concrete is reinforced by a terminology that dehumanizes its subject matter. Although her language initially gives the impression of conceptual breadth, in practice it divests art of all connotative appeal, reducing awareness to the perception of bloodless abstract patterns: "In formal terms, Bassanio and Portia are not persons who make journeys, but recurrent elements whose appearance in different contexts serves to link contexts together." Preoccupied with the ways in which a work is physically constructed, anxious to show relationship between components and parts, Mrs. Johnson is able to isolate the material building blocks of art, but her vocabulary cannot mediate between these components and the work that emerges *from* them. Thus her readings in music and literature are mechanistic and indistinguishable: "Just as in the motet [Byrd's *Civitas sancti tui*] where the end of one phrase is overshadowed by the next, so here [Sidney's 1590 *Arcadia*, Bk. II.] a multilinear continuity is maintained by avoiding cadences and by adroit shifting of the figure-ground relationship between the strands of narrative."

The methodology seems particularly inadequate to literature. Readings of the *Arcadia*, Lyly's *Gallathea*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes* rarely rise above narrative summary and uniformly ignore irony, character, and culture, to concentrate rather on double plots, sound patterns, and episodic recurrence. The interpretation of *Venus and Adonis*, for instance, notes a "melting away of passion in the final stanzas," where Shakespeare "matter-of-factly introduces the obsequies with nothing more than a 'quoth she.'" This "muted climax" represents a "descending curve" in the poem's "climactic" progression. By emphasizing the structural placement of this passage merely, Mrs. Johnson avoids the ambiguity central to its action and, thus, its ironic function.

But Shakespeare is deliberately non-committal here. For Venus's appetency, the poem has punished her in her sorrow, and while she is portrayed tenderly in this passage, her

mourning is not allowed to go without qualification. While Venus seems always able to rationalize her selfishness, we see that by plucking the flower she must necessarily kill it. In sorrow, as in love, she is inadvertently a destructive figure, one whose self-indulgence harms those things she cherishes most.

Irony of this order falls outside Mrs. Johnson's province. By providing cubbyholes into which the problematic may be confined without examination, her methodology allows the critic to discuss the text without actually engaging it. And yet one feels that she has not set herself an impossible task. Although it was not their specific intention, Joseph Kerman (*The Elizabethan Madrigal*; *The Beethoven Quartets*) and Charles Rosen (*The Classical Style*) have each shed new light on structural relationships between the arts, and have placed formal experimentation within a wide cultural context. Mrs. Johnson's book, however, fails to achieve an inclusive and transforming vision of compositional practices in Renaissance music and poetry. It is burdened by a plethora of mechanistic and inconsistent terminologies, and is confined, by its practice, to a needlessly reductive conception of form.

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Beryl Rowland. *Animals with Human Faces*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973. Pp. xx, 196. \$10.75.

Professor Rowland's book includes discussions of five reptiles, one insect, thirty-seven real and twelve fabulous beasts under fifty-seven names arranged alphabetically, as well as fifty-seven monochrome illustrations. It is attractively designed and bound, and has a generally useful index and a substantial bibliography.

The author has drawn her information from a selection of classical, patristic, medieval, and Renaissance sources. Her publishers claim that "her emphasis throughout is on current usage"; on the contrary, despite the citations from ancient and Renaissance writers the material seems predominantly medieval. In particular, the conventions taken from Renaissance poets, playwrights, and heraldic handbooks even in their own time depended for their effect on the long-lasting influence of their medieval antecedents. The evidence adduced from Renaissance emblem books, both English and continental, also tends to have strong medieval affinities, and seems, at least in regard to the examples chosen for this book, to substantiate the charge of Lord Shaftesbury that emblems were "magical, mystical, monkish, and Gothic." The illustrations, moreover, drawn solely from medieval manuscripts (the texts which they accompany are not given or described) and perhaps providing the book with its title, further suggest a too-heavy concentration on materials from the Middle Ages. Surely the inclusion of texts from emblem books should have necessitated the reproduction of the emblems themselves, since pictures and texts were closely interrelated in the emblem convention of complementary word and image.

The range of materials, with the qualifications noted previously, may seem to justify the subtitle, "A Guide to Animal Symbolism," but as a guidebook, the volume suffers from too few animal subjects as well as inadequate and sometimes careless treatment of the sources. For example, Alan of Lille includes twenty-seven animals in his *De Planctu Naturae*, but Professor Rowland, although mentioning most of them, uses the poem for only two, the ass and the camel, and misunderstands the description of the former. Other