Albert Douglas Menut, ed. *Maistre Nicole Oresme: Le Livre de Politiques d'Aristotle*. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1970. Pp. 392. \$10.

Nicole Oresme has been restored in recent years to a deservedly prominent position in the history of ideas, and this in no small measure due to the dedicated efforts and skill of Professor Menut. His editions of Oresme's French translations of Aristotle are now complete, including the *Livre de Ethiques* (1940), the *Livre du ciel et du monde* (1941-1943), the pseudo-Aristotelian *Livre de Yconomique* (1957) and now finally the *Livre de Politiques*. It is Menut's publication of the *Livre du ciel* ... which seems to have stimulated in recent years an intensive re-examination of Oresme's contribution to the history of medieval science, to the point where he is now generally acclaimed as the foremost natural philosopher of the fourteenth century.

However, Nicole Oresme was more than just a distinguished and original scientific mind: a number of his writings are concerned with wider behavioral issues, the rational and orderly conduct of life in society. These humanistic preoccupations are particularly well exposed in the commentary to his translation of the *Politica*. It may well be that this long-awaited edition will stimulate new research into the stature of Oresme the humanist, who seems to be every bit as interesting as Oresme the scientist.

There is a third aspect to Oresme's greatness which is not so well served by Menut's edition. The editor was, of course, primarily concerned with Oresme's thought; but Oresme was also a highly creative user of the French language, to the extent that he has left a rich heritage of over 400 common words in the lexicon of modern French, an achievement rivalled only by those of Rabelais and Victor Hugo. For the lexicologist, however, Menut's text is not entirely adequate. The critical apparatus is severely reduced, not only for understandable reasons of economy – "the expensive waste of printer's ink" – but also, regrettably, to avoid "clutter" and "an extended exercise in futility." In order to explore the full contribution of Oresme to the history of the French language, all manuscripts and early printed editions would have to be re-examined in detail. Practical considerations seem to have dictated against an English translation of the text, a most useful feature of the other three editions given to us by Menut. It is unfortunate that even more of the immense amount of detailed information and understanding accumulated by the editor in his years of painstaking work could not have been made available to future researchers.

The edition, like the others in the series, is beautifully presented, with helpful introductory sections on the intellectual background of the period, the life and work of Oresme, and the sources of his extensive commentary. A word of gratitude and congratulation is certainly due to Professor Menut on the completion of this series of editions which restore to us more completely one of the most remarkable and influential men of the Scholastic age.

ROBERT TAYLOR, *University of Toronto*

Forrest G. Robinson. *The Shape of Things Known: Sidney's Apology in its Philosophical Tradition*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972.

The purpose of this book is a re-interpretation of Sir Philip Sidney's definition of poetry as a "speaking picture" in terms of what the author calls "visual epistemology," or the philosophical tradition of conceiving of thinking as seeing. Thus the "notable images" praised in the *Apology* are not concrete visualizations, but moral concepts, Ideas, which ever since Plato have been described in terms of a visual analogy. The first two chapters therefore provide a valuable and at times dazzling synopsis of the main epistemological traditions, firstly from the pre-Socratics through the Middle Ages to the Florentine Neo-Platonists, and secondly in the Renaissance, emphasizing the boost given to visual methods of perception by printing, mathematics, emblem literature, contemporary art theory and the diagrammatic methods of Peter Ramus. The second half of the book analyses the theory of Sidney's *Apology* and the practice of the *Arcadia* and *Astrophil and Stella*, in order to demonstrate the connection between them.

Few to-day would quarrel with Robinson's thesis, especially since Geoffrey Shepherd's edition (1965) of the *Apology*, with its introductory survey of the philosophical tradition, or of Walter Davis' *Idea and Act in Elizabethan Fiction* (Princeton, 1969), a work which Robinson does not mention. Like many books with a thesis, however, *The Shape of Things Known* suffers from over-emphasis. The two chapters on the epistemological tradition bring out clearly the main divergence between those who derived *imagines* from illumination, as in Neo-Platonic and Augustinian thought, and those who, in some version of Aristotelian psychology, derived them by abstraction from sense data, only to submerge these irreconcilable views in the single term "visual epistemology," and despite the fact that Sidney himself firmly rejects the empirical approach. Similarly, Robinson ignores the substantial difference between various types of visualized conceptions; the "striking" images of the mnemotechnic tradition derived from Cicero's *De Inventione* and the *Ad Herennium*, the highly abstract tables and charts of Ramist method, and the allegorical, mystical and emblematic pictures of the Lullian-Brunonian systems not only have nothing in common except the joint analogy with sight, but actually, as Francis Yates showed in *The Art of Memory*, produced battles of the books, in one of which Sidney may have tried to act as mediator.

Sidney's undoubtedly visual approach to concepts is also stretched to make him indifferent to the audible elements of literature, despite the fact that "a speaking picture" is wisely double-edged. Even Walter J. Ong, from whom Robinson's emphasis on visualized conception is largely derived, warns in *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* that though invention is etymologically visual, judgement, requiring process, is not, and that therefore "any attempt to deal somewhat fully with the intellectual processes must rely on analogies between understanding and hearing as well as between understanding and seeing." Robinson is so concerned to demote hearing that he actually misreads Sidney's statement about the role of verse in aiding memorization. The statement that every word has its "natural seat, which seat must needs make the words remembered," concerns the benefits for memory of rhyme and rhythm and *not* the "word's place (in the logical sense) on the graphic fore-conceit underlying the poem" (p.120). But when he comes to the analysis of Sidney's works, Robinson in fact provides some very perceptive accounts of how the sound texture, especially of the Arcadian dialogues, is essential for our understanding.

Perhaps the least attractive aspect of an otherwise uncontentious book is the continuing quarrel with Neil Rudenstine (*Sidney's Poetic Development*, 1967), over the interpretation

of *energia*, which Rudenstine reads as a dramatic energy of style, transmitted especially by direct address, personification, prosopopeia and other animating techniques. Robinson insists that it must instead mean "conceptual clarity," but finds himself illustrating again and again, especially in *Astrophil and Stella*, the very dramatic devices he would demote as irrelevant. One is forced to conclude that Sidney meant what he said when he defined *energia* as "forcibleness," and regretted its absence in the love sonnets of his contemporaries.

Despite these objections, or indeed because of them, the book is well worth the effort of careful reading, providing the intellectual stimulus of necessary wariness which safer studies deny one, and constantly cancelling out one's uneasiness over details by summaries and conclusions as wisely latitudinarian as Sidney's own.

ANNABEL PATTERSON, *York University*

Gerald Eades Bentley. *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971. Pp. ix, 329. \$10.

In an earlier book entitled *Shakespeare and His Theatre*, G. E. Bentley speculated that we might achieve more schematic understanding of Renaissance dramatic practices by distinguishing among "amateur," "occasional," and "fully professional" playwrights.¹ His present work arrives at these divisions. Of two-hundred fifty authors who wrote plays during the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline periods, Professor Bentley distinguishes twenty-two playwrights who served the commercial theatre primarily, and from this group isolates a smaller number of "attached" or "professional" dramatists: Heywood, Fletcher, Dekker, Massinger, Shakespeare, Shirley, William Rowley, and Brome. *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time* uses the known practices of these playwrights to standardize the professional theatrical attitudes and activities of writers for the London stage: attached professionals, it argues, commonly assume that the writing, editing, revising, and publishing of their work must frequently be a company, and thus a communal, responsibility; they see their plays as theatrical, not literary, efforts; their work shows special regard for the requirements of theatrical performance.

By "professional dramatist," Professor Bentley means specifically those men who had continuous association with one London theatre or another, who showed hesitation about seeing their plays through the printing process, and whose play production was consistent and regular. Most important, the professionals were "primarily dependent upon the theatres for their livelihood."² Income from other than theatrical sources or eclectic compositional habits exclude from the professional category many of the most influential Renaissance dramatists: Jonson, Marston, Webster, Chapman, and Ford.

Professor Bentley's categories are less arbitrary in practice than they appear in summary. And they are documented with exhaustive conscientiousness. That the acting companies imposed publishing restrictions on their attached playwrights is evidenced by the 1635 and 1638 contracts drawn up between Richard Brome and the players of the Salisbury Court theatre; similar restrictions are implied by the publishing records of other attached professionals. The negative attitudes of amateur playwrights toward their professional contemporaries illustrate the low social status of attached dramatists. On the other hand, pay-