

The Complete Poems. By RICHARD BARNFIELD. Edited by GEORGE KLAWITTER. Pp. 256. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990. £32.

The Overthrow of the Gout and A Dialogue Betwixt the Gout and Christopher Ballista translated by Barnabe Googe from the Latin of Christopher Ballista. Edited by SIMON MCKEOWN. Pp. 48. London: Indelible Inc., 1990. £375.

The Sixth Book of Virgil's *Aeneid* translated and commented on by Sir John Harington (1604). Edited by SIMON CAUCHI. Pp. lxvi+182. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. £35.

All three editors and their publishers are to be commended for making available (with extensive introductions and notes) works languishing in neglect. However, Barnfield's poetry is entitled to pride of place—not only because it is of considerable merit and interest *per se* as original and individual work, but also because of Klawitter's innovative contribution as an editor. In fairness it should at once be pointed out that Cauchi strikes one as the more outstanding scholar, but Harington's translation of Virgil is nowhere near as distinguished as some of the masterpieces produced by Renaissance translators.

Barnfield wrote comparatively little, and ceased work as a poet at an early age. It is beyond the scope of this review to compare his poetry with Barnabe Googe's in any detail, although the texts are now at hand to enable one to do the job, as Judith Kennedy has ably and illuminatingly edited Googe's *Eclogues, Epitaphs, and Sonnets* for University of Toronto Press (1989). Of the two poets, Googe is now perhaps in some danger of getting overrated (partly as a result of Yvor Winters's efforts), while I dare predict that in the somewhat longer term Barnfield will reward critics and literary historians more.

I admit that some of Barnfield's poems are no less obvious, simple and predictable than most of Googe's. Some of the poems which Barnfield published last, i.e. in 1598, are hardly exciting, even if invariably competent and well written—such as 'The Encomion of Lady Pecunia' and its companion piece, 'The Complaint of Poetrie, for the Death of Liberalitie'. As Klawitter fully realizes, however, Barnfield's reputation will ultimately rest on his earlier volumes, *The Affectionate Shepheard* (1594), and *Cynthia* (1595), and more particularly on those poems which he usefully calls 'homoerotic' (referring to feeling) as distinct from 'homosexual' (referring to action). The point is not, of course, that homoerotic poetry is inherently more valuable than poetry about money (though one doubts that the reverse could be true): rather, the chief reason why Barnfield's love poetry is so striking is that it is inspired by intense yearning made psychologically more interesting by the homoerotic dimension, and expressed in a language which eminently fits its subject-matter. One suspects that in essence the poet ran out of material once his passion had spent its course.

Klawitter possibly somewhat overstates his case pro Barnfield's homoerotic poems. Let me briefly consider some famous lines by Shakespeare about his young man:

... for a woman wert thou first created;
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.

In their keenness to prove whether Shakespeare's persona is 'homosexual' or not, critics often strangely overlook some of the amazing complexities of sonnet 20. It is not often realized, for example, that Nature's dotting shows, initially, homoerotic feeling, which is to say that Shakespeare sees such feeling as natural enough. Neither

is it generally understood that Nature then shows herself heterosexual in leaning, while the speaker's feeling—even if the addition of a penis to the body of his friend as first created frustrates him—remains sexual even after that event. There is no such searching view or presentation of sexual complexity anywhere in Barnfield.

It is tempting to think at first that this is because Barnfield is simply homosexual while Shakespeare is bisexual (if for the moment one discards the question of persona—a pastoral 'Daphnis' in Barnfield's case). But the matter appears to be more truly one of different personalities and talents, for in an 'Ode' which forms part of *Cynthia* Daphnis talks of a lass who now appeals to him because her beauty far surpasses that of his 'Ganymede'. As in Shakespeare's case, the relationships prove too difficult to handle, but it is not very satisfying to see Barnfield complain of a heart 'riv'd in three', with one part each, it seems, for Ganymede, for the new lady, and for Queen Elizabeth.

Nevertheless, the poetry provides much of value, psychologically and artistically, and Klawitter pleads eloquently for it. I believe he is right in arguing that Barnfield has been unduly neglected or criticized as a result of his obvious homoeroticism, and the critical opinions which Klawitter refers to are often just as startling or obtuse as those of the critics who will not allow the possibility that the Bard himself was anything other than purely heterosexual. At the same time, we must of course guard against the assumption that poetry is inherently 'better' because of *any* specific sexual inclination. This whole area of criticism can well do without unnecessary ideological skirmishes.

It is a pity that Klawitter did not choose to modernize his text, for that would have made it more widely accessible, and I cannot see that anything would have been lost. Googe's *The Overthrow of the Gout* certainly gains from being modernized: it is a lively piece, even if in part because its 'science' now strikes us as so absurd. I certainly feel I now understand better why Shakespeare presented Falstaff as suffering from the gout. But this does not mean that the translation is very significant, and it had, after all, for the most part already been offered to us by Robert M. Schuler in *Studies in Philology*, 75 (1978), 67-107, as McKeown acknowledges. His editing is uneven, with clumsy handling of the question of accented/unaccented *-ed* in his text and poor punctuation (in part also a matter of printing), and an uncertain grasp as to what should or should not be included in the commentary. Still, the little book has a degree of merit, and the editor does provide a good deal of useful information of his own.

Sir John Harington is known to most of us as the translator of *Orlando Furioso* (1591), a far more significant translation than Googe's 1577 rendering of *Ballista*, but also, it must be said, than Harington's version of Book VI of the *Aeneid*. Virgil is of course so major a poet that almost any translation of competence will show some of his quality, and will be of linguistic and literary interest once a comparison is made with the original. But I cannot deny that I find this particular translation difficult to read without boredom, and that it seems to me far remote from Virgil's sensitivity. Surrey's approach to the *Aeneid*, several decades before, had, for all its unevenness, shown both a finer grasp of Virgil's language and poetic quality of its own. As there are still so many translations that need editing, one rather wonders whether this is the one that should have been selected, although I agree that it is significant that it is published for the first time ever. Certainly Harington's comments are of interest, though again, as the editor admits, because they reflect Harington's 'utterly conventional education and orthodox opinions' rather than for any more positive reason. It is a sign of the editor's completely objective, disinterested scholarship that he states: 'In none of his extraordinarily varied writings does Harington, perhaps, have anything of great importance to say' (p. lii).

It is somewhat of an irony that work so mediocre from a literary point of view has

been so superbly edited. The lengthy introduction is a model of good sense, good English, learning, and precision, and it tells us more about its subject-matter than I dare say most of us really wish to know. The editor seems totally sound on his primary material, and his editorial procedures also appear beyond reproach. One notes with interest that the edition started life as a thesis supervised by that excellent scholar, D. F. McKenzie; but that does not diminish one's respect for the editor's own work. His notes, too, strike one as massively learned and accurate. The punctiliousness of Cauchi's scholarship is evident in such a passage as the following: '... the scribe employed by Harington to copy the Latin did so very inaccurately. I have attempted to emend the numerous errors of transcription and yet to retain the old readings current in Harington's time' (p. 102).

Such respect for matters of fact and history is refreshingly unfashionable and totally praiseworthy. However, one hopes that Cauchi's formidable skills will soon be used in the service of enterprises more substantially appealing to most of us. Cauchi's own comments on Harington show that he can distinguish between texts which are of literary interest and those which are not.

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The Spenser Encyclopedia. Edited by A. C. HAMILTON *et al.* Pp. xxii+858. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press; London: Routledge, 1990. £175

Reading *The Spenser Encyclopedia* is a physical as well as an intellectual challenge: it weighs in at over five pounds, matching some notebook computers. However, it contains almost as much information, on a remarkable variety of topics. It offers pleasures of *copia* not unlike those of *The Faerie Queene* itself, and besides its value as a reference work, it offers plenty of scope for browsing on topics ranging from theories of allegory to a complete list of all the birds mentioned by Spenser. Amongst the unexpected items can be noted an informative piece on Spenser and Doughty, and an exercise of learned wit on the semantic field of Karl Marx's notorious description of Spenser as '*der Elizabeths Arschkissende Poet*'. *The Faerie Queene* is already a kind of encyclopaedia, so that *The Spenser Encyclopedia* encompasses much of Renaissance culture as well as a particular author. With its extensive bibliography, it offers a valuable starting-point for enquiry into such general topics as rhetoric, emblems, and astronomy. A generous selection of illustrations opens up iconographical questions. The *Encyclopedia* also offers detailed information on textual and biographical issues, including a very minute study of Kilcolman Castle which demonstrates to the curious the location of Spenser's privy.

As in *The Faerie Queene*, but to an extent inevitably multiplied when there are over four hundred authors, differing viewpoints are sometimes juxtaposed without a clear-cut resolution. Thus readers who want to clarify their understanding of Spenser's religious position will find considerably differing emphases in the articles by John N. King, Peter Milward, SJ, and Alan Sinfield. Spenser's treatment of gender is discussed by such prominent figures as Marilyn French, Camille Paglia, and Linda Woodbridge, whose approaches vary considerably. It is understandable that the general editors should have refrained from imposing a definitive interpretation; but though the cross-referencing is generally excellent, it could perhaps have been extended in order to bring to the fore the problem of the hermeneutic circle in such enquiries. Though many of the entries absorb and sometimes allude to recent developments in literary theory, the general sections on the reception and influence of Spenser (which are themselves uneven in detail, with a remarkably comprehensive study of the eighteenth century) stop at 1900, so that the intellectual milieu that