

Helen Cooney and Mark S. Sweetnam, eds. *Enigma and Revelation in Renaissance English Literature: Essays Presented to Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012. \$74.50. ISBN: 978-1-84682-281-0.

This is a collection of essays by twelve students and friends of the distinguished poet and scholar, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin. In the preface Helen Cooney explains the title as reflecting the idea that “secular writing of this period [i.e., 1500 to 1700] is distinguished to a remarkable degree by the recurrence of an enigma/revelation binary, in respect of both form and theme” (11). The essays are organized chronologically by topic from Skelton to the Restoration era.

At least half the essays are quite worthwhile, my own interests favoring Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin’s “‘A certain disgracing’: Resonances of a Renaissance Word,” on *sprezzatura*, and Thomas Herron’s “‘This concealed man’: Spenser, Ireland, and Ormond(?) in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*.” The study of *sprezzatura*, a word introduced in the first book of Castiglione’s *Il libro del cortigiano*, naturally begins with Hoby’s translation where the word becomes “disgracing,” then, with subsequent meddling, “recklessness” and “dispraising.” More satisfactory is the modern reading, “nonchalance.” But what can succinctly capture Harry Berger’s definition of the word: “the ability to show that one is not showing all the effort one obviously put into learning how to show that one is not showing effort” (71)? The essay also pays tribute to Hoby as translator for his appealing use of English style and prose rhythms, so it is of value for anyone interested in the art of English translation.

Not everyone will yield to Thomas Herron’s suggestion that Shakespeare, writing *As You Like It*, had one eye on Ireland, Essex, Raleigh, and the Old English nobleman Thomas Butler, tenth Earl of Ormond and third Earl of Ossory, alias “Black Tom.” Other scholars have also detected Ireland in the play, partly mediated by Spenser. In this new/old historicist topical-reference hunt, the Irish woodlands are the Forest of Arden; Orlando is like Raleigh-Timias (the Raleigh character in *The Faerie Queene*) wandering in the heart’s forest; Essex (as Dusinger has proposed) wanders in an Irish exile like Shakespeare’s good Duke. Herron thinks that Ormond is an equally likely prospect for Orlando, mounting an appendix to the essay that drags

in, as Ormond-Orlando's evil brother, the eleventh Earl of Kildare (Oliver's dream of lying under the mossy old oak may allude to the meaning of Kildare, "church of the oak"). If the reader balks, the essay does open up many tempting byways, such as Spenser's use of the mystical number twenty-two and the twenty-two scenes in the play, or the frequency of Ireland as setting in romances, or the name of the Anglo-Norman castle near Ormond's home, which sounds like "Arden." Ormond receives a dedicatory sonnet in the 1590 *Faerie Queene*, and may be Sir Orimont in book 5.

Two absorbing essays on seventeenth-century literature are Mark S. Sweetnam's on the *arcana imperii* in Donne's sermons and Crawford Gribben's on Marvell's "Upon Appleton House." Indebted to the king though he was, Donne differs from the usual monarchist in comparing God's with the king's keeping of *arcana imperii*, the secrets or mysteries of state. God, unlike the ruler, allows us to see his *arcana*. Gribben approaches "Upon Appleton House" as a message to Fairfax and "an elegy for England lost in the chaos of the civil wars" (197). The irresolution and fragmentation that are found in this poem are of course not unique among Marvell's writings.

The earliest texts discussed are John Scattergood's on Skelton's "Speke Parott" (seen as a poem about the dangers of writing a dangerous poem, especially if you want to be understood) and Erin Sebo's on *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* (read in the context of riddle poems). Students of Renaissance travel narratives will want to read Paris O'Donnell's study of English and Scottish travelers to Palestine ca. 1600. The contribution by John Flood is a real keeper for anyone studying early modern women writers: four Restoration-era philosophers prove to have been well versed in Descartes, the Cambridge Platonists, and Locke.

Coeditor Helen Cooney notes that her essay on Spenser's book 2 recasts a previously published version. She might have edited this version more carefully, as her first sentence lacks a period, the second is grammatically muddled, and several sentences on page 90 repeat verbatim on page 91.

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