English Authorship and the Early Modern Sublime: Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson. Patrick Cheney.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. xvi + 312 pp. $99.99.

Patrick Cheney, observing a resurgence of interest in the idea of the sublime, has contributed an original and persuasive book on this subject: first, in finding the idea's modern origins in the sixteenth, not the eighteenth, century, and second, in relating it to current interest in early modern authorship: "the connection between authorship and sublimity is vital to the formation of a modern literary canon" (1; cf. 252). Even Longinus, the earliest thinker on the subject, arguably "understands the sublime as an aesthetics of authorship" (37). The many definitions of *sublime* provided include the Elizabethan Angel Day's "high style" and "the statelyest maner" (5), Philip Shaw's "the awe inspiring or overpowering; the unbounded and the undetermined" (4), and *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*'s "that quality of genius in great literary works which irresistibly delights, inspires, and overwhelms the reader" (5). It is identified with wonder, Neoplatonic *furor*, Christian ecstasy (29), and negative capability (167). It seems to abide in the artist, the object, and the observer, perhaps all at once. Bloom, a strong advocate for a canon "dependent on a Longinian principle of literary greatness" (253), says that Falstaff, Hamlet, Rosalind, Othello, Iago, Lear, and Cleopatra "are sublime because they expand our consciousness without distorting it" (172). In the literary sublime, *phantasia* or visualization is the key principle: Marlowe "has perfect command of Sublime *phantasia* and makes it a liberating principle of authorship," as in Tamburlaine's obsession with the image of Zenocrate (134). The book meticulously catalogs and analyzes uses of the word *sublime* throughout the period.

The two meaty chapters on Spenser show that his sublime quality has long been recognized but has not been studied in its own right. First, Cheney provides a history of the sublime in Spenser criticism, culminating in the poet's "fictions of authorship," especially the Mount Acidale episode. The ensuing chapter examines the theological, the political, and the erotic sublime in Spenser's poetry. Upton saw Britomart's unveiling (in *FQ* 4.6) as embodying the Longinian sublime (114). Hazlitt explicated three episodes he viewed as sublime in their passion, strength, and "vastness": the Cave of Despair, the Cave of Mammon, and Malbecco's metamorphosis into Jealousy (72). Throughout, Cheney shifts attention far away from the political historicism so prominent in Spenser studies for decades, back into the aesthetic fields that reshaped Spenser studies beginning in the 1960s (e.g., A. C. Hamilton's and William Nelson's great and influential books), leading to work by the likes of James Nohrnberg and, most importantly for this book, Angus Fletcher (especially *Allegory* and *The Prophetic Moment*). Cheney does not exactly see this book as a return, however: "I aim to break theoretical ground, shifting from reception to literary production and placing Renaissance

https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2019.370 Published online by Cambridge University Press

authorship at the centre of pre-Enlightenment accounts of the sublime" (3). "Renaissance authorship" is defined by the poststructuralist idea of the subject, "an inventive writer bound in by cultural powers" (19).

The chapter on Marlowe, noting that Swinburne believed him "the first English poet whose powers can be called sublime" (144), looks first at the playwright's "challenge to Western aesthetics through *phantasia*" (133). Discussion of the particular sublimity of tragedy leads to analyses of *Edward II* and *Doctor Faustus*. Anyone approaching *Antony and Cleopatra* in the future should consult this book (191–97), in a chapter on Shakespeare charged with intelligence. Jonson's sublime is located in his tragedies, masques, and poems; inhering in *The Alchemist* is "the parodic sublime," where Jonson responds to Marlowe in, most famously, Sir Epicure Mammon, and to Spenser in Doll's Fairy Queen. Cheney ponders Jonson's having to reconcile his insistently rational poetics with the transcendent sublime.

This impressive achievement has its weaknesses. The conscientious index lists neither Pindar nor ode. The wide knowledge of Western thought and Renaissance scholarship is not always worn lightly, as in: "Schiller and Schelling are important for preceding Lyotard and Hertz in transposing the Kantian experience as a response to nature to a response to art [*sic*], and in particular the genre of tragedy (see Guyer)" (53). How is it that Wesley Trimpi's 1962 book "anticipates Edward Seward's 1750 'Preface'" (230)? And what is "epheminizing" (102)?

Richard F. Hardin, *University of Kansas*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.370

The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne, Volume 3: The Satyres.
John Donne.
Ed. Gary A. Stringer et al. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. cviii + 1,050 pp. $80.

After exploring "*The Anniversaries" and the Epicedes and Obsequies* (1995), *The Epigrams, Epithalamions, Epitaphs, Inscriptions, and Miscellaneous Poems* (1995), *The Elegies* (2000), and *The Holy Sonnets* (2005), the editors of the *Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne* now address his "satiric thorns." With the ambitious objective of providing the most authoritative version of this corpus, and understanding its critical reception throughout history, the one-thousand-page volume comprises editions for the eight following poems: Donne's "Satyre 1" to "Satyre 5," "Metempsychosis," "Upon Mr Coryat's Crudities," and its accompanying piece "In eundem Macaronicon." To Donne's productions, the editors have also added other reading texts that contribute to understanding the historical response to Donne as a satirist: the *dubium* "Incipit Ioannes Dones.," two noncanonical "Satyres" from the seventeenth century, as well

https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2019.370 Published online by Cambridge University Press