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Book Review: Joan Fitzpatrick. *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Contours of Britain: Reshaping the Atlantic Archipelago* Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire, 2004.

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Joan Fitzpatrick. *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Contours of Britain: Reshaping the Atlantic Archipelago*. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire, 2004. Pp x, 182.

In this clear and interesting study, Joan Fitzpatrick examines the metaphorical manipulation of landscape in a range of Spenser's poetry and six plays by Shakespeare. In relation to Spenser, the book suggests that we need to see his writing as shaped by a colonial desire to control and shape the world around him. This thesis is grounded upon an interpretation of *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. The most implacable speaker in this dialogue is Irenius who is preoccupied with opening up the landscape as well as cleansing it from Irish outlaws and rebels; this is identified as Spenser's view. Fitzpatrick then reads *The Shepeardes Calender* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* in terms of a presiding tension between rural reality and pastoral idyll; this results from Spenser's endeavour to reshape the Irish landscape. *The Shepeardes Calender* is interpreted as manifesting its author's interest in Ireland – in advance of his arrival there – especially through the work's insistent and unsettling allusions to mantles, the taming of woodland, and wolves. Throughout, there is a constant insinuation of malevolent forces lurking on the periphery of a potentially idyllic world. Similarly, Colin Clout acknowledges the necessity for demanding labour if the name of 'Cynthia' is ever to be marked properly on the landscape. In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's pastoral vision of Ireland is at its most extensive in Book 6, with Calidore, especially, embodying the experience and dilemmas of the new English settlers. Again, Fitzpatrick notes the presence of the unruly and recalcitrant alongside the vision of a beautifully ordered land.

The Faerie Queene also features in this study as embodying another of Spenser's topographical preoccupations: the marrying of waterways in Book 4, canto 11. The presence of Irish rivers in this symbolic act of union is cited as further evidence of Spenser's desire to dominate Ireland, although this is framed and interrupted by narratives of sexual aggression that hint at a darker story. Fitzpatrick opts for a colonial rather than a post-colonial approach in these readings: the repeated imagining in *The Faerie Queene* of Catholic villainy consumed by the land is read as symptomatic of the fantasies of a New English subject. Yet in the book's conclusion this argument is substantially modified: Spenser's more positive evaluation of Irish land and people is emphasised as well as his disaffection with Elizabeth embodied in, for example, Diana's abandonment of the land in the *Cantos of Mutabilitie*.

Shakespeare's interest in issues of place, identity, and power is then explored through analyses, first, of *Richard II*, *Cymbeline*, and *The History of King Lear*. These plays stigmatise corrupt or ineffectual rulers who rely on fantastical manipulations of landscape and they also share an interest in international relationships. In *Richard II*, the inefficacy of Richard's stewardship of the land, and his palliative fantasies concerning it, are signs of his increasingly feminized role and political disempowerment. In contrast, *Cymbeline* is read as expressing a purposeful nostalgia for Rome and Wales as embodying the true spirit of the international Christian Church. *King Lear* offers an equally subversive account of foreign invasion and the sanctity of national boundaries since the possibility of redemption in this play lies in French intervention. Guiding these readings is Fitzpatrick's reliance on the idea of Shakespeare's Catholicism, expressed through the internationalism of his writing, the sympathy expressed for Ireland and Wales, and the reiterated distaste for drastic and wilful reorientations of landscape. This interpretation is extended through readings of three further plays: in *1* and *2 Henry IV*, the spectre of (Welsh) rebellion remains unexorcised, undermining Henry's grand political designs as well as the force of prophecy, and these motifs are shown to recur in *Macbeth*.

At times, this study traverses some familiar ground as well as taking its own shortcuts (and some detours). Although Spenser's *View* is acknowledged to be a dialogue (and Spenser's interest in multivocal forms of writing is also noted), he is rapidly identified with one of its speakers. Yet, the complexity of Spenser's understanding of Ireland is insisted upon in the conclusion, an interpretation that had been hinted at rather than substantively anticipated earlier in the study. Fitzpatrick's emphasis on genre is welcome and refreshing, but it is conceived very broadly here in terms of the basic modes of poetry and drama rather than specific literary and dramatic kinds. That landscape might be figured very differently in romance, epic, the history play, or tragedy could have been given more weight in the argument. Furthermore, whether one can deduce a consistent 'authorial' subjectivity from this evidence is contentious: it involves conjectural reading of material that is highly mediated by literary forms or *personae*. Can we really retrieve Spenser's attitudes from Irenius or Colin Clout? Similarly, deducing Shakespeare's religious affiliations from recurrent patterns or motifs involves some highly selective reading as well as diminishing the secular qualities of the plays. The chronology of these writings is also dealt with very lightly: is the Shakespeare of *Cymbeline* essentially the same in attitude as the author of *Richard II*? Fitzpatrick's unfashionable insistence on deciphering authorial intentions also involves distinguishing her approach from a consensus that, as her own copious citation of contemporary

sources demonstrates, has little substance. Who now proposes Spenser as an essentially gentle poet of romance or that Shakespeare's works are timeless?

This book makes its own intervention, however, in a now crowded field. It also provides students with a very useful overview of current critical debate on how both these writers engage with the idea of the nation as well as Spenser's status as a colonial author and Shakespeare's Catholicism.

Dermot Cavanagh

Nancy A. Gutierrez. *'Shall She Famish Then?': Female Food Refusal in Early Modern England*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. Pp x, 146.

Female food refusal, familiar to us in our own culture in the form of *anorexia nervosa*, has most frequently been historicized in relation to female saints of the Middle Ages and 'fasting girls', as they were called, of the modern period. Nancy Gutierrez in *'Shall She Famish Then?'* fills the gap between these two characterizations of female self-starvation with a richly nuanced discussion of the complex resonance of food refusal by women in the early modern period in England. She resists, however, a linear argument which positions the early modern period as transitional between the religious perspective attributed to the Middle Ages and the clinical or 'scientific' perspective widely said to characterize discussions from the later seventeenth century through the nineteenth century. Rather, she draws upon a range of methodologies to illuminate the multiple ways in which a preoccupation with women's eating 'epitomizes the revolutionary anxiety that characterizes seventeenth-century English culture and politics' (2). For Gutierrez, the body of a woman who chooses starvation in response to institutional pressures within the family or within the state brings together questions of gender, agency, social practice, and institutional power. The significance of her refusal to eat, however, may vary with the woman and the context in which it occurs, and may simultaneously suggest both victimization and agency.

The texts discussed are varied. They range from the historical record of the death of Margaret Ratcliffe, lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth, through two seventeenth-century tragedies, to popular pamphlets published in England between 1589 and 1677 describing 'miracle maidens' who survived without eating for substantial periods of time. An epilogue looks briefly at Nicholas