

of Madrid. His purpose is to present a picture of contemporary life in Spain in terms of the social structure, work and leisure of two communities—one wholly rural, the other wholly urban, but both an authentic reflection of Spain, and of Castile in particular.

Inevitably, his rural parish is the livelier, for here a much more tightly integrated community can be studied at close range, and Mr Kenny is a careful observer not only of such usual items on the tourist's agenda as the fiesta or the survivals of traditional superstition, but of the details of the pueblo's economy, based, as is that of Ramosierra, on an elaborate communal ownership of the pine forests and determined by 'the pine luck', a division by lots that profoundly affects the whole structure of the village and its social life.

San Martín is less easily described, for, although it retains an identity in the huge metropolitan life of Madrid, it shows that tendency to social attrition which seems endemic in city life in every country. But Mr Kenny, speaking Spanish and himself a Catholic, enters with sympathy into the pattern of daily life and describes the fascinating detail of family fidelity, political apathy and inherited faith that remain so true of Spanish communities, in town and country alike.

It is rare to find any writer who retains his head as well as his heart where Spain is in question, and Mr Kenny's training as an anthropologist has served him well in that his book, utterly readable and full of beautifully observed details, is at once objective and alive.

I.E.

THE STRUCTURE OF ALLEGORY IN 'THE FAERIE QUEENE', by A. C. Hamilton; Oxford University Press; 35s.

Professor Hamilton's interesting book brings out especially clearly the growing recognition of Spenser's intellectual stature. It becomes impossible for any serious reader to regard *The Faerie Queene* as only a means of indulging a mildly escapist tendency amid beautiful surroundings of pageantry and music; or to feel surprise that a Milton should have regarded this poet as 'his original'.

The main contention of this book is that the form Spenser adopted, his 'fiction' and his figures, is inseparable from his 'meaning'; that it is delusory to try to distinguish the voice of the moralist or prophet from that of the poet. The critic illustrates this by relating Spenser's approach to Dante's, and the recognition of this relation is one of Professor Hamilton's most valuable contributions to the right understanding of Spenser. He regards the image as primary and 'focuses' upon it because in Spenser, as in Dante, the image is both individual and universal. Dante is himself throughout the *Divina Comedia*, but he is also the human soul. Taking Spenser's imagery in this sense Professor Hamilton very properly insists that the allegorical meaning cannot be completely or even intelligibly stated independently of the images by which the poet intended not

to conceal but to communicate it. Perhaps not all readers have been unaware that poetic imagery is far richer in meaning than plain statement and that Spenser was exploiting that fact. Nevertheless this insistence on the importance of the literal meaning is very salutary and it also leads to very interesting and useful analyses of single episodes and figures.

Professor Hamilton's conception of the whole poem as patterns converging on a centre, not advancing, enables him to bring out clearly Spenser's use of symbolic visions and typical myths, such as those of Venus and Adonis and Cupid and Psyche, but it leads him to undervalue Spenser's powers as a narrative poet and to obscure too much the very real element of story.

The exposition of Spenser's treatment of love commands less immediate assent than other interpretations. The writer's insistence on reading a strictly sexual significance into every detail of Books Three, Four and Six, and into the persons of Amoret, Serena and Florimel in every episode, is an exaggeration which does not allow Spenser the width and variety in the treatment of love in its various human relationships which is really his. We seem to have exchanged his Faerie Land for a more chaotic region inhabited by Blake's tempestuous giants. At times (e.g., p. 156) the professor seems even to have Blake's special vocabulary in mind rather than that of the author of the *Four Hymnes of Love and Beauty*.

In suggesting that all the exponents of chaste love come to grief before the arrival of their rescuers Professor Hamilton is throwing an unintended shadow on the achievements of Britomart and Arthur, and it is surely overstraining to speak of Una's unveiling of her *angel's face* as a 'fall'. Professor Hamilton does well to emphasize Spenser's Christianity but he does him less than justice in not bringing within its scope the poet's treatment of Christian marriage by means of Scudamour and Amoret.

Taking the book as a whole Professor Hamilton brings the resources of his varied learning to illustrate in a fresh and original way the power and consistency of Spenser's poetic achievement, and he puts into needed relief his clearly conceived complex and subtle design and his mastery of his varied material.

Younger students will find the last chapter, on Spenser's use of language, specially helpful, but it would be fortunately impossible to use this book as a substitute for the study of the text itself of *The Faerie Queene*.

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TUDOR SECRETARY: Sir William Petre at Court and Home, by F. G. Emmison; Longmans; 50s.

The fundamental problem with which the historical biographer must come to terms is the relation between his principal figure and the background against which he is to be seen. The terms of the problem are to a certain extent dictated