Kenneth Borris, ed. *Edmund Spenser's Shepheardes Calender (1579): An Analyzed Facsimile Edition*. **Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022. 304 pp. ISBN 9781526133458. £90.00 hardback.**

By Abigail Shinn

Edmund Spenser's Shepheardes Calender (1579): An Analyzed Facsimile Edition is an invaluable addition to the field, providing an essential new resource for researchers who wish to appraise the remarkable innovation of Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar* (1579). Borris's contribution is twofold. First, the book provides a high-quality facsimile edition of the 1579 *Calender*, currently held at the Folger Shakespeare Library, alongside enlargements of the twelve original images that head each eclogue. One aim is to demonstrate that the woodcuts printed from their original blocks show considerably more detail than those in subsequent editions. The facsimile and reproductions are wonderfully clear and allow for small elements to be carefully assessed by the reader. They are a reminder of the *Calender's* remarkable visual impact and the sustained conversation between text and image which lies at its heart. Second, the facsimile and reproductions are accompanied by a detailed and carefully researched introduction which surveys critical approaches to the book's composition, printing, and presentation, as well as making a number of significant arguments for why a rereading of the work's verbal-visual intersections is urgently needed. The facsimile and introduction have similar aims: as Borris suggests, a lack of attention to the book's visual presentation, which he argues is more innovative and symbolically charged than has hitherto been acknowledged, has occluded the significance of the visual text for the *Calender* as a whole. Notably, Borris does not read the *Calender's*

images as primarily paratextual and supplementary but rather as "textually integral…for each one constitutes a meaningfully interactive verbal-visual unit together with its eclogue" (7).

Much rests on whether Spenser himself was directly involved in formulating the composition of the book. Borris makes a compelling case for Spenser's authorial oversight. He stresses the printer Hugh Singleton's lack of experience in printing illustrated works, as well as the likelihood that Spenser had received training in drawing while at the Merchant Taylor's School, explaining that Richard Mulcaster included the fine arts in the curriculum and emphasized instruction in drawing. He argues that "Spenser was deeply concerned with his literary legacy and future reception" (32) and therefore unlikely to leave the oversight of this, his first solo publication, to others. Furthermore, the reception history of the work has not highlighted any additional contributors to the book's composition, but that rather "the quite substantial extant resources of the *Calender's* early modern reception emphasize Immerito's or Spenser's responsibility and literary genius" (43). The book's complex verbal-textual composition is therefore read as shaped primarily by Spenser himself. Borris believes that Singleton's involvement was due to extraordinary circumstances relating to the Anjou match, and that he had little influence on the format and presentation of the book, a work which would remain an aberration in his publishing career. Citing Singleton's printing of the anti-Anjou *Gaping Gulf* (1579), for which he narrowly missed out on losing a hand—the fate that was meted out to the book's author John Stubbes—Borris sees Singleton's involvement as prompted by his ardent Protestantism with the project likely financed by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (9). As a result, he claims that Spenser himself largely directed the production of the book although he further considers that the *Calender's* visual debt to emblem books may be a nod to the earl's interest in the genre. The exception to this claim for authorial control concerns the editor E. K. Borris contends that E. K. is not Spenser, as he finds too many disparities between the editor and the poet. Whoever E. K. is, perhaps Spenser's old university associate Edward Kirk, Borris nonetheless detects elements of collaboration and believes that Spenser, while giving E. K. a relative free hand, still expected his labors to reflect the poet's "mandate" (290) in the commentary. While the collaborative elements of the book, whether shaped by Leicester's patronage or the influence of the shadowy E. K., are perhaps underplayed overall by Borris, what emerges is a strong case for reading the *Calender's* verbal-visual form as primarily

fashioned by the guiding vision of the poet. As a result, Borris argues that the *Calender* should be recognized as an important work in the historical development of the author-function as famously outlined by Roger Chartier (8).

Along the way, Borris provides a thoughtful consideration of Hugh Singleton's role in the publication, appraises the general questions surrounding who was responsible for the design of the 1579 *Calender*, and considers a number of models and sources including the late fifteenth-century printed work *Calendrier des bergers*. Illustrations of possible models and influences are provided in order to facilitate visual comparison with the facsimile of the *Calender*. He foregrounds the generic mixture of the *Calender*, which includes emblem books, almanacs, and pastoral romance, while ultimately arguing that the dominant stylistic debt is to the eclogue series: "While primarily referencing the generic paradigms of the eclogue series, the *Calender* freshly incorporates various other forms and discourses, and such a text has no single textual source or model, but coordinates and reinterprets a range of precursors intertextually" (54). In the process, Borris interrogates "naïve source hunting" (43). In particular, he addresses S. K. Heninger Jr's claim that the *Calender* replicates the layout of Jacopo Zannazaro's *Arcadia* prepared by Francesco Sansovino and printed in Venice by Giovanni Varisco in 1571. Borris locates a number of flaws in Heninger's reading and provides a full reassessment of his argument, detailing a series of counterparts and precedents which undercut a direct correlation between the *Arcadia* and the *Calender*. Borris also reassesses arguments for the work's visual debt to popular almanacs, which he believes have been overstated, thereby obscuring the more significant affinities with eclogues and literary pastoralism. He considers the arguments made by myself and Pauline Reid to be too definite and states that the book's "dominant generic and presentational affiliation is the eclogue series" (55). He also sees any interest that Spenser may have in popular texts more generally as something which should be investigated, but not at the expense of the book's "prevalent pastoralism and literariness" (55).

In order to further cement the originality of the *Calender's* verbal-visual presentation and to situate its innovation within the context of book production and trade, Borris includes exhaustive analysis of the *Calender's* bibliographical format, including its paper watermarks, use of multiple typefaces, restrained title page, the titling and layout of the eclogues, the presentation of verbal emblems, and the incorporation of E. K.'s commentary. Useful comparisons are made with other eclogue

series. The final sections of the introduction are focused on a careful study of the illustrative mode of the woodcuts. This includes work on the genesis of the illustrations and symbolism. Reassessing Ruth Samson Luborsky's ground-breaking studies of the *Calender,* (to which he acknowledges a significant debt throughout the introduction), Borris highlights the pictorial symbology of the woodcuts. He argues that their rustic presentation, appropriate to pastoral eclogues, has all too often obscured their complex meaning. Focusing on *Aprill, Maye*, and *December*, he powerfully demonstrates the rich symbolism of the woodcuts. He analyzes *Aprill* and *Maye's* "pictorially symbolic excursions in politico-religious satire and moral philosophy" (96) and compares *Aprill's* symbolism with *December's*. In part, the analysis of these three images focuses on the book's topicality. For example, in *Maye's* image he detects topical allusions to the Anjou match, which displace Elizabeth's triumph in the *Aprill* eclogue with that of the May king (98). This section establishes the significance of the images for the generation of meaning and exemplifies how the inclusion of enlarged reproductions of the woodcuts will facilitate new readings of the poem.

An appendix further reassesses the contention that Spenser was guilty of "pictorial naivety" (125). Borris here reads the postscript to a published letter between Spenser and Gabriel Harvey (1580), in which Spenser strangely refers to "the Pictures so singularly set forth, and portrayed, as if *Michael Angelo* were there" (125), as relating to the now lost *Dreames* rather than the *Calender*. The historical assumption that Spenser is referring to the *Calender* in the postscript has been shaped by a preceding reference in the same sentence to "things excellently, and many things wittily discoursed of *E. K.*" (125). Borris argues that this is in fact a misreading of a "loose grammatical reference" and that the lost *Dreames* also included a commentary by E. K.. He sees the postscript as "hyperbolic raillery" (127) about this lost work and further argues that the images composed for *Dreames* may have been radically different to those appended to the *Calendar*. This rereading of the 1580 postscript helps to solidify Borris's argument for Spenser's careful oversight of the *Calender's* images by countering claims that he had a wrong-headed view of their artistic value and lacked discernment.

Altogether, *Edmund Spenser's Shepheardes Calender (1579): An Analyzed Facsimile Edition* is a significant contribution to the field of Spenser studies. It provides a much needed, high-quality facsimile and enlarged reproductions which will

doubtless facilitate further research, and an astute reassessment of the book's production and verbal-visual intersections.

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