

preoccupations of his poetry, finding the fantastic and 'frequent beheadings, dismemberments and slaughters' of Books V and VI of *The Faerie Queene* to be 'a clear residue' of Spenser's time in Ireland. All the while that Spenser was recording severed heads and bad faith, he was composing the first three books of his great epic poem and becoming the 'poet historical'.

Through a complex passage, the historical Lord Grey would be transmuted into the poetic character of Artagall. The letters show how the upsurge of Irish and Anglo-Irish resistance to the Dublin government and English Queen, which manifested hatred of English rule and was part of a wider conflict to restore Catholicism, the 'diabolica fede', hardened Grey's resolve. He wrote insistently 'that onely sworde will salue the sore', that 'feare ... and not dandlinge must bring them to ... obedience', that 'the sore of this countrey without force will not bee cured'. In common with other Lord Deputies, he suffered calumny at home as well as treachery in Ireland, and longed to return home. Later, in *A View*, attempting to justify Grey's extremity, Spenser admitted that 'the necessitye of that presente state of thinges forced him to that violence and allmost Changed his verye naturall disposicion'.

The editors' aim to provide the historical context within which Spenser's writings may be read is admirably achieved. The complex societies of Ireland are succinctly explained, and biographies provided for a remarkable cast of characters: New English planters and administrators, the Anglo-Irish and Gaelic lords. The reader encountering the following sentence, for example, will seek explication, and finds it: 'first his mother was foster to Iames fitz Morice the Archtraytour, whereby he is nephew to the Lord Roches wife and to the Lord of Muscries mother & coosen german to the Seneschall of Imokhillies wife'.

This volume will be required reading not only for Spenser scholars but for anyone interested in early modern Ireland and the politics of Elizabethan England.

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*The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey*. Volume V: 1603–1607, ed. Victor Morgan, Elizabeth Rutledge and Barry Taylor (Norwich: Norfolk Record Soc., 2010; pp. lxiii + 373. £18.50).

This volume, edited by Victor Morgan, Elizabeth Rutledge and Barry Taylor, represents another stage in a great publishing project, and the first passed on by the founding editor, A. Hassell Smith, to a new generation. Yet one still senses here Smith's long engagement with that emotionally private, tidy-minded Puritan gentleman-administrator Nathaniel Bacon and his well-matched servant Martin Man, as they laid down the archive now scattered across the world. These years represent a peak of achievement for Nathaniel. He was elected for the first time as the senior and not second knight of the shire for Norfolk in 1603, and, in 1604, finally achieved the knighthood which his elder brother had enjoyed for a quarter of a century. It may have been this long-awaited honour which at last prompted Nathaniel to finish off Stiffkey Hall, to a design reduced from the original, but appropriately putting to godly

use recycled Popish monastic stone from Walsingham. Almost immediately he also bought up a brand-new estate at Irmingland and began building a house there. Yet all the time in the background was Nathaniel's unhappy and childless second marriage to Dorothy Smith, which hardly figures in this volume; Victor Morgan, in his masterly introduction, speculates that the lack of personal papers represents deliberate weeding by Martin Man at Sir Nathaniel's death. Chief among the public events was old Queen Elizabeth's demise, so long dreaded, and arousing extreme nervousness in central government. In fact, they faced remarkably little trouble, though there were some wrinkles around the succession. One was an attempt by Scots and English merchants to push their commercial luck by exploiting the new situation of a single king for two kingdoms. An irritable government letter to the port of Lynn pointed out that, as soon as the Queen was known to be dead, various people had been quite illegally shipping large quantities of corn and beer to Scotland without paying any duty on it; they were patriotically presuming that the two realms were now one. That in itself is a significant indicator that there was a general public assumption that, once Elizabeth had died, James had no real rival. Even more interesting is one detail in Nathaniel Bacon's copy of the oath to the new monarch, echoing that taken by hundreds of JPs kingdom-wide. James was not to be Supreme Head of the Church of England, but Supreme Governor, like Queen Elizabeth before him. Most probably she had taken this new title in 1559 because she was a woman, but now a man had been named Supreme Governor, and so it has been for every monarch since then, regardless of gender. Perhaps out of personal theological preference, having his own Reformed Protestant worries about claiming a supremacy due to Christ alone, King James set a lasting pattern. It shows the limits on that widely-held caricature of him, that he was always pushing the concept of divine-right monarchy.

Other pages here provide tiny word-portraits of a large number of ordinary Norfolk men whose physical appearances would otherwise be entirely lost, for the good reason that, when it came to impressment for the navy, it was necessary to know what they looked like: the man pressed might vanish from the scene, or find a physically weedy substitute who would be bound to be rejected when he turned up for duty. So a gallery of faces, forty-strong, provides a straw poll of facial hair fashions in north Norfolk in 1603. Equally unexpectedly, it might not have been immediately obvious without a letter from Mrs Margaret Berney of Gunton that the collapse of Gunton church tower led to a sudden need for an alehouse: the influx of workmen rebuilding the church needed a handy source of beer and food while they were building, and tiny Gunton village had nothing licensed. That nuances a common cliché in social history about alehouse and church culture being at odds. Looking through Nathaniel Bacon's papers makes one realise that, for the villages around Stiffkey, he was the nanny state, and, as today, he had to cope with the public reaction of shock when the nanny state is not nanny enough. Here is a Peter Grimes of former days, George Phillips of Dunton, who for five years miserably ill-treated, starved and left scantily clad his apprentice in tannery Peter Howsigo, until eventually the lice-ridden, fatally sick twenty-year-old dragged himself to his widowed mother's house to die. A wretched detail is that for half a year the boy had been too ashamed to go to church after his Easter attendance, because his clothes were not up to an appearance in public.

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