to conceal but to communicate it. Perhaps not all readers have been unaware that poetic imagery is far richer in meaning thean 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 tempestous 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 *Fowre 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*.

M. PAULINE, I.B.V.M.

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

by the volume and scope of the information available, the proportion of official to private papers and the selection made by time, at a given moment, of certain classes of archive. To accept uncritically this arbitrary and artificial selection may lead to a disproportionate emphasis on one particular aspect of a many-faceted career. Mr Emmison, the Essex County Archivist, has synthesized a biography of Sir William Petre from State and private papers. Petre's service to successive sovereigns kept him in the centre of public affairs and his name recurs constantly in the official records; the corresponding accumulation of private family papers at Ingatestone Hall are now in Mr Emmison's care at the Essex Record Office. Here are materials in plenty for a biography which should illuminate the dark places of Tudor administrative history as well as opening up the bye-ways of mid-sixteenth century social life. The problem of technique is to present the principal figure in the proper stature of a man, neither dwarfed by the mass of circumstantial detail nor dominating his environment like a Colossus. Mr Emmison's solution has been to intersperse chapters dealing with State affairs with a detailed consideration of domestic topics, building, family life, pastimes, estate finance, based on an intensive analysis and manipulation of Petre's private account books. Attention is switched abruptly from the multitudinous preoccupations of the Sovereign's Principal Secretary to the day-to-day affairs of a moderately well-to-do country gentleman. Even the entirely praiseworthy determination to allow the documents to speak for themselves does not preclude a certain sifting and arrangement of the more important items. This lack of critical emphasis and selection blurs the main outline and leaves the reader with the uncomfortable sensation of looking simultaneously through both ends of a telescope. Mr Emmison's most successful demonstration of the interaction of State and private papers is in his plotting of Petre's movements at certain critical moments. His Steward's disbursements enumerate his master's journeys, their points of departure and destination; these establish Petre's silent presence at conferences documented by the official records, one of the small company of men who steered events through the dangers of mid-Tudor plot and counterplot.

The pre-eminent interest in Petre's career is its remarkable length. He served Henry VIII and his three successors with conscientious loyalty, as an executant of the royal will and, in his later years, as a trusted adviser, though hardly as a policy maker. His early training in Canon as well as in Civil Law brought him early promotion as one of the small number of laymen who could carry on, and where necessary re-shape, the ecclesiastical administration to suit the new Establishment. It is the measure of his ability that Petre, appointed Visitor to the monasteries by Thomas Cromwell, survived his patron's fall to be advanced as Ambassador to the Emperor and the King of France by Henry VIII, held the seal *ad causas ecclesiasticas* as well as the Secretaryship under Edward VI, retained his office under Mary and for the early years of Elizabeth's reign and finally retired, a respected Elder Statesman, to die in his bed. One of Petre's few positive statements, quoted by Mr Emmison, was recorded by Roger Ascham

in his report of a conversation about corporal punishment: Petre 'somewhat severe of nature, said plainly that the rod only was the sword that must keep the school in obedience and the scholar in good order'. These virtues were evidently placed high in Petre's scale of values; practised throughout his long life, they impressed their stamp upon this singularly consistent career. Why then, does the reader remain indifferent, the portrait fail to convince; is it a failure in biographical technique, author and reader alike stunned by the weight of evidence so painstakingly amassed? Up to a point this must be conceded, but there seems to be a certain deliberate elusiveness in the personality of Petre. This dimness of outline bothered his contemporaries as much as the modern observer: 'the man who said nothing' going about his work 'in entire compliance to the King's will'. Perhaps this facelessness was the deliberate choice of a shrewd intelligence; a protective dullness of coloration provided an efficient safeguard in the flamboyantly uneasy years of Tudor politics. Petre's remarkable tenacity of office may well be due to his silent discretion. All Mr Emmison's painstaking examination of a vast collection of documents fails to conjure up the sound of his voice. Petre said nothing, left no evidence of controversial activity which might be used against him, yet wherever one looks in the Tudor scene he is there, tireless and industrious. This study for a full-length portrait leaves the reader unsatisfied, not asking for more material but for a clarification of the facts already presented. What did Petre think about the events in which he took part; how far did his loyalty to the successive sovereigns rest on a genuine devotion to the legitimate ruler and how far was it dictated by a greater devotion to his own skin? We know from his personal account books that Petre's public reputation for honest dealing was not covering over private and concealed peculation and his benefactions increased with his prosperity. What restrained him from profiting from office to the same tune as his fellows and prompted him to so wide a benevolence? When all has been said Sir William Petre remains as shadowy a figure as when Mr Emmison began his work; he makes no attempt to pluck out the heart of his mystery. It is characteristic of Mr Emmison's generous profession that he has displayed the materials on which other scholars may work in the future. Some of the intricate detail of a Tudor household is extracted from the private account books and printed as an Appendix; for this, and for the excellent account of the building of Ingatestone Hall in the body of the text, all students of Tudor social life will be grateful.

J. ROWE

THE CRISIS OF WESTERN EDUCATION, by Christopher Dawson; Sheed and Ward; 18s.

Mr Christopher Dawson's new book is a work of cardinal importance not only for those who plan courses for undergraduates, but for all who concern them-