
Published in London in 1585, the title page of Robert Greene’s *Planetomachia* promised its prospective readers a healthy dose of entertainment and education, combining an astronomical discourse of the ‘essence, nature, and influence’ of the planets with ‘pleasaunt and Tragicall histories’. In this present volume, the latest in Ashgate’s new ‘Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity’ series, Nandini Das has sought to produce the first complete critical edition of Greene’s *Planetomachia*.

Prior to Das’ edition, Greene’s *Planetomachia* was available in only two other modern editions, both with their share of errors and limitations. The need for a complete, modern, critical edition of the text is clearly warranted, and Das is to be applauded for undertaking such a task. Das’ Textual Introduction begins with a comprehensive discussion of the printing of Greene’s *Planetomachia*, followed by a collation of the six extant copies of the text, including the Houghton Library copy neglected by both previous editors. On its own, Das’ bibliographical analysis is an important contribution to Greene studies. Finding in Bodleian Tanner 253(2) ‘the only complete copy to present the various segments of the text in the correct order’ (p. xlvii), Das is justified in selecting it as the copy-text for the present volume.

Beginning with a Critical Introduction, the edition includes the text of Greene’s *Planetomachia* along with commentary and a list of emendations (among other editorial apparatus), finishing with a section for Sources and Translations, and a selected bibliography. The Critical Introduction is split into four sections: Personal Contexts, Scientific Contexts, Literary Contexts, and a Textual Introduction. Appended after the edition and the list of emendations, Das includes a number of lists and tables, the purpose of which is not always clear. Of more obvious utility, especially for those with ‘small Latine and lesse Greeke’, is the Sources and Translations section that follows (pp. 139-59). Here Das includes translations of the Latin portions of Greene’s text and extracts from his sources in the original and in translation. Finally, the volume ends with a Select Bibliography, with primary sources cited erratically with or without their place of publication, and others with incorrect titles.

As laudable as these bibliographical efforts may be, other editorial procedures adopted by Das are puzzling. A modernised text might have proven more useful, but Das does not justify her decision to produce an original-spelling edition. Instead,
the edition of the English text ‘preserves the spelling found in the Bodleian Tanner copy’ but with many exceptions. Further, ‘in cases where the reader may be puzzled by ambiguous or irregular period spelling’ (p. xlix), the edition gives the modernised form in brackets, noting the original in the list of emendations.

Just as perplexing is Das’ treatment of Greene’s citations from Latin and Greek authors, and the substantial Latin sections of *Planetomachia* itself. While the English text was selectively regularised, expanded, and emended, the opposite approach is adopted with the Latin text. Das’ decision to leave untouched and uncorrected Greene’s citations from Latin and Greek authors is similarly inexplicable.

The system of line numbers used throughout the edition is puzzling, and at first appears to have no utility at all. While there is no mention or explanation of the line numbers in the editorial apparatus, an astute reader will inevitably discover the purposes of the numbers appearing in increments of five in the margin of every page: to assist in locating items from the ten-page list of emendations (the majority of which are simply expanded words originally printed with a tilde, or one of the 88 substitutions of ‘than’ for ‘then’). Surely it might have made more sense to implement a more conventional system of line numbering, tied to the structure of the text itself? Thankfully, Das includes the signature references in square brackets within the body of the text itself, so it is possible to cite from the edition.

In the Acknowledgements, Das jokes that ‘like his sixteenth-century successors’ she might wish to ascribe any errors in the edition ‘to Greene’s ghost’ (p. vii). If not an exorcism, Das’ edition is in need of a thorough proofing, as its pages are plagued with errors from the outset, ranging from minor printing slips (such as joining ‘between’ and ‘literary’ in the series blurb) through to more serious mistakes in names, dates, and citations. For instance, the first footnote of the volume gives an incorrect citation for A. B. Grosart’s *Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene*, published for private circulation in 1881-86, which was printed in 15 volumes, not 13 as stated (p. ix). Other embarrassing mistakes crop up throughout: we are told, for instance, that ‘Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1533’ (p. xii), confusing the year of Elizabeth’s birth (1533) with that of her accession (1558), and are directed twice to *Religion and the Decline of Magic* by one ‘R. V. Thomas’ instead of Keith Thomas (pp. xxv, 164). Even the Textual Introduction informs readers that ‘diagraphs’ in the text have been ‘silently expanded’ (p. xlix), where Das clearly intended ‘digraphs’ as opposed to the perspective drawing device invented by Charles Gavard in 1830.

Preparing a critical edition of Greene’s *Planetomachia* offered Das the enviable opportunity to paint a broader picture of a prominent (and sadly neglected) Early

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Modern literary figure and London personality. On the whole, Das succeeds in offering the reader a critical introduction to these various biographical, literary, and scientific contexts, although one might have wished for a more concentrated engagement with the text itself. Given the broad range of topics addressed by the introduction, a list of titles for suggested further reading would have been a useful addition.

Das’ edition of Greene’s *Planetomachia* has much to offer scholars of Elizabethan prose, Greene specialists, and scholars concerned with the intersection of early modern literature and discourses of science and astrology, but the end result, saddled with errors and inconsistencies, reads more like a draft than a finished product.

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By using the terms ‘periodisation’, ‘feudalism’ and ‘secularisation’, Kathleen Davis engages in an examination of three highly contentious terms. Add ideas around colonialism, postcolonialism, and a hint of nationalism, and we have a work that is both theoretically ambitious and academically challenging. The text is certainly not for the faint-hearted scholar, requiring careful and attentive reading in order to grasp the full import of Davis’ argument: the idea that there is a strong relationship between the structure of the ‘Middle Ages’ and the history of sovereignty, colonialism and slavery. Davis challenges the rigid medieval/modern periodisation that permeates historical and theoretical scholarship. By periodisation, Davis means ‘a complex process of conceptualizing categories, which are posited as homogenous and retroactively validated by the designation of a period divide’ (p. 3). Davis asks ‘Where is the Now?’ suggesting that categories deemed medieval cannot be relegated to a distant and barbaric past because they are still relevant to political categories today. Feudalism and secularisation still exist, undermining the argument that they anchor the Middle Ages as a period concept and supply the narrative bases of the ‘modern’ sovereign state and secular politics. History should not be erased or manipulated to fit a rigid timeline,

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