Paula Harms Payne, ed. *A Search for Meaning: Critical Essays on Early Modern Literature*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. x + 159 pp. + 3 illus. $55.95. Review by PHOEBE S. SPINRAD, THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY.

It is always difficult to do justice to a collection of essays on diverse themes, and it becomes especially difficult when the collection is also in diverse modes, as it is in *A Search for Meaning: Critical Essays on Early Modern Literature*, edited by Paula Harms Payne in honor of Albert W. Fields. Mirroring Professor Fields' versatility and interdisciplinarity, this *festschrift* includes nine essays and, surprisingly, three poems. The essays are on Elizabethan prose fiction, Sidney, Shakespeare, Jonson, Massinger, and Milton; and the poems, on Albrecht Dürer.

Among the most interesting of the essays are Christopher Baker's "Ovid, Othello, and the Pontic Scythians" and David Boocker's "Milton and the Woman Controversy." In the first of these, Baker begins with Othello's comparison of his "bloody thoughts" to the Pontic Sea and convincingly links this Pontic (or Black Sea) region to the "barbarous Scythian" invoked by King Lear and to Marlowe's famous "Scythian shepherd," Tamburlaine, as a likely association in the minds of Shakespeare's audience; from there, it is an equally plausible step, as Baker develops it, to Ovid: "Elizabethans who had read a frequent grammar school text, the *Tristia*, Ovid's account of his exile on the Black Sea, would have recalled the account of his last years among these people of the steppes" (62-63). But in associating Othello with these barbarous Scythians, Baker claims, not only does Shakespeare establish Othello's character at the moment of his rage as "more savage than noble," but he also "evok[es] the more contemporary English problem of related 'barbarians' closer to home–the Irish" (63). Although one may occasionally question whether *all* Othello's shouts of rage should be seen as Ovidian/Scythian rather than, say, Senecan, and although one may wish for a few more acknowledgments of the more obvious references to Moors and Turks, Baker argues his case cogently and opens up new vistas of exploration in ways to approach the play.

David Boocker, too, adds important considerations to ongoing critical discussions in his "Milton and the Woman Controversy." Focusing on *Paradise Lost*, and analyzing the arguments of both seventeenth-century and con-

temporary "feminist" critics–I use the quotation marks because, as Boocker reminds us, seventeenth-century defenders of women were very much unlike our contemporary feminists (125, 138)–Boocker carefully sorts out the threads of the various gender discourses used by the feminists of both eras and by Milton himself, being careful to distinguish between the terms "patriarchal" and "misogynist," a procedure one might wish to see in more discussions of this kind. Milton, Boocker claims, is no misogynist, and if he is patriarchal, so too were such female controversialists of the time as Lanyer, Speght, and Sowernam, who saw in the relationship of Adam and Eve a complementarity inclusive of Eve's subordination, but who, like Milton, defended Eve by placing greater blame on Adam (128-30). Boocker also notes that "[t]he real danger for Adam and Eve, then, is that the Fall will eradicate the possibility of their being able to maintain the feminist discourse, characterized by mutual respect, that shapes the prelapsarian dialogue. However, thanks to Eve, some feminist outlook remains in postlapsarian Eden; indeed, it is Eve's feminist discourse in Book X which begins their reconciliation" (134). Boocker, admirably, does not attempt to settle the "woman controversy" in Milton forever, although he does conclude that "Milton was no misogynist" (138). What he does accomplish is a long-needed definition of terms to work with in the future and a level-headed way to use them.

Among the other interesting essays in the collection, George Klawitter's "Hearing People Talk in Elizabethan Prose Fiction" links much of this fiction to dialogic manipulation in jest-books of the time and traces the development of both narrative and dialogue through analyses of Baldwin's *Beware the Cat*, Gascoigne's *Master F.J.*, Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveler*, and Deloney's *Thomas of Reading*. Paula Harms Payne, too, analyzes rhetorical strategies in her "Sidney's Poet-Reader Dialectic: Theory and Practice," focusing primarily on Sidney's *Defense of Poesie*. The collection then moves to a consideration of Shakespeare: Christopher Baker's essay on Othello and Ovid, already discussed, as well as James H. Sims' "Shakespeare and the Christian Reader: A Consideration of Shakespeare's Faith and Moral Vision As Communicated Through the Text of His Plays," and John M. Mercer's "Ben De Bar as Falstaff, 1872-1877: St. Louis's Gift to Shakespearean Performance in America," the latter essay accompanied by photographs of Ben de Bar in costume, both live and on the Shakespeare Statue in Tower Grove Park, St. Louis, Missouri. In other essays, Jean MacIntyre meticulously explores "Prince

Henry's Satyrs: Topicality in Jonson's *Oberon*" and Clayuton Delery does an Aristotelian and mimetic approach to the metadrama of a too-often neglected Massinger play: "Dramatic Instruction and Misinstruction in Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor*." We then move on to the Milton section, where Sung-Kyun Yim presents a well-argued claim about Harapha as a pivotal figure in *Samson Agonistes* ("Samson and Harapha: Milton's Anti-Heroism in *Samson Agonistes*"). There follows David Boocker's essay on Milton, and, finally, Darrrell Bourque's poems, "Dürer's *Hare*," "Courtyard at Innsbruch Castle, *after Dürer*," and "Dürer's *Appollo*."

If there is any flaw to be noted in this collection, it may be its principle of selection or perhaps its indeterminacy about who the audience is supposed to be. Some essays seem meant for a general audience, while others seem meant for experts. For example, the Sims essay, originally delivered as public lectures, includes elaborately detailed plot summaries of plays with which most Renaissance students (let alone scholars) are probably quite familiar, and at times it seems more focused on the reader's Christianity than on Shakespeare's. However, this essay is surrounded by two others, the Payne and Baker essays, which expect a great deal of expertise in the reader and which certainly expect the reader to be well acquainted with the text under discussion, including at least one of the plays so carefully described in the Sims essay. The poems, too, although interesting in their own right and displaying a high degree of craftsmanship, seem almost tacked on at the end; we move from primarily English texts, except for a foray into American theatre history, directly to Dürer, with no indication of how we have arrived there or what connection we are supposed to make with the preceding essays. Even the editor's normally helpful introduction is not of much help here.

All in all, though, this is an interesting–if at times quirky–collection of essays and poems, almost uniformly well-written, and any scholar of the seventeenth century will certainly be able to pick out a few gems from the collection that match his or her tastes and needs.

Adam Smyth, ed. *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in 17th-Century England*. Studies in Renaissance Literature, Vol. 14. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004. xxv + 215 pp. Includes black and white illustrations. $85.00. Review by BRYAN N.S. GOOCH, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.