

chapters: reviews (like this one) on the other hand must work within a prescribed low word count. Two other charges against the reviewers of *How Milton Works* are the resistance to Fish's explications of Milton's textual strategies, such as puns, whose acknowledged presence might dismantle decorous visions of Milton, and Fish's indifference to "history and politics" (128). We gather more of Fish's perspective on literary criticism by his explication of the points and stakes of these two charges. I recommend the book for its careful readings of Milton and the other authors featured, and for its emphasis on facets of antihumanism that deserve the attention he gives them.

Mary C. Fenton and Louis Schwartz, eds. *To Repair the Ruins: Reading Milton*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012. xii + 436 pp. + 22 illus. \$58.00. Review by ANTHONY WELCH, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE.

To Repair the Ruins, a collection of essays drawn from the 2009 Conference on John Milton in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, derives its title from Milton's 1644 tract *Of Education*. "The end . . . of learning," Milton writes, "is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright." The editors describe their volume as a project of restoration and repair: an effort to explore "the processes that play across the gap between a ruined world in need of repair and a world of the imagination that invites us to delight in the power of language to reflect our desire for a reshaped world and inspire us to the hard work of actually reshaping it" (4). More polemically, the editors frame this book as a reaction against the recent dominance of "historical and contextual" scholarship in Milton studies, with its emphasis on the author's political writings and engagements. These essays, they claim, herald a renewed critical interest in "close reading—historically and theoretically informed attention to Milton's poetic and rhetorical style—and in the history of that sort of reading" (1). It is always a challenge to shoehorn a diverse group of scholarly essays into a tight unifying theme or thesis, and one occasionally struggles to tell the difference between the historically informed literary analysis found in these pages and the contextual scholarship that the editors claim to

set aside here. But this collection brings welcome attention to Milton's poetry, its sources and contexts, the models of reading that it espouses, and the impact it has exerted on readers and artists over time.

The volume opens with three essays that address neglected aspects of Milton's poetry and its early reception. John Leonard recovers the literary criticism of James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (1714-99), a Scottish jurist and philosopher of language whose writings have been largely ignored by Miltonists. Leonard boldly suggests that Lord Monboddo's work on Milton, in particular his defense of the poet's "unnatural" syntax in *Paradise Lost*, makes him the "best close reader of Milton between Thomas Newton in 1749 and William Empson in 1935" (24). Milton's approach to literary inspiration and its relationship to divine truth is the subject of essays by William Shullenberger and Gardner Campbell. In an essay of remarkable sensitivity and insight, Shullenberger traces a complex dialogue between Milton's Nativity Ode and his *Elegia Quinta*, written a few months earlier in 1625. In startling contrast with the Ode's logic of "eschatological self-abnegation," the Latin elegy embraces a sensuous, naturalistic pagan vision that seeks meaning and value in the human imagination itself—a vision that was not to be realized again, Shullenberger suggests, until the poetry of the English Romantics. Campbell explores how *Paradise Lost* imagines heaven and divine creation in "Milton's Empyrean Conceit," showing that Milton views both the human imagination and the nature of poetic language as simultaneously creative and mimetic, an expression of the loving, flexible partnership between divine grace and human free will.

A second group of essays considers "the relationship between reading, self-examination, and action" in Milton's late poems (7). Reading *Paradise Regained* with an eye on Hegel and Gadamer, Ryan Netzley argues that Milton's poem rejects familiar models of readerly recognition and self-discovery, seeking instead to foster forms of reading, and loving, that move beyond all selfish expectations of "finding oneself" in a moral lesson or a decoded riddle (122). Further historicizing the act of reading in *Paradise Regained*, Vanita Neelakanta links the poem's portrayal of private devotion in the wilderness to the practices of the seventeenth-century prayer closet, with its tensions between secluded self-examination and public religious display. Giuseppina

Iacono Lobo investigates the treatment of conscience in *Paradise Lost*. Shaped by the Restoration politics of religious conformity and dissent, Milton's epic portrays the "horrors of a guilty conscience" and stresses the need to protect "liberty of conscience against all forms of external coercion" (175).

Three more essays delve into the local contexts and literary sources of the early poems. In "Milton's *Genii Loci* and the Medieval Saints," Alison Chapman shows how Milton's guardian spirits of the landscape in *Lycidas* and elsewhere use pagan mythology to evoke "the inherent sacredness of places" (197), while strategically displacing the local "cults" of medieval Catholicism: the saints' shrines, holy wells, and other sanctified places that dotted the landscape of early modern Ireland, Wales, and the West Country. Taking up the "two-handed engine" in *Lycidas*, Carter Revard traces this famous crux to 1 Chronicles 21.14-17, with its vision of the punishing angel witnessed by David on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite—a discrete appeal to Charles I, Revard suggests, "to repent and reform as David did" by rolling back Laudian reforms (221). Shifting to Milton's sonnets, Sara Van den Berg revisits the mysterious identity of Sonnet 9's "Lady ... in the prime of earliest youth." Making an intriguing case for Mary Boyle Rich, a sister of the chemist Robert Boyle who at the age of thirteen refused a socially advantageous marriage arranged by her upwardly mobile Anglo-Irish father, Van den Berg suggests how Rich's biography might have shaped the two versions of Milton's poem published in 1645 and 1673, and explores how the 1673 sonnets evoke contrasting patterns of masculine and feminine virtue.

A final set of essays addresses the reading and reception of Milton from the early nineteenth century to the present. Joan Blythe skillfully traces the roles played by both Milton and Cromwell—and, in particular, Milton's *Defensio Secunda*—in the writings of François-René de Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo, as they grappled with questions of political authority and liberty in the aftermath of Napoleonic rule. Exploring Milton's reception in the visual arts, Wendy Furman-Adams's bountifully illustrated essay analyzes the portrayal of space and place in Milton's Paradise, as rendered by three artists whose work stretches from early industrial England to Mussolini's Italy: John Martin (1789-1854), Mary Elizabeth Groom (1903-58), and Carlotta Petrini

(1901-97). In a thoughtful final essay, Sarah Higinbotham describes her experience of teaching Milton to fifteen inmates at Johnson State Prison outside Atlanta. Probing the key terms “repair” and “impair” in *Paradise Lost*, Higinbotham applies those concepts to her students’ personal and aesthetic engagement with Milton’s poem—a reading experience, she observes, that was rooted in a “genuine, fundamental belief that reading great books is transformational” (355). The authors in this volume clearly share that belief, and although they have for the most part avoided Milton’s polemical prose, the wide range of approaches that they have found to illuminate his poetry fruitfully complicates any straightforward distinction between “close reading” and “contextual studies.” As a snapshot of recent work by both junior and senior scholars in the field, *To Repair the Ruins* speaks to the methodological vigor, diversity, and eclecticism of American Milton studies today.

Jonathan Shears. *The Romantic Legacy of Paradise Lost: Reading against the Grain*. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009. ix + 221 pp. £55.00/\$99.95. Review by DAVID V. URBAN, CALVIN COLLEGE.

In this helpful book, Jonathan Shears focuses on “the relationship between *Paradise Lost* and Romantic literature” and “the legacy that Romantic readings of *Paradise Lost* have held, and still hold, on the critical consciousness” (1). Respecting but consciously setting his argument against Lucy Newlyn’s *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader* (1993), Shears takes issue with the longstanding Romantic interpretation of Milton’s epic that emphasizes ambiguity and contraction as central to *Paradise Lost*, instead arguing that *Paradise Lost* should be read as a unified whole, with the poem’s component parts interpreted in light Milton’s “great Argument.” In the process, Shears contends that the Romantic reading of Milton’s epic is “a *misreading*—an unsystematic imposition of meaning on to Milton’s text” (6). Shears analyzes not only the Romantic tradition of reading *Paradise Lost* but also how the Romantics’ reading of Milton manifested itself in the literature of six major Romantic poets: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats.