

In short, the *De Doctrina* is a learned and heterodox work, which may or may not have been authored by Milton. Since some of these views could result in one's being burned at the stake, one wonders why Milton would have given voice to them, during one of his darkest hours, "fall'n on evil days . . . In darkness, and with dangers compassed round" (*Paradise Lost* 7, 25, 27).

Stanley Fish. *Versions of Antihumanism: Milton and Others*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. ix + 289 pp. \$90.00. Review by ANGELICA DURAN, PURDUE UNIVERSITY.

Stanley Fish's *Versions of Antihumanism: Milton and Others* is a collection of nine previously-published essays, three new ones (four, counting the Introduction) on Milton (seven essays), and essays on other authors and topics in early modern literature. The essays cumulate to support the "intentional thesis," which avers that "the answer to the very old question, 'What is the meaning of a text?' is: A text means that its author or authors intend,' period" (1). His book-long answer, in which he discusses primary texts and contemporary literary and cultural criticism, provides welcome critical insights and in some cases opportunities for readers to investigate the critical moorings that they possess and that account for their disagreements with some of his arguments and statements.

Readers familiar with and convinced by Fish's critical arguments might determine it apt to read the whole of the volume in order. After all, Fish has repeatedly argued that precise reproduction is impossible, perhaps most memorably in *Is There a Text in This Class?* (1980). In response to Stephen Booth's claim that he does not intentionally interpret Shakespeare's sonnets but rather describes them in his award-winning *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1977), which features 75 pages of facsimile copies of the original Quarto text of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1609) and more than 400 pages of other textual apparatus, Fish avers that Booth's claim "is an impossible one since in order 'simply to present' the text, one must at the very least describe it ('I mean to describe them') and description can occur only within a stipulative understanding of what there is to be described, an understanding that

will produce the object of its attention" (353). Fish's counterclaim maintains with a cover-to-cover reading of *Versions of Antihumanism*. The "Introduction: Intention, Historicism and Interpretation" indeed *introduces* the logic and many of the topics and texts of the volume to imply the rationale behind the selection of these particular essays from among Fish's large critical publications. In the Introduction, Fish first addresses the most pertinent interpretive and analytical areas of historical and historicist readings (1-3), delves into intellectual history (3), reception history and presentism (4-5), and intentionalism vs. textualism (5-6), to hone in on his pithy application of the intentional thesis in "The Readings" subsection (6-19).

The previously-published essays—primarily from the 2000s, with the earliest, "Chapter 9: Authors-Readers: Johnson's Community of the Same," from 1984—are not organized sequentially but rather topically and methodologically, to develop the arguments of "Part I: Milton" and "Part II: Early Modern Literature." I was intrigued most by my own readerly response to "Chapter 5: Milton in Popular Culture." This chapter gains prestige by being featured in this collection, given its original publication as an "Afterword" to Laura Lunger Knoppers's and Gregory M. Colón Semenza's *Milton in Popular Culture* (2006). It read so differently to me in *Versions of Antihumanism* that I took my copy of *Milton and Popular Culture*, off my bookshelf, sure I would find that the chapter had been revised (to be more specific, reduced) only to find that it had not been. I was convinced "yet again" of the accuracy of Fish's assessment of the effect of presentation on reception.

Readers familiar with Fish's work might take another readerly tack in picking up *Versions of Antihumanism* and immediately jump to the three new chapters, to learn about the newest developments or applications of his approach: these readers will be rewarded with his signature aplomb and his ability to draw out the foundations of Milton's achievement in various works. The first chapter, "The Brenzel Lectures" (never delivered as lectures, according to the note on the first page), is the longest of the entire volume. Counterbalancing the complexity of his arguments are the helpful rhetorical and presentational maneuvers. He starts the chapter asking the governing questions, "Why read *Paradise Lost*? For that matter, why read poetry at all? What pleasure and/or instruction does it give? Is what it offers unique, or

can it be derived more easily and succinctly from other sources?" (23). He clearly demonstrates the pleasure he derives from the poetry of *Paradise Lost*, and explains how empiricism, feminism, theology, and other approaches factor into that pleasure, and that redounds on his claim of "the final rehearsal of Milton's great lesson, the lessons that however crowded and variegated the landscape of external events, the true landscape—the one whose composition really matters—is the landscape of the heart, the landscape of belief and conviction, the landscape of faith" (63).

Both of the other new chapters, "Chapter 6: How the Reviews Work" and "Chapter 7: The New Milton Criticism," warrant careful reading. I attend briefly only to the former here, given its attention to the very genre of this *review*, and given that both work towards the end of reminding readers that critical works, like reviews and Milton studies, should be held to the questions, "is it answerable to Milton's [or the text's] achievement? Is it on the right track or is it just horribly wrong?" (123). The article "the" in the title of Chapter 6 indicates that the topic will not be reviews *per se* but rather "the" reviews of his *How Milton Works* (2003). That book ends with an epilogue that also responds to his critics, although in that instance the critics are "friendly but acute" and the topic is broader, Fish's "works" not a specific work (561). In chapter 6, however, he primarily tackles "negative reviewers" of *How Milton Works* (120). He articulates some of the evasive maneuvers, hobby-horses, or plain errors that are pervasive in reviews of his work. Those include the persistence of anti-U.S. scholarship by British and Canadian scholars in particular, something that used to be more blatant. The cases that spring to my mind are the sets of reviews of Eleanor G. Brown's *Milton's Blindness* (1934) and of Stephen Booth's *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. He also provides examples of reviews that read like author attacks, rather than engagements with the text under review. My own model for productive and illuminating scholarly disagreement, serendipitously enough with some of Fish's works, is the concluding chapter of Richard Strier's *The Unrepentant Renaissance* (2012), which refutes Milton being a "theologically antihumanist poet" (255). It must be stated that Strier's success in engaging specifically with Fish, whatever his success in convincing his readers of Fish's errors, is in part a function of the length enjoyed by scholarly

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