

ity” (137). In this decade, satire’s radical potential thus came to the fore, as it was used to reveal the systemic corruption of the monarchy and locate “political rectitude” (140) among the common people.

The last two chapters present in-depth case studies of Richard Corbett and the satiric writings and trial of John Bastwick, Henry Burton, and William Prynne. Corbett, the second most popular poet in manuscript circulation (losing out only to Donne), shows that satire is not *by nature* an oppositional mode—he used satiric strategies to construct a discourse of royalism. Bastwick, Burton, and Prynne used similar strategies to redefine Puritanism as religious orthodoxy, and to stigmatize Laudianism as Arminianism and thus as popery. This final chapter, however interesting in and of itself, feels tacked on. Though they were charged as “seditious libellers,” the three men did not actually write much satire. (McRae has much recourse to their use of irony in correspondence and in their voluminous prose texts). He argues that their trial helped to politicize religious opposition—religious resistance becomes “sedition”—which is a theme he touches on throughout the book, but he needs to spend more time analyzing the satiric aspects of their writing.

In the epilogue, McRae briefly looks forward to the 1640s and the Revolution, pointing out how early Stuart satire influenced the work of John Taylor, John Cleveland, and Andrew Marvell. For many readers, the book’s primary interest probably lies in this glimpse at the poetic future, or in McRae’s skilled account of the ways in which a literary genre shaped English politics and history. It is a wonderful book about not-so-wonderful poetry.

James Fitzmaurice, ed. *Sociable Letters: Margaret Cavendish*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004. 336 pp. + 6 illus. \$12.95. Review by SARAH R. MOREMAN, SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY RIO GRANDE COLLEGE.

Margaret Cavendish published thirteen books that went through twenty-two editions in her lifetime. She employed a surprisingly wide variety of genres for any seventeenth-century English writer, including poetry, fiction, autobiography, plays, scientific speculation, a biography of her husband, William Cavendish, and letters. Until recently, Cavendish’s works had not been available in modern editions except C. H. Firth’s edition of *The Life of William Cavendish, to which is added the True Relation of my Birth, Breeding and Life*, which

appeared in 1886 followed by later editions, and Douglas Grant's 1956 edition of letters written by William Cavendish and Margaret Lucas. *Sociable Letters* was the first of Cavendish's works to appear in a modern edition, reproduced as it was in a facsimile edition by Scholar Press in 1969. Scholar Press also reproduced the first edition of *Poems and Fancies* in 1972. Other than excerpts appearing in anthologies, no other works by Cavendish appeared in modern editions until Paul Salzman's edition of *The Blazing World* in *An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Fiction* published in 1991 and Kate Lilley's 1992 edition of *The Blazing World and Other Writings*.

James Fitzmaurice did Cavendish scholars a great service by editing *Sociable Letters* for publication by Garland in 1997. Fitzmaurice's most recent Broadview edition of *Sociable Letters* is even more valuable because it situates the letters in context by providing a full introduction, appendices, illustrations, and annotations. The Broadview Editions series for which this edition was prepared brings together valuable newly-accessible texts with canonical texts, helpful introductions, and a variety of contemporary documents that set the lesser-known literature in context. Fitzmaurice's edition of *Sociable Letters* will help today's readers become the audience of "after ages" that Cavendish ardently desired.

*Sociable Letters* imitates the numerous epistolary relationships between men and women based upon ongoing philosophical or theological discussions; however, it models an exchange between two women instead of one between a male author and his female correspondent. The context of *Sociable Letters* is provided in the first letter as the correspondent writes to her friend that since they cannot visit personally, they should do so by letters. However, the letters are not intended for two readers only but for a wider audience including "All Professors of Learning and Art," to whom one of the prefaces is addressed, and to less virtuous readers, as we see when she cautions the "censorious reader" that her "Wit indites for Profitable Use,/That Men may see their Follies, and their Crimes" (46). As Fitzmaurice points out in his Introduction, Cavendish's letters cover a wide range of topics including marriage, medicine and science, war, peace, and politics, and English and classical literature.

Cavendish accounts for the variety of topics explored in the letters by including amongst six prefatory pieces the verse "Upon her Excellency the Authoress" according to which Cavendish's teeming thoughts travel the world

and “to the Mind do bring/All the Relations of each several thing” (45). Emphasizing Cavendish’s interest in the variety of human action and experience, this verse is suggestive of the letters that follow. In a prefatory letter to her husband, Cavendish establishes to some extent her ethos: she claims that she is ignorant of needle work, spinning, preserving, and baking as well as of “Gaming, Dancing, and Revelling” (38). She insists, however, that she is not a “Dunce” in all employments because she understands instead the importance of writing and the business of managing sheep, concluding that if “Men were as Harmless as most Beasts are, then surely the World would be more Quiet and Happy than it is” (38).

Fitzmaurice writes in his Introduction that the most important topic in *Sociable Letters* is marriage, and that while Cavendish always praises her own husband and marriage, she nevertheless questions the institution’s value for women generally (13). Cavendish’s reader is treated to a surprisingly wide variety of observations about seventeenth-century life for women and men, and many of the letters reward attention by their wit and, at times, their unconventional perspectives on marriage. Other important topics that Fitzmaurice introduces include medicine, war and politics and their impact on families, and literary criticism. While Fitzmaurice observes that *Sociable Letters* covers a wide variety of subjects, too wide one infers for all to be mentioned in an introduction, he might have included Cavendish’s thoughts about women’s education.

Illustrating his observation about unexpected details in the letters, Fitzmaurice points out an interesting letter about marriage. The letter opens with a description of “the Lady C.R.” who “being a woman of none of the least Sizes, but one of the largest, and having Anger added to her Strength,” beats her husband soundly and in public (72). This is remarkable; however, the letter also addresses education, as we see in the regret expressed about the woman’s having to resort to physical rather than reasoned rhetoric, and in the lament that “for the most part Women are not Educated as they should be” because it is an “Education of the Body, and not of the Mind...for this Education is more for outward Shew, than for inward Worth” (73). In Letter 112, while the speaker laments that women’s wit is “brief,” she implies that a sensible education would solve the problem: “But, Madam, I observe, our Sex is more apt to Read than to Write, and most commonly when any of our Sex doth Write, they Write some Devotions, or Romances, or Receipts of

Medicines, for Cookery or Confectioners, or Complemental Letters, or a Copy or two of Verses” (167). Responding to critics of her scientific speculation, Cavendish says that she has “neither Confidence nor Learning to Speak to an Assembly, nor in such Forms or Phrases, as Masters of Learning” (205), implying again the importance of education for women, especially for self-educated writers who want to defend themselves from the aspersions of uncharitable critics. Letter 150 recommends reading as the best employment for one’s maids because “by Reading they will Inrich their Understandings, and Increase their Knowledges, and Quicken their Wit” (212), and Letter 152 focuses on strategies to encourage a daughter “to Listen to Wise Instruction, [and] to Study Profitable Arts or Sciences” (214).

Fitzmaurice situates Cavendish’s *Sociable Letters* in their cultural context with appendices and discussions about the significance of Cavendish’s letters to seventeenth-century writing. In the first of three appendices, Fitzmaurice provides an additional twenty-one letters from Margaret Lucas to William Cavendish, four poems Cavendish wrote to Lucas, and five letters written by Margaret Cavendish’s stepdaughters. In another appendix, Fitzmaurice includes seven letters written by Dorothy Osborne and Aphra Behn. These appendices allow one to read Cavendish’s early love letters and her later *Sociable Letters* within the context of correspondence written by family members and other women of the time. Fitzmaurice finds that the letters are often similar in style and general appearance. A third appendix, “The Context of English Letter Writing and the English Essay,” provides sources that may have influenced Cavendish’s choice of genre and topic; those sources are, specifically, excerpts from Angel Day’s popular *The English Secretary* and Francis Bacon’s essay-like letter on marriage.

Fitzmaurice’s Introduction contributes to current reevaluations of Cavendish’s texts, reevaluations established in part by his own years of work on Cavendish’s texts, by asserting that her writing is ironic, suggestive, and discursive, that it is important for historians of science, and that her plays are now being performed in Europe, North America, and Australia. Fitzmaurice’s expertise in Cavendish scholarship is evident in the helpful annotations conveying not only rich sources of contextual information but also his appreciation of the ironies and humor in Cavendish’s writing, and in his delighted explanations of the many anagrams and initials used in her letters. This thoroughly interesting and enjoyable edition will reward any reader’s attention,

particularly those interested in Restoration literature, women's writing, and seventeenth-century history, culture, and society.

Earl Miner, senior ed. Wiliam Moeck, co-ed. Steven Jablonski, corr. ed. *Paradise Lost, 1668-1968: Three Centuries of Commentary*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2004. 510 pp. + 25 illus. \$85.00. Review by JOHN MULRYAN, ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY.

This massive scholia of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a fitting tribute to Earl Miner, the senior editor, who died while the book was still in press. It is unfortunate, however, that the editors proclaim (on the dust jacket) that a true variorum of *Paradise Lost* is "no longer possible," while one is in fact in preparation at Duquesne University press. The point is reiterated in the introduction, where a new variorum is dismissed as "hypothesis, wishful thinking" (16, col. 2). Instead, the editors provide detailed commentary from seventeen commentators, including themselves (the undated names listed here): Patrick Hume (1695), Joseph Addison (1712), Richard Bentley (1732), The Richardsons, Father and Son (1734), James Paterson (1744), Thomas Newton (1749), Henry John Todd (1801-42), William Cowper (1808), Thomas Keightley (1859), David Masson (1890), A. W. Verity (1920-29), Merritt Y. Hughes (1957), J. M. Sims (1962), Alastair Fowler (1968), Earl Miner, William Moeck, Steven Jablonski. There is also a stimulating chapter detailing the contributions of the early commentators on the poem.

While the earlier choices are excellent, I wonder about the wisdom of listing the three editors as separate commentators on the poem. It might have been better if the editorial voice had been one rather than three, as this (in my opinion) dilutes the force of the earlier commentators, and tempts the editors to deconstruct or reshape earlier commentary in line with their own opinions.

Sometimes two of the editors converge as one, e.g. Miner and Moeck on ll. 289-93 of Book 10 (344, col. 2). At other times Miner joins with Fowler to supply a feminist reading of the contest between Adam and Eve. On Book 10, line 162, both Fowler and Miner are credited with the notion that "Eve speaks one plain line to Adam's evasive nineteen, 125-43. 160-61 suggest that *we* [emphasis mine] draw much the same inferences from that" (341, col. 1). The editorial hand of Miner in particular lays too heavily on the responses of the earlier commentators. He has a strange affection for the