

portable collator, in addition to examining numerous other copies for textual features and marginalia. The editor also attends further to printing house practices, describing the much-debated *Omissa* and Errata (missing from the 1680 printing) and suggesting how material-text elements, such as the design of the title pages, can guide the reader toward particular (and often political) interpretations. In addition, Knoppers contends that previous scholarly attention to Milton's spelling seems injudicious when one considers that spelling practices frequently reflect compositors' idiosyncrasies, a perspective that variant spelling practices in various gatherings of the 1671 edition seem to corroborate.

The elegantly formatted texts of *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* are accompanied by textual variants alone, with explanatory notes relegated to the concluding "Commentary." Classical and scriptural sources provide potential contexts and allusions, particularly for frequently echoed texts, and appropriate definitions and etymologies are offered for words likely to be unfamiliar to or misunderstood by modern audiences. The learning displayed in Knoppers's commentary reflects Milton's own. These compendious notes will prove valuable to Milton scholars and to readers coming to Milton's poems for the first time.

Undoubtedly, this edition of *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* will (quite rightly) become the standard edition for seventeenth-century scholars. And Knoppers's illumination of circumstances related to the production and reception of these poems within their contemporary contexts will afford valuable avenues for critical inquiry. I eagerly await the next Oxford volume.

Gary Kuchar. *The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. xii + 242 pp. \$99.00. Review by P. G. STANWOOD, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

The opening sentence of this book anticipates well what follows in the long introduction and the six chapters, which really are discrete essays loosely and tendentiously bound together: "Christianity is

nothing if not a vast technology of mourning" (1). Yet the curiously inappropriate word choice is descriptive of the way in which this study unfolds, for the reader confronts a "technology" of complicated interrelationships of wheels within wheels. Early modern religious poets are, indeed, often concerned with grief, sorrow, and tears; they try with heavy effort to express these concerns while also interpreting them. Religious sorrow is "doctrinally charged"; poets who write of sorrow reveal their theological beliefs, we are told, and also their connection to a path well trodden by earlier practitioners in the mode of grief.

Gary Kuchar is a sensitive and subtle critic who moves easily between the Magisterial reformers and the post-Tridentine Catholic response of the Counter Reformation as he seeks to sort out the Christian experience of godly sorrow "as a medium of communication between the human and the divine" (25). The first chapter discusses Robert Southwell and his influential *St. Peters Complaint*, with Shakespeare's *Richard II* and Milton's Satan as the principal beneficiaries. Kuchar writes particularly well of "the sighs and tears" that lead from Southwell's *Complaint* to Richard and Satan, who provide a testament to the literary promise of the tradition that Southwell popularized. Subsequent chapters deal with Richard Crashaw's "The Weeper"; Andrew Marvell's "Eyes and Tears"; Amelia Lanier's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*; and two final chapters on Donne: one on the *Holy Sonnets*, the other on *An Anatomy of the World. The First Anniversary*. Kuchar moves from close textual analysis to large critical formulations in all of these carefully chosen examples. While George Herbert is not given a chapter to himself, his poetry, particularly "Grief," nevertheless figures prominently throughout much of the argument in the book.

"Compunction" is key to Kuchar's thesis. Contrition, remorse, the "pricking of conscience," pulls strongly in one direction, and despair in the other. The motion between these poles or opposing ways provides "the basic dialectic" of the book, which Kuchar discloses in the several poems he carefully meditates. But this is not an easy book to summarize adequately, for it does not develop systematically. Rather, the author approaches his general theme from a variety of independent authorities whose actions might converge, but only with strong insistence. Many excellent insights occur throughout the book, yet often unclearly related to each other, and sometimes not always clear

in their specific context. Of Crashaw's depiction of the Magdalene's tears ("O cheeks! Bedds of chast loves / . . . O wit of love!"), Kuchar writes of what he sees as a "dialectical tension" which is resolved "in a way that sustains the phenomenological principle that Magdalene's face presents a saturation of meaning that is in excess of being absorbed by cognition" (94). The relationship between Marvell's "Eyes and Tears," Crashaw's poem, and *Richard II* is offered in arresting but obscure terms: "Insofar as Marvell's anamorphic tears disclose the simultaneous continuity and discontinuity between temporal and eternal orders, they stand between the hypostatic vision of Neoplatonic transcendence voiced in "The Weeper" and the skeptically tragic view of existence expressed by Shakespeare" (120).

The following chapter (essentially an independent essay) turns from Mary Magdalene to the Virgin Mary, whom Aemilia Lanyer portrays with poetic and priestly authority. Her "swooning" depicts, Kuchar urges, "an active role that provides theological and iconographical authority for Lanyer's own reclamation of a quasi-priestly power" (144). Lanyer significantly places Mary in a medieval tradition, "at the center of a religious regime that is destructively asymptotic in nature" (145). Kuchar quotes from Lancelot Andrewes (whose name is consistently misspelled), out of context, in order to give an example of a late Reformation sensibility that feels Mary's sorrow with less intensity. But the point is not well made; at the very least, more proof is necessary from Andrewes's vast homiletic works.

Kuchar studies Donne's *Holy Sonnets* selectively in his by now familiar theoretical fashion, which he often conveys in theological terms. "Negative Love," one of the *Songs and Sonets*, shows how Petrarchism may be parodied. In this poem Donne applies "the apophatic principles of negative theology to woman rather than to God. . . . [I]he poem appears as a sincere application of Neoplatonic apophaticism to the context of secular love; from a second perspective, the poem appears as an obscenely solipsistic retreat into onself" (158). Somehow the achievement of this poem anticipates, or complements "O might those sighes and teares" (*Holy Sonnet 3*), where the speaker is fraught with Petrarchan anguish because he is trying to evade "the double-edged sword of the Word in the very gesture of asking to be healed by it" (164). One feels a brief moment of recognition and insight

(with the unusual invoking of the apophatic tradition that stresses the unknowability of God); but this reading of the sonnet puts a familiar idea into unnecessary accoutrements.

The final chapter on Donne's *First Anniversary* (its companion, *The Second Anniversary*, is not mentioned), like the previous chapter on the *Holy Sonnets*, stands on its own, having little direct connection with the rest of the book. Kuchar argues, not very convincingly, that the death of Elizabeth Drury relates to "cultural anxiety regarding original sin and the precise mechanism of grace believed to resolve it that is in question in the Reformation" (193). Donne, it appears, is engaged in a "process of working through the existential implications of doctrinal commitments [that take] place most often in the English Renaissance through the experience of grief . . . [registered] in the strange modality of overliving" (211)

Kuchar has written a remarkable but difficult collection of essays around the trope of "sorrow and grief." He moves fluently in a wide range of literature, theology, and contemporary critical theory, and in all of these areas, he is widely read. But the book seems to be addressed to an extremely narrow and elite audience while nearly every paragraph contains a reference to a critic or commentator, often with quotation in the text or in a note. Awkward, frequently obscure statements will commonly lead to a final sentence in the paragraph beginning "In short . . .," which is seldom a satisfactory summary of what has preceded. Certain terms become talismanic: "soteriological"; "desacralization" (in various forms); "apophatic"; "sacramental"; "icastic"; and so on. Notes, numbering altogether over 400, are gathered at the end of each chapter. There is no bibliography, but a full index. Nevertheless, in spite of some reservations about this book, one admires its scholarship and the brilliance of Kuchar's ingenuity and determination in bringing together so many diverse strands into one overarching motif.