motives in view; thus Samson is not one, nor is Fish an endorser of the idea. In an earlier note, however, Lieb makes a regrettable equation in his application of “terrorist” to the present situation in Iraq. He speaks of “the horrific events of 9/11” but then says: “In a kind of quid pro quo, however, one might also suggest that the U.S. attacks on Baghdad in March 2003 represent their own form of terrorism” (236).

Only if we wish to empty the word “terrorist” of its present meaning in association with the deliberate jihadist murders of 9/11 or the strapping on of suicide belts can this equation be made. Clearly Lieb does not wish to do this, but he should better have used the word “terrify” or “terror” of the U.S. raids to avoid the confusion of terms.


Aimed at college and university survey courses and the “general reader” and designed to complement Blackwell’s *A Companion to Milton* (2001), edited by Thomas Corns, the *Concise Companion* features twelve newly-published chapters and two reference sections. Part I: Surveys, addressing the central role of Miltonic texts in the English and international literary canon, contains the following essays:

Robert Thomas Fallon, “A Reading of His ‘left hand’: Milton’s Prose”


Roy Flanagan, “The world all before [us]: More than Three Hundred Years of Criticism”

Shawcross makes the case for the vast influence of Milton while conceding the difficulty of systematizing an influence which transcends historical, genre, and other conventional categories. In keeping with the introductory nature of the volume, he includes a clear, comprehensible definition of “influence in literary materials” and identifies the forms influence might typically take. Examples of Miltonic influence range from Spanish baroque illustrations of *Paradise Lost* to contemporary drama, poetry, and the novel, including Aldous Huxley’s *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) and Walker Percy’s *Laws in the Ruins*.
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(1971) as well as several poems by the American modernist poet Louis Zukofsky. Shawcross even manages to link the postmodern Argentinian fantasy writer Jorge Luis Borges to Milton because of each author’s self-reflective blindness. This essay offers not only an eclectic, graceful overview of the daunting subject of Miltonic influence, replete with an encyclopedic range of illustrations, but it provides an example of a fundamental form of literary criticism at work when Shawcross measures the boundaries of influence study. As anyone who has heard John Shawcross synthesize the discrete essays presented at an academic conference will testify, subject matter and authorial ethos are well matched here.

Part II: Textual Sites, targeting the relevance of specific Miltonic texts to such topics as cultural encounters, gender, religion, and the nature of scholarship, contains nine essays:

Angelica Duran, “First and Last Fruits of Education: The Companion Poems, Epistola, and Educational Prose Works”
Annabel Patterson, “Milton’s Heroic Sonnets”
Paul Alpers, “The Lives of “Lycidas”
Katsuhiro Engetsu, “A Mask: Tradition and Innovation”
Achsah Guibbory, “The Bible, Religion, and Spirituality in Paradise Lost”
Karen L. Edwards, “Gender, Sex, and Marriage in Paradise”
Juliet Lucy Cummins, “The Ecology of Paradise Lost”
Louis Schwartz, “The Nightmare of History: Samson Agonistes”

The arrangement of these essays is meant to follow the chronology of Milton’s poetry, the traditional organization of academic syllabi, and the presumed “reading practices of general readers” (2). Though speculating about the “reading practices of general readers” in the “information age” seems problematic, the Concise Companion generally presents its material accessibly. Duran concludes the introduction with an eminently postmodern invitation to readers of the volume to contact her with descriptions of their successes and failures in using it.

In “Milton’s Heroic Sonnets” Annabel Patterson reviews the structural formats of the sonnet Milton had to choose from when he began writing, stressing the unconventional deployments he eventually made of the genre and cautioning against imposing conventional strictures of sonnet arrangement on his poems. Topicality, she insists, was the signature of Milton’s
sonnets, here challenging Mary Anne Radzinowicz’s claim for a “shape in Milton’s 23 sonnets as a group” and Anna K. Nardo’s idea of the sonnets as an “ideal community.” What Patterson does particularly well is to demonstrate how critical analysis moves from hypothesis, to colloquy with competing theses, and finally to the positing of the most plausible explanation of the evidence under discussion. Her reading preserves both the uniqueness of Milton’s sonnets as a whole and the particular importance of historical occasions in his final ten poems. In effect, Patterson illustrates how one may practice literary criticism without over reliance on the habits of response shaped by critical templates rather than by the artifacts themselves.

In “The Ecology of Paradise Lost,” Juliet Lucy Cummins develops a postmodern history of the ideas of vitalism and the seventeenth-century ecological sensibility, setting Paradise Lost in opposition to the “prevailing mechanistic and instrumental forms of natural philosophy” (163) and to the Cartesian theory of mind (171). Milton’s vitalism in the epic, she points out, implicitly critiques the “objectification and exploitation of nature often connected with the new science” (163). If Adam and Eve repeatedly demonstrate their harmony and continuity with other natural things, Satan and the fallen angels violate, exploit, and deny the spirituality of the material world. Milton shows the ecological dimensions of his epic by assigning to humankind “responsibility for nature and the present value of created things” (175).

Part III: Reference Points contains these essays:

Edward Jones, “Select Chronology: ‘Speak of things at hand/Useful’”

J. Martin Evans, “Select Bibliography: “Much arguing, much writing, many opinions””

Chronologies and bibliographies seldom stir passion in the hearts of readers, but these pieces by Jones and Evans contain some of the best scholarship in the entire volume. Though the novice reader may not be the ideal audience for them, the bibliographical cullings of Evans will be appreciated by Miltonists for their astuteness and wide value.

One could argue that Angelica Duran has written a book about the advancement of learning in seventeenth-century England, and that hers in effect advances a similar goal today. To put it in that abstract way is of course to occlude the two massive abstractions of her title, *The Age of Milton and the Scientific Revolution*, which on the face of it seems to propose division, while Prof. Duran’s effort is to show verbal overlaps among the terms, to focus on particularities, and to synthesize. Prof. Duran advances our learning, among other ways, by reading Milton’s writing and those contemporaries who commonly feature in histories of science, through a lens which assumes, for starters, that the education of all these writers was in many ways the same. Like the exponents of the advancement of learning in Milton’s time, many of her readings cast new light, while a few seem a bit fanciful. Just as she entertains the unevenness of some arguments in natural philosophy, we acknowledge some unevenness in hers.

Prof. Duran casts valuable light on developing and changing thinking and writing, both in the scientific community and in Milton’s texts. For example, the phrase “natural philosopher,” which for this reviewer still suggests a person, like Newton, concerned to observe and speculate upon natural events, which for her in contrast often (but not always) signals elements of early naturalistic writing that suffers a “death” in her chapter 2 because it is basically passive, retiring, and behind the times. Thus she shows how writing about natural philosophy came increasingly to emphasize activism and a kind of militancy.

The book unfolds in three movements, headed “teachers, academic subjects, and students,” each composed of four chapters (22). At the outset, “Milton among Early Modern Scientists” lays the ground work, pointing to many similarities in education and interest, while demonstrating the verbal difficulties occasioned by words like *scientia*. Examining first “Il Penseroso” and *A Mask*, and then “Elegy IV” and particularly “Lycidas” and *Of Education*, she shows how Milton’s writing about teaching progressed toward what she calls “new model” teaching (49).