

Cheryl H. Fresch. *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton*, Vol. 5, Part 4: *Paradise Lost*, Book 4. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2011, xix + 508 pp. \$85.00. Review by REUBEN SANCHEZ, SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY.

Cheryl H. Fresch does a fine job annotating the most recent issue of the Milton Variorum: *Paradise Lost*, Book 4. The first entry, covering 4.1-12, effectively displays the standard variorum strategy of showing how the same word or passage may have been understood in different historical periods. Although Fresch emphasizes twentieth-century scholarship in this first entry—twelve references to the twentieth-century, one to the nineteenth, three to the eighteenth, and one to the seventeenth—the next eight entries annotate lines 1-12 in even greater detail. The result is an expansive, interesting, and useful series of annotations on the first twelve lines of Book 4.

Conveying the breadth of Milton scholarship is clearly one of Fresch's aims, as evidenced in both shorter and longer entries. As examples, note the following three short entries: one concerning the mechanics of publication as regards two words, one concerning the definition of a word, and one concerning the literary sources of a passage. First, a mechanics entry: The words "submission" at line 81 and "Disdain" at line 82 have or have not been italicized by editors in various editions of *PL*—by the editors of the first and second editions, by eighteenth-century editors like Bentley, Newton, and Todd, by twentieth-century editors like Hughes, Shawcross, Verity, and Fowler (32). Second, a definition entry: In the eighteenth-century Paterson defines the word "peerless" at line 608, and the OED cites Milton's use of this word (299). Third, a source entry: In the eighteenth-century Todd suggests that the sources for lines 772-73, in which flowers cover a sleeping Adam and Eve, may be found in Harrington's translation of *Orlando Furioso* and in Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas's *The Divine Weeks and Works*, while in the twentieth-century Bullough suggests an allusion to Jacob Cats's *Trou-Ringh* (376). The longer entries similarly reflect a commitment to expansiveness and equatibility as regards what to select and why. Note the following three extended entries: Satan's first soliloquy at lines 32-113 covered in a substantial annotation (12-22); the description of the garden at lines 205-287

covered in a substantial annotation (84-94); the *hail wedded love* section at lines 736-75 covered in a substantial annotation (356-366).

Volume 5, Part 4 shows an informed selection of Milton scholarship spanning the better part of three centuries, up to 1970. And therein lies the problem. The Columbia UP Milton Variorum originally projected six volumes, three appearing between 1970 and 1975: Volume One on the Latin, Greek, and Italian poems, Volume Two (in three parts) on the minor English poems, and Volume Four on *Paradise Regained*. The project was halted because of the deaths of some of the editors associated with it and because of Columbia's inability to find other Miltonists to work on the project. Three of the projected six volumes were never completed: Volume Three on *Samson Agonistes*, Volume Five on *PL*, and Volume Six on *The Prosody of the English Poems*. In 1997, Albert Labriola secured permission for Duquesne UP to complete the Milton Variorum. Since there are no plans to complete Volume Six, two volumes remain: Volume 3 on *SA* and Volume 5 on *PL* (both volumes now designated by Arabic numerals), with the latter comprising several parts. Once these volumes are completed and published, an update of all five volumes is planned, which will cover the years 1970 through 2000. The first volume published by Duquesne consists of Stephen Dobranski's annotations of *SA*, published in 2009. The volume comprising *PL* thus begins with Book 4, published in 2011. The next part, covering Books 11 and 12, is slated for 2012 (and may be in print at this writing). Evidently, the volume covering *PL* will consist of fewer than twelve parts, though we should not be surprised if another pair of Books, besides 11 and 12, is covered in a single part. Since Columbia covered *PR* in one part, perhaps the Duquesne editors felt it appropriate to do the same with certain Books in *PL*. But this is a questionable method of annotating one of the most significant poems in the English language. Though the number of parts comprising Volume 5 and the dates of publication have not been made clear, the publishing pattern thus far infers commentary covering one or two Books of *PL* will be published every year or two, beginning in 2011. At that rate Volume 5 should be published by about the year 2020—a conservative estimate, given how long it has taken to generate *SA* and *PL* 4. For the sake of argument, however, the final part of Volume 5 will therefore be published about fifty years

beyond the cutoff date of 1970. Sometime after 2020 the updating of all five volumes will begin. There is no telling how long this update will take, nor its form, nor who will do it. Nor are there plans, as far as we know, for another update covering from 2000 and beyond. But one thing is likely: In comparison to other variorum commentaries, the Milton Variorum will never be complete and up to date.

That a variorum can be up to date seems a moot point, of course, since once its shelf life begins even its most recent commentary becomes dated. Yet, this is perhaps why editors choose a cutoff date as close as possible to the actual date of publication, usually within about two or three years. For the Columbia Milton Variorum, the cutoff date seems to have been 1968 for volumes which began appearing in 1970. (The Duquesne Milton Variorum editors chose the 1970 cutoff date for this reason.) But the 1968 cutoff date was not consistently maintained in the three published volumes: In Volume One, published in 1970, we find annotations with references to works published as late as 1968; in the three parts comprising Volume Two, published in 1972, we find annotations with references to works published as late as 1968, but we also find bibliographic references to works published as late as 1971; and in Volume Four, published in 1975, we find annotations with references to works published as late as 1968, but in the section titled "Studies in Style and Verse Forms in *Paradise Regained*" we find at least one bibliographic reference to work published in 1970. Of course, bibliographic references are not annotations, but they are nonetheless included in the variorum. Why Duquesne chose to establish a level playing field (in terms of a cutoff date) between all five volumes of the Milton Variorum—some of which will be published from forty to fifty years apart—does not make sense.

As with any variorum, the character and quality of the work is judged according to whether the selection of scholarship seems fair and broad. But it should be recognized, as well, that the annotations themselves reflect the critical and cultural period in which the annotator lives and works; to appreciate this, one need only compare the annotations of any of the Columbia volumes with the two books published thus far by Duquesne. This is not to declare one set of annotations superior or inferior to the other, but rather to recognize scholars working today approach their work, even the work of anno-

tating, differently than their predecessors. A product of its time, the Columbia Milton Variorum was annotated by proponents of the type of scholarship practiced in mid-twentieth-century America, primarily the new criticism and the history of ideas. Their annotations look like and read like they belong in that era of American scholarship. The Duquesne Milton Variorum is also a product of its own time, and it looks and reads differently because its annotators are the proponents of post-1970, even post-9-11, developments and trends in literary theory and interpretation. P.J. Klemp acknowledges as much in his "Preface" to the Duquesne Milton Variorum: "Although the goals of a variorum commentary are largely consistent from generation to generation, the scholarly environment of the 1970s differs in many ways from the one we inhabit in a new millennium" (xiv). Nevertheless, Klemp insists, these most recent annotators embrace the "unspoken assumptions" of the earlier annotators, which includes an interest in and an endorsement of formalism (xv). Perhaps, yet the annotations by Fresch and Dobranski do not read like they were written by new critics; both in what they say and how they say it, they offer something different from their predecessors, although in the works referenced they have chosen not to go beyond the end of the new criticism. Hence, questions arise concerning the most recent annotators of the Milton Variorum: Why quit at 1970 knowing the finished product will require substantial updating? Given the cutoff date, why agree to do the work in the first place? Why not do it right the first time, no matter how long it takes?

When Volumes 3 and 5 are finally completed and published each will begin its shelf life somewhere around forty to fifty years out of date. Here I should like to repeat a claim from my review of Dobranski's volume on *SA* (*Seventeenth-Century News*, 2010): The best scholarship on *SA* occurred in the post-1970 period of Milton studies. I make the same claim for *PL*. It is a shame to deprive students and faculty—for who else reads or consults a variorum?—the annotations reflecting a more complete and, frankly, more interesting picture of the expansiveness and the development of Milton studies.

Klemp repeats his "Preface" from Volume 3 *almost* verbatim in his "Preface" to Volume 5, Part 4. There are a few word changes, but one change is most telling. In the *SA* "Preface" Klemp states: "After we

have completed the *Variorum Commentary* on ‘*Paradise Lost*,’ we will turn to an even more ambitious project, updating the entire *Variorum Commentary* . . .” (xv). In the same passage from the *PL* 4 “Preface” Klemp substitutes the word “hope” for “will”: “we hope to turn to an even more ambitious project” (xv). Gone is the assurance of an update; but again, even if an update happens it will cover only from 1970 to 2000. Furthermore, if the process of updating is “an even more ambitious project”—and I believe it must be—it will take quite a long time to finish this project, since it cannot begin until about 2020. Volumes 3 and 5 of the *Milton Variorum*, when completed and placed on the library book shelf, will disappoint because the editors involved, all Miltonists, declined to present the best possible selection of Milton scholarship.

Feisal G. Mohamed. *Milton and the Post-Secular Present: Ethics, Politics, Terrorism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. + 167 pp. \$21.95.  
Review by DANIEL ELLIS, ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY.

In *Milton and the Post-Secular Present*, Feisal G. Mohamed takes on two challenges, one involving the ethical practice of reading and one involving the historiography of literary-critical work. As his title promises, Mohamed examines Milton’s writings alongside late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century theory and criticism concerned with the concept of post-secularism. Mohamed attempts to do so in a manner that is methodologically sound—neither presentist nor too narrowly historicist—in order to argue that reading literature can help overcome threats to both individual liberty and the greater social good when religious belief conflicts with secular society.

While the book is organized into five chapters, with a brief introduction and epilogue, several of the chapters are closely connected in theme, so that the book has three movements: chapters one and two examine reading and writing practices as they relate to a concept of truth; chapter three considers the role of truth in the relationship between secular government and religious belief; while chapters four and five take on the topic of religious violence as a response to secular society. Chapters one and two examine Milton’s use of plain style in