

their respective poems. These valuable changes improve the overall sense of their poems.

As is to be expected, there are instances where even close attention to the poems does not resolve which variant is preferable. “Mould” for “would” in “Meditation 2.17,” “Hit” for “Hint” in “Meditation 1.38,” “brings” for “kings” in “Meditation 2.72,” “plight” for “night” in “Meditation 2.77,” and “tenses” for “senses” in “Meditation 2.118” are typical of this class of unassessable changes. In this group both variants are supported by the internal evidence, and so the verdict concerning them remains open.

It is good to be able to report that only two unemended single-word variants strike me as mistaken. The word “mandle” in “Meditation 2.101” is possibly an archaic form, but if so it would then be an anomaly in Taylor’s verse, in which the preferred word “mantle” occurs on thirteen other occasions. It is more likely than not that the word is “mantle” in “Meditation 2.101.” More problematic is Patterson’s reading of “flip” for Stanford’s “slip” in “Meditation 2.109.” The sense of the pertinent lines is clear: “Thy hand Let take my heart its Captive prey / In Chains of Grace that it ne’r slip from thee.” “Slip,” not “flip,” is the more obvious choice in light of the references in the lines to hand and chain. The handwritten long “s” apparently snagged the editor.

A project like this one is a very difficult, painstaking undertaking. It is doubtful that any such venture can be snag-free. Although the flaws in the emendation and variant lists impede scholarly facilitation, they amount to an inconvenience. This new, handsome edition of Taylor’s poems is effectively a gift, especially since it highlights a number of whole-word variants that ideally enables us to better appreciate Taylor’s poetic achievement.

Neil Forsyth. *The Satanic Epic*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003. x + 382 pp. \$22.95. Review by JAMES EGAN, UNIVERSITY OF AKRON.

Forsyth notes at the outset that *The Satanic Epic* should not be considered a sequel to his earlier work, *The Old Enemy: Satan and*

the Combat Myth (1990), though many connections between *Paradise Lost* and the combat myth are made, some of them elaborate. He demonstrates in this book, with proofs ranging from mythography, etymology, and historiography to syntactical analysis, the attraction of Satan. As Forsyth reviews Romantic and modern objections to Milton's dour God, he locates the commonality in such objections—Satan's attractiveness points to the "problem of God." He counts himself a member of the "Milton's flawed God" camp, yet Forsyth's rationale for this stance extends well beyond the peevishness and impressionism of many earlier objectors, growing as it does from the position that "Satan's presence both causes and excuses the fall of mankind, and it is his role to allow God to forgive Adam and Eve" (17). Evidence unfolds in twelve chapters, matching Milton's epic structure and developing chronologically through the poem. The opening traces the origins of Satan's identity in Christian mythology, epic literature, apocalyptic literatures, the medieval and Renaissance dramatic traditions in England, and seventeenth-century politics. Parts of this summary seem encyclopedic in the negative sense, that is, information for its own sake rather than as essential grounding for the case to be made in the body chapters. Contextualizing his own position in relation to that of important earlier voices in the Satan debate, notably William Blake, Percy Shelley, William Empson, C.S. Lewis, and Stanley Fish, Forsyth aims to put Satan "back at the center" of the poem (72), proposing that Milton "did indeed invite his readers to adapt a Satanic reading of Scripture and of human experience" (73).

Few would quarrel with Forsyth's initial position, that the text invites its readers to sympathize with the "heroic and divided character" of Satan (85). To support this position, he must raise challenges to the "solemn authority" typically attributed to the poem's narrative voice (89). Forsyth valuably critiques the assumptions of Fish, Anne Ferry and others who had constructed Milton's narrator as the standard voice of epic authority, all the while implying that the narrator was not only immune to the contaminants of Satan, but was a single, stable personality. The language of the

epic similes in Books 1 and 2, according to Forsyth, often “disturbs the clarity of vision generally associated with epic similes and therefore the authority of the voice that uses the similes” (103). This is an intriguing, fresh perspective, plausibly illustrated. The scenes in Heaven presented in Book 3 restrain the presumed adversarial relation between the narrator and Satan, a position Milton reinforces by devising several narrative feints to link the reader with the demon, above and beyond our sharing of Satan’s point of view as he approaches Paradise. For this argument, Forsyth’s mixture of assertion and corrective rebuttal links syntax, poetic rhythm, and semantics credibly in what amounts to a postmodern “close reading.”

Chapter 4 treats the “private Hell” which confines Satan, an appealing and at the same time “dangerously infected” place, appealing because Milton has anticipated the “modern” self and “modern” subjectivity therein (149-50). Forsyth does well to show how Satan’s rhetoric in Book 4 insinuates curious likenesses to God and His rhetoric, reminding us that the problem of Satan doubles as the problem of God. However, maintaining, as Forsyth does, that Satan’s “command of the interior world of modernity helps to render him deeply sympathetic... [and] also sinister” perhaps begs the question at issue. Clearly, Forsyth must illustrate the sympathetic Satan rather than the sinister one, the burden of proof for Satan’s wiles having been capably carried by the “pro-God” camp, yet even a cursory review of the “interior world of modernity” on display in Eliot’s *Prufrock*, Kafka’s *Gregor Samsa*, the characters of Sartre, Camus, and Albee, and the small army of their postmodern descendants will suggest how grotesquely repulsive the “interior world of modernity” can be. Chapter 5 continues the devil’s advocacy, this time somewhat indirectly, by showing the doubleness and paradoxes built into the rebellion in heaven. In Forsyth’s reading, God’s declaration of the sovereignty of Christ seemingly creates both Son and Satan at the same time (172). One likely source of the rebellion narrative is Hesiod, who presents Zeus himself as the rebel who, arbitrarily, almost whimsically, disturbs the “settled order of heaven” (186), establishing the autonomy

of Christ by decree rather than evident merit. This excavation of Hesiod's tale about Zeus will surely be provocative.

Chapter 6 engages the language of "evil" and the traditions which inform the word, with the intention of properly establishing culpability in the epic. "Evil," of course, sounds suspiciously like "Eve," though the etymology of the two words is fundamentally different. Following Forsyth, one would question Satan's responsibility for human evil. At most, Satan would be the "proximate cause" because human freedom, if genuine, must allow for evil. To answer the intriguing questions his interpretation raises, Forsyth proposes that "the real problem for men and women, Milton thinks, is not the world as created by God and perverted by Satan, but each other" (208), the inevitable crisis of sexual difference. The identification of Satan as "proximate cause" is an intriguing blend of metaphysics and postmodern gender theory which, however plausible, does not diminish Satan's archetypal status as plotter and tempter. Even if Satan proves less accountable for evil, as Forsyth would have it, he does not become more attractive thereby, one might reply.

A lengthy, somewhat labored discussion of the etymology of "dis" prefixes in *Paradise Lost* is followed by Chapter 8, "Homer in Milton: The Attendance Motif and the Graces," which draws several parallels between Eve and Homer's graceful heroines, elaborating the earlier argument about culpability. Eve's charm may well have precipitated more problems than Satan's plotting because of Adam's uxoriousness and Eve's vulnerability to her own ambivalent image. If Forsyth's insights here are valid, Milton would have displaced the problem of evil from its apparent cause (Satan) to its more demonstrable cause, Adam and Eve, and their creator. The problem of Satan translates, inevitably, as the problem of God, which Forsyth had urged from the outset. Identifying the demon as a sexual interloper, an adulterer who makes himself "as sensually attractive a serpent as he can be" (264). Chapter 9 offers a metatextual reading of the fall, restoring Satan to the pinnacle of the epic by illustrating how he can usurp the powers of language, of God's Word, and successfully seduce Eve, almost as a

well-shaped artifact might allure or entangle a reader. Book 9 qualifies as “the high point of *Paradise Lost* as Satanic epic” (285) by virtue of its complex tropes of seduction and entanglement. The intention of Forsyth’s case in the middle and later sections of the book, then, has been judicial, to defend Satan by raising doubts about the credibility of evidence traditionally used to trivialize or transform him into a grotesquely comic version of himself.

From Book 10 through the end of the poem, Satan’s damnation and the reader’s distinction from him rather than our similarity to him dominate the narrative, but even now the reader’s similarity to Satan shapes our difference from him. Chapter 10 studies the implications of “hearing” in *Paradise Lost*, a sophisticated and intriguing interpretation, perhaps the strongest individual argument in *The Satanic Epic*. In effect, the reader “hears” the regeneration of Adam and Eve. Figuratively in Book 10 Adam hears the promise of Christ’s Redemption, but literally he hears the voice of Eve. In contrast, Satan cannot hear or address God, hearing instead only the solitary hiss of his own voice. Forsyth achieves a phenomenological perspective on Christ’s sentencing of Adam and Eve and the promise of Redemption, a perspective which foregrounds Christ’s statement but, equally important, the circumstances of “when and how the words are heard” (299). Chapter 11 makes a final pitch for Satan’s preeminence by evaluating the symbolism of dove and serpent and their curious closeness: even as the narrative distances the reader from Satan, a counter-movement blurs distinctions between Christ and Satan. The structural arguments of Chapter 12, a neo-formalist assessment of the epic’s plot and Milton’s decision to adopt a twelve-book structure in the 1674 edition, reinforce the evidence of Chapter 11. Challenging Barker and Shawcross, Forsyth insists that Milton never conceded that his emphasis on Satan had been excessive: even in the twelve-book version he retained a plot that opens with “powerful scenes for Satan” (318). No matter how the poem may be parsed structurally, it weaves together closely God’s plot and Satan’s, until the two characters come to mirror each other. Simply put, the poem requires both satanic and divine points of view. In fact, argues

Forsyth, the epic's closing lines, with their likening of God's sword to Satan, may be read as a "Satanic triumph," or very close to it (340).

Despite this nearly melodramatic plea for a "Satanic triumph," Forsyth succeeds far more often than not in *The Satanic Epic*. Unlike earlier devil's advocates such as Empson, Forsyth proves versatile and extremely resourceful as a critic, assembling discrete but related support from several sources, even if he sometimes lapses into overabundant detail to do so. Most of his evidence proves fresh and all of it challenging. His claims add up to substantially more than attempts to launch several pro-Satan balloons in the hope that one might reach a far shore. His colloquy of rebuttal with Fish, Barker, Shawcross and others seems astute. *The Satanic Epic* even takes a Quixotic turn. Like Milton as an early pamphleteer, Forsyth hopes to reach an "interested, but nonexpert, reader" (ix) who is not a Miltonist by trade. Despite its clarity and intelligibility, however, the book's necessary references to the history of literary controversies such as the Satan debate, the positions of particular critics such as Georgia Christopher, and the intricacies of post-1950's Milton scholarship as a whole limit the access of non-specialists. Unfortunately, *The Satanic Epic* should prepare for a brief shelf life at Barnes and Noble, and even less at Walmart.

John Barnard and Donald F. McKenzie, eds. *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. IV, 1557-1695*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 891 pp. + 31 illus. \$140.00. Review by RANDY ROBERTSON, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY.

This rich, polyphonic volume is a timely contribution to the "history of the book," a field of inquiry that has flourished in recent years. The work is a fitting tribute to Donald McKenzie, whose "textual sociology" has continued to open up vistas in bibliographical studies even after his death in 1999. The story begins in 1557, the year that Queen Mary granted the Stationers' guild its charter, and ends in 1695, the year that preventive censorship lapsed for good in Britain. In his very fine introduction, John