the discussion of Eve as it stood twenty, even thirty, years ago. In a representative footnote that I have selected at random, Green points her readers toward the critical debate in "recent years" (160) and then cites articles from 1953, 1967, 1972, 1970, 1974, 1971, 1969, 1978, and 1980. This pattern is not simply intensely frustrating for a reader aware of the current conversation about Eve, about Milton's attitudes toward sexuality, and about Milton's theological positions, but it also leads Green to waste time refuting critical positions that have been long laid to rest and to credit without comment assertions long disproved. She exhibits no awareness of discussion surrounding the question of consent in the dream Satan whispers into Eve's ear or of nuanced readings of the Separation Colloquy initiated by McColley's *Milton's Eve*, a book that Green mentions a couple of times but does not engage in any serious way.

At one point early on, Green asserts that "Milton deliberately fails to fix the meaning of [his Ovidian] allusions which thereby become a way of holding in solution unresolved, even contradictory emphases in a situation where alternatives are not yet exclusive and the future has not been fixed" (20). At her best, Green manages to stir that solution in ways that illuminate Milton's art and design. Unfortunately, her treatment of Eve becomes more and more focused on using Ovid to fix interpretation, and, although she argues vehemently against the idea of the Fortunate Fall, the interpretation she seems set on is that Eve as flawed and fallen from the start. Having criticized others for being "too eager to alert the reader when a simile, borrowed episode or oblique allusion seems to draw Eve into a web of implication from whose inexorable sequel she cannot escape" (19), Green herself winds about Eve the sticky threads of implication.

James Dougal Fleming. *Milton's Secrecy and Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Aldershot, England, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008. xiii + 196 pp. $99.95. Review by W. SCOTT HOWARD, UNIVERSITY OF DENVER.

Milton's Secrecy and Philosophical Hermeneutics offers a compellingly learned yet inconsistently lucid study in apophasis: Fleming has much to explain about what his book will not accomplish. Neither empirical

nor 'objectivist' (and emphatically not deconstructive, or historicist, or intentionalist) *Milton's Secrecy* challenges an hermeneutics of discovery that has informed the horizons of Milton's literary reception at least since Richard Bentley's 1732 emendation of *secret* to 'sacred' in *PL* 1.6. Whereas "most Milton scholars … argue or assume, implicitly or explicitly, that studying [or editing] the poet's work entails a search for hidden meaning" (4)—hence, the plurality of interpretive methodologies throughout the twentieth century predicated upon esotericism—Fleming aims to correct that bias for secrecy and discovery by returning to Milton's textuality (ix-x) and the apt placement of his works within a nearly forgotten tradition of early-modern exotericism (6-25). Fleming's Milton "is the great poet of the exoteric world … hostile to any hermeneutics, and to any epistemology, that devolves on the category of secrecy" (161).

Consistent with Milton's Arian theology and cosmology, the God of *Paradise Lost* therefore retains the sole right to secrecy; discovery (though not the dialogic work of knowing) is banned from Paradise, and the quest for hidden 'secret' meaning functions as "*the* Miltonic keyword of Satanic sin" and human fallenness (10). Milton's secrecy thus involves an inter-textual counter-principle of anti-secrecy. His major poems (e.g. *Lycidas*, *A Masque at Ludlow Castle*, *Samson Agonistes*) and key pamphlets (e.g. *The Reason of Church-Government*, *Areopagitica*, *De Doctrina Christiana*) progressively question the hermeneutics of discovery (including self-discovery) by charting possible ways "out of the fall" (14) via philosophical hermeneutics, which Fleming defines in strictly Gadamerian terms, especially *Erfahrung*—"knowledge as an involving experience" (26)—and *Gespräch*—dialogue or conversation "theorized as the real mode of understanding" (119).

The complete arc of Milton's works and days constitutes the full disclosure of that knowing and understanding: "Milton's exotericism is what makes Milton Milton" (29). Notwithstanding Fleming's vigorous protests against biocriticism (31-55), however, *Milton's Secrecy* recapitulates one of the most persistent and resilient interpretive models in the field—the notion of *the rising poet*, introduced by Louis Martz in 1965—whereby, in this case, *Paradise Regained* manifests the poet's ultimate repudiation of the hermeneutics of discovery. "Christ's return to his privacy, after the successfully-resisted temptation, is

exactly congruent to Milton's own return home after the Italian journey" (171). Privacy, like secrecy, signals the immanence / imminence of esoteric and exoteric paths; thus for both figures privacy hinges upon a counter-principle of anti-privacy. The return home is always-already predicated upon privacy's abjuration and the prophet's / poet's proleptic acceptance of uncompelled commitment to public service.

Fleming's ambitious critique of esoteric inwardness, secrecy, and individualism—set forth in the volume's introduction, "Against Secrecy," and then sharpened in the concluding chapter, "Secrecy Again?"—shapes his book's center and circumference. Each section frames that thesis vis-à-vis different articulations of the early-modern exoteric tradition, brisk objections against the status quo hermeneutics of discovery in the field of Milton criticism, clever counter-readings of touchstones in Milton's major texts, and moments of sanguine engagement with an abridged version of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Readers unfamiliar with the thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer may find Fleming's perspective refreshing and generative, yet may also wonder why, for example, Gadamer's theory of Gespräch would be permitted to stand utterly unmeasured against any of the standard verse or prose dialogues (whether English or European) from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—especially Torquato Tasso's treatise, *Discorso dell'arte del dialogo* (1585), with which Milton was familiar. Nevertheless, the early-modern, self-reflexive, exoteric tradition that Fleming underscores for the purpose of substantiating his analysis of the hermeneutics of discovery provides the volume's most interesting and useful contribution to the field. *Milton's Secrecy* elaborates upon recent studies by Linda Gregerson, Valentin Groebner, Kevin Sharpe, Debora Shuger, and Ramie Targoff to posit a distinctive early-modern English Protestant abjuration of inwardness, secrecy, and individualism: "a rhetorical turning of the psyche, not without discomfort, inside out … predicated on a normative assumption of inwardness, but precisely as a moral redoubt that can be supra-normatively renounced" (73).

Chapter one, "Expressing the Conscience," applies that line of argument to a selection of works that dramatize the self-presentational casuistical mimesis of Milton's conscience: *The Reason of Church-Government*, *Apology for Smectymnuus*, *Second Defense of the English People*,

Defense of Himself, and especially *Lycidas*. These *mind-texts*, as Fleming calls them, "do not just give us insight into [Milton's] conscience; they are his conscience, which is always-already mind-text" (33). Chapters two, "The Armor of Intention," and three, "The Armor of Intension," extend that inquiry to contiguous and contrastive interpretations of *A Masque at Ludlow Castle* and *Samson Agonistes*. In both, asserts Fleming, "Milton constructs an ideal of exoteric behavior, according to which intentional secrets must be displayed for all to see [because] Milton's dramatic heroes must never attempt … the one thing that most critics assume to be normative: namely, a retreat from outward expression to inward and secret experience" (67). Fleming's cogent formulation of the dynamics of early-modern English Protestant conscience (via Targoff especially) informs the crux of *Milton's Secrecy*; the early-moderns "simply and simultaneously assume that their mind is inside, and that it is outside. Indeed, the inwardness of the mind seems to generate or require external figuration, and then to be explained and protected by that figuration" (69). *Comus* and *Samson* limn contrasting epiphenomenal images of that theoretical model: "where the Lady holds to an esoteric stance, expressly refusing to articulate her being, Samson expresses his being repeatedly and exoterically [because he is incarnated] with the meaning of divine selection" (94). Chapter four, "Talking and Learning in Paradise," examines *Paradise Lost* in terms of dialogic questioning, the "final step in an exoteric series that began with Milton's textualized conscience, and continued with the Lady's (erroneously inward) and Samson's (gloriously outward) intentionality" (129). Fleming's just attention to the complexity of Satan's and Gabriel's comparative readings of God's scales in *PL* 4 yields one of the book's most illuminating transpositions of Gadamer's thought. Milton's great poem highlights the conditions for creaturely uncertainty (134) through persistent representations of "interpretive activity, not as an objectivist process of discovery, but as an applicative process of dialogic transformation" (139). The fall thus results from a swerve away from dialogue and toward objectivism (151). "To participate in dialogue is to participate in God" (158). Readers less friendly with post-structural hermeneutics may object, however, to Fleming's occasionally apodictic statements, such as "Miltonic interpretation is true understanding through *Gespräch*" (164).

The decentering of early-modern subjectivity has certainly been one of the most vigorously devised and defended matters since the first wave of challenges (from the 1950s onward) against the humanistic-syncretic paradigm of the so-called Elizabethan world picture most famously popularized by E. M. W. Tillyard (ca. 1943). Key formulations of Milton's 'inwardness' have indeed been pivotal—arguably for *all* of the major twentieth-century studies in the field. *Milton's Secrecy* therefore proposes no middling task, especially given the provocative insight that "Miltonists have assumed discovery as the hermeneutic path to their various subject-matters; but they have not, in any significant way, turned to hermeneutic discovery as a subject-matter in and of itself" (5). Fleming invokes grounds for that capacious, double-edged charge within Milton's works, cultural context, and critical reception (especially since the rise and fall of deconstruction and new historicism), but ultimately engages (though not unreasonably) with a partisan selection of primary and secondary documents. Despite Fleming's rallying cry for the "worthy, endless work [of] hermeneutic, dialogic, questioning understanding [which] involves and mandates and absolutely demands a reiterative recognition and rejection of method" (172), *Milton's Secrecy* substitutes new binary oppositions (e.g. self-presentational reiterative mimesis / self-presentational casuistical mimesis) for old-fashioned pairings (e.g. interiority / exteriority), predictably privileging in each case the exoteric factors, thereby verging away from true dialogue and occasionally lapsing into mono-maniacal disputes with philosophers and critics, especially Jacques Derrida, Edward Said, and Stanley Fish. Some readers may find such coruscation invigorating; others, perhaps not. In either case, *Milton's Secrecy and Philosophical Hermeneutics* will spark new debates about Milton's concernment with both esoteric and exoteric Renaissance / early-modern traditions.