

particularly those interested in Restoration literature, women's writing, and seventeenth-century history, culture, and society.

Earl Miner, senior ed. Wiliam Moeck, co-ed. Steven Jablonski, corr. ed. *Paradise Lost, 1668-1968: Three Centuries of Commentary*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2004. 510 pp. + 25 illus. \$85.00. Review by JOHN MULRYAN, ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY.

This massive scholia of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a fitting tribute to Earl Miner, the senior editor, who died while the book was still in press. It is unfortunate, however, that the editors proclaim (on the dust jacket) that a true variorum of *Paradise Lost* is "no longer possible," while one is in fact in preparation at Duquesne University press. The point is reiterated in the introduction, where a new variorum is dismissed as "hypothesis, wishful thinking" (16, col. 2). Instead, the editors provide detailed commentary from seventeen commentators, including themselves (the undated names listed here): Patrick Hume (1695), Joseph Addison (1712), Richard Bentley (1732), The Richardsons, Father and Son (1734), James Paterson (1744), Thomas Newton (1749), Henry John Todd (1801-42), William Cowper (1808), Thomas Keightley (1859), David Masson (1890), A. W. Verity (1920-29), Merritt Y. Hughes (1957), J. M. Sims (1962), Alastair Fowler (1968), Earl Miner, William Moeck, Steven Jablonski. There is also a stimulating chapter detailing the contributions of the early commentators on the poem.

While the earlier choices are excellent, I wonder about the wisdom of listing the three editors as separate commentators on the poem. It might have been better if the editorial voice had been one rather than three, as this (in my opinion) dilutes the force of the earlier commentators, and tempts the editors to deconstruct or reshape earlier commentary in line with their own opinions.

Sometimes two of the editors converge as one, e.g. Miner and Moeck on ll. 289-93 of Book 10 (344, col. 2). At other times Miner joins with Fowler to supply a feminist reading of the contest between Adam and Eve. On Book 10, line 162, both Fowler and Miner are credited with the notion that "Eve speaks one plain line to Adam's evasive nineteen, 125-43. 160-61 suggest that *we* [emphasis mine] draw much the same inferences from that" (341, col. 1). The editorial hand of Miner in particular lays too heavily on the responses of the earlier commentators. He has a strange affection for the

infamous Bentley, who posited the existence of a phantom editor who radically misrepresented Milton's assumed intentions in *Paradise Lost*. For example, on Book 8, line 320, Miner observes that "Bentley's captious insistence on accuracy leads to attention, disproof, and improved understanding" (297, col. 1). Homer may nod, but Bentley keeps us awake (Book 9, ll. 1183-84; 333, col. 2), even when his "pedantry has occasioned tiresome commentary" (Book 10, ll. 523-31; 350, col. 2). At other times Miner is whimsical, even charming. On the perceived sexism of Hume, the Richardsons, and (perhaps) Fowler, he comments ironically that "it is remarkable how gender presumptions are inscribed into the universe" (Book 8, l. 150; 293, col. 1). On Book 8, line 421, "editors have *fused* (emphasis mine) that Milton may be playing on 'numbers' as an antithesis to 'one' and on its Latin sense of 'parts.' Fowler concludes that Milton's primary meaning is that the divine monad contains all other numbers" (299, col. 1). On book 10, line 460, both Newton and Milton come in for a drubbing: "Newton dimly glimpses the formulaic nature of Homeric verse; it is not clear that Milton saw farther" (349, col. 2). And on line 588 of the same book, "it is not clear why this striking 'jingle' escaped the frowns of eighteenth-century critics" (353, col. 2). On Book 9, line 845, he finds Todd "lax" on a usage listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but then suddenly recalls that "of course Todd had no *OED*" (327, col. 1). Then again, Milton also lacked a copy of this essential reference tool!

On Book 10, lines 664-7 (356, col. 2), Dunster "growled" about Milton's winds, while "Newton's quaint comment" that Milton's angels agreed with the medieval schoolmen that the soul died with the body (Book 10, ll. 789-92; 359, col. 2) is a very palpable hit. Finally, in commenting on Book 10, lines 888-95, Miner deconstructs his own interpretation of angelic sex: "I fear this note has wasted everybody's time" (362, col. 1).

Addison is cited very infrequently while other unlisted commentators, like William Empson and C. S. Lewis, are brought in through the back door, so to speak, through Miner's own summary comments on many of the lines and clusters of lines in the poem. Miner is especially good on cross-references, and also adds many enlightening historical observations from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

An appendix on the illustrations notes that "the Faithorne portrait used as a frontispiece [here] is considered the standard depiction of adult Milton" (421, col. 1). The editors also observe that *Paradise Lost* was "the first fully

illustrated long English narrative poem” (421, col. 1), and provide a detailed discussion of the first two illustrated editions (1688 and 1749), whose plates are reproduced in recto and verso before the text of each book of the poem. A series of “excursi” or learned digressions follow the commentary: “The Chronology of the Poem”; “To Compare Great Things [on the style and sublimity of the poem]”; “Personification, Relationship, and Allegory”; “To Venture Down and Up to Re-ascend [images of height and depth in the poem]”; “Politics in the Poem”; “When Satan First Knew Pain”; “Language and Laughter”; “Knowledge Is as Food”; “Music and the Sabbath”; “Cosmology, Astrology, and Belief”; “The Poem’s Irregular Regularities”; “So Called by Allusion”; “The First of the Visions of God”; and “Historical Measures of This Transient World.” A brief bibliography of primary and secondary sources completes the volume.

On balance, Miner’s personal touch and lively wit add a human dimension to an enterprise more often associated with drudgery and impenetrable prose. This last product from Miner’s pen is a poignant reminder of his many contributions to scholarship, and of the great loss we have endured at his passing.

Mark R. Kelley, Michael Lieb, and John T. Shawcross, eds. *Milton and the Grounds of Contention*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003. 352 pp. \$60.00. Review by W. SCOTT HOWARD, UNIVERSITY OF DENVER.

Edited collections tend generally to fall into two categories: those that have a unified sense of purpose, and those that do not. *Milton and the Grounds of Contention* gathers ten original essays that contribute substantially (if unevenly) to the field, sharpening our attention to a series of perennial topics examined from fresh perspectives. As the book’s title suggests, there are multiple grounds of Renaissance and early modern contention at work here—literary reception and influence; republican, devotional, and postcolonial poetics; reformation theology; discourses of gender, subjectivity, and property law; sectarianism; textual studies and authorial intention—these among the more conspicuous interpretive perspectives devised and defended by the contributors. The volume’s ten chapters (individually and collectively) are certainly engaging and important on their own merits, but they don’t quite work together toward a common goal.