Leonard Mustazza. *"Such Prompt Eloquence:" Language as Agency and Character in Milton's Epics*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1988. Pp xii, 173.

God Almighty was no rhetorician: Satan it was who created persuasive political rhetoric. Here Leonard Mustazza begins his exploration of character in Milton's epics as it is manifested in discourse, spoken or thought. "No mean feat," he comments on Satan's achievement (19), though some might feel that the misappropriation of language to move others to damnation is the archetypal meanness. His analysis of language usefully explores the strategies used by the characters in various states: innocent, sinful, remorseful, reprobate. Chapters on Satan's rhetoric as he tempts the angels and then Adam and Eve are followed by an examination of human language before and after the Fall. "Divine" language includes the speech of the angels, affable Raphael and understandably stern Michael. One of the best chapters is on language as a weapon in Christ's duel not of arms in *Paradise Regained*.

The discussion is in a traditional, conservative idiom, marked at its best moments by a practical common sense. No dragon's teeth here of signifiers and *différance*, of trendy new doublets, fresh minted affixes and intrusive solidi. Some readers will be relieved. Others will feel that at least a dimension is missing in a discussion of language that ignores contemporary theorists' focus on how words mean what they do, how texts speak to texts, how authorial and contextual ideologies frame the discourse of fictional characters. Mustazza accepts status of text and authority of author under an older covenant, as it were. Within the limits suggested, he quotes sensitively from some of the best critical work directed at his theme, but has a slightly irritating habit of endorsing quoted opinion as "apt", "valid" or "correct".

His own style is a little lumpy at times. He speaks of scenes that "represent polar boundaries in Edenic language use" (90), calls *Paradise Lost* "christological in perspective" (127) and analyses the "preseparation conversation" of Adam and Eve (88). More serious is his occasional insensitivity to the levels of meaning in the poet's language. When Adam chooses the same "lot" as Eve, "Certain to undergo like doom", Mustazza reads "doom" as "payment", the anticipation of which makes Adam's choice the sadder (95). But "doom" suggests that besides knowing that *judgment* will follow, Adam is becoming infected with a diabolic ideology which interprets events in terms of *fate*, denying the absolute power of divine will. Distempered, fallen Eve who speaks of her "lot" already believes in "fate". Elsewhere, when Mustazza discussed Satan's speculation about obtaining "By act of grace my former state", he notes Satan's ignorance of how God's grace operates (52). However, he does not notice that the phrase is also beautifully in character because it is exactly the dispensation an aristocratic transgressor might hope for when he is legally guilty but sues for a *free* pardon out of the *grace* of the monarch. One more example: neither Michael nor Milton use of Noah the phrase "perfect man" as quoted by Mustazza, nor might they consider "perfect" to be an adjective that permits degrees of comparison, as he does (112). One feels at times that

Milton's language has not quite yielded either its suggestive multivalency or its precision to this author.

One is uneasy also about the treatment here of rhetoric, a word much mentioned. We are promised early that "a kind of Miltonic rhetoric" will emerge (13), but this seems to refer to remarks such as: "Satan invents yet another kind of language – the 'pep-talk' " (34). Perhaps statements such as the following are the "rhetoric" the writer had in mind: "To illustrate the complexity of the medium, Milton moves quickly in this scene from Adam's inquiry into his Maker's identity (inquisitive language), to the Son's introduction of himself (formal language), to the interdiction (prohibitive language), to Adam's naming "presumption" in wishing to know more (exploratory, deferential language), and finally to the Son's gentle taunting of Adam (playful and indirectly didactic language). These last two categories are especially interesting. ..." (72–3). This is a shadow of a taxonomy but there is no descriptive elaboration within the categories. The writer seems simply uninterested in classical rhetoric, a lack of interest which traps him in misreadings e.g. of Satan's behaviour before the spoken temptation of Eve. "Each part, Motion, each act won audience ere the tongue": Mustazza dismisses this as clumsy "histrionics ... abusing the part of the orator with his serpentine meanderings" (65). Not so. The importance of motion and gesture, of catching the attention before the oration begins, was an important part of rhetoric. Satan is as accomplished a rhetorician as any "orator renown'd ... to some great cause addressed." Hypocrisy, "the only evil that walks invisible," acts convincingly not clumsily. Then there is the dream Satan induces in Eve with his "devilish art." It is treated as a rhetorical event: the art "can refer to little else besides words" (56). However, Eve is not awake as is suggested, and she cannot hear words. In the intertext, with other devilish figures who practise *goeteia*, is Spenser's Archimago. Archimago's evil illusions, too, are forged by night but with a more sinister weapon than rhetoric or a "mode of reasoning" (57).

Mustazza has a tendency to affirm or speculate without producing evidence from the theological or literary context, e.g. "Does [Satan] truly believe the rebellion can succeed? I think he does" (26); or, "It is highly doubtful that either Satan or the faithful members of his following actually believe that they were self-begotten" (28). The discussion of the evil angel's rebellion is unconvincing. This matter is central to Milton's theodicy and requires scrupulous attention. God says they fell "self-tempted, self-depraved"; Mustazza is satisfied that "the Father's statement obviously cannot be taken at face value" (29). Actually, it would be safer to assume that God can be trusted and that when Omniscience glosses Milton's narrative, that the reading is correct. *Christian Doctrine* 1.9 confirms this. In Carey's phrase, the temptation is intramural.

One last concern must be mentioned. Mustazza does not quite convince us that we should think in terms of the *agency* rather than the *instrumentality* of language. The distinctions between thoughts/words and reason/language are touched on but unsatisfyingly (45,85,97). He talks of the power inherent in words (19) and treats language as an entity in itself (29). The subject has fascinating potential but this is

not realised. The traditional model of human consciousness, rational soul with erected wit and infected will, not hegemonic, not an actor but an instrument in the drama of damnation.

For all these reservations, there are many interesting and enriching perceptions in this study, beginning with analysis of Satan's "calumnious art of counterfeited truth". Especially useful are the survey of the nature of pre-lapsarian language and its post-lapsarian future (88–89), human language after the Fall (90–100), the Son's response to Adam (100–116), and the whole chapter on *Paradise Regained*. Leonard Mustazza focuses our attention on a topic of undoubted importance to readers of Milton and he guides us through text and critical discourse with an interesting and often valuable commentary.

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Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani. *Agrippa d'Aubigné. Le corps de Jézabel*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1991.

Peu de critiques étaient aussi bien placés que Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani pour éclairer les coulisses de ce théâtre de la cruauté qu'est l'oeuvre d'Agrippa d'Aubigné, pour faire sortir de leur nuit les fantômes, et quels fantômes, qui ont peuplé l'imaginaire de cet écrivain au tempérament "igné". En effet, Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani est une spécialiste de la littérature baroque et on lui doit des études toujours pénétrantes sur Agrippa d'Aubigné. Ce petit ouvrage appartient à la collection "Le Texte Rêve," dont l'objet est de remonter au coeur même des oeuvres, de lever le voile sur l'inconscient des auteurs grâce à une lecture attentive au dit et au non-dit.

Nous avons la chance de posséder le "roman familial" d'Agrippa d'Aubigné. Celui-ci, en effet, a écrit *Sa vie à ses enfants*, qu'il a dédiée à ses trois enfants légitimes. Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani fait judicieusement remarquer que l'aîné des enfants avait été renié et que la fille, Marie, était déjà morte depuis quelques années quand ce testament-confession fut rédigé. Par contre, le fils naturel, son héritier spirituel, Nathan, est passé sous silence. Autre aberration, ce récit autobiographique est écrit à la troisième personne du singulier, comme si Agrippa d'Aubigné reniait lui-même sa filiation, comme s'il avait un compte à régler avec ses parents.

Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani voit trois moments décisifs dans la vie d'Agrippa d'Aubigné. Tout d'abord sa naissance. La sortie du ventre maternel fut vécue dans l'imaginaire de l'auteur des *Tragiques* comme une malédiction gravée dans son prénom même, Agrippa, *Aegre partus*. D'une part, il se voit victime, abandonné par sa mère qui mourut en couches; d'autre part, il sait qu'il doit la vie à la décision des docteurs ou du père qui ont choisi de "tuer" la mère pour sauver le fils; le voilà du même coup passé du côté des bourreaux. La dialectique victime/bourreau, accusé/accusateur, et le renversement des rôles qui a été maintes fois relevé auraient