formats, and experiential observations. Mick Jardine, on the other hand, offers a more theoretical (but nonetheless thankfully clear) overview of the stereotypical contrasts between Jonson and Shakespeare, and suggests how the contrastive pairing of the two authors has worked to the former's disadvantage. Jardine has much of interest to say about how Jonson's image has been "constructed" in certain negative ways and how we might escape from such constricting constructions, although he tends to beg the question of why Jonson was originally "constructed" in one fashion and Shakespeare in another. (Perhaps social responses are not, after all, merely matters of social construction or ideological convention.)

One real strength of this book is the sense it conveys of genuine give-and-take, of dialogue, even disagreement, among its contributors. A reader no sooner finishes one piece than he finds another author explicitly questioning a point or points just previously made. This "dialogical" approach not only reflects, but also genuinely stimulates, divergent responses and thoughts. Even more diversity is produced by the final section of the volume, which focuses on "Marginalised Jonsons," including such topics as women actors and directors, female characters and audience members, Australian productions of the plays, and even stagings by disabled actors. This is, in short, a book which cannot be easily pinned down or pigeon-holed, and which is all the more provocative as a result. It should appeal strongly to actors, directors, and theatre-goers, as well as to students and teachers of dramatic production, and with luck it will help contribute to a renaissance of Jonsonian stagings.

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Catherine Gimelli Martin. *The Ruins of Allegory: Paradise Lost and the Metamorphosis of Epic Convention*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998. Pp. xiii, 385.

The title of Catherine Gimelli Martin's book can be mildly surprising. *Paradise Lost* is not allegorically written as Spenser's and Dante's poems are. Nevertheless, it can be allegorically read, and the reading can be particularly instructive if we treat the poem not as "normative" allegory, but as an allegory emerging from the twilight zone of the baroque.

"Baroque" is a term which Martin tends to invoke rather than to analyze. It has been associated with an excess testifying to an endeavour of the mind which is compulsively called for yet impossible to execute. "Imperious impulse held all together," as Yeats puts it, after Unity of Being fell apart. An allegory held together by a will to order which anxiety makes imperious recalls the haunting of allegory by violence with which Gordon Teskey's book has made us familiar. Such an allegory will be disruptive in proportion to its integrative zeal. It will ruin itself in articulating itself.

The baroque can be held to lie between two modes of knowing, between the transcendently given and the empirically discovered, between the hierarchic order with its consoling claims to permanence (p. 81) and the rough beast of the new philosophy slouching towards Newton (pp. 94, 99). The ruin of allegory is its fall from one state to another. Ruining is associated with falling, as Martin reminds us, and as Milton makes clear in *Of Education* when he writes of repairing the “ruins of our first parents.”

Repairing does not consist of restoring the original. The return to Eden is no longer in vogue. The fall, moreover, is not into hell but into the human condition with its opportunities and torments. A meta-allegory, in which the poem's own self-discovery cartographs the complexities of “ruin,” points to an epic which will always have a future because we, as its inheritors, remain concerned to discover how to move forward and how to do so without forgetting our history, even as the conditions of desiring and knowing change.

Martin's interpretation of *Paradise Lost* is along these lines, and she follows her route with determination and perceptiveness. Her readings of specific passages are acute, though they are not self-evidently the result of her methodology. They could be arrived at by several of the all-too-few and diminishing band of critics still able to respond to the language of poetry. One is invited nevertheless to add to the richness of these readings. Satan's refusal to “deify” God's power (*PL* 1.112–13) not only provides “a darkly punning euphemism for actually defying him” (p. 150) but also points to the absurdity of not deifying the divine and of associating the divine exclusively with power, not with justice. Bowing before God (*PL* 1.112) may also be a dark reference to the Laudian practice of bowing before the altar. Satan's scorn for such submission links itself to the “humiliation meek” of Adam and Eve in the last line of Book 10. To Martin's comments on Book 4, lines 216–20 (pp. 136–41), one might add that “vegetable gold” is all the more paradoxical because it oxymoronicly compresses the barrenness of metals (even gold) with the vegetable soul's properties of growth and blooming. It was on the barrenness of metals that the medieval case against usury was built.

Martin's rhetoric is fascinatingly involved with presence in absence, with the “vanishing points” that baroque perspectives call for and by which those perspectives seem controlled with a strength almost in proportion to the vanishing point's remoteness. There is a “tension or torsion between an absent but idealized regularity” and “an irregularity that signifies the implicit presence of divine freedom, the moving content of its absent form” (p. 121). Milton's God is represented as an “absent” origin, “an infinitely multiplicative zero, a variable vanishing point located everywhere and nowhere in the universe” (p. 112). Driving the paradox boldly to its extreme, Martin can even affirm that Milton's “All in All” is “both fully responsible for and fully absent from his creation” (p. 120).

There is a price to be paid for any reading of *Paradise Lost*. We can ask only that the enlightenments exceed the cost, as they certainly do in Martin's quite notable book. Her selectiveness arises from her admirable conviction that a truly canonical work must always be contemporary, always supportive of a “forward”

reading. Consequently, her thought connections are not backwards or sideways (except into the world of baroque aesthetics) but to Wittgenstein, Benjamin and chaos theory. Current preoccupations are found to be not discontinuous with that “immanent but also semi-erased presence” into which we are persuaded to descend by “ruined or baroque allegory” (p. 340). Contradiction and indeterminacy no longer have to be read out of the poem by the unifying imperative. The postmodern reader has the advantage of being able to recontextualize these qualities as “alternative aspects of rationalism” (p. 324). It is doubtful, though, if such a reader would be prepared to see God's providence as “the internal form of matter: an *ex deo* pattern or design secretly encoded within the innermost level of reality's resemblances” (p. 340). The “track divine” of God's steps (*PL* 11.354) may be semi-erased or half-submerged in immanence, but it remains stubbornly more than a residual presence. Providence, however, mysteriously encoded, is still providence, our “stay” in the long journey which the last lines of the poem begin.

References to contradictions, to provisionality and to indeterminacy, to closure first maintained as a vanishing point and then repudiated as a sign of totalization, call on the poetics of the unfinished poem, a poetics leading into the post-modern which has not been unexplored and which Martin might have profited from considering. The account of the creation in Book 3 is also, surprisingly, not drawn upon. It is far more congenial then the Book 7 account to “an *ex deo* pattern . . . secretly encoded.” These notations in the margin are not offered as devaluations. They obliquely acknowledge the richness of Martin's book, a book that is closely packed and deeply thoughtful. It ushers a distinctive voice into Milton scholarship.

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