

things came about” and in Fortinbras’s assertion of his “rights of memory.” Hamlet’s fascination with dramatic poetry and its performance seems calculated to establish his credentials as a critic. His presumed role as Shakespeare’s intellectual “exposes not only the limitations of humanist philosophy, but the inadequacy of most attempts to supplant it at the cusp of the seventeenth century” (239). These explorations are endlessly productive, exciting, and original.

I take issue with this splendidly comprehensive study of *Hamlet* only when it interprets Hamlet’s appropriation of providential language in act 5 as a “posturing” that “entails some magnificently black comedy” (37). Providence is, for Shakespeare, “the child of wishful or deluded thinking” (241). “Hamlet is the inhabitant of Elsinore most thoroughly mired in bullshit, about himself and about the world around him” (252). But are Hamlet’s reflections on a “special providence in the fall of a sparrow” really nothing more than “some grammatically demanding pseudo-profundities worthy of Yoda” (291)? Yes, surely, Horatio is there to point out to us that the play’s death toll is brought about by “cunning and forced cause.” But perhaps Horatio’s differing from the interpretation of his dearest friend is a powerful indication that Hamlet’s story can finally be read in at least two ways: in the providential terms that Hamlet himself espouses, while also in the lament of the humanist for a story that is unrelievedly one of “carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts, / Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters.” One could add that the story is also, in Fortinbras’s view, a demonstration of how Machiavellian ruthlessness has served so often in human history to cut the Gordian knot that Hamlet finds so problematic and intricate. Lewis has chosen to give us the dark side of the equation, while also insisting quite properly that he is not describing *Hamlet* as a work of nihilism (309). He has done so with extraordinary brilliance and learning. But must we approach Shakespeare as a dramatist whose passion for dialectic is so extraordinary who nonetheless aligns himself with only one side of his theatrical equation? A question to be asked.

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Milton, Materialism, and Embodiment: One First Matter All.

Kevin J. Donovan and Thomas Festa, eds.

Medieval and Renaissance Literary Studies. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2017. viii + 250 pp. \$70.

This is a timely collection, insofar as it attempts to wed approaches characterizing recent studies of early modern embodiment to the study of Milton. Stephen Fallon’s *Milton among the Philosophers* (1991) and John Rogers’s *The Matter of Revolution* (1996) ostensibly initiated the conversation of Milton’s materialist philosophy, which the essays in this collection seek to advance by harmonizing early modernity with the new materialism of Deleuze, Jane Bennett, and others. Such harmonization, of course, subtends

much early modern scholarship on embodiment, especially in studies of Shakespeare and his dramatic contemporaries. But as editors Kevin Donovan and Thomas Festa point out, Milton's materialism is a unique hinge connecting early modern and contemporary brands of vitalism.

Some of the collection's essays deftly tease out materialist subtleties and their epistemological implications in *Paradise Lost*. Lara Dodds, for example, demonstrates the manner in which Raphael's blush in book 8 complicates the otherwise Homeric genealogy of angelic gesture. As "a physiological event, a social sign, and an instance of epic gesture," Raphael's rosy red smile "establishes the possibilities and the limits of shared understanding between humans and angels" (141). In her analysis of the phenomenology of smell in Eden, Lauren Shohet suggests that fragrance complicates the relationship between free will and foreknowledge in Milton's theodicy. In a postlapsarian environment characterized by mediation and disguise, "the unmediated quality of smell links it strongly to a prelapsarian condition" (35). By focusing on the epic's representations of sensory experience and movement, acute poetic readings like these forcefully assert the significance of seemingly minute details.

Other essays seek to enlarge the archive of scholarship on Milton's materialism. Erin Murphy takes up the collection's theoretical ambitions in her discussion of genealogy and queer kinship in *Paradise Regained*. Reading the brief epic alongside the work of Lee Edelman, Murphy argues that the poem's depiction of the Christic family, defined not by reproduction but by consent, exists amid "a tangle of changing ideas about the political promise of reproductive futurity" in Stuart England (105). Critical theory is a welcome addition to the study of Milton and materialism, but a wealth of salient, understudied materials lies in the poet-theologian's own corpus. Seth Herbst's investigation of materialist music thus brings him into contact with the early poetry (the *Nativity Ode*, "At a Solemn Music") as well as the late work (*Paradise Regained*, *De Doctrina Christiana*). By challenging Fallon's claim that Milton's monism emerges in the divorce tracts, Herbst pushes the materialism conversation forward mostly by looking backwards.

In the final section of the collection, John Rogers's discussion of Milton's presence in early Mormonism is a highlight. The account of Creation in *De Doctrina* and Raphael's "one first matter all" speech in *Paradise Lost* influenced the materialist, polygamist theology of Orson Pratt, an overlooked figure in the development of the Church of Latter-day Saints. Rogers's narration of the intellectual and ecclesiastical struggle between Orson, his brother Parley, and Brigham Young in the power vacuum created by Joseph Smith's death is both sad and surprising, containing Miltonic resonances that uncannily illustrate life imitating art. Rogers helps bring the collection full circle by conveying the exigency of situating Milton in dialogue with more contemporary materialisms.

This collection ultimately succeeds in nuancing our understanding of Milton's materialism, even if it falls a bit short of advancing the conversation as a whole. The collection's limited scope helps explain this shortcoming; half of the essays focus on *Paradise Lost*, and on similar moments, at that (Raphael and Adam's colloquy looms large). *Paradise Regained*,

De Doctrina, and *Areopagitica* garner sustained attention, but the complete absence of *Samson Agonistes*, though not a flaw per se, is a bit surprising, as is the limited presence of the early poetry. The notion that the mature Milton was fully committed to heretical monism, though certainly debatable, speaks to the importance of investigating the materialism of the young Milton. Like the divorce tracts, the antiprelatical tracts—a treasure trove for materialist inquiry—are an instructive bridge between the young and mature poet-theologian. Regardless, *Milton, Materialism, and Embodiment* provides strong, diverse examples of approaches to future scholarship on Milton's materialism, which will encourage readers to generate their own paradigms.

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Milton's Italy: Anglo-Italian Literature, Travel, and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England. Catherine Gimelli Martin.

Routledge Series in Renaissance Literature and Culture. London: Routledge, 2017. xvi + 318 pp. \$140.

More than twenty-five years have elapsed since the publication of the prize-winning volume *Milton in Italy: Contexts, Images, Contradictions*, ed. Mario A. Di Cesare (1991). Time would seem ripe therefore for a reappraisal of this dimension of Milton's life and corpus. The present work goes some way toward filling at least part of this gap. Commendable for its breadth, it discusses Milton's Italian journey, his anti-Catholicism, the role of grace and justification in *Paradise Lost*, neo-Platonism in his early Latin and English verse, his potential debt to Dante's Beatrice and Petrarch's Laura, the Italian context of his neo-Roman politics, and the possible relationship between *Samson Agonistes* and Italian oratorio. Perhaps the greatest strengths of the study reside in its careful contextualization of Milton's work and, in particular, its perceptive reading of Milton's appropriation of Sarpi.

But where the contributors to Di Cesare's volume signaled the complexity and ambiguity attendant upon Milton's literary and biographical relations with Italy, Martin presents an argument that is tainted by overstatement, factual error, and simplistic readings, e.g., "Milton's entirely happy stay in Italy" (2); "his journey was entirely enjoyable" (22). Unfortunately, this is compounded by basic errors and misconceptions. Milton's Latin gunpowder poems (pertaining to his Cambridge years) are twice referred to as "school boy poems" (32; 82). Crucially, the analysis of his Italian journey (chapter 2) states, without evidence, that Cardinal Barberini "invit[ed] him [Milton] to an early comic opera" (49), and that Giovanni Salzilli was a physician (61). And other viewpoints are certainly open to question, such as the belief that "[t]he Diodatis as a whole explain Milton's easy entrance into Florence's most select societies" (54) or the huge assumption