

John Milton: Epistolarum Familiarium Liber Unus and Uncollected Letters.

Estelle Haan, ed. and trans.

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It is a pleasure in these unsettling times to revisit the familiar letters of John Milton (1608–74), that consummate survivor whose last extant epistle (*Ep. Fam.* 31)—dated just one year prior to the publication of *Paradise Lost* (1667)—defiantly refutes the recent rumors of his death by the plague. Eight years on, Milton would publish a retrospective prose work that combined this same letter with thirty others of his Neo-Latin epistles, dating from 1627 to 1666. That first edition of the *Epistolarum Familiarium Liber Unus* (1674) would also include Milton’s seven university pro-lusions, in the last of which (ca. 1632) he had famously speculated that a lifetime of diligent study might lead to “a pleasure with which none can compare—to be the oracle of many nations, to find one’s home regarded as a kind of temple . . . whom men from near and far flock to visit” (*The Complete Prose Works of John Milton* [1953–82], 1:297). Read in this light, the familiar letters presented to the Latin-reading public in the final year of Milton’s life seem a clear attempt to represent the fulfillment of this early dream, despite their author’s current state of internal exile in the restored Stuart monarchy. For the 1674 *Liber* portrays “Joannis Miltonii Angli” as a godly humanist scholar whose mighty pen and erudition have earned him a lifetime’s worth of admiration from an international band of fellow thinkers, men from Italy, France, Germany, Geneva, and the Low Countries who write and visit the English oracle and, in so doing, transform his native abode into a kind of second Delphi.

Such, at least, is the impression made on this reader by Estelle Haan’s wonderful new edition of the *Liber*. This volume brings together the thirty-one published epistles—original Latin on the right page, Haan’s English translation on the left—along with six additional letters to the German diplomat Hermann Mylius and three unpublished English letters, including the famous epistle “To an Unnamed Friend” (ca. 1633). The appendix reproduces twenty-one Latin letters addressed to Milton in the 1650s, which lets one observe how Milton often, and characteristically, played on the specific language and tropes of others in his own writing. (The pro-lusions are not included, and the *Liber* did not contain all of Milton’s familiar letters nor his letters of state.) Haan’s translations are highly readable and faithful to the Latin; the letters are introduced by excellent headnotes that place each in its proper context in Milton’s life while also indicating some of the ways in which they participate in his self-fashioning. Each letter is followed by extensive notes that provide further historical-biographical context as well as insights into Milton’s qualities as a Neo-Latinist and interpretations of his engagement with the larger epistolographic tradition. Thus, Haan—both in her introduction and commentary—ably charts the various Miltons presented in the *Liber*: from the precocious Cambridge student writing of his poetic ambitions (*Ep. Fam.* 1–7), to the

Continental traveler showcasing his new contacts and literary accomplishments (*Ep. Fam.* 8–10), to the Commonwealth Latin Secretary entertaining praise and guests from abroad while struggling with blindness and deaths at home (*Ep. Fam.* 11–30), to the stalwart political outcast of 1666 (*Ep. Fam.* 31).

Ultimately, however, it is Milton the international humanist who appears most forcefully in these letters. And Haan—much of whose scholarship has concerned the transnational and multilingual aspects of Milton’s work (see, e.g., “From *Academia* to *Amicitia*,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 88.6 [1998]: 1–208)—does an admirable job of elucidating these same elements. An exemplary instance occurs in the aforementioned epistle of 1666. There, Milton, replying to the compliments of his German friend Peter Heimbach, notes that his patriotism has not been reciprocated by England, to the point that Milton has now been virtually “expatriated”; yet he consoles himself with the memorable phrase, “One’s homeland exists wherever it is well with him” (380). The quote is indeed memorable, as it was a commonplace dating back to Cicero—*Patria est ubicunq̄ue est bene*—which explains why some have tended to dismiss any deeper significance in its use here. Yet Haan argues for a more subversive and transnational reading, explaining how Milton’s use of the phrase specifically evokes its reworking in pseudo-Senecan and Petrarchan contexts, in both of which—as in Milton’s letter—the sentiment is linked to a discussion of plague and used to justify a more Stoic, optimistic attitude toward the loss of one’s *patria*.

Here, then, as throughout, Haan illuminates Milton’s intertextuality by placing his letters in conversation with the classical and Renaissance epistolographic traditions. Beyond that, though, her edition reminds us of the profound thinking and rethinking of the relation between insular nationhood and larger transnationalism that Milton performed not only in his poetry and political prose but in his personal communications, too. This welcome new edition suggests that Milton, always in search of some form of community, may ultimately have come to find one less in his native island than in that larger European nation of letters so compellingly represented in the *Liber*.

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The Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell. Martin Dzelzainis and Edward Holberton, eds.

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This tome in forty-three chapters might easily overwhelm Marvell’s relatively slender *Miscellaneous Poems* (1681). Yet the twenty-first-century Marvell so thoroughly explored in this new volume extends beyond the folio. This version of the writer also transcends the early twentieth-century characterization of Marvell that Steven