Br. Catholic Hist. (2018), *vol.* 34(2), *pp.* 332–343
doi:10.1017/bch.2018.27

Milton's Catholic Shadow

Genelle Gertz

Professor of English and Chair of the English Department, Washington and Lee University, Payne Hall, Lexington, Virginia 24450, U.S.A. Email: gertzg@wlu.edu

Milton and Catholicism, ed. Ronald Corthell and Thomas N. Corns, Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017, pp. vii + 212 £ 51.50, ISBN: 9780268100810

A few years ago, I attended an MLA panel devoted to the work of John Milton. I remember being intrigued by one of the panelists' presentations about Milton's Italian influences, and I waited to ask the speaker about it. 'Is there anything new to say about whether Milton held any pro-Catholic views or kept up friendships with English Catholics abroad?', I wondered. I had in mind much of the recent and exciting work by scholars of English Catholics like Alexandra Walsham, Alison Shell, Gerard Kilroy, Nicky Hallet, Arthur Marotti, Victor Houliston, Frances Dolan, Susannah Monta, Laurence Lux-Sterritt, Jamie Goodrich, Jenna Lay, Paula McQuade and others.[1] 'Absolutely not', I was told. Milton hated Catholics. He would never have kept up friendships with Catholics. Our conversation ended.

I therefore felt vindicated when I came across *Milton and Catholicism*, a new volume of essays dedicated to the very question I had posed. Ronald Corthell and Thomas N. Corns gather a rich array of essays by prominent scholars that touch upon the broad pairing of Milton and Catholicism. Contributors explore a 'variety of

[1] See Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016) and *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Gerard Kilroy, *Edmund Campion: A Scholarly Life* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016); Nicky Hallet, *Lives of Spirit: English Carmelite Self-Writing of the Early Modern Period* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007); Arthur Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Victor Houliston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Person's Jesuit Polemic* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007); Frances Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-century Print Culture* (Notre Dame, ID., University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Susannah Monta, *Martydom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Laurence Lux-Sterritt, *English Benedictine Nuns in Exile in the Seventeenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Jamie Goodrich, *Faithful Translators: Authorship, Gender and Religion in Early Modern England* (Evanston, IL.:Northwestern University Press, 2013); Jenna Lay, *Beyond the Cloister: Catholic Englishwomen and Early Modern Literary Culture* (Philadelphia, PA.:University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Paula McQuade, *Catechisms and Women's Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

approaches to Milton's career-long engagement with Catholicism and its relationship to reformed religion' (p. 12). This involves more than determining what Catholic sympathies or contacts Milton may have had in spite of his frequent anti-Catholic rhetoric, or my own initial question. It allows for discussion of Milton's constant disparagement of Catholicism as well as the place and purpose of such critique within reformed and sectarian communities. The essays richly advance our understanding of the many routes to Catholic ideas, and to ideas of Catholicism, in Milton's large corpus. Together they break new ground in Milton studies by focusing conversation on the place and meaning of Catholicism in Milton's work rather than covering religious identity more generally. Scholars of Milton, of Catholic studies, of early modern English and Latin poetry, and of polemic during the English revolution will take interest in this collection.

The collection begins steeped in Milton's polemical battles during the years of the Bishops Wars (1639 to 1640) and the beginning of the English Civil Wars (1642). In 'Milton and the Protestant Pope', Elizabeth Sauer establishes the baseline of Milton's anti-Catholicism by exploring how it shapes the poet-polemicist's critique of English Protestantism, especially Laudianism. Sauer identifies Puritans' rhetorical alignment of Laud with the Pope, showing how Milton follows suit in the antiprelatical tracts and *Areopagitica* by repeatedly linking current English episcopal government with Catholic church structure. Milton mistakes Protestant bishoprics for papal thrones in the *Reason of Church Government* to discover that, Sauer explains, 'Under the pretense of securing order, the office of the bishopric [could give] rise to the pope and papacy. If all churches joined together under the prelacy in the name of quelling dissent, an "Arch-primat or Protestant Pope" would emerge' (p. 29). Milton's anti-Catholicism mostly serves the rhetorical purpose, not of extirpating Catholic practices, but of uniting and convincing Protestants on questions of civil and church government. In *Areopagitica*, by uncovering the resemblance between the Stationers Company's control of licensing with the imprimaturs of the Inquisition, Milton 'establishes common ground through the opposition to Popish conformity' (p. 32) that allows him to launch a critique of licensing. The umbrella of anti-Catholicism, Sauer shows, ultimately gives Milton room in which to defend greater sectarianism, or what she calls 'the heterodox Reformed church' (p. 33), to the Presbyterian-dominated Parliament.

Sauer bases her discussion mostly on close readings of Milton's anti-Catholic language in the antiprelatical tracts, and wonders, but never explicitly answers, why it was possible for Milton during his tour to Italy, which preceded his writing of the antiprelatical tracts, to participate 'in a republic of letters [that could transcend] his anti-Catholicism' (p. 25).

https://doi.org/10.1017/bch.2018.27 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Alastair Bellany's and Thomas Cogswell's essay demonstrates how a central argument used by Milton to defend the regicide and the English republic came from a Catholic writer. They carefully trace the genealogy of the claim that Charles I poisoned his own father via the Duke of Buckingham, a story that furnished some of the main 'polemical grist for the radical Protestant revolution' (p. 59). Editors of Milton attribute this argument to the 1648 *Declaration to the Kingdom of England Concerning the Poisoning of King James*, but Bellany and Cogswell reveal that this attributed source is an abridged version of a tract, *The Forerunner of Revenge Upon the Duke of Buckingham*, published more than two decades earlier, and thus significantly prior to the English Civil Wars.

Consulting Antwerp registers and comparing typography, Bellany and Cogswell have identified the print shop that produced *The Forerunner*. This 1626 tract carried Frankfurt imprints in the English and Latin editions but actually hailed from Jan Van Meerbeeck's print shop in Brussels. This shop had close ties to the Spanish regime, linking the author of the tract, George Eglisham, to the Spanish. Though Eglisham was identified clearly on the tract as its author, his Catholicism was withheld, as were his ties to the Spanish Hapsburgs. Employed by them to generate fake news that would sew confusion among their Protestant enemies, Eglisham first made the charge that Charles I brought about his father's death by commanding the Duke of Buckingham to poison him. Eglisham further argued that when investigation into the possibility of the king's poisoning threatened Buckingham, Charles dissolved the 1626 parliament in order to cover up his crime.

It was Eglisham's story, reprinted in the *Declaration*, that fueled momentum in 1648 for the Vote of No Addresses, Parliament's vote to break off all talks with the king. Milton drew upon the story in his 1649 *Eikonoklastes*, a defense of the regicide, as well as in his 1651 *Defense of the People of England*, a refutation of Salmasius' attack on the regicide. The most surprising element to Milton's use of this story, however, is that he probably knew his source was Catholic, and thus disinformation, but kept silent about it. After 1648, Royalist tracts exposed Eglisham's Catholicism in response to the poisoning allegations. Milton had 'almost certainly . . . read' these but, as Bellamy and Cogswell argue, his 'attack chose to elide the Scottish doctor from the case against Charles' (p. 54).

Milton's apparent lack of interest in whether a linchpin of Parliament's defense of the regicide was actually true is surprising. Bellany and Cogswell decline to explain this choice other than pointing to the ways it aided his politics. Milton frequently defended the need to know truth, famously arguing in *Areopagitica* that even Protestants could be 'heretics' if they lacked means of defending their own orthodoxy.

https://doi.org/10.1017/bch.2018.27 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Equally important to the chapter, but undeveloped, is the way that George Eglisham's biography serves as an ironic foil to Milton's. Just as Milton faced isolation and loss after the Restoration, decrying in *Paradise Lost* 'evil days though fall'n and evil tongues', Eglisham, another poet-controversialist, faced persecution for his Catholic belief and penned Spanish propaganda in part because he could not make a living in England. The Scottish Catholic grew up with the son of his patron, the Marquess of Hamilton, and was introduced at a young age to James VI. He was educated at Louvain in the Spanish Netherlands, spending some of his time in a Jesuit college. In 1617 he married in secret at London's Clink prison, having previously worked as a tutor for a Yorkshire gentry family, where he was identified as a recusant. In London, Eglisham attracted the favor of the king he'd been introduced to in childhood, due to a tract he had written in Leiden critiquing the Arminian Conrad Vortsius. James appointed him 'extraordinary royal doctor and granted him a royal patent to establish a new London livery company of Goldbeaters' (p. 41). However, his success fueled monopoly charges in Parliament, causing the king to revoke his patent. After negotiations took place for the Spanish Match, Eglisham revealed his Catholic opinions, arguing in favor of transubstantiation in a disputation with Archbishop Abbot's chaplain. He also attempted to convert the dying Marquis of Hamilton. His theological defenses and conversion attempts infuriated James, and Eglisham went into hiding, fleeing to Brussels in 1625, where he took up work for the Spanish, ushering in the argument that Milton would deploy in his pro-regicide tracts.

In an essay on the limits of Milton's religious toleration, Martin Dzelzainis maps the significant overlap between Milton's beliefs and those of Sir Henry Vane, a fellow tolerationist radical. Milton sent Vane a sonnet in 1652, praising his ability 'to know/ Both spiritual power and civil/ and what each means' (p. 68). Dzelzainis takes as his starting point the general scholarly consensus regarding Vane's toleration of Catholics, asking why Milton, who "even if by the standards of his time . . . was not saying anything untoward or somehow contradicting himself" by disallowing "tolerated Popery" in *Areopagitica*, still refused freedom of religion to Catholics when his close friend, Henry Vane, did not.

According to Dzelzainis, part of the answer lies in the fact that Vane was actually not as tolerant as scholars have assumed. Vane 'was in complete agreement with Milton about denying toleration to Catholics on political grounds alone' (p. 75). Whilst he argued generally that idolatry should not be punished by magistrates, he qualified this position in regard to Catholics. In *Zeal Examined*, he argued 'By excusing of Idolators, I do not intend a necessary Toleration of Papists, much less of Priests and Jesuits.' Even 'though they may not

https://doi.org/10.1017/bch.2018.27 Published online by Cambridge University Press

come within the Magistrate's Cognizance by their worshiping of images of the host in the Sacrament, yet they may [come to the attention of the magistrate] as they maintain the Jurisdiction of a foreign power over their Consciences' (p. 75). This seems a version of the Elizabethan tenant that allegiance to the Pope constituted treason, nullifying Vane's concession that idolatry should never be grounds for civic control of religion.

Milton, on the other hand, developed positions that tempered his disregard for Catholic belief without admitting that they did so. Dzelzainis explores the ways that Milton's understanding of faith and his position on scriptural interpretation left him greater room for accepting Catholic belief. Milton shared with Vane a concern for reasoned and examined faith versus a faith unaccounted for and thus unknown. He favored 'beliefs that were conscientiously arrived at by the individual believer' over 'those held in consequence of an implicit faith' (p. 76). Protestants who lacked a defense of their beliefs were no better than 'any lay Papist of Loretto', he claimed in *Areopagitica*. Milton's comparison doesn't account for the opposite: a studied Papist informed by conscience. Vane also argued in *Zeal Examined* that anyone 'who can leap into a public Catechism as soon as they see it . . . do plainly declare that they are but Papists in principles, though they call themselves Protestants' (p. 76).

Both Milton and Vane made the most promising defense of the possibility of any belief, and therefore Catholic belief, through their defense of inward illumination. As paraphrased by Dzelzainis, Vane argued 'that practicing one's religion according to one's inner light, even if one is an idolater, is preferable to being in the right on someone else's say so' (p. 78). By contrast, Milton argued the scripture was the authority by which truth became known, but the Bible was impossible to understand without divine illumination, which itself is unverifiable: 'no man can know [it] at all times to be in himself' or ' in any other'. Thus 'it follows that no man or body of men in these times can be the infallible judges or determiners in matters of religion to any other men's consciences but their own' (p. 78).

Thomas Corns takes up an implicit strand of Dzelzainis' chapter by explaining why Milton depends rhetorically on denying full toleration of Catholics even as his writing defends unorthodox ideas, which might logically include Catholicism. Anti-Catholicism, still best explained in Peter Lake's "structure of a prejudice" argument, and referenced in the volume's introduction but not within the essay, becomes Milton's rallying cry for attesting to the reformed nature of his theological arguments precisely when those arguments take a minority position.

Complementing the focus of Dzelzainis' essay, Corns provides a helpful definition of toleration to illustrate one of several instances when Milton's own views veered toward heterodoxy, ironically

https://doi.org/10.1017/bch.2018.27 Published online by Cambridge University Press

necessitating his exclusion of Catholics. 'The minority position to which Milton most frequently returned,' argues Corns, 'was tolerationism, the notion that heterodoxy in belief and practice should be allowed without church censure or sanction and without the intervention of the civil magistrate, and that matters of belief and conscience should not concern the state' (p. 92). Corns traces Milton's friendliness toward toleration from his anti-prelatical tracts through the divorce tracts, *Areopagitica* and all the way to *De Doctrina Christiana*. In every case, Corns shows how Milton gestures toward toleration and then qualifies that by excluding Catholics: 'At no point was the toleration he advocated without significant qualification and exception' (p. 92). Thus, taking into account Dzelzainis' essay, Milton in all but words defends the possibility of toleration of Catholics but because hatred of Catholics covers a multitude of Protestant sins, as it were, Milton must always say he never defends Catholics.

Corns assembles a rather large collection of Protestant heterodox positions held by Milton, ranging from mortalism, advocacy of divorce, anti-trinitarianism, toleration of sectaries, and Arminian soteriology. Essential to the defense of each is Milton's ability to place it in the context of scripture (broadly Protestant) rather than implicit faith (broadly Catholic). Milton wrote as late as 1673 that 'The Arian and Socinian are charged to dispute against the Trinity: they affirm to believe the Father, Son and Holy Ghost according to Scripture and the Apostolic Creed; as for the terms of Trinity, Triunity, Coessentiality, Tripersonality, and the like, they reject them as Scholastic Notions, not to be found in Scripture' (p. 94). The tried and true slogan of *sola scriptura* masks the radical nature of Milton's claim here regarding the justifiability of monotheism, and he quickly distracts his readers from alarm by reminding them of Catholicism's idolatry: 'Let [Catholics] bound their disputations on Scripture only, and an ordinary Protestant, well read in the Bible, may turn and wind their Doctors. They will not go about to prove their Idolotries by the Word of God' (p. 94).

Anti-Catholic rhetoric as distraction animates Corns' sensitive reading of The Paradise of Fools passage in *Paradise Lost*. Glossing the 'Embryo's and Idiots, Eremits and Friers' tossing 'o're the backside of the World far off/ Into a Limbo . . . called/ The Paradise of Fools' (p. 97), Corns notes the tricky theological questions Milton has just tackled in the preceding scene of Heaven. The relationship between the Son and the Father, and the nature of salvation, animate Book Three, and 'both, of course, are major preoccupations and sites of controversy in *De Doctrina Christiana*' (p. 98). Lest readers detect grounds for Protestant unorthodoxy in his portrayal of God and salvation, Milton allays their concern by furnishing them with the well-worn figure of the superstitious, deluded Catholic priest. It is hard to generate a new interpretation of Milton's epic style and narrative

https://doi.org/10.1017/bch.2018.27 Published online by Cambridge University Press

choices, but Corns succeeds here by unmasking an important prose strategy of Milton's at work in his poetry.

Angelica Duran's essay transitions fully into analyzing Milton's poetry, studying the portrayal of Spain across Milton's early, middle and late poems. She selects 'Milton's poetic representations that prioritize Spain over Roman Catholicism at large', noting for instance that the Paradise of Fools passage 'contains subtle reference to Spain' (p. 102) since the founder of the Dominican 'Black' friars was Spanish, but ultimately reading these as merely anti-Catholic rather than Spanish. Duran pieces together a collection of passages that render Spain as something beyond the Catholic other. 'In some poetic moments', she claims, 'Milton rearticulates what he has learned about Catholic Spain—its landscape, people, and ancient heritage—as an integral part of God's creation and as Christendom.' Further, 'he integrates Spain as part of his larger vision of the fallen world' (p. 103).

Duran identifies anti-Hispanism in Milton's Latin poems, and especially in his celebration of Guy Fawkes day, 'In Quintum Novembris', but dismisses it as 'tepid' in relation to much firmer disregard for Spain in writing by Milton's contemporaries. Of the numerous poetic passages Duran discusses in her chapter, the Latin poems are the most flagrant in their invocation of Spain as England's arch-enemy. The devil of 'In Quintum Novembris' encourages the Pope to repair the loss of the Spanish Armada: 'ever mindful of the past, avenge the Hesperias [Spanish] scattered fleet and the Iberian standards drowned in the wide deep, and the bodies of so many holy men nailed to the shameful cross during the recent reign of the Thermodontean maiden [Elizabeth I]' (p. 104). If unattributed to the Devil, these lines evoke considerable sympathy for Catholics, particularly for the martyrdom of so many priests by the Elizabethan regime. But the foiling, rather than execution, of their plot signals a happy ending. Milton's God intervenes at the end of the poem to 'obstruct the papists' cruel venture', so that 'they are captured and dragged off to severe punishments' (p. 106). Duran argues that Milton 'focuses on God and present thanksgiving' at the end of poem through emphasis on revels and bonfires, rather than deploying more common anti-Catholic attitudes conjured by the more common phrase, 'Remember, remember the Fifth of November'.

Milton also expands the historical context for Spain, allowing him to remove it from present-day associations and to establish its wider identity as a beautiful part of God's creation. It is 'an ancient locale in a dream vision' (p. 106) in 'Elegia Tertia'; in *Paradise Regained*, an outpost, with Britannia, of the Roman Empire; in *Samson Agonistes*, a place of beauty and power, recalled in the simile to describe Dalila, who 'Comes this way sailing/ Like a stately Ship/ Of Tarsus' (p. 122). Tarsus, Duran reminds us, was associated with modern Andalusia.

https://doi.org/10.1017/bch.2018.27 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The reader wonders, however, whether the beauty of Dalila is ever separable from her treachery, and whether Milton's allusion to Tarsus merely expands the historical reach of Catholic Spain by pre-figuring its deceit.

Duran's chronological approach makes it harder for the reader to categorize the variety of Milton's allusions to Spain. They are mostly embedded in subtle, thoughtful, and contextualized readings performed across the Miltonic corpus. Within these readings, Duran memorably connects the Spanish-founded Jesuits with a key moment of *Paradise Lost*. She argues that the rebel angels' plot in *Paradise Lost* to overtake the inhabitants of the new world in order to 'seduce them to "our Party"' alludes to Jesuit missions. 'Just as the Jesuits replaced the western European losses prompted by the Protestant Reformation with Asian, African, and American souls'(p. 117), so the devils aimed to increase Hell's multitudes by missionizing Earth.

By far the most conciliatory, and to some degree, pro-Catholic approach appears in Milton's epigrams: celebrating the Italian singer, Leonora; in 'Mansus', on Giovanni Battista Manso, the founder of the Academia degli Oziosi; and in 'Epitaphium Damonis', on the death of his close friend, Charles Diodati. All of these poems are in Latin, the universal academic and poetic language, and date from Milton's travels to Italy: crucially, before the Civil Wars. Estelle Haan's thoroughly researched essay explicates the Catholic valences of these poems while linking them to Milton's connections with Catholic Italian intellectuals. Haan argues that Milton's 'physical encounter with the symbols, personages, and institutions of the other' creates 'in the Milton of the Italian journey a tolerance, or more accurately, the manipulation of a seeming tolerance to serve poetic and cultural ends' (p. 133).

Put simply, Milton could speak positively about contemporary Italy when Italian poets were his intended audience. In a letter to one key figure in that audience, Florentine Carlo Dati, Milton wrote in 1647 that he was planning to send the Latin part of his 1645 poems but feared Dati's reaction to their antipapal content: 'those rather harsh comments, in some of the pages, against the pontiff of Rome' (p. 133). These would have included the Gunpowder Plot poems, after all, in which Rome was made out as a beast and the Devil worked in concert with the Pope. Dati replied that he would 'exclude from his anticipated general admiration of the *Poemata* those pieces that show contempt for his own religion' (p. 134). But the offending poems would not also 'be an obstacle to his reception of the others' (p. 134). The magnanimous response insured that Dati did receive two copies of the *Poemata*, and he never registered any overt dissatisfaction with their contents, calling them in his correspondence with Milton 'erudite . . . although small' (p. 134). As Haan demonstrates, Milton's awareness of his Catholic audience here enables a kind of literary ecumenism on Milton's part.

https://doi.org/10.1017/bch.2018.27 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As Milton clearly hoped to gain esteem for his own poetry among Italians, he composed verse that favored Italian content, and, argues Haan, even deployed Catholic valences that are missing in the poetry of his Italian rivals. In his Leonora epigrams, Milton contributed to a body of poems by Italian literati who praised the musical skill of the famous vocalist, composer and instrumentalist who was also the only female member of the Roman Accademia degli Umoristi. Milton seems to have written the poems as way of catching the attention of Roman friends, not Leonora herself, a point argued by Campbell and Corns. Some of the elite members of the Umoristi were cardinals, perhaps prompting Milton's ultra-spiritual allusions. While Milton's Catholic peers made more conventional praises of Leonora, and rarely invoked angels in their poems, Milton embraced the Catholic concept of the singular guardian angel. He also wrote that Leonora's voice sounded 'out the presence of God' (p. 146). In his Leonora poems, and in contrast to the work of his Catholic friends, Milton's voice is thus 'carefully tuned and instantly recognizable to his Catholic audience' (p. 144).

Haan argues that Milton even engages in hagiographical allusion in his 'Epitaphium Damonis', his elegy for his close friend, Charles Diodati. Diodati was Protestant, and his family had fled Italy for Geneva, finally settling in London, where they were close friends of the Miltons. Memorializing an Italian Protestant, Milton would have had no immediate reason to invoke Catholic lore that Protestants would have rejected as untrue. Yet Milton sent his epitaph to Carlo Dati as well as to other Florentine intellectuals, and Haan sees this as reason enough for Milton to incorporate allusions to Catholic hagiography via the life of St. Deodatus. This *Vita* of the seventh-century Bishop of Nevers and abbot of St. Jointures tells of two close friends, one of whom dreams of his friend Deodatus' death and visits him in time to give him last rites, also tenderly seeing to his burial. This becomes a Catholic gloss on Milton's own insufficiency as a friend to Charles Diodati; he was traveling in Italy when his friend died. Haan calls it Milton's 'Catholic self-fashioning', reasoning that 'If Diodati can attain a "sainthood" of sorts' in Milton's elegy, 'so too can Milton as neo-Latin poet assume a surprisingly comfortable stance, both literally and metaphorically, alongside the poets, patrons, and academicians of Catholic Italy' (p. 153).

The reader wonders, along with Elizabeth Sauer in her opening chapter, what happened to this ecumenical, appreciative Milton who recited his poetry in Italian academies and participated in the Republic of Letters. This persona is entirely absent from his prose polemics and, to a large extent, from his later poetry. The years of his work for the Republic must have ground down any sense of his participation in a wider ecumenical community. As Latin Secretary, he defended the English Republic, not the Republic of Letters.

In the final chapter, John Flood examines Milton's treatment of Mary in *Paradise Regained*. Flood's compendious, witty chapter spends less time expounding the character of Mary in Milton's brief epic than it does providing an overview of the figure of Mary in Catholic and Reformed theology, as well as in English literature. His coverage of each is extensive, and full of interesting details, ranging from Erasmus' critique of Marian relics as well as his correction of biblical passages that had previously been thought to reference Mary, to the Laudian Anthony Stafford's *The Female Glory*, a text on the virtues of Mary that included illustrations employing traditional Catholic epithets from the Hours of the Virgin. Protestant writers frequently felt obliged to package their treatment of Mary in terms that distinguished her from Catholic devotion. So John Taylor's 1620 *Life and Death of the Most Blessed Among Women* denies the role of intercessor to Mary and refuses to direct prayers and invocations her way.

On Protestant writing generally, Flood correctively reminds his audience that Protestants developed their own theology of Mary even as they cut away parts of Marian tradition. Luther rejected Mary's status as Queen of Heaven, dismissed the Ascension, and denied her salvific role, but he also attributed to her perpetual virginity and praised her humility. Calvin saw Mary as a teacher and as a doctrinal authority. And Mary remained prominent in English liturgy and statuary. As Flood recounts, legislation from the 1640s 'shows not only that Marian images survived in pre-Reformation stained glass but that windows incorporating images of the Virgin had been installed in the previous two decades' (p. 176).

Though he provides this overview, Flood nearly dismisses the process of reading Milton's Mary in the light of Catholic thought at all. 'It could be argued that the whole business of looking at Milton against a Catholic background is wrongheaded', he poses, 'since it puts him in the position of reacting, an automatically subordinate one' (p. 178). This is an interesting assumption, presumably different from that of Haan's and Duran's essays, which, instead of seeing Milton in reaction against Catholics, recover in Milton either non-polemical associations with Catholic countries or detect intentionally pro-Catholic allusions in Milton's poetry. But Flood may also mean here that the process of reading Milton in light of Catholicism already assumes a greater importance for a topic than it actually plays in his work. Flood nevertheless answers his own objection by commenting on the relevance of Catholic identity to the English Protestant majority. 'It should be emphasized that Catholic Marian piety continued to be a threat to the state', he comments, 'and, as such, was not a minor theological aberration' (p. 178).

In the last four pages of his essay, Flood turns to Mary in *Paradise Regained* to contrast Milton's treatment of her here with *Paradise Lost*

and the Nativity Ode. She is mentioned far more in *Paradise Regained* than in these other poems, and Milton represents her directly. The forty-line monologue he gives her shows her reflecting on the difficulties of her life, prompting Flood's qualification that 'Although no one doubted the tribulations of the Virgin, representing them through her own eyes was associated with Roman Catholicism' (p. 185). Yet the fact that Mary takes a prominent role as a teacher aligns her with reformed tradition too. Ultimately Flood rejects the notion that that the Mary of *Paradise Regained* can be read as pro- or crypto-Catholic, yet he finds its pushing of boundaries undeniable and provocative, especially the fact that Milton took no pains to explain away references to Mary as 'not Catholic' when previous Protestant writers did.

Ending with this inexplicable, boundary-pushing picture of Milton seems fitting for a volume exploring his overall relationship with Catholicism. The volume as a whole attests to the value of much recent work on early modern Catholicism that throws into relief the importance of recognizing how and why Milton engages with Catholic theology. Thus Flood's essay on Marian tradition in *Paradise Regained* takes as its starting point the importance of a theology of Mary, whereas previous scholarship fails to see its relevance for a thoroughly Protestant poet. Bellany and Cogswell, too, illuminate how Catholic intrigue unexpectedly supplied a major tenant of the English revolution, something they could only discover through knowing English Catholic ties and printing house connections. In addition, all of the essays engage with the variety of ways in which Milton's opposition to Catholic theology and politics directed his thinking. Sometimes it served the purpose of unifying Protestant factions (Sauer), at other times it functioned as a boundary marker (Dzelzainis), and sometimes it became an argumentative and poetic strategy (Corns).

The essays together trace a stark difference between the Milton who always finds Catholicism out of the bounds of toleration, and the more magnanimous Milton, open to, or at least unafraid of tackling, Catholic-sounding topics like saints' lives, Marian devotion, Spain and Italy, and humanist academies populated by Catholic clergy (Duran and Haan). At least in the difference between pro- and anti-Catholic rhetorical strategies, Milton seems to prefer poetry as the medium where a pro-Catholic stance is easier to develop. The greater ambiguity of poetry, the diminished role of persuasion within verse, and the desire to gain approval from a wider audience familiar with classical literary traditions all seem to create an environment where it is possible to write more favorably about Catholics. Prose, on the other hand, puts Milton on the defensive. Catholics must be excluded in defense of national politics and religion, even as Milton extends the privilege of freedom of speech and worship to dissenting Protestants.

Milton and Catholicism sounds just the beginning of a conversation about Catholic studies and Milton. While providing a more nuanced understanding of religious identity in Milton's writing, it signals the need for further work on Catholic reception of Milton and of the ways Catholics approached Miltonic topics. What did Catholics think of Milton's polemics and poetry? How do early modern Catholic understandings of scriptural interpretation differ from Milton's own characterization of them? What Catholic contemporaries—especially women writers—might we put in dialogue with Milton to better study the role of conscience, of biblical interpretation, of ideas about God and Satan, and of exile and minority religious status during the years of the Civil Wars through the Restoration period? Hearing these other voices will help us better understand the path that Milton took.

https://doi.org/10.1017/bch.2018.27 Published online by Cambridge University Press