

This book is not as reader-friendly as it could be. There is no index, and no bibliography. With the exception of the cover image, no images whatsoever are included, though surely imagery must have played a major role in everything at issue in this book. At one point, images on coins in Naples are given brief attention, but discussed only briefly, and without any illustrations added to help the reader. Yet the book's title is suggestive of seeing: does a mirror have any function but a visual one?

Despite its limitations, this book has much to offer historians of early modern Europe, especially those interested in comparing contemporary events in several countries.

James J. Balakier. *Thomas Traherne and the Felicities of the Mind*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2010. xi + 220 pp. \$104.99. Review by KEVIN LAAM, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY.

Early in *Thomas Traherne and the Felicities of the Mind*, James J. Balakier observes that Traherne's storied "Felicity" has not been the subject of a book-length study, a startling fact to consider given the centrality of the concept to Traherne's work and thought. Balakier's book provides a long overdue treatment of the recurrence of Felicity across the Traherne canon, with readings of *Centuries of Meditations*, the Dobell and Burney poems, *Christian Ethicks*, *Commentaries of Heaven*, and the four unpublished treatises in the rediscovered Lambeth manuscript. Balakier locates Traherne's understanding of Felicity in the axes of the seventeenth-century sciences, with a particular emphasis on Bacon and Hobbes. "[A]t a time when philosophy, religion, and science were intertwined," claims Balakier, "Traherne's true importance lies in his endeavors to frame a modern science of cognition that complements and extends Hobbesian materialism" (28). Traherne's aversion to Hobbes's secular materialism has long been noted, but Balakier adds to the narrative by suggesting their common reliance on "thought experiments" as a means of developing a science of cognition. As Balakier explains, while the empirical bent of Traherne's methods (particularly in the *Centuries* and the Dobell poems) owes chiefly to

Bacon, at heart both he and Hobbes are committed rationalists who deem the mind the highest source of knowledge.

The conceit of the “thought experiment,” with its dual acknowledgment of rational inquiry and empirical science, is crucial to Balakier’s effort to establish Traherne’s holistic understanding of cognition. Among the numerous thought experiments that Balakier identifies in Traherne’s work, two of the most salient are in the *Centuries* and in *The Kingdom of God*. In Century 2, Traherne posits various scenarios in which the sun deviates from its normal operations. He directs his readers to imagine an absent sun, a stationary sun, and a sun so vast and powerful that it eliminates life on earth. “Traherne concludes from the above demonstrations,” writes Balakier, “that nature ‘manifesteth the Power and Care of a Creator’ (2.8), that is, an all-mighty organizing intelligence” (44). In *The Kingdom of God*, Traherne conducts a thought experiment in which he and his reader chart the hypothetical progress of a particle of sand, which takes multiple material forms—gas, liquid, and solid—as it winds its way through the cosmos. Balakier gathers several such examples through the course of his study, collectively backing his thesis that Traherne’s canon be viewed as “an ongoing thought experiment aimed at placing Felicity in a rational, experience-based Framework” (28).

Balakier’s chapter on the rediscovered writings in the Lambeth manuscript will be of timely interest to Traherne scholars. It is gratifying to see these works receive critical notice—in particular *The Kingdom of God*, where Traherne undertakes his most deliberate and sustained foray into the discourse of experimental science. Balakier’s illuminating analysis of the treatise affirms his claim that the work deserves to be considered “a core Traherne text” (30). However, other texts in the manuscript seem out of place here. The theological dispute that Traherne takes up in *A Sober View of Dr Twisses his Considerations* does little to advance Balakier’s discussion of Felicity. Here as in *Roman Forgeries*, Traherne’s eagerness to insert himself into topical theological controversies—namely, the supralapsarian debate over the order of God’s eternal decrees—seems to strain against the infinite and radical optimism that Balakier ascribes to Traherne. Balakier quotes generously from *A Sober View*, but his discussion touches only briefly on the text’s treatment of Felicity. Likely it is beyond the scope of Balakier’s study

to provide a detailed analysis of the theology of Felicity, yet without it the purpose of his lengthy exposition of *A Sober View* remains unclear.

Nevertheless, Balakier's book mainly succeeds in illustrating the common thread that unites Traherne's body of works. His introductory chapter on "Thomas Traherne, Hobbism, and the Seventeenth-Century Sciences" provides an enlightening context for understanding Traherne's work and his place in the evolution of scientific thought, and lays a strong foundation for the textual interpretations that comprise subsequent chapters. Balakier's readings of Traherne's texts are consistently thoughtful and extraordinarily diligent. He defines his terms clearly and demystifies abstruse subject matter in ways that readers unfamiliar with Traherne will appreciate.

Perhaps the most original and provocative part of Balakier's study is his concluding chapter, where he claims that Traherne's ideas anticipate modern-day consciousness studies. Balakier undertakes this argument by comparing Traherne to Edmund Husserl, the twentieth-century Moravian philosopher whose seminal work in phenomenology challenged preconceived notions of conscious experience. As Balakier explains, "the Husserlian examination of consciousness involves a suspension (epoché) of any beliefs about the character and makeup of experience as well as the 'bracketing,' or holding in abeyance, of any judgments about the ultimately subjective or objective reality of the thing perceived" (185). According to Balakier, this ideal of a pure consciousness, of an experiential and cognitive perspective undisturbed by theoretical speculations, resembles a fourth state of consciousness (beyond waking, sleeping, and dreaming) that has in recent years has been the subject of intense empirical research. Noting the parallels between this state and Traherne's Felicity, Balakier concludes that "Traherne's radical optimism results not from some unrealistic mood-making or escapist frame of mind but from multiple authentic experiences of a fourth state of consciousness" (190-91). For Balakier, the empirical basis of Felicity warrants reconsideration of Traherne's importance in both the history and future of cognitive science.

Balakier's conception of Traherne as a "pioneer of consciousness-based studies" (188) is ultimately more suggestive than prescriptive; a fuller treatment of the subject would be welcome. (In fact, Balakier addresses the Traherne-Husserl connection at greater length in a separate

essay from 2007.) Still, Balakier's analysis admirably contemporizes Traherne's work with an audacity that, with a few notable exceptions, remains too rare among critics. Having been so long marginalized as a mystic or metaphysical poet, Traherne's intellectual achievements are easy to overlook. Balakier has given them due notice, by grounding the concept of Felicity in experiential principles whose relevance endures in cognitive science today. He is in this sense, like his subject, "radically optimistic."

Ann Talbot. *The Great Ocean of Knowledge. The Influence of Travel Literature on the Work of John Locke*. Leiden / Boston: Brill's Studies in Intellectual History vol. 184, 2010. 337 pp. 4 illus. \$ 147. Review by MARÍA G. NAVARRO, UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

The researcher Ann Talbot presents in this book one of the more complex and in-depth studies ever written about the influence of travel literature on the work of the British philosopher John Locke (1632-1704).

At the end of the eighteenth century, the study of travel literature was an alternative to academic studies. The philosopher John Locke recommended with enthusiasm these books as a way to comprehend human understanding. Several members of the Royal Society like John Harris (1666-1719) affirmed that the learning that could be obtained through these books was different from the one that provided the educative system of that time. Travel literature could make one see the source of the ignorance of the ancients; it stressed the curiosities and extraordinary facts and led to a revision of beliefs and scientific theories of the ancient world. Besides, the account of a broad diversity of subjects contributed to the creation of matters of fact, and this was important in order to put rational limits to the descriptions of the world that were commonly accepted.

The book *The Great Ocean of Knowledge. The Influence of Travel Literature on the Work of John Locke* is an exhaustive and rigorous study of Locke's thought. It shows a deep knowledge of postmodern critiques to the modern notion of Enlightenment and applies these historiographical critiques to a documented analysis of Locke's library