

maturity in *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana*.

The topic of early modern angels can be rather daunting to those unversed in the intricacies of angelological debates. Yet, an understanding of this topic can shed vital light on much of Milton's canon, and Raymond's work excels in this regard. While *Milton's Angels* draws on an ostensibly dizzying array of sources, Raymond always keeps the narrative fresh and engaging, offering a readable and instructive passage into what is surely one of the most important topics for readers of Milton.

Reid Barbour and Claire Preston, eds. *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. xii + 368 pp. + 3 illus. \$120.00. Review by JOSEPH L. BLACK, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST.

As the editors note, Thomas Browne is "among the most influential of writers in the history of English literature," with an impressive list of admirers and imitators over the centuries. And yet his works, in "a paradox worthy of one of Browne's own meditations," have for some time been "largely relegated by the academy to the category of literary curiosity" (1). Building on the renewed interest generated by the 2005 quatercentenary celebrations of Browne's birth, this important collection invites us to revisit the achievements of a writer Herman Melville classified among the great "thought-divers": "any fish can swim near the surface," Melville wrote his friend Evert Duyckinck (in an 1849 letter not cited here), "but it takes a great whale to go down stairs five miles or more." Browne, unsurprisingly, could have discoursed at length with Melville on the properties of sperm whales, having not only read all there was to read on the subject but also examined one that had washed up on the Norfolk coast (*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, book 3, ch. 26).

The revival of interest in Browne follows a willingness to ask new questions of his life and work, and this collection features many of the scholars most actively asking these questions. Of course, Browne's singular style remains central: every essay here illustrates the extent to which after four centuries we continue to learn how to *read* Browne.

But collectively, these essays also situate Browne among concerns central to current investigations of early modern literary and intellectual culture. Browne, the editors observe, is a key figure for work on the history of science and seventeenth-century communities of learning; on interdisciplinarity, particularly the intersections among literature, science, medicine, philosophy, religion, and antiquarianism; on the evolving roles of early modern physicians; and on issues of textuality. Like many of his contemporaries, Browne participates in complex textual economies of manuscript and print, coterie and public circulation. More unusually, we can with Browne trace stages of composition from reading, commonplacing, or epistolary exchange to more formal text, and observe patterns of revision that reflect his ongoing engagements with changes both within himself and in the world around him.

The collection offers sixteen essays grouped into three sections, “Habits of Thought,” “Works,” and “Life and Afterlives.” The first opens with a useful overview by Sharon Cadman Seelig of the difficult subject of Browne’s style. What is it about his way of writing, she asks, that arouses such passion among admirers and detractors alike? Seelig summarizes the history of efforts to classify Browne, then illustrates the diversity of his stylistic effects in readings that focus on the varied ways Browne enacts the process of investigation, discovery, and judgment. Debora Shuger addresses the equally tricky subject of religion, reading Browne alongside William Laud, Kenelm Digby, Edward Herbert, and Alexander Ross to characterize the qualities of Browne’s tolerance, trace the rise of a “secular theology” in the mid-seventeenth century, and argue that its elite culture could be “more multiform, heterodox, even ‘post-Christian’, than generally thought” (61). Graham Parry explores “the uses of antiquity,” demonstrating that Browne was an established figure in antiquarian circles, participating fully in their projects and methods, yet also unusual for the ambivalence that attended his love for antiquity. Brent Nelson draws on Browne’s correspondence with his sons Thomas and Edward to discuss the “culture of curiosity”: to Browne, a trained curiosity was an essential professional tool, and Nelson reads these letters for evidence about the kinds of knowledge Browne valued and reminds us of the role played by social networks across Europe in Browne’s

own training and in the training he provided for his sons. Karen L. Edwards reads Browne's treatment of classical lore concerning pygmies, seeing in these passages an implicit refusal to acknowledge the reality of royalist defeat. Victoria Silver revisits Browne's role in the Lowestoft witch trials of 1662, offering a nuanced treatment of the interplay in these proceedings of issues concerning faith, reason, magic, science, evidence, and equity.

The seven essays in the second section address the full range of Browne's writings, not only *Religio Medici* (Brooke Conti), *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (William N. West and Kevin Killeen), *Urne-Buriall* (Achsah Guibbory), and *Garden of Cyrus* (Kathryn Murphy), but also *Letter to a Friend* (Claire Preston) and *Repertorium* (Jonathan F.S. Post). Conti traces the evolution of Browne's thoughts on the nature of belief through successive stages of revision in *Religio Medici*, arguing a move toward increased rhetorical and philosophical certainty. West reads Browne's characteristic digressiveness in *Pseudodoxia* as an instrument for bringing different voices into a shared discursive arena, with contradiction and inconsistency acting as touchstones for further discussion. Killeen argues that Browne's insistence in *Pseudodoxia* on accuracy in illustrations of sacred narrative puts him in the terrain of the period's literalist iconoclasts. Preston, in what is now the best discussion of an understudied text, reads *Letter* as an exercise in mixed modes but also (with the help of a manuscript poem written by a relative of one of Browne's grateful patients, newly discovered by Reid Barbour) offers a detailed portrait of Browne as physician. Guibbory makes a compelling case for *Urne-Buriall* as an implicit engagement with contemporary debates about Jewish readmission, seeing in Browne a capacious intellectual vision and a willingness to accept religious and cultural difference. Murphy explores the disordered order of Browne's *Garden*. Like Preston on *Letter*, Post on *Repertorium* is now the fullest treatment of this text: in an essay that speaks productively to discussions elsewhere in the collection of antiquarianism, iconoclasm, politics, religion, communities of learning, style, and textual revisions, Post reads Browne's account of Norwich Cathedral as an exercise in knowledge in the making.

The three essays in the final section comprise Barbour (who is completing a biography of Browne) in a brilliant meditation on

Browne's medical, scientific, and figurative engagements with skin as barrier, boundary, and text, and two concluding influence studies that might have seemed less out of place if joined by additional examples of Browne's afterlife: Rosenstein on Browne and Borges (focusing primarily on issues of imitation and translation) and Miller on Browne and Sebald (via the antiquarian project of the search for truth).

The experience of reading the collection in its entirety reproduces in some ways the experience of reading Browne himself. What seems certain in one place gets questioned in another, and we return repeatedly to certain key concerns and questions, encouraged each time to rethink what we first thought. To a degree unusual in collections, these essays speak to and enrich one another, even when they disagree. Several of the contributors have written on Browne before, in works cited often in the essays here (particularly Preston, Barbour, Post, Parry, Silver, and Guibbory). Along with the essays by Shuger and Nelson, their contributions seem likely to become standard treatments of these respective texts or subjects. Furthermore, six contributors (Murphy, Barbour, Nelson, Preston, Killeen, and Edwards) appear in another recent collection, though in each case writing on a different text or subject from what they write on here: *'A man very well studied': New Contexts for Thomas Browne*, ed. Kathryn Murphy and Richard Todd (Leiden: Brill, 2008). The two collections complement one another, with the Brill collection strong on such issues as Browne's time in Leiden, his responses to the civil wars, and the early translation of his works. Both together are indispensable, and it seems appropriate that a writer known for amplification requires two collections to capture the full range and complexity of his achievement.

Achsah Guibbory. *Christian Identity: Jews and Israel in Seventeenth-Century England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. xi + 328 pp. + 11 illus. \$110.00. Review by WILLIAM E. ENGEL, THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH: SEWANEE.

Achsah Guibbory's new book is a wide-ranging account of the presence of Jews in England from the Renaissance to the Restoration. At the same time it is a lucid assessment of the dominant metaphors