

the state of captives themselves, situated in-between cultural spaces, forced to gain knowledge of the culture of the other in extenuating circumstances. By examining how these texts shift and go back and forth between different states and locales, Matar demonstrates that the text itself, the “elite text” produced by the state representative or the “expert,” is in fact an unstable historical document. This text can only be read in juxtaposition to that of the captive, often suppressed in the historical investigation.

The exchange of ambassadors and the exchange and ransoming of captives between Europe and North Africa, in addition to the texts they produced and the interchangeability of their positions—all these things, beautifully captured and discussed in Matar’s text—characterize this early modern period. Matar identifies a period of instability that involves constant cultural and political negotiations both for the freedom of captives and for trade between states. Knowledge circulates both peacefully and violently through the exchange of books and also through pirate raids and captivity. However, this often violent and coercive exchange is not reduced to its violence: Europe is not simply a hegemonic power seeking to control and subdue its neighbors to the south. Matar sees in this violence epistemological possibilities and openings vis-à-vis the other. Through this microhistorical approach, Matar identifies the processes of translation and cross-cultural representation as the key characteristics of this time period. It is this back and forth between European and Arabic texts and archives—the back and forth of ambassadors, captives, and contemporary scholars—that this new history, full of possibilities, comes to life in Matar’s book.

Feisal Mohamed. *In the Anteroom of Divinity: the Reformation of the Angels from Colet to Milton*. University of Toronto Press, 2008. xiv + 242pp. 6 plates. \$55.00. Review by CHRISTOPHER BAKER, ARMSTRONG ATLANTIC STATE UNIVERSITY

Despite their nonmaterial nature, angels maintained a palpable presence within the religious and literary compositions of early modern England. Feisal Mohamed’s monograph charts their influence from the Henrician era through the end of the Interregnum by trac-

ing the changing impact of the works of the first-century Platonist, Dionysius the Areopagite. His *Celestial Hierarchy*, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, *Divine Names*, and *Mystical Theology* shaped the understanding of angels and the spiritual hierarchy of heaven for medieval scholastics. Even though the detailed structure of his thought, like the monasteries of Henry VIII, underwent its own dissolution as the tide of Reformation thought advanced within England, remnants of it persisted through the close of the seventeenth century.

English humanism felt the impress of Dionysian thought through the commentaries on his work by John Colet. Colet's own conception of angelic hierarchy is influenced by Ficino's observations on Dionysius, yet Colet departs from Ficino's unrestrained praise of human nature, and he also appears to have been influenced by St. Bonaventure's sympathy for the Franciscan renewal of Roman Catholic piety. Bonaventure's de-emphasis upon the hierarchy of the church magisterium in favor of one based upon the contemplative quality of the clergy injects a Franciscan reformist element into Colet's ideas. Mohamed also finds Dionysian roots in Richard Hooker's concepts of hierarchy as expressed in *The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, especially in his comments on the mystical nature of worship and the spiritual capabilities of the ordained clergy: "episcopal ecclesiology and traditional liturgy are an extension of angelic ministration and a reflection of heavenly devotion" (43). Spenser's *Four Hymns* move the idea of spiritual hierarchy in a more decidedly Protestant direction, and "the final hymn registers a Reformed skepticism of mystical flight most famously seen in Luther" (50). Nevertheless, both Colet and Spenser generally retain an affinity for the transcendent which recalls Dionysian themes.

The chapter on John Donne opens with a close reading of "Aire and Angels" which stresses Donne's poetic syncretism. Mohamed wishes to defend the poem against charges that its composite ideas make up little more than an "intellectual toy chest" (62), but the exact way in which the poem contributes to what he sees as "a consistent view of divine economy underpinning early and late work, verse and prose" (62) deserves more clarity. Donne's appropriation of Dionysian thought is held in tension with the other intellectual currents within his work, but the poet's lengthiest commentary on angels in his All

Saint's Day sermon of 1623 displays a strongly reformist tendency. His sermons reveal a Calvinist emphasis upon the mystical interpretation of scripture which supersedes the role of church hierarchy, while his poetry's stress upon "grace and the Word" discloses a "Dionysian angelology and mysticism" (77).

John Milton rightly figures prominently in the book's final three chapters, but Mohamed comments as well upon the Dionysian presence in several of Milton's contemporaries. The angelology of Henry Lawrence enhances his pro-Cromwell stance by emphasizing a transition of angelic authority to the Puritan elect, and the more republican Henry Vane deemphasizes angelic influence still further; both of them shared, as did Milton, a stress upon the election and illumination of individuals over against angelic direction. While Milton adheres to a traditional hierarchy of Seraphim and Cherubim in *Paradise Lost*, this ranking obtains only in Hell, an implicit critique of the Dionysian celestial architecture. The final two chapters address Raphael and Michael, the first a doctor of souls and the second an apocalyptic prophet of earthly corruption. Rather than Adam (not the brightest of students) being the primary student of Raphael's knowledge in the mold of Milton's *Of Education*, the angel's "true pupils are the inhabitants of the fallen world who must rely on such knowledge" (136). Adam's creatureliness, though unfallen, is a cautionary reminder of the limits of material being and its far greater shortcomings after the fall. Michael's role as champion of a renewed national church in *Lycidas* evolves into his function as "protector of the elect provided in Revelation" (143). Mohamed contextualizes this evolution of Michael's purpose in a lengthy review of Milton's prose tracts which chart a gradual shift in emphasis from the election of a godly nation-state to that of saintly individuals. Michael's prophetic function in the epic thus replaces his accustomed identity as heavenly victor against Satan and his minions. Rather than a traditionally Dionysian host of angelic mediators between heaven and earth, Milton finally offers us fit angels, though few. Michael and Raphael are exemplary and singular agents after whom fallen yet elect humans can model the growth of a paradise within.

This monograph will be essential reading for students of angelology in English and European culture. Mohamed's command of

Milton's canon is thorough, and his illuminating critical conclusions are supported by close readings of numerous relevant and recondite primary sources as well as contemporary scholars.

Mandy Green. *Milton's Ovidian Eve*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009. xi + 235 pp. \$99.95. Review by MARGARET OLOFSON THICKSTUN, HAMILTON COLLEGE.

In this book, Mandy Green argues that Ovid's "interest in female subjectivity" made his *Metamorphoses* a fruitful source for Milton's development of Eve's interiority. As Green points out, "fewer and fewer readers are as well equipped to appreciate Milton's subtle and varied use of the *Metamorphoses* as his own 'fit audience'" (10). She proposes, by close attention to verbal echoes, parallels, and other relationships, to "help the modern reader speculate more precisely about what Milton may have had in mind when, in his own reworking of the mythographic tradition, he invites us to see Eve in a series of Ovidian guises" (7). Green can be a careful close reader—her explorations of relationships between Eve's birth scene and both the stories of Narcissus and Echo, as well as her discussion of how analyzing the story of Daphne might help to illuminate the problem of Eve's consent, are illuminating and provocative—but she offers no clear or comprehensive argument about what she thinks Milton is, in fact, trying to do in creating his portrait of Eve: sometimes he appears to be allowing resonances (Daphne, Narcissus); at other times he appears to be closing off possibilities. I am willing to read a discussion of how Milton uses Ovidian analogues to guide his readers' responses to and understanding of his story; I am willing to read a discussion that exposes how Milton's engagement with Ovidian moments creates resonances he cannot control. But I would like to know which I am reading or what the criteria are by which a person decides whether, at any given moment, Milton is or is not in control. About two chapters into this book, I went back to the beginning, re-reading the introductory material and then the first two chapters to try to figure that out. I remain confused.