

chapter, "The Provenance of *De doctrina Christiana*. A View of the Present State of the Controversy," advances the following determinations: that Milton may indeed "be confidently identified as the author"; that both the general, historical committee and the stylometric subcommittee failed to communicate effectively with one another and did not "take their own evidence into account"; and that we may "never receive an adequate answer concerning authorial revision of a document of such complex authorial genesis, one that is moreover so internally inconsistent as to be self-contradictory" (232-3). And finally, in "Milton and the Socinian Heresy," Michael Lieb investigates two major issues: the emergence of Socinianism vis-à-vis Milton's views on Christian doctrine and discipline; and the critical reception of Milton's works, following his death, within modern contexts of Socinian practice. Lieb concludes that Socinianism deeply influenced both radical and conservative strains in Milton's religious thought and that—as is the case with the authorship controversy over *De doctrina Christiana*—"the debate over the heterodox Milton, as opposed to the orthodox Milton" (283) will persist as an open ground of contention.

Jonathan Gil Harris. *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. 263 pp. \$49.95. Reviewed by BYRON NELSON, WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY.

Because of our habit of conspicuous consumption, Americans have long been the envy of the world. As a result, it's hard to reflect back to a time when "consumption" was an incurable, debilitating wasting disease. While syphilis and canker have lost their economic implications, consumption has been transformed into an economic virtue. Jonathan Gil Harris reminds us, in this deft study, that "metaphors of infectious disease . . . continue to organize popular understanding of the economic." He shows how Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights eagerly seized on pathological images to flesh out narratives of mercantilism, and how by implication the birth of early modern capitalism was assisted by images of disease. The playwrights who staged the emergence of modern capitalism are a familiar lot: Shakespeare, Massinger, Heywood, Ben Jonson, Middleton and Dekker; while the early modern economic theorists are for the most part unfamiliar to literary scholars. Among these, Thomas Starkey worried that a nation's wealth would be diminished by

consumption, palsy, and frenzy. Although he warned against conspicuous consumption as zealously as a medieval Franciscan might have, Thomas Smith provided a judgment-free explanation of international commerce as it was developing in early modern England. Gerard Malynes warned that no object of value is safe from infection. Thomas Milles noted the threats to national trading from entities, practices and goods. And Thomas Mun employed a vocabulary of pathology to depict the problems of international commerce. Harris calls his chosen mercantilist writers—Malynes, Milles, Misselden and Mun—the “four Ms,” and readers of this book should thank him for rescuing them from the dustier shelves of Renaissance libraries, if their ideas are as provocative as Harris makes them seem. Long before Adam Smith, these writers were the first to explain the national economy, and to do so they instinctively used imagery of the diseased body.

In the same spirit as the mercantilist writers, Shakespeare links syphilis and commerce in *The Comedy of Errors*, and he worries about “transnational contamination” in the much darker *Troilus and Cressida*. (Somewhat surprisingly, there is no extended discussion of the role of the pox in the Vienna of *Measure for Measure*.) Shakespeare imagines the early modern state besieged by immigrants and merchants in *The Merchant of Venice*. Harris insists that the identity and national status of the Jew is not a solvable problem in this play, and that hence recently scholarly efforts to find the “real” identity of Shylock are beside the point. In the chapter on Shylock on usury, Harris quotes in full an otherwise unknown “Dutch Church Libel,” a poetic pasquinade which had been sent to one of the “stranger churches” of Elizabethan London. Since the slander somewhat bizarrely compares the immigrant Dutch workers to the Jews (“like the Jews, you eat us up as bread?”), it both illuminates the anti-Semitism of *Merchant* and offers a sobering reply to the cheerful assimilation of “Hans,” the supposed Dutch shoemaker, into Simon Eyre’s shoe factory in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*.

The three subsequent chapters turn to non-Shakespearean plays. For Harris, *Volpone* is a satirical portrait of greed, in which the title character is a voracious CEO of a transnational corporation. Two pirate dramas, the unfamiliar *The Renegado* by Massinger and *The Fair Maid of the West* by Thomas Heywood, are used to support the argument that pirate drama, with its vocabulary of treasure, is imbued or infected with mercantilist discourse. The Barbary corsairs of Massinger’s play pose a clear threat to the Christian West,

while the pirates of Heywood's play anticipate their descendents in modern bodice-ripping romances and Hollywood pirate movies in their rapacious quest for bullion. Like blood and semen coursing through the male body, Harris speculates, bullion is the life-blood of the international economic "body." In his chapter on Thomas Middleton's plays, Harris makes a distinction between the playwright's earlier economic views and those found in his later plays. In *Michaelmas Term*, Middleton views consumption more negatively, as the loss of health and wealth. By *The Roaring Girl* (1611), Middleton takes a view closer to that of the mercantilist writer Thomas Mun, who anticipated the modern view of material consumption as a form of venture capital; in the later play, Middleton even sees consumption as a form of "retail therapy." The book also reminds us of the irony that the early modern playhouse was frequently cited as a nursery of contagion and that the authorities, who were always happy to close down the theatres for their potential for political subversion, could use the threat of plague as an excuse to shut the theatre doors.

By the end of the study, Harris shows the playwrights abandoning the imagery of the pathological body in favor of a more modern and more positive conception of the mercantilist capitalist economy. By then, the nation's economic well-being was seen to depend on consumption—if not quite to the extent of modern America, where citizens are accustomed to being admonished as unpatriotic if they don't spend huge amounts on consumer goods as Christmas presents.

Harris's study has some affinities with earlier books that relate the imagery of the diseased body to early modern drama, such as Gail Kern Paster's *The Body Embarrassed*. But this book says much that is original and is engagingly written. There are some eye-catching insights, such as "*Volpone* is teeming with drugs," and witty one-liners, such as when it describes Gerard Malynes's economic tract, *Saint George for England Allegorically Described*, as "a boiled-down *Faerie Queene* set in Lombard Street." Of Bassanio's casket scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, Harris says, "In what might seem like an unholy marriage of the Eurovision Song Contest and *The Love Connection*, Portia is both the M.C. and the prize..." This book offers great insight into the Renaissance discourses of the body, the emergence of mercantile theory, and early modern drama.