

Mary C. Fenton. *Milton's Places of Hope: Spiritual and Political Connections of Hope with Land*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006. viii + 225 pp + 3 illus. \$99.50. Review by SARAH MOREMAN, SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY, RIO GRANDE COLLEGE.

In *Milton's Places of Hope: Spiritual and Political Connections of Hope with Land*, Mary C. Fenton offers an imaginative view of the early modern concept of hope as both a virtue and as connected to space. Drawing from historicist, theological, and literary perspectives on the subject, Fenton argues that hope informs Milton's theology, Milton's political views about England's future, and Milton's ideas about individual power, faith, and responsibility. Fenton brings together wide-ranging sources to deliver this intriguing study of hope as related to literal and physical places as well as figurative and metaphysical spaces.

Fenton establishes her thesis with an etymology of the concept of *hope*, part of which examines Old Testament connections between God, place, and land. She then traces biblical conceptions of hope as place to seventeenth-century emblems of hope in the form of the anchor, the spade, and the plough. Fenton finds in these emblems an emphasis on the value of land stewardship, and on hope as a mode of purposeful living. Fenton explains the impact of English land law on the individual, contending that both "literally and symbolically, land fused itself with the English character" (24). Hope, both personal and political, stemmed from land, from literally and symbolically coming from "*England*" (23-24). Fenton extends this concept of hope as grounded in the land to a look at the ways in which property and propriety connected; that is, both individuals and the nation in early modern culture could hope for dispute-resolution through restructured access to land. Fenton balances examinations of cultural artifacts with interesting conclusions about figurative dimensions of the literal, so that "landscape is ultimately, then, less about geography and topography than about human imagination" (27). What Fenton achieves so aptly is an approach that "reunites the body and the spirit: hope is bound to both the internal and external, the spiritual and the material" (33). Fenton concludes the introduction with some remarks comparing early modern ideas about place with postmodern culture's more global, delocalized ideas of place. Fenton's work, then, explores the fascinating ways in which early modern English culture connected spiritual and political, personal

and national hope with literal and figurative place, or, the land of England.

In Chapter 2, Fenton analyzes the misguided nature of Satan's equating hope with power instead of with spirituality. This chapter explicates how Satan's materialized hope runs counter to spiritual hope generated through faithful stewardship of the land. Fenton interprets Milton's epic within the context of post-Restoration England's changing land laws and of Pauline and Augustinian views of hope as based on love. Turning to a view of hope in the realm of international politics, in Chapter 3 Fenton explores Milton's hope for Protestant reform in the context of colonialism and Ireland. Addressing Milton's hegemonic perspective, Fenton analyzes Milton's political hope for a unified Britain that included a reformed Ireland, and she explains Milton's idea of such reform in terms of a charity that would reform the misguided hope of the Irish rebellions of the 1640s. In Chapter 4, Fenton changes her focus from physical and political expressions of hope in Milton's works to "Milton's view of tending to the interior land of the human soul" (97). Fenton describes the shift in Reformation England of the "spatial relationship between God and humans" (98) from physical places such as cathedrals to spiritual terrains including the human soul, thus prayer creates an "interior, sanctified dwelling place" (99). Within this context of prelapsarian and postlapsarian hopeful prayer, Fenton elaborates on Milton's ideas about stewardship of land and stewardship of soul in *Paradise Lost*.

Complicating her definitions of hope, Fenton returns to further analysis of Milton's Satan and in Chapter 5, she distinguishes between *The Lord's Prayer* and Satan's and Beelzebub's inverted version of *The Lord's Prayer*, an antiprayer, that seeks to displace God. Chapter 6 offers a good discussion of hopeful journeys, both earthly and spiritual in terms of Jesus' combined human and divine nature. Fenton focuses on Milton's insistence upon the centrality of literal and figurative place and its relationship to hope" in the redemptive process(161). Exploring a version of hope that represents a more personal, uncertain struggle, Fenton contends in the Epilogue that *Samson Agonistes* falls outside the framework of Milton's other works that reveal connections between hope and place. Fenton suggests that Milton's view of hope in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regain'd* reveals "the character of early modern culture"; whereas his view of hope in *Samson Agonistes* evokes the character of modern culture (195). To arrive at the significance of her work, Fenton concludes in the Epilogue that if Milton can lead readers back to "the very

old ground of hope,” then perhaps he can also influence the same readers towards a concern for ecology and an appreciation of place and its creatures (198).

Fenton’s analysis of hope in Milton’s works and his culture is rewarding, often surprising, and at times amusing. Her observation, for example, of Satan’s despair which detaches and displaces the individual from place and thus hope is intriguing. Similarly, Fenton’s discussion of the enclosure laws of early modern England and Satan’s “gesture to enclose the historical kingdoms” (190) is provocative. Fenton’s framing ideas about the role hope plays in our lives today are significant. Fenton’s book should reward any reader interested in an interdisciplinary history of thought, especially as it relates to politics and theology in Milton’s works.

Thomas H. Luxon. *Single Imperfection: Milton, Marriage and Friendship*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005. xvi + 215 pp. \$58.00. Review by W. SCOTT HOWARD, UNIVERSITY OF DENVER.

Single Imperfection: Milton, Marriage and Friendship is a lively examination of Milton’s divorce tracts, a selection of the minor poems (especially *Epitaphium Damonis*), *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regain’d* with regard to classical, Renaissance humanist and early modern Protestant notions about marriage and friendship. The volume also cogently engages with key texts by a variety of literary, philosophical and religious figures, including: Montaigne and Shakespeare; Plato, Philo, Leone Ebreo and Erasmus; Saint Paul, Luther and Calvin. The book consists of a preface, an introduction, five chapters, notes and an index, but does not include either a conclusion or a bibliography. Chapter one was first published as “Humanist Marriage and *The Comedy of Errors*” in *Renaissance and Reformation* 25.4 (2001); chapter four, as “Milton’s Wedded Love” in *Milton Studies* 40 (2002). Apart from those two sections, *Single Imperfection* offers new writing that has emerged from Luxon’s research, teaching and conference presentations since 1995.

Working within a context of recent Milton scholarship by Barbara Lewalski, David Loewenstein and David Norbrook (among others) that emphasizes a synthesis of biographical, political, theological and textual criticism, Luxon delivers particularly strong readings of Milton’s “doctrine of conversation,”