

Frédérique Aït-Touati. *Fictions of the Cosmos: Science and Literature in the Seventeenth Century*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011. ix + 261 + 6 illus. 45.00. Review by ELENA LEVY-NAVARRO, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN AT WHITEWATER.

A visit to our local bookstore—if, indeed, we are lucky enough to have one—will find books placed into apparently discrete categories: not only science, health, and the metaphysical, but also fiction and nonfiction. *Fictions of the Cosmos* reconsiders a body of scientific literature from the seventeenth century in order to show how these texts helped to create just such distinctions. The journey that the reader takes in *Fictions* may not reveal strange moon-men or lion-like fleas, but it does reveal what can be equally strange to many of us: the poetics at the heart of scientific texts. Drawing on theorists of science, Bruno Latour and Michel Serres, who have effectively made science strange to us in productive ways, Aït-Touati underscores the tools, both poetic and mechanical (optical), that were used to distinguish the fictional from the nonfictional, the literary from the scientific, or what she terms the “fictionalizing narrative” from the “factionalizing” [factualizing] one (193-96). In the process, Aït-Touati raises profound theoretical issues for literary scholars in particular, including, of course, literary scholars of the seventeenth century. If a certain form of poetics served, ultimately, to legitimize these factualizing narratives at the expense of what were coming to be seen as fictionalizing ones, then what form of poetics promoted very different ways of thinking?

The book covers much of the seventeenth century, from Johan Kepler’s *Somnium* (*Dream*), published in 1634, to Robert Hooke’s *Micrographia*, published in 1665. It focuses on a subgenre of narrative literature—the lunar journey that has its origins in Lucian’s satirical odyssey, *True History*. In the three sections that comprise the book, Aït-Touati traces how Kepler first uses the lunar journey in his *Dream* in order to help his readers envision his alternate view of the universe (a heliocentric one, made visible by the assistance of optical—and literary—tools); next, how subsequent writers begin to use this same narrative structure as a useful “thought-experiment” with some relationship to factuality; and ultimately, how Robert Hooke uses these same tools to persuade the reader that the most acceptable form of

evidence of a factual universe is precise mechanical representations, created through the steady hand of the scientist who seeks to reproduce accurately what he sees in his microscope (all rendered for the reader through the tools of publishing, including the tools of engraving). In the last section, Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* is analyzed as a radical text, which rejects the optical tools of Hooke and the Royal Society, even as it asserts the authority of its own fictional lunar journey. In concluding with Cavendish, Ait-Touati achieves what she set out to demonstrate: namely, that this period, and these texts, have given rise to the division between the factual and the fanciful, the scientific and the literary.

In the above summary, I have focused on the word that is insistently used throughout—"tool." Ait-Touati uses the word for those optical instruments, like the telescope and microscope that were invented in this period, as well as for various forms of the poetic. Literary tools employed by the writers include the genre of the lunar journey, borrowed from Lucian, and the classical rhetorical figures like *ekphrasis*, employed in the careful description of astronomical bodies. The word is a tricky one. Initially, it might seem to serve the radical purpose of exposing the dependence of the scientific on more than their optical instruments. As the book progresses, the word becomes increasingly more limiting so that it can almost seem to "discipline" the poetic, much as *Micrographia* is said to do in developing its own "uninterrupted chain" of association (173).

The final chapter is necessary to make this point, as it insists on reading Cavendish's text as a "radical" rejection of the Royal Society, as given voice in Hooke's *Micrographia*. At once describing her as a radical totalitarian, who wants to proclaim her own ominipotence and with it the ominipotence of the vanished royal order, "the Duchess," as Cavendish is insistently called, is characterized as asserting an outmoded literary universe, which is now viewed entirely from the perspective of this (early) modern factualizing tradition. Here, some of the polemical implications of conceptualizing the poetic as a "tool" comes to the fore, as her literary work is measured largely in terms of its response to the immediate social context. What only remains is to show how she "ironically" employs the same tools that she rejects in her "enemies." In conclusion, we are told, "Beyond the

radical rejection of instruments implied by Cavendish's epistemology, our analysis has revealed a recuperation of these same instruments at two levels: they serve the Empress and participate in the construction of a novel about absolutism; and (ironically) they furnish the model for a poetics of fiction founded on exaggeration and enlargement of the figures of scientific discovery" (190). By this point in the book, the other ways in which this journey could be understood—utopian, allegorical, and satirical, have been effectively marginalized, precisely because the utilitarian has been foregrounded. As such, the reader is directed to think primarily in the hypermodern terms that are seen as having been invented in the period.

In the introduction, she notes that she preferred to examine "*literary fiction* that will soon be called the *novel*," rather than dramatic or poetic texts that have similar themes (8). What is lost in the process can be hinted at in the discussion of the earliest text, Johann Kepler's *Dream*, a text that is a hybrid according to the later categories of fiction and nonfiction. One suspects that a deeper consideration of Lucian's own lunar journey, including a consideration of the transmission of the text in humanist circles and the traditions of interpretation that circulated around it, would have offered a very different perspective on the "cosmopoetics" that is the exploration of the book. Ait-Touati explicitly dismisses the "utopian" and "satirical" dimensions of Lucian, even as she does not explore the tradition of the dream narrative as it might touch on Kepler's *Dream*. Kepler's text is itself divided into two sections, where the journey is seen as setting the stage for the more descriptive astronomical section that follows. The journey is for the most part seen as a preface to the arrival, in which the reader is rewarded with the detailed astronomical account of the moon. Her focus is evident in her appreciation: "Kepler's originality lies in his combination of the two, to make a fabulous journey to the moon in the mode of Lucian the basis for real astronomical reflection. In doing so, he gives the lunar fiction an epistemic weight—an ontological weight, as we will see—which it did not have before" (23).

One can only dream of what alternate journey could be taken if it did not limit itself to "literary fiction" as defined by the later development of the novel and thought, instead, of the cosmopoetics of a *Paradise Lost*. How might it change our sense of the poetics, if

we were to consider the multiple perspectives? The subject and object are simultaneously exaggerated and diminished, as we are encouraged to look through very different poetic forms, which even includes the “optic glass” of a Galileo, the “Tuscan artist,” standing either (or simultaneously on both) the mountain top of Fesole *or* the valley of Valdarno, the high and low that, from the perspective of these heavenly lands, are both neither? Of course, this more confusing, subjunctive poetics is not the subject of *Fiction of the Cosmos*, nor should it be, if the purpose is to focus on the genesis of the categories that are more obviously dominant today. This book will be much discussed in years to come, and we can thank the author for demonstrating once again that the literary, if not expansively understood poetics, is present on those different bookstore shelves if we just have the right tools to see it.

Daniel Shore. *Milton and the Art of Rhetoric*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xii + 203 pp. \$95.00. Review by ANTHONY WELCH, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE.

Milton, writes Daniel Shore, “dons his singing robes to take care of business” (10). In this elegantly argued new study of Milton and rhetoric, Shore portrays the poet as a determined pragmatist, ready to use every tool at his disposal to persuade others to his point of view—even, and perhaps especially, at those moments when Milton claims to renounce the arts of rhetoric. Where some Miltonists have stressed the poet’s antirhetorical tendencies—his iconoclasm and otherworldliness—Shore’s Milton shows surprising ideological flexibility. He is acutely conscious of his changing audiences, and he is quick to adapt his self-presentation to their needs. Shore hopes to persuade Miltonists to read his writings less as evidence of his most cherished beliefs than as shifting tactical arguments addressed to specific audiences and occasions. To do so, Shore ranges across nearly the whole corpus of Milton’s poetry and prose, uncovering the rhetorical strategies behind Milton’s most seemingly antirhetorical gestures. As Shore explains, “I am not leveling the accusation of insincerity or, worse, of lying outright. My accusation (the wrong word) is rather that he is a polemicist and poet, a maker of persuasive fictions, and that his