

of Milton's critical reception, Raleigh was defending *Paradise Lost*, not (as has been said too often) dismissing it. Arguing against those who would relegate Milton's epic to a narrowly defined "religious" category, Raleigh asserts its expansive and enduring greatness: the poem "*is not the less an eternal monument* because it is a monument to dead ideas." (The emphases are mine.) Greater care with text, context, and presentation would go far to ensure that not only the life-blood of a master spirit and that of his interpreters, but also the medium—print—in which they labored will indeed be preserved and stored up for future readers. I look forward to the second impression.

Eric B. Song, *Dominion Undeserved: Milton and the Perils of Creation*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013. ix + 215 pp. \$49.95. Review by KATHRYN R. MCPHERSON, UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY.

In *Dominion Undeserved*, Eric B. Song crafts a brief, elegant, and theoretically informed argument about the ways in which all forms of creativity, including the building of nations, literary works, and concepts of new worlds, "must be carved out of and guarded against an original unruliness" (2). Weighing Milton's prose works, such as letters and major published and unpublished prose tracts, against selections of poetry, including early poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, Song asserts that Milton arises as "a great poet of multiple perspectives, of the *either/or/lor*" rather than more simplistic binaries (3), but also that "co-existing perspectives are not mere equivalents" (4). Song's analysis remains unafraid of ascribing to Milton gendered and politicized notions that may bother some Milton apologists.

Relying in part on Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, Song defines how Milton shares her concerns with disrupted identities and systems due to culturally bound concepts of purity, the maternal body, and prohibited foods; Kristeva's definition of Christian concepts of sin as "signified abjection" (6) enables Song to make an argument that connects Milton's depictions of chaos, language, the body, gender, and national identity. Milton's God, the Son, Adam, Eve, Samson, and other poetic voices all participate in processes of abjection that lead

to questions about how they earn the sovereignty they assert, assume, or abandon. Song also explicitly states that his outlook is “primarily historicist” (15), and his analyses frequently reach back to texts from the Middle Ages to help situate Milton’s ideologies of creativity, gender, and national identity, including post-colonial theory. Song concludes his exploration with a brief but fascinating discussion of how Oludah Equiano’s citations from *Paradise Lost* show the robust artistic, historical, and ideological functions of Milton’s great works.

In exploring the many manifestations of Milton’s encounters with conflicted forms of identity (gender, artistic, national, spiritual) and creativity, Song’s book addresses a series of seemingly disparate topics. Chapter 1 discusses “allusions to the barbarism of the so-called Eastern Tartars” (4) and the ways that these unruly and ambitious peoples, who were strongly connected with infernal, excremental residues, conflict with “divinely sanctioned expansionism,” (14) particularly regarding the Irish. Song believes that geopolitics affect Milton’s cosmology and that the pressing issue of *Paradise Lost*’s theodicy also informs questions about the relationship between East and West, barbarous and civilized.

Chapter 2 reveals “Milton’s engagements with country house poetry and accounts of the New World,” focusing particularly on Eden’s fall as a critique of dominion (4). Song claims that Milton’s depiction of Eden in *Paradise Lost* can be seen as a rebuttal of Ben Jonson’s harmonious Penshurst because he describes “the happy rural seat [of Eden] through a global lens” (46) in order to show how Adam “loses the rural seat of his global empire by failing to maintain control over his wife” (47). Satan’s view of Eden reinforces the concept of Eden as a colony and, thus, involves postlapsarian concerns about estate management and dominating behaviors such as surveillance (56), voyeurism (59), and patriarchal succession (65).

Chapter 3 wrestles with “Milton’s half-articulated thoughts about Anglo-Irish affairs after the Restoration” and how, although he wants “colonial cooperation,” he cannot surrender English superiority (15). Much of this sharply focused argument, one that includes thoughts on the “hubub” of native language, as well as serpents both literal and figurative, relies on a reading of Eve’s moments of creation, which Song interprets as a trope that figured “Ireland as a potential paradise that has been spoiled, and Ireland as a woman, either treacherously

seductive or humbled and fertile" (76). Song reads the disjunction and eventual reunion of Adam and Eve as one of Milton's ways of understanding "the need for a politics of grace that would replaced lapsed dominion with mutual cooperation" (77) in a post-Civil War nation.

Finally, Chapter 4 returns to theories of abjection and reads *Paradise Regained* against *Samson Agonistes* to raise "questions about how the Son of God seeks to overcome the politics of undeserved dominion" (4). Above all, Song wants to delineate how "Milton's Anglocentrism is located within an international matrix" in hopes of revealing the poet's quest for an "elusive universality" (14). Song shows how the discord in *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained* undermine the gracious work of *Paradise Lost*, particularly through focusing on Kristeva's concepts of abjection and Derrida's ideas about archive, or "how the body governs the transmission of cultural knowledge" (115). The heroes of both 1671 poems experience both bodily and typological struggles, rooted in "bodily purity, gendered and sexual identity, [and] familiar versus public knowledge" (142) to teach readers the "limits of Pauline universalism" (144).

On the whole, Song's short book succeeds in weaving together many diverse strands of thought into an innovative reading of Milton's prose and poetry. A sharp, close reading of the texts is never overshadowed by reliance on contemporary critical theory, and the author frequently acknowledges the dangers of what he calls "willfull practice[s]" (76) of reading seventeenth-century literature through modern historical and critical modes. Occasionally, the rapid progression of the argument leaves a reader wishing for more robust bridges between ideas, as when Song's second chapter leaps from Eve's creation at the smooth lake to the temptation in Book 9 to her connections with the unruly Irish. These occasional lapses, though, do not diminish the sensitive and insightful book that this accomplished young scholar has produced.