

In short, this book will be of interest to a wide range of early modern scholars, whether interested in the history of reading, English Catholicism(s), or women's embodied experiences. Contemporary theorists of the body would do well to attend to the experiences of this small group of women precisely because they challenge some of our most basic assumptions of what be.

Susanne Woods. *Milton and the Poetics of Freedom*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2013. ix + 289 pp. \$58.00. Review by ANNA K. NARDO, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY.

*Milton and the Poetics of Freedom* places itself alongside three "books arguing for Milton's continuing relevance" (247) that appeared between the turn of the millennium and the four hundredth anniversary of Milton's birth: Stanley Fish's *How Milton Works* (2001), Joseph Wittreich's *Why Milton Matters* (2006), and Nigel Smith's *Is Milton Better than Shakespeare?* (2008). Despite their considerable differences, all three of these Milton scholars would, I believe, agree with Woods's assertion that Milton matters now because he was "an important voice for defining freedom within the contestations of English-speaking culture" (1). Always aware of the plastic meanings and contradictory uses of the term "freedom" in Milton's culture and our own, Woods argues that Milton "more than any previous English writer, centers freedom in the act of rational, knowledgeable choice" (3). Woods's book approaches Miltonic freedom by mapping its antecedents in both political and literary history and by analyzing what she terms Milton's "invitational poetics" (5). She identifies a constellation of rhetorical and poetic techniques that take "advantage of interpretive spaces in metaphor and in varieties of indirect syntax" (196), through which Milton invites "his readers ... to enact their own freedom by choosing" (5).

Woods's readings of the 1645 *Poems, Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Areopagitica, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes* will be familiar to most readers. "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" "set choices before the reader and invite the exercise of thoughtful choosing" (76); the stance of the Attendant Spirit at the end of *A*

*Mask* “is a posture of invitation toward right choice” (85); and in “*Lycidas*” the poet “leaves room for the reader to respond to questions his rhetoric raises, to complete or interpret the gaps and ambiguities the poet creates” (88). The divorce treatises reveal a mind rethinking “the transparency of Biblical authority” and modeling interpretive freedom for his readers (92); and in *Areopagitica* Milton delivers an eloquent “invitation to choose toward the virtuous self” (96). *Paradise Lost* presents the reader with “paradigmatic occasions that illustrate free will and put the act of choosing at the heart of creating an individual self” (104); both *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* confront the reader with “contradictory evidence, obscure purposes, ambivalent characters, and ambiguous signs,” in the midst of which the son, Samson, and the reader must know and choose (145).

Although these readings are not ground breaking, they amply demonstrate how, for example, the temptation scenes of *Paradise Lost* “put readers directly into the decision processes of Eve and Adam” (131). Here and elsewhere, Woods makes it clear why Milton is so much fun to teach. (In fact, a student might be inspired by her book to challenge her own statement that prelapsarian Eve does not know the experience of evil: “Professor Woods, don’t Eve’s tears of remorse after her Satanic dream signify a vicarious experience of evil?”)

Where Woods’s book does challenge us to think anew about Milton’s conception of freedom is by (a) tracing its roots in a native English tradition, (b) following its branches that grow toward opposing positions, (c) attending to the influence of Sir Phillip Sidney on Milton’s conception of poetic freedom, and (d) reading this ideation made manifest in words and syntax that invite qualifications, complications, even opposition.

Woods acknowledges the importance of “‘neo-Roman republicanism’ generated by early sixteenth-century humanists” (1) in the evolution of Milton’s idea of freedom. But she redirects our attention to the impact of “what may be called the popular tradition of English freedom” and its clash with James I’s theories of kingship (16). Likewise, she acknowledges that Spenser was Milton’s principal model for a national poet. But she again redirects our attention to what Milton learned from Sidney’s wrestling with the competing imperatives of poetic freedom and religious restraint (62) in a language that is “tenta-

tive, full of double negatives, surmise, and interrogatory constructions” (59), which challenge the reader to engagement.

Woods finds these linguistic challenges to the reader to a greater and lesser degree in all of Milton’s work. But her analysis of the metaphors, indirect locutions, double negatives, rhetorical questions, and surmises in *Areopagitica* persuasively demonstrates how Milton requires the reader to translate between the vehicle and tenor of his proliferating metaphors, to consider a statement in the context of its opposite, to answer his questions, and to weigh his surmises (99). Her study fittingly ends by tracing the effects of the “inspiring and indeterminate” rhetoric (173) of *Areopagitica* on two traditions of readers who have evolved “(what we now call) conservative and progressive definitions of individual freedom” (179). In the current debates by Washington think tank spokespersons between “liberty’ as free markets, unimpeded by government, and ‘liberty’ as social opportunity, aided by just governance,” Woods finds evidence that Milton’s “words ... have found force in the individual time and place of their interpreters” (195). Woods ends her contribution to recent testimonies to Milton’s continuing relevance with a brief excursus on the contribution of contemporary neuroscience to the discussion of human freedom, where the capaciousness of Milton’s mind, she argues, would have made him “quite at home” (197).

Barbara Wooding. *John Lowin and the English Theatre, 1603-1647*. Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2013. 209 pp. + 2 Figures and 1 Table. \$99.95. Review by NANCY M. BUNKER, MIDDLE GEORGIA STATE COLLEGE.

While John Lowin’s name may not be well known in the scholarly documents of theatre history, his career and role in early modern drama records a life spent working at the craft he loved. In this first comprehensive study, *John Lowin and the English Theatre, 1603-1647*, Barbara Wooding establishes the trajectory of a multi-talented man with deep ties to Southwark and the theatrical enterprise. She situates Lowin at the beginning of seventeenth-century drama, noting that his career developed after Shakespeare’s and after the death of theatre