

Peter E. Medine, John T. Shawcross, and David V. Urban, eds. *Visionary Milton: Essays on Prophecy and Violence*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010. xxv + 346 pp. + 29 illus. \$60.00. Review by ANTHONY WELCH, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE.

This Festschrift for Michael Lieb features essays by eleven prominent voices in Milton studies. The collection draws its central themes from Lieb's forty years of scholarship on prophecy, visionary experience, religious violence, and the nature of Milton's God. Although it presents itself as a timely engagement with these issues in an age of global terrorism, this fine book is under-served by its packaging and marketing. Its role as a festschrift is absent from the volume's title and its dust jacket description; the reader first learns of it in the editors' introduction, which offers an overview of Lieb's writings, while a selected bibliography of his published work appears at the end of the volume. The editors make a valiant effort to tie all of the contributors' essays to the twin themes of prophecy and violence—two terms which, as some of these scholars demonstrate, are often mutually opposed rather than conjoined in Milton's writing—but the essays are bound more tightly together by their shared admiration for and indebtedness to Lieb's work than by the book's stated topic. That diversity is a strength rather than a weakness of the collection. Here the reader will find a range of provocative viewpoints on Milton's poetry (the emphasis is mostly on the later poems), grappling with such concerns as authorship, biblical exegesis, gender issues, literary genre, reception and influence, and, of course, political and religious controversy.

Visionary Milton opens with three essays that relate the visionary mode to matters of authorial self-presentation and political dissent. First, the late John Shawcross traces Milton's vatic rhetoric in the early poetry. Culminating in a sensitive reading of "The Passion," his essay helpfully reminds us that Milton was able to handle the role of the inspired prophet with witty irony as well as high seriousness. Barbara Lewalski's "Milton and the Culture Wars" steps back to survey Milton's whole poetic career, viewed here as an ongoing project to reform English literary culture by transforming the traditional poetic genres. This "aesthetic contestation," Lewalski argues, was viewed by

Milton as a kind of warfare, training his readers to cultivate the habits of mind required of a free people (25). Turning to a later moment of cultural conflict, Sharon Achinstein explores the work of Abraham Polonsky, a leftist Hollywood writer blacklisted during the McCarthy era. Achinstein shows how Polonsky's 1955 television script, "The Tragedy of John Milton," deployed the figure of Milton—with supporting roles by Andrew Marvell, Thomas Ellwood, and William Prynne—to mount a critique of state violence and the repression of free speech.

A second group of studies addresses the contexts and reception of Milton's writings. Stanley Fish's crisply argued essay, "How Hobbes Works," contrasts Milton's commitment to private conscience with Hobbes's insistence on the shared, public, social, conventional, and contractual basis of truth and of language itself. In a meditation on pain in *Paradise Lost*, Diana Treviño Benet draws on the period's medical and religious writings to explore how Milton portrays the pain suffered by the rebel angels, and how he tries to manage the questions it poses about the justice of God. A lengthy essay on *Samson Agonistes* by Wendy Furman-Adams and Virginia James Tufte surveys how both the biblical Samson and the hero of Milton's poem have been portrayed by visual artists from the early Middle Ages through the late twentieth century. More than two dozen accompanying illustrations largely bear out the authors' claim that visual artists have anticipated many of the critical approaches and controversies that literary scholars have recently brought to bear on Milton's *Samson*.

All of the remaining essays in the volume showcase Milton's *Paradise Regained*. Here the book's concern with prophecy, violence, and iconoclasm becomes more tightly focused. Four of these studies pay close attention to the poem's biblical and theological matrices. Joseph A. Wittreich explores a dispute among biblical exegetes, both before and after Milton, over whether Satan's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness "is to be read literally or figuratively, whether it is real or visionary." In Wittreich's view, *Paradise Regained* rejects "the either-or answers of institutionalized interpretations" (126) as it portrays "the evolution of human consciousness and the building up of the human spirit" (134). Addressing the poem's relationship to its Gospel sources in a different way, Mary Beth Rose asks, "Why Is the Virgin Mary in

Paradise Regain'd." Noting that Milton's other writings show a Protestant discomfort with Marian devotion, Rose links Mary's prominent role in the poem to contemporary attitudes toward maternity and the family, as she suggestively argues that "Milton locates the origins of the Son's eventual triumph over Satan in his relationship with his mother" (206).

Directing our attention back to the Father, Michael Bryson extends his controversial reading of *Paradise Lost* to Milton's brief epic. Building on Stanley Fish's familiar thesis that Jesus rejects the purely external, worldly goods offered to him by Satan and turns instead to the divine source within him as the true measure of all value, Bryson makes the startling claim that this divine source "*is not the Father*" (262, italics in original). For Bryson, both the Father and Satan "speak the same language" of worldly power, glory, and force, so that, in the poem's apophatic vision, the search for God must lead to a rejection of both figures (252). On firmer historical ground, Stella P. Revard's "Charles, Christ, and Icon of Kingship in *Paradise Regain'd*" traces the poem's concern over what it means for Jesus to inherit the Davidic kingship. Revard's subtle observations on the poem's theorizing of monarchy focus on its implied critique of Charles II, a false king whose earthly reign, celebrated by his apologists as divinely ordained, everywhere stands in contrast with the millenarian kingdom of God.

David Loewenstein's essay, "From Politics to Faith in the Great Poems?" concludes the volume. Loewenstein rejects the view that Milton slunk toward political quietism after the Restoration, but neither does he find a straightforwardly activist posture in the last poems. Instead, he argues, each of Milton's later works expresses "divergent and, indeed, sometimes agonized political responses" to the failure of the English Revolution (271). The result is a complex poetic texture marked by unresolved tensions and contradictions, such as the ripple of submerged violence that disturbs the Son's loving ambition, "By winning words to conquer willing hearts, / . . . the stubborn only to subdue" (*PR* 1.222-26).

Perhaps what most clearly unites these well written, thought-provoking essays is Michael Lieb's longstanding interest in "the more disturbing aspects of Milton's God." The contributors frequently cite Lieb's research into the "terrifying, inscrutable, even primitive" quali-

ties of this deity and the fearsome grandeur of the *odium Dei* (xv). In showing how Milton and his successors struggled to interpret the mystery of the divine will, and how they strove to bring human life more fully into line with their vision for it, this essay collection is a worthy tribute to Michael Lieb's scholarly career.

Maria Rosa Antognazza. *Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xxvii + 623pp. \$45.00. Review by Jonathan Wright, Hartlepool, United Kingdom.

Describing this as an “intellectual biography” was an astute decision on the part of author and/or publisher. The book's greatest virtue is its ability to guide the reader through the staggering diversity and frequent complexity of Leibniz's thought—from ethics to logic, from physics to theology, from math to metaphysics. Even some of the more rarefied aspects of Leibniz's theorising are explained with great clarity and one would not have to be especially familiar with the subject to enjoy this volume. Antognazza is to be especially commended for tracing the gradual development of Leibniz's ideas. As she puts it, his was a “labyrinthine” intellectual odyssey (90) but it is still eminently possible (though far from easy) to plot the trajectories of some of his most influential contributions (the theory of monads, for instance) back to his more youthful work and conjectures. Leibniz always dreamed of producing a grand philosophical synthesis. He never came close to achieving this goal but, as this book clearly demonstrates, there was more systematisation and coherency to his life's work than is sometimes allowed.

Another accusation routinely levelled at Leibniz is that he was something of a dreamer. Antognazza rejects this characterisation and insists that he usually had his “feet firmly on the ground” (100). For Leibniz, utility was extremely important. He wanted to improve the world in practical ways. This is a refreshing adjudication. Leibniz adored the realms of pure mathematics and abstruse metaphysics but, as Antognazza reminds us, he also weighed into debates about Louis XIV's foreign policy and spent a great deal of time conjuring up schemes to drain water from the Duke of Hanover's mines. It can