

*World*) as, indeed, other theories on women's writing and Otherness could have been included (those of Julia Kristeva or Hélène Cixous), but Ferguson sets the parameters of her study to contain a just-manageable, lively discussion of the vast concepts of literacy, gender, and empire and the ways they intersect in these four particular texts. A gift of this study, then, is the way in which it inspires one to consider elements of Ferguson's ideas and textual analyses in conjunction with numerous other texts and theories. In general, the book is a useful one for anyone interested in early modern literacy and women's commentaries on issues of empire.

Kristin A. Pruitt. *Gender and the Power of Relationship*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003. xvi +196 pp. \$60.00. Review by JAMES EGAN, THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON.

*Gender and the Power of Relationship* begins with a metaphysical definition of divine "unity in diversity," a definition offered in the Father-Son colloquy of *Paradise Lost* III and reiterated throughout the epic. Unity in diversity is, of course, a perfect relationship, one which prelapsarian Adam and Eve are made aware of and urged to imitate in the series of lessons they receive in Paradise. Chapter Two reviews the educational process as a whole in the poem, from the divine education of Books V and III, to Adam's conversation with God in Book VIII, and finally to Eve's progress from self-knowledge, to awareness of Adam and their relationship, and to understanding of the "hierarchy of values on which the harmony of Paradise is based" (35). God, in turn, "examines" Adam on his understanding of relationship, and the human couple is allowed ample opportunity to "work out their relationship" (41). This chapter effectively establishes the meaning of "relationship" in two of the three primary settings of the poem, while confirming that the goal of divine pedagogy is to explain how Adam and Eve can "grow into relationship with each other and with the Creator" (44).

Chapter Three links the topic of relationship to the Miltonic motifs of hierarchy and equality, arguing in the process that his

stance on gender cannot be dismissed, as it often has been over the past thirty years, as merely masculinist. The marriage of Adam and Eve allows Milton to act out the dialectic of hierarchy and reciprocity and to generate thematic tension from the dire consequences which follow when Adam and Eve try to balance the conflicting demands of hierarchy and reciprocity. In his lecture to Adam, Raphael misjudges Eve physically and intellectually, thereby indicating that he understands only hierarchy, not the interplay of hierarchy and reciprocity. Pruitt stresses an essential distinction here: Raphael, not Milton, takes a masculinist position on Eve. For his part, Milton proposes equality between the sexes, shown by the couple's complex expressions of love, including their conversations. At this point, again with solid evidence, Pruitt connects relationship to another of *Paradise Lost's* most familiar concerns, the dialectic of reason and faith. Adam's misuse of reason after Eve confesses that she has sinned suggests his obsession with reason for its own sake, rather than as a path to faith. Eve had subscribed to Satan's argument for diabolical sexuality, sexuality based on self-love and division rather than on her relationship with Adam and "the God in him" (79), thereby opting for a hellish parody of mutual love, the antithesis of the divine love displayed in the Incarnation. Pruitt's discussion of the implicit Ovidian subtext of Satan's temptation, his evocation of the courtly lover, will allow readers to see useful parallels between the temptation and the seventeenth-century love lyric as well as the meditative tradition of Donne and Herbert.

Chapter Five, "God is also in sleep," returns to the notions of process treated in the opening chapters. Both God and Satan, Pruitt demonstrates, work through and in dreams. Adam and Eve learn of the "fruit of relationship" in theirs (95), while Eve's Satan-inspired dream urges self-exaltation, thus becoming a demonic perversion of mutuality and a reversal of the sacred into the secular. Because Satan controls this early dream, Pruitt reasons, following John Diekhoff, that Eve is not culpable here and remains innocent; only Satan can be legitimately indicted. In contrast, Eve's final

divine dreams empower her and confirm her “sufficiency” to have withstood temptation.

The last chapter of *Gender and the Power of Relationship*, “The Many Faces of Eve,” elaborates Pruitt’s case for Milton’s positive characterization of Eve and her egalitarian relationship with Adam by comparing his character to the normative interpretations of Genesis found in eight seventeenth-century exegetical commentaries published before *Paradise Lost* and available to Milton, those of Andrew Willet, Henry Ainsworth, John Salkeld, William Austin, William Whately, John Downname et al., John Trapp, and John White. These exegeses enable Pruitt to identify both the standard perspectives of Milton’s contemporaries on gender issues and significant variations from the normative interpretations of Eve. Generally, his Eve resembles the more exalted readings of woman found in the exegeses. While most interpreters follow the Pauline interpretation of female subservience before and after the fall, *Paradise Lost* accentuates both Eve’s refusal to be reflexively and invariably submissive and Adam’s lack of enthusiasm for patriarchal authority over her. Milton enhances Eve’s status in many ways—by playing up the intricacy and skill of Satan’s temptation, her prolonged resistance to it, her blunt admission of guilt and responsibility, and Adam’s rapid surrender to her temptation. In short, the epic presentation of Eve’s character proves more psychologically complex, and therefore more realistic, than any account found in contemporary exegeses. As Adam and Eve leave Paradise, they walk hand in hand, a visual image which signifies the final equality of their relationship.

*Gender and the Power of Relationship* offers a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. Pruitt makes the case for Eve’s “sufficiency” capably and non-polemically, reassessing with detailed evidence earlier indictments of Milton’s masculinism. The tone of her reading is free of ideological jargon, question-begging, and stridency. Her best chapter contextualizes Eve well historically by measuring Milton’s version against those of his exegetical peers. This well-researched conclusion offsets an opening chapter with an overly abstract, clinical quality, one which rests more on implication and

assumption than it should; readers might have been better served early on had Pruitt carefully and overtly linked the sub-sections of evidence to be presented. She defines “relationship” inductively and accumulatively, an acceptable practice, but one which may cause the reader to hesitate before apprehending the overall movement of the argument. Finally, the book’s prose style, generally clear and readable, sometimes overindulges the scholarly affectation of beginning sentences in the analytical voice and syntax of the critic and completing them with lines from *Paradise Lost*. Though this affectation can enrich, or even entertain, it can also work as a sort of interpretive sleight-of-hand which nudges readers to agree with unstated conclusions. On the other hand, Pruitt’s style is also good enough on occasion to be delightfully quotable, for example, her reference to Satan’s “one-noon stand” with Eve (87) and her suggestion that “if Milton’s Eve is the ‘author . . . of transgression,’ his Adam is its licenser and publisher” (154).

Reid Barbour. *John Selden: Measures of the Holy Commonwealth in Seventeenth Century England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. 384 pp. \$70.00. Review by ROBERT C. EVANS, AUBURN UNIVERSITY MONTGOMERY.

This study, its jacket flap notes, “is the first text in over a century to examine the whole of Selden’s works and thought.” That fact alone would make the book significant, but even more important is the further claim that “Reid Barbour brings a new perspective to Selden studies by stressing Selden’s strong commitment to a ‘religious society,’ by taking a closer and more sustained look at his poetic interests, and by systematically examining his Latin publications (particularly those using Jewish sources).” Barbour, the flap continues, “posits that the overriding aim of Selden’s career was to bolster religious society in the face of its imminent demise. He argues that Selden’s scholarly career was committed to resolving an essentially religious question about how best to establish the holy commonwealth in both lawfulness and spiritual abundance.” In academic publishing, at least, there is still truth in