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The ingenuity and diversity of these essays indicate the strength of Milton studies in North America. The volume begins with three essays about why Milton matters by members of the distinguished editorial board of *Milton Studies*. "Against Historicism" is the subtitle of the first, by Stanley Fish, who proposes that we need to start out by examining an author's intention and that if we do so it will become plain to us that Milton meant to write poems, rather than, say, to contribute to political thought. By devoting our attention to politics, theology, or material culture, Fish argues, we will lose our interest in and understanding of the poetry for the sake of which we investigated the politics, theology, or material culture in the first place. As poetry is the purpose of the poet, so illumination of that poetry must be the purpose of the critic, and the history of literary forms must be the means of that illumination.

In the second essay on why Milton matters, Barbara K. Lewalski writes that Milton is important now as a source of values: for instance, the opposition in *Areopagitica* to censorship of books and the repression of potentially threatening points of view at a time when freedom of speech is inhibited, resistance in *De Doctrina Christiana* to a literal interpretation of scripture at a time when fundamentalism flourishes, Milton's example of committed and responsible citizenship at a time of political cynicism and apathy, and the educative powers of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*.

In relation to the last point Lewalski observes that "Samson's final act of pulling the theater down on the assembled Philistine nobility poses for modern readers as well as the Chorus the all-too-relevant question of how to tell the difference between a freedom fighter and a suicide-terrorist" (20). The third essay on why Milton matters, by Joseph Wittreich, begins with some restatements of her question about Samson from the press after the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. Wittreich's dense and allusive essay scans criticism, scholarship, and commentary on Milton going back to Marvell's poem on *Paradise Lost* to open up a dialogue between voices for a Samson who knows and enacts the will of God and those for one who evinces the destructiveness of revenge, the option that Wittreich favors.

Elizabeth Sauer's "Tolerationism, the Irish Crisis, and Milton's 'On the Late Massacre in Piemont'" examines the sonnet in relation to the intolerance of the Cromwellian government, especially with regard to Ireland, and finds, not surprisingly, a rupture between its thinking with respect to Protestants and Catholics, for whom its sympathies are far less developed. Sauer proposes that the English imagined the

Waldensians as their compatriots, as opposed to the Catholics, Jews, and dissenters who were persecuted aliens at home, and that the English moreover responded like Wittreich's Samson to persecution with further persecution. Sauer's hypocrite for whom the abuse of one group justifies the abuse of other groups differs from Lewalski's exemplary Milton as much as he resembles the protagonist of "Milton's View of Ireland: Reform, Reduction, and Nationalist Polity," by Mary C. Fenton, a Milton who supported Cromwell's bloody conquest of Ireland and denied the Irish the privileges of citizenship.

"The Masquing of Genre in *Comus*," by Heather Dubrow, is the first of three essays on Milton's mask. Dubrow argues by discussing its uses of romance and pastoral that *Comus* reveals Milton's inflection of the genre to privilege his social and political principles over its traditionally aristocratic affiliations, but that it does so only incompletely because of its author's enduring commitment to those affiliations. Dubrow encourages her reader to think of a "spectrum" and "in terms of degree of reform, not its simple presence or absence" (75).

Joseph M. Ortiz in "'The Reforming of Reformation': Theatrical, Ovidian, and Musical Figuration in Milton's *Mask*," agrees with Dubrow that Milton's esthetic, particularly as expressed in *Comus* and *Areopagitica*, diverges from Puritan iconoclasm in its understanding that humanity in its fallen state requires figuration as a means to apprehend truth. Ortiz develops in detail the idea, which comes up in Dubrow's essay, that the antifigural rhetoric of *Comus* works against the mask of which it is a part. In contrast, Milton is prepared to risk the indeterminacy of art, for instance in the music of the mask. Like Dubrow's, Ortiz's essay is nuanced and richly contextualized.

The third and final essay on *Comus* is also the slightest. "Go Ask Alice: Daughter, Patron, and Poet in *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle*," by Ronald Corthell, moves from religious and political questions to the configurations of characters in the mask. Corthell examines the Lady's relationship to her brothers; her parents, especially her father, the poet's patron; and the poet. His observation that the poet presents the daughter to the patron and father in an arrangement that reverses the presentation of the daughter to her future husband is especially interesting in the light of Alan Stewart's work on patriarchy, patronage, and humanism in the Early Modern period.

Maura Brady's "Galileo in Action: The 'Telescope' in *Paradise Lost*" first turns to the history of science for a narrative about early telescopes or "instruments," their construction, their limitations, and contemporary writing about them, including Galileo's efforts to educate his audience about his work and its outcomes. Brady then applies her information to an illuminating reading of the three passages in *Paradise*

Lost that refer to Galileo, the only contemporary of Milton who enjoys the honor of inclusion in his epic. Brady argues that the telescope simultaneously and complicat- edly exemplifies the dangers and the possibilities of human knowledge.

In “Milton’s Pandora: Eve, Sin, and the Mythographic Tradition,” George F. Butler systematically compiles references to Pandora in classical literature, the Re- naissance mythographers, the Church Fathers, and Milton’s poetry and prose along his way to *Paradise Lost*. Through an intricate and subtle examination of Milton’s use of mythology, he extends the defense of Eve by arguing that Sin, rather than Eve, corresponds to Pandora.

“Discontinuous Wound: Milton and Deism,” by Abraham Stoll, explores early critical reception of the war in heaven in Book 6 of *Paradise Lost* to demonstrate the ways in which readers used the tension between the material representation of the war and its allegorical meanings to justify deism. Stoll begins with the instantaneous healing of the severed sylph in *The Rape of the Lock* and proceeds to its origin in the injury to Satan for which the essay is named. Because deists defended their beliefs by mocking miracles and revelation, Milton’s war became the subject of controversy between deists and their traditionalist opponents: if wounds heal instantly and God must triumph, how can readers take the war in heaven more seriously than they take the gods of classical epic? Although Stoll justifies the contemporary discussion of deism in *Paradise Lost*, he attributes the discursive gap between the machinery of the poem and its theology to Milton’s iconoclasm and to the monotheism that grounds it. ✱