

embellished or downright false, starting in the Restoration and ending in the nineteenth century. The objective is to introduce to the world again a little known, one-act play titled simply *Milton* and composed by the Spaniard Hermenegildo Giner de los Ríos in 1879. The author would become a leading Spanish intellectual and educational reformer and this play, performed only once, was dedicated to American poet James Russell Lowell, co-founder of the Modern Language Association. While Duran does analyze the text of the play, the real story is about how these two men met, what the historical and literary situations of the two countries were at the time, and why Milton was chosen as the subject of the play.

In a similar strategy, in Chapter 4, Duran guides us through Spanish illustrations of *Paradise Lost* beginning with John Baptiste de Medina, who was Spanish by extraction, and takes us this time into the twenty-first century, after first noting that intervening Spanish editions had often recycled sculptures by Gustave Doré. The objective here is to introduce an obscure set of drawings by Spanish artist Gregorio Prieto that appeared in a Spanish language edition of the epic in 1972. Duran demonstrates how “early modern English verbal art [merges] with modern Spanish visual art” (125) with the intention of producing delight. Although there are not many Spanish illustrations of Milton’s work, Duran argues that they are “deep in meaning” (147), and Prieto’s renderings make a charming contribution to a growing international collection of art inspired by Milton.

Angelica Duran returns to the discussion of “otherness” that she had introduced at the beginning of her book. In a brief but touching autobiography, she tells the story of reading her family’s *Sagrada Biblia* (Sacred Bible) in her Spanish-English bilingual home. That she would become a noted scholar of Milton and eventually President of the Milton Society of America is a testament to the poet’s international, multicultural appeal. If Milton studies are to grow and evolve beyond the frameworks of English-speaking countries and universities, we must seek out alternative perspectives and include them in our scholarship. In my case, teaching Milton to Ecuadorian students with no prior knowledge of him or his works and for whom English is a second or third language has enlarged my own perspective immensely. So too Duran, in providing this erudite study, concludes that her sources “have revised and reinvigorated *my Milton*” (161). *Milton among Spaniards* will be a welcome addition to any Miltonist’s library.

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Milton, The Sublime, and Dramas of Choice

Irene Montori

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In *Milton, the Sublime, and Dramas of Choice*, the author advances two main arguments. The first is that Milton made self-conscious use of sublimity and sublime effects in his poetry, even if he may not have actually referred to this style of poetry as “the sublime.” The second is that, for Milton, such sublimity was not merely an aesthetic effect: rather, true sublimity in his poetry is associated with moments of *ethical* sublimity, in which characters make heroic choices to align themselves with the will of God. Irene Montori cites three chief examples of this ethical sublime in Milton’s works: the

Lady in *Comus*, Jesus in *Paradise Regained*, and Samson in *Samson Agonistes*. All three, she argues, ultimately adopt ethical positions in which their confidence in their own virtues is reconciled with their faith and willing dependence upon God, in a stance of “active” patience (161). These moments of attainment are both sublime in themselves and communicated through deliberately sublime language, thus demonstrating the poetic excellence of their author, and hopefully prompting experiences of sublime emotional elevation in the reader. As Montori writes:

The sublime, in brief, is for Milton the ability of the artist to generate through a character in the fiction a sublime event, which makes the character an example of heroic virtue and the author a model of artistic fame. In such instances, the sublime becomes a poetics of elevation and a revolutionary practice of virtuous heroism for the character, the reader, and the author alike. (24)

Milton has, of course, been read for centuries as a “sublime” poet, ever since Marvell famously commented on his “theme sublime” in *Paradise Lost*. Much of Milton’s poetry fits the description of sublimity given by Longinus in *On the Sublime*, and after the publication of Boileau’s influential 1674 translation of Longinus it became a critical commonplace to assert that Milton surpassed all other modern authors in his mastery of the Longinian sublime. However, the question of whether Milton *himself* understood his own poetic practice in terms of “the sublime” is a much harder one to answer. Longinus’s *On the Sublime* was certainly available in Milton’s Britain, most obviously through Langbaine’s 1638 edition, but Milton gives no sign of having taken much interest in it. His writings mention Longinus only once, as part of a list of teachers of “gracefull and ornate Rhetorick” in *Of Education*, and he mostly used the word “sublime” to simply mean “very high up,” as in his repeated use of the phrase “Air sublime” (*Paradise Lost* 2.528, 3.72, 7.421, *Paradise Regained* 4.542). In *English Authorship and the Early Modern Sublime* (2018)—a work of which Montori makes substantial use—Patrick Cheney argued that Milton regarded Dante and Petrarch as “sublime” authors, on the basis of his description of their “sublime and pure thoughts” in the *Apology for Smectymnuus* (25). But “sublime” here describes only the *moral* content of their poetry, and evidence that Milton regarded certain *styles* of poetry as constituting or communicating something called “sublimity” remains frustratingly thin on the ground.

Montoni argues that, despite this, it still makes sense to discuss Milton’s use of the sublime, as “The sublime ... gathers around an array of images, themes, markers, and structures which are not necessarily located in contexts where the word ‘sublime’ is used” (33). She describes as “sublime” those moments in Milton’s poetry where he employs a rhetoric of amazement, elevation, and transport, and it is this rhetoric that she sees him as employing during scenes depicting the pivotal “dramas of choice” referred to by her title. These scenes, she argues, are always as much about their author as they are about the characters: Samson and the Lady act as avatars of Milton himself, torn between Classical traditions of self-sufficient personal excellence and Christian faith in the necessity of divine grace, and their dramas thus serve as endorsements of Milton’s own position that “they also serve who only stand and wait” (57, 87–91, 97, 115, 161). Drawing upon Cheney’s insights into the relationship between sublimity and early modern authorship, whereby sublime writing marks an author out as worthy of literary immortality, Montoni thus concludes that these scenes play a double role in Milton’s self-construction as an author, demonstrating both his outstanding poetic talents and his solution to the difficult problem of how he could simultaneously present himself both as an author whose skill is due to his Classical learning and study, *and* as a poet-prophet whose poetry comes from divine inspiration (50–51). As she writes, “The oscillation of the author between his divinely inspired vocation and the cultivation of his prophetic status, through hard work, is dramatized in the character’s ethical choices” (53).

Montoni accepts that Milton, like Shakespeare and Spenser before him, may have arrived at his sublime imagery quite independent of the Longinian tradition: “they need only have been aware of classical and biblical examples of sublimity, then translate and imitate them, given that sublime ideas, motifs, and images had circulated since antiquity, independently of Longinus” (42). Despite this,

however, she argues that the direct and indirect influence of Longinus on concepts of literary sublimity was such that it makes sense to consider their use of sublime rhetoric in relation to the theories of Longinus *even if they themselves had no interest in his writings*. Elsewhere in the book she asserts, for example, that “Milton’s reliance on verbal echoing in *A Maske* is profoundly influenced by the Longinian notion of the sublime,” or that “Milton’s idea of the sublime, so conceived, is modelled on Longinus” (42–43, 120, 182). This is slippery ground, and while Montoni offers a great deal of subtle and intelligent commentary on Milton’s poetry, I was never entirely persuaded that his works were really engaged in the kind of close and sustained dialogue with Longinus that Montoni describes. At times I even felt that the word “sublime” might be doing more to confuse the discussion than to illuminate it, as when Milton’s reference to the “sublimest points of controversie” in *Areopagitica* (which has nothing to do with aesthetics) is used to demonstrate why Milton might have viewed tragedy as a sublime literary form (85).

Despite these reservations, there is a wealth of fascinating readings on offer here, and Montori provides a great deal of illuminating commentary on Milton’s authorial self-presentation, his use of drama, and his attitudes towards tragedy. Chapter 3 includes an ingenious discussion of Shakespearean and Spenserian echoes in *Comus*, and I was genuinely delighted by Montori’s observation that Samson’s location within the Temple of Dagon not only positions him like an actor on a tragic stage, but also under the lintel of an archway, and thus makes him *literally sublime* (124–38, 186–87). There are a few textual errors—“On the light of fantastic toe” really should have been caught in proofing—and I am dubious of the claims made here about Milton’s relationship with Arianism (74, 126). Overall, however, this is an insightful and enjoyable work that should be of value both to scholars interested in Milton’s use of drama, and to those exploring the vexed history of the early modern sublime.

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Church Polity and Politics in the British Atlantic World, c. 1635–66

Elliot Vernon and Hunter Powell, eds.

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For Milton, Sir Henry Vane the Younger had “learned, which few have done,” the distinctions that should be drawn between “spiritual power and civil.” Certainly, few followed Vane in arguing for the necessity of a radical separation between church and state, but many engaged in the study of church polity came to markedly different conclusions. That much is obvious to any early modern historian, and indeed any reader of Milton. However, this admirable book puts these debates, in a British Atlantic context, under the microscope in new and illuminating ways. Church polity is here defined as “the manner in which the church is structured and governed,” and is distinguished from ecclesiology which is “used for more abstract theological reflections on the nature of the church” (1). Debates over church polity had a long history, and had developed explosively during the first period

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