Check for updates



*Milton, Marvell, and the Dutch Republic*. Esther van Raamsdonk.
Routledge Studies in Renaissance and Early Modern Worlds of Knowledge. Abingdon: Routledge, 2021. xiv + 256 pp. $52.95.

Reflecting on the encounters between England and the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century, Esther van Raamsdonk asks, "How better to understand oneself than through encounters with a neighbor, and consequently, how better for readers to understand Milton and Marvell than through a transnational lens?" (218). In her comparativist study, Raamsdonk examines how early modern Anglo-Dutch relations informed the works of not only Milton and Marvell but also various Dutch authors; while doing so, she manages to clarify and convincingly characterize the nature of those relations.

Raamsdonk's monograph provides an imagological account of how English and Dutch artists and writers circulated pejorative ethnotypes of each other as a means of fashioning distinct national identities in opposition to those representations. This derogatory stereotyping was fueled by three Anglo-Dutch wars fought over maritime trade disputes, conflicts that overrode the bond the two nations once shared as Protestant neighbors struggling against Catholic powers. In chapters 1 and 2, Raamsdonk identifies anti-Dutch representations found in wartime pamphlets and propaganda, Marvell's evolving poem *The Character of Holland*, and Milton's *Defenses*. In chapter 7, she rather ingeniously reads Milton's association of spice trade imagery with Satan in *Paradise Lost* as sour grapes over the Dutch's wresting of this trade from the English. When Raamsdonk compares how English and Dutch authors treat ideas and concepts that are beyond the scope of imagology, she links these authors through their shared reliance on Dutch printing culture, which she describes as a transnational nexus where English authors and readers could publish or acquire controversial texts with fewer obstacles and less expense than would be the case in their home country.

In chapter 3, Raamsdonk compares and contrasts two country house poems, Marvell's *Upon Appleton House* and Huygens's *Hofwijck*, and then two poems with different genres but similar themes, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Vondel's *Lucifer*. In doing so, she refrains from rehearsing claims of direct textual influence asserted by previous scholars and even endeavors to refute these claims, adopting instead the theoretical stance that when two nations engage in cultural, financial, and martial exchange, the social, historical, and political contexts they share are sufficient to explain any parallels in their literary output. If Milton studies were to embrace such "indirect intertextuality" (17) as the basis for a comparative study, it would be a boon for the credibility of the field, as Milton would have needed more than one lifetime to read every source that Miltonists have found traces of in his work.

Chapter 4 seeks to overturn a monolithic view of Arminianism by distinguishing Dutch Arminianism and its toleration of all Christian practices, even Catholicism, from English Arminianism and its association with the intolerant policies of William

https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2023.283 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Laud. Raamsdonk aligns Milton and Marvell with Dutch Arminianism, as evidenced by their polemics advocating religious freedoms for Protestants; however, she notes that neither Milton nor Marvell was willing to extend these freedoms to Catholics. As for Arminian views on predestination, in chapter 5 Raamsdonk argues that for Milton, the story of Samson, an elected individual who appears to lose and regain divine grace, provided a problematic case for Calvinism and therefore an opportunity to express, in *Samson Agonistes*, his "agreement with three Arminian points (that grace is universal, grace is resistible, and free will is necessary for salvation)" (139). Marvell's tract *Remarks Upon a Late Disingenuous Discourse*, meanwhile, suggests to Raamsdonk that he was receptive to Arminian views on predestination, though not willing to profess them.

Overall, Raamsdonk's study lends support to the traditional portrayals of Marvell as a proponent of moderation and diplomacy and Milton as a promoter of revolution and debate. Their differences become most evident when Raamsdonk concludes, in chapter 6, that *Samson Agonistes* endorses acts of violence carried out by those faithfully interpreting God's will, a position untenable to Marvell, the author of numerous pacifistic texts. Still, the historical record suggests that the two men were friends. As for England and the Dutch Republic, Raamsdonk depicts the two states as too similar in their situations and aspirations to remain on friendly terms for long. Her book should prove most valuable to scholars of Milton and Marvell who are looking for fresh approaches to comparative readings of literature and culture.

Olin Bjork, *University of Houston-Downtown*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.283

*Ottoman Eurasia in Early Modern German Literature: Cultural Translations (Francisci, Happel, Speer)*. Gerhild Scholz Williams.
Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021. xii + 234 pp. $75.

The author of this book has set herself the goal of providing a better understanding of the impact of Ottoman-European contacts by focusing on the numerous and diverse intersections generated by the perception of Ottomans in seventeenth-century German-speaking Europe. From the outset, there is a tension between, on the one hand, a growing interest in this other that seems so close and with whom forms of coexistence developed, and, on the other hand, the violence of the contacts, an ambivalence that is well highlighted in recent works.

In what way does the abundant literary production devoted to the Turks in seventeenth-century Europe go beyond the now well-known theme of the so-called Turkish danger? Scholars are faced with such an abundance of writings on the Turks and their empire, whose genres and media are so diverse, that a choice is necessary. The

https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2023.283 Published online by Cambridge University Press