The New Milton Criticism seeks to emphasize ambivalence and discontinuity in Milton's work and to interrogate the assumptions and certainties in previous Milton scholarship. Contributors to the volume move Milton's open-ended poetics to the center of Milton studies by showing how analyzing irresolvable questions – religious, philosophical, and literary critical – transforms interpretation and enriches appreciation of his work. The New Milton Criticism encourages scholars to embrace uncertainties in his writings, rather than attempt to explain them away. Twelve critics from a range of countries, approaches, and methodologies explore these questions in new readings of Paradise Lost and other works. Sure to become a focus of debate and controversy in the field, this volume is a truly original contribution to early modern studies.

Peter C. Herman is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at San Diego State University.

Elizabeth Sauer is Professor of English at Brock University, Canada.
THE NEW MILTON CRITICISM

EDITED BY

PETER C. HERMAN

AND

ELIZABETH SAUER


## Contents

| Notes on contributors          | page vii |
| Acknowledgments                | xi       |
| Note on editions               | xii      |

**Introduction: Paradigms lost, paradigms found: the New Milton Criticism**

*Peter C. Herman and Elizabeth Sauer*

### PART I THEODICIES

1. **Milton’s fetters, or, why Eden is better than Heaven**
   *Richard Strier*
   
   25

2. **“Whose fault, whose but his own?”: Paradise Lost, contributory negligence, and the problem of cause**
   *Peter C. Herman*
   
   49

3. **The political theology of Milton’s Heaven**
   *John Rogers*
   
   68

4. **Meanwhile: (un)making time in Paradise Lost**
   *Judith Scherer Herz*
   
   85

5. **The Gnostic Milton: salvation and divine similitude in Paradise Regained**
   *Michael Bryson*
   
   102

6. **Discontents with the drama of regeneration**
   *Elizabeth Sauer*
   
   120
Contents

PART II CRITICAL RECEPTIONS

7. Against fescues and ferulas: personal affront and the path to individual liberty in Milton’s early prose
   Christopher D’Addario 139

8. Disruptive partners: Milton and seventeenth-century women writers
   Shannon Miller 156

9. Eve and the ironic theodicy of the New Milton Criticism
   Thomas Festa 175

10. Man and Thinker: Denis Saurat, and the old new Milton criticism
    Jeffrey Shoulson 194

11. The poverty of context: Cambridge School History and the New Milton Criticism
    William Kolbrener 212

12. Afterword
    Joseph A. Wittreich 231

Index 249
Notes on contributors

Michael Bryson is Associate Professor of English at California State University, Northridge. He is the author of *The Tyranny of Heaven: Milton’s Rejection of God as King* (2004). He has also written on the relationship between sacrifice, death, and community formation in the book of Judges (in Religion and Literature), and has recently finished the manuscript for a new book on “The Atheist Milton.”

Christopher D’Addario, Assistant Professor of English at Towson University, is author of *Exile and Journey in Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Cambridge, 2007). He has also written articles on John Donne, Abraham Cowley, and John Manningham’s Diary that have been published or are forthcoming in *The Huntington Library Quarterly, English Literary Renaissance*, and various essay collections. His current book project is on perceptions of the everyday in early modern England.


Peter C. Herman is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at San Diego State University. He is the author of *Royal Poetrie: Monarchic Verse and the Political Imaginary of Early Modern England* (2010), *Destabilizing Milton: “Paradise Lost” and the Poetics of Incertitude* (2005), and *A Short History of Early Modern England: British Literature*
He is also the editor of *Approaches to Teaching Milton’s Shorter Poetry and Prose* (2007), and the forthcoming *Approaches to Teaching Milton’s “Paradise Lost”*, 2nd edition.

**Judith Scherer Herz** is Professor of English at Concordia University in Montreal. She works on both early modern and early twentieth-century writing. She has published two books on E. M. Forster and numerous articles and essays on, among others, Leonard Woolf, Donne, and Milton. She is a former President of the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English and of the John Donne Society.

**William Kolbrener**, Professor of English at Bar-Ilan University, is author of *Milton’s Warring Angels* (Cambridge, 1997) and co-editor of *Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith* (2007). His essays on early modern writing have appeared in journals such as *English Literary History*, *Common Knowledge*, *The Eighteenth Century*, and *Milton Studies*. His book on Jewish hermeneutics and epistemology, *Open Minded Torah: Of Irony, Fundamentalism and Love* was published in 2011.

**Shannon Miller** is Professor and Chair of the English Department at Temple University. She has authored *Invested in Meaning: The Raleigh Circle in the New World* (1998) and *Engendering the Fall: John Milton and Seventeenth-Century Women Writers* (2008). She has also published articles on women writers of the early modern period, including Mary Wroth, Mary Sidney, Margaret Cavendish, and Aphra Behn. Her current book project is titled “On the Margins of History: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Pamphlet Collections.”

**John Rogers**, Professor of English at Yale University, authored *Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (1996), winner of the MLA Prize for a First Book, the James Holly Hanford Award (Milton Society of America), *Choice* magazine’s award for an Outstanding Academic Book in 1996, and the Samuel and Ronnie Heyman Prize for Outstanding Scholarly Publication by a Yale Junior Faculty Member in the Humanities. He has also published articles on Milton, Marvell, early modern gender relations, and women’s literary history in *English Literary History*, *Milton Studies*, the *Huntington Library Quarterly*, and in multiple essay collections. He has twice received awards from the Milton Society of America. *Milton’s Passion* is forthcoming.
Elizabeth Sauer, Professor of English at Brock University, has authored two books, “Paper-Contestations” and Textual Communities in England (2005) and Barbarous Dissonance and Images of Voice in Milton’s Epics (1996). She has also edited twelve volumes, including Milton and Toleration with Sharon Achinstein (2007), Milton and the Climates of Reading (2006), Reading Early Modern Women with Helen Ostovich (2004), and Books and Readers in Early Modern England with Jennifer Andersen (2002). She is the recipient of awards from the Milton Society of America; Choice; The Society for the Study of Early Modern Women; and the Canada Council for the Arts (Killam Research Fellowship).


Joseph A. Wittreich is Distinguished Professor in the Ph.D. Program in English at the CUNY Graduate Center and Honored Scholar of the Milton Society of America. His books include Why Milton Matters: A New Preface to His Writings (2006); Shifting Contexts: Reinterpreting “Samson Agonistes” (2003); Feminist Milton (1987); Interpreting “Samson
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, the editors want to thank Ray Ryan for his patience, wise guidance, and his confidence in this project, and we likewise extend our gratitude to the contributors for their diligence and collegiality, and for sharing their expertise with us. This volume also benefited tremendously from the constructive and incisive reports of the anonymous readers, which helped strengthen and sharpen our argument.

Peter C. Herman: I want to thank Joseph A. Wittreich for his work and for his example. Feisal Mohamed has been a worthy interlocutor, and John Rumrich consistently provided sage advice and much-needed encouragement. I owe my interest in law and literature to Constance Jordan, and I am privileged to have been, and continue to be, her student. I am also grateful to the Modern Language Association and the Renaissance Society of America for sponsoring panels on the New Milton Criticism, where some of these articles had their first public outing, and to the Milton and the Law Symposium at the University of London for inviting me to participate.

Elizabeth Sauer: I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Canada Council and Killam Trusts for a Killam Research Fellowship that provided invaluable release time. Additionally, I would like to thank the Social Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada for its generous research funding, and my colleagues and students at Brock University for their counsel and community. Christopher Stampone served as a tremendously efficient, rigorous, and conscientious research and editorial assistant for this project. Particularly influential for me has been the Milton scholarship by Joseph A. Wittreich, Balachandra Rajan, Paul Stevens, Sharon Achinstein, Nigel Smith, and Barbara Lewalski.

While the naming of debts in the acknowledgments is a pleasure, we also take this opportunity to remember four people who are no longer with us: Douglas A. Brooks, John T. Shawcross, Marshall Grossman, and James Paxson. All were stellar scholars, colleagues, and friends. All are deeply missed.
Note on editions