



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S29. Milton, Rights and Liberties

Thursday 31 August: 9.30-11.30am

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What status does Milton lend to rights and liberty in his works, whether prose or verse? What are his conceptions of related ideas such as law and justice? What heritage has he left us?

The Politics of Divorce

Christophe Tournu (University of Grenoble)

Whereas the royalists used the traditional analogy of king and father to support their claim that the king as father of his people (or husband to the kingdom) could not be resisted, the parliamentarians had to defeat the analogy. Milton came to their help by inventing a divorce logic which could be transferred to the relationship between the king and the people, i.e. what he supports in the private sphere could be ontologically related to the public sphere. Just as the private contract may be broken if the end of marriage is not attained, the public contract may be rescinded if the people are unhappy with their rulers. Love in marriage is what laws are for the political society -- a covenant of union.

The Separation Scene (*Paradise Lost*, IX, 204-386): Eve's liberty as the condition for private and public happiness

Antonella Piazza (University of Salerno)

The confrontation between Adam and Eve on the topic of separation, which precedes their fall, articulates poetically issues of liberty and happiness, both private and public, discussed by Milton in his *Divorce Tracts*. Milton's tripartite hierarchy of liberties: "ecclesiastical, domestic or private, and civil (*The Second Defense*, 1654)" rests upon the domestic or private sphere, which Milton posits as the fulcrum of ecclesiastical and civil liberties. But the 'separation scene' complicates and dramatizes the consecration of the conjugal romantic love based on mutuality and solidarity as the first unit of all other human institutions through a problematic representation of the couple as an asymmetric, unbalanced, gendered structure.

The Liberties of Intertextuality, or, Milton's Use of Isaiah 14, 12-15

Eva Oppermann (University of Kassel)

In my opinion, Milton used the Isaiah quote deliberately in *Paradise Lost*. There are several reasons hinted at when one compares both texts. Among them are the poetic value of both texts, a very strong auctorial narrator and a definitive message in Isaiah which could be used to influence the reader at the beginning of the epic. I have used Rohmann's concept of Creative and Archaeological Intertextuality for the comparison and my comments on the texts' relationship.

Milton and Paraeus

Noel Sugimura (New College, Oxford)

This paper examines Milton's use of Calvinist Resistance Theory as derived from Paraeus's *Commentary on Romans* (republished with David Owen's response on the eve of the Civil War in 1642). In *The Tenure*, Milton uses Paraeus's arguments for the right of the inferior magistrate over the superior, thereby wedding natural law to divine law. In so doing, he opposes the pacifism of the Royalists and also embarrasses the Presbyterians, who rejected natural law in favour of the Covenant Act. By adopting Paraeus's interpretation of the stories of Trajan's sword and Ambrose's rebuke to Theodosius, Milton thus constructs a theory of natural law and liberty of conscience fundamental to his antimonarchical treatise.

From Other to Brother: Postcolonial Constructions of Milton

Dirk Wiemann (University of Magdeburg)

This paper traces how Milton resurfaces in a selection of postcolonial texts and debates. What is at stake here is not only an assessment of Milton's own ambivalent position(s) towards empire, or a genealogy of the imperial orchestrations of Milton as an apex of English cultural superiority vis à vis the colonised, but the largely neglected reassessment of Milton in postcolonial writing itself, whether theoretical or literary. Focusing on the works of Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Dabydeen and Salman Rushdie, this paper delineates a move away from the polemical rejection of Milton as an emblem of white cultural supremacy towards an embrace of the empowering potentials inherent in both Milton's radicalism and the incertitude of his mature, post-revolutionary writings.