“Pursuing things yet unattempted” in literary criticism, Reginald A. Wilburn offers the first scholarly work to theorize African American authors’ rebellious appropriations of John Milton and his canon. This comparative and hybrid study engages African Americans’ transatlantic negotiations with perhaps the preeminent freedom writer in the English tradition.

Preaching the Gospel of Black Revolt: Appropriating Milton in Early African American Literature contends that early African American authors appropriated and remastered Milton by “completing and complicating” England’s epic poet of liberty with the intertextual originality of repetitive difference. Wilburn focuses on a diverse array of early African American authors, such as Phillis Wheatley, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Frederick Douglass, and Anna Julia Cooper, to name a few. He examines the presence of Milton in these works as a reflection of early African Americans’ rhetorical affiliations with the poet’s “satanic epic” for their own messianic purposes of freedom and racial uplift.

Wilburn explains that early African American authors were attracted to Milton because of his preeminent status in literary tradition, strong Christian convictions, and poetic mastery of the English language. This tripartite ministry makes Milton an especially indispensable intertext for authors whose writings and oratory were, sometimes, presumed “beneath the dignity of criticism.” Through close readings of canonical and obscure texts, Preaching the Gospel of Black Revolt explores how various authors rebelled against such assessments of black intellect by altering Milton’s meanings, themes, and figures beyond orthodox interpretations and imbuing them with hermeneutic shades of interpretive and cultural difference. However they remastered Milton, these artists respected his oeuvre as a sacred yet secular “talking book” of revolt, freedom, and cultural liberation.

Preaching the Gospel of Black Revolt particularly draws upon recent satanic criticism in Milton studies, placing it in dialogue with methodologies germane to African American literary studies. By exposing the subversive workings of an intertextual Middle Passage in black literacy, Wilburn invites scholars from diverse areas of specialization to traverse within and beyond the cultural veils of racial interpretation and along the color line in literary studies.

Reginald A. Wilburn is associate professor of English at the University of New Hampshire, where he teaches African American literature and drama, women’s literary traditions, and intertextuality studies. He has presented his work on Milton and African American literature and culture at the Modern Language Association; the International Milton Symposium in Tokyo, Japan; the African American Studies Spring Symposium at the University of Texas, San Antonio; and the Northeast Milton Seminar. Wilburn has published in Milton Studies and is a contributing author to Milton Now.
Milton and the Poetics of Freedom

Susanne Woods

In our contemporary Western culture, “freedom” is a powerful term with elastic meanings and contradictory uses; it has both driven rebellion and justified empire. John Milton's world, like our own, struggled to understand freedom within what was already considered a heritage of political and personal liberty, compounded in the seventeenth century by theological questions of freedom. In this important new study, Susanne Woods reveals Milton's central place in the evolution both of ideas of freedom in English-speaking culture and in creating a poetics that invites readers to enact the freedom Milton defines.

For Milton, we find, freedom is fundamentally about human choice; God gave humankind genuine free will, with reason and the light of conscience to enable choice. True freedom comes from who one is, formed and asserted by the choices one makes. This is true for the reader as well as for the author, Milton believed, and the result is what Woods terms an “invitational poetics.” By locating freedom in thoughtful choice, in other words, Milton must offer his reader opportunities to consider alternatives, even to his own well-argued positions.

In six chapters, Woods examines these invitational poetics on several levels: as they develop in Milton's prose and early poetry, in theory as well as practice; as they are expressed within prose sentences and lines of poetry through choices of diction and syntax; and as they inform character, plot, and genre. Chapter 1 connects Milton's most famous statement about his ongoing interest in liberty with debates that preceded him. Chapter 2 shows Milton's Elizabethan predecessors grappling with the possibilities and limits of poetic indirection. These background chapters allow us to see Milton's evolution toward a poetics of choice, followed by their confident manifestation in the great poems. Later chapters consider Paradise Lost as Milton's grand disquisition on knowledge, choice, and freedom; and Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes in relation to the ambiguities of choice and vocation. Finally, Milton is situated in relation to the most influential seventeenth-century political thinkers, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and Woods examines the influence of Areopagitica on political culture since Milton's time, placing Milton's ideas in a tradition that leads to modern contestations of freedom.

Susanne Woods is provost and professor of English emerita at Wheaton College (Massachusetts) and visiting scholar at the University of Miami. She also serves as a senior advisor to the Council of Independent Colleges. She has chaired three Modern Language Association divisions, served on the Executive Committee of the Milton Society of America, and served as chair of the Northeast Milton Seminar. She received the Inaugural Award for Special Achievement from the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women for her founding of the Brown University Women Writers Project. In addition to three other books, Woods has published over 40 articles on Renaissance poetry and poetics.

Rethinking Shakespeare's Skepticism

The Aesthetics of Doubt in the Sonnets and Plays

Suzanne M. Tartamella

In this original and compelling new study, Suzanne M. Tartamella casts new light on seemingly quite familiar material—Shakespeare's Sonnets and a number of his plays, including Hamlet, The Taming of the Shrew, and Antony and Cleopatra. By placing the Sonnets within the context of the literary history of praise poetry, and exploring the underlying influence of early modern skepticism on Shakespeare's writing, this book truly enhances our understanding of the subtleties and complexities in all of Shakespeare's work.

In our own contemporary culture of doubt and anxiety, investigating the classical skepticism present in Shakespeare's sonnets and plays deepens our sense of his relevance, suggesting that he could just as easily have traded ideas with Friedrich Nietzsche as with Ben Jonson or John Donne. To truly consider this Renaissance philosophy of doubt, Tartamella traces Shakespeare's relations with his poetic precursors, including Petrarch, Dante, and Sidney. During the Reformation, then, an age of radical experimentation and reform, Shakespeare revised conventional methods of praise by doing more than simply mocking or challenging these literary precursors; rather, he transformed a poetics of praise into a poetics of appraisal. Tartamella's approach here encompasses both new historicism and a wide-ranging history of ideas.

As a result, perhaps the most intriguing demonstration of this poetics and its manifestations are Tartamella's cross-genre examinations of the Sonnets and some of Shakespeare's best-known dramatic characters, drawing unique and original correlations. The sonnets to the young man, with their melancholy tenor, are linked to the ghost in Hamlet, while the more physical and combative sonnets to the dark lady are related to Katherina in The Taming of the Shrew. These complex relationships, further considered in her final discussion of Antony and Cleopatra and the ways in which it harmonizes the characteristic problems of both sonnet sequences, are truly at the heart of Shakespearean tragedy and comedy.

Students of both literature and philosophy will find this book important, as it offers a nuanced analysis of the intersections between literature and intellectual history, a comprehensive examination of Shakespeare's poetry and plays, the history of epideictic poetry, and an exploration of the impact of skepticism on the whole of Renaissance literature.

Suzanne M. Tartamella is assistant professor of English at Henderson State University and previously taught at Gettysburg College. Her work has previously appeared in English Literary Renaissance; this is her first book.

“An impressive and inspiring achievement. Tartamella discusses the sonnets in ways that are at once precise, persuasive, and game-changing. They will never look the same again.” —Anita Gilman Sherman, American University
Milton Studies
Volume 54
Edited by Laura L. Knoppers

Published annually by Duquesne University Press as an important forum for Milton scholarship and criticism, Milton Studies focuses on various aspects of John Milton’s life and writing, including biography; literary history; Milton’s work in its literary, intellectual, political, or cultural contexts; Milton’s influence on or relationship to other writers; and the history of critical response to his work.

The 11 essays in Milton Studies, volume 54, offer new and groundbreaking perspectives on topics of current scholarly interest. Contributors examine Milton’s angelic narrators; Adam’s nativity and vitalism; Miltonic authorship, gender, and music in Comus; satanic self-fashioning; Areopagitica and religion in the public sphere; Edenic worship and iconoclasm; the process of theology in De doctrina Christiana; Milton’s reworking of epic hospitality; Limbo and the Lucretian swerve; and early black women writers’ uses of Milton.

Contents:
The Question of “what Cause?”: Storytelling Angels and Versions of Causation in Paradise Lost • N. K. Sugimura
Adam’s Awakening and the Feeling of Being Alive in Paradise Lost • Timothy M. Harrison
Milton: The Muses, the Prophets, the Spirit, and Prophetic Poetry • Barbara K. Lewalski
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Praying in Paradise: Recasting Milton’s Iconoclasm in Paradise Lost • Rhema Hokama
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Propitious Guests: Paradise Lost and Epic Hospitality • Swen Voekel
Satire and Speculation in Milton’s Limbo • Christopher Kendrick
Milton’s Early Black Sisterhood • Reginald A. Wilburn

Laura L. Knoppers is Liberal Arts Research Professor of English at the Pennsylvania State University. In addition to having edited a number of collections, she is the author of Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton’s Eve; Constructing Cromwell: Ceremony, Portrait, and Print, 1645–1661; and Historicizing Milton: Spectacle, Power, and Poetry in Restoration England, which was named a Choice Outstanding Academic Book. Her scholarly edition of Milton’s Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes won the 2008 John Shawcross Award from the Milton Society of America. She is past chair of the Northeast Milton Seminar and past president of the Milton Society of America.

Levinas and Asian Thought
Edited by Leah Kalmanson, Frank Garrett & Sarah Mattice

While influential works have been devoted to comparative studies of various Asian philosophies and continental philosophers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida, this collection is the first to fully treat the increased interest in intercultural and interdisciplinary studies related to the work of Emmanuel Levinas in such a context. Levinas and Asian Thought seeks to discover common ground between Levinas’s ethical project and various religious and philosophical traditions of Asia such as Mahāyāna Buddhism, Theravāda Buddhism, Vedism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Islam.

In these 13 essays, contributors draw on resources as diverse as the self-sacrificial ethic of bushido, Islamic jurisprudence, and contemporary research in cognitive science. The essays are organized around three primary themes of enduring ethical, political, and religious importance. The first set of essays considers a dialogue between Levinasian and Asian accounts of the self, others, and the intersubjective relationship. Through a conversation with a variety of non-Western traditions, the second group of essays addresses the question of Levinas’s extreme portrayal of the self’s responsibility to the other and its potential limits. Finally, the collection ends with essays that utilize Asian thought and culture to consider ways in which Levinas’s ethics of alterity might be put into practice in the sphere of politics, social norms, and institutions.

Levinas and Asian Thought is not only a comprehensive attempt to bring Levinas into conversation with the philosophies of Asia, but it also represents a focused effort to recognize, address, and overcome Levinas’s own Eurocentrism. Overall, the thoughtful investigations collected here chart new territory, pushing Levinas’s practice of philosophy outside its familiar European and Jewish contexts, expanding our understanding of key Levinasian terms, thus furthering the thinking necessary for ethics as first philosophy. This volume will be of interest to a wide range of scholars and students, as it builds connections among Levinas studies, Asian philosophy, comparative philosophy, continental philosophy, and ethics.

Leah Kalmanson is assistant professor of philosophy and religion at Drake University. She is the coeditor of Confucianism in Context and has published essays in Continental Philosophy Review, Hypatia, and Shofar.

Frank Garrett is an independent scholar in continental philosophy. He has taught at Baiko Gakuin University in Japan and was a 2001 Fulbright scholar.

Sarah Mattice is assistant professor of comparative philosophy at the University of North Florida. Her work has appeared in Asian Philosophy, Philosophy Compass, and Comparative and Continental Philosophy.

Contributors:
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Steven Shankman
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December 2013
$28.00s paper
304 pages
Ontology after Ontotheology
Plurality, Event, and Contingency
in Contemporary Philosophy

Gert-Jan van der Heiden

After the vehement critique of metaphysics in the twentieth century, ontology has again found its place at the center of continental philosophy. Yet this does not mean that the way in which metaphysics and ontology are understood has not been affected by these criticisms, the so-called “linguistic turn” of hermeneutics and deconstruction. In fact, as Gert-Jan van der Heiden demonstrates, the themes and concepts of contemporary continental metaphysics are highly influenced by the different versions of the account of classical metaphysics as ontotheology. Thus, contemporary thought seeks to recover a sense of the absolute, but without recourse to specifically theological underpinnings.

Working largely with present-day thinkers who take seriously Heidegger’s critique of ontotheology—authors such as Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy, Claude Romano, Quentin Meillassoux, and Giorgio Agamben—van der Heiden returns with them to the question of ontology rather than rejecting the question altogether. As the book’s title suggests, he maps this contemporary debate in terms of three axes: plurality; the event and contingency; and, finally, an ethics proper to a thinking receptive to contingency.

Rather than affirming either the speculative or the hermeneutic-phenomenological school of thought, van der Heiden shows how these schools, each in their own way, are concerned with similar themes and sources of inspiration. In particular, he assesses and critiques the ways in which philosophers today deal with these concepts to offer an alternative to ontotheology. The question of contingency, he argues, is the most challenging issue for present-day ontology, and ontology today can only be an ontology of contingency.

Gert-Jan van der Heiden is professor of metaphysics at Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. He is the author of *The Truth (and Untruth) of Language* and *De stem van de doden (The Voice of the Dead)*, coeditor of the series Studies in Contemporary Phenomenology, and has also served as coeditor of *Investigating Intersubjectivity*. Van der Heiden’s work has appeared in *Philosophy Today, International Journal for Philosophy and Theology*, and *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*.

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Levinas Studies
An Annual Review, Volume 8

Edited by Jeffrey Bloechl

Levinas Studies: An Annual Review is dedicated to scholarly work on the innovations and implications of the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, one of the twentieth century’s most eminent philosophers and religious thinkers. This series strives to advance reflection on Levinas’s thinking, in its pertinence for fields including philosophy, psychology, religious studies, theology, and the study of literature.

Volume 8 specifically addresses the current debate among scholars regarding the relation between Levinas’s talmudic writings and his philosophical work. By engaging Levinas on such questions concerning Judaism and philosophy, and the relationship between text and inspiration, these eight essays take those issues considerably further into the field. Specifically, the authors treat Levinas and his contemporary thinkers Jacques Lacan and Vladimir Jankélévitch, his interest in the writing of Shakespeare and Léon Bloy, his philosophy of language and exegesis, and finally, Levinasian meditations on Hebrew texts of Scripture.

Contents:
Introduction • Jeffrey Bloechl
Levinas and Lacan: Faced with the Eclipse of Christianity • Guy-Félix Duportail
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Jeffrey Bloechl is associate professor of philosophy at Boston College and honorary professor of philosophy at the Australian Catholic University. He has published widely in contemporary European thought and philosophy of religion. He is currently working on book-length studies of philosophy of religion in the wake of Heidegger and on Freud’s later work. Bloechl is also the founding editor of *Levinas Studies: An Annual Review*. 
Books published in this series break fresh ground concerning our understanding of communication by employing the thinking of continental philosophy to investigate the phenomena of communication. With communication understood as the manner in which human beings together find the world meaningful, the studies in this series are concerned in one way or another with interpretation (hermeneutics), responsibility to the other (ethics), and the sociopolitical consequences of being-in-the-world (critical theory).

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Ramsey Eric Ramsey is associate dean of Barrett, the Honors College, and associate professor in the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University. He is the author of Leaving Us to Wonder: An Essay on the Questions Science Can’t Ask (coauthored with the biologist Linda Wiener) and The Long Path to Nearness, a philosophical contribution to communication theory and ethics.

Amit Pinchevski is senior lecturer in the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. He is the author of By Way of Interruption: Levinas and the Ethics of Communication and coeditor of two books, Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication and Ethics of Media.

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