



PROJECT MUSE®

The Chinese Impact upon English Renaissance Literature: A Globalization and Liberal Cosmopolitan Approach to Donne and Milton by Mingjun Lu (review)

Susan Broomhall

Parergon, Volume 36, Number 2, 2019, pp. 226-227 (Review)

Published by Australian and New Zealand Association of Medieval and Early Modern Studies (Inc.)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/pgn.2019.0086>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/742764>

This is highly interesting, though Lemon may not appreciate pledging's full implications. She presents it as something disapproved of initially by both secular and godly writers. However, the situation was possibly more complicated. The Dutch Revolt pitted Protestant patriots, aided by England, against Catholic Spain, so soldiers' health drinking potentially had jingoistic, sectarian overtones. If these continued after pledging established in England, how might Catholics have responded? Jonson was certainly Catholic, Shakespeare possibly so: their wariness conceivably had a sectarian aspect. If so, did England's increasingly Protestant culture release puritans to condemn the practice on moral grounds, while its dissipating religious significance enabled royalists to appropriate it for use in a new political contest? This merits further investigation. Such a qualification, though, does not invalidate Lemon's argument: it builds upon it, testament to its power to engage the reader.

Overall, the work succeeds in unfolding changing understandings of addiction, drawing attention to its forgotten links to devotion. Lemon amply demonstrates that addiction involved abandonment to something beyond oneself: God; the beloved; a community or cause; a substance. Such addictions might be estimable, but could have deleterious consequences, depending on the source of addiction. Addiction also interfered with legal notions of selfhood and responsibility; there was uncertainty whether the addict controlled or was controlled by the addiction. In prompting scholars to pay closer attention to the word's implications, the work performs valuable service. Readers are unlikely to take the term or concept for granted in future.

PATRICK BALL, *University of Tasmania*

Lu, Mingjun, *The Chinese Impact upon English Renaissance Literature: A Globalization and Liberal Cosmopolitan Approach to Donne and Milton* (Transculturalisms, 1400–1700), Farnham, Ashgate, 2015; hardback; pp. 248; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9781472461254.

This is an intellectual history of globalization; how ideas about China, as a material and cultural presence, were received and treated in seventeenth-century texts and literature. Mingjun Lu's argument is that key intellectual values of cosmopolitan Europe came about by interactions with other cultures, and that these negotiations and the values that they produce can be seen in its literature. Donne and Milton, among others, are sites for such negotiations, drawing upon ideas about China that filtered through what were perceived to be Chinese goods and through reports of Jesuits, both of which updated older ideas about Cathay already operating in European culture.

Before the eighteenth century and its interests in chinoiserie, Lu claims that China plays a role in Europe that has not been recognized by scholars thus far more interested in interactions with Moorish, Jewish, and American peoples in this period. Lu suggests that contemporaries were unsettled by the place of China, perceived as self-sufficient, not inferior nor enemy, in a European hierarchical

order of world cultures. For Lu, ‘enlightened thinkers’ (p. 26) such as Donne and Milton, who engaged with cultural pluralism and developed an ‘enlightened cosmopolitanism’ (p. 27) through their intellectual encounters with China, ‘planted the very seeds of Western liberalism that was to witness a full blossoming in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment’ (p. 27).

The first chapter examines Spanish coinage in Donne’s elegy *The Bracelet* as a global flow of precious metals and global commerce that provided the platform for international cultural exchanges. Lu then studies Donne’s image of Anyan in ‘Hymn to God; My God, in My Sickness’ to argue for the poet’s global vision and what she terms theological cosmopolitanism, a willingness to engage with a globalized world into which Christian theology might be placed. The third chapter explores his engagement with the radical chronological difference of the Eastern annals from the biblical symbolic economy. Although she concludes that Donne was unsuccessful in his attempts to assimilate Chinese chronology into a scriptural timeframe, his efforts reveal him to be an intellectually flexible, cultural pluralist.

In the fourth chapter, Lu analyses how Milton engaged with the influential controversy surrounding Joseph Scaliger’s use of Juan González de Mendoza’s work *Great and Mighty Kingdom of China*, to develop a universal chronology. In both Chapter 3, for Donne, and Chapter 4, for Milton, Lu argues that these poets were negotiating a powerful Other that destabilized their worldview, and developing a global perspective. Milton, she argues, was willing to engage with alternative accounts of time in his representation of biblical time and world histories in *Paradise Lost*, with contemporary claims for the primacy of Chinese language, and with the idea of common ground between languages. Milton is cosmopolitan, for Lu, in the sense that he can accommodate the notion of linguistic diversity in the same way that his allusions to the world empire forged by the Mongol Tartars could serve (not uncritically) a comparative exploration of ideas about empires.

Lu’s exploration of Donne and Milton from this perspective is novel, although at times her insistence on the connections in their work and ‘enlightened’ views feels somewhat forced. With the exception of the first chapter’s focus on early modern commercial developments, the other case studies analyse how European works about China influenced Donne’s and Milton’s thinking. Lu’s Donne and Milton are thus sedentary global travellers and exemplars of an early modern imaginative reception of Chinese culture.

SUSAN BROOMHALL, *The University of Western Australia*

Lucas, Adam, *Ecclesiastical Lordship, Seigneurial Power and the Commercialization of Milling in Medieval England*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2014; hardback; pp. 436; 37 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £90.00; ISBN 9781409421962.

While most scholars agree as to the importance of innovation and technology adoption, the questions surrounding these phenomena, that is, their determinants,