

Making Darkness Light: A Life of John Milton. Joe Moshenska.
 New York: Basic Books, 2021. 464 pp. \$35.

Making Darkness Light is luminous: beautifully written, rich, and uniquely combining biography and autobiography, literary criticism and scholarship, the personal and the professional. Published by the prestigious Basic Books, this book is a welcome crossover, speaking to a general (literate) audience but also to Miltonists (with forty pages of endnotes), offering fresh insights for all who work on Milton. *Making Darkness Light* embodies a new kind of scholarship that goes against the assumption that the personal should be kept separate from (and out of) the professional—also seen in James Kuzner’s *The Form of Love* (2021) and Rachel Eisendrath’s *Gallery of Clouds* (2021). Moshenska’s is a book I will treasure and recommend to my students. It brings Milton and his poetry alive.

This is a big book. Sharing Milton’s preoccupation with “the place of literature in a life” (12), Moshenska explores connections between Milton’s poetry and Milton’s life and experiences: from birth, through schooling and travels to Europe and Italy, to marriage and the politico-religious turmoil of the Civil War period, and its aftermath until his death.

The book divides into three parts. Part 1 illustrates the beginning of Milton’s life, measuring time and rhythms, culminating in a reading of “Nativity Ode.” Part 2 focuses on Milton’s late twenties and early thirties, “Lycidas,” travels to Europe and Italy, meeting with Galileo, and how the Italian/Florentine experience entered Milton’s poems. Part 3 covers the second half of Milton’s life, the political situation, *Areopagitica*, Milton’s blindness, *De Doctrina Christiana* and Milton’s unusual theology, *Paradise Lost*, and *Samson Agonistes*.

Every chapter is given the title of a specific date (e.g., 26 May 1658) and a short relevant quotation from Milton. Each chapter starts with an imagined scene from Milton’s life (full of fascinating detail), then proceeds in a circling way, bringing in the poetry and some of the prose, as if taking a tour that yields rare discoveries. Travel, as Moshenska says in a statement that applies as much to himself as to Milton, is a way of making the real world and the imagined world of books connect. We travel through Milton’s life—the places he lived, studied, and visited—and Moshenska travels (often with his friend and former teacher Sean) to many of these places, trying to experience Milton or capture Milton’s experience. Chapter 9 begins with him imagining the experience of Mary Powell, appalled at her early, enforced marriage to Milton. Place and time matter. Moshenska takes us along on the journey just as Milton has taken him on a journey—imaginative, intellectual, and often moving, especially when Moshenska returns more fully in the last chapter to the autobiographical, his personal engagement, and the insight he has gained in grappling with Milton.

Moshenska’s Milton is complicated, pulled between engagement and withdrawal, unsettled and unsettling. Milton’s writings are “a constant provocation to shake every monument that confronts it” (27). Moshenska brings out the strangeness of his poetry.

He tries to inhabit the strangeness of Milton's "Nativity Ode" (the poem had never done much for me before), the opening of "Lycidas," the long sentence that begins *Paradise Lost*. The book ends with Milton's death—Moshenska raising the question of what monument he might have wanted or deserved—and Samson's father promising to build a monument for his dead son in *Samson Agonistes*. To be comfortable with what is strange is a necessary art, perhaps, of living.

Making Darkness Light demonstrates how reading literature changes our lives (it is an encounter with the different, the novel, what is not "me"), and writers' lives shape what they write—Milton's and Moshenska's. His Milton lived in an in-between state, never quite fully belonging (e.g., not fitting into any conventionally Christian category), and thus Moshenska (a British Jew and atheist) has a deep affinity with him, his very difference allowing him special insight. This book has transformed me (I read every word of it, taking my time)—not just because, like Moshenska, I am a Jew who powerfully connects with Milton's writings, but also because this book shows how early modern literature can speak to others who are culturally, ethnically, racially different, and why literature matters. The humanities and those of us who are specialists will not long survive if we only speak among ourselves.

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Scottish Colonial Literature: Writing the Atlantic, 1603–1707. Kristen Sandrock. Edinburgh Critical Studies in Atlantic Literatures and Cultures. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021. x + 230 pp. \$100.

Kristen Sandrock's *Scottish Colonial Literature: Writing the Atlantic, 1603–1707* is a welcome incursion into the field of postcolonial Scottish studies. With a steady hand, Sandrock's work adeptly guides the reader through an understudied era of Scottish history, utilizing lesser-known works of literature to illuminate and elucidate the underlying political, social, and economic currents of the time. Throughout the text the reader is immersed in the long seventeenth century and the complex peculiarities of Scotland between the Union of the Crowns and the Act of Union. Sandrock's decision to situate her work within this timeframe is a sound one and serves the text well in truly addressing a lacuna in literary and historical studies.

Crucially, Sandrock does not shy away from questions that have long been ignored in Scottish studies as to Scotland's role in the murky world of empire-building. What emerges is a nuanced study that peels back the idea of Scotland as an unwilling and beleaguered participant in aggressive colonialism, and offers a much deeper reading of a nation deploying its own sense of victimhood in order to justify actions abroad. With Scottish universities such as Aberdeen and Glasgow recently making steps to