Rachel Trubowitz, "Reading Milton and Newton in the Radical Reformation: Poetry, Mathematics, and Religion." *ELH* 84. 1 (2017): 33-62.

In her daring article, Rachel Trubowitz aims to show how Milton applies mathematics in his prose and poetic works similarly to the way in which Newton thinks about poetry in relation to mathematics, as these two thinkers, she argues, should not only be reinterpreted in relation to the Radical Reformation, but also in light of each other. Without claiming that Milton possibly influenced Newton, the author explores the analogies which are apparent in their attitude to certain heresies and their response to orthodoxical misconceptions, such as idolatry.

This lengthy article is made up of five sections; the introduction starts with the establishment of the critical context in which the author places her study. Trubowitz explains that in spite of having positioned Milton and Newton on opposite extremes of early modern philosophical thought (relating Milton to outdated, and Newton to progressive ideas) there have recently been several attempts to place both authors in the context of Radical Reformation, and to revise their theological writings; a trend that the present study continues. The author goes on to review the reception and relevant criticism concerning Newton's metaphorical understanding of mathematics, and Milton's application of Zeno's paradoxes and other mathematical analogies in his poetry. She makes an important point when she demonstrates that Newton's early mathematics and his later theological thought are consistent, and that his theory of fluxions and fluents "metaphorically pointed at something beyond mathematics - to God's persevering power" (36). She then explores the possible sources and contemporary texts on alchemy that inspired Newton's interest in poetry and that informed the metaphors elaborated in his *Quaestiones quædam Philosophiæ* (1661-65). Trubowwitz, goes on to study Milton's prose works, such as the *Second Defense* (1653), in which he demonstrates his knowledge of the sciences and employs mathematical analogies to address the limited possibilities of language. Milton, like Newton, uses poetry and mathematics as semiotic systems and as instruments through which it is possible to approximate divine truth.

A commonality between the two authors, she argues in section one of the article, "Literalism, Heresy and the Noachide Code," can be found in their rejection of idolatry and other irrationalities of orthodoxy, which manifests itself in their acceptance of certain heretical ideas, such as antitrinitarianism, mortalism and their strict reliance on Scripture. Although, as Trubowitz herself admits, it is difficult to reconstruct how these ideas entered the philosophies of Milton and Newton, nevertheless their influence is obvious, which she proves via quotations from both primary and secondary sources. The second section of the article, entitled "Newton's fluxions and the poetics of redemption," explores more profoundly the proximity of Milton's and Newton's thought. Similarly to Newton's theory of calculus and kinesthetic theory, Milton's emphasis on the primacy of motion demonstrate that they had in common a dynamic mortalist vision of the universe, regarding the End of Days as the most important event in history that proves the power of divine providence.

The most interesting and novel part of the article is elaborated in the third section, "Milton, Death and the Mathematics of Falling". Here, Trubowitz's exposition of Milton's double description of death as free fall and as an allegorical entity portrayed

in *Paradise Lost*, provides a political interpretation of the much-discussed episode, which, she argues, is Milton's way of showing how orthodoxy distorts perception and encourages superstition. Another fascinating point the author makes in the fourth section, "Mathematics, Poetry and Prophecy," concerns the analogy between the theory of fluxions and the understanding of the relationship between the Son and the Father, as conceived by Newton. The advantage of mathematical analogy is that, apparently, it clarifies better than typology the Son's status as "divine similitude," which in the Arian understanding means that the Son is perfectly alike to the Father, yet not identical. As Trubowitz writes, "The likeness between the Son and the Father is to be understood in terms of the relationship between quantities that tend to infinity and infinity itself, which is not a quantity at all in any commonplace sense" (54).

The article concludes that both thinkers believe that mathematics restores clarity to the obscurities of prophetic language. Thus it is necessary to approach God's two interlocking books (those of nature and scripture) from a mathematical/prophetical vantage point, and to relate the different disciplines through analogies and metaphors.

Trubowitz's article is a challenging and engaging read, which also raises awareness of the necessity for literary critics to read and be well-versed in non-literary texts, as the theory of fluxions and its relationship to Milton's works require a deep understanding of mathematics. Without sufficient knowledge of calculus itself, in fact, readers might feel themselves obliged to do some research outside the article in order to fully appreciate its content. Nevertheless, the article intelligently highlights how poetry and science in Milton's and Newton's time were not conflicting, but complementary mind tools through which to access a prelapsarian knowledge of divine will.

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