



# **Melville & Milton: An Edition and Analysis of Melville's Annotations on Milton (Medieval & Renaissance Literary Studies)**

*Robin Grey*

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Two decades ago, Herman Melville's marked and annotated copy of John Milton's poetry first came to light. This was the most substantial and tangible evidence of the deep connections between the two authors since Henry R. Pommer's speculative study on Milton and Melville was published a half century ago. Featuring a foreword by John Bryant, this study brings together both Melville and Milton scholars in the same text, and makes available the important artistic connections between these two great authors. Also shared for the first time in this study are Melville's copious annotations to Milton's works, including numerous erased annotations that have only been partially recovered, a significant number of marginal markings and underlinings, all of which together offer us a chance to see one great author's provocative and idiosyncratic response to another. In addition to these annotations, the essays presented here suggest that Milton and his poetry fascinated Melville, provoking him at times to artistic competition in depicting the sublime, providing at other times a measure of companionship as they both explored religious heresies and civil wars in their respective ages. Melville enjoys Milton's combativeness toward institutions, civil and religious, as well as Milton's exposure of the grimness of civil war. But Melville, at times, appears annoyed with Milton's attempts to uphold the absurdities of religious doctrine -- to lend credibility and artistic authority to an otherwise questionable theology. Milton's assurances of faith are beyond Melville's ken, and his theodicy, *Paradise Lost*, a glorious failure. For Milton scholars, this study demonstrates Milton's very vital artistic and theological "afterlife" in America. For Melville scholars, this book shows Melville in American culture and history; his influence on studies in textuality and performativity and in theology and literary genre.

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