

Milton in Context

EDITED BY

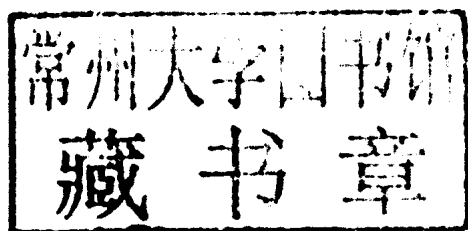
Stephen B. Dobranski



CAMBRIDGE

MILTON IN CONTEXT

STEPHEN B. DOBRANSKI



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521518987

© Cambridge University Press 2010

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Milton in context / edited by Stephen B. Dobranski.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-521-51898-7 (hardback)

1. Milton, John, 1608–1674 – Criticism and interpretation. 2. Milton, John, 1608–1674 –
Knowledge – England. 3. Milton, John, 1608–1674 – Knowledge – History. 4. Milton, John,
1608–1674 – Political and social views. 5. Milton, John, 1608–1674 – Contemporaries.
6. England – Intellectual life – 17th century. I. Dobranski, Stephen B. II. Title.

PR3583.M57 2009

821'.4 – dc22 2009030742

ISBN 978-0-521-51898-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

MILTON IN CONTEXT

Few early modern poets engaged more fully with their historical circumstances than John Milton. A pamphleteer, government employee, and writer of occasional verse, Milton did not retreat from public life even after his political hopes were dashed by the Restoration. This volume investigates the various ways in which Milton's works and experiences emerged from the culture and events of his time. In a series of concise, engaging essays, an international group of scholars examines both the social conditions of Milton's life and the broader intellectual currents that shaped his writings and reputation. A uniquely wide range of topics is covered: from biography to translations, from astronomy to philosophy, and from the English Church to the civil wars. *Milton in Context* is an accessible reference work that both students and scholars will turn to again and again to enrich their understanding of Milton's writings and his world.

STEPHEN B. DOBRANSKI is Professor of English at Georgia State University. He is the author of *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge, 1999); *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005); and *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton: "Samson Agonistes"* (2009). He is also co-editor, with John Rumrich, of *Milton and Heresy* (Cambridge, 1998).

Illustration acknowledgments

The photograph of Bruegel's *Paradise* (fig. 2) is reproduced by permission of Bildarchiv PreuBischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, New York. The frontispiece to the Geneva Bible, 1610 (fig. 3) and images by Louis Chéron, Richard Westall, and Edward Burney (figs. 5 and 7–10) were reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, whose staff produced the digital images. Special thanks are due to Aaron Greenlee of the Rare Books Department. Images by Bernard Lens and Francis Hayman (figs. 4 and 6) come from photographs provided by the William Andrews Clark Library, University of California, Los Angeles. William Blake's 1808 illustration to *Paradise Lost*, book v (fig. 11) is reproduced by permission of the Boston Museum of Fine Art, whose staff produced the original photograph. Blake's 1807 illustration of the same scene (fig. 12) is reproduced by permission of the Huntington Art Collections, San Marino, California, whose staff produced the digital image. The photographs of John Martin's mezzotints (figs. 13–14) were made by the Special Collections staff at the University of Southern California Library, Los Angeles. The two images from Jane Giraud's *Flowers of Milton* (figs. 15–16) were taken by Dawn Finley from a copy of the work owned by Virginia James Tufte. Images by Carlotta Petrini (figs. 17–18) come courtesy of the Limited Editions Club and the Clark Library; those by Mary Elizabeth Groom (figs. 19–20) by courtesy of the Golden Cockerel Press and the Clark Library. Images of Alexis Smith's *Snake Path*, 1992 (figs. 21–23) are used by permission of the Stuart Collection, University of California, San Diego, photography by Philipp Scholz Rittermann. The image of William Leighton's *The Teares or Lamentacions of a Sorrowfull Soule* is by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Notes on contributors

IAN W. ARCHER is Fellow, Tutor, and University Lecturer in History at Keble College, Oxford. He is the author of *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991) and various articles on the social and political history of early modern London. He is Literary Director of the Royal Historical Society and General Editor of its online Bibliography of British History. With Paulina Kewes and Felicity Heal he co-directs the Oxford Holinshed Project.

JOAN S. BENNETT is Professor of English at the University of Delaware. She is the author of *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems* (Cambridge, MA, 1989). Her articles on Milton have appeared in journals such as *PMLA* and *Milton Studies* as well as in collections such as *Milton and Heresy* (Cambridge, 1998), *The Cambridge Companion to Milton* (Cambridge, 1999), and *Milton in the Age of Fish* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2006).

AMY BOESKY is Associate Professor of English at Boston College, Massachusetts. She is the author of *Founding Fictions: Utopias in Early Modern England* (Athens, GA, 1996) and co-editor, with Mary Crane, of *Form and Reform in Renaissance England: Essays in Honor of Barbara Kiefer Lewalski* (Newark, 2000).

CEDRIC C. BROWN is Professor of English and former Dean of Arts and Humanities at the University of Reading. In Milton studies he is the author of *John Milton's Aristocratic Entertainments* (Cambridge, 1985); *John Milton: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke, 1995); and numerous essays. He is general editor of the series *Early Modern Literature in History* (forty volumes to date), and his present interests concern the discourses of friendship exchange.

GREGORY CHAPLIN is Assistant Professor of British Literature at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts. He is co-editor, with John

Rumrich, of *Seventeenth-Century British Poetry, 1603–1660* (New York, 2005). He has published articles on Ben Jonson and Milton in *ELH*, *Modern Philology*, and *PMLA*, and he is currently working on a study of Milton and Renaissance friendship.

ANN BAYNES COIRO is Associate Professor of English at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She is the author of several essays on Milton as well as *Robert Herrick's "Hesperides" and the Epigram Book Tradition* (Baltimore, 1988). She is co-editor, with Thomas Fulton, of the forthcoming collection, *Rethinking Historicism: Essays in Early Modern Literature and Culture*, and she is presently completing a book on Milton and drama.

JOHN CREASER is Emeritus Professor of Royal Holloway, University of London, and Emeritus Fellow of Mansfield College, Oxford, and until recently had for many years been Executive Secretary of the Malone Society. He has edited plays by Middleton and Jonson (including *Bartholomew Fair* for the forthcoming *Cambridge Works of Ben Jonson*), and written extensively on Milton, Jonson, and other seventeenth-century poets.

DENNIS DANIELSON is Professor of English at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. He is the author of *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (Cambridge, 1982) and *The First Copernican: Georg Joachim Rheticus and the Rise of the Copernican Revolution* (New York, 2006); and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Milton* (Cambridge, 1989, 1999) and *Paradise Lost, Parallel Prose Edition* (Vancouver, 2008).

STEPHEN B. DOBRANSKI is Professor of English at Georgia State University. He is the author of *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge, 1999); *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005); and *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton: "Samson Agonistes"* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2009). He is also co-editor, with John Rumrich, of *Milton and Heresy* (Cambridge, 1998; rpt. 2008).

PHILLIP J. DONNELLY is Associate Professor of Literature in the Honors College at Baylor University, Texas, where he teaches in the Great Texts Program and the English Department. He is the author of *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning: Narrative and Protestant Toleration* (Cambridge, 2009).

KAREN L. EDWARDS is Senior Lecturer in the English Department at the University of Exeter. She is the author of *Milton and the Natural World*:

Science and Poetry in "Paradise Lost" (Cambridge, 1999) and of *Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary* (currently being published in twice-yearly issues of *Milton Quarterly*).

J. MARTIN EVANS is William R. Kenan Professor in the English Department, Stanford University. He is the author of *"Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford, 1968); *The Road from Horton* (Victoria, 1983); *Milton's Imperial Epic* (Ithaca, NY, 1996); and *The Miltonic Moment* (Lexington, KY, 1998). He is also editor of *John Milton: Twentieth Century Perspectives* (New York, 2003)

STEPHEN M. FALLON is John J. Cavanaugh Professor in the Humanities at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. He is the author of *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca, NY, 1991) and *Milton's Peculiar Grace: Self-Representation and Authority* (Ithaca, NY, 2007). He is also co-editor, with William Kerrigan and John Rumrich, of *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton* (New York, 2007).

NEIL FORSYTH is Professor of English at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. He also teaches in Geneva. He co-edited *Milton, Rights and Liberties* (Bern, 2006) and is the author of *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, 1989) and *The Satanic Epic* (Princeton, 2003), as well as the recent *John Milton: A Biography* (Oxford, 2008).

WENDY FURMAN-ADAMS is Professor of English at Whittier College, California. She is co-editor of *Renaissance Rereadings: Intertext and Context* (Urbana, IL, 1988) and a special edition of *Milton Studies*, volume 28, *Riven Unities: Authority and Experience, Self and Other in Milton's Poetry* (1993). Her articles on Milton – many written in collaboration with Virginia Tufte – have appeared in *Philological Quarterly*, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, *Milton Quarterly*, and *Milton Studies*, as well as in various multi-author collections.

LYNNE GREENBERG is Associate Professor of English at Hunter College, New York. She has published several articles on Milton and is the author of *The Body Broken* (New York, 2009) and editor of *Legal Treatises in The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works* (Aldershot, UK, 2005).

PITT HARDING is Associate Professor at Jacksonville State University, Alabama. He is the author of " 'Strange point and new!': Satan's Challenge to Nascent Christianity," in *Uncircumscribed Mind: Reading Milton*

Deeply, ed. Charles W. Durham and Kristin A. Pruitt (Selinsgrove, PA, 2008), and "Milton's Serpent and the Birth of Pagan Error," *Studies in English Literature* 47 (2007).

RANDALL INGRAM is Professor of English and Director of the Humanities Program at Davidson College, North Carolina. He is the author of essays on early modern media and poetry, including "The Writing Poet" on Milton's 1645 *Poems* in *Milton Studies* (1997).

EDWARD JONES is Associate Professor of English at Oklahoma State University and the editor of *Milton Quarterly*. In addition to authoring several articles on Milton, he is preparing a new edition of Milton's state papers for the *Oxford Complete Works of John Milton* and serving as the commentary editor for books VII and VIII of *Paradise Lost* for *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton*.

N. H. KEEBLE is Senior Deputy Principal and Professor of English Studies at the University of Stirling, Scotland. His publications include *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1982); *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester, 1987); *The Restoration: England in the 1660s* (Oxford, 2002); a two-volume *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Oxford, 1991, with Geoffrey F. Nuttall); and editions of texts by Baxter, Bunyan, Defoe, Hutchinson, and Marvell.

P. J. KLEMP is Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. The Senior Editor of *Milton Quarterly* and Associate General Editor of *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton*, he is the author of bibliographies of Milton and essays on Andrewes, Laud, Spenser, Dante, and Petrarch.

ALBERT C. LABRIOLA passed away while this book was in production. He was Acting Dean of the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts at Duquesne University, Pennsylvania, and General Editor of *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton*. He was also editor of *Milton Studies*, and Secretary (1974–2009) of The Milton Society of America.

BARBARA K. LEWALSKI is William R. Kenan Professor of History and Literature and of English at Harvard University. Her books include *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, 2000; rpt. 2003); *"Paradise Lost" and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* (Princeton, 1985); and *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of "Paradise Regained"*

(London, 1966). She is also editor of *Paradise Lost*, an original language edition (Oxford, 2007) and is editing volume III (*The Shorter Poems*) for the new *Oxford Complete Works of John Milton*.

WALTER S. H. LIM is Associate Professor of English Literature at the National University of Singapore. He is the author of *The Arts of Empire: The Poetics of Colonialism from Raleigh to Milton* (Newark, NJ, 1998) and *John Milton, Radical Politics, and Biblical Republicanism* (Newark, NJ, 2006). He is co-editor, with Debra Johanyak, of *The English Renaissance, Orientalism, and the Idea of Asia* (forthcoming).

DAVID LOEWENSTEIN is Marjorie and Lorin Tiefenthaler Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His publications include *Milton and the Drama of History: Historical Vision, Iconoclasm, and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, 1990); *Milton: "Paradise Lost,"* in the Cambridge Landmarks of World Literature series (Cambridge, 1993; rpt. 2004); and *Representing Revolution in Milton and His Contemporaries: Religion, Politics, and Polemics in Radical Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2001). He is also co-editor, with Janel Mueller, of *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge, 2002).

JAMES LOXLEY is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *Royalism and Poetry in the English Civil Wars* (Basingstoke, 1997), *Ben Jonson* (London, 2002), and *Performativity* (London, 2007).

JULIET LUCY, formerly Juliet Cummins, is an honorary research adviser in English at the University of Queensland, Australia, and a practicing lawyer. She is co-editor, with David Burchell, of *Science, Literature and Rhetoric in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, UK, 2007); editor of *Milton and the Ends of Time* (Cambridge, 2003); and author of *Water Regulation: The Laws of Australia* (Pymont, NSW, 2008).

DIANE MCCOLLEY is Professor II Emeritus of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Camden. Her books are *Milton's Eve* (Urbana, IL, 1983); *A Gust for Paradise: Milton's Eden and the Visual Arts* (Urbana, IL, 1993); *Poetry and Music in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1997; rpt. 2007); and *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell* (Aldershot, UK, 2007).

NICHOLAS McDOWELL is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Exeter. He is the author of *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630–1660* (Oxford, 2003) and *Poetry and Allegiance in the English Civil Wars: Marvell and the Cause*

of Wit (Oxford, 2008). He also is co-editor, with Nigel Smith, of *The Oxford Handbook of Milton* (Oxford, 2009), and is editing Milton's regicide tracts for volume VI of the *Oxford Complete Works of John Milton*.

CATHERINE GIMELLI MARTIN is Professor of English at the University of Memphis, Tennessee. Her publications include *The Ruins of Allegory: "Paradise Lost" and the Metamorphosis of Epic Convention* (Durham, NC, 1998), and two edited collections, *Milton and Gender* (Cambridge, 2004) and, with Julie R. Solomon, *Francis Bacon and the Refiguring of Early Modern Thought* (Aldershot, UK, 2005).

ANNABEL PATTERSON is Sterling Professor of English, Emeritus, at Yale University. Her publications include several essays on Milton as well as *Early Modern Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1997; rpt. 2006); *The Long Parliament of Charles II* (New Haven, 2008); and *Milton's Words* (Oxford, forthcoming 2009). She also edited the Longman Critical Reader on Milton (London, 1992).

WILLIAM POOLE is Galsworthy Fellow and Tutor in English at New College, Oxford. He is the author of *Milton and the Idea of the Fall* (Cambridge, 2005) and co-directed the project "Language-planning and free-thinking in late seventeenth-century England," funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

JOAD RAYMOND is Professor of English Literature at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003); *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641–1649* (Oxford, 1996); and of articles on early modern literature, politics, print culture, and news, as well as editor of several collections. He is presently completing a book on angels and editing *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, vol. 1.

STELLA P. REVARD is Professor Emerita of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. She is the author of *The War in Heaven* (Ithaca, NY, 1980); *Milton and the Tangles of Neaera's Hair* (Columbia, MO, 1997); *Pindar and the Renaissance Hymn-Ode: 1450–1700* (Tempe, AZ, 2001); and *Politics, Poetics, and the Pindaric Ode: 1450–1700* (Tempe, AZ, 2008). She is also editor of *Milton's Complete Shorter Poems* (Oxford, 2009).

JOHN RUMRICH is Thaman Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of *Matter of Glory: A New Preface to "Paradise Lost"* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1987) and *Milton Unbound: Controversy and Reinterpretation* (Cambridge, 1996). He has also co-edited

Milton and Heresy (Cambridge, 1998); the *Norton Critical Edition of Seventeenth-Century British Poetry, 1603–1660* (New York, 2005); and *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton* (New York, 2007).

ELIZABETH SAUER is Professor of English at Brock University, Canada. She has authored two books, including *"Paper-Contestations" and Textual Communities in England* (Toronto, 2005), and eleven editions/co-editions, including *Milton and Toleration*, with Sharon Achinstein (Oxford, 2007); *Milton and the Climates of Reading: Essays by Balachandra Rajan* (Toronto, 2006); *Reading Early Modern Women*, with Helen Ostovich (New York, 2004); and *Reading the Nation in English Literature*, with Julia Wright (New York, 2009). A book on Milton, toleration, and nationhood is in progress.

JOHN T. SHAWCROSS is Professor of English, Emeritus, at the University of Kentucky. Recent publications include *The Development of Milton's Thought: Law, Government, and Religion* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2008) and companion volumes edited with Michael Lieb, *"Paradise Lost": A Poem Written in Ten Books: An Authoritative Text of the 1667 First Edition and Essays on the 1667 First Edition* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2007).

SHIGEO SUZUKI is Professor of English at the Graduate School of Languages and Cultures at Nagoya University, Japan. In addition to publishing in English on Milton, he is the author of two books in Japanese, one on Michel Foucault (Hiroshima, 2005) and the other on multicultural studies (Tokyo, 2007). He is also co-author of *Polyvalenz und Multifunktionalität der Emblematis* (Frankfurt, 2002) and co-translator of *Sprechen Sie Lateinisch?* (Tokyo, 1993).

CHRISTOPHE TOURNU is Professor of English at the University of Strasbourg. He is the author of *Théologie et politique dans l'œuvre en prose de John Milton* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq, 2000) and *Milton et Mirabeau, ren-contre révolutionnaire* (Paris, 2002). He made the first translation into French of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (Paris, 2005) and is co-editor, with Olivier Abel, of *Milton et le droit au divorce* (Geneva, 2005) and, with Neil Forsyth, of *Milton, Rights and Liberties* (Bern, 2007).

ANTHONY WELCH is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. His essays on Milton, Davenant, and Dryden have appeared in *ELR*, *Modern Philology*, *Milton Studies*, and in *Uncircumscribed Mind: Reading Milton Deeply*, ed. Charles W. Durham and Kristin A. Pruitt (Selinsgrove, PA, 2008).

Preface

In the middle of *Paradise Lost*, John Milton offers what has proven to be an enduring image of his poetic creation. The epic speaker pauses in his invocation of the muse to lament that he has “fall’n on evil days” and now composes his poem “In darkness . . . / And solitude,” surrounded by the “barbarous dissonance / Of Bacchus and his revellers” (VII.25, 27–28, 32–33). Certainly this portrait of the author seems plausible: in 1661, the blind poet could have sat alone in his house in Jewin Street and fearlessly composed his heroic poem, undaunted by the distant noise of royalist celebrations. But Milton’s Orphic self-conception in this and similar passages has also contributed to an implausible mythos of an ever-isolated genius. Again and again in his works, Milton emphasizes his achievements by casting himself as a solitary figure. Even in treatises commissioned by the Commonwealth government, he often frames his work rhetorically as an act of individual heroism, describing how he defeated the French intellectual Salmasius “in single combat” (CPW IV:556), for example, and interrupting his *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda* to defend his own life and writings.

The eight biographies of Milton written within sixty years of his death reflect and have contributed to this perception of Milton’s autonomy. Often published with editions of his works, these early lives echo Milton’s strong authorial voice in encouraging readers to approach his writings in terms of his individual identity. Collectively, the biographies depict Milton as a poet, like Shakespeare, “not of an age but for all time” – or, as one early biographer less eloquently puts it, “the best of Writers our Nation hath in any Age brought forth” (EL 50). Still today, the traditional divisions of British literary history continue to separate Milton from his contemporaries. Born at the end of the English Renaissance but publishing his greatest poetic works after the Restoration, Milton defies easy categorization and is most often studied in a single-author course, best suited to reading all twelve books of *Paradise Lost*.

The problem with this perspective is that it obscures the rich historical and cultural conditions that helped to shape Milton's life and writings. Few early modern poets engaged more fully or more directly with their historical circumstances. A pamphleteer, government employee, and writer of occasional verse, Milton did not retreat from public life even after his political hopes were dashed by the Restoration. That during his trip to Italy in 1638 Milton began to sign his name "John Milton, Englishman" – and cut short his continental journey as the threat of war loomed at home – suggests that he conceived his identity as a citizen of England and was deeply invested in the period's political and religious conflicts. Even the autobiographical digressions in some of Milton's works, while implying his individual achievements, reveal upon closer scrutiny his engagement with contemporary events. If we return to the above passage from *Paradise Lost*, Milton underscores the isolation he feels because of his blindness, but with expressions such as "evil days" and "dangers" he also seems to allude to the recent restoration of monarchy.

This volume pursues such contextual details in order to remedy the myth of authorial autonomy that Milton himself sometimes encouraged. The essays in the collection investigate the author's life and works within his changing cultural and historical circumstances. Building on the efforts of recent scholars who have successfully uncovered relevant, local contexts for reading Milton's poetry and prose, all of these essays contain original arguments and analyses. The contributors re-assess the milieu of Milton's writings and reveal various ways that Milton's works and experiences emerged, directly and indirectly, from his culture.

The volume comprises three parts, with the essays in each section arranged alphabetically for ready reference. The book's first section, "Life and works," contains ten chapters. It begins with a brief biography and a discussion of Milton's process of composition. A separate chapter on Milton's correspondence focuses on humanist conventions of letter-writing and the insight that Milton's epistles provide into his career, character, and habits. Two additional essays address, respectively, the author's acute self-concern and the versions of Milton's life constructed by early biographers. The final five essays in this section pertain to the literary contexts of Milton's works: a chapter on Milton's prose style compares his early and late polemical method, and four chapters on his poetry offer fresh examinations of his verse and rhyme as well as the dramatic, epic, and pastoral traditions in which he composed his major poetic works.

The book's second section, "Critical legacy," turns to the reception of Milton's works in six chapters that trace the interpretive threads that have interested scholars over the past three and a half centuries. Rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive overview of changing critical trends, each essay actively intervenes in the issues and interests of its respective historical period. The goal of the first three essays is to improve our understanding of how various readers – and various schools of thought – have read Milton and how his literary reputation has accordingly evolved. The other three essays in this section also address the way that Milton has been reconfigured posthumously – in later editions, through translations, and in paintings and illustrations inspired by his works. The authors of these three essays explore how subsequent generations of readers have paid homage to Milton's poetry and prose while re-interpreting his works in new forms.

The book's third and longest section, "Historical and cultural contexts," offers a series of original arguments and engagements with existing and emergent contexts in Milton studies. The writers of these twenty-four essays discuss the ways in which an understanding of seventeenth-century issues and institutions sheds new light on Milton's works and helps today's readers re-assess traditional interpretations. Not only do the book's contributors examine Milton's personal experience within these contexts – as in, for example, the chapters on education and the Interregnum – but the contributors also analyze the broader social conditions and intellectual currents that subtly affected Milton's writings – as in the chapters on Catholicism and the New World.

The overarching goal of this book is not to argue for a single version of Milton but to piece together various glimpses of his life and works from multiple critical perspectives and within a selection of interrelated contexts. Like Milton, the collection's contributors are necessarily influenced and limited by their own historical situations. So as to capture most effectively the range and depth of Milton's changing circumstances, I have assembled a diverse group of contributors. The writers of these essays consist of both seasoned scholars and up-and-coming, younger critics. Geographically, the contributors represent Australia, Canada, England, France, Japan, Scotland, Singapore, Switzerland, and the United States; methodologically, they represent bibliographers, eco-critics, feminists, formalists, historians, materialists, Marxists, and psychoanalytic critics. I am grateful to all the contributors for their cooperation and goodwill throughout the editing process.

When Milton in one of his early prose works asserted that “he who would . . . write well hereafter in laudable things, ought him selfe to bee a true Poem” (*CPW* 1:890), he was suggesting the intimate relationship between a writer’s life and works. The essays in this collection begin with that premise. My hope is that *Milton in Context* will enrich readers’ understanding of Milton and his writings by demonstrating how his historical moment and personal experiences helped to shape some of the greatest works in English literary history.

Abbreviations

- CPEP* *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon (New York, 2007).
- CPW* *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven, 1953–82).
- EL* Helen Darbishire, ed., *The Early Lives of Milton* (London, 1932).
- LR* J. Milton French, ed., *The Life Records of John Milton*, 5 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ, 1949–58).
- WJM* Frank Allen Patterson, ed., *The Works of John Milton*, 18 vols. (New York, 1931–38).

Citations and line numbers for Milton's poetry, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *CPEP*, which uses modernized spellings. Milton's prose works are quoted in their original spelling and punctuation, except for those tracts that are translated from the Latin. Citations to classical works are to the Loeb editions published by Harvard University Press. All translations from Greek or Latin, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the editions cited.