This volume brings together an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars to consider Milton’s republicanism in the context of the European republican tradition and in the political and literary circumstances of Interregnum England. It draws on the expertise of both historians and literary critics to examine the classical sources of Milton’s republicanism, the genesis of that republicanism in the 1640s, its disappointment in the 1650s and its presence in his work (particularly in Paradise Lost) after the Restoration. Milton’s thought is compared with that of his predecessors and contemporaries, and attention is given to his role as a transmitter of republican values in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Milton’s prose works and his poetry are given equal coverage, making this the first collaborative volume to attempt a comprehensive thematic assessment of his political and literary career.

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IDEAS IN CONTEXT

Edited by Quentin Skinner (General Editor), Lorraine Daston, Wolf Lepenies, Richard Rorty and J. B. Schneewind

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IDEAS IN CONTEXT

MILTON AND REPUBLICANISM
MILTON
AND REPUBLICANISM

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Preface

The Colloquium on ‘Milton and Republicanism’ which gave rise to this volume was held at the Université de Paris X-Nanterre, in April 1992. Armand Himy, in consultation with Quentin Skinner, drew up the original list of participants and issued invitations to the speakers, among whom were myself, Cedric Brown, Tony Davies, Martin Dzelzainis, Roger Lejosne, Elizabeth Tuttle and Blair Worden, as well as Armand Himy and Quentin Skinner themselves. The organizers are grateful to the speakers, as well as to the other scholars who presented papers, those who chaired sessions, and the audience in Nanterre for the effort they put into making the Colloquium such a success.

The responsibility for turning the papers from the Colloquium into the present volume has been divided between myself and Quentin Skinner. While the final organization of the volume has been my responsibility, I discussed it with Quentin Skinner at every stage. We selected the initial group of papers for inclusion in consultation with Armand Himy and representatives of the Cambridge University Press. I then approached further prospective contributors and commissioned the remaining essays. Quentin Skinner conducted the negotiations between the editors and the Press, and he and I read and commented on the completed essays before publication. We are grateful to those of our contributors who were present in Nanterre for the speed with which they undertook revisions – sometimes substantial – to their papers, as well as to those who joined the project at a later stage, for producing original and appropriate essays under the constraints of a tight deadline. I should also like particularly to thank Martin Dzelzainis, Quentin Skinner, Nigel Smith and the anonymous reader for the Press for their advice regarding the volume and its contents, as well as the Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College,
Preface

Cambridge, for their support and hospitality at all stages of my work on the book.

The editors wish to thank the Université de Paris X-Nanterre, and the Centre de Recherches sur les Origines de la Modernité et les Pays Anglophones, for placing their facilities at our disposal for the original Colloquium. That a volume has resulted so quickly from that Colloquium is thanks to Quentin Skinner, who has propelled the project with exemplary efficiency and courtesy, and to Richard Fisher, who has put his own energy and skill, as well as the heartening faith of the Press, behind the volume at every stage of its gestation. Frances Brown copy-edited the manuscript swiftly and exactly, and David Atkins compiled the index. Our thanks to both of them for their careful work.

The frontispiece and cover show the clay bust of Milton in the Senior Combination Room of Christ’s College, Cambridge. College tradition holds that the bust is a life-study of Milton executed either by Edward Pierce or by Abraham Simon, though its provenance is unknown before 1738 when it was in the possession of the antiquarian and engraver George Vertue. After Vertue’s death, the bust was acquired by the radical whig Miltonian and republican Thomas Hollis, who later presented it to ‘the College in which my hero Milton, and the guide of my paths, was bred’. It was engraved twice in the eighteenth century, and was the model for the nineteenth-century marble bust in the College Hall. We are very grateful to the Master and Fellows of Christ’s College for permission to reproduce this striking and tangible link between Milton and later English republicanism.

David Armitage

Abbreviations
