

MILTON AND THE ART OF RHETORIC

Challenging the conventional view of John Milton as an iconoclast who spoke only to a “fit audience though few,” Daniel Shore argues that Milton was a far more pragmatic writer than previous scholarship has recognized. Summoning evidence from nearly all of his works – poetry and prose alike – Shore asserts that Milton distanced himself from the prescriptions of classical rhetoric to develop new means of persuasion suited to an age distrustful of traditional eloquence. He demonstrates that Milton’s renunciation of agency, audience, purpose, and effect in the prose tracts leads not to quietism or withdrawal, but rather to a reasserted investment in public debate. Shore reveals a writer who is committed to persuasion and yet profoundly critical of his own persuasive strategies. An innovative contribution to the field, this text will appeal to scholars of Milton, seventeenth-century literature, Renaissance literature, and the history and theory of rhetoric.

Daniel Shore is Assistant Professor of English at Georgetown University. His work has appeared in journals such as *PMLA*, *Critical Inquiry*, and *Milton Studies*. In 2006, the Milton Society of America awarded him the James Holly Hanford Award for “Most Distinguished Essay” of the year. He earned his Ph.D. and master’s degrees from Harvard University.

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To Carolyn

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Abbreviations and Editions

Quotations from Milton's poems are from *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon (New York: Modern Library, 2007). *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* are abbreviated as *PL*, *PR*, and *SA*, respectively.

YP *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols., ed. Don M. Wolfe et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–82).

CW *The Works of John Milton*, 20 vols., ed. Frank Allen Patterson et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923–40).

Passages from the Bible, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version.