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978-1-107-05292-5 - Reading Class Through Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton

Christopher Warley

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READING CLASS THROUGH SHAKESPEARE, DONNE, AND MILTON

Why study Renaissance literature? *Reading Class through Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton* examines six canonical Renaissance works to show that reading literature also means reading class. Warley demonstrates that careful reading offers the best way to understand social relations and in doing so he offers a detailed historical argument about what class means in the seventeenth century. Drawing on a wide range of critics, from Erich Auerbach to Jacques Rancière, from Cleanth Brooks to Theodor Adorno, from Raymond Williams to Jacques Derrida, the book implicitly defends literary criticism. It reaffirms six Renaissance poems and plays, including poems by Donne, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, as the sophisticated and moving works of art that generations of readers have loved. These accessible interpretations also offer exciting new directions for the roles of art and criticism in the contemporary, post-industrial world.

CHRISTOPHER WARLEY teaches Renaissance literature, literary criticism, and critical theory at the University of Toronto. He is the author of *Sonnet Sequences and Social Distinction in Renaissance England*, also published by Cambridge University Press.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107052925

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First published 2014

Printed in the United Kingdom by CPI Group Ltd, Croydon CRO 4YY

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

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Warley, Christopher, 1969– author.

Reading Class through Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton / Christopher Warley.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-05292-5 (hardback)

1. English literature—Early modern, 1500–1700—History and criticism.
2. Literature and society—England—History—17th century.
3. Social classes in literature. 4. Renaissance—England.
5. Criticism. I. Title.

PR428.S65W37 2014

820.9'355—dc23

2013032794

ISBN 978-1-107-05292-5 hardback

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Illustrations

- 1 Detail from *No Place (Spiral)*, 2006, by Rory Macbeth.
Macbeth painted the entire text of More's *Utopia* upon
an abandoned building in Norwich, UK. Photograph by
the author. *page 3*
- 2 Detail from *No Place (Spiral)*, 2006, by Rory Macbeth.
Photograph by the author. 9

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Acknowledgments

This book began its life among undergraduates and graduate students at Oakland University, and it took shape among undergraduates and graduate students at the University of Toronto. I thank all the students whose skepticism and enthusiasm are the main reason that literary criticism exists. I hate to think about just how truly terrible these chapters were before they were read, repaired, and reassured by Jeremy Lopez; getting an office next to his was one of the best things that has ever happened to me. Special thanks to Rory Macbeth for talking about his art, sending me a copy of the film of *No Place (Kingly Digs)*, and making the artwork that tied the whole project together. I hope that everyone can hear in the book the voices, words, and ideas of the patient and generous people who read drafts (often multiple times) or just helped me think through many different issues: Suzanne Akbari, Emily Bartels, Alan Bewell, Rebecca Brittenham, Rachel Buurma, Ann Coiro, Barbara Correll, Jeff Dolven, Paul Downes, Andrew Dubois, Katherine Eggert, Andrew Escobedo, David Galbraith, Alex Gillespie, Catherine Gray, Roland Greene, Matt Guterl, Elizabeth Hanson, Paul Hecht, Virginia Jackson, Heather James, David Kastan, Bill Kennedy, Deidre Lynch, Arthur Marotti, Chris Martin, Jennifer McDermott, Michael McKeon, Randy McLeod, Paul Menzer, David Lee Miller, Jackie Miller, Erin Murphy, Jonathan Nashel, Mark Netzloff, Lori Newcomb, Mary Nyquist, Anthony Oliveira, Stephen Orgel, Curtis Perry, Celine Pitre, Anne Lake Prescott, Beth Quitslund, Will Robins, John Rogers, Colleen Rosenfeld, Marjorie Rubright, Tristan Samuk, Melissa Sanchez, Holger Syme, Gordon Teskey, Dan Vitkus, Brian Walsh, John Watkins, Ben Weiner, and Will West. My sincere thanks to Sarah Stanton and Rebecca Taylor at Cambridge for their patient expertise, and to the Press's two anonymous readers for their very helpful comments. Being an immigrant is often no fun, but life in a foreign country has had many happy moments with Jeannine DeLombard, Erik Gunderson, Alice Maurice, Naomi Morgenstern, Richard Ogden, Mark

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Acknowledgments

Rigby, Mark Stabile, Kat Vitale-Lopez, Dan White, Sarah Wilson, and Victoria Wohl. I very much look forward to the work of Oscar, Freddie, and William Rufus. Thanks to the staffs of the Huntington Library, the Folger Library, the Houghton Library, and the Norwich Millennium Library for their help and assistance. This project was assisted by funding from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and from the University of Toronto English Department. Early versions of chapters appeared as “Specters of Horatio,” *ELH* 75 (2008): 1023–1050; and “Shakespeare’s Fickle Fee-Simple: *A Lover’s Complaint*, Nostalgia, and the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism,” in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages*, ed. John Watkins and Curtis Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21–44. Thanks to audiences at Stanford, Rutgers, Toronto, and the USC-Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute for listening to early versions. A tutti gli amici a Levanto che non mi hanno mai chiesto come si scrive un libro sulla spiaggia, un bacione: Carlo, Libia, Donatella, Guirardo, Giovanna, Davide, Riccardo, Marina, e Tiziana. And to my fellow Riviera lifer: Rosanne, let’s meet at Piper Bar at 6:30.