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978-1-107-09439-0 - Milton's Visual Imagination: Imagery in Paradise Lost

Stephen B. Dobranski

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## MILTON'S VISUAL IMAGINATION

*Imagery in Paradise Lost*

To tell the story of humankind's Fall requires the description of much that has never been seen – from the war in Heaven, to life in Eden before the first sin. In *Milton's Visual Imagination*, Stephen B. Dobranski discovers new allusions and previously ignored contexts that show how Milton enriches his biblical source text with acute and sometimes astonishing visual details. He contends that Milton's imagery – traditionally disparaged by critics – advances the epic's narrative while expressing the author's heterodox beliefs. In particular, Milton exploits the meaning of objects and gestures to overcome the inherent difficulty of his subject, and to accommodate seventeenth-century readers. Bringing together Milton's material philosophy with an analysis of both his poetic tradition and cultural circumstances, this discerning study is a major contribution to our understanding of early modern visual culture as well as Milton's epic, the preeminent work of the English literary canon.

Stephen B. Dobranski is Distinguished University Professor of early modern literature and textual studies at Georgia State University. He is the author of several books, including *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton: "Samson Agonistes"* (2009); and *The Cambridge Introduction to Milton* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

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STEPHEN B. DOBRANSKI

*Georgia State University*



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*for John Rumrich*

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## *Acknowledgments*

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## *Abbreviations*

- CPEP*     *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon (New York: Modern Library, 2007).
- CPW*     *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–1982).
- Fowler     Alastair Fowler, ed., *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton, 2nd edn. (London: Longman, 1998).
- OED*     *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd and 3rd editions.

Citations and line numbers for Milton's poetry, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *CPEP*. Citations to classical works are to the Loeb editions published by Harvard University Press; citations to the Bible are taken from the King James (Authorized) Version.