



Milton: Poet, Pamphleteer, and Patriot

Anna Beer

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A fresh and engaging account of the life, times, politics, loves, and letters of the great English poet John Milton on the 400th anniversary of his birth. John Milton is one of the worlds greatest poets, renowned author of the epic *Paradise Lost* as well as numerous sonnets and other works. But he was also deeply involved in the political and religious controversies of his time.

Fully immersed in the new and rapidly changing print culture, Milton wrote a series of radical pamphlets on free speech, divorce, and religious, political, and social rights that proposed a complete rethinking of the nature and practice not only of government, but of human freedom itself. Having put his pen at the service of Parliament against King Charles, and his Latin at the service of Cromwells new commonwealth, when the Restoration came Milton was lucky to escape with his life. By then completely blind, he persevered, creating the majestic works that made him immortal.

For centuries Milton has emerged from biographies either as a blind, saintly figure removed from the messy business of personal affections, or as a woman-hating domestic tyrant. Yet as Anna Beer shows, he was neither ogre nor paragon. Milton had intense and often troubled relationships with both men (such as his early, passionate friendship with Charles Diodati) and women (throughout his three marriages).

By closely examining all aspects of Milton's life - his poetry, his prose, his Latin writings, his careful editing of his own biography, the records of his government work, and the social and political history of England during one of its most tumultuous periods (an era that ran from Shakespeares plays to Samuel Pepyss diaries), Anna Beer succeeds in bringing a celebrated and enigmatic writer to vivid life on the 400th anniversary of his birth.

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