

## How Milton Works

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stanley fish's *Surprised by Sin*, first published in 1967, set a new standard for Milton criticism and established its author as one of the world's preeminent Milton scholars. The lifelong engagement begun in that work culminates in this book, the magnum opus of a formidable critic and the definitive statement on Milton for our time. How Milton works from the inside out is the foremost concern of Fish's book, which explores the radical effect of Milton's theological convictions on his poetry and prose. For Milton, the value of a poem or of any other production derives from the inner worth of its author and not from any external measure of excellence or heroism. Milton's aesthetic, says Fish, is an aesthetic of testimony: every action, whether verbal or physical, is or should be the action of holding fast to a single saving commitment against the allure of plot, narrative, representation, signs, drama—anything that might be construed as an illegitimate supplement to divine truth. Much of the energy of Milton's writing, according to Fish, comes from the effort to maintain his faith against these temptations, temptations which in any other aesthetic would be seen as the very essence of poetic value. Encountering the great poet on his own terms, engaging his equally distinguished admirers and detractors, this book moves a 300-year debate about the significance of Milton's verse to a new level.

Recent critical conversation has described John Milton's major works as sites of uncertainty, irreconcilability, or even confusion as texts that actually reflect radical incoherence and openness. These newer critical voices posit, moreover, that traditional critics must strain to find coherence and authorial control in Milton's poetry. Richard Durocher and Margaret Thickstun, together with an esteemed group of Milton scholars from a wide range of critical and theoretical

backgrounds respond to this challenge while accepting the presence of uncertainty and welcoming the multiple perspectives that Milton builds into his works this volume offers a variety of nuanced approaches to Milton's texts as these eleven essays demonstrate Milton's own acts of interpretation compel readers to reflect not only on the rival hermeneutics they find within his works but also on their own hermeneutic principles and choices an interpretive complexity that is integral to his poetry's enduring appeal thus each of the contributors takes up the problem of this interpretive dilemma in some way several explore Milton's own engagement with the texts of scripture and the classics some examine the ways in which Milton represents the process of interpretation in his narrative poems and still others are intrigued by the challenges that Milton's works present for the reader's own interpretive skills Milton's rival hermeneutics in responding directly to the incertitude critics of Milton will be of interest to those on all sides of this debate and will certainly redirect the ongoing conversation

the romantic legacy of *Paradise Lost* offers a new critical insight into the relationship between Milton and the romantic poets Shears devotes a chapter to each of the six major romantics contextualizing their misreadings of Milton's *Paradise Lost* within a range of historical aesthetic and theoretical contexts Shears argues that the romantic inclination towards fragmentation and a polysemous aesthetic leads to disrupted readings of *Paradise Lost* that obscure the theme or warp the grain of the poem

using the teaching of John Milton as a case study this book describes how a university English professor teaches an undergraduate course over a semester employing a situated learning model the author describes the details of literary learning and student development

the book's study of Milton's identification with his female hero and his advocacy of women's ethical sexual and political

autonomy gives a jolt to ongoing debates about Milton and feminism book jacket

In the reason of church government a thirty three year old John Milton writes of his hope that by labour and intent study joynd with the strong propensity of nature I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die even the young Milton committed as he was to achieving a place in the annals of poetic history might have been surprised by the strenuous efforts in aftertimes to keep his legacy alive the fifteen essays that comprise this collection focus from varied perspectives on Paradise Lost Paradise Regained and A Mask poems that have attracted sustained critical attention several consider shorter poems such as the Nativity Ode the Passion upon the Circumcision and Sonnet 14 some pursue issues of sources authorship and audience while still others probe extant biographical records or reflect on the author as biographical subject diverse though they are in subject matter approaches and emphases all demonstrate how Milton scholarship in the twenty first century continues to be committed to not willingly letting Milton's literary legacy die Kristin A. Brothers University Charles W. Durham is professor emeritus of English at Middle Tennessee State University and is president of the Milton Society of America

Lee Morrissey explores how Milton's major late poems narrate varying responses to modernity adjustment avoidance and antagonism

This book focuses on the character and enduring influence of Milton's epic poem Paradise Lost looking beyond the book's original text and into the various works and media it has inspired

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