

Milton and Rhetoric: Polemical Prose

Milton was an active, vocal participant in the public affairs of his time for the majority of his adult life. After he returned from what he termed his “grand tour” of Italy, France, and Switzerland, Milton began to exercise his talents as a rhetorician when he authored a series of “antiprelatical” tracts targeting the Catholic religion. Over the subsequent two decades, Milton would write polemical prose on any number of “hot-button” issues from divorce to the freedom of the press. These works display remarkable intellectual confidence and power, as he was often defending minority views on tendentious religious and political issues. They also demonstrate his versatility as a writer and thinker, proving that he was not only gifted as a poet but as a polemical writer as well.