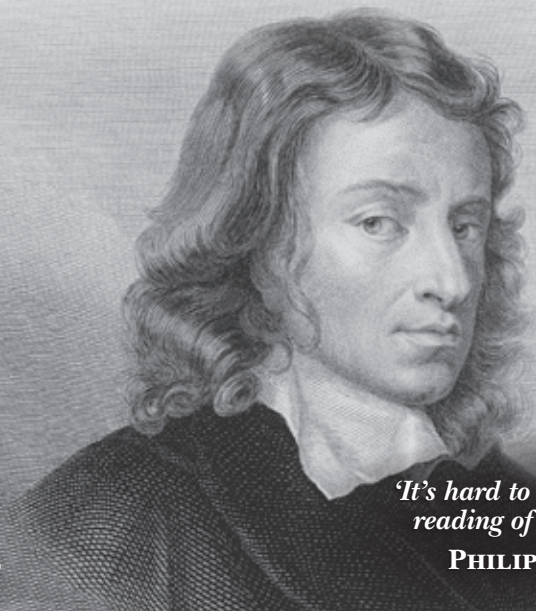




The Essential John Milton

Paradise Lost • Paradise Regained
Shorter Poems • Prose • Biography

Read by Anton Lesser • Samantha Bond • Derek Jacobi



*'It's hard to imagine a better
reading of Paradise Lost'*

PHILIP PULLMAN

NA888512D

1	PARADISE LOST Book I Line 1: Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit	7:52
2	Line 128: O Prince, O chief of many thronèd Powers	4:47
3	Line 242: Is this the region, this the soil, the clime	6:38
4	Line 522: All these and more came flocking; but with looks	5:31
5	Line 622: O myriads of immortal Spirits, O Powers	5:35
6	Line 722: ...Th' ascending pile	4:20
7	Book II Line 1: High on a throne of royal state, which far	7:31
8	Line 119: I should be much for open war, O Peers	6:45
9	Line 229: Either to disenthronè the King of Heav'n	4:43
10	Line 310: Thrones and imperial Powers, offspring of Heav'n	5:18
11	Line 390: Well have ye judged, well ended long debate	2:39
12	Line 430: O progeny of Heav'n, empyreal Thrones	3:02
13	Line 506: The Stygian Council thus dissolved; and forth	5:51
14	Line 704: So spake the grisly terror, and in shape	8:40
15	Line 850: The key of this infernal pit by due	7:00
16	Line 968: T' whom Satan turning boldly thus. Ye Powers	5:04
17	Book III Paraphrase: God sitting on his throne sees Satan...	1:54
18	Book IV Line 1: O for that warning voice, which he who saw	7:24
19	Line 114: Thus while he spake, each passion dimmed his face	3:18
20	Line 172: Now to th' ascent of that steep savage hill	3:35

21	Line 246: ...thus was this place	6:20
22	Line 358: O Hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold	5:29
23	Line 440: To whom thus Eve replied. O thou for whom	3:16
24	Line 492: So spake our general mother, and with eyes	3:09
25	Books V–VIII Paraphrase: Meanwhile, Uriel, descending	2:16
26	Book IX Line 1: No more of talk where God or angel guest	5:33
27	Line 99: O earth, how like to Heav’n, if not preferr’d	6:57
28	Line 204: And Eve first to her husband thus began.	3:48
29	Line 270: To whom the virgin majesty of Eve	5:27
30	Line 376: So spake the patriarch of mankind, but Eve	7:07
31	Line 494: So spake the Enemy of mankind, enclosed	4:13
32	Line 567: To whom the guileful Tempter thus replied.	2:37
33	Line 613: So talked the spirited sly snake; and Eve	3:39
34	Line 679: O sacred, wise and wisdom-giving plant	4:13
35	Line 745: Great are thy virtues, doubtless, best of fruits	6:56
36	Line 856: Hast thou not wondered Adam, at my stay?	2:35
37	Line 896: O fairest of Creation, last and best	4:42
38	Line 960: So Adam, and thus Eve to him replied.	4:43
39	Line 1034: So said he, and forbore not glance or toy	6:18
40	Line 1134: Would thou hadst hearkened to my words, and stayed	3:15

41	Book X Paraphrase: Man's disobedience known	0:38
42	Line 68: Father Eternal, thine is to decree	9:07
43	Line 229: Meanwhile ere thus was sinned and judged on earth	4:58
44	Line 354: O parent, these are thy magnificent deeds	3:56
45	Line 460: Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers	7:19
46	Books XI and XII Paraphrase: Meanwhile Sin and Death rejoice	1:52
47	Book XII Line 553: How soon hath thy prediction, seer blest	7:53
48	Paradise Regained – Book I	3:48
49	Oh ancient powers of Air and this wide World	4:31
50	So to the coast of Jordan he directs	3:54
51	Meanwhile the Son of God, who yet some days	4:36
52	This having heard, straight I again revolved	2:52
53	Full forty days he passed – whether on hill	3:54
54	Whom thus answered the Arch-Fiend, now undisguised:	3:10
55	To whom our Saviour sternly thus replied:	3:41
56	So spake our Saviour; but the subtle Fiend,	3:32
57	Book II	3:30
58	Thus they out of their complaints new hope resume	3:18
59	The while her Son, tracing the desert wild,	3:51
60	To whom quick answer Satan thus returned:	3:38

61	He ceased, and heard their grant in loud acclaim;	3:46
62	He viewed it round;	4:34
63	'What doubts the Son of God to sit and eat?'	4:18
64	To whom thus Jesus patiently replied:	4:05
65	Book III	3:14
66	To whom our Saviour calmly thus replied	4:10
67	To whom the Tempter, murmuring, thus replied	4:36
68	To whom our Saviour answer thus returned	4:15
69	With that (such power was given him then), he took	3:43
70	He looked, and saw what numbers numberless	4:26
71	To whom our Saviour answered thus, unmoved	4:19
72	Book IV	2:37
73	And now the Tempter thus his silence broke	4:10
74	To whom the Son of God, unmoved, replied	3:42
75	Whom thus our Saviour answered with disdain	4:08
76	Look once more, ere we leave this specular mount	2:55
77	To whom our Saviour sagely thus replied	3:04
78	Or, if I would delight my private hours	3:50
79	So saying, he took (for still he knew his power Not yet expired)	3:30
80	Him walking on a sunny hill he found	3:15

81	To whom the Fiend, now swoln with rage, replied	3:46
82	But Satan, smitten with amazement, fell	2:07
83	'True Image of the Father, whether throned...'	5:13
84	At a Vacation Exercise	6:46
85	L'Allegro	7:19
86	Il Penseroso	5:21
87	Or let my lamp, at midnight hour...	5:06
88	At a Solemn Musick	1:55
89	To Mr. H Lawes, on his Aires	1:05
90	On Time	1:17
91	On Shakespeare	1:05
92	On the morning of Christ's Nativity	5:49
93	Yea Truth, and Justice then...	3:31
94	Sonnet: To the Lord General Cromwell	1:13
95	Sonnet: On the detraction which followed...	1:07
96	Sonnet: On the Late Massacre in Piedmont	0:55
97	Lycidas	6:25
98	<i>cont.</i> It was that fatal and perfidious bark...	6:47
99	Sonnet: To the Nightingale	0:56
100	Sonnet: On my 23rd Birthday	1:38

101	<i>from Paradise Lost – opening of Book I</i>	1:48
102	<i>from Paradise Lost – Book 1 – The fall of Mulciber</i>	1:31
103	<i>from Paradise Lost – opening of Book II</i>	1:52
104	<i>from Paradise Lost – from Book XII</i>	1:30
105	<i>from Paradise Regained</i>	1:39
106	Sonnet: Upon a Deceased Wife	1:13
107	Sonnet: On his Blindness	1:11
108	Sonnet: to Cyriack Skinner	1:12
109	<i>from Samson Agonistes</i>	2:05
110	The destruction of the Temple <i>from Samson Agonistes</i>	2:11
111	The Final Chorus <i>from Samson Agonistes</i>	0:48
112	<i>from Comus, a Masque</i>	3:55
113	<i>ntroduction to Areopagitica</i>	0:49
114	<i>from Areopagitica</i>	6:58
115	Next, what more national corruption...	6:35
116	What advantage is it to be a man...	6:13
117	And now the time in special...	5:48
118	<i>Introduction to The Doctrine and Discipline</i>	0:41
119	<i>from The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce</i>	5:36
120	How vain therefore is it....	6:49

121	I suppose it will be allow'd us...	7:27
122	<i>Introduction to</i> The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates	0:32
123	<i>from</i> The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates	7:19
124	Since the king or magistrate...	5:40
125	John Milton: A Life	7:59
126	John Milton was a republican and a Protestant.	7:03
127	In the end, his time at Cambridge...	7:16
128	The poem, a pastoral elegy...	6:58
129	Speculation surrounds almost every facet...	7:41
130	In 1644 he wrote what is still probably...	7:01
131	Milton stayed in his role...	8:08
132	This was a dangerous thing to be doing...	7:14
133	The poem is a dark and dramatic one.	7:20
134	He was still working, though.	6:47

Total time: 9:45:55

The Essential John Milton

John Milton (1608–1674) is one of the great voices in English. Beside Shakespeare and the Bible, it is his cadences and rhythms that have sounded through the last four hundred years in the way the language is written and spoken. He created new words, formed phrases that are now in everyday use, and wrote about matters of eternal interest in a completely new fashion. *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* are the towering later works of his genius; but there are also sonnets of great tenderness and technical brilliance, as well as elegies and joyous experiments in classical forms. Beyond the language is the theology – his concerns over the nature of Man’s relationship with God – in which Milton was almost as much a revolutionary and an influence as he was in politics, the other great feature of his life.

John Milton was born in December 1608 to a father who was a scrivener (a form of legal notary) and also a

distinguished composer. He was, too, a Protestant, disowned by his own father for breaking with the Roman Catholic Church. The England of the time was in the middle of a series of huge political, social and religious shifts, as the monarchy switched between the Catholic and the Protestant. At the same time, arguments over the legitimacy of monarchy itself were being discussed, and radical new theories of how to worship God, what God to worship, and the right of the individual to determine matters of faith for himself were continuing to ferment throughout Europe.

Milton was born more than seven years before the death of Shakespeare – at the end of the Golden Age of English supremacy, of a Renaissance in trade, science and art – and just three years before the publication of the King James Bible. He was thirty-four when the Civil War broke out, leading to the execution of a king and the establishment of a revolutionary form of parliamentary

government. A few years later, and this New Order was itself overturned with the restitution of the monarchy. He died in 1674, fourteen years after the king returned to the throne, and fourteen years short of seeing another revolution in Britain that led to a recognisable form of democratic, constitutional monarchy. A steadfast apologist for the parliamentarians, his professional output defending regicide was as robust as his pamphlets promoting the legitimacy of divorce or the freedom of the press; as a result, he has been quoted by revolutionaries and libertarians the world over. Milton's life was threatened by the changes in the politics of the period (once the king was back on the throne, there were calls for Milton's head) but he was saved by the genius of his art: his erstwhile assistant, the poet and satirist Andrew Marvell, had become an MP; and there were those who recognised the worth of Milton's poetry, and saw the PR value of the king's mercifully allowing the now-blind poet to survive.

Milton had started to write poetry when at college (including the *Nativity Ode* and *Epitaph on Shakespeare*), but since he

had always been independently minded, intellectually strong, dedicated, rigorous and brilliant, he had not been a very popular pupil at school. He used to read until midnight (or later) while at St Paul's school, where his father sent him after recognising the range of his son's talents. Later student life for Milton at Christ's College, Cambridge was no smoother – he thought his fellow students were fools for their playing around, while they mocked him as 'the Lady of Christ' for his long hair and dedication to his God. Milton also disagreed so violently with his tutor that he was suspended. Some reports suggest there was actually a fight between them! Certainly Milton defied him, as he did many of the prevailing mores of his time, with no apparent concern for the risk this caused to his reputation or his future.

Thanks to his father's successes – and generous understanding of his son's linguistic and poetical talents – Milton was able to spend the six years after he graduated in a kind of intellectual retreat, continuing to develop his vast knowledge of languages (including Latin, Greek, French, Italian and Hebrew) as well

as writing *Comus*, a dramatic masque, and such poems as *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso* and *Lycidas* – the latter considered probably the finest pastoral elegy in English. He then headed off to Europe for a grand tour. Although he was hugely stimulated by the people he met there – including, it is thought, Galileo – Milton believed that there were greater tasks to undertake as a writer and a profound (if not precisely conventional) Protestant. For him, the nature of Man's relationship to God, and how this should be expressed politically and socially, was the vital question of his time, so when he heard rumours of a civil war in England, he returned.

For the next twenty years he dedicated his life to politics. During the Civil War, he taught, and also published pamphlets and polemics on educational, political and religious matters (including *Areopagitica*, a treatise against censorship), which brought him to the attention of the parliamentarians. On their victory, he was employed as Secretary for Foreign Tongues, which essentially meant that it was his job to write, in Latin, responses to criticisms of the turmoil that had overtaken England.

Here was Milton's great prose platform from which he rallied his magisterial tone and extraordinary reserves of knowledge in the cause of liberty. Any optimism he may have had about the republican ideal was, however, to be tempered by the inevitable intolerance of the new government towards any dissent.

On a personal level his life went through a turmoil almost as great as the political and social one of his country. In 1642 he had married Mary Powell, half his age and from a Royalist family. Unsurprisingly it was not a success (hence his tracts in favour of divorce), but they were reconciled in 1645 despite her entire family accompanying her back to London and moving in. The couple had a child, Anne; and – once they had moved away from Mary's family – a second girl (also called Mary). In 1651 their son John was born, and in 1652 a third daughter, Deborah. But his wife died from complications following the birth, and his son died only months later. In that same year, Milton became totally blind. He had been aware that his eyesight was deteriorating, but he would be no more likely to reduce his reading

and writing than he would be to give up his republican ideals or his idiosyncratic religious convictions: he simply had people to read and write for him. He was married again, to Catherine Woodcock, in 1656; but she too died in childbirth just two years later, prompting the *Sonnet Upon a Deceased Wife*. He finally found lasting happiness with Elizabeth Minshull, a younger woman whom he married in 1663 despite his daughters' unhappiness at the match; Milton's relationship with them was never an easy one. Having been spared by the intervention of Marvell and others following the restitution of the monarchy, Milton lived out his life in relatively quiet retirement. He died in 1674, probably from gout.

For some, Milton is not an easy poet. His style deliberately follows classical forms and uses classical techniques, references and allusions that are not immediately accessible to those who have not followed his rather proscriptive tenets on education. As a result, to some (such as T.S. Eliot), his poems are 'withered by book-learning' – in some fashion disconnected from the emotional or intellectual striving at their

heart. If not actually a misogynist, Milton certainly believed in the subordination of women. His puritan ethics are out of fashion (although his belief that the chaste are likely to find marriage more difficult than those who enjoyed a variety of experiences before settling down might find more general favour). His theology was considered almost heretical at the time – questioning as it did the divinity of Jesus, among other things – and 17th century quibblings over the nature of God are rarely populist four centuries later. But to some extent this difficulty is the point. Here was a man of formidable intellectual gifts that were allied to a magnificent ear for the music of English. He took on the largest issues – politics, freedom, religion – and combined his learning with his understanding of the complex power of language itself. The poetry is a rare combination of profound intent profoundly expressed, yet carrying this burden with a touch as light, beautiful and balanced as it is masterful and weighty.

Notes by Roy McMillan

PARADISE LOST

Paradise Lost, the epic meditated and planned by Milton over many years (years which included the turbulence of the Civil War and the strictures of the Commonwealth), was completed in 1663 and published in 1667. In 1668 he added the prose arguments which provide plot summaries for each of the twelve Books into which the poem is divided.

Paradise Lost is Milton's greatest work: Dryden described it in 1667 as 'one of the greatest, most noble and sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced'. Milton set himself the task of 'justifying the ways of God to men': in other words, to tell the story of Man's creation, fall and redemption so that his readers might be moved to appreciate God's wisdom and purpose.

The poem paints unforgettably vivid and powerful pictures, both of characters and places, in a magnificently subtle and sonorous blank verse. One of the most interesting aspects of his epic is the characterization of Satan, who (in spite of Milton's efforts to disparage him) emerges as a tragic and in some ways heroic figure,

evil though his intentions are. Satan, the fallen rebel angel, defies God and seeks revenge by seducing Adam and Eve into disobedience to their creator. The human pair are poignantly evoked: paradoxically frail yet perfect, their sense of their own humanity (after the fall) is Everyman's plight – we find ourselves, our capacity for wonder, love, shame, hope and despair, in them.

Notes by Perry Keenlyside

PARADISE REGAINED

Only four years after the publication of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* appeared – in a volume which also contained *Samson Agonistes*, his dramatic masterpiece modelled on classical Greek tragedy. Milton was now sixty-three years old. His nephew records that *Paradise Regained* ‘was begun and finisht and Printed after the other [*Paradise Lost*] was publisht, and that in a wonderful short space considering the sublimeness of it.’ Thomas Ellwood, a pupil of Milton’s in the 1660s, had been lent *Paradise Lost* to read and claimed that he said to his teacher, ‘Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*; but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?’ Some while later the poet presented Ellwood with the shorter work, saying: ‘This is owing to you; for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont; which before I had not thought of.’

Some have disputed this account of how *Paradise Regained* came to be written, considering it unlikely that Milton had never before thought about composing such a ‘sequel’. *Paradise Regained* is an example of the ‘brief epic’, which Milton

had discussed in his much earlier *The Reason of Church-Government*; the model for it was the biblical *Book of Job*. It is in four books, and the much grander *Paradise Lost* is in twelve. *Paradise Lost* comprehensively charts the fall of man while *Paradise Regained* is concerned with the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. This is the one episode from the process of man’s redemption which involves a confrontation between the Saviour of Mankind and Adam and Eve’s Old Adversary. The later epic failed to engage its early readers and, ever since, has largely been regarded as a lesser work, not only in length and ambition but also in literary power. It is certainly read less frequently. William Blake controversially declared that Milton was of Satan’s party without knowing it, by which he meant that the reader responds to the convincing and lively portrayal of the fallen Lucifer with ready understanding and sympathy while he finds the Supreme Being a remote and characterless abstraction. Milton’s God was Blake’s Nobodaddy, a tyrant rather than a fond if disappointed Father of Creation. Milton’s difficulty was that

which most writers have found: goodness and perfection, like happiness, 'write *white*'. It is no surprise that more readers of Dante engage with *Inferno*, fewer with *Purgatorio* and hardly any with *Paradiso*. The simplest explanation for this might be that man in his fallen state would inevitably find fellow feeling with the rebels, with those suffering.

Coming fresh to *Paradise Regained*, knowing nothing about it other than as having been written after *Paradise Lost*, one might expect something considerably more ambitious – perhaps an account of the entire process by which Adam's fault is set to rights by the sacrifice of the Son of God. It might be argued, however, that even if Milton had been tempted to try this, he was wise in not seeking to outdo himself by the creation of a second epic to rival his first – an *Odyssey* to his *Iliad*, as it were. *Paradise Regained* perhaps should be seen as a coda to *Paradise Lost* rather than as a bathetic afterthought. As Dr Johnson wrote:

'Of *Paradise Regained* the general judgement seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and every-where

instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of *Paradise Lost* could ever write without great effusions of fancy and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of *Paradise Regained* is narrow; a dialogue without action can never please like an union of the narrative and dramatick powers. Had this poem been written, not by Milton but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.'

Notes by Maurice West

**The music on this recording is taken from
the NAXOS catalogue**

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Cover Picture: Portrait of John Milton (1608-74) engraved by Alexandre Vincent Sixdeniers (1795-1846)
Courtesy of The Bridgeman Art Library



One of this country's leading classical actors, **Anton Lesser** has worked extensively at the National Theatre, and is an associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company, where, over the years, he has played many of the principal roles, including Romeo, Troilus, Petruchio and Richard III. His many television appearances include roles in *The Cherry Orchard*, *King Lear*, *The Politician's Wife*, *Vanity Fair*, *Perfect Strangers*, and *Dickens*. Films in which he has appeared include *Charlotte Gray*, *Fairytale – A True Story*, *Imagining Argentina*, *River Queen*, and most recently, *Miss Potter*. A familiar voice on radio, he has been involved in countless plays and recordings, and has become particularly associated with his award winning readings of Dickens for Naxos AudioBooks.



Samantha Bond is one of Britain's best-known actresses. She trained at the Bristol Old Vic and has since been active in theatre, television and film. Theatre credits include *Rubinstein's Kiss* at the Hampstead Theatre, *Amy's View* at the National Theatre, West End and Broadway, and *A Woman of No Importance* at the Haymarket Theatre. She has appeared in *Midsomer Murders* and *Inspector Morse*, as well as in several BBC period adaptations, including *Mansfield Park* and *Fanny Hill*. She also starred as Miss Money Penny in several James Bond films and has read *The Great Poets: Milton* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Derek Jacobi is one of Britain's leading actors, having made his mark on stage, film and television – and notably on audiobook. He is particularly known for the roles of I Claudius and Brother Caedfael, both of which he has recorded for audiobook. His extensive theatrical credits, from London's West End to Broadway, include numerous roles encompassing the whole range of theatre. He also reads *The History of Theatre*, *The History of English Literature*, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* and *The Great Poets: Milton* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Oliver Senton has worked at the RSC, Chichester and beyond, playing leading roles from Shakespeare and Marlowe to Fry, Galsworthy and Chekhov. On screen he has been seen in *Wimbledon*, *Casualty*, *EastEnders*, *Nuremberg* and *Cathedral* among many others. He has appeared in over thirty radio plays for the BBC, and in regular playreadings for Shakespeare's Globe and the Theatre Royal Bury St. Edmunds. He also translates plays by French authors ranging from Maeterlinck to Giraudoux. He lives in North London.



Roy McMillan's work for Naxos includes producing *An Introduction to Ancient Greek Philosophy*, as well as books by Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Virginia Woolf, Haruki Murakami and the Persian poet, Rumi. He directed the Radio 3 play *The Fiery World – A Play of William Blake* for Ukemi Productions, and will be adapting and directing *The Duchess of Malfi* in 2008. He was arts editor, presenter and producer on Manx Radio, before which he spent ten years as a writer, actor and director in the UK and Europe. He has also read *Aristotle: An Introduction* and the introduction from *Beyond Good and Evil* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Credits

Paradise Lost

Produced by Nicolas Soames. Abridged by Perry Keenlyside
Engineer (speech): Alan Smyth, Bucks Audio Cassettes
Post-production: Simon Weir, The Classical Recording Company

Paradise Regained

Produced by Nicolas Soames
Recorded by Daryl Chapman at RNIB Talking Book Studios, London
Edited by Sarah Butcher

Poetry

Produced by John Tydeman
Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London
Edited by JD Evans
Selected by John Tydeman

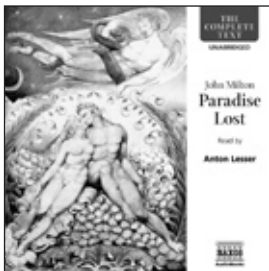
Prose and Biography

Produced by Roy McMillan
Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London
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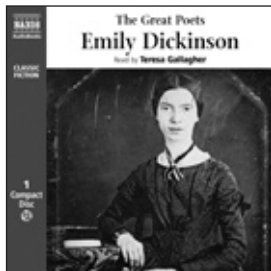


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Oliver Senton • Roy McMillan

Poet, philosopher and polemicist – John Milton is one of the most controversial, uncompromising and highly influential figures in English literature. This selection from some of his finest poetry and prose contains key sections from *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* in its entirety, and excerpts from other major works including *Comus* and *Samson Agonistes*. His poetry is represented by *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* as well as sonnets and shorter poems such as *On his blindness*. This unique audiobook overview of Milton's life and work also offers a biography and one CD devoted to his essays highlighting his views on free speech and divorce.

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