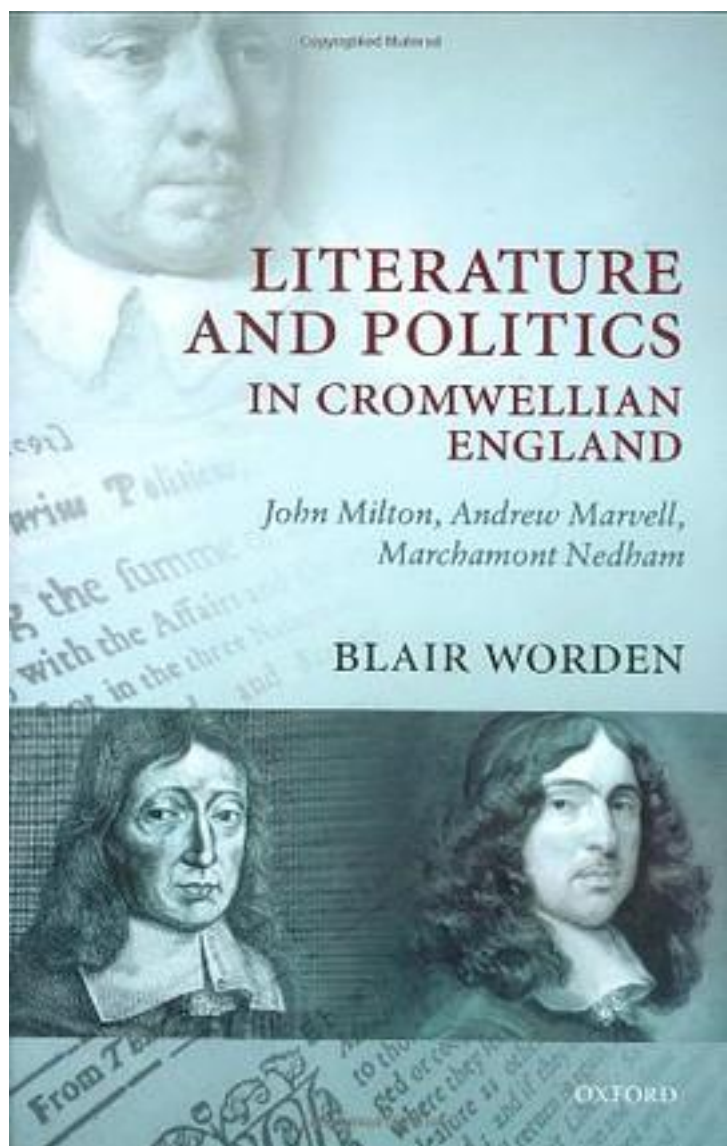


Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England



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In this book the pre-eminent historian of Cromwellian England takes a fresh approach to the literary biography of the two great poets of the Puritan Revolution, John Milton and Andrew Marvell. Blair Worden reconstructs the political contexts within which Milton and Marvell wrote, and reassesses their writings against the background of volatile and dramatic changes of public mood and circumstance. Two figures are shown to have been prominent in their minds. First there is Oliver Cromwell, on whose character and decisions the future of the Puritan Revolution and of the nation rested, and whose ascent the two writers traced and assessed, in both cases with an acute ambivalence. The second is Marchamont Nedham, the pioneering journalist of the civil wars, a close friend of Milton and a man whose writings prove to be intimately linked to Marvell's. The high achievements of Milton and Marvell are shown to belong to world of pressing political debate which Nedham's ephemeral publications helped to shape. The book follows Marvell's transition from royalism to Cromwellianism. In Milton's case we explore the profound effect on his outlook brought by the execution of King Charles I in 1649; his difficult and disillusioning relationship with the successive regimes of the Interregnum; and his attempt to come to terms, in his immortal poetry of the Restoration, with the failure of Puritan rule.

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