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The Poetics of Dew: A Study of Milton's Sonnets

by

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Abstract

The Poetics of Dew: A Study of Milton's Sonnets

by

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Taking Wordsworth's description of Milton's sonnets as "orbicular bodies" or "dew-drops" very seriously, this study explores the kinds and degrees of poetic openness that Milton invents for the brief modern lyric in his sonnets. Each of the poems is examined to reveal its structure and style, to elucidate its debt to predecessors, and to show its contribution to the poetics of a tradition of the English lyric poem commonly termed the "Meditative Romantic lyric." The kinds of openness or anticlosural devices Milton deploys are marshalled under a rubric of allusion, a concept which I define and typologize in my first chapter. Allusion is there shown to be not merely a matter of content, but one of structure as well, for example in the type self-echo or foregrounding. The first chapter also thoroughly discusses Milton's first sonnet and his Italian poems to point out Milton's particular use of the allusive types available to all poets. The second chapter treats the political sonnets, focusing on Milton's diverse uses of topical allusion, while the third compares Ben Jonson's manner of alluding with Milton's, a comparison which supports our critical intuitions concerning the differences between the Neoclassical closed form and the Romantic open form lyric of English literary tradition. The final chapter exposes Milton's influence on the Romantic meditative

-iv- (continued)

lyric as it is practised by Wordsworth, not in his sonnets--so obviously Miltonic imitations--but in his so called genre-free lyrics. Milton's innovative sonnet style, then, which very clearly contributes to his own and other poets' achievements in blank verse paragraphing, also has profound effects upon the brief lyric poem.

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Introduction

...in the better half of his (Milton's) sonnets the sense does not close at the eighth line, but overflows into the second portion of the metre. Now it has struck me that this is done not merely to gratify the ear by variety and freedom of sound, but also to aid in giving that pervading sense of intense Unity in which the excellence of the sonnet has always seemed to me mainly to consist. Instead of looking at this composition as a piece of architecture, making a whole out of three parts, I have been much in the habit of preferring the image of an orbicular body,--a sphere--a dew-drop.

1
William Wordsworth

Wordsworth's image for "the better half" of Milton's sonnets, the dew drop, remains one of the most acute perceptions in their critical history, though like less felicitous observations, it remains to be validated. In what follows, I introduce a study which would substantiate Wordsworth's intuition through a stylistic examination of Milton's sonnets. My aim is to describe their style and to place them in the English lyric tradition, as well as to sketch out a "poetics of dew"; I want to provide, that is, some notes toward a characterization of a poetic mode of procedure that Milton invented in the sonnets and that has been practised by later poets in sonnets and also in versions that we have come to call the "meditative Romantic lyric."

For Wordsworth's distinction between "architecture" and "dew" extends far beyond the sonnet form insofar as it discriminates two main stylistic traditions of the "modern" English lyric,² variously designated by the antithetical pairs, classic/romantic, closed/open, hard/soft, structured/free. Following from the work of contemporary theoreticians such as Paul Ricoeur and Umberto Eco, I shall also discuss the resemblance between the open form and the dream, as well as that between the closed form and the joke.

Moreover, to these pairs, general and vague—though to our intuition, legitimate distinctions between traditions of the lyric—I add two more: the Greek/Latin epigram. Geoffrey Hartman has suggested the usefulness of the epigram for the study of the lyric, writing that the development of Neoclassical and Romantic styles seems to parallel the difference between the styles of the Latin and Greek types of epigram as they are found in the Greek Anthology.³ Unlike the others, then, this pair involves an historical dimension, being two styles of practised poetry which—unlike the lyric—received a good deal of treatment in Renaissance poetic theory; thus, the epigram provided both a possible practical and theoretical resource for the new lyricist of the Seventeenth Century. I shall invoke the aid of the epigram in the third chapter of this study, in which, focusing on the structural properties of verse, I attempt to compare Milton with his close predecessor Ben Jonson.

The epigram helps us to place Milton in the native tradition because it widens our perspective on the English vernacular lyric to include the continental antecedents of all the English Seventeenth-Century styles. Since the work of J.S. Smart, who located Milton's

roots in Italy, the poet has been absolved from the charge of "crank," of writing sonnets peculiarly Miltonic, *ex nihilo*.⁴ But Milton's connection with Italy, because it provides a thoroughly un-English solution to the problem of the origins of his sonnet style, has discouraged comparisons between Milton and his English contemporaries, as well as studies of his influence.⁵ What needs emphasizing is that not only Milton but all the English new lyricists owe debts to Renaissance continental poetry, and this poetry seems to owe something to the Classical and Neo-Latin epigram.

For a proper understanding of Milton's sonnet style requires that we recognize it as a response, along with the different responses of the other Seventeenth-Century major poets, to the need to develop a new lyricism, a need entailed by the divorce of the lyric from music, and the exhaustion of the Petrarchan style. Such a recognition reveals just how seriously Milton regarded the sonnets. For with this group of poems he attempts to recover the tradition of the brief lyric poem: he uses the sonnet "format" to comment upon three hundred years of poetic "form." By this terminological distinction "format" and "form," borrowed from John Hollander, I mean the difference between metrical givens and poetic tradition. The sonnet's "format," then, entails fourteen lines, and rhyme schemes of either the English or Italian patterns; "form" involves the sonnet's generic development in literary history, the attitudes, ethos, and styles which accrue to the sonnet as practised by great poets and their followers, such as the Petrarchan or Shakesperian forms. In performing the recovery of form, Milton simultaneously provides the history of the

vernacular lyric and creates—for English Romantic poetry—its destiny.

Milton takes up the sonnet format, after its vogue in England has long waned, because it was the most venerated and debased vernacular form; being the repository of the theme of love in poetry, it had run the gamut in form and content from Dante to Barnabe Barnes. The degeneration of the sonnet has been frequently traced by recent scholars in the various strands of Petrarchanism being practised at the end of the Sixteenth Century, but Milton in his sonnets anticipates these judgments. For these poems on married love, love of country, friends, and God indicate Milton's concern to resurrect the higher strain of a Neo-platonic conception of love as his subject-matter. We will see that Milton's version of Neoplatonism derives mainly from Ficino's Christianized Platonism, love thus being the desire for beauty, the ascending process by which one mounts to the beautiful or good, and finally to God. Milton's "resurrective" task, then, constitutes a corrective to the decadent, courtly Neoplatonism of the Italian Petrarchans, as well as to the English sonneteers of the 1590's.⁶ With his sonnets, Milton places himself with Spenser (not with Amoretti, the sequence which Louis Martz has characterized as playful, parodic Petrarchanism⁷) but with The Fowre Hymnes, Spenser's intensely serious commentary on the meaning of love.

Furthermore, unlike other serious poets and thinkers who had sought to justify the subject of love by appending scholia to their poetry (Dante in the Convivio and Vita Nuova comes immediately to

to mind), or by writing explications of texts (Pico's on Benivieni's Canzone d'amore), or prose treatises on Love (Ficino's commentary on the Symposium), Milton incorporates his "moral" into the sonnets—an element contributing, as we shall see, to their "dew drop" texture.

The task of recovering is one of remembering and re-forming. We must expect Milton's sonnets to be both highly allusive yet strikingly original, to look backward and forward, to maintain both a metaleptic and proleptic style. To describe the orbicularity of this style, I shall focus my discussion on Milton's main stylistic device, his use of allusion. Poetic allusion is not often treated as an aspect of style,⁸ though I hope to show in my first chapter that it might be profitable to do so. The second chapter treats the problematical subject of topical allusion in Milton's political sonnets. In the third part of this study, I use allusion as the basis for a comparison between Jonson and Milton. The last chapter discusses Wordsworth—perhaps Milton's greatest Romantic heir—and his poetic openness, derived through his brilliant invention of an analogous allusive mode: the echo of personal memory.

¹William Wordsworth, letter to A. Dyce (? Spring, 1833), Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, ed. E. de Selincourt, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1939)2, p. 653

²By the "new" or "modern" lyric of the Seventeenth Century I mean the type of brief poem which, though nearly always co-existent with song, becomes popular in the Seventeenth Century, usurping the centrality of the song lyric in poetic practise. Intended to be read, the new lyric is personal, particularized in both its formal and thematic elements; its parameters may be designated, briefly, as individuation of persona, localization of place, temporal immediacy of utterance. For further discussion see, Catherine Ing, Elizabethan Lyrics (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968); and Jerome Mazzaro, Transformations in the Renaissance Lyric (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1970).

³Geoffrey Hartman, "Wordsworth, Inscriptions, and Romantic Nature Poetry," in From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick Pottle, eds. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1965), p. 389. The characteristics of the Greek and Latin epigrams will be discussed at length in chapter three of this study. Here it is sufficient to describe the Greek variety as muted, contemplative, often commemorative or elegiac in function and tone; the Latin type is pointed, witty, and frequently satirical, best exemplified perhaps in Martial's work.

⁴J.S. Smart, Milton's Sonnets (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921). Smart placed Milton in the Italian sonnet tradition of Tasso and Della Casa, work which was augmented by a later study, F.T. Prince's The Italian Element in Milton's Verse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954). In his discussion of Milton and his contemporaries, J. B. Leishman writes of the danger resulting from ignorance of Milton's Italian antecedents, a view of the young poet as "a kind of lonely and provincial crank." See, Milton's Minor Poems, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson (Pittsburgh: U. of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), p. 38.

⁵The influence exerted by Milton's sonnets has been documented by R. D. Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1922). Owing to his great scope, Havens treats broad categories of poetic form: theme, rhyme scheme, presence or absence of bipartite structure, direct allusions to Milton. I shall explore, through close analyses of much subtler effects in Milton's sonnets, how various Romantic poets "translated" Milton's practises into their versions—in and out of the sonnet format—of the Romantic meditative lyric. For an excellent study of Milton's influence upon the Romantics in general, see Leslie Brisman, Milton's Poetry of Choice and Its Romantic Heirs (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1973).

⁶A cogent summary of Bembo's and his followers Neoplatonism is found in John Charles Nelson, Renaissance Theory of Love: The Context of Giordano Bruno's "Eroici furori" (New York: Columbia U.P., 1955). Though Bembo sought to reify the Petrarchan tradition in Italy, he is often guilty of an artful pleonasm. See, The Italian Element, p. 97.

⁷Louis Martz, "The Amoretti: 'Most Goodly Temperature'" in Form and Convention In the Poetry of Edmund Spenser: Selected Papers from the English Institute, ed. William Nelson (New York: Columbia U.P., 1961), pp. 146-168. Martz justifies the inconsistency of tone in Spenser's sequence by stressing the imitativeness of the Amoretti, whose title he translates: "intimate little tokens of love made out of ancient materials deriving, primarily, from Italy." In short, Spenser does not attempt a coherent narrative sequence, but a series of imitative exercises loosely strung together.

⁸An important exception is the study of allusion by Reuben A. Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1959). At this point in my search for studies of allusion treating it as a literary device (work I am doing for an International Annotated Bibliography of Allusion Studies, to be published in Style, spring 1978), I find only brief articles. Brower's book remains the only major treatment in English on this subject, though a full length study by Helen Williams (Allusion, Harper & Row) is to be published soon. An article by Ziva Ben-Porat ("The Poetics of Literary Allusion," PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature, 1 (January, 1976), 106-28) makes a major theoretical contribution to the subject of poetic allusion, but is a bit over-methodological to be useful.

Chapter I
Toward a Theory of Allusion

If curves are more graceful than straight lines, the reason is that, while a curved line changes its direction at every moment, every new direction is indicated in the preceding one.

Henri Bergson

Explosion, fusion—such are the terms in which modern criticism rightly praises a certain kind of effect. But the vitality in Milton's style will not be that of a bomb, but rather that of a scent, active and beautiful both as a harbinger and as a memory.

Christopher Ricks¹

Harold Bloom has recently described Milton's response to a burdensome past to be dependent upon the rhetorical figure of transumption or metalepsis, with which Milton effects an interpretive role for himself, thereby rendering the past "his," so to speak. The poet who creates great "memory" chains, strings of allusions to past texts, in order to depict his present context "murders" time, exchanging his belatedness for his precursors' anteriority.²

Milton does not confine himself to a metaleptic use of allusion, as students of Paradise Lost have noticed ever since Dr. Johnson, quoting Dryden, wrote of "the spectacles of books" through which Milton sees nature. In one of the most important studies of the similes of Paradise Lost, Geoffrey Hartman found Milton using allusion to create a counterplot, and Christopher Ricks, in his book on Milton's grand style, discussed the poet's use of prolepsis, a kind of verbal echo in reverse³. Indeed, in Milton, allusion is conceptual handmaid to Latinate syntax, for both syntactically and conceptually his

poetic method tosses us about, forward and back, crowding the imagination so that we never wish his poem to be (borrowing Dr. Johnson's phrase but not his negative judgment) "longer than it is."

Milton's allusiveness, moreover, is not restricted to his epic. As we will see by examining his sonnets, poems written over a period of twenty-eight or thirty years, allusion is a constant factor in his poetic technique, the very signature of his style. Before turning to specific instances of use, however, it is necessary to discuss the nature of allusion in general and to delineate a typology of allusion in order to isolate the variety of kinds available for Milton's and all poets' uses.

We begin by resurrecting the historical definition of allusion which, according to the OED, originates in its root meaning "to mock or play with," is then narrowed in the early Renaissance to "illusion," and subsequently to "pun" or "word play"; "implied, indirect reference" dominates in the early Seventeenth Century (though Bacon uses allusion for "any symbolic likening"), while currently we find "direct, overt reference" as well as "indirect."

The earlier meanings will be recalled below in discussing the uses of allusion. Here it is sufficient to expand the Seventeenth-Century sense, and so to define allusion as it occurs in literature as indirect or tacit reference to some referent (in or out of literature) of "public knowledge"—that is, knowledge recoverable for members of a given culture. The referent may be a previous text, a topical event, or a verbal echo within a text (part of what is usually called the "musical" effects of verse,

or more recently, "fore-grounding"). In any case, the text alluded to is a "symbolic" expression. By "symbolic" I mean that the alluded to expression has more than a literal meaning, that it has a "hidden" or "symbolic" meaning which is discovered through the act of interpretation; furthermore, the alluded to text is always an interpreted one, one whose symbolic meaning is generally understood—which is what is meant when I say that an allusion is public knowledge or recoverable. I do not wish to imply that the alluding author always maintains this received interpretation of the allusion in his context, but only that this common understanding is an initial given.

Thus defined, allusion is a major mode of one way literature means, one of its means signification. For allusion is a "mockery" (in the sense of "imitation" or "analogue") of nonfictional language insofar as it shares linguistic conventions with this system while it eschews the usual primary aim of nonfictional discourse—univocality or precision of reference. For this referential power it substitutes indirect reference via symbolic meanings. The symbolic nature of the alluded to text is most clearly evident in the most common type of allusion in literature, that to a past literary text, so that allusion is often the manner of meaning in literature through literature. But even when the allusion is to a topical event, or to an aspect of the author's or another's life, it must be a symbolic text whose meaning has been interpreted previous to the act of alluding. An author may covertly refer to his little red sports car in a poem, but unless his audience can know he has such a car; as well as its symbolic import—say,

through newspaper accounts of his repeated reckless driving and avowed death wish—his referenc does not constitute an allusion. It should be clear from my example that nothing honorific or profound is meant by the term "symbolic." If, in the case of the hypothetical poet, the symbolic import of his car is the "vehicle of self-destruction," this meaning is quite obvious. The point is that it is, strictly speaking, not the literal meaning—which would be, after all, simply "little red sports car."

Unlike the criterion of "recoverability," the insistance upon the criterion of symbolic import may seem arbitrary. The latter, however, is necessary in order to secure for allusion in literature the status of a literary device. For in using his society's linguistic conventions, an author is guaranteed the most general kind of recoverability: even the tacit reference to words such as "apple" and "virtue" will be translated into a culture's commonly understood conceptions of them. Thus, to distinguish this most simple process of signifying from the literary device of alluding, we require the latter's referent to maintain some symbolic meaning, a requirement which specifies the presence of a second kind of indirection along with the more general "indirect or tacit reference."

But what is gained by alluding in literature? To determine its value as well as its source, it may be helpful to compare allusion in literature with the second group of joke techniques (techniques which the joke-work shares with the dream-work⁴) as they are described by Freud. Freud's discussion of this group of technical methods used in jokes (all of which may be subsumed under

our use of the term allusion) may indicate the relevance of the comparison. Of these techniques, unification, similarity of sound, multiple use, modification of familiar phrases, allusions to quotations, Freud writes:

we can single out as their common characteristic the fact that in each of them something familiar is rediscovered, where we might instead have expected something new. This rediscovery of what is familiar is pleasurable...(and) it is not difficult for us to recognize this pleasure in economy and to relate it to economy in psychical expenditure.⁵

Freud himself hints at the connection between a poetic use of language and a joking one when he mentions the pleasure incurred by recognition and remembering in the verse conventions rhyme, alliteration, and refrain.⁶ Such devices provide pleasure because they point out, by prompting our recollection of something known in the past, a new relationship between this past remembrance and the current context. Let us examine a joke adduced by Freud which exemplifies the "rediscovery of what is familiar" joke type. This joke reads as follows: "This girl reminds me of Dreyfus; the army doesn't believe in her innocence." Clearly, this joke relieves no internal inhibitions in its audience. The pleasure it excites is, rather, owing to the new connection it creates between the two meanings of "innocence." Through the allusion to Dreyfus, it urges us to remember a past topical "text," and to apply its meaning to the new context, which, easily done, provides pleasure in economy of psychical energy. Like this type of joke, then, the genesis of allusion may be said to derive from the basic psychological pleasure obtained from learning something new when this knowledge is got with little expenditure of our psychic

energy; and, like the joke, the allusion is composed of three elements; the echoing structure (what we usually call the allusion proper), the remembrance (the interpreted meaning) this structure strikes up in its audience, and the new knowledge resulting from the connection made by the present text's interaction with the remembrance.

The objection might be made that the pleasure of economy can only be experienced when reading an "unadulterated" allusion, that is, an indirect reference to something which the alluding poet does not alter or modify in his context to any significant degree, so that we easily absorb the new connection; the comparison between joking and alluding would then have trivial significance since we know that major poets do not rest with the initial meaning of our remembrance of the referent, but so use this to spin off yet other, deeper, perhaps antithetical meanings. But Freud, who anticipated the same objection to his theory of jokes, tells us that the pleasure of economy is of a relative economy, that the more complicated the connection between ideas made by the joke, the more we appreciate the short-circuiting effect of the joke's technique or device; our pleasure is therefore greater than it would be were there less difficulty for both the joke and its audience to overcome.⁷

Keeping in mind the importance of remembering in the structure of allusion (the Muses, of course, are the Daughters of Memory), I arrange the types of allusion along a "memory" spectrum, an axis stretching from what is most external to the alluding text to-what

is most internal, this text's echoing structures themselves.

The spectrum is devised merely as an isolating device, however, implying no judgment as to the quality of a poet's use of any type. For example, transumption, as one use of allusion, may be an inoperant function in any given allusion, or when operating, may do so with either good or bad results. In fact, allusive transumption appears in no major poet's work until Milton, who, in treating allusions as figures, invents allusive transumption by troping them—by troping tropes. A famous example of this use of allusion is the movement from allusion to allusion in the bee simile of the close of Book I in Paradise Lost; to exemplify transumption proper, we may consider Milton's "blind mouths" of Lycidas, in which he metaphORIZES a synecdoche, but in which allusion plays no part.

Ben Jonson comes to mind as a highly allusive and successful poet who eschews transumption for other uses of allusion (uses which we will examine in our comparison between Jonson and Milton in Chapter Three). Moreover, in transumption, the remoteness in time of the allusion from the alluding text is not significant per se, since it requires equal skill to effectively transume a precursor text be it written five hundred or five years previous to the allusion. Especially for the lyric poet wishing to create the illusion of spontaneity, "murdering" time may often be a matter of "self-destruction," the radical revision of his utterance-in-process via self echo.

But we must postpone this discussion of transumption and other uses of allusion in order to sketch the kinds. At one extreme of the spectrum, then, is the allusion to a specific precursor text in an obvious manner, so that its recognition as a past utterance marks it

clearly as "other" from the text in hand. Again, this overtness entails no one use but ranges from the Medieval poet's relatively unadulterated "citation" of precursors to exhibit learning, to a complicated sequence of allusions, such as those of Milton's bee simile mentioned above. This type shades off into the less recognizable, until the echo may be condensed into one significant word, or inhere in the repetition of a rhythmical pattern, so that it is barely perceptible to the audience—appearing to be for the poet himself, something we "overhear."⁸

The evocation of a past cultural milieu, such as Pope's "allusions to Horace," or Milton's etymological puns (to capture a "golden age" of meaning) is placed closer to the alluding text because this type is more a part of the alluding text's texture; that is, it is not a recognizably "other" text which is recalled but a generalized atmosphere or ethos of either an age or poetical canon that is recreated through imitation of an overall style, genre, meter, or even title. As John Hollander writes selections within these poetic conventions are always allusive insofar as the types of each convention maintain a unique ethos; the choice of a particular meter, for example, reminds us of its general use in the past and thus urges us to give it a particular kind of attention.⁹ The poet, of course, may or may not be conscious of these selections, or he may so design his poem as to emblemize them, thus exploiting their allusive power.

Topical allusion, either to some public event or to some "private" aspect of the poet's life, may seem to be of another order than the literary kinds discussed so far, but not if we remember that it shares with the allusions to literature a commonly understood "symbolic"—even

if reduced--meaning. For the initial significance of the remembrance prompted by any allusion is always, at least at first in the process of reading, a "common denominator" significance, a received interpretation with a shared (and therefore necessarily reduced) meaning. The topical allusion, in tapping the previously interpreted symbolic meaning of some piece of reality, is therefore as "fictional" as the literary allusion.

Finally, the least external type is the allusion of a text to itself, self echo, on either the morphemic level (repeated words, phrases) or the phonetic level (internal, terminal rhyme, alliteration, assonance). We should distinguish between "rhetorical" echo and the variety called "foregrounding"; for though both may be used allusively, the former conforms to some standardized pattern as set forth in the rhetorical handbooks (such as anaphora), whereas the latter, being a repetition peculiar to a given poem, is more subtle and difficult to identify. Now both varieties are so general as to be the distinctions between prose and verse. Of interest to us will be cases in which there is some evidence that the poet is implicitly directing out attention backward and forward by verbal echo; not merely sound, but sense must be involved to constitute an example of allusion. Let us turn now to the sonnets of Milton's early years to examine these kinds and uses of allusion, which he was even then beginning to master.

*

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Writing a sonnet to a nightingale in 1629 is the poetic equivalent of breaking into a swift Peabody at one of today's slick dischoteques--both activities just about forty years too late to be fashionable. And

though we might (considering our present nostalgia for the 1930's) apply the epithet "original" to the dancer, critical opinion has never found any consideration which would permit a similar application for the young Milton's Sonnet I. As F.T. Prince writes, the poem is an exercise in the manner of Bembo, whose gift and curse to Italian Sixteenth-Century poetry was the elevation of the vernacular at the expense of content. Thus Milton's poem in its "slight and solemn trifling, literary tone, and epigrammatic turn in its final lines" imitates Bembo's version of Petrarchanism. More-over, though demonstrating the balance and unity demanded by Bembo's form, Sonnet I exhibits none of the effects of asprezza or the minutely applied parallelisms of Della Casa.¹⁰ Prince is certainly correct in this last point, but wrong I think, in his classification of the poem as purely Bembist. For though Sonnet I differs from the other sonnets in this matter of parallelism, it shares with them a serious regard for content and distinctively Miltonic uses of allusion, attention to which reveals that the poem is no strict imitation but rather a revisionary one. In this early poem Milton shows himself capable, as he will demonstrate so clearly in Lycidas, of using his precursors to serve his individuated voice.

The poem's strength derives from its successful manipulation of the convention in which it is purportedly set, the lover's complaint. Standing as it does at the head of the sonnet groups, its blatant iconography (of nightingale, lover, and bloomy bow) helps it serve as a frontispiece; but as an emblem genuinely heraldic for the group, it announces and renounces certain traditions of love poetry, preparing us for the profound interpretation of love the poet will treat in his sonnets. This emblematic quality inheres in its metrical form as well. Written in what

at first appears to be a strict Petrarchan mode, it signals Milton's allegiance to the Italian over the English sonnet tradition.

The poem, however, is not "complaining" but "hoping" and "announcing." It is, to borrow Angus Fletcher's notion, a "liminal" poem, involving a shift from one state of mind to another.¹¹ As such, it generates a tone of hope and anxious uncertainty, but uncertainty overcome because the transition, the speaker's passing to a new state of consciousness, is successfully performed. The rite of passage in question here is, of course, that requisite for a young poet embarking on a new poetic genre. As Fletcher notes, the threshold poem is characterized by metaphor, specifically, by the poet's rendering of his experience of the discordia concors, of living through a metaphor. What we find in Sonnet I is no artificial pastiche, but a poem in which Milton contrives a liminal scene (the young poet's discovery of a salient metaphor of sonnet love poetry) in which he renders both this metaphor's traditional meaning and his unique perception of it.

The most important allusions for the poem are those to Milton's own fifth Latin Elegy, to Renaissance complaints to nightingales such as Bembo's and Marino's,¹² to Clanvowe's The Cuckoo and the Nightingale (thought to be Chaucer's by Milton), and that to Spenser's "Mutabilitie Cantos." Milton's allusive technique here is to establish a commentary on these literary allusions which implicitly rejects the complaint poem of the Petrarchan love tradition of the Italian Renaissance and its Medieval English courtly version while it allies the poet with the higher strains of Spenserian love and poetry.

Evocation for the purpose of renunciation is thus initiated in the poem's first lines, which are both an allusion to the nightingale poems

of the complaint tradition and a close paraphrase of part of Milton's exhortation to the nightingale to sing in his Elegy Five:

Iam, Philomela, tuos foliis adoperta novellis
Instituis modulos, dum silet omne nemus

(Already, Philomela, you are beginning your trills
in your covert among the budding leaves, while
all the woods are still.) 13

Had the allusion no further significance, that Milton echoes himself here would be of interest, since it creates a kind of bridge from his erotic elegy writing to his new poetic endeavor. But the close paraphrase requires that we examine the allusion's context, an elegy in which Milton ingeniously combines the coming of spring with the resurgence of poetic power—an idea not often found in the Latin elegists.¹⁴ But he also conflates his poetry with the nightingale's song, for within the invocation (ll. 25-36) Milton asks the bird to be the sylvan counterpart to the urban poet, a function which is then usurped by this poet, who for the rest of the poem is transported to rural places, exuberantly singing, as he had requested the nightingale to do. Milton collapses the distinction between his poetry and the nightingale's song here, and by paraphrasing precisely these lines in the sonnet, expects us to remember the identification.¹⁵ Sonnet I's nightingale is like Ovid's bird whose song is that of eloquence restored;¹⁶ that is, it is neither Bembo's nor Marino's bird whom Milton invokes, but his very own poetic voice.

If the speaker is not the lover as passive supplicator but a lover urging hi-self to poetic action, then we are forced to reinterpret the central, governing allusion to Clavow's poem. It, like Bembo's and Marino's poems, becomes part of a tradition which the speaker rejects through his usurpation of the nightingale's symbolic role.

Milton also uses Clannove's poem as an allegorical narrative frame to depict his speaker's state of consciousness, his liminal mood at the moment before "entry" with all the attendant anxiety of belatedness which accompanies this moment. The Cuckoo and the Nightingale, a narrative which turns on the urgency of a particular temporal sequence of song, thereby happily serves Milton's purpose.

Thus the nightingale and cuckoo represent projections of two potential poetic qualities; the young poet stands at a transitional moment—at eve—in the woody profusion of poetic tradition, but he is ready, for the woods are "still"—both "quiet" (so that his song might be heard) and "enduring" (it is a living tradition in which he about to take his place); the poet forces a crisis in order to dispell the anxiety of belatedness, mounting from "year to year," which will be relieved if he writes the right poem; if, however, his powers fail and he writes a "cuckoo song, this tune utself will sound his doom as poet.

The allusion to Spenser's "Mutabilitie Cantos" provides a meaning for that "amorous power" other than the erotic: the Neoplatonic love which binds the universe and is the essential power of poetry. Milton's single line, "While the jolly Hours lead on propitious May," introduces a bit of masquing into the sonnet, along with the masque's perspective on the theme of fertility vs. order, rebellion vs. duty. The "Mutabilitie Cantos," fulcrum for this main theme of Spenser's epic, represents a further distillation in the pageant of the months and seasons to which Milton alludes. Mutabilities, the beautiful if rebellious principle of change, orders the display of annual alteration to testify to her domination of the mudane world. The irony in all

this, of course, is that the very repetition of seasonal change is not orderless but the hallmark of constancy. It is not chaotic abundance or change per se that marks nature but an ordered mutability that moves earthly forms toward their original, unfallen perfection.¹⁷

Milton contrives the most cogent image among those of the entire pageant to represent Spenser's meaning when he selects May, propitious, abundant fertility, to be "led on" (the phrase suggests the dance and thus patterned regularity) by the Hours, about whom Spenser writes:

Then came the Howres, faire daughters of high Iove,
and timely Night, the which were all endowed
With wondrous beauty fit to kindle love;
But they were Virgins all, and love eschewed,
That might forslack the charge to them foreshewed
By mighty Iove; who did them porters make
Of heavens gate (whence all the gods issued)
Which they did dayly watch, and nightly wake
By even turnes, ne ever did their charge forsake.¹⁸

The appearance of the Hours, ordering principles, along with fertile May thus signals Milton's awareness, ever-present in his poetry, of the need to harness and discipline his poetic impulse. The aspiring poet might be, like Mutabilitie, a usurper.¹⁹ Only if he is a good poet, one who can alter tradition positively by taking it a step closer to perfection, is he justified. This is the poetry the speaker would write, and he wishes, in the sonnet's second plangent cry, that Jove—Spenser's symbol for reigning order²⁰—might have linked that amorous power, that power of poetry to effect discordia concors, to his poetic talent.

After the Spenserian allusion of line four (touched on again in the mention of Jove), Milton dispenses with all literary allusion save for the narrative frame of Clanvowe's poem. Thus as the jolly Hours and

May "dance" through the poem, the image of the nightingale's song closing the eye of Day acts like a shutter, closing out a certain kind of light, what could be poetically inhibiting, the glare of his precursors—especially his "poetical father," Spenser. The sonnet now begins to allude to itself, performing an exegesis on its use of Clanvowe's story, which it does by stressing the tale's concern with priority (nightingale must sing before the cuckoo if the lover is to be successful). Because Milton wants to convey the urgency felt by the ready poet in the liminal state, just before writing, his method involves the echoing of all time words and expressions, but with the added dimension of sequence or progression in time, since the speaker wants to express as well his cognizance of his place in time, in poetic tradition.

This annotating meta-language of succession is instanced in the redundant collocation "First heard before" (1.6), as well as in the suggestion of temporal succession in "success" (1.7). Moreover, Jove's is a linking power, while the phrase, "year to year" (1.12) itself makes a kind of echo chain. The pun on "ere" (1.9), both "before" and "song" combines two central concepts of the sonnet, time and poetry.

Our first clue that Sonnet I is not Bembo metrically comes with the echo of the initial vocative "O" which splits the poem in half (coming in line 7), offsetting the balance of eight and six that is almost always observed by Bembo and his school.²¹ The last two lines of the poem, furthermore, are not as Prince writes, Bembo "epigrammatic turns," those tagged conclusions following from a syllogistic or pseudo-syllogistic thematic development, or those in which a new perspective or a new theme is introduced (such as we frequently find in Shakespeare's

sonnets). For the declaration of service in a particular train is merely the explicit realization of what has been implicit throughout, and is therefore not epigrammatic in the sense of "tagged on," though we might call it so in the sense of "summing up." Furthermore, though most editors use a colon after line twelve, Milton consistently printed a comma,²² a detail which would reduce epigrammatic, hard closure by investing a hinge-like function to the half line, "yet hadst no reason why," connecting it with the last two lines, though the phrase would remain primarily as a qualifier of the preceding clause.²³

The grammatical confusion in these concluding lines, often noted by critics serves Milton's purpose, if we accept that the poem's speaker—in talking to the nightingale—is talking to himself, as well as if we accept that this talking concerns the rejection of the complaint poem of Petrarchanism for a more authentic tradition of love. For then the problematical singular masculine pronoun "his" in "Whether the Muse or Love call thee his Mate," serves the association of Muse and Love; indeed they collapse into one entity requiring a singular pronoun. The pronoun is masculine because Muse is a synecdoche for poetry.²⁴ Thus the sense of these lines might be paraphrases: it does not matter whether one associates my creative power with Poetry (the Muse) or Love because for me they are inextricably connected; my poetry will be of "that amorous power" which impels one to the good (and thereby, for a Christian Platonist, to God).

There is, therefore, only one train in the poem's final line, whose monosyllables beat out a strong assertion of service to a poetic principle that embraces both the ethical and aesthetic, an assertion characteristic

of Milton's poetry and thought in general. As he writes in 1642:

He who would not be frustrate of his hope
to write well hereafter in laudable things
ought himself to be a true poem, that is,
a composition and pattern of the best and
honorabest things. 25

Thus, even in this early attempt at a hitherto untried poetic form, we find Milton in Sonnet I bringing to bear certain ideas and ways of expressing them that he will continue to practise and develop throughout his career. As we ought to expect from the man who would be a poem, Milton has quit himself like Milton.

Though Milton in Sonnet I rejects Petrarchanism as the tradition in which he will write sonnets, he could not, in his desire to recover the vernacular lyric, ignore its great continental exponent Petrarch or the tradition he inspired. Milton's five Italina sonnets and one canzone stanza constitute his excursis on the tradition of Petrarch in which he studies one aspect—the love of a beautiful woman—of the larger Neoplatonic love theme announced in Sonnet I. Without a doubt these poems come closest among all the sonnets to being "exercises," insofar as Milton subordinates his poetic voice in order to learn from the experience of writing them; nevertheless, Milton effects some thematic changes in the received tradition. For even when practising this type of allusive technique of imitation, Milton could not leave his source wholly unaltered. He substitutes points of emphasis that are latent or subordinated in Petrarch so that he might render imitations which—if they do not fully reflect—at least do no violence to his poetic personality. In this respect the Italian imitations are like Spenser's Amoretti and Ben Jonson's lyrics in his "Celebration of Charis," the latter being a group of poems, which for all their ironies of tone

are not anti-Petrarchan but "Jonsonian-Petrarchan; that is, they, like Spenser's Amoretti, represent an accommodation of the tradition (which Jonson in other poems disparaged) to suit his poetic ethos.²⁶

The Italian poems are nearly always discussed as exercises because, clearly, Milton had to write them in order to develop that grand style with its "variety of pauses" which he deploys in the later sonnets and in his epic.²⁷ F. T. Prince has shown precisely what and how Milton took from the Italians in the way of formal techniques: Petrarch's balance and parallelism of structure; Bembo's purity and loftiness of diction; Della Casa's Latinate syntax and aprezza.²⁸ Prince's thorough analysis of these prosodic effects in the Italian poems renders our attention to them unnecessary, though we will be engaged later in studying how Milton translated these techniques into his English sonnets. Our concern will be merely to note Milton's alteration in the conventional treatment of the Petrarchan lady.

It is generally agreed that Milton's lady enjoys "Petrarchan" addresses in the poems, though it is not always clear what this term means. To avoid confusion, let us reserve "Petrarchan" and "Petrarchanism" to designate the followers of Petrarch. Petrarch's poetry itself (as practiced in the Canzoniere) has been cogently described by Leonard Forster, who finds its treatment of the beloved woman to be the result of a tension (present as well in Dante, but not as emphasized) between the troubador and dolce stil nuovo traditions. The former includes final satisfaction in love, though the prevailing tone is lament; the latter tradition, makes the woman a symbol of divine, so that love is equated with virtue or the pursuit of good. Sensual satisfaction is thereby excluded by definition. This much Petrarch had inherited from Dante, especially from his Rime and Vita Nuova. Petrarch's innovation was to forge a poetic subject matter and

language out of ambivalence with regard to the sensuality and divinity of woman. His poetry is therefore one of antithesis, paradox, and oxymoron. Yet he sustains a delicate balance in his artful manipulation of the two traditions to probe the psychology of love and the lover. Many later poets, such as Serafino dall'Aquila (1466-1500), Antonio Tebaldo (1463-1537), and Panfilo Sasso (?1454-1527), were less interested in the balance than in the antithesis, which they endlessly exploited, as they did all Petrarch's conceits.²⁹ In a similar way, the English Petrarchan sonneteers of the 1590's, such as Thomas Watson, Henry Constable, and Barnabe Barnes indulged in constant repetition of Petrarch's rhetorical devices, rendering them rigidified commonplaces.

Milton's Petrarchanism, insofar as it attempts to eschew these mannered excrescences and return to the original purity of Petrarch himself, is like the Petrarchanism of Pierro Bembo, who, in seeking to vivify the tradition, led a kind of "back to Petrarch" movement in Sixteenth-Century Italy.³⁰ Milton's major modification of Petrarch and the Petrarchans involves his substitution of poetry itself for women as the symbol for the Beautiful which moves man from mundane, erotic love to love of God. That is to say, in Dante and Petrarch the beloved is both "real" woman and a symbol for the divine; in Milton she is a "real" woman and a symbol for poetry. No doubt Milton's Protestantism rendered the former symbolism temperamentally unappealing--certainly his earlier attempt in "On the Death of a Fair Infant" to supply the dead babe with the symbolic role of Christ is awkward at best.³¹ But for whatever reason it was performed, Milton's substitution explains the curious feeling engendered by the poems that his lady is--as Brooks and Hardy note--the poetic Italian language itself.³²

Milton's substitution also absolves him from the personal

charge of insincerity, lodged against him because at times he imitates Petrarch too closely to mean what he is saying to Emilia. This invalid approach results from Smart's and others belief that Milton addresses a living (historical) lady, about whom he writes in Italian for the purpose of gaining emotional distance, because of his natural shyness or niceness, in short.³³ This belief that the poems recreate a literal experience is maintained mainly because of the realistic details Milton mentions to describe Emilia, attention to which, however, reveals that he represents both a "real" fictitious lady³⁴ as well as his symbol for the Northern Italian Muse. For the assignment of physical traits to the beloved in a realistic manner does not necessarily imply that the poet is recreating experience, inasmuch as it is part of the medieval allegorical tradition in the love lyric, a technique which helps gain credence for the lady on the realistic level, as the potential erotic lover.³⁵ Of interest to us is Milton's selection of traits, all of which concern language.

Thus, in the first sonnet the lady's powers of speech and song are associated with those of Orpheus in the allusion:

Quando tu vaga parli o lieta canti,
 Che mover possa duro alpestre legno
 (When thou speakest in beauty, or singest
 in joy, so that the trees of the mountains
 might be moved. ll. 9-10)

Moreover, there is an allusion in the line, "La, onde l'alta tua virtu s'infiora" (There where blooms thy lofty might, l. 8), which literally placed her in the position of the nightingale of Elegy Five and Sonnet I--where, as we saw, the nightingale is associated with the speaker's poetry. In Sonnet IV in which Milton also describes his lady, he again stresses her linguistic prowess, "Parole adorne di lingua piu d'una,/ E'l cantar che di mezzo l'emispoero/ Traviar ben puo faticosa Luna;" (Speech in language more than one, and singing that from the mid hemisphere might lure the laboring moon, ll. 10-12). And, though this poem is patterned on

Petrarch's "Grazie ch'a pochi," it is nevertheless significant that Milton chose a model which assigns such poetic skills to the beloved.

Geography is again associated with poetry in Sonnet III, in which the poet's essay in a foreign idiom is likened to a shepherdess's cultivation of an exotic plant (ll. 1-4), and in which rivers become tongues: "E'l bel Tamigi cangio col bel Arno" (And change the fair Thames for the fair Arno, l.10). The poem is explicitly concerned with the reason for writing poetry in a foreign language: "Amor lo volse" (Love willed it, l.11). That Milton wants to signify the pressure of the Italian tradition of love poetry as well as Cupid by this phrase becomes apparent in the canzone which follows. This poem is by far the most introspective of the group and in its central position, sheds a kind of auto-exegetical light for reading those poems which surround it.

Milton's creation of a scene in which he is confronted by a skeptical audience very cleverly enables him to frame the mocking charges of hubris in a quotation, thereby in part weakening them--since the opinion of these "amorous youths" must seem less serious than self-accusation. Pitted against a taunting "mob" who question him on his daring, beckoning him to tell them his wishes so that these may not be expressed in vain (they cannot read them in the Italian poems), the speaker implicitly rebukes their ignorance by ignoring them and addressing himself to the canzone itself. His answer also refuses to acknowledge their poetic provincialism: they ask the poet to tell them; he refuses, communicating instead through the poetic idiom.

Milton also smuggles in a compliment to himself (albeit a left handed one) by having these youths describe his high poetic aspirations:

'Altri rivi,
Altri lidi t'aspettan ed altre onde,
Nelle cui verdi sponde
Spuntati ad or ad or a la tua chioma
L'immortal guideron d'eternae fronde.'

(Other streams, other banks await thee and other waves on whose green margin there sometimes grows, to crown thy head, the immortal guerdon of unfading leaves, ll.7-11)

The poet never denies these possibilities; his reply simply clarifies the reason for writing love poems in Italian: " 'Questa e lingua di cui si vanta Amore.' " (This is the language in which Love takes pride, l.15).

As if to illustrate the precedence of Italian as the language of love, Milton models the next sonnet on one of the most beautiful of Petrarch's. Smart notes that Milton's variations are significant, but does not explain this remark.³⁷

The most obvious difference between the poets' depictions of their lovers is that while Petrarch's lady is extraordinarily beautiful, Milton's is extra-ordinary; that is, he emphasizes her foreign qualities. Another difference resides in Milton's earthly and Petrarch's divine representation of the women. Petrarch explicitly assigns the epithet "divine": "E 'n umil donna alta belta divina" (And lofty divine beauty in a humble lady, l.4). He further characterizes her: "Rara virtu, no gia d'umana gente" (Rare excellence never known amongst men, l.2).

Because Petrarch is clearly dealing with woman as divine here, there is no remorse, no threat of sinfulness in his love: "'l vago spirito ardente,/ Ch'ogni dur rompe ed ogni altezza inchina" (delightful glowing spirit which breaks the hard and bends the haughty, ll.7-8). Compare this with Milton's "my stubbornself that was wont to despise Love and often laughed at his snares, has now fallen where sometimes even an upright man is entangled" (ll. 3-4). There is the introduction of moral seriousness here in Milton's "impiglia" translated "entangled," and in the allusion to Odysseus and the sirens (ll. 13-14), because unlike Petrarch's, Milton's concern is secular love, which while not being denounced, is being presented as a possible moral danger. The potential for evil to spring from what seem to be sources of good is suggested in the word "impiglia,"

which reminds us of Milton's use of the concept in Areopagitica, where truth--in and out of books--is envisioned (characteristically) to be intertwined and difficult to enmesh:

Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many ways cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed on Psyche as an labor to cull out and sort asunder, were not more intermixed.³⁸

There is no similar Miltonic resonance in Sonnet V, however, which is always condemned as a hopelessly stale pastiche of Petrarchan conventions. As Smart notes, sighs and tears, eyes that are suns, burning and freezing, and mornings of roses, had been found among all sonneteers since Petrarch.³⁹ But Smart suggests the significance of the poem for Milton when he writes that "Milton has united such figures, the abstract of a thousand sonnets, into a strange and heavy consistency."⁴⁰ For though it fails, this poem is characteristic of Milton's most practised allusive method, the piling up of conventions in a way that renders them --in striking baroque excessiveness--startingly new, as he will do so brilliantly in Comus and Lycidas.⁴¹ Undoubtedly Milton knew the poem was bad, but he did not omit it from his 1645 edition, as he did not another early failure, "The Passion," because they serve a rhetorical purpose: both poems create a kind of pathos for the young author, as well as indicate--for the perceptive reader--precisely how the poet learned from his errors.⁴²

Milton's good rhetorical judgment is evinced in his placement of his most original sonnet, devoted to the defence of his character, at the close of the Italian sequence. The editors of the Variarum note three poems by Petrarch and one by Michelangelo which use the idea that the lover must escape from his tormented, distracted self and flee to his beloved whose goodness and virtue (in her role as a symbol for the divine) provide solace.⁴³ Reading Sonnet VI

as alluding to this convention, we notice that Milton not only deprives Emilia of this divine role, but nearly usurps it for himself, though of course there is nothing in his character portrait that is extra-human or God-like: "In many trials I have known my heart faithful, dauntless and loyal; fair, wise and good in its thoughts." This novel substitution of the poet-lover's goodness for his beloved's is typical of Milton in its elevation of the ethical function of poet and poetry, and the subjection of any given poetic theme (here, mundane love) to this ethical function.

Thus his character portrait, insofar as it associates poet-poetry with virtue, completes Milton's substitution of the power of poetry for feminine power as the ascensive force leading man to the Good. Milton, it seems, knew even in 1631 that feminine sensual beauty would not figure large in his poetic canon. Art, the beauty of verse itself, "simple, sensuous, and passionate," occurs in his work far more frequently than the beautiful woman as the source of love.

His character portrait has a more literal relevance, moreover, coming at the close of poems in which Milton, writing in a foreign language and in an alien tradition, had had to suppress his individuality. There is a great pathos in this personal revelation; we feel as though the young poet, straining so long his natural inclination, could not but help express a more authentic account of himself.

And this "defensive" impulse--which as self-love is part of Milton's Neoplatonic love theme⁴⁴--is not extinguished in Sonnet VI but reappears in the last sonnet of his early years, "How soon hath Time." This poem represents our first instance in English of topical allusion of the "personal" variety. Now all poetry, especially lyric poetry, reflects a "personal" (that is, individual) consciousness, but this is not what is meant by the term "personal allusion." Only when the poet uses a reference (which must be recognizable of course) as a means of signification in the service of his poetic fiction do we have allusion proper: the covert reference to some

previously known and interpreted symbolic "text" of life. Thus defined, personal allusion is one way of being personal in poetry--of which there are many. For example, Donne does not often make use of personal allusion but does write personal new lyrics, that is, poems spoken by a highly individuated narrator; taken together, his lyric corpus exhibits neither his own nor any single personality. As Jerome Mazzaro has written, Donne deploys personae who "play at roles," which results, when we contemplate his lyric corpus, in a "multiple ego":

In 'playing at a role,' a person assumes a role which he can not actually appropriate except in a make-believe, playful, fictitious, or fantasy form. Donne's playing at being an alchemist in "Love's Alchemy" is an example of it in action. 45

Mazzaro rightly sees Donne's dramaturgical technique as the poet's solution to the new lyric's demand for an interiorized or personal point of view. In an antithetical manner, writing without the mask, Milton satisfies the same criterion.⁴⁶

A.S.P. Woodhouse saw Milton's poems as his "aesthetic pattern" imposed upon experience,⁴⁷ but we should add that Milton imposed his pattern upon all experience--in and out of literature. By this I certainly do not mean that there is no private, unfathomable dimension to Milton man or poet, but that Milton seems to have deliberately (which does not imply insincerely) publicized his character--in his professional roles, political prose, private correspondence, and poetry--in order to permit a rather wide access between his inner and outer reality. As John Diekhoff writes concerning the biographical details known about the poet, "Milton wants us to know them, takes trouble that we may."⁴⁸ For the poet, the benefit of choosing to represent a consistent self portrait (all private satisfaction in virtuous integrity aside) is its provision of a generative matrix of biographical data to which he can allude.

It is precisely the sonnet form, traditionally the most revealing for the poet, that Milton most actively engages to forge this continuum between his inner and outer existence.

Curiously, though most of the sonnets have been plundered for the biographical data that they supply, there is no mention that the sonnet group reads like a kind of lyrical autobiography. It is important to note that no other English poet had used the sonnet format in so unmediated a manner--and would not do so again until the Romantics. Donne, as we noted, used the sonnet and other lyric formats to dramatize self discovery rather than revelation, and the Elizabethans were "personal" only behind their masks, intermixing realities with the poetic conventionalities of the Petrarchan persona.⁴⁹

We saw Milton in Sonnet I, and to a lesser extent in the Italian poems, using conventional poses innovatively, in order to express his authentic self, but it is in Sonnet VII that he drops the mask, beginning the bridging process toward interiority which the sonnet group thoroughly completes. Through personal allusion he here begins to impart his profoundly ethical conception of "character" (carrying its original meaning of something stamped or impressed indelibly), chosen at the expense of the dramaturgical role playing of shifting personae.

Sonnet VII is in every way an unmasking poem: it represents the speaker of Sonnets I through VI without the veil of the conventional erotic lover; it revises certain poetical judgments on Milton's contemporaries; it exposes Time; and it reveals Milton's decision to pursue a poetic career.

This last revelation has been noted by biographical scholars on the basis of the poem's appearance in the Cambridge Manuscript with the Letter to a Friend, in which Milton justifies his solitary, scholarly pursuits, and hedges on his decision not to take Holy Orders. That is,

when read with the letter, the poem--which also does not explicitly reveal a career choice--implies Milton's decision to become a poet more strongly than either document read singly. We cannot treat parallels between the sonnet and letter or allusions within the letter as instances of allusive technique, since Milton never published the letter, which thus cannot be considered accessible to even the "fittest" audience of his poem. Nevertheless, the letter has been rightly used for its value in providing evidence for Milton's intended meaning in the poem, his declaration of profession.

Thus, R.M. Smith discovers a similar sentiment between Milton's letter and Spenser's verse letter to Harvey in which he writes:

Namque sinu pudet in patrio, tenebrisque pudendis
Non nimis ingenio Iuuenem, infoelice, virentes
Officijs frustra deperdere vilibus Annos,
Frugibus et vacuas speralis cernere spicas.

(For a youth not too meagerly gifted feels it
shameful to waste
His green season waiting at home, where vainly
he lingers
In the ignominious twilight of duties obscure,
and too late
Find the grown ear of his hope still vacant of grain.)⁵⁰

With his letter-and-poem, then, Milton may have been associating himself with his great poetic precursor, and thereby to his own poetic affiliation. It should be noted also that Spenser's letter is a farewell to Harvey written upon Spenser's departure on a journey for his patron Leicester, in fact, upon embarking on his career--albeit his political and not poetical career.

The letter's function of associating Milton with Spenser and his very real friend Harvey does not contradict Hanford's appealing suggestion that the letter operates as a fictional setting for the gem-like poem, that Milton created the friend as a fictional embodiment of

the world's view on his belatedness, thereby creating for himself a
51
dramatic context for his self-defence.

But to exhibit the contiguity between art and life which
Milton maintains, we must deduce the interpretation of the poem
as announcing Milton's aspirations to a poetic career (as well as
to a "poetical character") from the sonnet alone; let us turn, then,
to the poem itself, specifically to its allusions, through which it
52
aspires.

The personal allusion in Sonnet VII to Milton's twenty-fourth
birthday opens up the meaning of the poem, creating a channel from
the artifact (the poem itself) to life, at least to a certain,
knowable or public time in the poet's life, the time to depart on a
career. As Parker reminds us, many students at Cambridge often waited
until their twenty-fourth birthday and graduation to take Holy Orders,
and all submitted to an oath (at this time pro forma.) upon obtaining
their Masters degree to continue their "regency," active University
53
study for five years leading to their Bachelor of Divinity. Milton
had taken his Masters degree and this oath in the summer of 1632,
subsequently returning to Hammersmith, his father's newly acquired
house of retirement. We know with hindsight that Milton would spend
five years of study together here and at Horton, and it seems likely
that Milton suspected this as well in December of 1632 when he writes
Sonnet VII, an "oath" to counteract his regency promise, and the perhaps
more pressing expectations of family and friends that he would enter
the clergy.

The initial quatrain, as it is often noticed, contains the
Elizabethan conceit of personified, furtive Time:

How soon hath Time the suttile thief of youth,
Stoln on his wing my three and twontith yeer!
My hasting dayes flie on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.

This, of course, is Shakespeare's Time, as he deploys the commonplace in his sonnets to his young friend for the purpose of urging him to "seize the day," and Milton here might be said to be assuming the role of the recipient of that counsel by representing the likely response of the young man to his birthday, made sensitive to fleeting time by the great Shakespeare. Since Milton's major concern in the sonnet is with "issuing," he may well be punning on Shakespeare's enjoinders to procreate--for the purpose of answering Shakespeare, of revising the topos of fleeting Time which so relentlessly haunts Shakespeare's sonnet sequence. (Milton will within a few weeks of writing Sonnet VII perform a similar Christian revision in his poem "On Time.") Milton must re-mythologize time to suit his metaphysic, and so Time is still personified at the poem's end, but as a servant of God.

The second allusion in the quatrain reveals the particular nature of the issuing, literary publication. That Milton is alluding to Cowley with "blossom" and to Thomas Randolph in "timely-happy spirits" (1.8) must not be discounted because, as Hanford writes, "there was nothing in the work of Randolph or any contemporary poet that Milton could have
54
envied. For Milton invokes them precisely to criticize them, they being two types of poetical "characters"--the precocious and the popular wit--which he, in Sonnet VII and in his entire life works, consistently deprecates. Milton's criticism, I think, is directed at the audacity of these youths who, though unready, had dared to publish. At this time Milton had published (anonymously) only "On Shakespeare," yet he had written the splendid Nativity Ode. His

His waiting until 1645 to publish an edition of a group of poems indicates his serious regard for poetry as a profession and not some casual endeavor.

Cowley, of course, is the precocious poet, a reputation he did much to foster. It is his Poetical Blossomes that is probably alluded to in line four; published in 1633, the two narrative poems and two brief elegies (Constantia and Philetus, Pyramus and Thisbe, elegies to Lord Carleton and Richard Clerke) were undoubtedly known in manuscript around Cambridge earlier, as were his plans to publish. Known early as well, no doubt, were his claims to youthful composition, which he printed in his 1636 edition. In his "Epistle to the Reader," he assigns the age of ten to the completion of Pyramus and Thisbe, twelve to Constantia and Philetus, and registers the complaint that "what men commend in fruit" they blame in him: "earliness."⁵⁵

Just as Cowley had cultivated a legend of himself in his own time, Randolph played at, or (to be more kind) enjoyed, the reputation of being a "wit." Milton could not have been oblivious to his senior by two years at Cambridge. In 1625-6 while Milton as a new student was finding it difficult to adjust to university life--as his rustication attests--Randolph was contributing to collections of poems, gathered to celebrate the marriage of Charles and Henrietta Maria and the death of Bacon. In his edition of Randolph's poems, Parry cites several letters from Randolph's tutors and friends in which he is called a great wit. There was even an anecdote circulating around Cambridge by 1632 which recounted Randolph's meeting with Ben Jonson, who conferred prestigious "sonship" upon Randolph for his spontaneous quipping of some verses at Jonson's request. Most impressive is the praise incurred by the visiting

King and Queen for a performance of Randolph's Jealous Lovers.

Parry writes of the rivalry between Hausted's and Randolph's plays, which was a matter of much debate at Cambridge in 1631, That the matter was taken seriously is evinced by Vice Chancellor Butts' suicide, to which his shame in bad judgment, having endorsed Hausted's play, is said to have been a contributing factor. ⁵⁶ Moreover, Randolph had published an edition of his play Aristippus in 1630 and of The Jealous Lovers in 1632

If we accept "buds and blossoms: as a disparaging glance at Randolph and Cowley, or any poetical characters like them, then lines three and four read with an ironic double tone: is Milton saying "though my speeding (hasting) days fly on full speed (career, OED.3), I nevertheless in my late spring, lamentably, have not produced anything; or is he saying that "though my speeding days take me toward my professional career (OED. 5b), I nevertheless do not publish, preferring autumnal ripeness to pubescent blossoms and buds.

The latter reading has the advantage of reflecting Milton's publication practises, as well as his views on precocity. Douglas Bush reminds us of Milton's remark to Alexander More on this subject in Pro Se Defensio:

To me it always appeared best to grow slowly, as it were, by imperceptible advances. You (More) are that mushroom, who, when only just out of your boyhood, went to Geneva, and all at once popped up professor of Greek; and as you tell, ...bore away 'the palm from so many men who were' your elders...by favour of that genius, ⁵⁷ which was then only beginning to blossom.

Milton is perhaps our poet most sensitive to timeliness: in Lycidas he worries about writing too early, in the Proem to Paradise Lost, IX

about writing too late. As Woodhouse and others have noticed, Milton seems always to be grappling with the desire to shape epic ambitions and the knowledge that he must wait to do so.⁵⁸ Moreover, though the OED gives 1803 as the first usage of "career" to mean "profession," I find the idea that Milton invented a new meaning for the word--as he will do for "talent" in Sonnet XIX--very appealing.

The second quatrain contains the second personal allusion to Milton, who Aubrey told us was nicknamed "the lady of Christ College" because of his extreme fairness. Milton uses the allusion to maintain the University context of the poem and also to raise the metaphysical question of appearance versus reality:

Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arriv'd so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
Than som more timely-happy spirits indu'th. (ll.5-8)

The hypothetical construction of lines five and six conveys a musing tone: the speaker is considering what his schoolmates have noticed about his external physical appearance. He is also willing to admit, declaratively, that "inward ripeness" appears less in him than in others who produce ("indu'th"); though we see, especially when reading "appears" and "indu'th" with their full metrical emphasis at line termini, allowing them their metaphysical significance, that he does not so much deny his possession of worth, but only that he has not exhibited it.

Milton finds a solution to the problem of determining reality through appearance in the sestet:

Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure eev'n,
To that same lot, however, mean, or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heav'n;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great task-Masters eye. (ll. 9-14)

I accept Woodhouse's reading of these lines, with one modification suggested by Svendsen, who reads the antecedent of "it" (1.9) as the inner ripeness which has not appeared. Thus read, Milton may be said to be specifying his "lot" to be future poetic achievement: No matter if the appearance of my inward ripeness be soon or slow, it shall be still in strictest measure equal to that same lot, however mean or high, toward which Time leads me and the will of heaven. All that matters is whether I have the grace to use it as ever being
59
conscious of being in God's view.

In the course of submitting himself to divine will, Milton introduces a highly significant echo, the problematical allusion to Pindar's Nemean Ode IV. 41-3, which Lewis Campbell noted: "But whatsoever excellence Lord Destiny assigned me, well I know that the lapse of time will bring it to its appointed perfection." W. T. Lendrum objected to the parallel because in Pindar's ode the poet has "no doubt at all where Lord Destiny is leading him," whereas Milton's meaning is
60
"humble resignation to divine will." But Milton is merely "borrowing" Pindar's confidence and can thereby condense two meanings, the conviction that his poetic achievement is subject to God's will, and the belief (a pious one based on Christian hope) that this will be no small achievement.

Of course, alluding to Pindar in itself also reinforces that Milton aims for a poetic "lot," as does the sestet's rhythmical variation--or lack of it. Milton suppresses the techniques learned from studying Della Casa, already practised in the Italian poems, because he wishes to make the announcement of his poetic career with the very form of his utterance. The method of Della Casa, dissolving octet into sestet,

dispensing with the volta, and deemphasizing rhymes through asprezza, "de-structures" the sonnet format--an effect Milton avoids because he wants to allude to the sonnet format itself in order to emblemize format, make it signify poetry itself.

A brief comparison with "On Time" is instructive on this matter of emblemized format in Sonnet VII. As we mentioned above, both poems treat personified Time as a daunting figure who is at their close seen to be merely God's instrument. But "On Time" is concerned with a very different meta-poetic statement than the sonnet, one which involves the recovery of the canzone stanza, which--historically--is the poetic format connecting ancient inscription with the later lyrical epigram and then to the madrigal poem.

F.T. Prince has written of the canzone stanza as this historical
61
link, and Milton's poem, by utilizing to the fullest extent the "rhetoric of rhyme" and variety of syllabic length permitted by the stanza, comments upon the historical development of brief, inscribed verse pattern into the "musical (I.E. echoic), self-referential structure of the Renaissance Italian madrigal poem. Thus his rhythmical variation in "On Time," which prompts backward and forward reading of the poem, rehearses the historical poetic process from inscription to the more sophisticated madrigal form; and, this rehearsal is also consonant with the thematic presentation of the steady but storm-tossed progress toward a Christian Last Judgment when Time is vanquished.

In Sonnet VII Milton uses only the technique of balancing pairs that he had learned from the Italians: less or more; soon or slow; mean or high; Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven. The effect is to tighten up the poem, to call attention to the strict pattern in order

to gloss his "strictest measure " to mean poetic 'meter." Milton's "excessive formality" here does not compensate for his "dangerous" ambition, as Taylor Stoehr writes,⁶² but reveals--in a poem thoroughly bent on un-masking--the nature of Milton's hopeful ambitions.

Thus, in Sonnet VII Milton officially begins his poetic career, though his poetic character was manifest much earlier. The remaining sonnets will record, much more directly than any of his other poetry, the pattern of this career and character imposed upon public and private occasions, as Milton turns again and again to the sonnet format to express his deepest thoughts and feelings.

Footnotes

Chapter I

1

Henri Bergson, Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York 1960), p. 12. Christopher Ricks, Milton's Grand Style (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1967), p. 48.

2

Harold Bloom, A Map of Misreading (New York: Oxford U.P., 1975), pp. 128-131. Bloom's conception of metalepsis differs somewhat from the classical rhetoricians'. As John Hollander explains in his review of Bloom's book, Bloom tropes the concept of metalepsis (itself a trope of a trope). He is not content with examining the rhetorical figure as it appears in a text, but must account for the trope's genesis in the poet's expressional needs and for the transformations occurring between the points of need and the appearance in the text. For Bloom, metalepsis is the most interesting trope because "it is a figure of figures, wired in a series." See Hollander's remarks in Poetry, CXXVII, 4 (January 1976), 222-234.

The traditional rhetoricians define metalepsis as a figure only as it appears in a text. Puttenham, who calls it the "farfet," defines it in a general way as an indirect mode of expression, and cites a truly trivial example: "I speake it Madame without any mockes,/ Many such cradell may I see you rocke." (The speaker is not wishing that the lady bear more children, but that she may have the opportunity to do so, i.e. have long life.) See The Arte of English Poesie, eds. A. Walker and G. D. Willcock (Cambridge: Oxford U.P., 1936), pp. 143-185. For Quintilian, metalepsis is also a transitional figure: "It is the nature of metalepsis to form a kind of indeterminate step between the term transferred and the thing to which it is transferred, having no meaning in itself but merely providing a transitation." Institutio Oratoria, ed. and trans. H.E. Butler VIII (Loeb: Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 37. For a highly suggestive discussion of transumption, see Angus Fletcher's footnote³³ in Allegory: Theory of A Symbolic Mode (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1964), p. 241.

3

Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English poets (New York: Dutton, 1968), p. 105; Geoffrey Hartman, "Milton's Counterplot" in Milton: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Arthur Barker (New York: Oxford U.P., 1965), pp. 386-397; Ricks, Milton's Grand Style, as cited above.

4

I shall be discussing the structural implications of the joke and its analogue the dream (both as explained by Freud) for the closed and open form of the brief lyric poem in Chapter III.

5

Sigmund Freud, Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1960), p. 120. Freud distinguishes three groups of joke techniques: (1) the replacement of object associations with word associations; (2) the rediscovery of something known; (3) conceptual pleasure in nonsense. Our pleasure in (1) and (3) derives from relief of internal inhibitions that they effect. (2) is like allusion because it calls on us to remember something known, and

because the psychical expenditure of tension that it relieves is not internal but created by the joke itself.

6

Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious, p. 122.

7

Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious, pp. 156-8.

8

An example of such a buried allusion to a specific literary work (noticed by John Hollander) is Milton's last two lines in the Nativity Ode, echoing Paerie Queene, VI. x, 13, ll. 8-9. For his comments see Vision and Resonance: Two senses of Poetic Form, VII (New York: Oxford U.P., 1975), p. 158.

9

Vision and Resonance, pp. 135-164.

10

F. T. Prince, The Italian Element In Milton's Verse (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954), pp. 91 and 95.

11

Fletcher writes of the classical models inherited by Western Christian mythography: the labyrinth provides a model of profane movement, its figure being metonymic; the temple provides a model of sacred stillness, its figure being the synecdoche; the threshold or liminal state of "betweenness" is a pattern for the prophetic moment, the transitional phase that links these two modes of being--its figure, metaphor. See "'Positive Negation': Threshold, Sequence, and Personification in Coleridge" in New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth: Selected Papers from the English Institute, ed. Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Columbia U.P., 1972), pp. 133-164; and the Prophetic Moment (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1971), pp. 11-56.

12

In my reading of Bembo's canzone "O rossignol, che'n queste verdi fronde" I find nothing that contradicts Prince's general characterization of Bembo's poetic style. See Prose e Rime di Pietro Bembo, ed. Carlo Dionisotti (Unione tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1960), pp. 554-555. Marino's three sonnets to the nightingale seem to be imitations of Bembo's manner. Cf. Marino e i Marinisti, ed. Giuseppe G. Ferrero (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1954,) pp. 344-6. Of one of these poems (sonnet xxix) the editor notes, "E una leggiadra favoletta, senza alcuna moralita finale." (It is a light little fable, without any final moral.) For further discussion of Petrarchanism in general and Bembo's variety, see pages 23-25 below.

13

Elegia Quinta, ll. 25-6 Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Milton's poetry other than the sonnets are from John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957) The sonnets are cited from Milton's Sonnets, ed. E.A.J. Honigmann (New

York: St. Martin's Press, 1966).

14

See A. S.P. Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Early Development," UTQ XIII (1943), pp. 71-2.

15

Concerning Milton's fondness for the nightingale and his identification with it in his later poetry, see J.L. Lievasay. "Milton Among the Nightingales" in Renaissance Papers (1958), pp. 36-45. To support the view that Milton is not using *Clanvowe* in an unaltered manner, note that *Clanvowe's* nightingale had become a cliché by the Seventeenth Century, as can be seen from Burton's mention of it in his discussion of the miseries of the lover: "Except at such times that he hath lucida intervalla, pleasant gales or sudden alterations, as if his Mistress smile upon him, give him a good look, a kiss, or that some comfortable message he brought him....He is then too confident and rapt beyond himself as if he had heard the nightingale in the spring before the cuckoo." The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Lawrence Babb (Michigan: Michigan State U.P., 1965), p. 270. Milton, then, revives in Sonnet I what had been almost a dead metaphor for "luck in love," as he does in the opening lines of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" for the received meanings of Mirth and Melancholy.

16

Ovid, Metamorphoses, VI.

17

For a more complete discussion of a similar interpretation of the "Mutabilitie Cantos," see Sherman Hawkins, "Mutabilitie and the Cycle of the Months" in Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser: Selected Papers from the English Institute, ed. William Nelson (New York: Columbia U.P., 1961), pp. 76-94.

18

Edmund Spenser, "Two Cantos of Mutabilities" Book VIII. vii, 45. Quotations from Spenser are taken from The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition. 10 vols., ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1949).

19

In Ovid the Hours appear in Phaethon's story (Book II); arranged at equal intervals, surrounding the throne of Phoebus, they are emblems of order. It is also interesting to note that Mutabilitie, in both her desire to prove herself and her hubris, is very much like Phaethon.

20

The reference to Jove in both Spenser and Milton may be significant insofar as, in the mythology of the Silver Age, Jove rules by fiat, because of his worthiness, and not because of temporal priority.

21

Prince, The Italian Element, p. 16. Prince notes that Bembo enjambs

lines but almost never does so over the divisions of quatrains and tercets. Petrarch, however, often dispenses with the volta, and of course Della Casa's enjambments nearly dissolve the quatrain-sestet structure.

22

See A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton: The Minor English Poems, Vol. II, part 2, eds. A.S.P. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush (New York: Columbia U.P., 1972), p. 360.

23

These points and other structural concerns, such as closural techniques, will be discussed fully in Chapter III.

24

The editors of the Variorum, II, 2, p. 360. feel that "Muse" means poetry or song; they discount the possibility "poet" (which occurs in Lycidas, l.19) with no explanation. It seems likely that Milton's intention is to blur these very distinctions.

25

"An Apology against a Pamphlet Call'd a Modest Confutation of the Animadversion upon the Remonstrant against Smectymnuus, etc." in Complete Prose works of John Milton, eds. Douglas Bush et al. (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1953) vol. 1, ed. Don M. Wolfe, p. 891.

26

For Spenser's accommodation of the tradition see my note 7 in the Introduction and Martz's "The Amoretti" cited there. For a useful discussion of the "Celebration of Charis" in its relation to Petrarchanism, see Wesley Trimpi, Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style (Stanford Calif.: Stanford U.P., 1962,) pp. 210-227.

27

Prince, in The Italian Element, p. 18, is undoubtedly correct in ascribing a desire for "magnificence" as Milton's motivation for the development of asprezza in his sonnets, but an article by Jiri Levy on the accommodation of the Petrarchan sonnet format in England suggests a reason why Milton would have to devise a manner of breaking up his lines if he chose to write the Italian over the English sonnet format. Because the French alexandrine and Italian endecasyllabic lines maintain an obligatory caesura, Levy believes that each line written in these meters is potentially autonomous and may therefore be grouped by threes. That is, the caesura fosters a bipartite intonation contour of mid line semi cadence followed by full cadence at end line, which in turn corresponds to a thought pattern of introductory statement, followed by completion of statement. First generation English sonneteers practising the Italian rhyme scheme, but with our accentual verse line--which does not maintain obligatory caesura and therefore frequently has no such bipartite intonation contour and thought pattern--often wrote doggerel because of the disjunction between intonation and thought, with rhyme patterns. Levy's example is instructive. He cites the following quatrain of Wyatt:

Because I still kept thee fro lyes, and blame,
And to my power alwayes thee honoured,
Unkind tongue, to yll hast thou me rendred,
For such desert to do me wreke and shame.

We see here that the intonation and thought contours are bipartite between and not within lines (which is frequent in English and explains why couplets and quatrains are legion in our poetry), while the rhyme scheme forces an emphasis that is not congruent with this meaning: ab/ba ab/ba. The result is doggerel. Milton, who did not adopt the solution of the Spenserian or Shakesperian rhyme scheme in the sonnet format, would therefore be forced to alter the usual intonation and syntactical patterns of English in some way. See, Jiri Levy, "On the Relation of the Language and the Stanza Pattern in the English Sonnet" Worte Und Werke: Bruno Marchwardt 60. Geburtstag (Berlin, 1961), pp. 214-231.

28

Prince, The Italian Element, pp. 89-107. For further discussion of the Italian poems, see Smart's and Honigmann's editions of the sonnets; Sergio Baldi, "Poesie Italiane di Milton" Studi Secenteschi 7 (1966), pp. 103-50; A Variorum Commentary of the Poems of John Milton vol. 1, eds J.E. Shaw and A. Bartlett Giamatti; Cleanth Brooks and John Edward Hardy, Poems of Mr. John Milton: The 1645 Edition with Essays in Analysis 1952 rpt. (New York: Gordian Press, 1968), pp. 148-152; John T. Shawcross, "Milton's Italian Sonnets: An Interpretation" UWR, vol. III, no. i (Fall, 1967), pp. 27-33

29

Leonard Forster, The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchanism (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1969), pp. 1-60. See also Thomas Bergin, Dante (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), and John Nelson's Renaissance Theory of Love (cited above) for cogent descriptions of the Petrarchan and Troubadour traditions.

30

Baldi notes that Milton avoids English Petrarchanisms and writes a "pure Petrarchan," in "Poesie Italiane," p. 111.

31

The relevant stanzas are ix and x.

32

Brooks and Hardy, p. 149.

33.

This view, that Emilia represents an actual lady, is shared by Smart, Prince, Baldi, and the Variorum editors. The question is somewhat irrelevant to criticism, but it is interesting that these students of the poems maintain their belief despite the fact that there is no mention of an encounter with Emilia in the whole of Milton's writings.

34

By the phrase "real fictitious lady" I mean the poetic depiction of woman as a physical being, as she would exist in the world.

35

For a discussion of this convention see, Bergin, Dante, especially his chapter "Vita Nuova," pp. 67-87.

36

Citations of the Italian poems are from Smart's edition, as are the translations.

37

Smart, p. 134.

38

Areopagitica in Complete Prose, vol. 2, ed. Ernest Sirluck, p. 514.

39

Smart, pp. 136-7.

40

Smart, p. 137.

41

For an excellent discussion of Milton's transcendental manipulation of conventions in Comus, see Angus Fletcher's The Transcendental Masque: An Essay on Milton's "comus" (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1971).

42

Milton's endeavor to deemphasize his reputation as a polemicist and to create a public image of himself as poet in his 1645 edition of his poems has been interestingly written about by Louis Martz, "The Rising Poet, 1645" in The Lyric and Dramatic Milton: Selected Papers from the English Institute, ed. Joseph Summers (New York: Columbia U.P., 1965), pp. 2-34.

43

Variorum, p. 387. Petrarch's poems are entitled "Non d'altra," "Di pensire in pensier," and "Ocameratta"; the poem by Michelangelo in which the conceit occurs is a madrigal, "Un uomo in una donna."

44

Self-praise had also the sanction of Dante, who wrote in Il Convivio that "the magnanimous man always exalts himself in his own heart," just as "the pusillanimous man always considers himself of less worth than he is.: Il Convivio, eds. G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli (Florence, 1934-7), I, II.

45

Mazzaro, Transformations, p. 158.

I do not mean that Milton writes with a consistent "lyric I" in his poetry, but that his character more strongly informs his poetry after 1632, no matter what narrational point of view he chooses. For example, "On Time" and "At a Solemn Music," though written from an impersonal third person plural point of view, exhibit a "transcendental ego" in their idiosyncratic stylistic effects, such as their retarded syntax and musical, echoic structures, which--along with their high seriousness of theme--will henceforth mark all of Milton's poetry. Obviously, in a dramatic form like Comus, Milton's character resides in no one figure but in the vision of the whole work. Angus Fletcher, in a seminar on Milton's Minor Poetry given at the Graduate school of the City University of New York (Spring, 1975), spoke of Milton's "killing the masque in Comus." As I understand him, Fletcher, believing that the masque was a dramatic form used to analyze drama proper, to isolate, that is, the drama's surface qualities (visual perspective, opsis, authorial point of view), finds Milton in Comus posing, solving, and transcending these problems. Milton may hereafter create characters (Satan, Adam, Eve, Samson), but he need never use any as his single persona (as he does not in Comus). For Fletcher's position see Transcendental Masque. In Lycidas, Milton's character, despite the pastoral machinery, is so strongly present that no one (excepting Dr. Johnson) reads the poem without feeling that it is Milton the poet writing about--among other things--not being ready, for death, for writing; hence our shock at the commiato in which Milton calls our attention to this achievement of expressing his ego (again in spite of the pastoral guise) by interposing a second narrator who attributes the poem to some uncouth swain.

Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Early Development," p. 97.

See John S. Diekhoff, "Introduction" in Milton on Himself, ed. John S. Diekhoff, 1939 rpt. (New York: Humanities Press), p. xiii. Note also Milton's attempt to impose a pattern upon his prose writings in the Second Defence. Though as his editor Sirluck notes, Milton's coherent plan probably only emerged in retrospect, that Milton felt it important to point out the pattern is significant in being so typical. See Complete Prose, vol. 2, "Introduction."

See Mazzaro, Transformations, pp. 73-108, for an excellent discussion of the development of the persona in the new Lyric.

"Ad Ornatissimum virum, multis iamdiu, nominibus clarissimum, G.H. " in The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, vol. 10, ed. Rudolf Gottfried, pp. 8-12; the translation is found in vol. 10, pp. 256-258. R. M. Smith, "Milton's Sonnet VII" MLN, 60 (1945), pp. 394-8 Smith interprets the allusion cited to mean that Milton is signaling Spenser as one of the "timely-happy spirits," but the passage--in which Spenser laments belatedness--hardly seems to function in this capacity/

51

John Holly Hanford, "The Youth of Milton" in John Milton: Poet and Humanist, Essays by John Holly Hanford (Cleveland: Press of Western Reserve Univ., 1966), p. 42.

52

The letter's and sonnet's biblical imagery is discussed by Macon Cheek, "Of Two Sonnets of Milton" in Milton: Modern Essays, pp. 125-134.

53

William Riley Parker, Milton: A Biography 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), vol. 1, p. 113. I should add that Parker does not think that Milton has made a career decision at the time of Sonnet VII. See pp. 145-167.

54

Hanford, "Youth," p. 41. Grossart first noticed Milton's possible allusion to Cowley in his The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Abraham Cowley, 2 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1967; a reprt. from the original, undated), vol. 1, p. xliii. Smart, p. 46, adduces Thomas Randolph as a possible referent of the allusion.

55

Abraham Cowley, "To the Reader" in Works, vol. 1, p. 19.

56

See John Jay Parry's "Introduction" in The Poems of Thomas Randolph, ed. John Jay Parry (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1917), pp. 1-45.

57

Cited in the Variorum, II, 2, p. 371. The passage is from Milton's Pro Se Defensio, Works, IX, p. 281.

58

Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Early Development," p. 58.

59

See the Variorum, II, 2, pp. 372-3 for a review of the various readings which have been proposed; and Kester Svendsen, "Milton's On his Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three" Explicator, vol. VII, no. 7 (1949), item 53; and Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Early Development," p. 96.

60

Lewis Campbell, "Milton and Pindar" Classical Review, 8. (1894), p. 349; W. T. Lendrum, "Milton's Sonnet VII," Classical Review, 9 (1895), pp. 10-11.

61

Prince, The Italian Element, pp. 57-70.

Taylor Stoeher, "Syntax and Poetic Form in Milton's Sonnets,"
ES, XLV (1964), p. 290.

Chapter II

Topical Allusion

Love is not only the knot of Commonwealth,
whereby divers parts be perfectly joined
together in one politike body, but also
the strength and might of the same, gathering
together in one small room with order, which
scattered, would else breed confusion and
debate.

Sir John Cheke (1536)¹

Topical poetry, and one species of it, the occasional poem, is highly regarded in Classical poetry and poetics, a respect which of course encouraged poets such as Pindar and Horace to write their great odes. In the vernacular lyric, public odes are considered "lofty" and "serious" up to the Nineteenth Century. But because of that elusive shift in sensibility, codified by the Romantic poets, concerning consciousness, self-expression, sincerity, and the like, the public poem fell out of favor. As O.B. Hardison describes the new attitude, "True poetry was to be a journey into the self and the poet an explorer of the darkness at the center of life."² So we today, for the mostpart inheritors of this belief that the only eternal is internal truth, neither write topical poems nor read those of the past with any great pleasure.

Milton's occasional sonnets have been either underestimated or ignored because of this prejudice against topicality.³ There is some irony in this reception of them, however. For though no one would deny their occasionalism, it is precisely in his most public, topical poems that Milton invents the modern use of occasion for the brief lyric, providing methods of eternalizing the ephemeral (a major characteristic

of the poetics of dew) which--as we shall see in a later chapter--are⁴ fully exploited by the Romantics. For the Romantic meditative lyric also insists upon its precipitant occasion, the difference between it and the traditional occasional poem really residing in the degree of "publicness" of this event and the extent to which it is absorbed and transformed. Every act of poetic commemoration that performs such a transformation, insofar as it monumentalizes what it says is ephemeral, rehearses a paradox--as Angus Fletcher writes, "every occasional poem is a tomb,"⁵ an enduring monument for a moment. Now in all of his poetry we find Milton evoking moments--of states of mind, of traditional legend, of topical occasions--and in every case he brings to bear on them a consciousness that absorbs, transforms, and transcends any extra-aesthetic matter with which he begins.

This kind of universalizing of a specific occasion within the sonnet format had of course been achieved before, as in the sonnets of Sidney and Shakespeare, for example. But these poets did not write on public occasions; moreover, working in the English sonnet format, they tended to exploit (though not always) the inherent syllogistic potential of this structure in order to develop universal significance ("the moral") from their occasions. One of Milton's contributions to English poetry concerns his invention of a very different manner of processing information within the Petrarchan format, a manner marked by a seamless synthesis of occasion and moral resulting in a rotund, dew drop texture.

Insofar as they do this, the poems are concerned with themselves, with poetry. But they are also genuinely public poems, each written in what Fletcher, writing about Spenser, calls the "prophetic moment."

Prophecy, he reminds us, is neither the mode of passive asceticism nor of prediction; the method of prophecy is to hold the eternal and the ephemeral in simultaneous copresence, balancing stable principles against unstable reality. "The prophet utters an eternal truth that is immanent in the daily affairs of men."⁶ Not surprisingly, Milton, who shares with his age (at least up to 1660), the belief that God has chosen England to fulfill the earthly covenant of the New Jerusalem, takes up the task inherited from Spenser of advancing his country toward this goal. For like Spenser in Book V--the most topical book of The Faerie Queene--Milton in his "topical" political sonnets is writing about nothing less eternally important than justice.

Milton's debt to Book V, mainly his borrowing of Spenser's many monsters to depict deformities of justice, goes unnoticed because the effect of Spenserian pageantry in the sonnet format (without a narrative frame) is necessarily very different; as we shall see below, Milton's use of the iconography of pageantry creates something like political cartoons.

But Milton's essential difference in his topical poetry--from Spenser and all his English predecessors--involves his use of topical language: without legend, without continued allegory, extensive mythology, or antique diction, Milton forges a poetic language out of the apparently very unpoetic language of the moment.⁷ As I hope to show, it is Milton's second contribution to the poetics of the ephemeral to have discovered the prophetic possibilities inherent in topical language. To put it briefly here, Milton saw that the topical allusion in poetry, as Freud saw that the topical details in dreams, had a tremendous capacity to signify precisely because of its apparent "innocence," or freedom from

associations, which it maintains because it is new, relatively
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uninterpreted material. To put this in the terms of Chapter I, which
we used to define allusion in general, the symbolic meaning of the
topical is minimal because the alluded to text is so very recent.

It is this discovery concerning topical language, I think, that
provides Milton with the confidence to write prophetic poetry at a
time (unlike Spenser's) that finds poetry sadly losing its ancient
agon with history as modes to convey truth. Milton's faith in the
efficacy of poetry contrasts sharply with the feelings of his
contemporary Marvell who, as Geoffrey Hartman has shown, writes in the
"Nymph Complaining," a complaint about this very problem:

Poetry's mediating virtue is still, for Marvell,
the great and necessary virtue, but no longer
a sufficient one. The new, perhaps desperate
faith of his age in the sortes of history--its
desire for a clean break and a clear commencement
of the kingdom of God on earth--militates against
an ethic of compromise which poets had learnt
from their long endeavour to reconcile Classical
forms and Christian sentiments.⁹

Milton, moreover, was spared Marvell's anxiety because in the period
of writing his topical poetry (1642-55), he was deeply engaged in history
reading and writing (1640-7), as well as in writing political prose
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1641-54) ; he therefore approached the problem of history versus poetry
from a practical perspective and found history, oratory, and poetry to
maintain traditionally distinctive decorum, to be mutually exclusive
formally, though in function each might convey truth. As he writes
to Henry de Brass concerning the historian:

That he should do so (write history) in
ornate style, I do not much care about;
for I want a Historian, not an Orator, Nor
yet would I have frequent maxims, or criticisms

on the transactions, prolixity thrown in, lest,
by interrupting the thread of events, he
should invade the office of the political
writer.¹¹

Eschewing the exhortative and decorative dimensions from history, Milton thus provides the necessity for poetry and oratory, especially for their topical varieties; for if the kingdom of God was at hand, it had not yet arrived, and Milton--never more millennial than in the years of the Revolution and early Commonwealth--clearly saw the need to urge men toward Liberty and Justice, so fallen and erroneous did they show themselves. Before we turn to the sonnets that so poignantly demonstrate Milton's confidence in poetry's capacity to treat literal truths and topics of the moment,¹³ let us examine Sonnet VIII, in some ways a "crisis" poem, the successful completion of which established his confidence.

Sonnet VIII is frequently referred to as a "serious" joke, by which it is meant that Milton uses the immediate occasion of a threatened Royalist attack on London to make--in a rather cavalier manner--an earnest statement that places the world of such contingencies below the higher realm of imaginative events, specifically, below poetry. In the main, this interpretation seems correct, though I would read the poem as an expression of Milton's view on the correct type of public poem to be written by the artist as well. For implicitly, this received interpretation finds Milton espousing a position of the artist-as-aesthete, one which would put the artist outside society. None of the poem's commentators, anticipating Milton's very deep involvement in wordly affairs very soon after writing this poem, recalling his view expressed in prose on the poet's didactic function, and appreciating the

significance of his ten years of history reading, wishes to dwell upon the aesthetic implications entailed by this reading. But that Parker is worrying about ascribing such an uncharacteristic position to Milton seems evident in his surmise that the sonnet was written after the threatened attack--to amuse Milton's friends.¹⁴

The poem undoubtedly jokes, insofar as it never intends to achieve its purported end (to be tacked on Milton's door, thereby saving him from assault); in Smart's words, "We are in the presence of a poetical situation, not a practical expedient."¹⁵

But I would read Milton's joke seriously, as Freud would, that is, as a fiction devised to release tension, in this case, as an aggressive joke serving the purpose of defense.¹⁶ Milton, it seems, is in the autumn of 1642 considering his left and right hands and is meditating upon the responsibilities of the poet who feels morally obligated to participate in civic affairs. And, though the poem, in its beautiful last lines, glances derisively at the flux of reality while placing art above it, Milton's main meaning does not center here; rather, Milton, already committed to the idea of writing public poetry, isolates and provides solutions for its most troublesome aspect--the problematics of praising and blaming. He accomplishes both these aims through the poem's allusive strategy, which charts its own genealogy leading us back in memory to a specific tradition of public poetry--not to transcend, transform, or overcome this tradition--but simply to establish an alliance with it.

Put simply, praising and blaming are dangerous because the man of the hour, say the righteous man who is awarded the poem of praise, may, chameleon-like, turn colors, leaving the poet's artifact--what

should be an enduring monument--compromised. We shall see how Milton finally came to solve this problem of topical praise and blame in his later sonnets: in 1642, before he had become immersed in politics or had performed poetic public service, we nevertheless find him in search of answers such activity demands.

To support a reading of the sonnet as a meditation on poetic engagement rather than disengagement, we must examine Milton's use of the "immortalizing verse" topos, the poem's central allusion. The topos is common in elegy and sonnet, but the poet here usually brandishes his power before a mistress or personal friend; the problem of the poet's integrity is, therefore, never an issue, since in the sphere of the erotic one incurs pity and not blame for loving the false or unworthy. Milton places himself with Pindar and his follower Horace who considered their obligation to the state and so wielded poetry's power in contemporary affairs.

In England, of course, it is Spenser who is most concerned about the poet's role in society. As Douglas Bush notes, Spenser carried the convention of the poet conferring fame to a new point in England by dedicating The Faerie Queene to Elizabeth.¹⁷ More important than the dedication, however, is his inclusion of her into the "dark conceit": as Spenser writes to Raleigh, he believes that verse should¹⁸ teach through worthy examples (so he prefers Xenophonto Plato). His choice of Elizabeth is of a different order than that of Arthur in the romance: she is a living pattern of excellence.

Milton also evokes Spenser more directly, in his allusion to Alexander the Great. Editors of Sonnet VIII point to Pliny and E.K.'s gloss on a passage from the "October Eclogue" as sources of Alexander

story. But taking a further step, to Spenser's passage itself, proves instructive, for in this eclogue Spenser grapples with a problem related to the poet's civil service. Cuddie complains of the pastoral poet's poor lot and is encouraged to sing heroic verse. Alas, there being no brave and good men, there can be no poetry about them. The result of this dearth is the de-valuation of the poet in society; whereas, when public men were great, poets had proper subjectmatter, wrote lofty verse, and were therefore admired. The passage glossed by E.K. reads:

For ever, who in derring doe were dreade,
 The loftie verse of hem was loved aye.
 But after vertue gan for age to stoupe,
 And mighty manhode brought a bedde of ease;
 The vaunting Poets found nought worth a pease,
 To put in preace among the learned troupe.
 Tho gan the streames of lowing wittes to cease,²⁰
 And sonnebright honour pend in shamefull coupe.

Interestingly, E. K. rather distorts Spenser's meaning:

He sheweth the cause, why Poetes were wont
 be had in such honor of noble men; that is,
 that by them their worthines and valor shold
 through theyr famous Posies be commended to al
 posterities. Wherefore it is sayd, that Achilles
 had never bene so famous, as he is, but for Homeres
 immortal verses. Which is the only advantage, which
 he had of Hector.²¹

Clearly, Spenser's emphasis is on the lamentable loss of great men to praise: for poets, being honest, lose their subjectmatter when society loses virtuous examples. E.K., on the other hand, picks up only the detail of the poet's power, and implies that poets may indiscriminately "make" or "break" men independent of their virtue. If we accept the point that Milton wants to provoke a moral response in his reader concerning his purported promise to praise indiscriminately in Sonnet VIII, he may well want us to be aware of the ironic incongruity

between Spenser and E.K.--of the poet's exalted notion of the importance of accurate poetic praise and the glossator's rather cynical view.

The sonnet's closing allusions also deserve more consideration than they have been given, for recovering the context of Alexander's and Lysander's stories reveals that they may be present in Milton's poem not so much as honorable patterns but as great examples of "sackers." Honigmann's reading of Milton's tone toward Alexander and Lysander is typical. He finds Milton measuring the petty present against the heroic past, "the gap between the two no doubt affording him as much wry amusement as the image of a spear lifted against a Bowre." In the next line, where he compares a petty commander with the great Emathian Conqueror, his sardonic implications become even more clear.²² But to be historically accurate, the heroism of Alexander and Lysander in the specified situations is minimal: they are not leaders fighting other warriors for some righteous cause, but sackers of--respectively--Thebes and Athens, cities renowned for their high regard for liberty. The allusions to their conquests thus might testify against Alexander and Lysander: the sparing of one house, Pindar's, may imply only the power of poetry and not any greatness for Alexander; similarly, though Athens was spared destruction because of Euripides' poetry, it was not subjugation--and on very hard terms. We must remember that Milton is writing with the threat of just this kind of attack: raising, sacking, enslaving.

Smart writes of the intense anxiety of Londoners during the autumn of 1642, after the Battle of Edgehill (October 23) and the Parliamentary army's defeat at Brentford (November 12), both confrontations resulting in pillages by the Royalists. "No one doubted that London itself would

meet with a similar fate (i.e. be taken and sacked) should it fall into the enemy's hands," notes Smart. Yet he too maintains that Milton, when suspense and alarm hung over the city at the upcoming battle on Turnham Green, "remained calm and detached, and converted the moment of peril into a theme for slightly playful verse."²³

Milton may be calm and playful, but he is not detached, for while he is jocularly promising to "save his neck" so to speak, all the allusive power of the sonnet (topical, literary, and historical) is indicating his unwillingness to do anything other than blame the deserving. His ironic tone is present on the linguistic level as well. Thus he begins with his worst fear, the possibility of being seized by the enemy, but his haphazard collocation, "Captain or Colonel, or Knight in Arms," (l.1), obviously shows his slight regard for the Royalists. The request for protection and promise of praise sound curiously like a command and criticism, moreover, for in the lines "If deed of honor did thee ever please,/ Guard them, and him within protect from harms," (ll. 3-4), the "please" may be read with the contre-rejet. The sense would then be: If you ever did a deed of honor, then please guard.... Milton's change from the manuscript and 1645 edition seems significant. He originally wrote, "If ever deed of honour did you please," a construction that makes his ironic meaning too apparent.

It is for the "gentle" actions, seizing, guarding, and protecting--and not merely for the latter two--that the poet would requite the officers, he knowing "the charms/ That call Fame on such gentle acts as these." The tone here is again ambiguous. The OED gives for its first entry of "requite" the definition "to repay, make return for,

reward a kindness." But l.b reads "to repay...to avenge (a wrong, injury, etc.)." "Fame" is similarly charged, for in the Seventeenth Century it could mean, neutrally, "what people say, a public report," or it could be our "good reputation," or Virgil's "Fama"--infamy. So the poet, in the act of expressing a willingness to commend, may, in deed, be condemning.

As all commentators of the poem agree, Milton turns his tone in the ninth line, eschewing all humor in the serious generalization of the sestet:

Lift not thy spear against the Muses Bowre,
The Great Emathian Conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when Temple and Towre
Went to the ground: And the repeated air
of sad Electra's Poet had the power
To save the 'Athenian Walls from ruine bare.

(ll. 9-14)

The solemnity of the tercets is in part created by the formal aspect of adducing examples, for as Finley notes, in Horace as here, the appended examples (independent of their content) arrest closure, effecting a majestic repose.
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But in terms of content, they are important as indicators of Milton's view on his role as public poet. We should note that Euripedes and to a much greater extent Pindar, were both commentators of their times, yet neither wrote at the expense of his integrity. Moreover, Milton's whole emphasis is on the power of poetry, not on the virtue of the warriors. Euripedes and Pindar, long dead at the time when the "sparings" occurred, performed no sychophantic praise to save themselves or their cities. The majesty of Milton's closing lines, then,

also derives from the evocation of the uncompromised poems of Euripedes and Pindar, poems whose beauty and truth aborted slaughter. Read thus, Milton's poem seems less a statement of an aesthete's belief in the political detachment of poetry than as an implicit credo specifying the tradition of public poetry in which he will endeavor to write.

So, in 1645, having indicated this tradition of the honest muse that he will follow, Milton is ready to write topical poetry with genuine public significance without sacrificing either his own integrity or aesthetic universality. This had never been done in English literature within the sonnet format, though it had in a very similar one--the martialesque epigram--as we shall see in the next chapter. Milton's only source for the idea (but not the stylistic execution) of the "heroic" sonnet is Tasso, a debt F.T. Prince has very well documented. And for his political-satirical sonnets, Milton may also have looked to Italy for models, there being a long tradition of humorous and satirical sonneteering in Tuscany.

Milton was thus without any specific English sonnetmodels for his political poems, which would probably display--given his penchant for transforming predecessors--the same Miltonic quality even had he had a strong tradition to follow. For these poems attest to Milton's belief (expressed everywhere in his prose, but especially in Areopagitica) in the connection between politics, in its full sense--the total complex of relations between men in society--and the language men use to think and talk about politics. Thus Milton, not shy or overnice on the question of the "un-poetic" in Paradise Lost (as Addison noticed with displeasure²⁶), faced the problem of writing significantly about topical matters in the sonnets unblinkingly, forging

a poetic language out of the very political diction and imagery of the moment. This is not to say that Milton's political sonnets are in the colloquial plain style. Clearly, those to Fairfax, Cromwell, and Vane are written in an elevated language no man every spoke; nor are the satirical sonnets, IX, IXX, and "New Forcers," colloquial in the manner of Ben Jonson's epigrams or epistles, examples of the Seventeenth-Century plain style which we will be contrasting with Milton's in the following chapter. Milton never imitates the contemporary speaking voice of conversation (Jonson's favorite mode) or argument (Donne's), so that his poems in the low mode are never imitations of spoken utterance. Unlike Jonson and Donne, Milton is not concerned with creating a poetic style out of spoken language. He thus introduces ordinary language into the sonnets only locally, against a more formal background, for the purpose of commenting upon what men speak. In short, Milton treats the sayings and phrases of the ordinary language of his time as topical allusions. Very much like his use of the vernacular in general in Paradise Lost, Milton plays off original and derived usages of topical language in a dialectical manner, so that his full meaning emerges in the resonance of the connections

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he points up.

The wit of this use of topical allusion is the wit of the topical verbal joke, as well as that of the pictorial topical or political cartoon, all three sharing a telescopic process that points up a connection between their content and something (s) known in the past. But because (for the original audience) the reference is topical, the past remembrance of a very recent date, there emerges a peculiar power for the topical artist. For if he calls upon his audience to remember

something, it is a something not fully interpreted, and so he has a good deal of power to influence the meaning of this interpretation, which is in the process of being formed by his audience. We noticed in Chapter I that the structure of allusion proper contains a covert reference to some past text, which we said need not be a literary text, but which had to be some datum that had been "interpreted," that is, that had a generally understood symbolic significance for a given audience. The point I wish to make here concerning topical allusion is that the text to which it refers is minimally interpreted, is so new that there is relatively little (or perhaps, unstable) symbolic significance attached to it as yet by the given audience.

To understand this point more clearly we may refer to Freud's discussion of the prevalence of the topical details and contexts of dreams. According to Freud, the reason that the dream is frequently composed of recent events and images is that these are free of significance or associations for the dreamer, and so are able to slip by the mind's censor. ²⁸ It is not so much that the topical details of dreams are inherently trivial, but only that they are uninvested with meaning at the time of the dream because, being so recent, the dreamer has not reflected upon them. The dream work itself then, may be analogous to the topical poem, joke, and cartoon--all three fictions having the potential to invest meaning into apparently "innocent" material.

Most often, the topical joker, cartoonist, and poet use this principle of their audience's unreflective use of language to re-awaken awareness of the dead metaphors behind all language, but especially prevalent in political gargon. As G.H. Gombrich has

written of the political cartoon (whose wit he also likens to the verbal joke), it reveals the power of the "mythical imagination in our thought."²⁹ For example, when looking at Daumier's crowned female figure perilously placed upon an ignited bomb with the caption, "The Balance of Europe" (Equilibre Europeen), we are shocked into understanding the metaphorical significance of the topical phrase, so easily have we accepted its transferred meaning. Abu's "Arms Race" of 1962 is a more recent example. He pictures Kennedy and Khrushchev catapulting off the edge of a cliff, a point they have reached by leap-frogging with their very arms.³⁰

I am not here concerned with the meaning or message created by Daumier or Abu in the connection between ideas that they point out in their cartoons, but with their method. Gombrich hints at the potential power behind such revelations in general when he notes that "One draws attention to the imagery of one's language at one's own peril, for as soon as you are alerted to these dormant pictures they will crowd in on you from every side. They are...grist to the cartoonist's mill, or...weapons in his armoury."³¹

Milton, well understanding the force of such a crowding on the imagination, assembles an iconography, an array of sayings and images from political language in order to provide them with interpretations, or to reinvigorate them, so that he may both redress his society's abuses of language as well as vividly dramatize abstractions such as Peace, Liberty, and freedom.

Because political language is so packed with latent personification and symbol,³² we must expect Milton's cartoonist's armoury to stock a multitude of allegorical devices. The selectivity of allegorical

writing, its simplification--or better--its total disregard for the mimetic mode of recreating experience, is of course purposeful. The allegorist wants to get at ideas, to essentialize a part of reality by extrapolating from it only what illustrates the intellectual system that is his subject. Allegory is by nature diagrammatic, schematic, but "thin" and "Unreal" only if we wrongly maintain a naturalistic criterion for the representation of truth.³³

Now Milton's political sonnets are not formal allegories, but they do borrow the machinery of allegory as well as its often fantastic arrangement of devices in order to express Milton's system of liberty and justice. Milton's borrowing is perfectly apt, since to convey such intellectual complexity in the fourteen lines of the sonnet requires an essentializing iconography. Emblem verse, the sole cartoons of the early Renaissance and the main imagistic source of Seventeenth-Century political cartoon prints,³⁴ has the picture proper to aid its articulation of ideas. Milton compresses, incorporating the iconography into the linguistic expression itself, as well as the generalized moral--so often expressed in the emblem's appended verse.

We find Milton performing such a compression of image and idea in Sonnet XI, where he realizes the Baconian notion presented in Areopagitica: books are living things.

For books are not absolutely dead things, but
do contain a potency of life in them to be as
active as that soul was whose progeny they are;
nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest
efficacy and extraction of that living intellect
that bred them....as good almost kill a man as
kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable
creature, God's image; but he who destroys a
good book, kills reason itself, kills the image
Of God, as it were, in the eye.³⁵

In Sonnet XI Milton sets a city scene in which he personifies his book, Tetrachordon, in order to render the above idea ironically, for he suggests in the sonnet that not only are books alive, but that they may be more so than people. His manuscript change is therefore significant, since it sharpens the personhood of Tetrachordon. Originally he had written for "it walk'd the Town a while" (1.3), "it went off well about," which might easily be read non-figuratively, to mean "it circulated and succeeded rather well." Moreover, it is individuated as "a Book" (1.1) which "numbered" (separated and determined the value of) good intellects, compared with the general and uncapitalized "the stall-reader" (1.5) who cannot "spell" (pronounce, or, literally, read).

Milton's talent for invigorating the commonplace is evinced in his hyphenation of "the stall-reader" for with this single dash he connects two nouns in an association that deprives the second of its human status. Invoking all the force of "stall" as an animal convenience, as well as its sense of "haulted," he turns the familiar practise of book browsing in the booths at St. Paul's into a "dumb" show, with barnyard connotations.

This use of "stall-reader" and his surmise that misreading would continue while one might walk to Mile-/end Green (ll. 7-8) are clear instances of the dream technique of investing topical detail with significance. All serious advocates of "the constitutional" in London walked to Mile End Green. (The phrase, among less energetic Londoners, probably had the sense of our "while one digs to China.") Milton's cutting up of the boundary's name supplies an ironic meaning for both the habit and the saying, since the hard enjambment, cutting

into the proper name, isolates the two last terms, divests them of their proper name status, and suggests that the strollers will not "end green"--i.e. end up any greener, richer in health or intelligence, for all their walking or pursuit of such a goal or milestone.

In lines seven and eight, Milton pretends to commit his mis-readers' error, judging by titles, when he asks/exclaims: "Why is it harder Sirs then Gordon,/ Colkitto, or Macdonnel, or Galasp?". By putting his title in an analogous relation to the Scots' titles, he suggests that the readers who cannot say "Tetrachordon" and do not know what it means, but who can say the Scottish names, may not really know what these mean, a suggestion which is heightened when we learn that they are not even "proper" names--that "Galasp" was used indifferently by a person also called Macdonald and
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Colkitto.

With this allusion to the Scottish members of the Westminster Assembly, Milton is not objecting to the lack of sonority of the names per se, as Smart thought when he wrote that "it is the scholar and stylist who speaks, not the politician."³⁷ For if Milton meant to deride only the sound and not the sense of these names, he would be as foolish as the stall readers; rather, Milton would have his audience re-thing the significance of the Scottish Presbyterians in the Assmebly so that they may be known as a repressive faction. They "mean" intolerance, precisely what Tetrachordon--in the domestic sphere of liberty--stands againts.

This is not to say that Milton is hitting specific individuals (we noted that the four names represented one man), but that he is using the naming process to provoke his readers' awareness of the

insidious Scottish element in the Assembly. This use of naming maintains a rhetorical dimension, as it recalls Horace and Juvenal, who had evolved a complete mythology of this speech act in their satires. The satirist who would castigate vice effectively names names, bravely risking consequences--and thus is the satirist's ethos established. Milton's sonnet (as will Pope's "imitations" of Horace) reflects his appreciation of this rhetorical force, especially when we contrast his boldness in naming in Sonnet XI with the hesitancy of Sonnet X, where, we shall see, Milton purposefully conveys his awareness of a different power inherent in the act.

Just as Smart (to spare Milton from the charge of personal revenge) trivialized Milton's mention of the Scottish names, so commentators, believing that Sonnet XI is merely personal defense of Tetrachordon, gloss Quintilian's presence (l. 11) to be an example of the good stylist. But Milton's sonnet defends Individual Liberties, not solely his own individual liberty, and he adduces Quintilian as an embodiment of humanism in its widest sense. Milton's general intention should be clear from his invocation of Cheke as well, a humanist dedicated to discovering and publishing truths for his age (monarch and pupils). Recent critics read Milton's allusion ironically, to mean: "the two ages alike hated not learning worse than
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toad or asp, but quite as much as either."

We need only read Tetrachordon, however, to discount this ironical interpretation. For the sonnet and the treatise, individually "woven close," are also "of a piece" insofar as Milton's thought on Reformation is concerned. In Tetrachordon he had written:

...in those times which are on record for the purest and sincerest that ever shon yet on reformation of this Land, the time of Edward 6th. That worthy Prince, having utterly abolisht the Canon Law out of his Dominions, as his Father did before him, appointed by full vote of Parliament, a Committy of two and thirty chosen men, Divines and Lawyers, of whom Cranmer the Archbishop, Peter Martyr, and Walter Haddon, (not without the assistance of Sir John Cheeke the Kings Tutor, a man at that time counted the learnedest Englishman, and for piety not inferior) were the chief, to frame anew som Ecclesiastical Laws, that might be in stead of what was abrogated.³⁹

Far from being ironical in what may be an allusion to his treatise in the sonnet, Milton is warning his readers concerning the prohibitive legislation threatened by the Westminster Assembly, a group which is in sad contrast to that of Henry VI. Milton would perhaps appreciate the real irony here: we misread his sonnet today because Tetrachordon goes unread--our age as well has its "false spellers" who do not get beyond a title.

The reception of Areopagitica and the divorce treatises also precipitates Sonnet XII, though like Sonnet XI, it is much more than self defense. Milton, having personally met the "Blatant Beast" in both Presbyterians and dissenting sectaries, writes a meditation on detraction, the prevalent mode of discourse practised by the age. The implied bestiality of the characters of Sonnet XI is here represented full blown, as is the reason why men are reduced to animals--their abuse of the instrument, language, which would, rightly used, separate them from God's lesser creatures. Milton thus draws heavily upon the current polemical language and imagery of the times to illustrate the consequences of factious (as opposed to unbiased and constructive) criticism. His point is simply put:

detraction is noise.

Yet Milton himself has been charged with making noise, or at least nonsense in this sonnet, which has been found to refer ambiguously. The critical problem concerns the animals of line four, which are generally agreed to represent the Presbyterians who turned against Milton for his views on divorce and the Hogs "That bawle for freedom in their senceless mood," who must be the more radical sectaries, the vulgar, who misread and mis-used Milton's tracts. But accepting these two distinct targets raises the question of an obscure change of reference, for the "this" in "But this is got by casting Pearl to Hoggs:" (1.8), while it cannot logically refer to the Presbyterians, provides no grammatical indication of the new referent.

Milton's ambiguity seems appropriate, however, since in his anger here he wants to show the age that though it divides itself into warring political factions, it is a perfect piece of ignorance. If we find a grammatical problem, it is because we are not reading Milton as we should, as an emblematiser or cartoonist. Such a reading is called for by the strategy of the poem, which represents two apparently distinct cartoons caricaturing Presbyterians and sectaries, separated by an abrupt change of reference that creates a "space" between them. Iconographic poetry often assembles its imagery in a non-discursive or a-logical order, so that it invites the reader to supply the underlying connections between symbols. The space or eloquent silence of Sonnet XII "speaks" the poem's message: the connection between detracting Presbyterians and sectaries is a close one.

The sonnet's opening lines prepare us for the conflation of the detractors by applying the epithets then used by Presbyterians against the sects, to the Presbyterians. Honigmann cites the commonplace dismissal of the sectaries as vermin, "all manner Sectaries creepe forth, and multiplie, as frogs, and flies and vermine in the Spring." There was current, too, the likening of the sectaries' speech to noisy babel.⁴² Milton distinguishes between this detraction and his "prompting" according to the "known rules of ancient liberty," an imageless, anaphoric phrase that forces us out of the quixotic present, back into memory to recover these forgotten truths.

But Milton's allusion to Latona endows his "prompting" with a visual image that raises the occasion of the sonnet above mere personal revenge. For as Ovid writes the story, Latona, assuming her natural right to drink from a clear spring, is prevented by rustics who rail at her and her twins Diana and Apollo--Milton's Tetrachordon and Colasterion.⁴³ The myth concerns the threat to individual liberty inflicted by ignorant men through verbal assault (even when transformed to frogs, the rustics continue to shout abuses). The clear spring (freedom) is for Milton as it is for Latona, "life itself." The myth's singling out of noisesome, tyrannical rustics looks forward, in Milton's context, to his change of reference to the vulgar in line eight. The myth is also convenient because it permits Milton to hint at the apotheosis of his twin tracts, which, being symbols here of freedom of expression (man's only path to truth), signify the apotheosis of Truth.

Milton's design to castigate by categorizing the age as a babbling whole (by using its own language against it) is apparent in his punning line eight, the verse which initiates the second cartoon of the dissenting sects: "But this is got by casting Pearl to Hoggs." This not only alludes to Matthew vii: 6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you," but puns on two of the names of enemies of liberty, men named Bacon. One Bacon was a judge assigned to examine Milton for his unlicensed publication of Areopagitica; a second was in charge of a Parliamentary committee to prevent heresies which imposed the death penalty on "heretics," a stricture designed to crush Independents.⁴⁴ Neither of these men, alluded to in a line that turns its reference to the sects, are members of any, but are staunch Presbyterian conservatives. Thus the line turns like a hinge, alluding backward to Presbyterians, forward to the sectaries (the latter clearly implied by the allusion to Matthew).

There may also be a glance at John Lilburne's Pearle in a Dunghill, and anti-Presbyterian tract, in which occur, as Honigmann has pointed out, popular phrasings and ideas similar to Milton's-- thereby testifying to the "free floating" language upon which Milton draws. Lilburne writes of the Civil wars: "For what it is so much precious blood hath been spilt, so many families wasted, so much treasure consumed" and that the Commons "love those best, that most know and affect true liberty."⁴⁵ By echoing Lilburne's epithets against Presbyterians but with reference to the sectaries, Milton overdetermines

their meaning: like the use made by the unconscious of topical detail, Milton invests apparently innocent locutions with symbolic significance.

One such locution, "License they mean when they cry libertie" (1.11), instances Milton turning the Presbyterians' charge against him, against the sectaries.⁴⁶ But the line also may refer to the Presbyterian dominated Parliament, which believed that liberty meant the suppression of minority opinions; the line's allusion to the subject of Areopagitica, licensing, would then be operant.

In effect, then, Milton's criticism of all those not "wise and good" transcends party boundaries and designates these citizens, the ignorant and evil, to be yet another--and the most vicious--political group.

"New Forcers" continues the satiric strategy of Sonnet XII in its exposure of the similarity between ostensibly opposed political groups, here the Anglicans and Presbyterians. One of its possible positions in the sonnet order permitted by the ambiguous instructions of the Trinity Manuscript, placement after Sonnet XII, is felicitous for this reason, as well as for the reason that it shares with Sonnets XI and XII the same aspect of Neoplatonic love--love of country--and a satiric tone. The tone of "New Forcers" is sharpened, however, in the poem's intensified name calling, depiction of daemonic agents, and finally in its "tail," a spill-over expressing Milton's anger at his offenders.⁴⁷

The offenders are among the Presbyterian majority of the Long Parliament, who in 1646 were pressing for the adoption of National Presbyterianism replete with state paid clergymen and persecution of dissenters. Milton, in speaking against these repressive plans

and out for toleration with strong ehemence, had upset readers who find his anger illogical, though without reason, after all, if we accept that one can find intolerance intolerable--as Milton
48
certainly did.

The poem is structured on the belief, a commonplace among Independents at the time, that the Presbyterians had banished
49
tyrannical Episcopacy only so that they might assume the role. One of the most popular political cartoon prints at this time showed two Presbyterian ministers climbing up a mountain as a few prelates
50
are falling from the summit into an abyss.

Milton exploits the imagery latent in the notion of the Presbyterian hierarchy, their system of ascending orders of courts, and its relation to the Anglican ecclesiastical hierarchy. Milton wants to show that the hierarchies are essentially the same and that the relation between Presbyterian and Anglican is one of exchange or substitution of position from high to low. The structuring principle is thus similar to that of Sonnet XII, though as we shall see, Milton does not in "New Forcers" cartoon the situation; rather, he renders it through a punning technique.

Milton's intention is implied by his title, which reads, "On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament," the "New" tacitly evoking the former forcers--specifically the Anglicans but also, in general, all previous intolerants. Thus Honigmann appropriately sees "Laud" behind "Prelate Lord" (1.1) and notes that the Scottish version of the Liturgy imposed by Charles I had been
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popularly called "Laud's Liturgy." Milton here invests a current saying with new meaning, pointing out this connection for his

day's readers who would appreciate the wit. We cannot experience their shock of recognition with this type of allusion today, though we should add that it reads meaningfully on its literal level.

One of Milton's manuscript changes reveals the same attempt to identify Presbyterian and Anglican, the image of "the widdow'd whor Pluralite" (1.3), which had in manuscript "vacant": Latin vacua, unmarried, single. The final choice conveys the point that Pluralitie (the condition of clergymen holding more than one benefice at a time) had had an Anglican husband previously, a meaning not suggested by the original term. Moreover, as Honigmann comments, Milton brackets the political-religious groups with the term "classic Hierarchy" (1.7): "classic," deriving from classic, another term for presbytery; "Hierarchy," an allusion to the Puritans' common reference to Episcopal church government as "the Hierarchy."⁵²

Milton names and mis-names significantly as well. He reduces "meer" Adam Stewart to the initials A.S. (and thereby to the animal, ass) and by misspelling Samuel Rutherford's name, transforms him into an ox (rother). In contrast to these, are not the proper names but the attributes of good men, their Life, Learning, Faith, and pure intent, which Paul would have esteemed. Milton eschews "Saint" (a common practise among reformers) to convey the lack of hierarchy among such good men. Christ, too, had been mentioned in line six without elaborate circumlocution or epithet, as simply "Christ." Milton chose Paul among the apostles because the Presbyterians always cited him as the enemy of false teachers and, therefore, of toleration.⁵³

Imagery of hierarchy is at work in that these men of "high"

esteem are 'ham'd and printed Hereticks" by "shallow Edwards," the Presbyterian author of Gangraena, a review of religious sects⁵⁴ revealing cursory knowledge of myriad books. Milton's instance of non-naming, "Scotch what d'ye call," reduces his target (no one man but the Scottish members of Parliament) to nonentity.

Milton's substitution of a covert, for the excised overt reference to Prynne is nonetheless an allusion to this Presbyterian that would be recognizable to all in Milton's day. For as Honigmann comments, the martyred ears of Prynne were notorious. Like the resurgence of tyranny, the ears reappeared, having been cut off twice, by order of the King. Prynne is thus a felicitous example of the mutual intolerance shared by Presbyterian and Anglican, for just as Laud had persecuted Prynne, so Prynne would put down⁵⁶ dissenters now that his party was in ascendancy. Milton's original line read "Cropp yee as close as marginall P- -s ears," which pokes fun only at Prynne the man: his final version hits Prynne personally while also deriding the Presbyterians in general: "Clip your Phylacteries, though bauk your Ears" (l.7). The Presbyterians' "phylacteries," what were once protective ornaments, have come to be symbols of ostentatious piety. It is not as⁵⁷ Bush notes, merely the second meaning that Milton had in mind, but the very change in meaning: the resonance of the two meanings held together traces the Presbyterians' degeneration in their rise to power.

Milton ends his rebuke with the supposition that Parliament "shall read this clearly in your charge/ New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ

Large." This is the most perfect pun of the sonnet since (1) it is typographically "writ large," being expressed in the tail or the enlarged portion of the sonnet format and (2) etymologically, "priest" is an abbreviated form of "presbyter." Now that the former term has been expanded--via the sonnet's condemnation--all will perceive the relationship. Milton could not have ended more cleverly, for the lines draw out explicitly both his poem's punning technique and its naming-exposing process practised throughout.

Neither Milton's vehement negative criticism in Sonnets XI, XII, and "New Forcers," nor his enthusiastic praise in the heroic sonnets should surprise us, considering the political upheavals in England of the 1640's: the Second Civil War (1648), the alliance between Scots and Royalists against the Republicans (1648), the conflicts arising between the Independent Army and the Presbyterian dominated Parliament, the regicide and establishment of the Commonwealth (1649). Understandably, then, we find Milton increasingly engaged with the ideas of Justice, Law, Liberty, Equity. These are precisely the concerns of Spenser in his most topical book of The Fearie Queene, Book V, but because these two minor government officials and major poets maintained such radically different political views, no debt to Spenser is ever mentioned in discussions of Milton's sonnets to Fairfax, Cromwell, and Vane. Yet despite his "original's" different ideas concerning rebellion and revolution, Milton follows Spenser in prophesying through
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pageantry. In these heroic sonnets, Milton continues to deploy the politically current imagery and language that he used in the satirical sonnets, but he adds a ceremonial element reminiscent of the

highly serious pageantry in Spenser.

In his book on The Faerie Queene, Giametti associates Spenser's pageantry with his confidence in the communicability of language, for Spenser uses pageantry to emblemize language: "pageantry is itself a system of signs, a language, revealing inward sense." But by the time he comes to write book V, Spenser begins to loose faith in this power of language to embody truth. In Book VI, Spenser's confidence is even weaker. As Giamatti writes:

Only the Blatant Beast remains as an impulse
from the earlier parts of the poem. And this
remnant of the pageantry of the past serves
only to embody the harsh truth that no matter
how far into the self one drives the self,
language always bears within it the seeds of
monstrosity as well as beauty. As long as men
use words, they must risk letting slip the
Beast.⁵⁹

In the heroic sonnets, which "speak out" for liberty, Milton puts Spenser's pageantry to use fearlessly, to evolve a public language designed to steer men back to their inner selves, so that they might reclaim the truths buried there.

Readers have long understood that Milton intends more than praise in his addresses to Fairfax and Cromwell, so stridently exhortative in overall effect are the poems. Precisely what Milton wants from each of these public figures is his self-transformation from dux to rex, from social bandit to magistrate. Fletcher, summarizing the notion of the social bandit as discussed by Dumézil and in Hobsbawm's Primitive Rebels, writes that the social bandit is the man who brings justice to a world where laws either do not yet exist or have failed to work,

usually through a governor's malfeasance.⁶⁰ Milton saw Fairfax and Cromwell as such bandits during the civil wars, but as the Parliament (backed by the New Model Army) began to exert a force in government, and especially after the establishment of the new commonwealth, he saw the need for legal codification. This is the pattern followed by Spenser, whose Artegall (who ultimately represents justice) learns justice by following a tortuous path in which, as social bandit, he distributes--without the aid of legal codes--a natural equity: this equity, being insufficient for a civilized state, evolves into a condition of codified but equitable justice in Britomart's vision in the temple of Isis and Osiris.⁶¹

Like Spenser in his time, Milton perceives England to be undergoing a dangerous transition from chaotic rebellion (where natural law serves, necessarily), to a civilized state requiring codified law. Thus Milton, fearing the Presbyterian reactionaries who threatened the newly gained liberty with their plans to institutionalize (i.e. legalize) intolerance, calls on two England's best warriors to follow the careers of former dux-rex figures (Aeneas, Brutus, and Hercules among them) and become magistrates who would stabilize the victories of liberty by resisting unjust, and initiating just law.

Thus, the essential point of the Fairfax sonnet is to warn a man with this leadership potential against wasting himself in battle. Basing his argument on Aristotle's view that force and fraud are the enemies of justice,⁶² Milton calls for the dux to become rex. The sonnet's initial quatrain, then, is a cartoon-like depiction not so much of Fairfax's fame but of fame's close resemblance to notoriety,

lest Fairfax be tempted to continue soldiering merely for reputation:

Fairfax, whose name in armes through Europe rings
Filling each mouth with envy, or with praise,
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze,
And rumors loud, that daunt remotest kings, (ll. 1-4).

The image of Fairfax's name "in armes," ringing," is rather grotesque and flatters neither the mouths nor the reputation, as the arbitrary collocation, "with envy, or with praise," or "rumors loud" makes clear. The first occurrence of "ringing" to mean "filled with talk or report of" is cited in the OED as 1608 (the next, 1675), so we may safely assume the novelty of Milton's usage, especially in his negative twist. For in effect he says that no matter how heroic Fairfax's deeds, they will be subjected to fraudulent interpretation. The effect of heroic deeds in Europe's rulers is similarly disappointing: all jealous monarchs will be filled with amaze (awe, and a pun on "maze" as error); remote kings will be daunted--a questionable effect since Milton never justified any monarch's demise, but only the tyrant's. Milton seems to be glancing at Artegall's (Lord Grey's) reception at the close of Book V when his heroism is met with Envy, Detraction, and the Blatant Beast. What at first looks like unqualified praise, then, seems really to be praise embedded in a warning concerning the fate of heroic action. The reader is prompted to re-think the "ringing" image because Milton isolates it in the first quatrain, and thus, though there is no grammatically complete sentence to secure closure, there is our awareness of the quatrain format to prompt a pause; it is in this silence, in between violent baroque shifts of imagery, that the reader is invited to supply the logical connections among images.

This process augments the "meditative space" of the heroic sonnets, which though moving in single-breath sentences, are continually checked by the introduction of disparate images.

The second quatrain, containing the only expression of pure praise, presents it in an image from procession or pageant:

Thy firm unshak'n vertue ever brings
Victory home, though new rellions raise
Thir Hydra heads, and the fals North displaies
Her brok'n league, to impe their serpent wings,
(11. 5-8).

Fairfax's firm, unshaken vertue brings Victory home. Later, in line nine, Milton alludes to this praise of Fairfax's peaceful virtues by echoing the masque-like "leading" quality in "O yet a nobler task awaites thy hand."

In between Fairfax's and Virtue's progress home to perform nobler domestic tasks, Milton inserts, paranthetically, an emblem of horror--his monsters. These beasts have received a great deal of attention because of the inaccurate mythologizing in the "winged hydra," which results if we accept the Trinity Manuscript's "their Serpent Wings"--i.e. the Hydra's of line six. But certainly John T. Shawcross' reading, which substitutes "her" in the line "and the fals North displaies/ Her brok'n league, to impe her serpent wings" (11. 7-8), and thus provides two beasts, the hydra (Royalists) and winged serpent (Scots), is more plausible.

The really interesting question concerning the beasts, however, is why Milton adduces the new uprisings in a sonnet designed to discourage Fairfax's warring? and why with such powerful images? Part of the answer concerns the iconographic import of the hydra and

winged serpent, for both are associated with the Fraud of the opening quatrain. Ripa, in Nova Iconologia, had depicted Envy with a hydra,⁶⁴ and she is often represented chewing snakes. So Spenser had depicted her in Book V in his depiction of detraction and envy met by Artegall in his monarch and countrey men after his heroic battles to squelch the Irish rebellions.⁶⁵ Milton's allusion to Spenser thus suggests that Fairfax too might be fighting thankless battles, though necessary ones. Moreover, the hydra unceasingly springs new heads, a detail hinting at the futility of Fairfax's efforts-- unless, that is, he be a Hercules.

Hercules-as-giant-killer, however, is merely one of the hero's roles in mythology. As Jane Aptaker reminds us, Hercules set out to conquer and civilize; it is the latter task that Milton here prescribes for Fairfax. Moreover, the Hercules allusion serves Fairfax as a warning, for in some versions of the former hero's life, he not only never becomes the civilizer, he also oversteps the slim boundary between social bandit and anti-social bandit to become a reckless tyrant.⁶⁶

Milton's idealism at this point in history emerges in the sestet, the meaning of which is that the Independents can best persuade Royalist and Scot alike of the merits of their reform if only the Independents would settle domestic injustices:

O yet a nobler task awaites thy hand;
 For what can Warr, but endless warr still breed,
 Till Truth, and Right from Violence be freed,
 And public Faith cleared from the shamefull brand
 Of Public Fraud. In vain doth Valour bleed
 While Avarice, and Rapine share the land. (ll. 9-14)

The sense of the purity of the ideals is expressed through the barest

hint of them as personified abstractions, so sharply in contrast with the preceding vivid imagery for Fraud and Force. War breeding war, Truth and Right to be freed from Violence, these only suggest personhood (glancing as they do at God's three daughters, Justice, Truth and Peace) because Milton wants to stress their reality as ideas. He also, in a prophetic moment, wants to foreground his most essential statement, which follows the abstractions in the last tercet. Here Fairfax is reminded once more of England's worsening domestic problems, which Milton glosses by pointing up a shift in his contemporaries' linguistic usage. "Public Faity" Honigmann reminds us, originally meant "national honour" but had come to signify the "national debt" incurred by a Parliament that had no funds to pay its creditors.⁶⁷

This allusion, which must have had a great force for Milton's contemporary readers, shocking them into an awareness of the actuality behind semantic degeneration, instances a type of topical allusion that we today cannot experience with the impact analogous to that experienced upon interpreting a detail of a dream--that impact, that is, of the "innocent revealed."

The final image of Valour bleeding while Avarice and Rapine share the land returns to the method of vivid emblemizing of the octave. But even more striking is the image of a sword not present, a kind of phantom sword, suggested in Public Faith being "cleard" from the shameful "brand" of Public Fraud. Perhaps Milton suppresses the overt figuration of severing (with a sword) to reinforce his belief that the goal must be achieved in peace, when swords will be, literally, absent.

Both Milton's Sonnet XVI and Marvell's Horatian ode to Cromwell

are, though in different ways, complex poems of praise. Milton wants to commend the warrior, while (as with Fairfax) urging him to more pertinent Christian heroics. Marvell appraises more than he praises, and the approbation expressed in his poem becomes all the more genuine for this evaluative method. The essential difference between the ways each poem conveys its complexity resides in the two "sub-texts" to which they allude, which each seems to use as a matrix, so to speak. Milton's sonnet is like a masque, its processional movement drawing Cromwell from a cloud, through the Scottish battle landscape, to England and the present political concerns. The masque provides a still point along with movement and is thus the prophetic poet's most felicitous mode, for he needs a form which crystalizes movement in stasis in order to capture history in a moment; he needs a form which embodies--to quote C.S. Lewis--"a union of fixation and processional flow."⁶⁸

Marvell writes out of a dramatic sub-text in which, as Rosalie Colie has shown, he denatures events in the manner of a providential play (Charles politely proffers his comely head; the Irish confess the goodness and fitness of Cromwell). Such simplification of historical complexity, paradoxically, generates an ironical complexity of tone,⁶⁹ for the simplification is serving rigorous analysis. A further glance at the two poets' modes of alluding may supply finer distinctions between their poetic styles of complication.

In this sonnet, Milton deploys one of his favorite allusive methods, which might be called "dillation"; his fullest meaning must be unpacked from a dense allusive surface, and the context of the echoed

text contemplated, the reader thus being forced back through time in order to interpret the significance of the past in the present. This technique is most apparently at work in the central allusion of lines five and six to Joshua 10: 24-5. Milton writes, "And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud/ Hast reared Gods trophies and his work pursu'd," against which we must read the following passage from Joshua:

And...when they brought out those Kings
...Joshua called for all the men of Israel,
and said unto the captains of the men of war
which went with himm come near, put your feet
upon the necks of these kings....And Joshua said
unto them, Fearnot, nor be dismayed, be strong
and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord
do to all your enemies....And afterward Joshua
smote them and slew them.

The resonance of this allusion truly "crowds the imagination." In the first place, the biblical allusion, acting as a kind of deep syntax, justifies Cromwell's part in the regicide and offers comfort to the Puritans who were having secondthoughts concerning the execution, while on the surface, Milton need not descend to apologetics. But more importantly, the allusion to Joshua foreshadows Milton's final appeal to Cromwell to become England's leader in justice rather than in war, for Joshua is the prototype of Christ, who abrogated the brutal Old Testament Law by realizing the principles of Christian Liberty in the Gospel. By association, then, Cromwell becomes the type of Joshua and thus a Christ figure, a role which explains the poem's last lines urging Cromwell to correct the distorted gospel of Presbyterianism.

Marvell's allusive method may be likened to that of "penetration";

as he himself writes: "Nature that hateth emptiness, / Allows of
⁷⁰
penetration less." Two substances cannot assume the same space in
nature: they may in art, as Marvell well knew, but not without creating
irony and ambiguity. Marvell's allusive complexity is the result of
his superimposition of echoed texts. He does not, as Milton, "trope
deeply," but asks only that the reader recall the initial, obvious
symbolic significance of the echoed text. The trouble, or better,
the beauty of Marvell's allusive method is that he often alludes to
two or more texts simultaneously. This is the case in the
"Horatian Ode," whose opening lines are adapted from Lucan's
Pharsalia, i. 239-43, where Lucan castigates Julius Caesar. But
Marvell's title itself points us to Horace, friend to his Caesar, as
do Marvell's echoes of Horace's Ode I. 37, in which he celebrates the
victory of Caesar Octavian. The allusions are co-present and clearly
contradictory. But as John Coolidge writes, the historical similitudes
do not invite extrapolation, are not part of a "tendentious rhetorical
strategy" (Milton's dillation). The very ambiguity of the co-existence
of the allusions is their point, for they "evoke the complex experience
⁷¹
of the ambiguities of power and right."

Marvell also overlays characteristics of different genre for ironic
effect. Thus he describes Cromwell with cosmological imagery
reminiscent of epic: "And, like the three-forked lightning, first/
Breaking the Clouds where it was nursed, / Did thorough his own side/
His fiery way divide" (ll. 13-16). Some lines later, however, Marvell
has Cromwell emerging from a pastoral scene: "from his private gardens,
where / He lived reserved and austere, / As if his highestplot / To plant
the bergamot" (ll. 29-32).

Is Cromwell an heroic daemon or a simple shepherd preordained to heroism? The question so put is unanswerable for Marvell: not either or but both and then some. This is the complexity his allusive method is designed to convey.

Milton's use of allusions to genre, on the other hand, is analogous to his use of literary allusions, as we can see in his treatment of the masque's conventional emblems in the Cromwell sonnet. Not content with their traditional, static meanings, he encourages our rereading of them; thus, with one stroke in "crowned Fortune," he transfers all the negative associations (beginning in antiquity) of this emblem to Charles, who is epitomized in the pun, "crowned" Fortune. Moreover, Honigmann reminds us that "rearing" alludes to the ancient practise of erecting structures on battle fields or public places, so that Milton's selection of this verb forces us back to the heroic past and vivifies what might have been merely a dead metaphor.

As Cromwell is ploughing through the cloud of War and detraction, Milton switches--with the rapidity of masque machinery--to the natural landscape. Marvell too had Cromwell breaking through a cloud and had glanced at the pastoral, but in Milton there is no competition between heroic and pastoral modes. Nature is evoked because on it are imprinted emblems of Cromwell's heroism: "While Darwen Stream with blood of Scotts imbru'd,/ And Dunbarr field resounds thy praises loud,/And Worsters laureat wreath:" (ll. 7-9). Honigmann rightly suggests that Milton's choice of Scottish battles rather than Irish or Royalist is significant because it connects the Scottish defeats with the sonnet's

closing lines: the "new foes" who would "blind our soules" are the
Presbyterians who were demanding a National Church on the Scottish
model.⁷² Thus, through allusion, Milton dilates meaning, supplying
a reading for the new foes without having to name them.

He can therefore adduce the enemy as wolves, with all their
emblematic force, which is considerable, as Jane Aptekar notes in
her discussion of Spenser's wolves. This traditional emblem of
terrible force is often associated with Talus of Book V, who is
Spenser's symbol for law, the instrument of Justice. For Spenser,
the "iron man" is wolfish though necessary, and must be checked and
mitigated with equity.⁷³ So here, for Milton, the wrong law
(institution of a national clergy) is nothing short of the force
and fraud it would purportedly supplant.

Milton ends his poem of praise with a couplet--the only couplet
among all the sonnets--of exhortation. We shall be discussing the
prosody of this poem in the next chapter, but we should note here the
allusive force of the final two lines, for they hark back to the
many Elizabethan sonnets patterned on the syllogism, whose concluding
couplets contained the tautological conclusion worked up to in their
preceding twelve lines. Though Milton has chosen the grandeur of the
processional over the logic of the syllogistic, he nevertheless borrows
the weight of logical inevitability for his exhortation to Cromwell,
which thereby reads less as a request than as a deduction of fact.

Unlike the heroic sonnets To Fairfax and Cromwell, that to Vane
curiously lacks exhortation. Honigmann's discussion of the poem's
historical background suggests the reason for the purely complimentary

stance Milton assumes, for the first and last time, toward his addressed subject.

England and Holland, on the brink of war, began peace negotiations in 1651. sometime in 1652, instructions to the Dutch ambassadors from their government counselling them to negotiate in bad faith, to stall for time while the Dutch gained forces, were discovered and handed over to Milton to translate. On 9 July, the public English case against the Dutch was published, having already been sent to the English Council of State, of which Vane was a principle member. On 3 July, Milton sent Vane his sonnet.⁷⁴ What this means, of course, is that when he wrote the poem, Milton and Vane knew for certain what most other Englishmen only suspected: war with Holland was inevitable.

This knowledge undoubtedly saddened Milton, who, as we saw in his sonnets to Fairfax and Cromwell, regretted the use of arms even when fully committed to a cause. Vane too, along with being adept at mobilizing the navy, was renowned for his peace-making diplomacy. Honigmann, trying to account for the sympathetic tone of the poem, writes that Milton, having lost his only son a fortnight before writing this poem, thinks of Vane in a fatherly way.⁷⁵ This seems highly unlikely, considering that Vane was forty at the time (he is "the Younger" to distinguish him from his father). Rather, the tone of the poem seems to derive from the "secret" knowledge shared by Milton and Vane. Milton writes an expression of sympathy for the future course of war which he keenly lamented, as he knew Vane would. The poem is, then, a complimentary consolation that implicitly regret Vane's imminent engagement in military affairs.

The plangency of Milton's first quatrain is therefore particularly poignant--though it also reads with an Horatian solemnity. The vocative "Vane," as we pause over it, has all the force of an exclamation, especially as it carries an echo of Ecclesiastes' "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Milton rarifies his diction in this quatrain, as he does throughout the poem, to an exceptional degree.

Vane, young in yeares, but in sage counsell old,
Then whome a better Senatour nere held
The helme of Rome, when gownes not armes repell'd
The fierce Epeirot and the African bold,
Whether to settle peace or to unfold
The drift of hollow states, hard to be spell'd,
Then to advise how warr may best, upheld,
Move by her two maine nerves, Iron and Gold
In all her quipage; besides to know
Both spirituall powre and civill, what each meanes
What severs each thou 'hast learnt, which few have don.
The bounds of either sword to thee wee ow.
Therefore on thy firme hand religion leanes
In peace, and reck'ns thee her eldest son.

Milton figures with synecdoche and metonym in the "helm" of Rome, "gowns" for senators, and "armes" for armies; he also uses the symbols of "the Epeirot" and "the African" to stand for all enemies of state. The effect of this manner of referring is to essentialize concepts, which are thus imaged as their most salient trait; much like the components of an emblem, the images maintain their status as abstractions.

Milton persists in this manner throughout the sonnet, as in the "sword" of spiritual powre and civill," and in the barely personified religion. But in the midst of these abstractions, Milton thrusts the concrete war, moving with all her "equipage." The very physically present, masque-like machine outweighs the conceptual vocabulary of the sonnet and sets an ominous tone, without explicitly announcing an imminent war.

As in the Fairfax sonnet, Milton here uses his reader's awareness of the sonnetquatrain almost as a stanza, to close off the scene, while the syntax nevertheless marches on heroically. But the "space" created between "dissolves" in this sonnet are connected by self-echo in a motif of hands and handling. That is, senators "held" the helm of Rome; Vane "settles" peace or "unfolds" the drift of Hollow states. So too, war appears "upheld"; and, finally, Religion leans on Vane's firm "hand."

Milton wants a repeated image to connect the myriad concepts he has figured. Though as we noticed above, baroque shifts in imagery are often part of his poetic design, we also saw in the sonnets to Fairfax and Cromwell that Milton bridged his poetic "spaces" with the masque's procession, by escorting his heroes "home" through various details of symbolic import.

Milton's choice of the hand-handling motif in the sonnet to Vane is an appropriate device to form a connection among diverse ideas. Vane was both a military strategist and a peace negotiator at this time; he could, Milton knew, handle both tasks. But the poet, always proleptic, looks forward to the end of the war that had not yet officially begun, as he prophesies Vane's handling of the religious toleration, yet to be won.

Milton's concern for religious toleration is expressed most beautifully in his last political sonnet, "Avenge O Lord." Commentators have always praised the poem in detailed analyses of its diction, syntax, imagery, and sound, but no one has directly answered the question implicit in Pattison's early comment:

It would not be easy to find a sonnet in any language of equal power to vibrate through all the fibers of feeling...yet with what homely materials is the effect produced! Not only is there not a single purple patch in the wording, but of thought, or image, -all that there is a borrowed thought, and one repeatedly borrowed, viz. Tertullian's saying, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."⁷⁶

Pattison goes on to wonder how the consistently low diction and suffusion of commonplace biblical phrasings could end up so happily in the poem. Honigsmann further complicated this problem by discovering the similarity, and in many cases the duplication, of phrasing between Milton and contemporary news-letters and journals reporting the massacre. Moreover, reading through Cromwell's letters to heads of state on the occasion, letters penned by Milton, we find suggestive resemblances of imagery and exhortation.⁷⁷ How can a poem made out of nothing original, but of the biblical and journalistic commonplaces of its day, be so beautiful? Of course, the question has been implicitly answered by the studies of the poem mentioned⁷⁸ above, but this work has concentrated on Milton's poetic powers of transforming the topicality of the poem into some universal greatness. The occasion is seen as something to overcome. Yet, when regarded as a topical poem, Milton's last and fulcrum for all the devices of public poetry that he had been inventing in the 1640's and 50's, the nature of Milton's achievement appears in a different light: the strength of "Avenge O Lord" derives not despite but from the unoriginal, current materials of which it is composed.

The news worthiness of the massacre is in part responsible for Milton's borrowing. Civil War may have been common during the mid

Seventeenth Century, but massacres of innocent people (excepting Indians in the colonies) was too rare--and in the case of the Piedmont massacre--to pure an example of religious intolerance to go unnoticed. It was, in fact, what we today would call a "news event," for journalists were soon at the scene of action, reporting it nearly as it occurred.

Milton could not trust the press to treat the Piedmont affair as it deserved: indeed, to use the term "the press" for journalism at this time is misleading, for the institution of journalism had only just begun. Not only were newsletters and papers partisan, they were also subjected to the licenser, and thus reflected the distortions resulting from censorship. Moreover, as we have seen, the press used the most vivid, fantastic graphic language, laden with personification and hyperbole, to capture a large readership.

Apparently Milton knew what American social psychologists discovered in the 1960's during the Vietnam War news coverage: the United States public, daily exposed to the camera's depiction of atrocity, became immune to it. The constant visual barrage diluted, if not neutralized, the actual events it presented. There was a similar danger for Milton's audience, daily confronted with a newspaper idiom, which in its attempt to re-present events, made heavy use of devices of vividness, thereby threatening its credibility. Milton did not want the lesson to be learned from the Piedmont massacre to be wasted: thus, to secure, for the widest audience, the proper regard for the event, he echoes the very idiom with which they are (perhaps too) familiar, but he re-invigorates it by writing a sonnet-

emblem. That is, his poem, with the help of interlaced biblical allusions, imbues its linguistic elements with symbolic significance, as the emblem does its pictorial elements.

Milton's arrangement of the borrowed images greatly contributes to his symbolic effect. In the first quatrain, he pictures bones scattered upon icy mountains, a direct echo of a newsletter account, and comments upon the early reformation of the Vaudois "saints" by comparing them with the relatively belated English, depicted as worshipping "stocks and stones." The entire quatrain subtly blends biblical and topical, so that the former lends its symbolic import to the recent event.⁸⁰ The technique is practised throughout the poem. In the second quatrain, the biblical images of God's book and sheep supply context and meaning for the news accounts of Vaudois hurled off Alpine cliffs. And in the sestet, the Italiana fields become the recipient of Tertullian's seeds, which will fulfill the prophecy of Revelation.⁸¹

More subtle effects contribute to the poem's emblematic meaning; for example, the way Milton narrates the literal event suggests a frozen moment in somekind of "black masque." On one side we have the Vaudois "saints," a word redolent with meaning since it carries both its orthodox sense of the sanctified dead, as well as the Puritan connotation of all living members of their fellowship. Among these saints, Milton singles out "Mother with infant," the absence of pronoun here contrasting with all preceding collocations (thy slaughter'd saints, thy truty, thy book, their groanes, thy sheep, their antient Fold), and suggesting a chilling isolation for martyred humanity.

The villians, however, are indicated with the definite article

instead of pronouns or zero article. They are "the bloody Piemontese," and "The triple Tyrant," and "the Babylonian Wo" they engender. Thus specified, they both stand for the particular as well as the general figures of evil.

The poem is a perfect "echo structure" not only in its biblical and topical allusiveness, and in its grammatical foregrounding, but in its internal phonological "redoublings" as well. Studied from this perspective, the sonnet clearly illustrates the transformational power in poetic repetition.

Mark Van Doren aptly described the effect of Milton's sound system to be "one long groan of anger,"⁸² but the "long O" (i.e. /o/) sound repetition throughout the sonnet also conveys a moan or wail of lamentation: O Lord, cold, old, stones, groanes, Fold, roll'd, moans, sow, O're, grow, wo. According to the OED, Milton invented the meaning of "moan" in the sense of "a prolonged low inarticulate murmur indicative of physical and mental suffering,"⁸³ which, considering Milton's penchant for inventing new meanings for words, does not surprise us. What is impressive as an innovation, is Milton's use of self-echo to achieve this end, for his allocation of /o/ in the key words cited above "sounds out" the new significance.

The resounding chorus of moan is heard, then, in the poem's language itself, as well as in its subject-matter--the moans of mother with infant in the natural and supernatural world. Milton might be describing the aim of the public poet when he writes,

Their moans
The Vales redoubl'd to the Hills, and they
To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O're all th'Italian fields where still doth sway
The triple Tyrand: that from these may grow

A hunderd-fold, who having learnt thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian wo.

(11. 8-14)

To bring good out of evil, to reveal--by the very echoing of the news idiom used to report them--the deepest meanings of current events so that men might learn from them, this is the function of topical poetry that we have seen Milton achieving in all his political sonnets, but certainly most brilliantly in Sonnet XVIII.

Footnotes

Chapter II

1

Sir John Cheke, "Dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset (1536) as quoted in Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1971), p. 177

2

O.B. Hardison, Jr. The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literature (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 107. See also pp. 107-122 for a discussion of occasional poetry throughout the Renaissance.

3

For two examples of this critical bias against Milton's occasional poetry, see David Harrington, "Feeling and Form in Milton's Sonnets," WHR, VX (1966), pp. 317-325; and George Boas, "The Problem of Meaning in the Arts," U. of California Publications of Philosophy, 25 (1950), pp. 316-327

4

The topical sonnets to be treated in this chapter are Sonnets VIII, XI, XII, "New Forcers," XV, XVI, XVII, and XVIII.

5

Fletcher, The Transcendental Masque, p. 7.

6

Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment, p. 5.

7

There is an Italian tradition of humorous-satirical poetry written in the "plain style"; in England there is Davies' "Gulling Sonnet," but neither rises to prophesy. For the Italian tradition see, Ernest Hatch Wilkins, A History of Italian Literature, rev. Thomas Bergin (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1974).

8

Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, in The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. A.A. Brill (New York: Modern Library, 1938), p. 508. Freud distinguishes the "recent" from the "indifferent" elements of the dream: the latter pass censorship because they have had no occasion to be more than trivial, the former because they have not had sufficient time to form associations in the dreamer's waking life. I shall discuss this principle more fully in my text.

9

Geoffrey Hartman, "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn": A Brief Allegory," EC, XVIII (April, 1968), p. 126.

10

For a chronological account of Milton's interest in history, see Fogle French, "Introduction" Complete Prose Works of John Milton, vol. v, part 1 (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1971).

11

As quoted in French, p. xliv. Taking into account this comment to de Brass and all other recorded remarks of Milton concerning historiography, Fogle French summarizes Milton's view thus: history must be an accurate, continuous narrative in the most transparent prose possible, and must--unlike oratory--contain no moralization. In a providential world view, history instructs per se, needing no man's idiosyncratic interpretation.

12

Arthur Barker stresses Milton's belief that after the Kingdom of God could only be approximated on earth, that the final attainment of it was only possible after death or in the event of the Second Coming. He writes of Milton's highest aspirations for earthly happiness: "if the good of man, both temporal and spiritual, was meanwhile to be achieved, it could only be so in a commonwealth modelled as far as possible on this (kingdom of God) divine pattern. The end of revolution as Milton saw it was therefore the realization of the ideal, not simply of a perfectly natural, but of a holy community, which in a variety of forms was the purpose of the several groups of Puritans." Milton and the Puritan Dilemma (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1942), pp. 213-14.

13

I do not wish to imply that Milton required literal truths to serve as poetic subject-matter. He allowed poetry to treat either facts or fictions. Thus, he did not discard his original plans for an Arthuriad epic because he had found Arthur to be merely legendary, but because (among other reasons) the Arthurian legend was supremely patriotic, a sentiment unacceptable to Milton in Restoration England. For a discussion of the chauvinism attached to the Arthurian legend, see A. Bartlett Giamatti, Play of Double Senses: Spenser's "Faerie Queene" (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1975), pp. 53-64.

14

William Riley Parker, Milton, vol. 1, pp. 232-3.

15

Smart, p. 48.

16

For a discussion of this type of joke, see Freud, Jokes, p. 97. I do not mean that Milton feared Royalist retribution for his political views. Douglas Bush is undoubtedly correct in his estimation of Milton's as yet minimal political involvement (in 1642), since at this time he

written only five antiprelatical tracts (1642-2), unsigned; he did not become "notorious" until the second, signed edition of his first divorce tract in February, 1644. See, Variorum, p. 375. Milton's anxiety at the time of writing Sonnet VIII seems to stem from his conception of himself as a poet, which involved public instruction, and the aesthetic pitfalls associated with didactic poetry.

17

Bush, Variorum, p. 376.

18

Spenser, "A Letter of the Author's Expounding His Whole Intention in the Course of this Work," Variorum, vol. 1, p. 168.

19

Bush, Variorum, p. 377.

20

"October," The Shepheardes Calender, Variorum, vol. 8, part 1.

21

The idea that poets shape our conceptions of historical figures is found in Milton's favorite historian, Sallust, but he is making an historiographical point, complaining of the distortions in historical records when we accept the past's poetic embellishments of an event (a view Milton shared). Thus Sallust writes: "The acts of the Athenians, in my judgment, were indeed great and glorious enough, but because Athens produced writers of exceptional talent, the exploits of the men of Athens are heralded throughout the world as unsurpassed. Thus the merit of those who did the deeds is rated as high as the brilliant minds that have been able to exalt the deeds themselves by words of praise." Bellum Catilinae, VIII, pp. 3-4, trans. John C. Rolfe (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1920), pp. 15-17.

22

Honigmann, p. 104.

23

Smart, p. 49.

24

J. H. Finley, Jr. "Milton and Horace: A Study of Milton's Sonnets," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, XLVIII (1937), p. 28.

25

See Wilkinkins, A History of Italian Literature, pp. 201-2.

26

Joseph Addison, Essay 285, Saturday, January 26, 1712, in Critical Essays from "The Spectator," ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 76-7.

27

For an excellent discussion of this technique, see Ricks, Milton's Grand Style; pp. 57-66.

28

See Jokes, pp. 124-5 for Freud's view of the topical joke; for the joke's connection with the unconscious, see Jokes, pp. 238-247 and The Interpretation of Dreams, pp. 501-14.

29

E. H. Gombrich, "The Cartoonist's Armoury," in "Meditations on A Hobby Horse" and Other Essays on the Theory of Art (New York: Phaidon, 1963), p. 129.

30

Reproduced in Gombrich, plates 70 and 74.

31

Gombrich, p. 129.

32

This sensationalism is especially true of Seventeenth-Century political journalism, which is generally acknowledged to use vivid animation, as well as scurrilous imagery. To illustrate this tendency, I cite--at random--some titles of pamphlets published in July, 1648:

"Stop your Noses; or, England at her Easement, evacuating

Clods at Westminster who depressed her stomach:

"Londons New Colours dislaid; or, the Snake in the
Cities grasse-green petition discovered"

"The Mad Dog Rebellion worm'd and muzzl'd. With
some reasons why a Personall Treaty with his
Majesty is delayed"

"Hiberniae Lacrymae. Or, a Sad Comtemplation on the
bleeding condition of Ireland"

"Saints in England under a Cloud and their Glory
eclipsed in this Life"

"Colchesters Teares, dropping from the sad face of
a new Warr"

for much more of the same, see Catalogue of the Pamphlets, Books Newspapers, and Manuscripts Relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and Restoration, collected by George Thomason, 1640-1661 (London: British Museum, 1908) vols. 1 and 2.

33

For an illuminating discussion of the compartmentalizing power of allegory, see Angus Fletcher, Allegory, pp. 25-38.

34

The evolution of the emblem into the Seventeenth-Century political cartoon is traced by Mary Dorothy George, English Political Caricature (Oxford, 1959).

35

John Milton, Areopagitica in Complete Prose, vol. 2., p. 492.

36

Bush, Variorum, p. 391.

37

Smart, p. 62.

38

For a summary of the arguments of the controversy, see Variorum, pp. 391-2. My Paraphrase is from Rudrum, Milton's "Comus," p. 89.

39

John Milton, Tetrachordon, in Complete Prose, vol. s, p. 716.

40

Bush, Variorum (pp. 396-397) fully defines the problem.

41

Cp. Fletcher, Allegory, p. 107: "The price of a lack of mimetic naturalness is what the allegorist, like Metaphysical poet, must pay in order to force his reader into an analytic frame of mind. Ellipsis in speech has just this effect, in much the same way that any fragmentary utterance...takes on the appearance of a coded message needing to be deciphered....by having a surrealistic surface texture allegory immediately elicits an interpretive response from the reader. The silences in allegory mean as much as the filled-in spaces, because by bridging the silent gaps between oddly unrelated images we reach the sunken understructure of thought...."

42

Honigmann, p. 116.

43

For an interesting interpretation of the "progenie" as Christ (Apollo) and his Church (Diana), see T. E. Maresca, MLN, (1961), pp. 491-4. Parker, Milton, vol. s, p. 897, note 118, was first to notice Milton's glance at his twin treatises with the Latona allusion.

44

Honigmann, p. 117.

45

As quoted in Honigmann, p. 119.

46

Honigmann, p. 120.

47

"New Forcers" is an example of a tailed sonnet or sonetto caudato, widely practised in Italy for humorous-satirical purposes. Following the usual fourteen lines comes a half line and a couplet; any number of these tails may be appended.

48

Smart attempted to dispel Masson's view that the sonnet is a result of personal provocation by finding Milton's interest in I^Ndependence and Toleration to be motive enough. Yet even Smart is unwilling to grant that Milton's feelings--as well as the conventions of the satirical sonnet--justify the invective demonstrated in the poem. Cf. Smart, pp. 116-117.

49

Honigmann, pp. 195-198.

50

George, English Political Caricature, p. 28.

51

Honigmann, p. 197.

52

Honigmann, pp. 199-200.

53

Honigmann, p. 201.

54

Honigmann, p. 201.

55

See Honigmann, pp. '203-3.'

56

Bush (Variorum, p. 517) comments on the cogency of using Prynne to exemplify the political climate, the Prynne's history reflects the successive stages in the Puritan Revolution. See also, Ethyn W. Kirby, William Prynne (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1931; and W.M. Lamont, Marginal Prynne (London, 1953).

57

Bush, Variorum, p. 516.

58

Fletcher summarizes Spenser's view on revolution and rebellion in The Prophetic Moment, pp. 217-228

59

Giamatti, Play of Double Senses, p. 91.

60

Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment, p. 147. See also Georges Dumezil, Mitra-Varuna: Essai sur deux representations indo-europeenes de la souverainete (Paris, 1940); and E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (New York, 1965).

61

See Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment, pp. 276-294, for a political interpretation of Britomart's dream.

62

Aristotle, Politics, trans. Benajamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), V. iv, 13, p. 198.

63

John T. Shawcross, "Milton's Fairfax Sonnet," N&Q 2 (1955), pp. 195-6.

64

Ripa's representation is noted in Jane Aptekar's Icons of Justice: Iconography and Tjematic Imagery in Book V of "The Faerie Queene" (New York: Columbia U.P., 1969), p. 204.

65

We should note that Milton's use of the hydra to symbolize the Royalists--the established party--is antithetical to Spenser's and all other conventional uses. Christopher Hill devotes a chapter in his History of Continuity and Change in Seventeenth-Century England to "the Many-Headed Monster," a symbol which is applied, traditionally to popular rebels. Ramus, Florio, Sylvester, Sidney, Spenser, Drummond, and Browne so apply it. Moreover, Independents, such as John Webster and John Gauden, who opposed the more radical factions, used the image to describe the Levellers. Thus, when Milton describes the Royalists as the hydra, he is flagrantly turning the iconographical tables; i.e. he is rather boldly calling the kettle black. His usage, for his time, would reinvigorate the commonplace image, provoking new thoughts concerning the identity of the real rebels.

66

For the mythographic tradition of Hercules as illegal bandit, see Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment, pp. 146-156.

67

Honigmann, p. 81.

68

Quoted in Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment, p. 52.

69

Rosalie Colie, "My Echoing Song": Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1970), pp. 67-71

70

Andrew Marvell, An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwel's Return from Ireland, in The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, ed.=H.M. Margoliouth (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1927), vol. 1, pp. 87-90.

71

John C. Coolidge, "Marvell and Horace," MP, LXIII (1965), pp. 111-120. See Coolidge for the specific passages in Horace and Lucan alluded to be Marvell, as well as an article by A.J.N. Wilson, "Andrew Marvell: 'An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwel's Return from Ireland': The Thread of the Poem and Its Use of Classical Allusion," Critical Inquiry, II, 4 (1969), pp. 325-342

72

Honigmann, p. 149.

73

Aptekar, p. 45.

74

Honigmann, pp. 156-7.

75

Honigmann, p. 158.

76

Mark Pattison, The Sonnets of John Milton (New York: D. Appleton, 1883), pp. 58-60.

77

See Honigmann, pp. 164-66, for a sampling of newsletters very similar (in diction, imagery, and thought) to Sonnet XVIII. Cromwell's letters to heads of state contain some images which may have proved suggestive to Milton, such as the Vaudois women and children wandering over "the wildest mountains and through perpetual winter...through endless snows": moreover, each letter, after describing the horrible massacre, turns to exhortation, urging intercession of the particular government addressed, just as Milton's sonnet urges God's intervention. See The Complete Prose Works, vol. 5, II, pp. 684-691.

78

Detailed analyses of Sonnet XVIII are made in Kester Svendsen's "Milton's Sonnet on the Massacre in Piedmont," Shakespeare Assoc. Bulletin, 20 (1945) pp. 147-155; Taylor Stoehr's "Syntax and Poetic Form in Milton's Sonnets," ES 45 (1964), pp. 299-300; Dale Herron's "Poetic Vision in Two Sonnets of Milton," MiltonN 2 (1968), pp. 23-8.

79

The character of the early English Press is discussed by J.D. Symon, The Press and Its Story (London: Selley, Service & Co., 1914), pp. 1-17; Elbert N.S. Thompson, "War Journalism Three Hundred Years

Ago." PMLA 35 (1920), pp. 93-115; Joseph Frank, The Beginnings of the English Newspaper, 1620-1660 (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1961). Frank alone stresses the difficulties of the nascent journalism--repression by the censor, lack of technology, no common code or decorum--finding it not quite as inaccurate as is generally believed.

80

Honigman, p. 165, cites a fragment of The Weekly Post, No. 231, 12-19 June, to gloss Milton's "scattered bones": "There is scarce any thing now to be seen, but here a Head, and there a Body; here a Leg, and there an Arm; here a hand, and there a foot." The same paper may have provided the idea of echo: "But amongst so many furious assaults...did resound nothing else but the Cries, Lamentations, and fearful Screechings, made yet more pitiful by the multitude of those Echo's which are in those Mountains and Rocks...."

81

The biblical allusions in the first quatrain, as glossed by Bush (Variorum, p. 439) are as follows for "Avenge," Milton may have been thinking of Revelation 6: 9-10, "...the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held...cried with a loud voice saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?", and Luke 18: 17, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him...?"; for Milton's bones/Lie scatter'd" Bush cites Psalm 141: 7, "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth...."; "stocks and stones" echoes Jeremiah 2: 27; for "thy truth," see Psalm 86: 11, "teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth....": God's book is found in Revelation 20: 12, in Psalm 56: 8, in Exodus 32: 32-3, in Psalm 69: 28, in Phillipians 4: 3, and in Revelation 3: 5.

82

Mark Van Doren, Introduction to Poetry (New York, 1951), pp. 121-5.

83

Bush, Variorum, p. 440, cites Ants Oras for this observation.

Chapter III

Neoclassical and Romantic Allusive Styles

The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed, unless the mind of the reader co-operates with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener, He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key note and expects his hearers to make out the melody.

1

Thomas Babington Maccaulay

Macaulay's impression of Milton's peculiar resonance is one aspect of the sonnets' poetics that we shall be examining this chapter through a focus on the structural and thematic effects of allusion. To distinguish Milton's allusive characteristics clearly, we shall compare his style with Jonson's, a comparison which may seem at first unprofitable, since Jonson wrote prolifically in all the lyric kinds save the sonnet. Jonson, like all the new lyricists of the Seventeenth Century, sought an answer to Petrarchanism, but unlike, say, his contemporary Donne, he could not dissociate Petrarchanism from the sonnet. He chooses the epigram as an alternative form, a choice for which there was much precedent, given the widespread conflation of the sonnet and epigram during the Renaissance, though in a Neoclassicist like Jonson, we must assume not only complete awareness of the formal distinction between these poetic kinds, but of the "ethical" as well. For Jonson, ever sensitive to the modality of verse forms, selects with the epigram its ethos as well as its formal properties.

Though Jonson practised myriad poetic styles, it is the plain style in this large sense of tone, theme and structure found "in little" in his epigrams, but deployed as well in his epistles and satires, that seems to become the model for the Eighteenth-Century Augustans and their followers in the closed form Neoclassical tradition.³ As such an influence, then, Jonson's epigrams may be usefully compared with Milton's sonnets, the texts that we find giving rise to the open Romantic meditative style, the second brief lyric tradition that emerges in the Seventeenth Century.⁴

Jonson's and Milton's different conceptions of allusion seem to inform these two traditions of English verse as well. Jonson alludes from a "storehouse" of learning, and does so as though his readers all had keys. John Hollander has written of Jonson's creation of literary language out of classical building blocks which he uses as discourse, as speech, in poems that thus assume an ideally civilized community. In noticing Jonson's "stock pile" of knowledge overflowing in his poetry, Hollander points out Jonson's supposition of the public nature of his allusions, of their communicability.⁵ The effect of this allusive method is the recreation of a past civilization for present times, and of course it is precisely this that the Eighteenth-Century Augustans, in their adaptations or "imitations" of classical poets, would imbibe from Jonson--as they would the structure of his poetic line. Reuben A. Brower has shown how Pope and Dryden use allusions to Roman predecessors in order to raise and lower their contemporaries, but Brower gives too little credit to

Jonson when he established Dryden as the initiator of this allusive⁶ mode, a title which we shall see, really belongs to Jonson.

As we have noticed, Milton's allusive method, even in topical poetry, operates on an entirely different principle than this attributed to Jonson. Milton, frequently making a "subterranean" use of the past, forces us back into ourselves, into memory, so that our understanding of his allusion often requires the recovery as well as the revision of some knowledge from the past. Instead of Jonson's confident allusive flow outward, Milton drives us to introspection, to reflect, interpret, and re-interpret the texts of the distant and recent past comprising our collective "cultural" unconscious.

The difference between these two poetic methods is like the difference between the joke and the dream, a distinction it is now time to clarify. Freud made dreams the model of all the disguised, substitutive, and fictive expressions of human wishing, and so invites us, as Paul Ricoeur writes, "to look to dreams themselves for the various relations between desire and language." On this view, dreams are paradigmatic for all "symbolic" expressions, among these⁷ the analogues jokes, works of art, and religious "illusion." I began in Chapter I by analogizing the poetic technique of allusion in general with the second group of joke techniques (those requiring recognition), and theoretically, alluding is a means of symbolic expression that is more like joking than dreaming because of the former's intelligibility. As Freud writes, "the joke is the most social of all mental functions that aim at a yield of pleasure," whereas the dream

"must actually avoid being understood, for otherwise it would be
8
destroyed: it can exist only in masquerade." From what we have
said of Jonson's allusive communicability, its social surface,
it seems clear that his allusive technique is like the joke's wit,
while Milton's is closer to the dream's. I of course do not mean
that Milton adopts the dream-work's high degree of obscurity, but
only that his allusive procedure, in being more elusive and
suggestive--more overdetermined, in effect--than Jonson's overt
procedure, is therein more dreamlike.

Macaulay's observation that Milton invites his readers'
participation in creating the text precisely describes Milton's
technique, for his demanding allusiveness makes no private dream
but always one that is possible, though not easy, to share. Umberto
Eco calls this kind of art (which he also likens to the dream) "opera
in movimento," a species of "second degree openness" in which the
audience makes the work with its author. Eco finds the "work in motion"
to be a Twentieth-Century phenomenon, a product of the symbolist
movement. But for its origination in English lyric poetry we must look
back at least as far to Sepnser, and certainly, to Milton.

The Twelfth-Century term "jogleor" (menestrel and bouffon) and
the common epithet "poetic dreamer" should be our first clue that
there is some substance to the labels with which poets have ever been
derided. In what follows, I thus take seriously the traditional
name-calling; poets may indeed be, in an important sense, "jesters" and
"dreamers."

The historical precedents for the open "dream" lyric and the witty

"joke" type are found in the most ancient verse, inscribed epigrams. Before examining Jonson's and Milton's uses of thematic and structural allusion, then, I should like to discuss their largest allusive option-- their choice of generic traditions. This discussion is perhaps more necessary in Milton's case than in Jonson's, for the latter followed, in his epigram writing, dominant epigram mode, the Latin or Martialesque form. But placed side by side with the Latin type in the Greek Anthology is the Greek variety, the species of epigram that seems to stand as prototype for the sonnet as Milton practised it, as well as for the ¹⁰romantic practise in other epigram related forms. This Greek type has been characterized as muted, contemplative, often elegiac or commemorative, as opposed to the Latin variety, which is ¹⁰pointed, witty, and frequently satirical. Whether or not all the early Renaissance artists noticed them, the epigrams of the Greek Anthology were present as models for brief, un-sung verse. It seems likely that many of them did, for as Geoffrey Hartman has written, the different development of the Neoclassical and Romantic lyric styles seems to parallel the difference between the Greek and Latin epigram ¹¹styles as found in the Greek Anthology.

Literary historians, however, nearly always slight the Greek epigram as a stylistic influence, and with some reason, since it certainly was not as powerful a force on the early Humanists as the Latin type. Praz's comments in Seventeenth-Century Imagery are typical in this respect. He writes that in the Sixteenth-Century in Italy, the epigram of the Greek Anthology "modelled the sonnet in its own image by making the tercets end in a conceit, and by supplying

the sonneteers with a whole set of finicky and witty Alexandrian themes, it created the fashion for madrigals. Finally it broke up long poems into groups of witty pictures, of which a typical example is offered by Marino's stanzas, each with its epigrammatic point.¹²

This influence follows from the Latin epigram alone, and we may perhaps understand its power better by examining Renaissance theory concerning the epigram. The Latin type is most cogently described by Julius Ceasar Scaliger in his Poetices Libri Septem (1561). For though Scaliger postulates two classifications of epigram, those making a simple indication of the thing in question (the Greek type), and those deducting--according to the rules of rhetoric--something new and surprising from what has been written in their lines, he devotes nearly all his discussion to this second, deductive, or "composite" class.¹³ Scaliger is heavily indebted to Aristotle's Rhetoric in this preference, as well as in his view that brevity is the proprium, wit or subtlety (*arguita*), the soul of the epigram: moreover, the epigram is not a species of a larger poem (as some theorists believed) but a distinct genre, of which there are as many kinds as there are kinds of oratory: judicial deliberative, and demonstrative.

More concerned with the affective quality of the form, Robortello and Minturno, Scaliger's two rival theorists, rely on Aristotle's Poetics in their discussions of the epigram. Advocates of the Greek tradition, they define the epigram as a species of some larger form (comedy, tragedy, epic), thereby freeing it to treat any subject and use any

(appropriate) style. Minturno emphasizes the connection between epigram and epic (for both have a mixed manner of narration and eschew music and spectacle), and urges poets to emulate the
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Greek rather than the Latin mode.

For England, the predominance of Scaliger's poetics established the Latin epigram's ascendancy, and it seems clear that the borrowings of things Italian begun by Wyatt and Surrey are drawn from poetry in this tradition. For the early Elizabethan poet who was in the process of losing the musical component of his art, the "rhetoricized" or epigrammaticized Petrarchan sonnet afforded instruction on how to absorb a new structuring device--rhetoric--in brief lyric formats. In the case of the sonnet, of course, the English modification of the Italian rhyme scheme (encourage by the dearth of rhyme words in English) facilitated the adoption of rhetorical techniques by constructing a stanza analogous to the syllogism. The need for a new structuring principle may explain why the Elizabethans chose the "worst" Petrarchans to imitate: the most pointed, witty, conceited--in short--the most Latin-epigrammatic Petrarchans. For it is in these exaggerated manifestations that the Elizabethan poet most clearly saw exemplified new supports for his
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poetic line and stanza.

When the late Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century poets reject this Petrarchanism, it is not a categorical rejection, for though they discard the hackneyed themes and conventional conceits of their predecessors, they retain many of the epigrammatical techniques. The new lyricist, however, subordinates the old effect of these techniques--
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harmonious proportion--to a different end, originality.

But all this refers only to the Latin epigram tradition of theory and practise. Can we not see some importance for the English lyric in the Greek tradition, at least as it was absorbed by Milton and his Continental predecessors? Certainly Minturno's and Robortello's conception of the epigram as some heightened fragment of language--a kind of purple passage detached from a larger work--provides theoretical justification for a practical flexibility that we find in Milton. Moreover, the Greek epigrammatist in imitating comic, tragic, or epic decorum, would create an effect of inchoateness--in short, would compose an "open" form. (The poet following Scaliger, of course, would write a "closed" form, a rigorously strategical poem conforming to or patterned on the rules of rhetoric.)

An influential poet who seems to have transposed Minturno's and Robortello's epigram theory into lyric poetry is Tasso. And yet Tasso, always cited as Milton's predecessor for the heroic sonnets, has not been seen as a follower of Greek epigram tradition. Moreover, Milton's "free form" in the sonnets, always attributed to the Della Casian sublime dissolution of the sonnet structure, may also be seen as following in the Greek epigram tradition. Acknowledgment of this tradition, then, allows us to see Milton's sonnets, as well as Tasso's and Della Casa's, as members of a line of poetry just as ancient as the Latin tradition, and not merely as mannered responses to high Renaissance classicism.

The importance of epigram theory and practise for the English Neoclassical and Romantic lyric styles may be studied under the

rubric of closure, since understanding the way a poem ends entails understanding how it begins and "middles," and because for the epigram as well as for the brief modern lyric, build and resolution (what we may also call "strategy" or poetic "procedure") seem to be the most important feature for distinguishing styles. In her book on poetic closure, Barbara Smith isolates many devices of hard (Latin epigrammatic) and soft (Greek Epigrammatic) closure along with their expressive effects, and, in summarizing her discoveries, invokes the concept of "hyperdetermination" as it is used in Information Theory to explain how the hardest poetic closure is secured. Smith writes that a hyperdetermined utterance maintains a coincidence of thematic and structural significance so predictable that the information of any of its parts is expendable; that is, the information conveyed by each part is "redundant" because each part determines and is determined by, the others.¹⁷ Let us examine the example form Donne which Smith adduces to explain hyperdetermination:

Hero and Leader

Both rob'd of aire, we both lye in one ground,
Both whom one fire had burnt, one water drown'd.

Smith surmises that most readers could supply the epigram's last three words, were they omitted, because of the entire poem's high degree of redundancy. Contributing to this predictability is the semantic structure--heightened by syntactic parallelism--which may be represented by labeling the clauses and putting them into the ratio: $A:B :: C:D$ and $A:C :: B:D$, so that we can solve for D . Moreover, the conceit of the poem is self-contained, for the mention

of air, ground (earth), and fire, implies the fourth element, water (drownd). Finally, the title, which refers to the well known myth, in itself contains all information conveyed by the poem.

The degree of closure demonstrated in Donne's poem is "fatalistic," since every element in the poem is aware of its end, is teleologically determined. We should notice that hyperdetermination is frequently a function of allusion, specifically, of the self-echo variety. It is precisely a hyperdetermining self-echo that Jonson is calling for when he complained to Drummond that "A Great many Epigrams were ill, because they expressed in the end, what should have been understood, by what was said."¹⁸

Jonson's remark may be taken to stand for more than his views on epigram writing, for it implies an understanding of the work of art as an autonomous whole which is indicative of all his poetry in the plain style, as it is of the Neoclassical tradition in general. The poem as an autonomous world, a "well built" structure whose parts "answer" one another echoically, thus performing auto-exegesis via the technique of foregrounding.¹⁹ Milton, on the other hand, designs open forms, difficult to interpret because overdetermined with meaning.²⁰ The sonnets maintain multiple but not contradictory meanings, for (to use the terminology of Information theory) their plurivocality contributes to the information zone, which is not, however, invaded by elements that disrupt its orders they maintain, that is, "desirable uncertainty."²¹

It is difficult to resist speculation concerning the epistemological and world view implications that foster hyperdetermined and over-

determined poetic styles, however, dangerous such extrapolations may be. And so I offer with reservation Blake's anti-epigram as a Romantic's prejudiced expression of the kind of thinking lurking behind such stylistic choices:

The Question Answered
What is it all men in women do desire?
The lineaments of gratified desire.
What is it all women do in men desire?
The lineaments of gratified desire.²³

There is more at play here than the absence of wit being displayed as wit, for Blake is treating the form he debunks dead seriously, as a distorted mode of thinking. He thus gathers up for his radical utterance about human, as opposed to male/female, sexuality, all the traditional authority associated with epigrammatic tautology. The surprising conclusion, so out of key with the expectation that the formal properties have established, leaves the poem open-ended, the reader impelled to contemplate its implications. Blake seems to be criticizing Neoclassical tautology as a manifestation of the Neoclassicist's false confidence in his ability to classify experience according to established principles. Implied in this criticism is the Romantic artist's belief that his art must be spent on what Thomas McFarland has called (In describing Coleridge's thought and art) "reticulation," in making interconnections between experienced phenomena with a thrust toward creating a universal harmony.²³ Any poem informed by such a principle as reticulation must necessarily be open-ended, a structure deploying all its linguistic options toward an "organic" accretion and synthesis of significations.

We find no Romantic subversions in Jonson's oeuvre but rather the

Neoclassical total acceptance of epigrammatic modes of thinking and writing, artfully realized. In comparing Jonson and Milton, we would do well to keep in mind a hypothetical spectrum of closure, ranging from the most enclosed hyperdetermination to the most overdetermined, open variety. We shall not be surprised to find Jonson and Milton, initiators of two very different poetic styles, placed at opposite extremes of the spectrum. In what follows, then, I shall be using the term "overdetermined" in the sense (derived from Information Theory) of "desirable uncertainty," which is also, of course, Freud's use of "overdetermined," to convey the multiplicity of meanings with which each element of the dream is charged; "hyperdetermination," on the other hand, designates a high frequency of occurrence of elements, but these elements signify or help to insure the communication of a single meaning.

We can best begin our consideration of Jonson's and Milton's approached to epigram tradition by examining their use of titles. In his epigrams, Jonson's titling is always essential, being part of the poem's initial "set up" to which the poem proper stands as "resolution." In their announcing, advertising, function, Jonson's titles establish certain conditions, or constitute rules of his poetic "game," and it is thereby that the poems gain their autonomy--which is like that of a syllogism, whose major premise must be granted to insure the veracity of the conclusion.

Milton, however, suppresses all the titles that appear in the Cambridge Manuscript, save for three in the 1673 edition (XII "On the Same": XIII "To Mr. H. Lawes, on his Aires": XVIII "On the late Massacher in Piemont"), but even these are superfluous insofar as the

poems remain comprehensible without them. For Milton's sonnets, like the epigrams in the Greek tradition of "simple indication," have no rhetorical strategy to chart and therefore need no title to announce one. Milton seems to complicate this Greek simplicity by turning the art of indication inward, to chart a mind in meditation. His absorption of title really indicates his tendency to make metaphorical use out of what for a lesser poet might be narrow, confining occasionalism. As we saw perhaps most clearly in Sonnet VIII, it was not the occasion of a possible attack on London that the poem is primarily about, but the poet's private thoughts concerning the questions it raises. Milton excises "On his dore when ye Citty expected an assault" because, clearly, the sonnet is no notice for Captain or Colonel but one for himself and some "fit" (if few) readers of poetry.

The first line of many of Jonson's epigrams, however, contains an anaphoric reference to the title and so the poem cannot be understood without its title. In Epigram XI the title "On-Some-Thing, that Walkes Some-Where," is part of the epigrammatic "set up," but since it provokes inquiry about the subject at hand rather than providing information about the subject, it is a kind of "anti-title." It does establish the poem's format as riddle, though unlike the riddles of ordinary spoken discourse, Jonson's will not merely provide clues, leaving his audience to supply the proper answer; instead, Jonson divulges, with great wit, all the information needed to "fill in" the title.

At Court I met it, in clothes brave enough

To be a courtier; and lookes grave enough
To seeme a statesman: as I neere it came,
It made a great face, I ask'd the name.
A lord, it cryed, buried in flesh, and blood,
And such from whom let no man hope least good,
For I will doe none: and as little ill,
For I will dare none, Good Lord, walke dead still.²⁴

The syntactic parallelism of the first two and one half lines puts both hypotheses on the same level of probability, as it makes the moral value of the qualities noted (brave and grave enough) equally questionable. Jonson self-echoes syntactically for the purpose of glossing his half implicit meaning, an echoing which he performs semantically for the same reason in the pairs "clothes" and "looks," the latter word signifying "facial expressions" but harking back to "clothes" as well with the implication of "superficiality."

Jonson draws the contrast between superficial appearance and true, inner reality by having the lord speak his own condemnation with a voice "buried" in flesh and blood. Line six allows for the possibility that the Lord would do not least but more or most good, possibilities which are deflated in the qualification of the following clause. The next statement, because syntactically parallel with the preceding, comes as less of a surprise, and in reinforcing our understanding of the lord's character; provides closure--which is completed by Jonson's capping remark, a simultaneous exclamation to heaven and ironic address to the courtier (in which he is named). "Good Lord, walk dead still," read as a directive might be paraphrased, "keep up your harmless (if morally reprehensible) walking death of a life.

Jonson's poem concludes fulfilling its "contractual" relation

to its title, for it has provided specification for every undetermined element of the title, whose "on" promised that this information would be given. (We see that "To Some-Thing, etc." would induce no such expectation in the reader.) The entire epigram, inasmuch as Jonson foregrounds syntactically--each element answering another, and all reaching back to the title-- maintains an autonomy which is responsible for its authoritative tone: this pronouncement on aristocracy, because it satisfies all the requirements of the subject (as put in the title) must therefore be true.

Jonson's book of epigrams has recently been called a book of names, a "directory of good and evil,"²⁵ an estimation which seems particularly apt in view of the energy Jonson spends on defining characters--both of types and of actual friends and enemies. Definitions require nice distinctions, for example as in Epigram XV "On Court worme," which is a variation on the commonplace as stated in its first line:

All men are wormes: But this no man. In silke
'Twas brought to court first wrapt, and white as milke;
Where, afterwards, it grew a butter-flye:
Which was a cater-piller. So't will dye.

By beginning with a universal statement (and a summary one at that), the worst that has been said of humanity, Jonson reverses the usual technique of the aphorism, which would close with such a pronouncement. His wit lies in unfolding the implications of the courtier's particular brand of "worminess," which Jonson takes literally. Structuring his poem as a condensed biographical narrative, Jonson describes the life-cycle of the court species of worm (cater-pillar), which is again

an instance of satisfying the poem's title.

But we must look at the strategy of a longer poem if a comparison with Milton's sonnets is to be instructive. "On English Mounsier" has sixteen lines: in the first twelve and one half, six rhetorical questions are asked: the remaining lines answer the last of these. Even in a long poem, Jonson usually keeps to one rhetorical strategy. His insulting queries are moreover, on one topic, the fop's clothing, and the effect of his foregrounding--repeated questions on a repeated topic--is a progressive deepening of moral implication.

Thus the first question, "Would you believe, when you this Mounsier see, / That his whole body should speake french, not he?" (l. 1-2), implies superficial vanity and ignorance, while the explicit answer to the last, "Or is it some french statue?" (l. 12) vents all Jonson's disgust at the meaning of actions rather than appearances:

, No: 'T doth move,
 And stoupe, and cringe. O then, it needs must prove
 The new french-taylors motion, monthly made,
 Daily to turne in Pauls, and help the trade.

This is Jonson the dramatist at work, placing and posing his character, whose surface "motions" then reveal his inner reality.

The essence of epigrammatic "point" resides in the hyperdetermination displayed in the poems we have so far discussed, but for epigrammatic "wit," we want a combination of hyperdetermination and an unexpected element (though always, on second thought, an inevitable one) placed at the poem's close. ²⁶ This type of wit, which is that of the joke with its build toward a "punch line," is instanced in "To Fine Lady Would-bee," also written in a question-answer format. Jonson both asks and answers (damningly) the questions, all of which turn on the reasons why the

lady rejects motherhood (she would lose her figure, her place at court, etc.). In the last lines, however, Jonson drops the question-answer format, ending with a command to inscribe a macabre epigram upon the lady's womb:

Write, then on thy wombe,
Of the not borne yet buried, here's the tombe. (ll. 11-12)

This is the blackest of wit, for we realize that the unfulfilled potential implied by the title's "would-bee" refers not merely to vane social aspiration, but to aborted life. It is because of the logical relation that the surprising conclusion maintains with all the preceding information that there is no unsettling effect at the poem's end, but rather complete closure. Here as in the previously discussed epigrams, there is built a kind of formal-semantic web, a structure in which all elements answer to others within a closed system, as if echoing against one another.

The differences in strategy between an overdetermined and hyperdetermined poetics emerge clearly in a comparison between Milton's Sonnet XII to Henry Lawes and Jonson's fourteen line epigram to Edward Allen. Both poems, reduced to paraphrase, say the same thing: that is, each turns on the commonplace that man who serve poets professionally deserve to be immortalized through poetic praise. Both Lawes and Allen are, moreover, superior to their contemporaries in the practise of their arts, and in each poem both poet and the addressed are cast in similar relations to great figures of the past: Jonson is to Cicero as Allen is to Aesopus (tragic actor) and Roscius (comic actor); Milton is to Dante as Lawes is to Casella.

The poetic strategies, however, render two quite different effects . Jonson, bent on explaining why Allen merits praise, needs a rhetorical procedure, while Milton needs none, as he makes no attempt to convince but simply asserts praise. This simple assertion, considering that it is untrue (Lawes was not the first to practise or teach declamatory setting in England) warns us that Lawes is being used symbolically, to represent the idea of subordinating music to poetry as it emerged in the Seventeenth-Century declamatory style.²⁷

Jonson disposes his fourteen lines as an argument, phrasing his first twelve lines in an "if-then" syntactical pattern which raises and answers the poem's central--indeed only--question:

If Rome so great, and in her wisest age,
 Fear'd not to boast the glories of her stage,
 As skilfull Roscius, and grave Aesope, men,
 Yet crown'd with honors, as with riches, then;
 Who had no lesse a trumpet of their name,
 Then Cicero, whose every breath was fame:
 How can so great example dye in mee,
 That, Allen, I should pause to publish thee?
 Who both their graces in thy selfe hast more
 Out-stript, then they did all that went before:
 And present worth in all dost so contract,
 As others speake, but onely thou dost act.

Jonson's one great sentence, unlike Milton's heroically suspended ones, which call attention to themselves through syntactic irregularity, appears to be several short ones because Jonson isolates dependent and relative clauses in unenjambéd couplets, with the result that they are easily read as self contained units (ll. 5-6; 7-8; 11-12).

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It is not quite true that the concluding couplet, as Trimpí writes, could stand alone, though it is redundant with regard to the preceding lines:

Weare this renowne. "Tis just, that who did give
So many Poets life, by one should live."

The couplet would only be autonomous if we relinquished the desire to know the specific quality of the "renown" (an ambiguous term as we saw in Milton's Sonnet VIII), as well as who it was who gave poets' life, and in what capacity. Each of these questions is answered in the body of the poem in the careful parallel Jonson draw between himself and Allen and the great Romans. Yet technically the conferring of praise has not been performed since the parallel has been phrased hypothetically. All that remains, then, for perfect closure is the poet's response to his rhetorical question--the bestowal of praise which the couplet performs.

Milton, though without using a rhetorical strategy, also supplies reasons for his commendation; as his manuscript changes attest, he chose terms with more specific relevance to the music/word problem
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for his final version of the poem. But unlike Jonson's first sentence, Milton's (comprising the first six lines of the sonnet) exhibits no syntactic pattern requiring an "answer" (for example, "if-then"; question-response) but is a statement complicated only by a relative clause:

Harry whose tuneful and well measur'd Song
First taught our English Musick how to span
Words with just note and accent, not to scan
With Midas Ears, committing short and long;
Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng,
With praise enough for Envy to look wan;

That Milton is not concerned with forming a consistent justification for his praise is apparent in his final excision of the Cambridge Manuscript's line six: "And gives thee praise above the pipe of Pan."

This allusion to Pan harks back to Midas of line four, since Apollo turned Midas' ears into donkey ears in punishment for the King's preference of Pan's music. Continuance of the allusion is unnecessary because the Ovidian myth is completely appropriate to Milton's context. Midas' misjudgment, we remember, concerned his choice of Pan's irrational music over Apollo's made on the lyre, which came to be the symbol of rational music because, being played with the hands, it left the musician free to sing words to his music.

Unlike Jonson (who also chose an appropriate allusion), Milton does not hammer out the parallels in his allusive analogy but prefers rather to let the reader bridge the allusive gap. He does this again in line ten when he attributes to Lawes the title "Priest of Phoebus Quire." This does not refer directly to the Midas-Apollo myth because, as Ovid relates it, Apollo plays without singing, either his own or a quire's.³⁰ It is only in later versions of the myth that the latent significance is made explicit and Apollo is represented with singing. Milton, then, is using the myth diachronically, making us remember not only the original story as found in Ovid, but its meanings accreted through time.

But the major difference between Milton's and Jonson's poetic strategies emerges most clearly in Milton's last tercet:

Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
Then his C-sella, whom he woo'd to sing
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.

As we saw, Jonson's first twelve lines were devoted to establishing the parallel between himself and Cicero, between Allen and the

Roman actors: which done, he conferred his praise explicitly in the final couplet. This procedure produces perfect closure, all elements of the poem participating in the "if-then-therefore" logical structure. There is no appended aside, as we find in Milton, who refers to his and Lawes' parallels only in these last lines. Rather than closing the sonnet, the tercet opens it back into "literary time" with a complex and complicated literary allusion of the kind for which Milton is most famous.

For we are made to think first of Dante's moving meeting with Casella in Purgatory when he--almost immediately upon recognizing his friend--requests a song:

E io: 'Se nuova legge non ti toglie
memoria of uso all'amoroso canto
che mi solia quetar tutte mie voglie,
di cio ti piaccia consolare alquanto
l'anima mia, che, con la mia persona
venendo qui, e affannata tanto!

(And I: 'If a new law does not take from thee memory
or practise of the songs of love which used to quiet
all my longings, may it please thee to refresh my soul
with them for a while, which is so spent coming here
with my body.) ³¹

With this allusion Milton captures, for himself and Lawes, some of the beauty and pathos of the human and artistic friendship as it is set--jewel-like--in one of the greatest poems of Western civilization. But we are not allowed to stop with only this effect, for the allusion is complex and opens into a second text, the song which Casella sings, Dante's own early poem "Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona." This poem is not merely a love song, but as Dante explains it in the Convito, a praise of the lady Philosophy written during the time of his intense scholastic studies. ³² Milton is using Dante's lyric, then, to signify

the power of language, specifically poetic language, to redeem man. And so Milton's allusion to the first great poet whose verse--written to be read--was set to music implicitly assigns values to poet and musician. For as recovering the context of the allusion makes clear, Dante, like Milton, is celebrating first and foremost the power of the written poetic text, the rational force of language.

This judgment has been explicit throughout the sonnet since Milton is praising Lawes for subordinating music to text. But in saying it again, with a final allusion whose context unfolds yet two other texts, each freighted with significance concerning the historical development of vernacular poetry, Milton demonstrates his peculiar allusive genius. What better way to end a poem that celebrates the power of the poetic word to endure beyond any given "setting" than to extract poetry from its original context in an allusion that not only preserves its original meaning, but illuminates its very widest implications?

As was mentioned below, we have come to expect a highly individuated speaker and vivid, concrete details of subject matter from the new or modern lyric. Now Milton, in his sonnets, quite obviously meets these expectations, as does Jonson in his plain style poems, though to a less extent than Milton. Both Jonson and Milton could suppress the traits of new lyricism in order to attain classical generality. And it is worth pausing in our contrast of their styles to illustrate this point of similarity.

Among the sonnets, Milton is nowhere more linguistically pure and austere than in Sonnet XIV, "On the religious memory of Mrs.

Catherine Thomason," addressed to his friend, wife of the famous collector of political tracts, George Thomason:

When Faith and Love which parted from thee never,
Had ripen'd thy just soul to dwell with God,
Meekly thou didst resign this earthly load
Of Death, call'd Life; which us from Life doth sever.
Thy Works and Alms and all thy good Endeavour
Staid not behind, nor in the grave were trod;
But as Faith pointed with her golden rod,
Follow'd thee up to joy and bliss for ever.
Love led them on, and Faith who knew them best
Thy hand-maids, clad them o're with purple beams
And azure wings, that up they flew so drest,
And spake the truth of thee in glorious Theams
Before the Judge, who thenceforth bid thee rest
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams.

Brisman has commented on the simplicity and "choiceness," on the complete appropriateness of this poem, characteristics which become especially apparent after examining Milton's manuscript changes.

The poem first read:

When Faith & Love, that parted from thee never,
Had rip'n'd thy just soul to dwell with God,
Meekly thou didst resigne this earthly clod
Of Flesh and Sin which man from heaven doth sever.

Brisman rightly ascribes Milton's change of "clod" to "load," and "flesh and sin" to "death call'd life" to his understanding that the original choices overlaid a "dark impasto of original sin" in a poem meant to be a "comfortable evocation of heavenly delight." In effect Milton exchanges the more vivid and concrete for a less defined generality. As another student of the poem noticed, Milton's personifications represent the universal figures of a Medieval morality play.

The sonnet shares a similar style with Jonson's "Epitaph on S.P.," which we may regard, following Trimpi, as a typical example of the

fifteen epitaphs Jonson wrote.

Weepe with me all you that read
 This little storie:
 And know, for whom a teare you shed,
 Death's selfe is sorry.
 'Twas a child, that so did thrive
 In grace, and feature,
 As Heaven and Nature seem'd to strive
 Which own'd the creature.
 Yeares he numbred scarce thirteene
 When Fates turn'd cruell,
 Yet three fill'd Zodiackes had he beene
 The stages jewell:
 And did act (what now we mone)
 Old men so duely
 As, sooth, the Parcae thought him one,
 He plai'd so truely.
 So, by error, to his fate
 They all consented;
 But viewing him since (alas, too late)
 They have repented.
 And have sought (to give new birth)
 In bathes to steepe him;
 But, being so much too good for earth,
 Heaven vowes to keepe him.

In avoiding allusive complexity and reducing the built-in ambiguity of language (Jonson's usual Neoclassical precise diction is deployed here), both poems control and direct their readers' response on a plane of generality. We notice that though Jonson promises to tell us "for whom" we weep, he really renders no details concerning S.P. other than his age and profession. And, as the conceit unfolds, the child's role as actor takes on metaphorical significance, coming to stand for all men who "play on the stage of life." Moreover, like Milton's, Jonson's mythological figures, Heaven, Nature, Fates, and Death, in being embodiments of complex ideas, help Jonson generalize his meaning.

But Jonson differs here from Milton in Sonnet XIV in his analytical use of mythology. By this I mean that Jonson is not content to bring in his allegorical figures, like the masque's

machinery, in order simply to illustrate abstractions; rather, his mythographic technique is tendentious in being bent at revealing the genuine significance of his poem. Thus Jonson invents the pathetic little story of S.P. to involve us emotionally, and as we are wishing with the Parcae, to resurrect life in S.P., Jonson shifts "mythological gears" in the concluding couplet and shocks us into remembering that it is of course--in Christian terms--better to attain heaven sooner than later.

This clever counterpoint of mythologies, then, is used to reveal the general import of a particular death. In our examination of Milton's poetics so far, we have seen how he attains this analytic, tendentious effect through the use of allusion. In Sonnet XIV, however, Milton does not allude (aside from the obvious biblical language he echoes) and he uses myth here not analytically but synthetically, to structure his poem with the form and meaning of an emblem. In a different way than Jonson's, he de-occasionalizes his literal impetus for writing, since Sonnet XIV--like Jonson's epitaph--might be written to the memory of any Christian.

This sonnet represents an extreme case of Milton's ability to subude his personal, poetic voice. He usually employs this ability (what might be called his "classicism" for convenience) as a technique within poems whose diction, imagery, and allusions he raises and lowers to achieve ironic and pathetic effects of elevation and deflation. Satan's soliloquies in Paradise Lost come to mind as examples of stylistic mixture, in this case, of sublimnity undermined. But Paradise Lost contains another instance of unadulterated classicism,

Book III, which has been criticized precisely for its consistently abstract language, and which may indeed have been the impetus for Eliot's infamous remark that "Milton may be said never to have seen anything." This is not the place to rectify the Modernist prejudice for poetic concreteness which "blinded" Eliot and others to the alternative beauty of Milton's style. This correction has been made in the case of Book III, moreover, by Jackson Cope, who pointed out the exquisite aural figures of sound created by Milton in order to depict, with perfect appropriateness, the unseeable.³⁶ Here, it is enough merely to recall the debate so that we may also see, with Brisman, the peculiar beauty of the critically ignored Sonnet XIV, a poem--if nearly anonymous--yet of perfect tact.

Thus far we have not discussed closure within the poetic line--what prosodists call caesura--and how it may affect poetic strategy. Milton's often spectacular dispensing of closure at line terminus has received much critical attention,³⁷ but aside from some suggestive remarks by Stoehr, Brisman, and Prince (all to be discussed below), only Wesley Trimpi has ventured to generalize about the stylistic effects of Milton's use of caesura. Though Trimpi's findings which involve the attribution of Milton's grand style to Jonson's plain one, seem completely off the mark, his error may prove instructive.

Trimpi compares Jonson's "To Heaven" with Paradise Lost, III. ll. 40-55, according to number and placement of caesurae. He finds frequent use and nonsystematic placement of caesura in both poets and concludes that Milton's blank verse owes its organizing principle to Jonson: "If one holds a magnifying glass, so to speak, over Jonson's lines and imagines the number of syllables greatly increased between

commas, the run-overs correspondingly more frequent and the periods greatly lengthened, one will see the essential structure of Miltonic
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blank verse.

When we consider that it is precisely in these factors Trimpi would have us "imagine" for Jonson that Milton's grand style is manifested, Milton's debt to Jonson appears quite trivial. Trimpi's attribution, which goes against our intuitions as readers, is based on frequency and placement--that is, on the quantification of these factors. But we know that quantification in stylistics is not enough, and it is significant that Trimpi does not look closely at the uses of each poet's pauses, but applies a general ad hoc effect to both: colloquialism. Of course students of Milton's (and other poets') pauses ascribe the opposite effect to frequent and nonsystematic caesura: sublimnity. Thus, the statement that Milton's caesural patternings raise or lower his style as they variously approach or depart from ordinary syntactical patterns is valid only in certain instances and is certainly not adequate as a characterization of style.

For just as Milton deploys pauses at line terminus by playing off our syntactic expectations of English phrase structure for special effects, so too, does he use pauses within the line; that is. Milton pauses not merely to convey a plain style (when the pause coincides with our syntactic expectation) or a grand one (when the pause violates this expectation but satisfies the idiom of Latin), but frequently uses pause, uses silence, as a structural means of
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signification, as a foregrounding device.

This use of caesura is markedly different from Jonson's characteristic use, as we shall see by examining the passages adduced by Trimpi. Before doing so, however, we should note that any discussion of caesura must be based on the understanding that this phenomenon is extra-metrical in English verse; it is not required by the abstract pattern but occurs (consciously or accidentally) because of the existence of junctures in the syntactical patterns of speech. The poet wishing either to heighten or diminish pause can manipulate these speech patterns with relation to the accentual-syllabic metrical given of his line, just as he may manipulate English phrase stress patterns with relation to this metrical given to gain rhythmical effects.

Milton's favorite caesural devices are serialization (especially with the conjunction "or"), the Italian collocation Adjective-Noun-Adjective, and the likewise Italian techniques of balance and parallelism: pairing of adjectives, substantives, verbs, and entire phrases and clauses.⁴⁰ It is significant that Milton took most of these devices from the Italian sonneteers who developed them as a kind of poetic syntax in order to gain expressive effects by playing this artificial syntax against normal word order in speech. The passage Trimpi selects to exemplify Milton's debt to Jonson is especially redolent with these devices:

Thus with the Year

Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's Rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men

Cut off, and for the Book of Knowledge fair
Presented with a Universal blanc
Of Nature's works to me expung'd and ras'd,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
So much the rather thou Celestial Light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight. (III, ll. 40-55)

The passage divides into two descriptive series, one coordinated with "or," the second with "and," followed by an exhortation to God. In speech as in verse, serialization imposes a pause or what structural linguists call "weak open juncture."⁴¹ So Milton forces us to pause over each loss of blindness and thereby insures our attending to them. Leslie Brisman has commented on the alienating effect of this series, the lengthy enumeration of Milton's absences, being present to us, created "spaces," gaps between poet and reader.⁴²

But Milton's "or" here, which connects an array of natural phenomena from the seasonal to the most personal, comes to stand for the common lot of all men and serves as a device that allies us to the blind poet's plight. For both these absences and the list of "presences" following it--all phenomena from the Book of Nature, man's sources of knowledge on earth--are transcended by the final plea for a privileged inner light or source of knowledge far superior, so far superior, in fact, that the "seeing" reader is made to appreciate the inferiority of his fallen option of attaining knowledge and is forced to accept the "blindness" of sight as opposed to insight.

This is not to imply that Milton's "inclusive" or, as it surveys with nostalgia his losses, does not create genuine pathos, especially at the final mention "or human face divine." But this instance of

the Italianate adjective-noun-adjective pattern, which insures hard closure at line terminus, also, in giving positional emphasis to "divine," reminds us that this loss of human face is analogous to all men's loss of God's presence and our consequent sight "through a glass darkly." The mention of "face," and divine" in a passage about sight and knowledge cannot help but evoke Corinthians, and is an example of the most subtle type of Miltonic allusion. The loss, then, when we think of Paul's words, becomes all inclusive, not alienating but implicating: we must all wait for that redeemed time when we shall know the Divine "face to face."

In another way we are made to experience the poet's existence as he enumerates the qualities of blindness. These he joins with "and," and phrases repeatedly in passive constructions in which the verb occurs last and as the contre-reject of each line (ll. 46-50). Thus additional weight is added to the pause of the series, and we are made to grope through each line, sorting the elements belonging to each verb. There is a suggestion of blindness created by our doubt concerning the direction in which words are to be read grammatically.

If wrong about Milton, Trimpi does accurately describe the effect of caesura, in Jonson, the recreation of idiomatic speech patterns in verse.⁴³ In "To Heaven" this natural idiom contributes to a tonal sincerity of a poetic prayer to God that seeks to persuade him of precisely this quality of honest sincerity.

Unlike Milton's "or" which rolled over creation until it seemed to lose its usual logical function in grammar and become instead a phonic equivalent of lament (Oh!), Jonson's conjunctions are consistently deployed logically, to make fine distinctions or join

similar grammatical elements. We see this concern for precision in Jonson's first line, in which he addresses God as "Good and Great," this being no haphazard collocation but a singling out of two qualities--merit and power--which the remainder of the poem explores.

Instead of heightening the natural pause of serializing, by repeating the connecting conjunction, Jonson saves his "ands" for the last term in his series: "First, midst, and last, converted one, and three;/ My faith, my hope, my love: and in this state,/ My judge, my witness, and my advocate." (ll. 10-12). The rapid, sumerial quality of the lists conveys the legitimacy of the qualities ascribed: these are God's deserved roles and no hesitation is required to express them. This same logical use of "or" is instanced in the poem's last four lines, where Jonson wants to explain the exact nature of his grief;

Yet dare i not complaine, or wish for death
With holy Paul, lest it be thought the breath
Of discontent; or that these prayers bee
For weariness of life, not love of thee.

These last lines perfectly cap a poem that restlessly sought to understand God's nature as it effects the speaker's life on earth. There is a kind of urgency in Jonson's "or" here, as though he had to specify again the reasons for his prayer in case that all the preceding, though reasoned discourse, was yet not clear enough.

Another student of Milton's pauses, Taylor Stoehr, analyzes the interplay between syntax and poetic form in some of the sonnets in order to substantiate the commonly felt intuitions concerning their expressive effects. Applying terminology from structural linguistics to describe Milton's syntactic patterns, he determines their degree of conformity with ordinary speech patterns, assigning qualities such

as anxiety, despair, and energy to irregular patterns, and resolution,⁴⁴ determination, and confidence to regular schemes. Because he keeps close to Milton's texts and intentions, most of Stoehr's analyses are quite successful; yet in discussing Sonnet XIX to Cromwell, Stoehr obscures both the grammatical structure and meaning of the poem, probably because he ignores its historical context.

Stoehr reads the poem as a single request sentence, the resolution of the initial apostrophe occurring in the final couplet. Because the first twelve lines of the sonnet depend upon the couplet, the sonnet maintains "Structural anxiety," reflected in an ambiguous use of "yet" in the ninth line, which introduces new "secondary" material⁴⁵ and thereby postpones the "major" structure of predication.

Stoehr is surely right in his description of the "processional" effect of the octave's syntactic suspension. We noticed in Chapter II that the octave contained three image sets, the masque-like emergence of Cromwell with Faith and Fortitude through a cloud, his rearing of God's trophy, and the Scottish battle fields' reflection of his triumphs. As in the masque, the shifts in imagery dazzle the reader, forcing him to acquire new perspectives. They also convey motion while the syntax is suspended, co-occurrence of this imagistic propulsion and syntactic hesitation causing a kind of frozen tension.

We must notice, however, that the sonnet is not one sentence but four. The "ambiguous" yet much remains/ To conquer still;" completes the first sentence, and instances Milton's variation of the poetic "envelope," on which he isolates and emphasizes a phrase by echoing its first word in its last. We shall be discussing how he "enveloped"

the important anagorisis in Sonnet X, "yet by you Madam/ Methinks I see him living yet." He does so in Sonnet XIX by punning on "yet" with "still."

Only in this sense, in the initial possibility that "yet" may be being used adverbally to mean "still" is it ambiguous. For as a coordinator, meaning "nevertheless," it very logically joins the octave with the sestet. The pause is meant to be strong here. After all the amplified praise of Cromwell's material success--indeed because of it--we are stopped by the information that there are prospective battles. This information is not secondary in importance but primary, for the poem's intention (historically) is not to praise but to urge Cromwell to act on domestic matters, a purpose which becomes clearer when we understand the sonnet to be four sentences and not one.

For Milton, by prolonging the first sentence until line ten, sets up a norm of extended predication which he then violates by composing three sentences within four and onehalf lines. The first two predications are emphasized because of their violation of the established norm, while the last, being expressed in a couplet (the only concluding couplet among all the sonnets), is especially prominent. Milton here gathers the traditional tautological force of the couplet for his sonnet, which technically is not tautological but contains new information in the form of a request. Thus Milton attains the credibility associated with the Elizabethan sonnet's authoritative, inevitable couplet (because hyperdetermined in the preceding twelve lines) for his final words, without confining himself to a syllogistic thought pattern.

If Stoehr's prosodic analyses tend to over-emphasize Milton's magnificent onrushings, while Trimpi's in his attempt to locate Milton's stylistic roots in Jonson's plain style, err in the opposite direction, by attributing arbitrary qualities to Milton's prosodic pauses, F.T. Prince's study of Milton's ebb and flow, is eminently more inclusive and helpful. Clearly Prince discovered the immediate stylistic origins of both build and closure in Milton's sonnets when he elucidated Milton's debt to Della Casa's handling of the Petrarchan sonnet format. This Sixteenth-Century Italian's conception of the sonnet's duplex structure was realized variously in semantic or grammatical pairings between quatrain and quatrain, sestet and sestet, octave and sestet, and also between sentences, lines, phrases, or parts of speech. Any of these pairings might be actualized to provide some underlying solidity in a sonnet which also realized de-structuring devices such as enjambment over the format divisions, or Latinate syntactical patterns. These two sets of structuring and de-structuring devices are the means, respectively, of the ebb and flow that characterize Milton's poetic strategy. 46

And yet even Prince, despite his sensitive analyses of Milton's prosody, fails to interpret its expressive effects with the same acuity. For he finds that the parallelism, duplex structure, and balanced or antithetic diction that Milton learned from Della Casa leads to "a predominance of the number of words used over the number of things said." According to Prince, "neither Milton nor his Italian exemplars could have been unaware of this inherent tendency to pleonasm, nor of its dangers. It was an accepted factor in this type of poetry, and the poet's skill was to be manifested rather in the way in which he

could play with it and disguise it than in any attempt to eliminate⁴⁷ it."

To elucidate this pleonasm, Prince urges the reader to "normalize the word order of the sonnets"; then, just as in Della Casa's poems, "the charm of the poem evaporates in a series of flat or pompous statements."⁴⁸ To "normalize" the word order of a poem is to rob it of its prosodic features, in the case of the sonnet: meter, rhyme, rhythm, as well as syntactic irregularity. What is left, figurative language, is of course common to all uses of language. In effect, then, Prince's distinction between form and content is illegitimate critical procedure, insofar as it denatures the poem in question only to notice afterwards how unpoetical it is. Of course, a poet's signifying powers often reside in extra-lexical elements, in the prosodic and linguistic combinations and interplay afforded by poetic license.

To exemplify Milton's pleonasm, Prince adduces Sonnet IX, a poem which he notes is nearly always disparaged, and which he "admires" because of its ingenuous artifice--a critical slight as well if the poem is taken seriously. On first glance we notice that the sonnet is a tissue of biblical allusions, on a second, that these allusions are used with no alteration of their meaning in their original context. Milton, rather than asking for our interpretation (his usual allusive demand), is "meaning" through the "spectacle" of the greatest book straight-forwardly, by encoding his message in its language. This allusive technique helps express the sonnet's intention, which is supportive--to console and urge a lady friend to sustain Christian hope by creating an authoritative context for the poet's belief in

her ability. He provides her with models with which she may both compare and evaluate herself, and her very recognition of the biblical allusions, I might add, would attest to her wisdom.

Milton's choice for the poem's allusive frame, the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (a story concerned with proper entry), raises the poem above its occasion, which, we gather from the poem itself, involves a young lady rebuked for some over-nicesness of manner. Thus, like Sonnet I, Sonnet IX is a liminal poem, with the more mature Milton here encouraging another to move into the "temple" from the threshold state of uncertainty.

Far from being mere artifice, the main stylistic device Milton uses to generalize the significance of the occasion, the Italianate pairings, are integrally connected with the poem's meaning in the largest sense. The pairings themselves express the nature of the "surmise," as the term is used by Geoffrey Hartman in his opening essay of Wordsworth's Poetry. We shall be discussing this essay more fully in the following chapter; here it is sufficient to mention Hartman's idea of the surmise, the quality of meditative speculation that he finds first exemplified in Lycidas' flower digression:

It might be useful to consider the Romantic lyric as a development of the surmise. We have no proper definition, formal or historical, of this kind of lyric, which disconcertingly turns all terms descriptive of mode into terms descriptive of mood. When we say, for example, that "The Solitary Reaper" is a blend of idyll and elegy we refer more to states of mind expressed by it than to formal genres. Though the surmise is not a genre originally, it is a specific rhetorical form whose rise and modifications one can trace and which significantly becomes a genre in the Romantic period.⁴⁹

Hartman goes on to discuss doublings in "The Solitary Reaper," and

finds them (in contradistinction to blunt determinateness) to be the hallmark of the poetry of surmise: "Stop here or gently pass," reaping and singing, "cuts and binds"; the effect of such doublings is "fluidifying," is an effect of expansion.⁵⁰

So too, in Sonnet IX, the Italianate pairs of adjectives, phrases, and clauses come to stand for the idea of surmise itself. The meditative space existing between pairs signifies the mental choosing, that prerequisite, so important for Milton, for the performance of any human action. As Milton encourages the lady through describing her earthly progress toward God (Divine Truth), he indicates the problematics of the journey in the pauses created by the pairings, as well as in the tortuous syntax with which they are expressed.

The octave of the sonnet is one extended sentence, completely comprised of pairings from the clausal to the lexical level:

Lady that in the prime of earliest youth,
Wisely hast shun'd the broad way and the green,
And with those few art eminently seen,
That labour up the Hill of heav'nly Truth,
The better part with Mary, and with Ruth,
Chosen thou hast, and they that overween,
And at thy growing vertues fret their spleen,
No anger find in thee, but pity and ruth.

The first quatrain contains a complex relative clause whose elements are joined by "and" (1.3). The placement of the conjunction echoes the second quatrain's structure which also has a verse headed by "and" (1.7), as well as echoing the adjectival pairs at line termini: broad way and the green; with Mary and with Ruth; pity and ruth. Such repeated coordination creates the sense of accumulation, a build-up of time emerging from syntactical space.

As was mentioned, the allegorical frame of the sonnet, the lady's journey toward "entry," takes the form a "journey" through the Bible; that is, not only the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, but all Milton's allusions to the Bible, refer to right choosing and its reward, proper entry. The first allusion, contained in the first pairing, echoes Matthew 7: 13-14, "broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction," but "narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The "green" way may be an allusion to Daniel's Delia, 6, in which he writes that his love's feet, "doe treade greene pathes of youth and love."⁵¹ More likely, Milton alludes to the pastoral world of literary romance in general, and to the often frivolous manners displayed therein.

Each member of the second pair, Mary and Ruth, introduces a second member and the story of their choices. Mary (Luke 5: 42), unlike her sister Martha, chooses to sit and listen to the Lord rather than busy herself with mundane matters; Ruth decides to travel with Naomi, to devote herself, unlike Orpah, to the service of Israel and its God. We see that, far from being pleonastic, the allusive pairings both associate the lady with two righteous women and evoke the opposite women and their inferior choices. Milton, ever cognisant of good and evil dwelling together, cannot think of virtue without thinking of choice and the time--the period of surmise--that is needed to make choices.

The next pair, "pity and ruth," is a biblical allusion only insofar as it reflects two commonly espoused virtues of the New Testament; and "ruth " of course is an echo of the preceding

line's proper name. This combination of pity and ruth Douglas Bush, citing Todd, also finds in Spenser, but he fails to draw any significance from the echo.⁵² It may be, however, that Milton is pointing to another lady whose true nature is improperly regarded, since the context of Spenser's mention of pity and ruth concerns the misdirected admiration that the "faunes and satyres" display for Una:

The doubtfull Damzell dare not yet commit
Her single person to their barbarous truth,
But still twixt feare and hope amaxd does sit,
Late learned what harme to hastie trust ensu'th,
They in compassion of her tender youth,
And wonder of her beautie soveraine,
Are wonne with pittie and unwonted ruth,
And all prostrate upon the lowly plaine,
Do kiss her feete, and fawne on her with count'nance
faine. (.I. vi, 12)

The wood creatures believe Una to be divine, and worship her. Thus, though they express an opposite judgment from the lady's accusers, they share with them a misjudgment, while Una represents the right reaction to opinion--cautious pausing and reliance upon her own abilities of estimation.

In the sestet Milton continues pairing:

Thy care is fixt, and zealously attends
To fill thy odorous Lamp with deeds of light,
And Hope that reaps not shame. Therefore be sure
Thou, when the Bridgroom with his feastfull friends
Passes to bliss at the mid hour of night,
Hast gain'd thy entrance, Virgin wise and pure.

Her care is "fixt" and "attends" (stasis and motion); it fills her lamp with "deeds of light and Hope." This pair echoes two biblical texts (John 3: 19-21, and Romand 5: 3-5), joining them for no complicated reason but with a kind of allusive purity, as though the speaker's idiom were naturally that of the Bible. The Parable

of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 36: 1,ff.) is expressed in the same allusive manner, as a natural parallel, and it too resonates with echoes of other biblical texts, for example John 10: 9, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

The last line of the syntactically twisted sestet brings the lady's journey to an end. Milton concludes with the pair, "Virgin wise and pure," a doublet which, like all the others, invites speculation. What is the relation between these two qualities? How can one be wise if pure, if "pure" means untested? Apparently the "mysterious" occasion of criticism prompting this sonnet, which so intrigues its commentators, involves behavior similar to that enacted in Comus (whose lady has also been called "prissy by Twentieth-Century readers). Both ladies are pure because they are tested and choose rightly. In the masque, the lady is brought home after her successful debate with possibilities; in Sonnet IX, Milton also brings his lady across the threshold of uncertainty by assuring her that she has thought and acted wisely--and he does so by poetically recreating the mind's operation of surmise, the meditative pauses upon which the right choices are always contingent.

Sonnet XXII is also a good example of the lyrical surmise achieved through skillful caesural patternings and pairings:

Cyriak, this three years day these eys, though clear
To outward view, of blemish or of spot;
Bereft of light thir seeing have forgot,
Nor to thir idle orbs doth sight appear
Of Sun or Moon or Starre throughout the year,
Or man or woman. Yet I argue not
Against heavens hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. (ll. 1-9)

The first line begins with a swiftness (fostered by its initial dactyl and repeated dental fricatives) that seems to belie any meditative tone, but the pace is checked by syntactical suspension of the clause "these eys...thir seeing have forgot." Milton breaks down the Petrarchan quatrain in exchange for a semantic grouping of three here because he wants to heighten the rhyme words of the second and third lines (a sound effect that would be diminished if the sense of these lines were to unfold in the fourth). The pairing "of blemish or of spot" is thus associated with forgot." Now, that one's eyes have "forgotten" how to see may be a rather strange periphrasis for blindness, but not when read in conjunction with the rhymed and therefore emphasized word in the doublet "blemish and spot." For then a subliminal connection emerges between original sin (often referred to as our blemish or spot) and knowledge, the true knowledge man has forgotten since his fall. Like the passage from Paradise Lost discussed above, the sonnet meditates on the distinction between inner and outer knowledge available to postlapsarian man and finds greater import in the former. Thus, though the octave is written in the indicative and is an explanation, our sense of surmise, of the poem's underlying ruminative quality is quite strong.

The subversion of the indicative mood becomes more apparent in the subsequent two and one half lines, which begin as a survey of the cosmological and end with human loss (again, as in the proem to Paradise Lost, III). These lines are grammatically connected with the preceding by the coordinator "nor." Milton makes heavy use of coordination in the first eight and one half lines of the poem, his

chief means of effecting a backward and forward movement. For if the "nor" glances backward logically, the "or's" after the series, "Sun or moon or Starre through-out the year," both create speculative pauses between elements in the series and carry the forward thrust of listening--an activity which by nature implies continuation.

Milton's choice of the inclusive "or" over "and" maintains a cutting force, each repetition seeming to slice off more of existence. But Milton really strikes emotional chords with his pairing, "Or man or woman," which comes after we are made to feel that he had ended his enumeration of loss with the cosmological. The doubling is one of balance and imbalance, for though, structurally, as a pair, it adds weight and solidity to the octave, its semantic meaning is unsettling; for the pathos in the mention of humanity, as an addition to the cosmological, the latter seeming much more expendable than the former, shocks us into open-ended speculation concerning the personal significance of this loss.

Milton continues coordinating until line nine:

Yet I argue not
Against heavns hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. (ll. 6-9)

The sound repetition and pairs carry a weight of structural conviction, but such excessive coordination piles up pauses within the lines, reflecting as well, Milton's awareness of the qualifications of conviction.

But the last coordinates imply, through placement and semantic significance, the sonnet's new strident movement in structure and tone. The contre-rejet, "Right onward" acts like a kind of spur to Milton's Turn toward justification, which is, in contrast to the preceding

meditative description of his condition, significantly uncoordinated:

What supports me dost thou ask?
The conscience, Friend, to have lost them overply'd
In libertyes defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe talks from side to side. (ll. 9-12)

The only question asked in this poem of surmise is reported to be that of someone other than the speaker, and is asked after the poem's real speculation is completed. It is as though the searching undergone in the octave, having supplied Milton with the answer to doubts, may only now safely be made explicit. The answer is syntactically uncomplicated (interpolating only the apostrophe "Friend" between its subject and verb), and emphasizes its important elements by placement: "overply'd" (Milton's coinage) at line end; "In Libertyes defence" in initial position.

The sestet of the poem instances Milton's sensitivity to the signifying powers of the sonnet format divisions, especially as they can be used to convey build and closure. His question and answer of self praise is contained in lines nine through twelve, but because the rhyme scheme designates two tercets (cdc dcd), we might expect this praise to continue until the poem's close, thus providing a unified thought pattern. The thought pattern, however, falls into quatrain and couplet. The effect of this tension between content and rhyme scheme is the implication that the praise could continue, but is abruptly checked, perhaps because the poet is modest about self-congratulation.

The final lines, as a semantic couplet, do not maintain hard closure, however, for they continue the distinction between inner and outer knowledge made in the octave. If heaven's hand or will

has inflicted blindness, loss of outward knowledge, because--though no more fallen than other men--this is one lot of earthly existence, nevertheless, inner knowledge, conscience, remains. The pressure behind "the world's vain mask" is enormous, for we must think of the spectacle of the allegorical court masque, all the wealth and effort expended for the avowed purpose of figuring forth abstractions. Also implied by the term is the realm of natural forms, the Book of Creatures, which is vain because so often never leading to the knowledge of God, and literally vain for Milton, who is blind. Moreover, the term captures the general significance of the worldly distortions and misrepresentations, as Bacon used the word. The overdetermination of the "mask" is matched in a way by the poem's last word, for it is far from clear who Milton's guide is: God, Cyriack, his won conscience?

Throughout the preceding discussion of the structural aspect of allusion, I have subordinated treatment of allusive content, but it is now time to focus on the actual "texts" (in our extended sense of this term as defined in Chapter I) and the uses made of them in Jonson and Milton. Jonson's "Inviting a Friend to Supper" and Milton's Sonnet XX to Lawrence, both in the Classical tradition of verse invitation, will provide useful grounds for comparison.

The invitation poem renders ethical and aesthetic values in social terms. For Martial, Horace, and Catullus, the supper poem was to be read against verse banquets such as Trimalchio's in Petronius' Satyricon, in which the richness of the feast becomes
53
a symbol for the host's moral depravity. The accoutrements of the

simple supper reflect an antithetical set of ethical values shared by host and friends. Both Jonson and Milton expect their readers to recognize the generic ethos of their poems, but Jonson's art is spent on developing an English analogue of the past culture to which he alludes, whereas Milton's genius, nearly always revisionary, transumes the classical, so that the poem's import is in its very departure from the allusion. To say this in another way, both Jonson and Milton use the social surfaces of the supper symbolically, but Jonson's symbols refer to the same ethical and aesthetic values as his predecessors' do, while Milton radically alters the traditional symbolic significance to which he alludes.

"Inviting a Friend to Supper" exemplifies Jonson's characteristic use of allusive content, adaptation or "Imitation," yet Jonson is not usually credited with the origination of this mode. The Imitation has been defined as a poetic form by Howard Weinbrot, who describes it as a kind of parody (in the original sense of this term) of one or more parent poems in which the later poet recreates in his own idiom and for his own times, the original's tone, subject-matter, and style. The reader's awareness of the original text is more or less necessary, according to the degree of "rivarlry" or alteration of the alluding text.⁵⁴ Though Jonson's translations of Horace are far too faithful to count as Imitations, his "Inviting a Friend to Supper" (which draws on three of Martial's epigrams), as well as many other⁵⁵ of his poems, qualify as Imitations.

Another student of the imitative mode, Reuben a. Brower, has shown how brilliantly Pope makes subtle ironic shiftings by allusively

playing off the greater Augustans against his own age, but Brower also overlooks Jonson as the father of allusive adaptation when he assigns Dryden this title.⁵⁶ It is true that Jonson does not usually pit one allusion against another (an echo of the pastoral in a context of epic grandeur, for example, Pope's use of the pastoral in The Rape of the Lock) for purposes of satiric reduction, though an obvious exception is "On the Famous Voyage." This technique of allusive satire Pope probably learned from Dryden, who undoubtedly found it in Marvell and Milton. But Dryden and his Neoclassical followers could not have tricked out the ironic manipulations of various Classical styles within one poem, had not Jonson established the imitative principle as well as the Classical norms for English verse in the plain style.

These are precisely the services Jonson performs in "Inviting a Friend to Supper," a poem in which he reconstitutes the Augustan invitation for his age. He is therefore very careful to translate, point by point, the details of a Roman supper into their English equivalents. Thus Jonson, amidst the usual Roman menu, specifies "ruffe," a bird of the sandpiper family common in the fens of⁵⁷ Lincolnshire, as well as clarks, larkes, and wood-cocks. The wine shall be Canary, from the Mermaid, the latter being the favorite haunt of Jonson and his tribe. He also reduces the ancients' refreshment to "Luther's Beer." Jonson introduces an interesting analogue for Martial's proclaimed innocence of the festive evening. Martial's description reads:

accedent sine felle loci nec mane timenda

libertas et nil quod tacuisse velis:
 de prasino conviva meus venetoque loquatur,
 nec faciunt quemquam pocula nostra reum.
 (To crown these shall be jests without gall, and
 a freedom not to be dreaded the next morning, and
 no word you would wish unsaid.)⁵⁸

Jonson captures for England the entire atmosphere of the political
 subterfuge undermining "free" Augustan Rome with his parallel:

And we will have no Pooley, or Parrot by;
 Nor shall our cups make any guiltie men:
 But, at our parting, we will be, as when
 We innocently met. No simple word,
 That shall be utter'd at our mirthfull board,
 Shall make us sad next morning: or affright
 The libertie, that wee'll enjoy to night.
 (ll. 36-42)

Pooley and Parrot were two bribers and informers, the former being⁵⁹
 present at Christopher Marlowe's death--after supper, in a tavern.
 Jonson is thus also drawing an implicit contrast between his Mermaid
 tavern and its genial society--in and out of the tavern--and the
 less amiable social spirits among the English.

Jonson does not adapt Martial without any alteration. Where⁶⁰
 Martial uses the pat formula, "vinum tu facies bonum bibendo,"
 Jonson generalizes the idea to extend to all aspects of his feast (ll.
 3-8) in an original and perhaps for this reason, a more sincere
 sounding compliment. In his rendition of the conventional
 seductive "lie," Jonson's sensitivity to tradition and self-conscious
 artistry emerge clearly. For Martial's curt "I will deceive you to
 make you come,"⁶¹ after which he enumerates gustatory delicacies,
 Jonson substitutes a different phrasing and meaning:

Ile tell you more, and lye, so you will come:
 Of partrich, pheasant, wood-cock, of which some

May yet be there; and godwit, if we can:
(ll. 17-19)

Jonson's inclusion of "may yet be there" implies that he is not lying, and so declares both allegiance to and independence from his source: he shall follow Martial, but when his details are personally distasteful (or, as we saw, culturally inapplicable), Roman mores must give way to those of England and Jonson.

Thus Jonson alters Martial's assurances that he will not read
62
"a bulky volume." For this Jonson substitutes his promise that he will read none of his own verse:

How so ere, my man
 reade a piece of Virgil, Tacitus,
Livie, or of some better booke to us,
Of which wee'll speake our minds, amidst our meats;
And Ile professe no verses to repeate:
(ll. 20-4)

Jonson is unwilling to eschew good literature and the talk about it that he found so essential to good society. Finally, Jonson does not subvert his invitation, as Martial does in one of the sources of Jonson's poem, Epigram V. LXXVIII, in which Martial, after denying the presence of women at the dinner, ends with the coy question,
63
"Wuam nobis cupis esse tu priorem?"

But the rarity of these changes attests to the nearly total comfort Jonson felt with his source, while the quality of them reveals Jonson's fastidious nature, his scrupulous faithfulness to his time's and his own sensibility and morality. His allusive candor is responsible for the tonal urbanity so often noticed by readers of his poetry. The essence of urbanity is assumption, the implicit assumption that poet and audience maintain a common cultural context.

Milton's genius, on the other hand, and as every one of his students knows, is never completely easy with established norms, especially pagan ideals. So he revises, in Sonnet XX, the Roman notion of "spare time"; but more than this, he corrects the contemporary Puritan idea of it as well. The sonnet seeks to de-occasionalize that portion of time (traditionally termed "spare") when one is not at work, to see it not as "tacked on" to life's routine but as essential and inevitable to life in the way that seasonal alteration is to nature or modulation is in music. One's leisure, like one's work, is part of divine service. The controversy over the sonnet's last lines is therefore crucial:

He who of those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

Does Milton mean "spare time for" these delights or "refrain from them?"⁶⁴ The solution to this critical crux is to be found in Milton's allusions.

We notice first that Milton's parallels to the Invitation tradition allude to Horace and not Martial, this choice indicating a higher ethical order. For in his most serious invitations, Horace exorts friends to cast off the fretful world of business for good companionship and simple pleasures, and though in other less serious poems, he urges seizing the day in the face of mortality, he never descends⁶⁵ to the sometimes lascivious tone of Martial. But though Horace may hover over Milton's lines, he is present more to indicate his absence from the sonnet's offering. For as Leslie Brisman has written, Milton transforms carpe diem into carpe Deum in Sonnet XX. Though I do not quite agree with Brisman that the sonnet is concerned to establish

two priorities--the heavenly over the earthly kingdom, and divine over self service--he correctly indicates the biblical allusions with which Milton transumes the Classical Invitation tradition. ⁶⁶

Precisely what Milton offers Lawrence is the invitation to choose wisely, which is why the sonnet is framed as a series of questions. The nature of the right choice is embedded in the biblical allusions, to Canticles 2, and to the Sermon on the Mount, which are interposed--declaratively--amidst the questions:

time will run
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire
The frozen earth; and cloth in fresh attire
The lillie and Rose, that neither sow'd nor spun.
(ll. 5-8)

As Brisman noticed, the only biblical passage combining the lily and rose is in Canticles, to which Milton here alludes in order to suggest a "descent" into select community:

I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the
valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love
among the daughters.

The context of this floral union joins spring renewal with selectivity:

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down
under his shadow with great delight, and his
fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the
banqueting house, and his banner over me was
love....'For lo the winter is past, and the rain is
over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth;
the time of the singing of birds is come, and
the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.'

The seasonal context of this description of love, banquet, and song, "naturalizes celebration, makes it parallel with the natural cyclical patterns, a parallel which is reinforced by the allusion to Matthew as well.

For Christ's sermon, as is well known, urges man to accept the whole contemplative realm of experience, and by alluding to this passage, Milton's reference widens way beyond occasionalism to encompass the entire contemplative half of the traditional doublet, descriptive of man's existence: active-contemplative. The pleasures Milton delineates would seem to be in contradiction with Christ's disdain for physical concerns in the sermon, did we not understand that Milton is integrating these pleasures with those of the contemplative realm. Together, Milton's details of the day stand as a conspectus of stimuli to meditation: a repast of "Attick tast" recalls Plato's philosophical banquets; rising to hear the lute invokes the sphere of rational music; and artful, immortal warbling to "Tuskan Ayre" add the performing arts and poetry--specifically the religious-philosophical poetry of Dante and his school.

Spare time is not the Roman momentary abandonment from worldly concerns, seized when these concerns permit; nor is it the Puritan's negative time, those empty hours when man serves his self rather than God. Milton transumes both pagan and Puritan notions with his biblical allusions, and those to Plato and Neoplatonism, in order to designate a kind of spare time that is part of the rhythmical alteration of action and contemplation and an important part of the service owed to God.

Footnotes

Chapter III

1

Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Milton" in Critical and Historical Essays, 2 vols., ed A.S. Grieve (New York: Dutton, 1905), vol. 1. p. 157.

2

For the influence of the epigram on the lyric, see James Hutton, The Greek Anthology in Italy to the Year 1800 (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1936), and The Greek Anthology in France (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1946). The generic conflation among brief poetic forms in the Renaissance is generally known, and is apparent in Sixteenth-Century miscellanies whose titles do not distinguish among songs, sonnets, and epigrams, and madrigals. See Norman Maclean, "From Action to Image: Theories of the Lyric in the Eighteenth Century" in Critics and Criticism, ed. R.S. Crane (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1952), pp. 408-60. The Nineteenth-Century Romantics' blurring of lyric forms is attested in Wordsworth's lumping together of inscription, sonnet verse epistle, and idyllium. See, Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1940-9), 2, p. 433. Coleridge, in his prefatory essay to his sonnets, defines the form very loosely as "a small poem, in which some lonely feeling is developed." Brevity is required for "totality," though fourteen lines is an arbitrary convention; rhyme is optional, and as for meter, "the writer should consult his own convenience." See, S.T. Coleridge, "Introduction to the Sonnets" in The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London: Basil Montague Pickering, 1877), 1, pp. 129-30.

For a discussion of Jonson's awareness of the modality of verse forms, see Hollander, Vision and Resonance, pp. 165-186.

3

For a study of the plainstyle in general and Jonson's practise of it, see Wesley Trimpi, Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1962).

4

Of course both Jonson and Milton have predecessors in their lyric styles; I mean only that these two poets seem to gather up the tenets of open and closed form and forge coherent poetic styles in the brief, unsung lyric with them.

5

Hollander, Vision and Resonance, pp. 165-186.

6

See Geoffrey Walton, Metaphysical to Augustan: Studies in Tone and Sensibility in the Seventeenth Century (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1955), chapters 1 and 2, and Reuben A. Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion (London: Oxford U.P., 1959).

7

Paul Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1970), p. 5. And see pp. 159-163 for the reasons that dreams are thought to be paradigmatic for all symbolic expression. "Symbolic" expressions, as we defined them in Chapter I, are those that designate an indirect meaning in and through a direct meaning and thus call for deciphering, i.e. for an interpretation in the strict sense of the word. Cp. Ricoeur, pp. 10-12.

8

Jokes, p. 179. And see pp. 159-180 for Freud's complete discussion of the relation between jokes, dreams and the unconscious.

9

Umberto Eco, Opera Aperta: Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee (Milano: Bompiani, 1967), pp. 87-99.

10

For further discussion of the epigrams' characteristics see the two Hutton studies mentioned above and J.W. Mackail, Epigrams From "The Greek Anthology" (London: Longmans, 1906), pp. 1-90; and Paul Friedlander, Epigrammata: Greek Inscriptions From the Beginnings to the Persian Wars (Berkeley: U. of Cal., 1948),

11

Geoffrey Hartman, "Wordsworth, Inscriptions, and Romantic Nature Poetry" in From Sensibility to Romanticism, pp. 389-414. Rosalie Colie recently attempted to explain some of the "tagged" endings of Shakespeare's sonnets as resulting from epigram influence which she sees informing two lyric traditions, the "sugared" and "satiric." These distinctions seem less inclusive than "open" and "closed," referring as they do to tonal elements alone. See Shakespeare's Living Art (Princeton U.P., 1974), pp. 68-134.

12

Mario Praz, Seventeenth-Century Imagery (Rome, 1964), p. 97 for the Latin epigram influence on English verse see also Hoyt H. Hudson, The Epigram in the English Renaissance 1947; rpt. (New York: Octagon Books, 1966) and T.K. Whipple, Martial and The English Epigram from Sir Thomas Wyatt to Ben Jonson 1925; rpt. (New York: Phaeton Press, 1970).

13

The edition used is Poetices Libri septem (Heidelber, 1607), p. 64.

14

Robortello, In Librum Aristotelis De Arte Poetica Explicationes (Florence, 1548), pp. 35-40. Minturno, L'Arte Poetica 1563; rpt. (Naples, 1725), p. 413.

15

Lyricists raided the rhetorics from at least Medieval times, but primarily for *topoi*; it was mainly in the Seventeenth Century that poets sought structural devices there.

16

Cf. Jerome Mazzaro (Transformations), who accounts for this new post-Petrarchan originality as a substitution of substructures: rhetorical persuasion via the use of predicaments for the musical consonance of mathematical ratio. I certainly do not deny the importance of this theoretical-methodological shift as an explanation for the character of the new poetry, but am suggesting that the new lyricists may have either deliberately sought or intuited (or both) the means of incorporating certain rhetorical techniques into their lyric forms from epigram theory and practise.

17

Barbara Hernstein Smith, Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1968), pp. 204-210.

18

Ben Jonson, eds. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1925-52), 1, p. 143. All references to Jonson's works are from this edition and will be cited in the text.

19

For a cogent summary of the work done in stylistics on foregrounding see, Morton W. Bloomfield, "Stylistics and the Theory of Literature," New Literary History, VII (1976) 2, pp. 271-311.

20

We saw in Chapter I that both Sonnet I and VIII caused critical debate concerning their final lines; in Chapter II we noticed the ambiguity at the end of Sonnet XI, and at lines eight through twelve in Sonnet XII. For the critical cruxes concerning Sonnets XIX, XX, and XXIII, see Variorum Commentary on those poems.

21

See Eco, Opera Aperta, p. 83. Eco adduces "desirable uncertainty" from Information Theor to explain a characteristic of "second degree openness" that, as I mentioned earlier, he finds prominent in Twentieth-Century art.

22

The Complete Writings of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 1957; revised (New York: Oxford U.P., 1966), p. 184.

23

Thomas McFarland, Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. xxxiv-v. For Blake's thought on the modality of

verse form, see Hollander Vision and Resonance, p. 207.

24

Hereford and Simpson, 8, p. 30.

25

David Wykes, "Ben Jonson's 'Chast Book': The Epigrams" Renaissance and Modern Studies XIII (1969), 76-87.

26

Smith, Poetic Closure, pp. 206-7.

27

For the contemporary denial of Lawes' priority in declamatory settings, see M. Lefkowitz, William Lawes (London, 1960), pp. 150-1. In an unpublished dissertation, however, Elize Jorgens' "Let Well-Tun'd Words Amaze": Attitudes Toward Poetry in English Solo Song from John Dowland to Henry Lawes (C.U.N.Y., 1975), the author demonstrates Lawes' deep commitment to the poetic text. His allegiance was always to intelligibility and speech rhythms, sometimes to the detriment of his music. Thus, if Lawes was not first to create declamatory settings in England, he was the principle advocate for this style in Milton's time.

28

Trimpi, p. 175.

29

For a full discussion of Milton's manuscript changes with regard at the declamatory style, see MacDonald Emslie, "Milton on Lawes: The Trinity Manuscript Revisions," Music in English Renaissance Drama, ed. John H. Long (Kentucky: U. of Kentucky Press, 1968), pp. 96-102.

30

Ovid, Metamorphoses, II, 153-193.

31

Dante, Purgatorio, trans. John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford U.P., 1939), II, 38-9, ll. 106-111.

32

I am not taking into account the similarity between poetic styles when Milton is imitating Jonson, such as he does in parts of his early poems, like "William Shakespeare," "Epitaph to the Marchioness of Winchester," and parts of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," in which he echoes Jonson's characteristic rhythms and cadences; but even in these youthful imitations--and most especially in the latter two poems--Milton seems to be deliberately echoing Jonson in the form of allusion, by which Milton wants us to remember the precursor upon whom he is commenting.

34

Brisman, pp. 34-6. For a discussion of the Medieval allegory suggested by the poem, see R.L. Ramsay, "Morality Themes in Milton's Poetry," SP, 15 (1918), p. 142.

35

Trimpi, p. 181.

36

Jackson Cope, The Metaphoric Structure of "Paradise Lost" (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962).

37

See Hollander (Vision and Resonance) pp. 91-116) for an illuminating discussion of enjambment effects attained through the interplay between syntactic structures and phrase stress patterns.

38

Trimpi, pp. 129-33.

39

We have already noted (in Chapter II) one of Milton's uses of pausing within the line, those swift transitions between images in his political poems causing baroque "gaps" that forced the reader's attention to the iconography as it went "masqueing" through the poem.

40

Cf. Prince, The Italian Element, pp. 97-7. Prince discusses these techniques in their capacity to supply underlying balance in support of the sonnet structure, which is threatened by enjambment over the sonnet divisions.

41

For a complete discussion of juncture, see George L. Trager and Henry Lee Smith, Jr. An Outline of English Structure (Studies in Linguistics, Occasional Papers. No. 31) Norman, Okla., 1951.

42

Brisman, Milton's Poetry of Choice, pp. 122-3.

44

Taylor Stoehr, "Syntax and Poetic Form in Milton's Sonnets," ES, XLV (1964), 294-301

43

Trimpi, p. 122.

45

Stoehr, pp. 296-8.

46

Prince, pp. 14-33.

47

Prince, p. 97.

48

Prince, p. 104.

49

Geoffrey Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814 (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1964), p. 11. Brisman's work should be consulted on the matter of Miltonic and Romantic surmise, since it is one of its main concerns to expand upon Hartman's original perception.

50

Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 9.

51

Cited by Honigmann, p. 108.

52

Variorum, p. 382.

53

See Trimpi (pp. 187-8) for a summary of the Invitation tradition.

54

Howard D. Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1969), pp. 1-30.

55

All Jonson's songs, epigrams, epistles, as well as his great country house poem, "To Penshurst," though they do not imitate one specific Augustan poem, are nevertheless imitations insofar as their tonal accents and rhetorical strategies cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of the Augustan parent tradition.

56

Brower, Alexander Pope, pp. 1-14. This is the portion of the book in which Brower discusses Dryden as the initiator of the imitative tradition. But see the entire work for Pope's modes of allusion.

57

Hereford and Simpson, p. 21.

58

Martial, Epigrams, trans. Walter C. A. Ker (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1968), x. xlviii, pp. 21-4.

59

For a full discussion of these characters see, M. Eccles, "Johnson and the Spies," RES, xiii (1948), pp. 32-41.

60

Martial, XI. lii, 13.

61

Martial, XI. lii, 13.

62

Martial, XI. lii, 16.

63

Martial, V. lxxviii, 32.

64

See Variorum, pp. 474-6, for a discussion of the controversy.

65

Milton's borrowings are from Horace, but are not confined to any one ode. For a list of parallels, see Finley, pp. 63-5.

66

Cf. Brisman, Milton's Poetry of Choice, pp. 36-44.

Chapter IV

Milton's Sonnets and The Romantic Meditative Lyric

The union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying, the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops.

Coleridge, on hearing Wordsworth's
"Guilt and Sorrow" 1

Mainly because of Harold Bloom's recent work, students of literature are again concerned with the concept of "influence" in literary tradition. Whether or not we completely accept Bloom's thesis that every "strong" poet confronts one or more precursor poetical fathers' influence with anxiety and misreading, we are indebted to him for widening and vitalizing our conception of influence, which had narrowed to studies of source and attribution under the aegis of Nineteenth-Century scholars. In the following discussion of the influence of Milton's sonnets, I maintain a liberal understanding of influence as a force not confined to verifiable parallels, but as one subjected to the peculiar (even "distorting") genius of the influenced. I want to reveal the effects of Milton's sonnets on a type of Romantic poem other than the sonnet; to show, that is, how Milton's poetics of dew appears reinvented in the Romantic meditative lyric, specifically, as it is practised by Wordsworth.

I do not wish to deny Milton's influence on the sonnet itself. Without question, the re-discovery of Milton's sonnets around 1740 was the impetus of the format's revival, and many sonneteers writing in the following decade modelled their poems on Milton's in avowed imitation. R.D. Havens has carefully documented this debt to Milton in his study of influence, and he cites many a Miltonic pastiche common until the more innovative work that begins in the late 1780's. The following imitation by Philip Yorke, appearing in London Magazine for July, 1738 exemplifies the Miltonic sonnet, vastly popular for the next ten years:

A Sonnet, In Imitation of Milton's Sonnets

O Charles! replete with learning's various store;
Howe'er attentive to th'historic page,
The poet's lay, or philosophic lore,
Thy thoughts from these harsh studies disengage.
Let Horace rest and Locke, and quick repair
To Wrest, that ancient honourable seat!
In its wide garden breathe a purer air,
And pass the fleeting hours in converse sweet.
From this short respite shall thy mind renew
(Whose spirit by the midnight lamp decays)
Her native strength, its labours to pursue,
And in thy bloom of age outstrip the praise.
Each studious vigil thou shalt pleas'd review
Ehen honours crown thy well-spent early days.³

We may infer from Havens' detailed description of Milton's influence on the Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century sonneteers that the development described is that of the meditative lyric in general: these poets, beginning in their sonnets with Milton's quality of republican austerity (as in Yorke, above), learn more and more from Milton how to modify the format's metrical requirements, as well as to introduce the lyrical self-consciousness latent in even Milton's

most public poems. These discoveries are transferred to their lyric poems written outside of the sonnet form, especially in the Nineteenth Century when the Romantic belief in metrical freedom gains sway. The sonnet's importance in the development of the free form lyric is not surprising, since artistic innovation usually originates in the tension generated by constraining traditions. And the sonnet, we remember, is one of the few fixed verse forms widely practised in English literary history. Moreover, the Italian sonnet, the format most used by the proto- and Romantic poets, is far more conducive to experimentation than the Shakesperian with its fixed quatrains and couplet. Considering that it is the Italian sonnet as practised by Milton that becomes popular in the Eighteenth Century, then, it would be strange had the sonneteers not taken advantage of the general technical effects to be learned from writing in this mode.

Writing sonnets certainly effected Wordsworth's lyric style in general. In the most cogent study of his sonnets to date, Johnson's Wordsworth and the Sonnet, the author traces Wordsworth's development from stiff Miltonic imitation to attainment of harmonious form, and assigns the sonnets "synecdochic" significance in Wordsworth poetic canon. Johnson also notes that Wordsworth wrote the 1805 draft of The Prelude while composing his best "spherical" sonnets, and that he, upon noticing Milton's "blank verse sonnets" in Paradise Lost, wrote several dozen in The Prelude and The Excursion.⁴ Though Johnson does not develop the implications that one poetic kind may have had for the other, it seems clear that for both Milton and Wordsworth, writing sonnets was the essential exercise for their innovations in

blank verse paragraphing; and that for Wordsworth, studying and writing his own Miltonic sonnets result in his achievement of the structural properties of blank verse ebb and flow, and all the significance for content this rhythm entails. It should be of interest, then, to study the relationship of Milton's sonnets in some of Wordsworth's lyrics other than the sonnets, his versions of the meditative Romantic lyric.

Before tracing the characteristics of this type of lyric in general, we should keep in mind its difference from a second strain of meditative lyric that also emerges in the Seventeenth Century, most notably in the work of Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan, and which descends in recent times in much of the poetry of Hopkins, Auden, and Eliot. At least one student of this tradition, Louis Martz, has confused it with the Romantic variety; in the last chapter of his anatomy of "the poetry of Meditation," Martz seems to over-extend his brand of meditative verse, believing it to subsume the work of Hopkins, Dickinson, Eliot, and Auden, as well as that of Wordsworth, Keats, and Wallace Stevens.⁵ Of course all lyric poetry is meditative, insofar as it is "the voice of the poet talking to himself--or to nobody," Eliot's "first voice." But not all poets talk alike, and it seems more helpful for understanding the developments of lyric poetry since the Seventeenth Century if we hold to a distinction between the tradition that Martz is concerned with and the Romantic strain.

The former is characterized by dialectic, being devoted to rendering formalized patterns of argument and thought; it therefore

employs formal structures from rhetoric and the Ignatian meditation. The poets of the Romantic tradition, however, are concerned with representing thoughts remote from consciousness, the movements of mind before they have been formulated in fixed linguistic, logical, or meditational patterns.

Martz has too thoroughly discussed the former tradition (which, for want of a better name, I would call the "formal" meditative lyric) to require additional remarks here, but to substantiate the Romantic strain as an independent tradition we must turn to an essay by Wimsatt in which he attempts to draw just this distinction on the basis of the Romantic poet's "imaginative structure," a counterpart of the subject, the philosophy, the sensibility, and the theory, behind it.

Wimsatt finds the wit of the Romantic meditative lyric to reside in the connection it establishes between external reality (imagery from nature) and consciousness. Eschewing the poet-rhetorician's overt simile, with which he hammers out similarities to so great an extent, that all differences in the analogy also become apparent, the Romantic lyricist merges tenor and vehicle; both are wrought in a parallel process out of the same material. This is done through the poet's infusion of significance in the natural details he describes. That is, a river landscape in such poetry is both the occasion of the reminiscence and the source of the metaphor describing the reminiscence. With this characterization, Wimsatt also derives support for the quality we frequently only intuitively ascribe to this poetry--its "sincerity" and "spontaneous feeling," properties emerging when we discover the latent design in the multiform picture that the poet creates.

Hartman suggest another way to approach the distinction between these species of meditative verse in his discussion of Wordsworth's "egotism," his self-absorption in his most casual responses, which Hartman views as an off-shoot of the Puritan quest for evidences of election.⁷ This is a poetry of interpretation, but one based on the personal significance of experience. For this reason, the Romantic meditative lyricist avoids the general, "catholic" structures of dialectic to expose his thoughts, preferring to represent these thoughts as they exist in consciousness before they are rigorously subjected to logical formulation. This interiorization of meditation Hartman attributes to "L'Allegro" and Il Penseroso," but we have found it in the sonnets as well, in Milton's radical alteration of the Neoplatonism associated with the Italian sonnet. For if Milton is recovering the tradition of Neoplatonic love in his absorption of its hierarchical assessment of experience, he revises by turning assessment inward, by making it a private act of interpretation. The Renaissance Italians did not so much Christianize Platonism as they did Catholicize it; it remained for Milton to Puritanize it.

Milton's "Puritanizing" of the meditatively lyric within the sonnet format is taken up by Romantics, such as Wordsworth, who eschew metrical format and develop the openness of Milton's form to its furthest extreme. Hartman ascribes the lack of definition (historical and metrical) of the Romantic meditative lyric to its peculiar conflation of mood and mode. This mood of penseroso "white melancholy" or deepened self-consciousness informing such poems as "The Solitary

Reaper," "Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree," and Tintern Abbey,"⁸
Hartman describes as a "distinctly elegiac and memorializing strain,"
finding its generic antecedents in ancient inscriptionary verse
(of the Greek variety), and its first practitioner in English poetry
to be Mark Akenside.⁹ But we saw that the sonnet, as Milton practised
it, is also related to ancient epigram, a recognition which suggests
a Seventeenth-Century link in the generic evolution of the Greep
epigram in English verse history.

Another student of this poetry, M.H. Abrams, writes of its
determinate speaker in a particularized outdoor setting; of a fluent
vernacular rising to a more formal speech between the speaker and
himself, the scene, or some silent auditor; of the speakers' initial
notice of a change in landscape that evokes a varied but integral
process of memory, closely involved with the outer scene; and finally,
of the gained insight, the poem's rounding off where it began in an
incorporation of the present scene with past memory, and a recognition
for the future.¹⁰

Implicit in the above descriptions is the notion that this
meditative lyric, so often connected with nature, is not "about"
nature at all. As Hartman writes of "The Solitary Reaper,"
"Wordsworth's response, rather than the image causing it, is his
subject, yet he keeps the latter in mind and returns to it, especially
in the last stanza, so that our attention is drawn to a continuous yet
indefinite relationship between mind and image, each of which retains
a certain autonomy."¹¹ Harold Bloom writes of Romantic poets' images
that either "poise themselves just within the visible or compel a new

kind of visibility to appear." He quotes Wordsworth's letter to Landon in which the former writes that what moves him most in poetry is that point of vision "where things are lost in each other, and limits vanish and aspirations are raised." Expressing the difficulty of writing linguistic criticism on the absent, Bloom nevertheless makes an accurate attribution to account for Wordsworth's effect in The Ruined Cottage: "The things not seen provide the substance of hope, and Wordsworth at last approximates Milton in practising an art of the eye's abyss, in taking us down to that inward depth where no modern prophet of the eye has followed."¹²

Though Bloom refers to Milton's verse in general here, he is probably thinking of the poetry of Paradise Lost; for none of the students of the Romantic meditative lyric mentions the sonnets as a stylistic influence. Hartman accounts for the surmising of the Romantics by pointing to Lycidas' flower passage and Paradise Lost, I. 740-46, an ascription which obscures Milton's contribution to the Romantic mode of surmising, since these are both false surmises, appearing to be inadequate aesthetic speculation in contrast to religious, doctrinal solutions.¹³

But we have seen throughout this study that Milton legitimizes surmise in his sonnets within an orthodox framework. Milton was not opposed--as it might seem in the examples of Hartman--to the free play of mind in its search for truth. Fluidity, approval of alternatives, rather than exclusions or blunt determinateness, doublings, and expansiveness--these are the qualities of surmise adduced by Hartman. They are also those of the dream as discussed by Freud, and of Milton's sonnets, as we have seen.

Thus, though no one would argue that Milton's sonnets alone and not his entire poetic corpus influenced the poetics of the Romantic lyric, for at least its most salient qualities--its brand of speculation and interiorization--there could be no better map of mental avenues than Milton's sonnets. For Milton invented in them the ^Romantic conception of lyric occasion, the impetus for the act of private interpretation, and just because Milton chose more traditional occasions (a birthday, invitation, or political event) than the Romantics' unconventional discoveries in nature, their similar use of occasion need not be obscured.

The one important difference between Milton and a Romantic such as Wordsworth is that the latter nearly eliminates from his poetry what for Milton is the essential device of interiority: allusion. But Wordsworth really avoids only a species of allusion, the literary variety; he uses his past self as "text" and thereby brilliantly invents a new type of topical allusion. We shall be examining the ways in which he codifies personal memories, "textualizes" them, in effect, so that they may be used as allusions. Hazlett well understood Wordsworth's allusive use of memory and seemed to compare its effect with Milton's use of literary allusion. For Hazlitt is certainly echoing Dr. Johnson's description of Milton's allusive technique--the spectacles of books" through which he sees--in the following observation on Wordsworth's poetry:

Thus his descriptions of natural scenery are not brought home distinctly to the naked eye by forms and circumstances, but every object is seen through the medium of innumerable recollections, is clothed with the haze of

Imagination like a glittering vapour,
is obscured with the excess of glory,
has the shadowy brightness of a waking
dream.¹⁴

In what follows, I shall be drawing parallels between the "waking
dreams" of Milton and Wordsworth: the open forms of Milton's sonnets
and Wordsworth's meditative lyrics seem to share a poetics of dew.

Wordsworth's poem "To the Cuckoo" (1802) illustrates, in part
his particular allusive mode.

O Blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A Voice, a mystery

The same whom in my school boy days
I listened to; that Cry
which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.
And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!¹⁵

Wordsworth's poem view with Milton's Sonnet I in its deceptively innocent surface. For here as in "O Nightingale," the speaker projects his poetic powers onto the bird. In both Wordsworth and Milton, hearing-discovering of the bird song is an allegory of self-searching and discovery of poetic voice.

We saw in discussing Milton's sonnet how he used literary allusion to modify certain kinds of his precursors' sonnet poetry in his quest for an authentic voice. We did not dwell on his blending of time, however, an effect that apparently did not escape Wordsworth. Milton opens with a great immediacy, with a vocative of address and with what seems to be a simple present aspect of the verb: "O Nightingale, that on you bloomy Spray/ Warbl'st at eeve, when all the Woods are still." But at line nine ("Now timely sing") we learn that the bird is not visible or present at the scene: it is being evoked not addressed, the aspect of the verb being a continuous not a simple, present. Honigmann remarks that the effect of a young lover's excitement is achieved with this play of time, ¹⁶ but I rather see this as an act of will, as part of Milton's "stationing" (Keats' term) in the poem. For we learn (at l.9) that the speaker has placed poetic tradition (as embodied in the nightingale) for the purpose of over-taking it, that is, in order to assume his own distinctive place within the tradition. Thus we believe at first that Milton is hearing the nightingale's song, only to learn that he is listening to his own voice. This surprising re-vision moves us out of tradition and into the speaker's individual consciousness.

Wordsworth effects a similar meditative quality with his time

blend: "I have heard,/ I hear thee and rejoice" (ll. 1-2). As Hartman writes, the doubling and the shift in tense from past to present "indicates in one formula his inward response."¹⁷ In effect, Wordsworth makes a text out of his remembrance in order that he may echo it, allude to it, in the fictional present of his poem. He confers the status of textuality by providing an interpretation for the remembrance, thus rendering a symbolic significance for it. The allusion to his past in this case is revised (though it need not be, in which instance it would be an unadulterated use of allusion), for the poem is about Wordsworth's poetic development via his altered relationship with nature.

Wordsworth, more overtly than Milton, interprets the significance of bird song in recalling his quest for the embodiment of "that Cry" which made him hunt through woods and green (l. 21), in short, in nature. The memory of the act of listening and what it meant to him in his "school boy days" is the text from which Wordsworth departs in order to record his poetic maturity. In former days "that Cry" sent him to look , actively, "a thousand ways/ In bush, and tree, and sky" (ll. 18-20), while now he need not search for the voice in nature; for having internalized it, he can recreate it imaginatively:

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That goldentime again. (ll. 25-8)

The poem's initial shift in tense is significant, then, in that it calls our attention to time and mind, and prepares us for the past's importance for the present as memory. Hartman talks about this allusive procedure as a type of "insight," of which there are too in Wordsworth's

poetry: the after-image and the recollected after-image. The first occurs when the event Wordsworth is recounting creates a mental echo that provides the possibility of elongation, of renewal in time and therefore of the overthrowal of time. This kind of anticipatory echo resembles prolepsis, the atithesis of allusion insofar as it leaps forward and not backward in time. Hartman's example from "Resolution and Independence" well illustrates the technique:

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The Old Man's shape, and speech, all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seem'd to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently,
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.
(Stz. XIX)

The second type of insight, Wordsworth's version of allusion proper, occurs when the mind moves under the recollected rather than the original impact of experience, and is instanced in both the opening lines of the Cuckoo poem and "Resolution in Independence":

There was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
(ll. 1-3)

Wordsworth continues in the present tense until stanza three, "I was a Traveller then upon the moor." With this shift in time, Wordsworth sharpens our awareness of the importance of remembering. He has rendered the past and its meaning with the immediacy of a present observation, only to call attention to its pastness. This indirect manner of signifying is analogous to the use of literary allusion to serve the concerns of the alluding text. Wordsworth's abrupt shifts

in tense are his means of sharply delineating a memory, of separating it from present thought, and thereby of calling attention to his allusive procedure. As Hartman writes about the example cited above, "the cross over in tense shows that time itself can be dissolved by memory"¹⁸ --which is, of course, precisely the effect of Milton's metaleptic use of literary allusion.

It is important to emphasize the difference between simple remembering and this second type of insight. For in the latter case what is recalled is an experience that has been interpreted and assigned symbolic meaning; that is, the mind has, previous to the present time of the alluding poem, formally reacted to it, and so it appears in the present poem with the status of a formal structure of thought, and for the purpose of signification.

The bird poems nicely point up the major difference between Milton's and Wordsworth's means of expressing deep concerns: Milton's spectacle of books, Wordsworth's of personal memories. As we have seen, Milton also frequently uses the conventional topics of his sonnets allusively, insofar as he expects us to recognize their traditional meaning and the new significance his text contrives for this meaning. Wordsworth also derives personal significance from his poetic occasions, but does so by eschewing conventional topics altogether, preferring to expand poetically from the apparently arbitrary occurrences of the ego in a landscape. Wordsworth's elevation of these seemingly insignificant occasions is generally appreciated, but Milton's analogous transformations of occasion go unnoticed. I want to turn now to Sonnet X, a brilliant example of Milton's metaphorical use of occasion.

As a close reading reveals, social, public statement occasions a revelation of the inner life.

Yet the poem is hardly noticed, and when it is, is read as a tour de force compliment to Lady Margaret Ley and her father, the Earl of Marlborough.¹⁹ This assumption concerning the sonnet's theme prevents its proper evaluation because it alienates content from form, and while commending the latter, devaluates the whole by implying that great artistry is expended for a trivial purpose. Clearly, the sonnet, which I here quote, is finely wrought:

Daughter to that good Earl, once President
Of Englands Counsel, and her Treasury,
Who liv'd in both, unstain'd with gold or fee,
And left them both, more in himself content,
Till the sad breaking of that Parliament
Broke him, as that dishonest victory
At Chaeonea, fatal to liberty
Kill'd with report that Old men eloquent,
Though later born, then to have known the dayes
Wherin your Father flourisht, yet by you
Madam, me thinks I see him living yet;
So well your words his noble vertues praise,
That all both judge you to relate them true,
And to possess them, Honour'd Margaret.

But though Sonnet X praises, it is not soley a compliment. For Milton uses the topical, the real world events concerning the Earl and his relationship with Margaret Ley, metaphorically, to make a very personal statement--albeit one with universal application. Specifically, the poem uses its occasion as a metaphor for the difficulty of truthful expression in a corrupt society, and thus by implication, laments the loss of unfallen language, of an edenic language which maintained maximum power of expression in an undivided community. This sense of linguistic failure it shares with a poem like Marvell's "Nymph Complaining." But even as the sonnet laments this separation between

word and referent, Milton, unlike Marvell, posits another linguistic community, a fallen yet redeemed group consisting of the speaker, the lady, her father, and "all who judge her," that is, all regenerate users of language. The poem's very structure is that of an allusion, and this linguistic indirection--symbol for our only recourse to truth--is displayed finally as a strength.

We remember what Wimsatt noted, that the Romantic nature lyricist imbues natural detail with significance, so that the poem's subject matter is at once its metaphor.²⁰ In Milton, the "imbued detail" is often linguistic patterning itself, which forms a meta-language; or, as John Hollander describes this practise in Paradise Lost, Milton makes "a metaphoric use of phenomenology of language: grammar, syntax, and diachronic morphology, as the reader is aware of them, become elements of experience which are, in subtle ways, moralized in the poem."²¹

The effect in both Milton and the Romantics is the gradual emergence of a multiform design, so that we feel at the poem's end that this design was ever-present and not "logically" developed (the frequent effect in the sonnet, when an epigrammatic couplet is employed). Wordsworth called this kind of development "harmony of style," and it is part of what he meant when he described Milton's sonnets with the image of the dew drop. Examination of Sonnet X well illumines this principle of the poetics of dew.

As Smart noted, the strict version of the Italian structure of this sonnet is pronounced, since the termination of phrasal and clausal units coincides with the end of each quatrain and tercet.

Nevertheless, its "sense is variously drawn out," the whole existing as one sentence. The co-occurrence of both this suspension and a closed structure instances a type of Miltonic progression other than "hard" enjambment, the latter naturally being emphasized when it does occur-however subtly. This variety of pausing, in its isolation of phrase and clause in the verses, might be called a self-allusive syntax; it serves Milton's thematic purposes by calling attention to the way we build sentences, which while free (theoretically) to continue infinitely, are bound by laws of syntactic closure.

These and some other annotating effects of Milton's language will perhaps seem over subtle and unworthy of notice, but as they combine, they support and are ultimately responsible for the peculiar resonance Milton attains for his broader stylistic strokes. One of the latter, the most striking feature of Sonnet X, is its reluctance to name its addressee, performing this act four times allusively (at ll. 1, 11, 12, and 14) but only explicitly, that is "properly," in its last word. If a poet wishes, he may make any indirect use of language (such as epithets, kennings, tropes) allusions to "ordinary" ways of expression. In this sonnet, Milton's periphrasis alludes to edenic language.

Adam's first significant speech act, performed effortlessly because he was endowed with natural wisdom, is the naming of creatures, an act which becomes problematical for fallen man. Milton's sonnet rehearses this act of naming, but in a much more discursive "space" now requisite for the performance of what prelapsarian man uttered spontaneously and "uni-formly" (i.e., one-creature-one-name). Milton

thus posits allusion as our fallen linguistic option.

Though he establishes person deixis with what is apparently the most direct and univocal poetic possibility, with the vocative, Milton's choice of "Daughter to that good Earl" rather than some form of the addressee's proper name creates ambiguity; for the formerphrase is more likely to be read as a simple subject about which something is to be predicated rather than as a vocative--which may or may not be the subject of predication in the sentence it heads.²⁴ Is the speaker addressing, or predicating, or both?

The reader's initial uncertainty is reinforced by the occurrence of "to" in the more usual periphrastic "X of Y" genitive. This formulation is believed to deemphasize its second term,²⁵ and we can see here that "Daughter" receives more semantic weight than it would with the "s" genitive, "that good Earl's Daughter."

But Milton's choice of "to" over "of" also serves his ostensible "predicative" purpose, for "to" implies--along with the possessive relation--a metaphorical kinship, one which attributes agency. "Daughter to" takes on the properties of a verb, specifically, of an inverted infinitive. We see this clearly in the dead metaphorical phrase "Father to" in the phrase "the child is father to the man," which carries the sense of "originating." "Daughter," then, becomes a designation resulting less from biological fact than from something she does, some "daughtering," which the poem's closing lines render explicit: her ability "to relate" and "to possess" vertue. Here the function word "to," as if to celebrate linguistic security, is not "empty," but appears "legitimatized," in a major word category, the infinitive verb phrase.

A further complication in this initial vocative involves the demonstrative "that," which as Honigmann notes, carries the Latin significance "ille, the well-known."²⁶ It is thus an allusion functioning anaphorically, taking for granted a connection among speaker, addressee, and referent which is previous to the poem's coding time. Moreover, as an English demonstrative it specifies a unique identity, and vividly through pointing.²⁷ Thus it titillates the reader, prompts him to read further, because he has been made aware that he does not understand the reference; but in its Latin sense, "that" creates a pretence of understanding, thus refusing to recognize ignorance or ineloquence, postulating the intersubjectivity of language that the poem seeks to establish.

Milton's initial vocative, then, does more than communicate person deixis with the immediacy of a summons; it also reveals the ambiguity inherent in language, for what appears to be purely an act of addressing fails to be merely this. Failure in precision of reference, at the same time, however, renders richness of connotation.

The elliptical relative clause that follows the vocative "once President/ of Englands Counsel, and her Treasury" emphasizes the Earl's public, active role by naming his office, while simultaneously undermining this role. For by analogy with the preceding periphrastic genitive, this should read "President to," a choice which would strengthen his connection with presidency by suggesting both literal and figurative possession. As was mentioned, the "X of Y" genitive deemphasizes "Y"; it also, literally, creates distance between possessor and possessed, a distance increased by the subtle enjambment

of line one, which not only points up the contrast between "to" and "of" by placing "of" in initial and therefore visually emphasized position, but also focuses attention upon officer rather than office by placing the man's title in the equally emphatic final position. The deictic adverbial of time. "once," also serves the purpose of stressing the man rather than his office, since its collocation with "President" at line terminus, dislocated from the Council and Treasury, welds it to "President," making the phrase self-sufficient and rather elegiacally titular.

The division expands with the introduction of a third and fourth genitive formulation, the "s." inflection and possessive pronoun in "Englands Counsel and her Treasury." Read in contrast with the more meditative "to": and "of" genitives, these direct indications of possession seem to form "unholy alliances," usurping presidency; that is, the president is separated from his offices, which are also England's, but in a way that England is not. Moreover, the choice of "Englands" necessitates "her," a pronoun of "otherness" as opposed to "our," one of solidarity.

The cleavage between the president and what he presided over is widened by both the semantic and grammatical significance of the subsequent relative clause: "Who liv'd in both unstain'd with gold or fee/ And left them both, more in himself content," (ll. 3-4). The first verb in the sonnet, "liv'd," suggests the President's total absorption of his offices as well as monumentalizing them, making them, that is, like architectural forms, structures in which one performs all one's life functions.

The second verb, "left," continues to depict the Counsel and Treasury as architectural structures, thus contributing to their substantialization and thereby to their existence as objects against which the President is pitted. The poem's grammar annotates this reading in the qualifying phrase "more in himself content," forcing comparison with having "liv'd in" the Counsel and Treasury, and implying the substitution of one identity (public) for another (Private citizenship) which is equally solid and satisfying--"content" suggests autonomy and integrity as well as complaisancy.

Termination of office, clause, and quatrain prepares us for an end of reference to the President, an expectation shattered by the temporal deictic "Till" of the second quatrain. This is an instance of enjambment theoretically so soft as to warrant no notice. But here, coming after such emphatic closure, "Till" carries great irruptive force: all the linguistic and poetic conventions signifying closure have been deceptive (one cannot even trust those past verb forms); the Earl's story is not over.

Its continuation in the second quatrain makes explicit all the complexity that was implicit in every term and the relations obtaining among them in quatrain one. For the problem raised there concerns the elusive Good: the difficulty of identifying and communicating it. On the one hand, Milton seemed to postulate two worlds, one private and good (containing Daughter, Earl, and contentment), one public and bad (England, her Counsel and Treasury, and (less) contentment). But as we saw "Daughter to" conveys a metaphorical kinship that is active and public, as is "that" in its "the well-known" sense, as is "Earl"

itself, which is a public title, after all. Now quatrain two demonstrates explicitly, in its surface meaning, the contingency of Good, for the Earl dies not for private reasons but when the public good terminates.

His death, in the poem's terms, is felicitous, since it collapses the distinction between public and private, thus negating a solipsistic private world and affirming a larger (if diversely good and bad) external reality in which communication is possible. This is made clearer in tercet one, where the death becomes the source of the speaker's vision, the poem's consolation.

Most importantly, then, the Earl's death represents the power of language, as the third and fourth lines of quatrain two indicate overtly. These lines instance the sonnet's sole use of a formal figure, the simile, a quite curious one when we consider that the purpose of simile is to express some relation(s) between terms, the comprehension of which relations(s) being dependent upon recognition of the terms in the analogy. Now Milton's simile is really a kind of non-simile, or allusive simile, since he names neither of the terms compared. We should also note that this "figurative failure" follows two uses of dead metaphors, instances of transiency in linguistic usage, the "liv'd and left" reference to office and the "breaking" of Parliament and Earl. The speaker, feeling at once both the impotence and power of language, eschews what in this poem would be the radical metaphor for the more timid simile, and does so cautiously--refusing to name terms.

This refusal to name is not trivial, since it indicates Milton's thematic intention; for though enough information is given for an

immediate recognition of Isocrates as "that old man eloquent," this is not equally true for "that good Earl": the reader continues to wait for identifying information. Milton's excision of the poem's manuscript title, "To ye Lady Margaret Ley," from both his 1645 and 1673 editions, can thus be seen as evidence that his intention is not so much to express a compliment as it is to express something about the Good and Language.

This something is embodied in all the allusion to Isocrates, which refers to the death of Isocrates, an orator, four days after hearing a messenger's report of Philip of Macedonia's victory over Athens and Thebes. Comparing the Earl to a patriotic speaker analogizes him upward (in importance) and backward (in time), generalizing his significance as a judge and emphasizing the power of speaking, judging, hearing, in short, the power of language. Moreover, withholding information is a way of implicating the reader, of "teasing" him into the poem's world, for insofar as we can decode the message of the non-simile, we become members of the privileged community.

No editor of the poem mentions the ambiguous reference which I find in lines nine through ten, where Milton seems to be saying that he was too young to have known the Earl. Commentators, concerned lest Milton be lying, are quick to note that though he was not technically too young to have known the Earl alive, if we read "flourisht" as "to be in one's prime or bloom," then Milton is absolved of hyperbole.²⁹

Granting this reading of "flourisht," I believe that the antecedent of the clause could nevertheless--at first--be read as "daughter", as the beginning (at last) of some predication about her. (That is,

it is she who was later born, too young to have known her father in his prime.) This initial possibility, along with Milton's "lie" mentioned above creates a functional confusion of reference, functional because they preface the speaker's announcement of realization, his visionary communion of speaker-daughter-Earl-judges, contained in the "envelope": "yet by you/ Madam, me thinks I see him living yet:" (ll. 10-11).

This confusion of reference comes at line nine and instances Milton playing at "turning" in the sonnet format. Like "Till" of line five, "Though" signals an end of reference (here, to Isocrates). We expect a turn; we get a turn, a move away from the simile. But Milton is not turning in any conventional manner. He is not going to render "the moral" from the octet--he has been giving it throughout. His turn is like a "false surmise," and merely dangles turning, initially reading as though it were a transition in reference to Daughter, but ending two lines later with the genuine referent, the speaker himself. As previously noted, however, our revisionary effort supports his visionary one.

The two tercets share a preponderance of pronouns, which also indicates the speaker's confidence in a more lexically endowed manner of naming (as opposed to gestural pointing in "that") and prepares for the final, proper naming, "Margaret." There is also a contraction of "grammatical space," and thus the suggestion of decreased distance between persons, in that several of these pronouns are possessives and therefore eliminate the need for both periphrastic and "s" genitives.

Thus, in tercet one the speaker envisions "your Father" and continues, redundantly (but in this context, joyfully), naming: "you/Madam." Here again the enjambment helps to emphasize the naming process. Honigmann notes the peculiarity of the "you" form here, commenting that in all the other sonnets Milton chooses the second person singular form: "he switched to the plural form here for the sake of the rhyme."³⁰ Perhaps; but the switch is felicitous thematically, serving Milton's "absorbing" purposes, since for a moment at the line's end we may read "you" as a plural, and assimilate daughter and father; moreover, the memory of the false plurality lingers, and implicates the "judges" (l.13) in the visionary "you."

The repetition of "yet" (its first occurrence signifying "nevertheless," its second, "still") neatly frames the clause in which appears (finally) the main verb. This clause is really two, since an elliptical "that" construction is embedded after "thinks." This grammatical contraction is mirrored in the constriction between pronoun and noun (You, Madam), pronoun and verb (me thinks, I see), and pronoun and participle (him living), the latter construction sharply contrasting with the suspended relative "who" clause of lines three through eight. The sonnet, preparing to close, tightly knits together its grammatical, as well as its "community" members.

The choice of the non-finite present participle is appropriate because it ensures closure of both the idea and the clause; that is, the Earl is "non-finitely" alive because temporally dead, and as a non-finite form can "go" nowhere syntactically. Still, closure is not harsh, since the second "yet" is meant deictically, signifying the endurance

of the present moment.

The last tercet overtly mentions the reasons for the speaker's vision, which had been asserted in the very grammatical relations of the first tercet. It also expands the latent meaning of "by you," by giving a final reading for the phrase "Daughter to." This involves her membership in the redeemed community, which necessarily includes Milton. He has evaluated (judged) Margaret's praise in a line, which in the poem's terms, grammatically evaluates her correctness--so closely are the possessors (being possessive pronouns) connected to the possessed: "So well your words his noble virtues praise" (1.12). "All" who judge correctly judge her "to relate them true" and "to possess them." Most interestingly, Milton repeats the objective pronoun "them" after each infinitive of praise--repetition here serves his welding process. It also reinforces the referential significance of the function word pronouns. In a sense, "Honour'd Margaret" is also repetitious, since as a passive transform of "all honoured Margaret" it is semantically equivalent to the preceding relation that all judge her to relate and possess virtue; as such an allusive, inclusive construction, it is a fitting summary phrase with which to end a poem that has imbued allusion--among other varieties of communication--with significance. Still another allusion is noted by Smart, who mentions that at least three Italian sonnets (of Dante, Tasso, and Tolomei) end with the name "Margherita."³¹ This echo extends Milton's community, making it translingual, so to speak:

But this proper naming, so long awaited, elicits, with a muted shock, our realization that we are never given the identifying information that the poem implicitly promises to render; that is, it promises

insofar as it carefully unfolds, adding a modicum of "data" in each of its phrases and clauses in their respective verses. We come to realize at the sonnet's close that its very subject, the problematics of naming, has been its process. This is not to divorce it from its occasion and historical import, from its significance as a personal compliment to Lady Margaret Hobson and her father, and as evidence of Milton's feelings about Charles' dissolution of Parliament in 1629. But we should see that this historical information, important in its own right, is also Milton's vehicle for making a larger statement, for some graver subject.

Wordsworth's great poem on the communicability of language is "Tintern Abbey." Just as Sonnet X seeks to describe the limits of linguistic inter-subjectivity (by testing those limits in its own deflection of language), so "Tintern Abbey" defines the matrix of Wordsworth's poetic idiom: the "language of the sense." Wordsworth is also interested in his linguistic community and resolves the problem of alienated expression by associating himself, the landscape, his memory of it, Dorothy, and her future self. Both Milton's and Wordsworth's poems testify to the difficulty of expression and the ego's capacity to extend itself in this endeavor, yet both end in affirmation, confirming the self's reciprocity with otherness through, as it were, a linguistic embrace.

Another similarity between "Tintern Abbey" and Milton's sonnets in general concerns rhythm. Hartman noticed the ebb and flow of "Tintern Abbey's" blank verse paragraphs and reminded us of Wordsworth's intention in this to approach the sublimity of the ode. And it was

Robert Bridges who first termed Milton's similar rhythmic waves--in the
grand style sonnets --"odic."³² One of the effects of both poets'
starts and stops is the representation of surmise as a structure of
thought; it is as though it were the stretches of mental landscape
themselves--before careful mediation by language--that were being
bared.

To illuminate Wordsworth's rhythmic ebb and flow, Hartman points
to his early breaking after the third syllable, or late pause after the
seventh; to the loose sentence construction; the qualified sentence;
and understatement. All these devices, which we discussed under
the rubric of closure in Chapter III, are not in themselves necessarily
meditative in effect (since as we saw, Jonson's plain style drew heavily
upon them); but in Wordsworth, as so often in Milton, they are deployed
to postpone hasty peripety or abrupt illumination. We see this effect
in the following passage from "Tintern Abbey," which also exhibits
Miltonic repetitions and their resulting meditative pauses:

Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.

(ll. 85-93)

The rhythm, so clearly Miltonic, functions Miltonically as well. For
example, Wordsworth's frequent caesura, being placed in syntactical
positions unusual for speech, has a completely different effect from
say, Jonson's Neoclassical caesura, which (as we saw) in corresponding
to ordinary English spoken syntactical patterns, contributes to both

precision of meaning and creation of a conversational idiom. Wordsworth, on the other hand, denies our syntactic expectations in his interpolations of information, here interposed in the negative qualifying phrases that break his main sentence into fragments--not of speech--but of thought. Wordsworth's "nor" is, moreover, not a Neoclassical conjunction, logically deployed. With it, rather, he surveys a field of possible thoughts and feelings: Wordsworth's is Milton's meditative "nor."

A less striking similarity than the rhythmic between Wordsworth's and Milton's styles, because attained through different means, is their metaphorizing of the poetic occasion. We saw in Sonnet X how Milton makes a "phenomenology of language," how his play with literary and spoken traditions is used to signify profoundly personal concerns. Wordsworth, despite his debt (inescapable for all poets) to these traditions, shies away from either using or revising them to express his individual statement. One of his great contributions to Romantic poetry is his perfection of the impulse found in proto-Romantic poets, to merge tenor and vehicle of metaphor. He creates a poetic language out of sensation by metaphorizing nature, which is then both the occasion and the essence of his meditations.

We see this phenomenon at work in "Tintern Abbey" where the reading of landscape is reversible with reading of self: everywhere, natural detail echoes inner states. Thus, as Wordsworth re-visits the banks of the Wye, all the elements of the scene contribute, in their stillness and isolation, to the thoughts they engender. In the first verse paragraph, where Wordsworth sets the scene of his recollection, he notes

the steep cliffs, which impress deep thoughts; the quiet of the sky; his own repose; silent chimney smoke; and the possible existence of an isolated hermit's cave, this last image cogently combining the human and elemental essence of silent solitude.

Wordsworth's remembered response to nature is put in terms interchangeable with the physical world itself; nature is experienced in and as emotion. "Beauteous forms" are "Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart" (l.27); "The sounding cataract/ Haunted me like a passion" (ll. 76-7). And, as the third verse paragraph builds to one of the poem's emotional peaks under the impetus of recollection, Wordsworth expresses the climax by identifying himself, whom he has characterized as a meanderer of the wood, and the river itself: "O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods" (l.56). The final association occurs at the close of the poem when Wordsworth sees, in Dorothy's wild eyes, his former self and feeling for nature, as well as her projected self when, matured, she will assume her brother's position and feeling. The series of interchanges is complete, and Wordsworth's identification with Dorothy's future self resolves the problem of discontinuity in nature.

Most of Wordsworth's energy in the poem is spent creating this synthesis of elements, creatures, humans, and time through the metaphorizing process. There is, however, an allusion to the Song of Solomon worth notice, for it is the very passage evoked by Milton in his sonnet to Lawrence, when he invited his friend to share in a community of love. Wordsworth's echo occurs while he is describing his former self, before he learned to participate lovingly with nature,

when "like a roe/ I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides/ Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams" (ll. 67-69). Yet the allusion functions proleptically, anticipating Wordsworth's eventual peripety, since the portion of the Song evoked recounts the formation of a community of lovers and nature:

...behold, he cometh leaping upon the
mountains, skipping upon the hills. My
beloved is like a roe or a young hart....
The flowers appear on the earth; the time
of the singing of birds is come, and the
voice of the turtle is heard in our land.
(2. 8-9, 12)

In general, however, Wordsworth proceeds through rememberings uncolored by past literary texts. (He has footnote to line 106 to call attention to its resemblance to one of Young's--as though he were surprised himself at his literary echo.) And his final and greatest realization is expressed as an allusion to his own text. For in the poem's concluding paragraph Wordsworth moves from the passive state of knowing that reciprocity between ego and otherness is possible (what nature taught him) to the active experiencing of this possibility with Dorothy. This experience depends on his sister's use of his discoveries in nature--as they are expressed in the poem. "Tintern Abbey" ends, then, in a kind of inscription to itself, as Wordsworth alludes to his preceding meditation in his vision of Dorothy's after-image:

when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
...with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations!

(ll. 139-421 44-46)

The hermits cave of the opening lines has been transformed into a mansion of memories, the recollections of developed understanding, gained through remembering nature, through--in fact--experiencing the poem itself.

The binding process present manifestly in "Tintern Abbey" and more implicitly in Sonnet X is an important facet of open form, which in these poems assumes thematic importance. In Chapter III, trying to account for a related aspect of this poetics, the overdetermination characterizing both the form and content of Milton's style, I suggested that it was motivated by a kind of "reticulatory" impulse, a Neo-Platonic desire to find or create a network of relationships to connect the spiritual and natural worlds. Hartman finds this impulse to be the shaping power of a specific type of lyric, the "prothalamic" poem, which achieves a union of supernatural and natural imagination, a type instanced in Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence."³³

Hartman, though mentioning Wordsworth's acknowledged precursors of this attempt in general--Spenser and Milton--notes only Spenser's "Prothalamion" as a specific model poem. Yet Milton's Sonnet XIX might easily be placed between Spenser's and Wordsworth's poems as the link to complete a triad of the three great prothalamic lyrics of English meditative verse.

Spenser's is, of course, the father poem. He begins depressed, with bitterness toward court life, but his walk out into the landscape where he envisions--realistically--the bridal preparations, restores him. The emblem of literary and natural continuity, the songs refrain, "Sweete Themmes run softlie, till I end my song," gently asserts the

affirmation that the beauty of the entire poem itself completes. Wordsworth too, begins in sadness, and his discovery in the landscape, the allegorical figure of the leech-gatherer, precipitates his recognition of a consoling truth.

But if Wordsworth's poem is closer to Spenser's than to Milton's in its connection with landscape, it is closer to Milton's in the way it achieves recognition, the way it re-vises. Spenser's refrain and the beauty of the vision itself creates consolation, as we said, but the leech-gatherer is not exactly a figure immediately suggesting sublime transcendence. Wordsworth's salvation, like Milton's in Sonnet XIX, depends more heavily upon interpretation, on the mind's operation upon phenomena in order to place their significance in both real and ideal realms.

The deeply ruminative quality of Milton's poem is not generally appreciated. He begins considering the futility of his endeavor, not either public or poetic (the usual critical reading ³⁴), but both:

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, least he returning chide,
Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd,
I fondly ask; But patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his gifts, who best
Bear his milde yoke, they serve him best, his State
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o're Land and Ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and waite.

Unlike most readers who accept the orthodox date of Milton's blindness (1652) and the date this sonnet was written (1655), I do not exclude poetic writing as one significance for "light" (1.1).

This exclusion is usually based on the fact that in 1655 Milton was writing very little poetry and was working primarily as Latin Secretary. Thus it is deduced that he is referring only to his efforts in public life. But Milton's great achievement in the sonnet is his prothalamio union of all the activities of man's intelligence (light). He therefore re-defines the biblical "talent" so that it signifies (along with man's general capability to serve God) the artist's particular aptitude. Although Barnabe Barnes had (very weakly) suggested the pun many years before, it is Milton's usage that takes hold, and to him we owe the modern definition of the term.

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Milton's extensive conception of his artistic talent accounts for the ambiguity of his sonnet's first line. He assimilates his physical, public, and poetic efforts in the construction "how my light is spent": if the verb is a past participle, Milton refers primarily to his physical eyesight, which is extinguished; if a submerged, elliptical continuous expenditure of light (i.e. talent) on public duties at the expense of his poetry; or, ever epically ambitious, he may be degrading the "minor" poetry he is writing at this time. Milton wants the resonance of all these meanings, for his despair results from the blocked desire to fulfill his covenant with God, which included for Milton both his poetic and civic work, all the products of the natural imaginative faculty that must ever strive toward spiritual fulfillment. This goal, as Milton well knew, is impossible for man on earth: it is a super-natural goal. His blindness at the opening of the poem generalizes the problem, symbolizing the frustration of postlapsarian man's yearnings for perfection on earth--as well as being a very real,

personal inhibitor.

Thus Milton begins, considering himself in a dark and wide world, separated from nature in its broadest sense, most importantly from his own human nature, the pursuit of his desires. This is precisely the consideration prompting Wordsworth's despair in "Resolution and Independence": "But there may come another day to me--/ Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty" (ll. 34-5). The more subtle and important similarity between the poets is the way in which they recover from their depressing surmises. Milton tries to understand his condition by comparing himself with the third servant of the Parable of the Talents (as alluded to in ll. 3-6), a comparison which he rejects as unsuitable to his case. It is not that the received interpretation of the Parable is denied by Milton.³⁶ He would accept God's rancor at his servant who would not, out of a fearful, self-protective sloth, work for his lord. It is rather that Milton realizes the inappropriateness of the comparison with himself. The allusion thus fills Milton's surmise with significance by forcing a negative comparison. The point is that Milton has been, in his writing of religious and political poetry, and in his service to country, anything but careful of self and slothful. He lost his eyes serving, and he knew he would, yet persevered in his duty--a fact that even Milton's detractors had acknowledged.

As does Milton, whose question, "Doth God exact day labour, light deny'd,/ I fondly ask," reveals his rejection of the Parable's applicability. The emotional import of his rejection is strengthened by the very distortion of syntax in which it is expressed--a re-

visionary syntax.

Patience, the allegorical figure in Milton's "landscape," his leech-gatherer of sorts, is not the deus ex machina of which she has been accused, but like all such effectively executed figures, a projection of Milton's thought.³⁷ Milton needs a virtue--at once his own and yet unknown to the part of him that has been "murmuring." He therefore adduces the personification minimally, merely naming her. Her function is to subdue the restless movement of the preceding lines, for as we saw, though the sonnet begins in quiet meditation, its syntax tangles as it rehearses a mind's fitful stoppings and starts. For example, line six seems to preface the following line, which would then be spoken by God. We understand that this is the poet's utterance only in line eight.

It is Milton's patience, then that allows him to survey his situation more clearly, without a cloud of despair. He moves in the last lines to a New Testament understanding of service, as we see in his allusion to Ephesians and Revelation. The angels in these books "stand" (armoured in expectation) and "wait" (attend as a servant) as well as "stay in expectation."³⁹ The best service is not passive but poised; performed on earth, it is man's link and path to heaven. These discoveries are made by Milton through his consideration of the Old Testament's third servant, his own past achievements, present condition, and God's New Testament Kingly state. Treating both the Bible and his own life as texts, as symbolic expressions, he properly evaluates them, ending not in resignation but in readiness.

Wordsworth's corresponding act of interpretation takes as its object his past reaction to nature, which is present in "Resolution and Independence" in the form of memories. These he recalls in stanzas one through seven, while the remainder of the poem represents his re-vision of their significance.

Wordsworth's text for revision concerns his original idea of man's place in nature, which he remembers to be a mindless participation with weather and landscape:

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
The pleasant season did my heart employ;
My old remembrances went from me wholly;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.
(ll. 15-21)

In this state of unadulterated (by thought) sensation, Wordsworth experiences a reversal, as he plunges into a mood of anxiety and isolation:

I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky;
And I bethought me of the playful hare;
Even such a happy Child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk, and from all care;
But there may come another day to me--
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.
(ll. 29-35)

Wordsworth's error lies in the extrmeties (identification versus isolation) of his position. At this point in the poem, he can find no middle path between innocence and experience.

The falsity of this view emerges in his mis-reading of another great prothalamie text that harmonizes the natural and supernatural realms, The Sermon on the Mount:

But how can He expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?
(ll. 40-43)

Wordsworth reads the Sermon incorrectly, as espousing no industry for man, whereas its whole import lies in its injunction to man to perform the duties "natural" for him--his spiritual obligations. Christ's analogies of the birds and lilies of the fields are meant to teach man the priority of the spiritual over the physical life, but he does not mean that man should take no care for practical concerns. Significantly, Wordsworth understands the text literally, failing to interpret its symbolic significance--as a child might read it.

But Wordsworth does correctly interpret the leech-gatherer, whom he finally sees as resilient man, a man who has synthesized spiritual and natural concerns. The moment of revelation comes in stanza XIX when Wordsworth imagines in his "mind's eye" the leech-gatherer wandering continually about the moor. This after-image perfectly answers the anxiety of discontinuity and alienation expressed in the opening stanzas and in the allusion to The Sermon on the Mount.

Wordsworth finds the solution to the problem of man's earthly status in the very appearance of the leech-gatherer, who is like a huge stone perched on a bald eminence, an amphibious creature, with feet and head "coming together in life's pilgrimage" (stzs. ix-x). The elemental imagery suggests a harmony with nature very unlike the kind that the poet described in his opening stanzas. For his relation to nature was there unmediated by thought, an unnatural participation in nature for man, God's only thinking creature. The leech-gatherer, on the other hand, is "firm of mind" (l. 138), and Wordsworth stresses

his courteous and intelligent speech. The old man "blends" (l. 134) diverse matters in his discourse, and Wordsworth understands that the leech-gatherer himself is "blended," neither too much with nor against the world.

Thus Wordsworth, at the poem's close, draws a consoling conclusion concerning man's and specifically the poet's place in society. In doing so, he joins his two greatest prothalamie predecessors, Spenser and Milton, men who had also sought and found the proper connection between resolution and independence, between external affairs and the inner imaginative life.

I would like to return now, in the final pages of this study, to the facet of the prothalamie impulse that I have been calling "overdetermination," after Freud's use of this term in characterizing the dream. In the preceding chapters, we discussed the overdetermination ("desirable uncertainty") of Milton's allusive poetics--how apparently innocent elements of his poems, like those of dreams--are really laden with meaning. We saw too, in comparing Milton with Jonson, that the former poet was supremely Romantic in his depiction of the hidden content and workings of the mind. For this purpose, Milton directs the interpretive process of his overdetermined expression, so that we cannot assign arbitrary meanings--though we may multiple ones--to his poetry.

Among the sonnets, however, Sonnet XXI exemplifies a rather different use of poetic overdetermination, for though its elements are highly charged with meanings, these are not subjected to a chastening design. To be more specific, the poem's diction is

curiously equivocal, but not as in a pun, for example, where two or more meanings may be meaningfully sustained in a given context. With much less direction, Milton very playfully deploys words whose secondary and tertiary meanings can in no way be meaningfully substituted for their primary semantic import in his context. These multiple meanings, barely suggestive, seem rather to hover about the sonnet's lines. Although this aspect of the poem is never noticed, it provides the solution for the only critical problem that commentators have raised concerning this invitation to Cyriack, its relation to the Horatian tradition of Invitation with regard to its tone. Thus Honigmann writes, rejecting the traditional reading of the poem as a friendly, bantering Horatian Invitation:

I suspect that the sonnet is a second invitation to a young friend who had excused himself, an appeal for companionship much more pressing than directed to Lawrence. Despite its superficial resemblances to Horace's bantering Ode to Quintus Hirpinus (II. xi) this is a sonnet of barely disguised rebuke, far removed from the spirit of the Horatian invitation.³⁹

Keeping in mind the tenets of Milton's Romantic poetics of dew, and comparing his poem with one of Wordsworth's, "To My Sister," clarifies this problem of tone. Contrary to Honigmann's belief, Milton's poem, as Wordsworth's, is written in the spirit of the Horatian Invitation.⁴⁰ Both poems are about release and so display the verbal play of an unguarded, undirected use of language; Milton's release, in short, is from a precisely logical use of words, while Wordsworth's is one from literary tradition. This kind of imprecision is, of course, the license of all poetry, and yet in these poems Wordsworth, and especially Milton, take the poetic prerogative to its

furthest extreme. The latter poet's message, concerning the relaxation of the daily constraints of sense and order, is conveyed through the poetic use of what Freud called our 41 "pleasure in nonsense" as expressed in dreaming and joking.

I quote Milton's sonnet in full, underlining the words that suggest meanings other than their primary ones:

Cyriack, whose Grandsire on the Royal Bench
Of Brittish Themis, with no mean applause
Pronounc't and in his volumes taught our Lawes,
Which others at their Barr so often wrench;
To day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth, that after no repenting drawes;
Let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intend, and what the French:
To measure life, learn thou betimes, and know
Toward solid good what leads the nearest way;
For other things mild Heav'n a time ordains,
And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.

We notice immediately that Milton's language, which functions primarily in legal (Lawes, Barr, wrench), geometric (measure), and in non-technical, ordinary language uses, is also redolent with musical-poetical meaning. "Lawes as we know from our discussion of Sonnet XII, is the name of Milton's famous musician friend, the man who set words to music--without "wrenching" them. The "bar" in music is the notational device used to indicate periodical duration and accent, while "rest" and "pause" signify caesura in both music and poetry. Less related to the music-poetry theme are the words "volume" and "drawes," though the former term signifies the form of both music and poetry when published, and the latter signifies a sister art.

"Measure" may mean (OED. III. 16-20) "a metrical group or period (meter)"; "an air, tune, melody"; "rhythmical motion"; or

a "dance"--as it does in Paradise Lost (I. 170). Finally, "refrain" and "burden" are words taken from the language of poetic song, a vital language before the separation of music and text.

Milton, contrary to Honigmann's view, is very close to the spirit of Horace's ode to Quintus. Horace, like Milton, urges his friend to quit, for a time, the tumultuous world of political debate:

Quid bellicosus Cantaber et Scythes,
Hirpine Quincti, cogitet Hadria
divisus obiecto, remittas
quaerere, nec trepides in usum

(refrain from inquiring what the warlike Cantabrian,
and the Scythian, separated from us by the Adriatic,
is meditating.)⁴²

Horace wants to annihilate separation and create a community, which he would form through the binding powers of music and poetry. His mention of the lyre (an instrument affording the musician the opportunity to sing words to his music) and even of the player's "bound" or "knotted" hair have symbolic importance:

eburna, dic age, cum lyra
maturet, in comptum Lacaenae
more comas religata nodum!

(come, bid her hasten with her ivory lyre, her
hair tied up in a graceful knot, after the
fashion of a Spartan maid.)

Thus, though Milton does not explicitly mention the force that will bind himself and his friend into a community of delight, he does implicitly indicate this force by creating a web of subliminal suggestion in his choice of words. The poem's surface is allusively connected to a kind of deep structure so remote that no grammarian could ever draw its tree. And yet we may postulate that Milton,

always aware of the fecundity of language, purposely chooses words whose non-sense--as well as whose sense--indicate the nature of his invitation: an invitation that is, after all, not extended in anger, rebuke, or injury, but in the pleasures of play.

When we turn to Wordsworth's poem "To My Sister" we find a different kind of indirection from Milton's "nonsensical" manner in Sonnet XXI. But Wordsworth's is also a subliminal technique, for although his poem's meaning depends upon our awareness of its relation to the Classical Invitation, on its surface "To My Sister" does not directly reveal any connection with the past. It pretends to be a spontaneous, lyric utterance, and yet Wordsworth writes it from a traditional Invitation sub-text that surfaces allusively at points in the poem. Thus, just as Milton overdetermined his vocabulary to suggest the quality of the community he would enjoy, so Wordsworth underlies his poem with associations from the Classical Invitation to define his community. I quote the poem in full for easy reference:

It is the first mild day of March:
Each minute sweeter than before,
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

My sister! ('tis a wish of mine)
Now that our morning meal is done,
Make haste, your morning task resign;
Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you;--and, pray
Put on with speed your woodland dress;

And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar:
We from to-day, my Friend, will date
The opening of the year.

Love, now a universal birth
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth:
--It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason:
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey:
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls:
They shall be tuned to love.

Then come, my Sister! come, I pray,
With speed put on your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

The most obvious similarity between this poem and the Classical Invitation is its call for a community of "blessed idleness." As Paul Sheats writes, "Like a figure inclassical sculpture, his forward motion is disciplined by his backward glance, and the poem as a whole embodies a moment of stasis that will spontaneously dissolve into action, an action thatparticipates in the mounting intensity of the season and yet does so in communion with man." ⁴³ But Sheats, though he asserts it, fails to make a case for the poem's "epochal" nature because he misses Wordsworth's link with tradition. Sheats believes

that the poem is "an expression of personal feeling rather than the imitation of extra-personal norms,"⁴⁴ and yet it seems likelier, considering Wordsworth's allusion to the Invitation tradition, that the poem's import derives from Wordsworth's transformation of poetic norms so that they might serve his personal needs.

Wordsworth's first alteration of tradition involves his choice of the ballad stanza as an alternative format to the verse epistle or sonnet, the stanzas usually used in English verse for the Classical Invitation. The ballad, being associated with English folklore and simple, heartfelt song, suggests the appropriate "atmosphere" for Wordsworth's version of release.

In contrast to the tradition, food is not the symbolic focus for the day's delight; indeed, Wordsworth makes a point of beginning after a meal, and this, breakfast, as opposed to the traditional supper. With this alteration of symbolic language, Wordsworth indicates that on the human plane community already exists; he seeks the membership of nature. He thus introduces the idea of an expansive community rather than the Invitation's cloistered and selective one. Wordsworth, stationed at his dorrway, tells of the first mild day of March (stz.1) and of the new, bare trees, fields, and mountains (stz. 2). In place of the traditional lyre player, Wordsworth has a singing redbreast, a cogent image combining the natural world and music. But he does include the traditional exhortation to resign daily tasks, to exclude study, and to revel in idleness (stzs. 3 & 4).

In stanzas five through nine, Wordsworth defines the community of love by describing it in symbolic language of his own

invention, and yet in language not completely removed from the Invitation tradition. All the conventional elements are present but in new contexts and combinations. For example, Wordsworth incorporates time (the threatening impetus for Horace's carpe diem) into human life, which he terms a "living calendar." In this way, Wordsworth harmonizes time, makes it part of his community, rather than perceiving it as an alien force. He even includes restraints in this community of release by using the language of law to speak of the silent vows that will legislate his and Dorothy's behavior. Wordsworth also makes the feeling/reasoning dichotomy underlying the Invitation tradition explicit. He, like Martial, Horace, and Ben Jonson (as we saw in Chapter III), excludes hard study from his day, writing, "--It is the hour of feeling" (stz. 6)

The drinking at the conventional banquet is in Wordsworth a spiritual imbibing from nature (stz.7), and the music occurs out of doors and is all encompassing. It is not enjoyed passively but is regarded as an activeforce that defines the spiritual realm and binds spirits together (stz. 9)

Both Milton and Wordsworth, then, make rather indirect use of tradition in order to express their personal conceptions of community. Great poets, we know, are those who confront tradition and "make it new." In the poetics of the Romantic lyric, contrary to a once popular belief, the past is not so much ignored as it is transformed.

Studying Wordsworth as the heir of Milton (the acknowledged master of transformation) helps us to discover the processes of individuation to which the poetic past is subjected in Nineteenth-Century Romantic poetics.

Very likely, Milton's last sonnet is "Methought I saw my late espoused Saint." His placement of it in the final position in the sonnet group--at the least--testifies to his sense of it as a culmination. The poem, in its allusiveness, recovers more comprehensively than any one of the other sonnets Milton's version of the Neoplatonic desire for love. And, poetry's debt to the means of expressing desire is here made explicit: the dream is shown to be, after all, the stuff of poems. Structurally too, the devices of openness of Sonnet XXIII threaten to over-ride its metrical limits. Milton gathers here all that he learned from writing in the sonnet format to render his greatest meditative lyric, perhaps the greatest in the Romantic meditative tradition. Further than this Milton could not go in so "narrow a room":

Methought I saw my late espoused Saint
 Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
 Whom Joves great son to her glad Husband gave,
 Rescu'd from death by force though pale and faint.
 Mine as whom washt from spot of child-bed taint,
 Purification in the old Law did save,
 And such, as yet once more I trust to have
 Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
 Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:
 Her face was vail'd, yet to my fancied sight,
 Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd
 So clear, as in no face with more delight.
 But O as to embrace me she inclin'd
 I wak'd, she fled, and day brought back my night.

I would not enter the critical controversy over the date of this sonnet, nor speculate about the well worn, related problem of which wife is referred to--Mary or Katherine--but rather adduce the cruxes to support an interpretation of the poem as a surmise, as an indeterminate because overdetermined structure very much like a dream, to which of course, the poem is an allusion. It is altogether

appropriate that we cannot penetrate the veils and screens shrouding Milton's saint, for she is to stand in the poem for all objects of desire, desire being for Milton (anticipating Freud) man's necessary, if lamentable, psychic condition.

Man has always heroically pursued the unobtainable, and sometimes created structures that feigned attainment. So if dreams are our unwilling fulfillments of wishes, poems may be our waking dreams. Milton, because he understood the motivation shared by these strategies of desire, conflates them in Sonnet XXIII and bares both the struggle and defeat such understanding entails. The poem as I read it, then, is about (among other things) human desire and the compensatory function of the poetic process.

For a more traditional reading of the poem we are indebted to Leo Spitzer, whose description of its three-fold movement, from a classical pagan redemption, through the Old Law's salvation, to the promise of the New Testament, clearly elucidates the sonnet's allusive pattern.⁴⁶ But Spitzer insists on too precise an identification for Milton's lady--the Donna Angelica of the Dolce Stile Nuova tradition--as well as not adequately accounting for the extreme despair of the poem's last line. For if Milton has moved toward the Christian realization that the ideal may be reached in heaven (as demonstrated in his allusion to Revelation, 1. 10), then he should imbibe the consolation from the Book of Revelation also--as he does so clearly in Lycidas.

But Milton does not so much evoke a sign (his wife) and assign it a symbolic significance (Donna Angelica) as he represents

the symbol-making process of imaginative perception. The poetic imagination must hold in abeyance both the real and ideal; thus, each of the allusions with which Milton seems to dispense, are really indispensable to Milton's main point: the symbolic texts alluded to, in themselves, embody multiplicities of meaning. Thus, with his first words, "Me-thought I saw," Milton evokes the entire tradition of dream literature, the corpus of poetry that expressed, explicitly, the knowledge of its origination in desire. Moreover, the more specific tradition alluded to, that of the Donna Angelica, concerns as Petrarch's and his followers' works show, a highly ambiguous concept, its lady being both real and ideal.

The incessant "dithering" in Petrarchan poetry concerning the reality and ideality of the beloved is not necessarily a trivial matter, though it had become so for many sonneteers of the 1590's, as we saw in Chapter I. Milton captures the essential import behind this aspect of the tradition, the psychological factor of man's quest for perfection, his awareness of its impossibility, and his consequent fictional compromises. The ideal-real lady in Petrarchan poetry may be--in the most self-conscious of the Petrarchans--an emblem for the poem or the poetic process itself, as she was for Milton in his Italian sonnets.

Yet critics continue to argue about the identity of Milton's saint--Mary or Katherine? One of the really interesting aspects of the debate, as Douglas Bush noticed, is that the arguments of both sides rest on a false assumption, that Milton is equating his wife with both Alcestis and an Old Testament, purified woman; whereas,

clearly, he is analogizing. And though the terms of the analogy are significant, in this poem the act of simile construction itself--surmising--is meaningful, especially when we remember Freud's characterization of the dream's refusal to exclude possibility.⁴⁸

Milton's first possibility, Alcestis, embodies the ideal-real combination suggested in the first line. For it is an allusion to Euripedes' curious, happy=ending "tragedy," with which he might be said to have ushered in the modern (morning after) love story--Northrop Frye's "low mimetic" mode. Alcestis is an ideal, heroic figure in her self-sacrifice; with her return, however, she becomes real, and we are forced to dwell upon the very human, domestic ramifications that her adventure will have for reality. Milton's choice of this particular classical heroine seems significant, then, insofar as her complexity contributes meaning in the symbol-making process of the poem.

Similarly, Milton's next allusion, which begins likening his dream vision to a woman purified of "child-bed taint" and ends with the description of his saint couched in terms from Revelation (7. 13-14), is designed to capture the essence of both the human and heavenly. Milton is not rejecting Old Law for New, but creating a testamentary relation between them: not either or, but the thought of both is necessary to characterize his symbol. This relation is illustrated in Milton's excited, very moving wish--which he interpolates between the allusions to the Old and New Testaments--to see his wife as if she were one who was purified (Old Law), but manifest in heaven, draped in the white robes of Revelation's

redeemed souls. The distortion of syntax of this passage, it need hardly be noted, is charged with the emotional energy of desire, and represents the often disjointed experience of a dream.

The virtues of Milton's "saint" (a term combining both the Puritan significance of any "elected" soul, and the more general meaning of an inhabitant of heaven) are love, sweetness, and goodness, those of a real woman; but they shine "as in no face with more delight," and are thus idealized in her.

Milton, of course, sees her with "fancied" sight, a description of his physical blindness, his dream state, and his act of poetic creation. These three conditions seem to coalesce and generalize the experience recounted. For all men on earth are blind, seeing both "through a glass darkly," all men incessantly desire ideals, and they express their desires in their dreams--or, perhaps, in their poems. I have not meant to denature the specific quality of Milton's desired ideal in my reading; that is, the poem is very much a wish for a wife, for a marriage. Unfortunately, Milton understood too well the difficulty of securing this domestic wish; perhaps that is why, in the act of expressing it, he creates an artful sublimation and one that reveals its awareness of itself as such. Long before Freud mapped the interior motivations for creative activity in civilization, poets had intuited them, but only a few--Spenser and Milton chief among these--had devised a poetics that actually reflected this interior mental terrain.

Sonnet XXIII inspired at least one of Wordsworth's sonnets, whose

first line, "I heard (alas! 'twas only in a dream)" and last, "She soared--and I awoke, struggling in vain to follow," testify to the debt. A more interesting, less imitative demonstration of Milton's influence on Wordsworth is found in "She was a phantom of delight." This poem is also a good gloss for Sonnet XXIII in that Wordsworth here explicitly records the poet-perceiver's importance in the search for the "perfect woman" and thereby more overtly acknowledges the poetic act to be a compensatory structure for desire. The poem is in fact an anatomy of the poetic surmise or symbol-making process, and Wordsworth, like Milton, shows a refusal to exclude significance.

Rather than gather meaning for the subject of his poem by alluding to past literary texts, Wordsworth alludes to his own memories of perception, which he "textualizes" for us by rendering their interpretation. He begins with his understanding of the woman as a supernatural being, this extra-sensory quality being, appropriately, nearly independent of his will and perceptual powers. He does not actively see her so much as she invades his consciousness:

She was a Phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely Apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament; (ll. 1-4)

But she is not completely unearthly, for he describes her eyes and hair to be like twilight, and her other features are drawn "From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;" (l.9). Wordsworth concludes his first stanza rendering her meaning for him at a point of time in the past, expressed in imagery suggestive of danger: "A dancing Shape,

an Image gay,/To haunt, to startle, and way-lay" (ll. 10-11).

His second stanza domesticates the woman while not negating her supernatural quality: "I saw her upon nearer view,/A Spirit, yet a Woman too!" (ll. 12-13). Wordsworth's nearer view brings him into sight of her "household motions," yet he does not name these, and his real concern is with her human virtue:

A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.
(ll. 17-20)

It becomes clear that Wordsworth's poem is about how he, as a poet, and especially as a Romantic poet, creates a symbol. The initial symbol-making impulse comes from without the poet; a sign must resemble the qualities it is to symbolize, which is why this perfect woman is described passively (from the point of view of the poet) in the first stanza. Once the subject is revealed, the poet's perception takes over and Wordsworth's piling up of her qualities in stanza two suggests his powers of figuration.

His last view is with "eye serene" (l.21); in tranquility does he perceive the innermost truth--not more true than the previous observations, but a more hidden truth, got at through reflection:

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.
(ll. 21-30)

Like Milton in Sonnet XXIII, Wordsworth looks backward, to the entire poetic tradition that idealized women--though characteristically, he does so without the use of literary allusion. As we saw, Milton's use of literary allusion enabled him to underlie his poem with a meta-poetic statement. Wordsworth exchanges this recondite method for a more explicit one, preferring to overdetermine his utterance on its surface or literal level. Thus, for example, his image of the woman as "ornament" and his phrase "pulse of the machine," combine both the human and mechanical, the natural reality and the ideal--that is, the created device; they thus capture the real-ideal duality of the symbolic woman as she exists through-out poetic tradition, as well as in the history of thought of men who did not write poetry.

But it is with his own poetic act that Wordsworth is most concerned, for his perfect woman is "nobly planned," suggesting the poet's role in her existence. Wordsworth also implies the transcendental power of poetry when he makes her a "Traveller between life and death." We see that like Milton, Wordsworth understands the motivation behind poetic fiction, the desire to bridge the expanse of reality's flux with some nobler, truer, fiction.

I want to develop a point concerning Wordsworth's poetics that I merely mentioned above when I wrote that Wordsworth, in eschewing Miltonic literary allusion as a mode of recapturing memories, overdetermined his poetry on its surface or literal level. It is this technique that is so often responsible for the uncanny quality of Wordsworth's poetry, a characteristic usually ignored in studies

of his poetry, though it is an important corollary to his brand of personal allusion.

This oversight is not surprising, since the domain of the uncanny is generally agreed to be prose fiction. Poetry is excluded because an uncanny affect, according to the received view, requires a startling abrogation of natural law; since poetry, by the very act of being labelled so, excites expectations of unreality, it cannot produce uncanny affects in its audience. This is the position of Tsvetan Todorov, whose genre study of the uncanny, the fantastic, and the marvelous treats each in prose fiction as (respectively), the genre of the unnatural which is finally explainable as natural; the duration of unresolved doubt concerning the unnatural: and the unnatural which is truly so, that is, which is shown to conform to its own laws of reality.⁴⁹

Freud also studied the uncanny, but his perspective, being as we might expect, psychological and audience-directed, suggests a way in which poetry can be uncanny. Freud begins his essay "The Uncanny" with an exposition of the German word for "canny," "heimlich," which maintains the antithetical meanings of "strange" and "familiar", as well as the transitional significance of "hidden." As the translator of Freud's essay notes, semantic breadth characterizes the English word "canny" as well, which signifies both "cosy" and "possession of magical powers."⁵⁰ Through an examination of the affect induced by the uncanny is not the unusual or unreal but the familiar, some element of our reality that we have either "repressed" or "surmounted." If the uncanny affect is due to our recognition of something that we--as a .

member of civilization--have surmounted, then the existence of material unreality is a necessary condition to produce the affect. For in this case it is man's shared, mythical imagination that is provoked, man's irrational beliefs, such as those in daemons, devils, withcraft, and the like. But if the uncanny is a result of our recognition of a repressed personal belief, then no abrogation of natural law is involved; for in this case the repressed material is a memory of some childhood complex (castration, womb, or oedipal fantasies), and since as children we have little cognizance of the laws of material reality, no violation of them is required in reviving our repressed memories.

I would not try to psychoanalyze Wordsworth through his poetry. But I will adduce Freud's second mode of the uncanny because it seems to explain some poetic effects resulting from Wordsworth's conception of memory and poetry. Wordsworth, all agree, is the poet of personal memory, the first poet in English literature to devote his art to the recovery of childhood states of consciousness. The "Intimations Ode" is perhaps his greatest hymn to this poetic creed, but the ode treats the act of recovery only in its pleasurable aspect. In other poems, the recapturing of childhood memories is painful, and it is in these cases that Wordsworth sometimes deploys the uncanny as an allusive mode, in order to convey his adult reaction to past states of consciousness.

Though very subtly, "She was a phantom of delight" evokes an uncanny affect. It is not so much that Wordsworth ascribes supernatural qualities to the lady per se, for as Todorov says, we

expect the supernatural in poetry, but rather that Wordsworth combines bizarre and homely imagery throughout the poem to describe her. The poem really insists too much on the phantom and human qualities of its "perfect woman": ornament and machine. I think, then, that along with being a poetic affirmation of the creative process, the poem also evokes the troubled memory of the male child's desire for some ideal woman, such as his mother.

Aside from Wordsworth's local uncanny figures, the appearance in his poems of quasi-human hermits and leech-gatherers, his most obvious use of the uncanny occurs in the Lucy poems. All commentators upon them notice an "eerie" quality, and Wordsworth himself tells us of his past, "strange fits of passion." The uncanny affect in the poem of this title, the first of the series, derives from its final lines: "O mercy! to myself I cried,/ If Lucy should be dead!" The fit of passion is "strange" indeed, evoking both an unexpected yet common anxiety among lovers, that irrational fear for a beloved's well-being that is often a mask for repressed hostility.⁵¹

It is the conceptual content of elements like this one that produce uncanny affects that have unsettled the poem's critics, a fact attested to in the controversy waged over the identity of Lucy. My view that the uncanny affect of the poems results when a repressed childhood felling is uncovered supports F.W. Bateson's belief that Wordsworth is representing his former incestuous desires for his sister. Whether or not Dorothy is meant, we can account for the poems' peculiar tonal effect by understanding that Wordsworth is remembering a love complicated with strong feelings of guilt and hostility. These feelings

may not have been directed at Dorothy. "Strange fits of passion" associates Lucy and the moon (hence Diana) when the moon "drops" just as the speaker reaches Lucy's cottage; the poem's expression of repressed guilt, then, may spring from any act of de-flowering, real or imagined.

Hartman has written of the Lucy poems as "rites de passage,"⁵² transitions between childhood and adulthood. But we should see that for Wordsworth poetry was the vehicle for passing back to childhood both to confirm its innocent delights as well as to resolve his adult uneasiness over its more sinister "delights." This movement is identical to Milton's, though Wordsworth's major contribution to Romantic poetics resides in his substitution of personal consciousness for literary tradition as the matrix of memory.

Footnotes

Chapter IV

1

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), I, p. 59

2

For Bloom's theory of influence, see his The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry (New York: Oxford U.P., 1973); A Map of Misreading (New York: Oxford U.P., 1976).

3

R.D. Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1922). The poem cited in my text is on pages 489-90, but see pages 478-584 for Havens' discussion of the influence of Milton's sonnets.

4

Lee M. Johnson, Wordsworth and The Sonnet, in Anglistica, XIX (Rosenkilde & Bagger: Copenhagen, 1973), pp. 9-13; 174-180.

5

Cf. Louis Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1954), pp. 321-330. Martz does note that poetry like Wordsworth's is different from that patterned on more deliberately religious techniques of meditation, but nevertheless groups the types of together under the heading "meditative."

6

W.K. Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (Lexington: U. of Kentucky Press, 1967), pp. 103-116.

7

Geoffrey Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814 (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1964), p. 5.

8

Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 33.

9

Geoffrey Hartman, "Wordsworth, Inscriptions, and Romantic Nature Poetry," in From Sensibility To Romanticism, p. 297. Jared Curtis suggests the influence of Jonson's "Cary-Morison" ode on Wordsworth's enjambment within a strict formal pattern, but the latter poet's ebb and flow effect seems very far from Jonson's much less frequent and therefore much more spectacular enjambment. Cf. Wordsworth's Experiments With Tradition: The Lyric Poems of 1802 (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1971), p. 95. For a view similar to Curtis' concerning Jonson's influence see J.D. Rea "Coleridge's Intimations of Immortality from Proclus," MP 26 (1928), pp. 203-4; and Herbert Hartman, "The

'Intimations' of Wordsworth's 'Ode', RES 6 (1930), pp. 136-8.

10

M.H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in From Sensibility to Romanticism pp. 527-566.

11

Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 3.

12

Harold Bloom, The Ringers in The Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1971), pp. 41-50

13

Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, pp. 8-9.

If we read Lycidas to be more about the development of the imagination (historically and personally) than to be about premature death, the flower passage may be seen as a stage in that development. The gorgeous "poesies" (poems) attached to Lycidas' hearse stand for a conventional, elegiac, "tacked-on" type of occasional poetry, which is inferior to the Christian inspired consolation of Lycidas' last lines, though we should see that this higher form of poetry is attained only through the process of surmise, which is the process of entertaining possibilities--even bad ones.

14

The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P.P. Howe (London: J.M. Dent, 1930), p. 112.

15

All quotations of Wordsworth's Poetry are from The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), vols. 1-5. The text of "To the Cuckoo" appears in vol. 2, pp. 207-8.

16

Honigmann, p. 86.

17

Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 270.

18

For Hartman's discussion of "insight" see, Wordsworth's Poetry, pp. 260-273.

19

Honigmann (pp. 49-50), unable to account for Milton's lack of decorum in his sustained reference to the Earl in a poem of praise to the daughter, suggests that the poem may have been written as prefatory commendatory verse for some post-humous publication of the Earl's writings. Alan Rudrum praises the poem for its solution of Milton's "problem": praising two people in the brief span of fourteen lines. See, Milton's "Comus" and Shorter Poems (London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 37-8. Finley (p. 42) observes, incorrectly, I think, that this

sonnet is "simple in both structure and grammar." See also Mark Pattison, *The Sonnets of John Milton* (New York: Appleton, 1883), pp. 144-146; and Smart, pp. 53-55.

20

Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon, pp. 103-116.

21

Hollander, Vision and Resonance, pp. 98-9.

22

I borrow the term "hard" enjambment from John Hollander, who adumbrates a taxonomy of line termini from hard to soft according to our usual syntactic expectations. See his Vision and Resonance, pp. 99-116.

23

The naming act is complex even with Adam, because of course, his distribution of titles in Eden imposes "otherness" and the "burden of syntax" upon creation; in Paradise Lost, VII, Milton checks our pride in prelapsarian man's naming by juxtaposing it with a discussion of God's androgenous, autonomous existence. Thus, like all actions and creatures in Eden, Adam's naming for Milton is morally neutral capacity--with no predetermined fate.

24

The purely exclamatory or evocative function of the vocative (i.e. mentioning a name without predicating anything about it) is often signalled by the particle "O." Technically, Milton never uses the vocative in this way in the sonnets, though Pattison fails to recognize this when he objects to Sonnet I's "O Nightingale": "the exclamatory particle, falling on our ear first, raises the expectation of a burst of emotion, which is rudely checked when we find it leads to nothing, but only serves as what grammarians call 'the sign of the vocative'" (p. 84). But as we saw in our discussion of Sonnet I, Milton is very earnestly talking to and about the Nightingale, albeit no literal bird in the landscape.

25

I am indebted to Professor Allen Mandelbaum for this observation concerning the genitive; he cites an unpublished paper by Renee Tombe as his source.

26

Honigmann, p. 111.

27

Jespersen compares "the" with "that," finding the former historically both phonetically and semantically weaker as a determiner. See, Essentials of English Grammar (Alabama: U. of Alabama Press, 1964) p. 161.

28

See Roger Brown and Albert Gilman, "The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity," in *Style and language*, ed. Thomas Sebeok (New York: Wiley, 1960), pp. 153-176.

29

Honigmann (p. 113) glosses "later born" as follows: "not literally true, as Milton was born in 1608, unless 'flourish' - 'to be in one's bloom or prime' (OED 4)."

30

Honigmann, p. 113.

31

Smart, p. 55.

32

Hartman's commentary on "Tintern Abbey" is on pp. 26-30 in Wordsworth's Poetry; Robert Bridges' observation is found in Poems of John Keats, ed. G. Thorn Drury (London, 1896), pp. lxx-lxxi.

33

Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, pp. 266-274.

34

For a summary of the criticism which reads the poem as either concerning Milton's private or public life, see *Variorum*, pp. 460-64.

35

J.L. Potter pointed out two sonnets of Barnabe Barnes' that use "talent" in both the biblical and modern senses ("Milton's Talent Sonnet and Barnabe Barnes," *N&Q*, iv (1957), p. 447. The quality of the poems (numbers xxvi and xxxviii) makes them very unlikely objects of Milton's imitation: moreover, Barnes does not seem to be punning, but merely to be using "talent" along with other terms from the parable, as a simple analogy. I quote one of Barnes' talent sonnets (xxxvi) to illuminate Milton's genuine use of the pun in comparison:

Great God of larges, bountifull good giver
Of Endless blessings (as thou did bestow
On mee poore wretch, that reason how to know
Thce without all beginning endlesse liver)
Powre likewise downe thy graces lovely River,
And let it (Lord) my pore hart overflow:
These like Sweete fire (which Divine spirits blow)
May clearly burne in zeale of thy Loves ever:
That all my thoughts thy Testament embrace,
From thy rich treasures of endlesse grace;
But (for thy sake) let it procure a place
That all my wits thy termeless grace set out,

That by thee praising I may shew thy grace,
Which in large Talent thou to me let out:
That after good accompt (past terme of ages)
I may receive a trustie stewards wages.

36

William Riley Parker, in his biography of Milton, maintains the view that the poet is rejecting or qualifying the meaning of the Parable of the Talents. See Milton, vol. 1, pp. 468-76, and vol. 2, pp. 1042-3, note 140.

37

This reading of Patience is implied in Paul Goodman's otherwise excellent close analysis of the poem in The Structure of Literature (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1954), pp. 192-215.

38

The allusion to Ephesians (6.11) was noted by J.L. Jackson and W.E. Weese, MLN 72 (1957), pp. 91-3. For a discussion of the allusion to Revelation see P.R. Baumgartner, "Milton and Patience" SP, 60 (1963), pp. 203-213.

39

Monigmann, p. 52.

40

See Chapter III of this study for my discussion of the traditional Classical Invitation poem.

41

Freud, Jokes, p. 175.

42

Horace, Ode II. xi, in Horace, The Odes and Epodes, trans. C.E. Bennett (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1914), pp. 132-3.

43

Paul D. Sheats, The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785-1798 (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1973), p. 182.

44

Sheats, pp. 181-3.

45

For a cogent summary of the debate, see John T. Shawcross, "Milton's Sonnet XXIII," N&Q, iii (1956), pp. 202-4.

46

Leo Spitzer, "Understanding Milton," Hopkins Review, IV (1951), pp. 16-27.

47

Bush, Variorum, p. 489.

48

See Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, especially the chapter entitled "The Dream-Work."

49

Tsvetan Todorov, The Fantastic: A Structural Approach To A Literary Genre, trans. Richard Howard (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve U., 1973), pp. 24-40.

50

Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" In the Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, gen. ed. James Strachey, vol. xvii (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 219-252.

51

Freud, "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety," in The Standard Edition, vol. xx, pp. 87-173.

John Price has written an interesting article on "Strange fits of passion" that takes a psychoanalytical approach--too far, I think, when he applies Fenichel's thoughts on oral fusion to Wordsworth's poem. See, "Wordsworth's Lucy," American Imago, 31, 4 (1974), pp. 360-375.

52

Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 157.

Conclusion

We have no less respect for the memory of Milton as patriot than as a poet. Whether he was a true patriot, we shall not enquire: he was at least a consistent one. He did not retract his defence of the people of England; he did not say that his sonnets to Vane or Cromwell were meant ironically; he was not appointed Poet-Laureat to a court which he had reviled and insulted; he accepted neither place nor pension; nor did he write paltry sonnets upon the "Royal fortitude" of the House of Stuart, by which, however, they really lost something.

William Hazlitt¹

When I began my research for this study of Milton's sonnets, I was surprised at the little critical attention they had received. Most of the work, the best done by scholars like Woodhouse and Parker, is biographical, which is understandable considering the poems' personal quality, their close relation to "occasions" of Milton's public and private life. In part, this limited interest results from Milton's politics, which blinded influential monarchists from Dr. Johnson to T.S. Eliot-though it did not Hazlitt. But in greater part, this disregard stems from Milton's having written epics: in an oeuvre that includes the major genre, sonnets must be relegated to minor status. And the terms "major" and "minor," even when used descriptively, to denote length, always carry value judgements. The lyrics of poets who never attempt epics are spared an automatic dismissal to minority and enjoy their due regard, such as the lyrics of Donne, and more recently, those of Marvell (who is coming to be

read as a major poet of "retirement," an inherently "unepic" mode).

Despite this critical injustice, the notion of major and minor verse is virtually ignored by literary theorists, probably because it rests on the apparently solid but untried assumption that "length is strength." But is brevity per se a disqualification for major status? I hope that my study of Milton's sonnets would stimulate--if not a negative answer to this question--some discussion of the problem. For I have tried to demonstrate how a brief poetic format can be used by a writer of an allusive poetics to comment upon and transcend hundreds of years of poetic form, thereby inventing a radically new form that has profound implications for later poets.

Had Milton written a sonnet sequence, it might have been accorded the serious treatment awarded to sustained efforts. But of course Milton, coming long after the vogue of sonnet sequences, had no interest in telling a story. Instead he essentializes, telling the story of his mind through literary allusions that capture whole narratives for his poems.

Freud illuminates this point concerning the great narrative power of allusion. In trying to explain how it is possible for the dream-work to create coherent stories in brief periods of time, Freud repeats the dream of Maury, who was struck on the back of the neck while asleep and wakes a few minutes later remembering a "complete romance" of the French Revolution in which he is beheaded. To account for such rapidity of the unconscious' productivity, Freud suggests that the dream-work sometimes makes use of ready-made fantasies stored in the unconscious:

Is it so very improbable that Maury's dream may have represented a phantasy which had been preserved for years in his memory, in a completed state, and which was awakened--I should like to say alluded to--at the moment when he became aware of the waking stimulus? The whole difficulty of composing so long a story, with all its details, in the exceedingly short space of time which is here at the dreamer's disposal then disappears; the story was already composed....

But the phantasy prepared so long ago need not be experienced again in sleep; it is enough that it should be, so to speak, "touched off." What I mean is this: if a few notes are struck, and someone says, as in Don Juan: "That is from Figaro's Wedding" by Mozart," memories suddenly surge up within me, none of which I can recall to consciousness a moment later. The phrase serves as a point of irruption from which a complete whole is simultaneously put into a condition of stimulation. It may well be the same with unconscious thinking.²

Other than his mastery of this technique of "stimulating wholes" with allusive fragments, a second reason why Milton did not write a sonnet sequence is that he saw that the best sequence writers (Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Sidney) had merely used the narrative frame as a device to convey their essential subject: the individual poetic consciousness. Milton also attains this goal through allusion. His literary allusions, so frequently the object of his re-vision, are his means of unveiling his workings of mind. For Milton, art was life, or a great part of his life. He was, we remember, the man who wanted to be a poem; and to be a poem means that you write your life. Hazlitt, in remarks on Lycidas addressed to Dr. Johnson's dislike of Milton's allusiveness, writes with complete understanding on Milton's relation to literature past:

Milton was as conversant with the world of
genius before him as with the world of nature

about him; the fables of ancient mythology
were as familiar to him as his dreams.³

Thus Milton revealed his dreams, his deepest thoughts,
through literary tradition; it remained for his Romantic heir,
Wordsworth, to use nature for the same purpose in his versions of
the poetic form Milton invented, the meditative Romantic lyric.

Footnotes

Conclusion

¹
William Hazlitt, "A View of the English Stage," in Howe, v, pp. 230-33.

²
Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, pp. 460-61.

³
William Hazlitt, Round Table, in Howe, iv, p. 31.

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