

THE THIEF OF PARADISE:
MILTON AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM
by
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Abstract

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This dissertation has two protagonists. One is John Milton. The other is Ellen Gould White, prophetess of Seventh-day Adventism and among the most overlooked, by ratio to her scope and impact, of American nineteenth-century theological writers. Their relationship, White's to Milton, Milton's to White, is not untroubled. It includes moments of uncertainty, of evasion, of occasional deception, moments when the record of their rapport disappears and threatens not to reappear. Yet the curve of this relationship, because broken, indicates something not only of Milton's surfacing in America but, to adopt a term from Henry James, the "abysses" from which he surfaces – and into which at times he recedes. I will demonstrate that Seventh-day Adventism comprises not only one of the most extensive absorptions of Milton into American religious, political, and literary life, but also one of the most important – which is to say, White's encounter with Milton instantiated more than a garden-variety literary appropriation, but an appropriation with ripples, ripples amplifying to waves. If we are to believe Carlos Martyn's suggestion in the first American book-length biography of Milton that "it may, in some sense, be said that religious and political America sprang from Milton's brain," we must then understand White's prophetic writings to be a crucial platform for the acrobatics of that event. The

platform is ever more crucial, moreover, as Adventism continues to expand in membership at an enormous rate and as that expansion acquires an international emphasis: America, having sprung from Milton, then springs a distinctively American version of Milton into a global milieu. I hope to describe why White's Miltonic appropriation matters, hence to open within Milton studies as well as American studies an expansive new field of application and significance for Milton's avowed ambition that "I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die."

Preface

While writing this dissertation, I often reflected upon the cautionary advice of one of my professors at the City University of New York Graduate Center, Marc Dolan, who urged a seminar of doctoral students to seek restraint in constructing arguments: the problem with so many dissertations, he said, is that they undercut good ideas with extravagant and totalizing claims. Forget it, I told myself; there's no way I'm falling into *that* trap. My first anxiety that I was *exactly* in the middle of a fall into *that* trap emerged some time later when I taught a course at Bard College at Simon's Rock titled "Milton and Aftertimes," the syllabus drawing loosely on the themes of my dissertation research and modeled in part upon Joseph Wittreich's approach to teaching Milton in conjunction with an array of subsequent texts that constitute responses to Milton in one way or another. My assertion in the course was that alongside the many overt and documented examples of Miltonic influence – William Blake, for example, or Mary Shelley – we could identify another variety of appropriation, contingent and diffuse, perhaps, but no less important to Milton's legacy. In this second camp I placed Charles Darwin, Sergei Eisenstein, Allen Ginsberg, Betty Freidan, Bob Dylan, and others, all of them dropping clues to their reliance upon Milton's precedence yet remaining less explicit than some of their counterparts in articulating that reliance. I also invited students to be alert to the possibility of

Milton's presence in their reading, listening, and viewing outside of class. The students responded enthusiastically to the project – at least at first. By the end of the semester, however, many were experiencing what they decided together to call “Milton fatigue,” and in response to my refrain that Milton might turn up just about *anywhere* in literature and media, I received an email from one student who complained that she was finding “shadows of Milton *everywhere*” and asked whether this was “some sort of horrible disease.”¹

One generally wants one's outlay of insight and energy in teaching to be thought of as contagious – contagious, that is, after the manner of laughter or optimism – but my student all too clearly sought in her missive less to praise contagiousness than to diagnose contagion. This flaring up of what might be termed the Miltonic pathogen among undergraduates, prone anyway to the accumulation and communication of an array of ailments in the dining hall and dormitories of a small New England campus, revealed, I feared, just as I was completing the chapters that follow, my own potentially pathological overreaching in my thinking about Milton and his readers. Such are the fevers of the final year of graduate study. Yet I quickly decided that this “disease” is not exactly a limitation in my dissertation; rather, it is my very subject. Milton survived the 1665 plague in London to publish his *Paradise Lost* in 1667. Saved from epidemic, that poem's pattern of travel, reception, and influence was indeed *pandemic* in scope from a remarkably early moment. I hope to demonstrate that especially in America the Milton bug is and long has been congenital, chronic, and acute. Moreover, I hope to underscore that it is out of the America strain, at

certain moments and in certain ways, and perhaps even more so than from England, that the bug has managed to spread globally, carrying and communicating its symptoms. In other words, my target is less Milton's communications – i.e. the complexity and extraordinary range of his poems, which even so lose no importance in my mind – than his communicability across time and place.

If the delirium, as Gordon Teskey might call it, of Milton's relation to the future of his readership is feverish in kind, my own study takes its beginning from another moment of historical fever: the evangelical enthusiasm of nineteenth-century American sectarianism. Borrowing from Charles G. Finney's characterization of central and western New York State during the Second Great Awakening, the historian Whitney Cross promoted the term "the burned-over district" to describe a region empty of fuel for the evangelical fires because everyone there had already been converted.² The metaphor slides between the physicality of actual fire sweeping across the land and the less visible yet still rapid person-to-person transfer of religious fervor – heat, fever – spreading as a plague would spread. Such images also reflect the millennialism of those particular religious movements whose adherents imagined all sorts of conflagrations burning away the world's sins (if sin is often described as disease, and disease as fever, and fever as fire, then this is fighting fire with fire indeed) in preparation for Christ's return and new paradise.

One of the most consequential of these movements began with Vermont farmer William Miller's calculation that the world would end on October 22, 1844. The Millerites, widely known and written about in their time, were disappointed in their expectations and ridiculed after standing vigil, often with some ostentation, on the appointed day. But from this Great Disappointment, as it came to be called, emerged a handful of more enduring prophetic traditions, most notably those convened and sustained within the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist and Jehovah's Witness churches. As I narrate in Chapter 1, Seventh-day Adventist prophetess Ellen Gould White first read Milton's *Paradise Lost* at an early moment in her career as a religious leader. From that reading she gained a raft of specific exegetical solutions for her ballooning theology as well as (and perhaps more significantly) a narrative structure that would prove vital to the long-term health and growth of her ministry. Seventh-day Adventism, I contend, comprises not only one of the most extensive absorptions of Milton into American religious, political, and literary life, but also one of the most important – which is to say, White's encounter with Milton instantiated more than a garden-variety literary appropriation, but an appropriation with ripples, ripples amplifying to waves.

Carlos Martyn suggested in the first American book-length biography of Milton that “it may, in some sense, be said that religious and political America sprang from [Milton's] brain”; we must understand White's prophetic writings to be a crucial platform for the acrobatics of that event.³ The platform is ever more crucial, moreover, as Adventism continues to expand in membership at an

enormous rate and as that expansion acquires an international emphasis. At present, Adventists residing in the developing world outnumber North American members by a factor of eight to one: America, having sprung from Milton, then springs a distinctively American version of Milton into a global milieu.

These are my broad conclusions. As a reader who suffers perhaps from the “horrible disease” of seeing “shadows of Milton *everywhere*,” I certainly don’t think those shadows got there – that is, got everywhere – by any small or negligible set of accidents. Instead, they move and multiply via specific historical conduits, find refuge in specific historical contingencies, and evolve in response to specific historical events. The story of Seventh-day Adventism represents a particularly rich nexus of such events, contingencies, and conduits. Yet this is a story with a twist. All of her life Ellen White stubbornly, bewilderingly, and enthrallingly denied having ever read *Paradise Lost* or any of Milton’s other works. The denial would be renewed by her followers and by her estate in the decades following her death, becoming in some ways, through constant rehearsal, as important to the structure and identity of the church as those ideas that White had borrowed from Milton in the first place. What I will relate, in this sense, involves more than White’s repeating Milton. It involves her concealment of that repetition, recorded in Part I, and then, in Part II, the repetition of the concealment of the repetition.

Following the expansion of Adventism via global missionary outreach, *getting Milton everywhere* with remarkable efficiency, this pattern of repetition

and obscurity has grown ever more complex. Meanwhile, in America in the twentieth century, where the Adventist church gained an increasingly significant minority and immigrant constituency yet struggled sometimes to adapt to the ethical imperatives of civil rights, some writers with Adventist roots such as Richard Wright and Jamaica Kincaid discovered in the Miltonic presence a bearing by which to navigate their exits from Adventism. Finally, as the church has progressed, in Ronald Lawson's formulation, "from *sect* toward *denomination*" (italics original), it has had to wrestle recurrently with the weight of its fringe beginnings – most urgently when David Koresh, a former Adventist who retained a belief in Ellen White's prophetic authority, staged his deadly standoff with federal agents at Waco, Texas in 1993.⁴ This last consideration carries special importance for the study of Milton at our present moment, as critics from Michael Lieb to Stanley Fish have labored to understand Milton's thinking about violence and his position within a violent world, as Feisal G. Mohamed seems just at the beginning of his already groundbreaking work exploring the applicability of Milton's liberalism within contemporary constructions of liberty, and as John Carey asks, following the attacks of September 11, 2001, whether Milton's tragic-heroic Samson is himself a terrorist, indeed an exemplar of sorts for today's suicide bombers. Milton stands nowhere near the core of the Waco tragedy; yet the tragedy can be understood at least partly as a culmination of a long series of convolutions and distortions of Ellen White's theological messages, messages steeped in Milton's own sometimes troubling, often confounding, always compelling messages.

The upshot is that the Adventist story is also a story about the ways in which Milton, once an overtly guiding voice in the American so-called errand into the wilderness, as well as in American revolutionary politics, as well as in a burgeoning American literary culture, now lurks and hides and huddles within the American scene. I – for one – cannot, however, shake the sense that, in so hiding, Milton has not ceased guiding the ideas and perspectives by which the country continues constantly to form and reform itself today. My title, which on one hand refers to Ellen White’s bold appropriation, is drawn from the fourth book of *Paradise Regained*, wherein “angelic choirs” sing of Satan as the “thief of Paradise” (4.593, 604). The phrase, if we jig its edges slightly, encompasses not only Paradise as the landscape and lost human condition of Milton’s imagination but also the text establishing the landscape, lamenting the condition, lost. After all, Satan steals more than Edenic happiness. He also steals, as Blake observed, along with Shelley, and later William Empson, the show. Satan’s heretical shadow (“intangling,” to borrow vocabulary from Stanley Fish, who borrowed it from Milton, alternative lessons with Milton’s own stated purpose “To justify the ways of God to men” [*PL* 1.26]) has periodically contrived to lengthen and indeed to *overshadow* brighter receptions of the text and to make therefore a history of reading mixed in volatility, erratic in its course, at times advancing, other times receding.⁵ In this way, the Adventist concealment of its Miltonic resonances stands as first an early instance and then a prime example of a more pervasive convention – that in America, as I will outline in Chapter 1, *owning Milton interlocks with an energetic disowning of him*.

But the same convention compels a fresh consideration of my aforementioned course syllabus, responsible for spreading “Milton fatigue” among my undergraduates. Reflected against that syllabus, this dissertation, I acknowledge, could as easily have been about the ambivalence of the American response to Charles Darwin, whose reading and rereading of *Paradise Lost* aboard the *Beagle* supplied a symbolic framework, as Gillian Beer and others have demonstrated, for the arguments established in *The Origin of Species* and extended in *The Descent of Man*. Reading Darwin, Americans were also rereading Milton, and the pronounced will to celebrate, matched by the pronounced will to bury, both of these generically dissimilar authors can productively be viewed as emerging from the same cultural tendencies. At yet another moment, Betty Friedan deployed something conspicuously like Eve’s Edenic – which is to say paradoxical – dissatisfaction in her “Problem that Has No Name,” remarkably less than twenty years before Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar identified Milton as a key villain for feminist literary criticism.⁶ Gilbert and Gubar’s argument was and remains persuasive, but as Joseph Wittreich points out in *Feminist Milton* (1987), Milton may be recognized as having played a different and a much more constructive role within women’s intellectual history. I’ll confess, too, that before I began writing in earnest about Milton in American culture, I’d outlined a possible dissertation having to do with Bob Dylan and his own habits of appropriation of the ideas and sometimes the very language of others – what he at one point terms “Love and Theft,” but what others working in a different milieu might call plagiarism. The epigraphs beginning Part I of this work are at once a residue of that earlier project and a

signal of my recognition that the two projects, this one and that one, are really – in their themes and concerns – of a piece. I recall another of my professors, Morris Dickstein, to whom I am greatly indebted, chuckling in his office as I described this evolution. “You’ve simply changed the names,” he quipped, “to protect the guilty.”

It was a side-note of my work on Dylan that he, too, appears to have been, at certain stages, a close reader of Milton, and his characteristically oblique indications of the ways in which he profited from that reading are themselves fascinating. I mention this only to underscore the myriad available trajectories of approach to the conclusion that Milton’s presence in American culture, if in shadows, remains persistent and wide-ranging. In fixing on the Adventist example, I have been consistently transfixed (and grateful, in the way that all researchers will recognize, as the next and again the next piece of the puzzle, after long searching, would suddenly surface as if from nowhere) by the reach and range of the story. A study that I initially thought would yield a relatively obscure cluster of details leading to a relatively modest if illuminating set of conclusions has turned out to involve, I submit, much more critical and immediate applications for Milton Studies as well as American Studies. Ellen White, among the most neglected of nineteenth-century theological writers by ratio to her ambition and impact, initiated in her appropriation of Milton a long process whereby Milton’s presence was enfolded more thoroughly yet more silently than ever into the American cultural fabric. Seventh-day Adventism, among the most ignored of sectarian movements by ratio to its eventual size and scope, succeeds

hourly in promoting Miltonic ideas more efficiently than any of Milton's scholarly boosters, yet its success derives precisely from the act of erasing Milton from the picture. Even so, it was only late in my process that I was able to name some of these more expansive issues, partly because I was bent on getting the small details right, but mostly because I had stumbled upon my topic in the first place through a much more intimate, contained, and personal series of events than is at all apparent in the following chapters.

At the beginning of the decade that is now about to end, I was doing what a lot of people do in their early twenties immediately after graduating from college: that is, weighing the value of a degree in the humanities, making and aborting plans, and generally looking for ways to fill time that would not later seem like a waste. For me, specifically, this meant a job in construction in Upstate New York with a carpenter who promised to teach me about fine joinery – I think I imagined taking up the mantle from William Morris – but seemed only able to get contracts roofing houses. In the summer of 2001, a friend, Lacy Schutz, wrote to ask whether I would like to accompany her for a visit to the home of the poet Donald Hall at Eagle Pond Farm in New Hampshire. She drove a borrowed white convertible from New York City and stopped for the night in my small town before we were to continue the drive in the morning. The local triplex was showing a new film, *The Others*, with Nicole Kidman; we were surprised by its strength of image and character, its more-than-horror gothic opulence, and its rich texture of literary allusion. The next day, a Saturday, traveling with the top

down in the sun, we mused about the film's points of resonance with Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*.

The conversation deepened after dinner at Don's as we watched the Red Sox on television, drank brandy, and talked about ghosts. Don has written beautifully and extensively about his family's generations in the old farmhouse; we sat in the room where, he told us, the dead used to lie in state, sometimes for days, before a funeral. On the shelf I noticed a complete set of James's New York edition. I opened a volume – it was a first printing, and signed. So we told Don about the movie, and we talked about James and Nicole Kidman and funerals, and before long I had swallowed enough of the brandy to ask what I really wanted to know, which was whether Don thought *his* house, old as it is and so full of the debris of years, might be haunted. He answered abruptly, almost before I had finished asking: "Not anymore."

Lacy had begun her correspondence and friendship with Don shortly after the death of his wife, Jane Kenyon, from leukemia. Earlier in that first day of our stay, he took me around the house while Lacy, having visited before, opted for a nap. When we stopped in Jane's study, which was entirely undisturbed, I said that I regretted having never heard her read her poetry – she was a famous reader. Now, late at night, at the far end of Don's answer to what I knew had been an intrusive question, we returned to Jane and to our talk about reading aloud. Don described their habit of reading to each other. Especially toward the end of Jane's life, he said, they had been through George Eliot, certainly James, and

especially Milton. “If you do anything for one another,” he said, “you should read *Paradise Lost* aloud together.” I remember that we were startled; this was a first recognition of an evolution that would lead to our wedding in Don’s backyard two years later. But for that moment he simply told us where we could find another bottle of brandy – under the sink – and excused himself for bed.

The next day was hot and bright, and we were sunburned by the time we found Route 23 in Massachusetts that afternoon and crossed back into New York State. At home we looked on the shelf for my old Norton Critical Milton. The volume was missing. Soon we were back in the car, driving between bookstores in neighboring towns, but – I still think incredibly – none stocked *Paradise Lost*, or any Milton, an anomaly that launched for us a feeling of urgency, as though my own copy had flown with these others to some locked archive, some warehouse for lost items. I thought of Ariosto’s lunar landscape, itself a paradise of the lost, so to speak, where everything forgotten goes, and I also thought of Milton’s corrective to Ariosto in the description of the outer casement of the world, the Paradise of Fools:

All the unaccomplished works of Nature’s hand,
 Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mixed,
 Dissolved on Earth, fleet hither and in vain
 Till finally dissolution wanders here,
 Not in the neighb’ring moon as some have dreamed. (*PL* 3.455-59)

Finally I remembered the friend who had borrowed my copy of Milton. The sun was setting, and the lights were off at my friend's place. We waited for a while on the steps before I went around to the back of the house where the landlady's son had spent the summer slowly building a deck on the second floor and where he often left tools scattered on the lawn. I slid the flat end of a hammer under the lip of a window, felt the resistance and then the sudden, sharp give. That morning Don had waved to us from a window similar to this one as we backed from his driveway. In the final scene of *The Others*, ghosts fade from behind a window where, despite their invisibility, we know they remain. I climbed into the house, crossed through the kitchen, found the worn paperback on a shelf, and unlocked the front door. Outside I gave the book to Lacy. Then I went back through the door and back into the kitchen, closed the window, and left a note in pencil on a pad on the table. I don't know what I wrote. Probably – at least I hope – I promised to repair the window later.

All of this was preparation for an idea that I had not yet articulated about the ways in which even the most canonical of texts can become lost within contexts where, unseen as those ghosts in *The Others*, or in *The Turn of the Screw*, or for that matter in *Hamlet*, they still exert influence. We took the book home with a few groceries, settled in, and began to read. By the middle of Book 3 Lacy was feeling agitated. This was her first reading of *Paradise Lost*, yet she found that she knew much of it already – even those details, as I was able to identify them, that are most specifically and idiosyncratically Milton's invention. She told me then about her childhood in Lincoln, Nebraska and about the one-

room Seventh-day Adventist schoolhouse where she began her education. The adventurous Satan, the wayward Eve, and the Son in his coronation had been the heroes and antiheroes of her religious instruction, all of them doing the same things that Milton makes them do, saying the same things that Milton makes them say.

It was a few years before this struck me as something to write about, and a bit longer before it began to seem like material for a dissertation. During that time Lacy and I frequently tried to figure out what Don meant by his “not anymore” in response to my question about ghosts at Eagle Pond. There was some grammatical wiggle-room in the question itself, and certainly Don might have been stating only that whereas *once he thought* – perhaps in childhood – the house to be haunted, he did not think so *anymore*. I prefer the eerier option, that after a long haunting, the house is haunted no longer. In my Epilogue I will devote a few pages to Lacy Schutz’s own poetry, as she is in a certain sense a poet of this process – the process of inhabiting texts as spaces which haunt and are themselves haunted, of knowing the unknown, of the uncanny return of knowledge after a long dormancy. Meanwhile my argument is that Milton has haunted Seventh-day Adventism from nearly the moment of that movement’s inception. My wish at the close of this work is to be able to point to the shadow of Milton in Seventh-day Adventism as a real, an identifiable, and a valuable presence.

Pownal, Vermont
December 2009

Acknowledgments

The writing process for me often feels perilously like Satan's journey through Chaos, except that I have almost never been "undaunted": "O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare, / With head, hands, wings, or feet pursues his way, / And swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies" (*PL* 2.948-50, 55). In other words, the writing is always hard going, and I am amazed whenever one maneuver or another happens to work. Nothing would have worked, I'll add, without the help, often in the form of various kinds of intervention, of the many individuals who "Instinct with fire and nitre" have "hurried [me]...aloft" (*PL* 2.937-8). First is Lacy Schutz – her importance to this project should be more than clear from the narrative concluding my Preface. I also extend my most profound gratitude and admiration to Joan Richardson and Joseph Wittreich. Their guidance has been a boon and their kindness a balm at every pass. My parents deserve and have my deep thanks for all the different modes and forms that their support has taken. John Harkey, Ezra Nielsen, Tyler Bickford, and Ryan Carey have offered tremendous help and clear advice along the way. I am grateful to Roland Greene at Stanford, Ann Douglas at Columbia, and Morris Dickstein at CUNY for their generosity and mentorship at the

bewildering early moments of my graduate study. I owe special appreciation to Albert Labriola for his encouragement and attention as I prepared a version of my first chapter for publication in *Milton Studies*; his passing was a tragedy for literary scholarship, especially for those younger scholars whom it was his habit to usher into the Milton fold. A fellowship and residency at the Huntington Library made possible the research for my second and third chapters. The Schlesinger Dissertation Fellowship for research in American history aided in the final stages of my writing. To Donald Hall, I send my love and thanks. The students who participated in “Milton and Aftertimes” at Bard College at Simon’s Rock have my sincere esteem for their truly awesome capacities. I very much appreciate Bill Kelly’s thoughtfulness in reading my work even while steering the very big ship that is the CUNY Graduate Center. Finally, I wish to thank the Graduate Center on whole and the Program in English in particular for supplying an intellectual home these past five years. Without any one of these individuals and institutions, I surely would have met “A vast vacuity” and “to this hour / Down...been falling” (*PL* 2.932, 934-5).

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Part I.**A High Shelf**

“I wouldn’t ask too much of her,” I ventured. “You can’t repeat the past.”

“Can’t repeat the past?” he cried incredulously. “Why of course you can!”

– F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

She’s looking into my eyes, she’s holding my hand
She says, “You can’t repeat the past.” I say, “You can’t?
What do you mean, you can’t? Of course you can.”

– Bob Dylan, *Love and Theft*

Chapter 1.

The Devil You Know: Reading and Denying

Texts inhabit a debt economy. This is axiomatic of our last century's thinking, at least, about text and textual transmission – which is to say it is *at least axiomatic of* as well as *axiomatic of at least* a century's thinking, and at least Western thinking, and thinking at least as it bears upon text as literature.¹ Another axiom, specific now to American letters, goes as follows: John Milton, author of *Paradise Lost*, most Puritan of English poets, is furthermore the most American of Puritan poets.²

If we were to isolate the second clause of that chiasmus, we would mean only what Margaret Fuller meant when she quoted R. W. Griswold from his introduction to the 1847 edition of Milton's prose works, published in Philadelphia, that "Milton is more emphatically *American* than any author who has lived in the United States." Fuller then substantiates Griswold's transatlantic redistribution of citizenship: "He is so because in him is expressed so much of the primitive vitality of that thought from which America is born, though at present disposed to forswear her lineage in so many ways...But the Father is still far

beyond the understanding of his child.”³ We would mean as well what W. Carlos Martyn meant, writing in the first American book-length biography of Milton that “it may, in some sense, be said that religious and political America sprang from [Milton’s] brain,” and our meaning would resurface in Kevin P. Van Anglen’s argument that to colonial and revolutionary Americans “the radical strain in Milton’s writings naturally made him both a transatlantic and a profoundly contemporary figure – an honorary American because he loved liberty.”⁴ For Fuller and Martyn, and absorbed though tempered in Van Anglen, who concerns himself with the history and the complexity of such receptions, the classical metaphor of generational descent predominates – a metaphor made much of in Milton’s epic – of minds opening up to produce other minds, sudden, springing forth full-grown, and of fathers subjected to tragic betrayals at the hands of children. Milton is American because in a manner of speaking he *caused* America. His verse if not his hand or eye helped to produce it, to frame it, to give it substance, to give it life.

In this and in subsequent chapters I will pursue a premise not entirely different in kind, yet with Van Anglen I hope to bare the problems buried in the generational language – a language too entrenched and too often overdetermined even when disciplined into the greater modesty of assorted models of influence. We might – in walking this line – hew to the proposition that when it comes to Milton the tradition in question “is...the tradition of prophecy,” “the line of vision” to be distinguished from “the line of wit” in the history of English and eventually American poetry, and as such its relay overflows the authorial points

in its sequence: “Prophecy is a way of seeing and a way of writing; that is, it is a system of aesthetics. But prophecy is also a way of relating: it postulates a theory of influence and provides a paradigm for intrapoetic relationships.”⁵ Milton’s relationship to Spenser, for example, and Spenser’s to Chaucer, *ad* (perhaps) *infinitum*, are each and all together a relationship to John of Patmos and the visionary tradition established – though we might infer not begun – in the book of Revelation.

America persists enormously in Milton’s debt. Of this there absolutely should be no doubt, just as Ginsberg complained that in “bypassing” what America owes to Kerouac “one bypasses the mortal heart.”⁶ Still, Milton’s life, which is to say his afterlife, west of the Atlantic, again in keeping with Kerouac, has been in many ways a subterranean one, the shaping value of the presence of his texts accumulating as much in the shadows, the crevices, the silences of American culture and writing as in the brighter, the documented places. The great irony here is that it is precisely Milton’s canonicity, the brightness with which he shines and the thoroughness and indeed the routine with which his presence is acknowledged, that deepens the shadows and further obscures his alternative, equally important, yet subterranean presences.

Yet Milton’s America, if such a place can be said to exist as a site for scholarly inquiry, has tended to induce among scholars a distinctive variety of daydream, what Paul Stevens, in reference to Peter Ackroyd’s novel *Milton in America* (1996), calls “a very deliberate anachronism,” an inversion of the

condition, again chiasmatic in design, that “while America has thought much of Milton, Milton himself seems to have thought very little of America.” Ignoring – or, if not ignoring, subverting – Milton’s feeling that “America was explicitly a wasteland,” a place of “savage deserts” – here Stevens quotes from *Of Reformation* – where “good Christians” were compelled to “hide from the fury of the Bishops” (YP 1:585), Ackroyd revises Milton’s biography to place the poet, not figuratively at all, in the wilderness of the American colonies.⁷ Such daydreaming is neither more nor less than an imaginative instantiation of the invitation, extended in sequence by Griswold, Fuller, and Martyn, that Milton in his afterlife might take haven in America and find new citizenship there. It is a crucial point of context in understanding Milton’s intellectual conditioning that England in his youth had become an out-and-out sieve for dissenting members of the clergy, among them John Davenport, John Cotton, and Thomas Hooker, who staged their expatriation to colonial America in remonstrance against new Laudian enforcement of what they felt to be Papist reforms in the Anglican church. These ministers, very much at the core of the eventual clerical establishment in the colonies, have been persuasively described by Keith Stavelly as bridging American Puritanism and Milton’s own peculiar education, and while most of the critical portraiture of a transatlantic Milton regards Milton exclusively from the perspective of his American readership, Stavelly sets the beginning of the story significantly, indeed radically, earlier, nearly forty years before the 1667 publication of the first edition of *Paradise Lost* – a peculiarity established in the very subtitle of his book *Puritan Legacies: Paradise Lost and the New England Tradition, 1630-1890* (1987).⁸

The rationale behind Stavely's approach is summed in the grammar of his placing *Paradise Lost* in a conjunctive rather than a prepositional relation to American culture, the *and* of his title challenging Ackroyd's *in*, hence he lays the groundwork – or, better, lends a pillow – for what amounts perhaps only to a more conscientious manner of daydreaming. After all, Stavely reminds us, Milton's tutor, Thomas Young, left London in 1620, “the same year...that the founders of Plymouth Plantation set sail in the *Mayflower*,” to take up a pastor's duties in Hamburg under much the same array of pressures as those faced by Davenport *et al.*⁹ We pause here, and *should* pause, to wonder what aspects of Milton's own biography would have needed changing in order to provoke his own literal departure for a new continent – that is, what smallest of all possible accidents might reveal Milton to the imagination as, of all things, a colonial American. For example, Milton was always self-conscious of his late start at Cambridge relative to his friend Charles Diodati. Diodati entered at fourteen, Milton at sixteen.¹⁰ Had a slightly younger, slightly more impressionable, slightly less defensive, hence less combative Milton followed slightly more of a conventional path in taking ministerial orders, would he then perhaps have found himself positioned neatly to join the expatriating cohort?

Our answer, of course, is probably not. The single detail – an important one – shaking us not only from our dream of a genuine American Milton but also from any conjecture of the contours of Milton's poetry or his theology or his politics reestablishing themselves in American terms without undergoing

extreme violence and revision to their under-girding message is, in the final measure, Milton's very English patriotism, the fact and the strength of the feeling of his national identity, fused in every aspect to his aforementioned poetry, theology, and politics. Indeed, Milton *Englishman*, as he described himself on the frontispiece of the 1645 *Poems*, the words IOANNIS MILTONI ANGLI boldly encircling a portrait hateful toward and hated by the poet, proved more enduring an identity than Milton the *religious* man, a distinction he makes plain in one of his episodic moments of autobiographical prose:

Comming to some maturity of yeers and perceaving what tyranny had invaded the Church, that he who would take Orders must subscribe a slave, and take an oath withal, which unlesse he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either strait purjure, or split his faith, I thought it better to preferre a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking bought, and begun with servitude and forswearing. Howsoever thus Church-outed by the Prelats, hence may appear the right I have to meddle in these matters, as before, the necessity and constraint appear'd. (YP 1:822-23)

Rather than choosing the church and refusing the country, Milton feels cornered ("Church-outed") by trends in national politics into refusing instead his established clerical path in favor of a secular yet still theologically inflected method of communicating his devotion to England and English identification.

The method was poetry – eventually epic. This all demands a small but significant elaboration upon the perception of Milton as “emphatically *American*”: he, and with him his texts, might be said to *immigrate* but not to *emigrate*; he arrives without departing; he is adopted into without adopting even the “honorary” rights and responsibilities of American citizenship, which is simply to say that influence by definition has no volition, plots no course, looks backward upon origins never forward upon offspring, is always retrograde.

And yet these parameters are exactly what compel the succession of qualifications with which I began. They are twentieth-century parameters, and Western parameters, and parameters deployed specifically in the interest – both the kind that accumulates and the kind that absorbs – of literary production and criticism. To situate Milton in “the line of vision” is to presuppose for him a tradition not entirely suited to Harold Bloom’s theory of influence, as Joseph Wittreich has indicated at several junctures, nor does the Miltonic tradition sit comfortably alongside something like Barthesian intertextuality wherein authorship dies and readership refracts into a labyrinthine indeterminacy. Either might illuminate Milton’s place or no-place in canonical or historical or textual relationships, but neither explains it.

Rightly isolating Blake’s *Milton a Poem* (c. 1804-1811) as a crucial text in the line that runs through and onward from Revelation, crucial because it not only participates in but identifies and tests the extensions of that line, Wittreich quotes Patrick Fairbairn to describe, per Blake, “a chain composed of many links,

each running into the others before and after it.”¹¹ To imagine that a text interacts in any volitional manner with its forebears *and* with its progeny – before *and* after – just as Wittreich replaces *intertextuality* with a reciprocal *intrapoetics*, is to cut against the grain of not only the overriding habits of a century of reading but moreover the *overwriting* habits, those habits that inscribe themselves upon and in doing so obscure all others.¹² This is to say that in two other centuries, the seventeenth and the nineteenth, centuries in many ways baffling to the twentieth despite the extent and the comprehensiveness of the thinking that went on in the twentieth about them, models of influence assuming a purely backward glance were not and would not have been taken as given.

In *Paradise Lost* as elsewhere, Milton overlooked (looked all the way over) the bulk of history toward a moment of original stillness and perfection, a regressive gesture that Stanley Fish detects as the single orienting detail behind everything Milton wrote ever.¹³ Gordon Teskey agrees – circumscriptively – with Fish. He acknowledges having read Fish’s *How Milton Works* (2001) in manuscript and finding it “invaluable” in writing *Delirious Milton* (2006):

Milton is the thinker of the *archê*, of the origin and governing “principle.”...[He] sees the cultural remains of the past – and for him they are truly remains, dead things – not as repositories of secret wisdom but as evidence pointing back to an origin, which he situates as the garden of Eden, the home of the truth about man...When he wanted to compose a great poem that would seize

human existence in its *archê*, Milton began at the beginning, in the moment, in the garden of Eden, when perfect human liberty was lost.¹⁴

Yet Teskey's agreement is also the platform for a departure, for he immediately leaves the past for the future just as Wittreich counters and attempts to correct the very foundation of the inquiry into "how Milton works" in the title of his own most recent book, *Why Milton Matters* (2006). Neither Teskey nor Wittreich declares Fish wrong; they question only the orientation of his questions. While plenty of attention has been allotted Milton's relation to history, Teskey observes, "It has been left to critics on the margins of Milton studies...to consider Milton's relation to the future."¹⁵ Wittreich's theory of "intrapoetics" and "the line of vision" emerges renamed and newly clothed in Teskey's conception of Milton as a "theoretical poet": "Theory," writes Teskey, "which means 'visualizing, abstractly and synchronically, that which already exists,' is turned toward a past from which it remains quite distinct. Claiming no primary existence for itself, theory is the detached representation of what already is, rather than a part of what already is." Poetry, on the other hand, "is turned toward the future, a future in which it will itself be a presence and a power, whence the nearness of poetry to prophecy. To be a *theoretical poet*, therefore, is to look in both directions at once, like Janus, the double-faced god of thresholds" (italics original).¹⁶ Teskey continues:

[I]n a poet such as a Milton, theoretical reflection and poetic production are so equally assertive, each dominating the other in

turn, that the poet seems to be divided within a sort of invisible rift. Let us, for the moment, imagine it as a mysterious veil suspended between contrary terms. When we read about the historical past in the final two books of *Paradise Lost* or in *Samson Agonistes*, the text itself seems to hang before us as a veil through which we dimly discern something else, a mystery that, if we could see it clearly, might bring before our eyes a scene of hectic production and shamanistic role-playing not unlike the art of our time. But just at the moment when the outlines of such a scene begin to appear, we find ourselves transported to the other side of the veil, in the very place of the modernity we had only begun dimly to perceive. But this modernity is no longer a mystery to us, for we are still looking into that veil, although from the other side, and what we see through it now is the past. I think it was some such experience as this, of moving from one side of the veil to the other and forever seeing mystery through it, on the other side, that was the driving force behind the creation of Milton's major poems.¹⁷

We should indeed think of the final books of *Paradise Lost*, in which Adam's future, told prophetically, equals our own past, told historically. To think in these ways, I submit, is to slice through an elaborate confusion over how to think of texts prior to the past century by rescuing how texts and their authors might have thought of themselves, prior and past – that is, prior to and passed on from

futurity and history alike – *while not instead of* attending to a history of readership and the multiplication of meanings therein.

This dissertation has two protagonists. One is John Milton. The other is Ellen Gould White, prophetess of Seventh-day Adventism and among the most overlooked, by ratio to her scope and impact, of American theological writers. Their relationship, White’s to Milton, Milton’s to White, is not untroubled. It includes moments of uncertainty, of evasion, of occasional deception, moments when the record of their rapport disappears and threatens not to reappear, when White, at least, would just as soon forget the entire business of their meeting. Yet the curve of this relationship, because broken, indicates something not only of Milton’s surfacing in America but, to adopt a term from Henry James, the “abysses” from which he surfaces – and into which at times he recedes.

Revelation as Velum in William Blake’s *Milton*

In proceeding, we must bear in mind a small disparity between the quotations from Fuller and Martyn above. Fuller thinks Milton is American “because in him is expressed much of the primitive vitality of that thought from which America is born”; Milton and America are cut from the same cloth and are therefore laterally related. For Martyn, on the other hand, America “sprang from [Milton’s] brain,” like Sin from Satan’s. Milton in this formulation is America’s parent – the two are linearly related. It might appear strange, then, that Fuller rebukes America for being “disposed to forswear her lineage in so many ways,” strange that she immediately repositions her lateral interpretation of the

relationship as linear. Van Anglen, continuing in his catalogue of American receptions of Milton, furnishes this from Dr. William Ellery Channing: “The works which we should chiefly study, are not those which contain the greatest funds of knowledge but which raise us into sympathy with the intellectual energy of the author, and through which a great mind multiplies itself, as it were, in the reader.”¹⁸ While Channing places Milton as his exemplary author, an author deserving of study and provocative of sympathy, Van Anglen observes a semantic ambiguity whereby the phrase “a great mind” in Channing’s formulation could refer equally to Milton *or* to God. In other words, Milton loses generative esteem but gains an advisory capacity “through which” revelation happens. He does not multiply but helps the “great mind,” God, to multiply.

We find Fuller swaying, as many of her transcendentalist comrades swayed, upon this epistemological pinnacle. She soon topples fully into generational language – Milton “is one of the Fathers of this Age,” she tells us in the same passage, and “the Father is still far beyond the understanding of his child” – but the drama of her indecision, the oscillation she performs between a linear and a lateral understanding of a particular genealogy, encapsulates the broader drama of reading and writing and what it means for authors to learn from each other. Authors either, a.) spring from each other’s minds, or b.) spring together from one original mind. Fuller’s arrival at the former option is in a certain sense a push toward a twentieth-century understanding of influence, yet we must remember that in Milton’s universe this option is explicitly marked as a demonic system (Satan, Sin) whereas the latter option interlocks more accurately

with Milton's God's rhetoric. We might also consider that to suppose oneself independent of forebears, furthermore to imagine drinking with them from the same fountain, is essentially to obviate debt. But for this we require an understanding of what type of mind might subscribe – and subscribe in earnest – to prophecy over against influence. What Milton thought about his own poetry *vis-à-vis* prophecy remains uncertain. Indeed, having in Book 3 of *Paradise Lost* compared himself explicitly to the blind prophets Thamyras, Maeonides, Tiresias, and Phineus (34-36), he poses serious questions in the proem to Book 9 about the actual prophetic status of his “nightly visitation unimplored”: the possibility haunts him that the “higher argument” on which he founds his epic might “all be mine / Not hers” – Urania's – “who brings it nightly to my ear” (46-47, 42). However, one finds less doubt among certain of his readers, most notably William Blake.

“Milton lov'd me in childhood & shew'd me his face,” Blake wrote to John Flaxman on September 12, 1800.¹⁹ And in conversation with Crabb Robinson: “I have seen [Milton] as a youth & as an old man with a long flowing beard. He came lately as an old man. He said he came to ask a favour of me. He sd. he had committed an error in his Par. Lost wh. he wanted me to correct in a poem or picture; but I declined. I said I had my own duties to perform.”²⁰ Blake meant these statements fully. We tend to make exceptions for Blake, for what may or may not have been his madness, but at the very least he seems to have meant as true most of what he said and all of what he wrote and meant it more plainly than

is always or necessarily betrayed in the allegorical timbre of his major prophetic poems.

Blake also said this: "I do not believe that the world is round. I believe it is quite flat."²¹ In Blake's mythology, when Urizen, an Eternal, separates from Eternity, human reason is born along with human subjectivity; this, to Blake, is not good, yielding what Paul Mann calls the "horror-zone" of language and text.²² Mann's "horror-zone" is a pun on "horizon," wherein, Mann argues, "Urizen" finds its homophonic source. Jerome McGann follows a historicist's path to the same conclusion, directing attention to Alexander Geddes's translation of the Bible: Geddes shows the "boundary called by us the *horizon*" to be that which allows the division of light from darkness, and in fact "horizon" takes its semantic root from "a Greek word...which signifies to *bound* or *terminate*."²³ If *Urizen* sounds like *horizon*, it also sounds like *your reason*, allowing for the Blakean thought that Enlightenment *reason* is itself a kind of *horizon*, a circumference beyond which perception cannot go, hence equating the imprisoning habits of the human mind with the fact of being hemmed in by a permanent visual limit. Blake's announcement about the flatness of the world, an announcement which seems to be at best anachronistic, at worst nonsensical, proves fully grounded in a variety of phenomenological empiricism. The human experience of being on the planet is not of roundness but of flatness, the flatness continuing, nightmarishly, wherever one travels. One builds it around oneself each moment, like Stevens's jar in Tennessee, "round...upon a hill," yet making that roundness "surround" oneself, making the roundness flat. Blake corroborates these observations,

evocatively, in his poem *Milton*: “Thus is the earth one infinite plane, and not as apparent / To the weak traveler confin’d beneath the moony shade. / Thus is the heaven a vortex passed already, and the earth / A vortex not yet pass’d by the traveler thro’ Eternity” (Plate 15).

Even more than in the text, the images in *Milton* display Blake’s subjective flatness in action. Needless to say, the introduction of the horizon into the flat plane of visual art was absolutely the most forceful innovation of Renaissance representation. Blake tends as an artist trained in Renaissance technique to supply one variety or another of horizon, but he often seems disdainful of it – it is typically for him an afterthought, without detail, and the figures in the images are always violating it in their apparent ability to fly around freely, willfully, as in a Chagall. Meanwhile, suns and moons and planets continually crest the horizon, if not actually then in the form of halos encircling the heads of human figures, dominating the upper quadrants of a given plate. The best example in *Milton* is Plate 13, wherein Milton stands upon a discernible horizon darkened by a rising sun and, above the sun, by the rays of light shining from Milton’s head. In Plate 43, Milton boldly steps out of a globe onto the flat plane of the horizon, straddling the two and therefore joining them, violating the horizontal, Urizenic (*horizonic*) imperatives of perspectival space.

It was Milton’s opinion that the Bible is as prone to textual corruption as any other document. That is, as it passes through history, through the modifications attendant in the process of translation, through editorship and

error, the Bible changes. Milton also was of the opinion that internal revelation should be privileged over and sometimes against scripture.²⁴ The very word *revelation* derives from the Latin *velum*, veil, also a kind of paper – the stretched skin of an animal – creditable with making the technology of the codex first physically durable then economically dominant in the business of reproducing and distributing written language.²⁵ Text as it occurs on leaved pages, scriptural or otherwise, can reveal but it can also veil information. This is nothing metaphysical; it happens every time we turn a page, new information appearing in place of the old. Yet Stanley Fish persuasively extends the figuration of *velum* as skin as paper when he interprets the parched body of Lycidas (“He must not float upon his wat’ry bier / Unwept, and welter to the parching wind” [*Lycidas* 12-13]) to be *parchment*. Milton’s horror as a young poet, Fish argues, is that in death one’s identity becomes a page on which others may write and therefore corrupt and therefore annihilate identity.²⁶

Blake has a different view. In the poem *Milton*, a star that is Milton falls on Blake’s left foot – as depicted in Plates 14 and 19, and again in Plate 33, but this time upon the *right* foot of Blake’s dead brother Robert. If the star is a kind of writing upon the body, it is also the revelation by which Milton speaks, Blake’s foot the *velum*, the living skin as an alternative to corruptible paper. Blake is perfectly willing to submit to being written upon, to being parchment if not parched. The annihilation of identity involved in this transfer is not only *not a horror*, as Fish describes it to be a horror, but a salvation from the flat Urizenic landscape – the “horror-zone” – of selfhood. The star, in falling, breaks the

horizon. The writing breaks the prison, as Milton the character says in *Milton* the poem: “When will the resurrection come; to deliver the sleeping body / from corruptibility: O Lord Jesus wilt thou come?” (Plate 14). In the book of Revelation, Christ breaks through the atmosphere, destroying peripheral flatness and introducing a new vertical plane to intersect horizontal experience. Milton, sometimes as a star and sometimes as a man stepping between horizons, does the same, which is not to equate him with Christ but to say that he operates within the same authorial system as Christ. Blake’s insight, like Channing’s, is that an author in the prophetic tradition will at moments open a view (though not necessarily a door) to Eternity – will give some variety of access to it.

In *Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion* (c. 1804-1820), which is an amplification of *Milton*, or, perhaps, a poem for which *Milton* enacts an intricate rehearsal, the giant Albion appears tattooed with stars and suns and moons (Plate 25).²⁷ Milton in *Milton*, when he “[reaches] the depths of direst hell,” finds himself in “Albion’s land” – “Which,” Blake affirms, “is this earth of vegetation on which now I write” (Plate 12). To *write on* is to write severally. It means first to *write about*; second to *write while standing upon*; third to *write directly upon the surface of* the land, which is the body of the giant Albion. Albion is England. In Revelation, upon the opening of the sixth seal, “the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up...” (Rev. 6:12). Having transcribed itself upon the earth in the form of falling stars, the information once held in the

heavens disappears, not extinguished, only moved elsewhere; we can only speculate that the sky as a scroll, a vanishing technology, moreover a technology weighted with Old Testament associations, would resonate for Blake who was preoccupied perhaps more than any other poet before or since with the printing and making – the corporeal reality – of books. For Blake, as for Milton, as for Spenser, England was to be the staging ground for what the book of Revelation told: the sun that darkens, the moon that bleeds, the stars that fall, the sky that rolls and vanishes.²⁸

In a Preface composed and printed for but later removed from *Milton*, Blake names these expectations for a nationally specific millennium. The first stanzas pursue a legend that Christ had as a youth visited what would become the British Isles:

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon Englands mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On Englands pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

The final stanzas imagine and propose activities facilitating Christ's return to England:

Bring me my Bow of burning gold;

Bring me my Arrows of desire:

Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!

Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,

Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:

Till we have built Jerusalem,

In Englands green & pleasant Land (Additional Plate 1)

If it is the centrality of England to Revelation, at least in part, that kept Milton home while others around him departed from the reach of an inhospitably entrenched regime, for Blake the same centrality was an opportunity to look abroad. *America a Prophecy*, among Blake's first prophetic books, "Printed," as the title page tells us, "by William Blake in the year 1793," looks back from the turmoil of the French Revolution – watched and brooded over by Blake with no less of a keen, at times enthusiastic, at other times concerned sensibility than Wordsworth's – to America's own revolutionary moment. Among the most crucial historical facts for Blake, second only, perhaps, to the stories of Genesis and Revelation, which Blake understood in a qualified historical context, were Milton's mind and the American Revolution. Certainly the former seems to bear

strongly, continuously, upon the latter in the chained figure of Orc, Blake's embodiment of American revolutionary determination, "who serpent form'd / Stands at the gate of Enitharmon to devour her children" (*America a Prophecy* Plate 9): this is the same Enitharmon who "separated" as an "emanation" from the mind of Los, the spirit of creativity, just as Sin in *Paradise Lost* leapt from the mind of Satan. Los, like Satan, resists and in resisting reifies the power of dictatorial Reason – Urizen to Los, God to Satan. Also like Satan, Los "in [his] perfect image viewing / Becam'st enamoured" (*PL* 2.764-65) and pursued his daughter, his emanation, whereon (to elide the distance between Milton's description and Blake's) "Eternity shudder'd when they saw, / Man begetting his likeness, / On his own divided image" (*The First Book of Urizen* Plate 17).²⁹ The issue of Satan's coupling with Sin is Death; Los and Enitharmon together beget Orc. The fateful offspring behave curiously, Death forcing himself upon his mother to engender a race of "yelling monsters" who "list into the womb / That bred them...and howl and gnaw / [Sin's] bowels, their repast" (*PL* 2.795, 798-800), while Orc, as we have seen, eats Enitharmon's other children. Her children, we know from *The First Book of Urizen*, are humankind. The circuit now closes: Orc equals Death.

Yet it is a strange equivalency, for death, in this case, is also the face of revolution, which Blake admires. The tyrant Urizen comes to understand that death alone affords escape from his tyranny: "he saw / That no flesh nor spirit could keep / His iron laws one moment. // For he saw that life liv'd upon death" (*Urizen* Plate 21). Indeed, it is "the birth of the human shadow" (Plate 17), that is,

the birth of men and women by other men and women, but also the inscription of a horizon over which a sun will shine, hence surround the subjective body, hence produce a shadow, which binds the mind; yet simply detaching from the shadow – dying – will effect freedom. Orc, from New England shores, confronts “Albions Angel” in similar terms:

The times are ended; shadows pass the morning gins to break:
 The fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten commands,
 What night he led the starry hosts thro’ the wide wilderness:
 That stony law I stamp to dust: and scatter religion abroad
 To the four winds as a torn book, & none shall gather the leaves:
 But they shall rot on desart sands, & consume in bottomless deeps;
 To make the desarts blossom, & the deeps shrink to their fountains,
 And to renew the fiery joy, and burst the stony roof. (*America a
 Prophecy* Plate 10)

To follow the turns of mind in this passage is to experience an evolution of textual reproduction, stone tablets giving way to paper which in turn is incorporated, turned to organic matter, absorbed into “Mental Fight”: revolution and therefore revelation. Tablets to dust and books to leaves make compost of prophetic text, a soil in which prophecy might bear fruit and the fruit might drop like stars which drop like “winter fruit when shaken by a gale” from the fig tree of Revelation 6:12. If England as a “green and pleasant land” seems initially an empty figuration – too broad a stroke of the brush – it ends in a rich association of meaning, green

because a living body, living page. Books are leaved with pages, but leaved no less with foliage. As Milton insists in *Areopagitica*, “books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them” (YP 2:492), and Albion replies to Orc, “my Punishing demons terrified / Crouch howling before their caverns deep like skins dry’d in the wind. / They cannot smite the wheat, nor quench the fatness of the earth.... / They cannot bring the stubbed oak to overgrow the hills” (Plate 11). Whereas Orc’s parched pages (his “parched lips drop with fresh gore,” Albion accuses) rot and blossom into life, Albion’s living revelators recede to skin, to velum, to the status of pages, parched – nothing grows of them.

Milton and Ellen White

Just as Milton appeared to William Blake in a series of visions, Blake appeared in New York City as a voice reading his own poems, so the famous story goes, to Allen Ginsberg masturbating over Blake’s illuminated books. One is tempted to suspect Ginsberg’s motives in broadcasting this experience (which was for him a transformative moment, a moment, he said, of revelation, affirming a permeable world, or else a variety of intrapoetics) as indulgent of a wish to include himself in a visionary tradition, moreover an exclusive one, using the obvious resonance of Blake’s visions of Milton to suggest a new intergenerational transfer. Joseph Wittreich tells of posing just such a visionary line, Milton to Blake to Ginsberg, at a conference talk in Normal, Illinois, where Ginsberg was in attendance. We can imagine Wittreich’s surprise as Ginsberg spoke from the audience to deny *ever having read* John Milton – explicitly to disown the lineage he seems elsewhere so keen to join.³⁰

The denial, by Ginsberg's own later confession, was a lie, but it was not, as some lies are not, exactly *untrue*. Whatever Ginsberg wanted to accomplish in this little episode, during which he probably meant to tease the younger Wittreich far more than to teach him anything, he managed trimly to summarize a pattern of regard for Milton deeply etched in American habits of reading and receiving. Owning Milton interlocks with an energetic disowning of him, an energy, not an anxiety, seeking to recast the generational language of authorship in visionary terms. An America "disposed...to forswear her lineage in so many ways" forswears it not to dismantle or replace it but to enter with it into a new order of economy wherein debt pays forward (if to swear is to pledge, and a pledge is a debt, to *fore*-swear is to owe in advance – "to forswear" indeed occurs "in so many ways") to apocalyptic expectations just as naturally as it pays back to the *archê*, as Gordon Teskey identifies it, the vast archival coffers of historical time. Teskey describes a history of the very conception of authorship as traveling from medieval *authority*, "each copy" of a text "manually connected to another, from which it is also separated in time, the time of tradition, of 'handing on,'" to the Renaissance "*author*...as one who creates. The author is now one who brings into being phenomena – hallucinatory experiences – that have never existed before."³¹ Both Teskey and Barbara Lewalski recognize Milton as in some sense epitomizing and at the same time completing the progression of this trend. In the framework of the 1645 *Poems*, in his prose works, and in the invocations commencing several of the books of *Paradise Lost*, Milton carefully and consciously erects an image of himself as simultaneously self-sufficient in *creative* authorship *and*

sufficiently imbued with prophetic capacity to *author* – this time, to witness and report – the events of Creation.³² If Ginsberg is to have learned this maneuver from Milton thoroughly enough to enact it himself, he must have learned it not from Milton at all, or, in any case, not from *reading* Milton, though *meeting* him, or meeting Blake, would seem to preserve and prolong the visionary principle.

But Ginsberg is not the first American to have read Milton and denied it. On March 14, 1858, Ellen White saw Satan in heaven rebelling against God upon the occasion of the coronation of the Son; she saw the marshalling of forces, the waging of war, and the fall of the demonic legions from their heavenly seat; she saw jealousy, ambition, and Satan's disobedient critique of political obedience to God. Her visions had occurred with remarkable consistency since an inaugural visionary experience in December, 1844, after the Great Disappointment in October of that year when followers of Vermont-farmer-turned-evangelist William Miller waited for the Second Coming and watched the last of several projected dates elapse without incident, whereon Ellen Gould Harmon, who at seventeen, unmarried, counted herself among Miller's followers, was told to "look again, and look a littler higher," and saw in the east "a small black cloud...about half as large as a man's hand, which...was the sign of the Son of man." This, along with a second vision "which soon followed the first," and in which "I was shown the trials through which I must pass, and that it was my duty to go and relate to others what God had revealed to me," Ellen took as a missive to maintain the Adventist vigil through a longer – imminent yet indefinite – term.³³

By the time she witnessed the Great Controversy, which is to say the apostasy of the rebel angels, Ellen had met and married James White, and together they had already established the basis for a church steeped in a peculiar doctrine of Saturday worship and dietary health, finally to coalesce in 1863 as the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.³⁴ In 1855 Ellen and James White settled in Battle Creek, Michigan. This new location became, increasingly, the center of Adventist life and work. According to White's son, Willie, "Elder J. N. Andrews was visiting our home" in Battle Creek during the period when White was writing her visions of the war in heaven. In a 1935 talk titled "How Ellen White's Books Were Written," W. C. White – the same Willie – would remember the following exchange:

After dinner was over, Mother would propose to read to [Andrews] and Father what she had been writing. Both Elder White and Elder Andrews were attentive listeners and one day after two or three chapters had been read to them, Elder Andrews said, "Sister White, have you ever read Milton's *Paradise Lost*?"

"No," she replied.

"Have you ever read any of his writings?"

Again she replied, "No."³⁵

This is not entirely unbelievable. At age ten, in Portland, Maine, Ellen had been struck in the face with a rock thrown by another girl, a schoolmate, causing long-term disfigurement and discomfort in breathing and, moreover, a nervous condition that made reading almost impossible. While her twin sister remained in school, in all likelihood gaining instruction in such curricular mainstays as *Paradise Lost*, Ellen soon withdrew: to “give up the hope of gaining an education,” she said in adulthood, “was the hardest struggle of my young life.”³⁶ Yet in maturity she regained her ability to focus on a page without blurring or dizziness or perspiration. Indeed, alongside constant writing, she read a great deal. As an esteemed confidant of the family, Andrews was very aware of her capacity for reading, and he evidently had that capacity in mind when, to resume W. C. White’s account, “A few weeks later he brought a copy of *Paradise Lost*, and read to Father and Mother some of Milton's descriptions of the experiences of Lucifer in his great rebellion. Later on he brought a new copy which he had purchased and gave it to Mother.”³⁷

Still the story warrants no dispute. White, we will appreciate, could legitimately have passed her thirty-one years to the moment of her son’s anecdote without encountering and certainly without reading a copy of *Paradise Lost* – much less Milton’s other works. We must take her double “No” in response to Elder Andrews’s double query, for now, as secure. Yet here our own project sprouts thorns. It would be convention in this variety of study, in establishing the reliable presence of a text within reach of a reader, to assume the text to have been, in one sense or another, read, with exceptions occurring only when the text

carries with it for the reader some variety of ideological repugnance, or when it has gone out of fashion, or when the convenience of *not reading* a particular text by some chance supersedes the text's availability. In Battle Creek, 1858, in the very residence of Ellen and James White, the presence of not one but two copies of *Paradise Lost* finds reasonable confirmation in W. C. White's memory – one copy lent, the other given.³⁸ It should therefore be *given*, insofar as the text in question carried the endorsement of Andrews, a friend, a person of trust, and insofar as nothing stood between it and Ellen White, that White, as the figure goes, *leafed through it* some idle afternoon or evening when it seemed convenient. One speculates, moreover, that White in leafing through would find her friend's assessment of the similarities between the matter of the poem and her own visionary themes remarkably accurate, would therefore discover herself engrossed, would read on, her leafing slowing, intensifying, leaves to fertile soil.

Willie reports the opposite. "She thanked" Andrews for the volume, "and looked at it a few minutes without opening it, put it on a high shelf in a cupboard built in back of the stove and under the chimney support. There," deliciously, "the book lay many days and several years."³⁹ White kept the book, we are told, but did not read it, did not so much as open it. It simply persisted in its place "on a high shelf" as a strange and silent archive to a line of information actively unwanted. "Too often our obsession has been with the paucity of a reception for Milton's poetry," warns Wittreich, "which sometimes translates into a complete lack, whereas our attention might be better directed toward receptions hitherto neglected, even sometimes suppressed, hence still unstudied, yet to be

decoded.”⁴⁰ There certainly seems to be a coding occurring in W. C. White’s account of Ellen White’s activities surrounding her reception of *Paradise Lost*; certainly as well, whatever her future level of engagement with the poem, she heard some passages read aloud from it then *received* it into her hands; but whether she then neglected it in its archive or whether the neglect in this particular story happens later, a critical neglect, a neglect and indeed a suppression of a single person’s experience of reading, remains an open question. W. C. White supplies one answer, along with a reason for his answer, along with his reason for answering: “I never saw Milton's poem in her hand, and never saw her reading it. I never heard her refer to the book, except on one or two occasions, when she stated to visitors what I have related above, and said that she felt that she ought not to study what anyone else had written regarding the rebellion in heaven until she had written out very fully what had been revealed to her.”⁴¹ It should be observed that this explanation *does not* mean White did not read Milton; it means only that she may have found it exceedingly important at a specific time, under specific circumstances, not to *appear* to have read him, not, in other words, to let on to reading. That she never held (except upon receiving), never read (except when *read to* by Andrews), and never referred to *Paradise Lost* (except to deny holding, reading, referring) seems an overly massive bulwark against the incursion of a text which, given its cultural status, one could not honestly nor endlessly hope to avoid. Willie overshoots, and we, for the present, are left with a few facts to weigh.

“Death into the World, and All Our Woe”

The words “paradise lost” appear three times in Ellen White’s published and manuscript writings. This would be unexceptional, but twice White ties the formulation to a rhetorical counterbalance of paradise *found*, or regained, and in one of these instances her announced recovery of paradise takes place in the wilderness, where Christ has wandered – an extracanonical interpretation of salvation for which Milton was himself accused of contravening scripture. This last instance occurs in White’s 1877 pamphlet “Redemption; or The Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness”; in it, “Paradise Lost” serves as the title of a brief chapter describing Adam and Eve, driven from Eden, and Satan, immodest in his successful treachery. A publisher’s preface to the pamphlet supposes that,

Probably there is no subject in all the range of Christian theology more neglected, and yet more important, than the threefold temptation of Christ in the wilderness. Hence, this little work fills a place that no other does. The plain and earnest style of the writer, her practical appeals touching Christian temperance, and her exalted views of the great work of the Redeemer in carrying out the plan of Salvation, make the work one of interest and importance. May it be carefully read, and prove a precious blessing to the candid reader.⁴²

In declaring inimitability, this Preface steps into terrain precarious for White – or at least *once* precarious to a prophetess younger, less established, more pervious

to cries of fraudulence and excess, now securer in the size and strength of her church – and, having stepped into, then tramples the terrain wherein White can be viewed as recommending her work of vision not only in supplement to but supplanting the Bible itself. If “this little work” indeed “fills a place” otherwise unfilled, the place is vacant, necessarily, only by the happenstance of having been vacated – one wonders when – by the authors Mark, Matthew, and Luke, each of whom relates and, in turn, adds to the narrative of “the threefold temptation of Christ in the wilderness.” It may be that White’s pamphlet is supposed unique precisely in its exegetical ambition of placing the temptation as the central moment of “Redemption,” *in place of* the crucifixion, yet this trampling of a precarious terrain is explicitly to tramp in Milton’s footsteps, perhaps knowingly, perhaps unknowingly. If unknowingly, that is, unwittingly, the Preface can then be taken as candid in its appeal to “the candid reader,” and, of course, it is a Preface written ostensibly *not* by White but by her publishers whose knowledge of the depth of White’s familiarity with Milton we cannot know. But candor without wit on one hand gives way to wit without candor on the other, indeed a wit too knowing, hence too tempting, to give up yet as accidental, for if the Preface (and with it the pamphlet) tramps *knowingly* behind Milton, it tramps in order to trump the prior author, moreover to trump him in his own words and on his own terms. Milton proposes in his own “little work” on the temptation, or what in “The Reason of Church Government” he forecasts as a “brief epic,” modeled, importantly, after the book of Job, “to tell of deeds / Above heroic, though in secret done, / And unrecorded left through many an age, / Worthy t’ have not remained so long unsung” (*PR* 1.14-17). Like White, Milton indulges, or

seems to indulge, a flourish whereby the apostolic authors are, all three of them, invited, maneuvered, compelled to stand aside, to damp their chorus and to make way for a new singer whose voice will so overwhelm as to rewind and in rewinding to erase the prior record, urging the song back to a moment when it was as yet “unsung.” White’s ambition is different from Milton’s only in the size of the task she sets for herself, for she must contend not only with Mark, Matthew, and Luke, but with Milton as well, all of whom insist on singing the song she wishes silenced so, at her late date, now to be sung anew – that is, *as or as if new*.

In a note to the text of *Paradise Regained*, John Leonard attempts to explain Milton’s trespass: “Many critics have objected that Christ’s temptation is recorded (albeit summarily) in the Gospels. M[ilton] might be using ‘record’ in the sense ‘render in song.’”⁴³ Yet, as Leonard goes on to indicate, such usage would need to be metaphorical, for in the intransitive the verb implies not just song but *birdsong*. Granting this metaphor, Leonard’s explanation releases Milton from hubris, but does so perhaps at the cost of a principal consideration that we will import from *Paradise Lost* to *Paradise Regained*, that “song,” to Milton, must be “advent’rous” (*PL* 1.13), must occur as novel, as experimental, hence (to note the fortuitous metrical elision of the penultimate syllable of “adventurous” in Milton’s line) must be a form of *advent*, a coming into being, which, even when a *second* coming, and here to keep closely in mind White’s sense of Adventist occurrences, will burn away the terrain of the first, make a new ground, a new “place” to “fill.” If a song is at once an adventure and a record, we

are then called to a third sense, a sense obsolete for Milton (the *OED* cites Chaucer among only a few other examples, 1422 the latest) yet fitted to his apparent meaning and also engagingly constitutive of the primary sense, “to relate in writing,” which usage Milton seems so thoroughly to *misuse*: this third sense is “to remember” or “to remind,” to motivate, then, an adventure on the order of Odysseus among the shades or Dante descending his circles, carrying back information from where it has been lost, gaining authority over, hence authorship of, such ownerless information in the course of the transfer.⁴⁴ Together, White and Milton can be understood as lamenting the “neglected” more than the “unsung” station of the temptation in tradition, imagining the “worthy” story “unrecorded” because too often unremembered. Yet if – an *if* we will risk but not settle – this affords an unencumbered position for Milton to occupy, White’s occupation remains freighted with Milton’s precedent authority.

In 1957, at Pacific Union College, an Adventist institution, a student named Ruth Elizabeth Burgeson wondered in her master’s thesis, “A Comparative Study of the Fall of Man as Treated by John Milton and Ellen G. White,” how “these two authors, living two hundred years apart, [are] so much in agreement on major facts,” specifically “facts” on which “the scriptures are silent.”⁴⁵ Burgeson demonstrates a close correlation to Milton in White’s explanation of Satan’s fall, and then in passages representing the temptation of Eve, Adam’s subsequent fall, the angelic description to Adam of future history, and the departure of the original couple from the garden. Especially notable in Burgeson’s study and in my own comparison are certain undeniable rhetorical

parallels at key moments of counsel in Satan's marshalling of forces and eventual defeat and, later, in Satan's lie to Eve, as the serpent, that he had gained the faculty of speech in the act of eating the fruit – a detail Leonard calls "M[ilton]'s most significant addition to Genesis."⁴⁶

Indeed, what transpires in the garden between Eve and the serpent, then between Eve and Adam, finds astonishing consistency between Milton's report and White's, or at least consistency that *would* be astonishing if White were as unfamiliar with Milton as she insisted. The similarities reside not only in details but perhaps more significantly in rhetorical design, each author offering a Satan less outwardly assertive than contemplative and quizzical in constructing his argument, pretending to a commonsensical incredulity at Eve's unquestioning obedience. What Satan introduces in the guise of the serpent is precisely a method of rhetorical questioning – different entirely from the kinds of questions Adam asks Raphael in Books Five through Eight of *Paradise Lost* or those Adam and Eve ask each other throughout the poem. White's version follows Milton's below:

Queen of this universe, do not believe
 Those rigid threats of death; ye shall not die:
 How should ye? by the fruit? it gives you life
 To knowledge. By the Threat'ner? look on me,
 Me who have touched and tasted, yet both live,
 And life more perfect have attained than Fate

Meant me, by vent'ring higher than my lot.

...

Why then was this forbid? Why but to awe,

Why but to keep ye low and ignorant,

His worshippers; he knows that in the day

Ye eat thereof, your eyes that seem so clear,

Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then

Opened and cleared, and ye shall be as gods,

Knowing both good and evil as they know. (9.684-90, 703-9)

The tempter intimated that the divine warning was not to be actually fulfilled: it was designed merely to intimidate them. How could it be possible for them to die? Had they not eaten of the tree of life? God had been seeking to prevent them from reaching a nobler development, and finding greater happiness.

Leading from misleading questions, Satan in each case indicts “the Lord” for “jealously desir[ing] to withhold” the fruit, hence the power of knowledge, from the original couple, fruit and knowledge which would effect “a nobler development” whereby they “shall be as Gods.”⁴⁷ In each case, too, the tree is a device, Satan argues, for intimidation and psychological coercion. These are complex exegetical moments, drawing on the precedent of the biblical serpent as a questioning agent (“He said to the woman, ‘Did God say, “You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?”’” [Gen. 3:1]), but then going further to make

questions of ideas presented in the Genesis account only as declaratives (“You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” [Gen. 3:4-5]). The purpose, at least for White, is to depict a Satan “constantly seeking to excite a spirit of irreverent curiosity, a restless, inquisitive desire to penetrate the secrets of divine wisdom and power,” and in pursuit of this purpose she happens upon a rhetorical strategy with a distinct precursor in Milton.⁴⁸

Yet for neither author does Eve’s error begin in her susceptibility to Satan’s questions; instead she “first erred” for White “in wandering from her husband,” and for Milton perhaps even earlier in airing her wish to wander (*PL* 9.205-25).⁴⁹ Her errancy, in other words, is an errant spree insensitive to warnings by angels – Milton and White are equally explicit on this point – of lurking danger.⁵⁰ The texts continue in accord. After eating and experiencing a “vivifying power,” an “exhilarating influence, thrilling every faculty with new life,” “heightened as with wine, jocund and boon” (*PL* 9.793), Eve seeks to deliver the fruit to Adam who has been laboring elsewhere, unaware (even if “he the falt’ring measure felt” [*PL* 9.846]) of the diabolical goings-on – this despite the clear biblical indication that Adam was standing at least in proximity to the event (“she took some of [the] fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, *who was with her*, and he ate” [Gen. 3:6; italics mine]).⁵¹ Adam eats because he cannot stand to lose his wife, finds himself transported with the intoxicant of the fruit – or perhaps the intoxicant of sin itself – then proceeds to blame Eve and eventually God for his misfortune.⁵² In fact, as Burgeson points out, White’s

telling differs from Milton's only in one element: whereas Milton's Eve plucks the fruit with her own hand, White's Eve waits for the serpent to do the plucking then "half-reluctant" accepts the fruit from him.⁵³ I will add to this detail, which Burgeson finds "perhaps...unimportant," only that it mirrors with enticing closeness the equivocating reluctance with which White handles Milton's book, drawing attention to her potentially having taken the story from other hands (*hands* an inexact metaphor when serpents are involved) rather than independently plucking it as Milton plucked it in his invention of these extracanonical narrative features.

Although Burgeson notes several of the aforementioned points of crossing between Milton and White in their versions of the Fall, she treads lightly in her conclusions regarding White's habits of reading and borrowing. It was not until 1982 that the Seventh-day Adventist church was shaken by the publication of a book titled *The White Lie* by a former Adventist pastor, Walter T. Rea, who argues that White's prophetic writings are broadly plagiarized not only from Milton – though he levels this specific charge and uses this specific word, plagiarism, at several junctures – but from a remarkable array of contemporary and historical texts on matters of theology, health, and history.⁵⁴ Such challenges were not new. Conjectures surrounding the extent of White's borrowing had percolated at intervals for nearly a century, beginning as early as 1889 with estimations by lapsed Adventist Dudley M. Canright that White had plagiarized as much as twenty-five percent of what she wrote. In 1976, in a biographical study spotlighting Ellen White's work in medical reform, Ronald L. Numbers

conducted a methodical evaluation of White's language in comparison to several key forebears. His conclusion is unavoidable, indeed incontrovertible, that White was a habitual borrower, yet Numbers tempered his book in a strong acknowledgment of White's real contributions to health and the infrastructure of health care. Like her near contemporary Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, Numbers relates, White parlayed her invalidism toward an understanding of care for the body in diet and wellbeing as central to the spiritual life. What plagiarisms she perpetrated in her investigations into health – the very word “plagiarism” unlikely to have been used by her contemporaries in regard to her practices – therefore constituted not simple parroting, not by any stretch, but an elaborate recasting of current medical ideas in an esoteric visionary context.

A former Adventist, as Rea, yet also a respected historian of theology and science, especially of the patterns of past and continuing conflict between creationists and Darwinian evolutionists, Numbers balances his estimation of White, whom he had already relinquished as a prophetess one might absolutely believe, in his critical training as a scholar. His critique, although received as highly controversial within the Seventh-day Adventist establishment, received as intolerable by his own father, a minister, is finally an argument for White's place as an important if problematic American religious thinker.⁵⁵ Rea's purpose, on the other hand, is fully to topple White, and the Ellen G. White Estate was justified in its objection that “many of [Rea's] claims are either so lacking in substance or so harsh and sarcastic that they fall of their own weight.”⁵⁶

Still, the church met *The White Lie* as a considerable threat, commissioning Fred Veltman of Pacific Union College to conduct a thoroughgoing study of White's *The Desire of Ages*, among the texts most heavily targeted by Rea, in pursuit of defenses against the charge of its derivations. In his 2,561-page report, the work of eight years, and in his redacted statement published in the church magazine *Ministry*, December 1990, Veltman concludes that, although White "took literary expressions from the works of other authors without giving them credit as her sources," nevertheless "the issue that concerned her" in "her role as a prophet" was, ultimately, "the authority and truth of her messages – not their originality." Unconcerned as she may have been with the freshness and innovation of her prose, Veltman continues, "Though Ellen White's writings appear to have been largely derivative, they do not lack originality," and taking into account the forgiving standards of nineteenth-century literary practice, "my *personal opinion* is that she was not guilty of [plagiarism]."⁵⁷

While Veltman worked, the Ellen G. White Estate began a parallel study in 1983 of each of White's texts – except for, "so as to avoid duplication of effort," *The Desire of Ages* – in which the goal was to "mark" all passages "*presently known* to contain literary parallels," thereby acknowledging an extent of debt while showing that debt to be, all things considered, small, at least nowhere near Canright's twenty-five percent or Rea's still more extravagant suggestion that close to everything White produced was either directly plagiarized or otherwise – if sometimes circuitously – purloined.⁵⁸ White's defenders moreover made frequent reference to an inquiry conducted in 1981, anticipating Rea's challenge

by a slight margin, by Vincent Ramik, a non-Adventist attorney, who concluded that technically, lawfully, by nineteenth-century statute, “Ellen G. White was not a copyright infringer” and “Ellen G. White was not a plagiarist” – an interesting way of sidestepping the issue, which was never, after all, about the legality but instead the spiritual validity of White’s visions.⁵⁹

The White Estate conjectures the following in caveat to its late recognition that White indeed employed *some*, though not much, borrowed language:

Most likely there were times when Mrs. White read an impressive passage in a book and later the Lord called her attention to the same truth while in vision, applying that truth to a specific need in her own life or the life of the church. In such cases, she could easily express a part of what she was shown in language paraphrased from another author. We know of a half dozen or so cases where this appears to have happened.⁶⁰

Having established this instrument by which paraphrase if not plagiarism is sometimes suitable to prophecy, however, the drafters of the foregoing defense then curiously, explicitly, hold back the instrument from the possibility that John Milton might have served as the supplier of one or more of these “impressive passage[s],” that Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, not to mention his other verse, might have contained for White any aspect of “the same truth” that she had experienced or would experience “in vision.”⁶¹

Rea's references to Milton are characteristically vague, yet he cites two authorities more specific in connecting White's visions to Milton's poems. The first is Burgeson, whose thesis was never published. The second transmits a greater authority: Arthur L. White, Willie's son, Ellen and James's grandson, allows in his supplement to a 1969 reprint of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, that Ellen White "did later read at least portions" of Milton's work, for she quotes once from *Paradise Lost*, only "one phrase," in *Education*, published 1903.⁶² This the White Estate – where Arthur served as director for more than forty years – cannot allow. "Unless direct literary dependence is demonstrated," the Estate bridled within a year of the publication of and in direct response to Rea's *The White Lie*, "it cannot be said that Mrs. White actually read Milton's poem. The ideas of Milton, the great Puritan poet, permeated New England theology for generations. The fact that Mrs. White uses a phrase from Milton in *Education*...does not of itself indicate literary dependence, since memorable lines of Milton were as current in her time as those of Shakespeare."⁶³ Interestingly, neither Rea, nor Arthur White, nor the White Estate identifies the "one phrase" at issue. It – with White's context intact – appears in quotation marks yet lacking direct attribution in the second paragraph below:

The strongest bulwark of vice in our world is not the iniquitous life of the abandoned sinner or the degraded outcast; it is that life which otherwise appears virtuous, honorable, and noble, but in which one sin is fostered, one vice indulged. To the soul that is

struggling in secret against some giant temptation, trembling upon the very verge of the precipice, such an example is one of the most powerful enticements to sin. He who, endowed with high conceptions of life and truth and honor, does yet willfully transgress one precept of God's holy law, has perverted his noble gifts into a lure to sin. Genius, talent, sympathy, even generous and kindly deeds, may thus become decoys of Satan to entice souls over the precipice of ruin.

This is why God has given so many examples showing the results of even one wrong act. From the sad story of that one sin which "brought death into the world and all our woe, with loss of Eden," to the record of him who for thirty pieces of silver sold the Lord of glory, Bible biography abounds in these examples, set up as beacons of warning at the byways leading from the path of life.⁶⁴

With ground already given by the White Estate and by the church itself to White's authorial dependence on other writers, one puzzles over the special status of *Paradise Lost* as an untouchable resource, the will, that is, to ignore Milton in White's life as a reader, to save her from him in saving, reserving, Milton's epic from all other texts as though to have something, one text at least, inured against reading. No other example in the troubled history of the debate over White's influences comes even close in kind.

The text held back resembles that “one vice,” that one “giant temptation” over which, “trembling,” the soul broods in desire, its avoidance of the forbidden object an obsession with the forbidden object. That White’s single indulgence of a direct quotation from Milton should occur in exactly her description of such brooding, that her choice of quotation should be Milton’s tersest expression of multiplied consequence in singular transgression, simply heightens this impression. The book on the shelf imitates the fruit on the tree, an emblem of knowledge, in Milton’s case a literal discussion, of good and evil, and to reach up for it, Eve’s gesture mirrored in what one supposes to be White’s eventual gesture, to take it down, to break it open and taste its substance is to fall. “Genius, talent, sympathy,” all Miltonic descriptors, descriptions of Milton and also terms Milton at various moments deploys, “may thus become decoys of Satan to entice souls over the precipice of ruin.”

White’s only way out of the typology of transgression, as she constructs it and as her proxies later reconstruct it, is the defense that her knowledge was all received at secondhand, much in the manner that Eve received *some* knowledge, much though – beguilingly – not all of it false, of the effects of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil from Satan in the guise of the serpent. With this in view, we must contend with the possibility – the White Estate’s contention – that the one direct quotation of Milton by White might well have been gained not via direct encounter but in the tendency of certain quotations to infiltrate and replicate within a culture, to get into minds without the intermediary of reading. Certainly the single line of ten syllables – “Brought death into the world, and all

our woe” – will qualify in its emblematic grade among Miltonic quotations as a candidate for such osmosis. The line, in other words, is not a giveaway – it answers nothing of the requirement, rightly asked for, that there be evidence supplied of genuine “literary dependence,” direct and positive. What follows that line, however, does give, positively, an answer. For Ellen White goes beyond the emblematic, beyond the unequivocally memorable, into a stray half of a line, four syllables far less likely than the previous ten to have strayed without direct knowledge into White’s literary consciousness, indicating in their unassuming but unambiguous presence that, as she quotes, she quotes from a present, an unshelved book, a book, if not open in front of her, at least reasonably familiar to her: “Brought death into the world, and all our woe, / *With loss of Eden.*” (PL 1.3-4; italics mine). This is not a quotation passed along as truism, recited catechistically, reflexively, from start to finish, but a citation, though unacknowledged, marked by study, by knowledge of a text thorough enough to manipulate the text, to extract only the fitting portion, not more, not less. We will proceed with this detail in mind as evidence that, whenever it may have been, under whatever circumstances, White did fall “over the precipice” into the temptation to take the book down from the “high shelf,” and then, “one vice indulged,” to read it.⁶⁵

Chapter 2.

The Devil, You Say: Ellen White's Miltonic Archive

Louis Menand, in his introduction to a recent edition of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, invites Milton, together with Freud, into an eccentric company:

“Sigmund Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents* is in a class with Plato’s *Republic*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Marx’s *Capital*, and Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*: the grounds have entirely eroded for whatever authority it once enjoyed as an ultimate account of the way things are, but we can no longer understand the way things are without taking it into account. Like the Commendatore in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, its afterlife is in certain respects more impressive than its life, and for the same reason. It can no longer be killed.”¹

Anchored in Milton’s own ambition “that by labor and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life) joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die” (YP 1:810), Menand’s metaphor not only prescribes a method for reading

Freud after the decline of Freudian psychoanalytic principles but implies an application for Freud's own metaphysical approach to science – in particular his conception of and fascination with the uncanny, *der unheimlich*, the return of the repressed – in considerations of literary transmission and influence. Indeed, the extent to which Freud's work in the twentieth century was shaped by his nineteenth-century education is evident in the way he completes an arc, as Menand hints, extending from the Platonic moment through the post-Enlightenment efforts of Hegel and Marx to describe the relationship of the individual to history, the mind to its surroundings, and the limitations of language to the urgencies of dialectical thinking. We will return to and rely upon a Freudian framework in the final chapter of this volume, where that frame supports a bridge from the concerns and events of the nineteenth century to their aftershocks in the “aftertimes” of the twentieth. Meanwhile, we will take Menand's cue to imagine Milton as a version of the living dead in nineteenth-century America, noting the anxiety provoked by his ostensibly zombie-like presence. It would be anachronistic and anyway too much to describe this anxiety as part of an idea that Milton would go around devouring brains. At the same time, the emerging literary culture in America, with Emerson at its forefront, helped to convene a way of thinking about reading that predicted and prepared the way for Freud's articulation of a dangerously haunting, eternally returning past; left unchecked, Freud thought, such a past would absolutely devour the brain in the consuming drives and fixations of neurotic experience.²

My purpose in this chapter is to assemble a context for the complications of Ellen White's relationship to Milton, and generally to reading, in the mainstream of nineteenth-century American letters, acknowledging that like Mark Twain's *Mississippi* the stream is at all times a main for majority and fringe alike. I will begin to argue that although Seventh-day Adventism travels at the edges of the Protestant current, remains in the minds of most non-Adventist Americans today a fringe quantity, the role of Adventist doctrine and culture within American history from the years preceding the Civil War to our present moment is in fact essential, broader in scope than generally recognized, deeper in consequence than ordinarily allowed, in large measure owing to the Adventist encapsulation, all secret, and communication, all coded, of Miltonic messages through "many days and several years," years and days increasingly uncomfortable with the messages of John Milton.

Statues, Horses, and Emerson's Vehicular Language

Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The Poet" was published the year William Miller and his followers experienced their Great Disappointment, marking therefore a beginning for our contextualization. "Language is vehicular and transitive," Emerson writes, "and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead."³ A demonstration of this principle turns up in Twain's image of a floating house containing the body of a vicious father, now dead, the father who once contrived to trap his son in another house, alone, without sufficient food, without recourse to communication with the outside world. Huckleberry Finn, sheltered by Jim from difficult knowledge, does not

discover the identity of the dead man until the penultimate paragraph of the novel; yet the floating house supplies a signal that Huck has embarked not only upon an abolitionist adventure, or an adventure against Protestant civilization, or against governments, whatever one's approach to the odd Twainian recipe of picaresque and Bildungsroman happens to be, but an adventure, with Emerson, of language. This house is no longer a house but a ferry, no farm, but a horse, a conveyance, not a homestead.

As the philosopher most concerned with the tyranny of prior generations in transmitting limitations to the minds of the living, Emerson elsewhere complains of a "retrospective" tendency in his contemporaries, condemns an "age" that "builds the sepulchres of the fathers," an age given over to "biographies, histories, and criticism" of "foregoing generations" who "beheld God and nature face to face," whereas "we grope among the dry bones of the past" and fail to "enjoy an original relation to the universe." "I had better never see a book," he resolves, "than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system."⁴ Father dead, Huck is free to attend to his own mind's thinking, his inner life cascading and eddying along the shores of the stream of his thought and set against the background of rising, fading human drama and conversation. Wherever "the dry bones of the past" return, parched or parchment, they return as a warning, the Shepherdsons and Grangerfords living out a pointless feud of generations, origins forgotten, the surreptitious romance between Sophia Grangerford and Harney Shepherdson a typological distortion of Romeo and Juliet, or the Duke and the Dauphin harnessing an obsolete

aristocratic structure in taking charge of the raft, then harkening to the textual authority of Shakespeare, yet again Shakespeare, in staging their cynical performances, only to misunderstand aristocracy, misremember and dismantle Shakespeare, and in making a mockery becoming a mockery.

These examples recommend one possibility for reading the disturbances of the final section of *Huckleberry Finn* wherein Tom Sawyer reifies Jim's captivity in the farce of staging a preposterous escape. Tom's priorities are with books. He is unable to sanction, unable to conceive a course of action not affirmed by the authority of old-world Romance and sentimental heroics, while Huck has only just begun to learn to recognize, to question, finally to resist the limitations of that authority, hence is not as helpful to Jim as he might otherwise have found the determination to be. Replicating in burlesque Huck's own emergency in and emergence from the father's house, the house that *is* a house, not a horse, Jim's persistent failure to escape under the tutelage of Tom Sawyer puts the period to the message that language necessarily fails, becomes a tyranny, if one attempts to live in it as a domicile, succeeds, however, if one consents to being carried along in it as a vessel.

Huckleberry Finn's very book, an artifact established in its first sentences as Huck's own, not interceded into by an author such as Mark Twain who "made" the book about Tom Sawyer, even allowing, as we are asked twice to allow, that Twain "told the truth, mainly," then a moment later, "mainly he told the truth," is evidence that Huck eventually learns the lesson.⁵ "Each age..." – Emerson –

“must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this.”⁶ My intuition that Twain through Huck wishes explicitly to mark the floating house as an alternative to the prison-house begins with the end, in the ameliorating detail that Jim waits until free of his own prison before helping Huck’s attention back to the memory of the house as a fantastic Emersonian ferry: “Doan’ you ‘member de house dat was float’n down de river, en dey wuz a man id dah, kivered up, en I went in unkivered him and din’ let you come in? Well, den, you k’n git yo’ money when you wants it; kase dat wuz him.” Huck, looking back from his new authorial position, then protests the “trouble it was to make a book,” swears Aunt Sally won’t succeed in her plan “to adopt...and sivilize” him (“I can’t stand it,” he says: “I been there before”), and promises, in perhaps the most famous line of the novel, “to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest,” not to be warped out of his orbit, “made a satellite instead of a system.”⁷

The equivalency of Jim’s freedom from slavery to Huck’s from his father as broadcast through the revelation of what – that is, whom – the floating house contains; the fear of stationary houses as statutory hazards; the strong ambivalence surrounding the value of books – the value of writing them only slightly less impeachable than the value of reading them: all this, again, evokes Emerson, who, having established that “each age...must write its own books,” hedges,

Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, the act of thought, is transferred to the record. The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly the book becomes noxious: the guide is a tyrant.⁸

It is by resituating Emerson's image of the statue-as-tyrant in the person of Mozart's stone bureaucrat that Menand extends the double quality of a metaphor on one hand celebratory, on the other distressing. After all, *Il Commendatore* is not an unproblematic champion, just as Don Giovanni is not an unsympathetic villain. Dead and therefore impervious to death, the statue wields an awful power (is it his power to kill that unnerves, or his power to speak?), which Don Giovanni, in a moment Mozart and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte dare us to deny as heroic, refuses to accept in his refusal to repent, hence falls burning, indeed screaming, but still not repenting, to hell.

Emerson, however, wants the reader to discover his or her own immortality in books rather than the immortality of the author and to understand how "An imaginative book renders us much more service at first, by stimulating us through its tropes, than afterward, when we arrive at the precise sense of the author." If one seeks only "the transcendental and extraordinary" in books and allows oneself in reading "to be touched by a wand, which makes us dance and

run about happily, like children” or in Plato’s sense as refurbished by Emerson, “like persons who come out of a cave or cellar into the open air,” then “The poets,” not the poems, “are thus liberating gods”:

What a joyful sense of freedom we have when Vitruvius announces the old opinion of artists, that no architect can build any house well, who does not know something of anatomy. When Socrates, in Charmides, tells us that the soul is cured of its maladies by certain incantations, and that these incantations are beautiful reasons, from which temperance is generated in souls; when Plato calls the world an animal; and Timaeus affirms that the plants also are animals; or affirms a man to be a heavenly tree, growing with his root, which is his head, upward; and, as George Chapman, following him, writes,

"So in our tree of man, whose nerve root
Sprints in his top;"

when Orpheus speaks of hoariness as "that white flower which marks extreme old age;" when Proclus calls the universe the statue of the intellect; when Chaucer, in his praise of 'Gentilesse,' compares good blood in mean condition to fire, which, though carried to the darkest house betwixt this and the mount of Caucasus, will yet hold its natural office, and burn as bright as if

twenty thousand men did it behold; when John saw, in the apocalypse, the ruin of the world through evil, and the stars fall from heaven, as the figtree casteth her untimely fruit; when Aesop reports the whole catalogue of common daily relations through the masquerade of birds and beasts; –we take the cheerful hint of the immortality of our essence, and its versatile habit and escapes, as when the gypsies say, "it is in vain to hang them, they cannot die."⁹

Supposing Milton's *Paradise Lost* to be "a monument to dead ideas," as Raleigh holds, it is also, as Raleigh also holds, yet is less often acknowledged as holding, "not the less an eternal monument" therefore.¹⁰ Kermode argues in response to Raleigh's "dead ideas" clause that "The proper answer to the charge is not that the ideas are, on the contrary, alive; but that the poem is not a monument to *any* ideas," instead "seems to me enduringly to represent, or better to embody, life in a great symbolic attitude."¹¹ In so arguing, Kermode reminds us that Milton probably would have resisted the characterization of his work, kept alive in "aftertimes," as so much statuary, that he in fact *did* explicitly resist that characterization in *Areopagitica* when extolling books as the "life-blood of a master spirit" – though he does view that "master spirit," troublingly, as "embalmed" within its books (YP 2:493). Emerson above might appear simply to be listing moments he especially likes in books by authors he especially values, but the key to his catalogue, its concord, as it were, is that *nearly every item in it describes transformation of inorganic to organic entity*. Especially important among these items is John's vision wherein stars, falling, turn to fruit, which, as

we have seen in Blake's exegesis, will rot upon the ground, take root, and blossom into new life, and if indeed "the universe is the statue of the intellect," then the root of the new life sprouting from the compost of the universe after its collapse is man's head. Dead intellect – no contradiction for Emerson – plants itself in living intellect.

Emerson reverses the need to reckon with books that in Menand's words "can no longer be killed" and in Milton's "they should not willingly let...die" to place *readers* within the gypsies' recklessness: "it is in vain to hang them," the readers, "they cannot die." Likewise, Huckleberry Finn's ambivalence toward books evolves with his suspicion that books are mixed up in the machinery of cultural entrapment, while his resolve to "light out," to escape, Huck never an author who wishes to be "embalmed" in his authorial persona, adopts and adapts the Emersonian recommendation that language should carry, not contain, its practitioners: "As the traveler who has lost his way throws reins on his horse's neck and trusts to the instinct of the animal to find the road," again from "The Poet," "so must we do with the divine animal" – which I take Emerson to mean to be language – "who carries us through this world."¹²

Milton's books, then, might live, but not as statues of or houses for Milton, instead as vehicles, whether horses, ferries, or rafts, for his readers. Yet elsewhere Emerson is not as sanguine about the value of reading. "Books," at best, "are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings."¹³ The better course

involves pursuit of transcendental experience as described first in *Nature* and perhaps best in “Self-Reliance,” the experience transpiring “Whenever a mind is simple and receives divine wisdom,” at which moment “old things pass away, – means, teachers, texts, temples fall; [the mind] lives now, and absorbs past and future into the present hours.”¹⁴ This is not simply an assignation of primacy to direct over textual experience; it is the beginning of an articulation of what verges on a radical mistrust of precedent texts: “If therefore a man claims to know and speak of God and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldering nation in another country, in another world, believe him not,” which involves more than disregarding him, more than looking past him to a more legitimate authority, but instead comprises a circumspection that to quote, to rely on, therefore to relay, textual knowledge, is to lie, or because the liar is caught in a cultural habit of lying, to re-lie, to relay a lie that has been told countless times.¹⁵

Emerson mentioned the Millerites on several occasions in his journals, and as Gary Scharnhorst suggests, “his reference in ‘The Poet’ to popular religious imagery – ‘some stars, lilies, leopards, a crescent, an eagle, or other figure which came into credit God knows how, on an old rag of bunting, blowing in the wind’ – probably describes murals depicting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and the apocalyptic vision of John, which Millerite evangelists used to illustrate their sermons.”¹⁶ As an example of the subtlety of Emerson’s sense of humor, Conway relates in *Emerson at Home and Abroad* the “allegorical” story – Scharnhorst calls it “almost certainly apocryphal” – of “a crazy ‘Millerite’”

informing Emerson of the impending end of the world, to which Emerson is to have replied, “I am glad of it; man will get along better without it.”¹⁷ Even if an invention, the incident places Emerson in range of what was often called the Millerite “excitement,” convincingly painting him as not entirely unsympathetic to that phenomenon.

If Emerson knew something about the heritage from which Ellen White derived her apocalyptic expectations for future history, there is no evidence that White had any knowledge of Emerson’s work. Even so, the Emersonian injunction to steer away from “the phraseology of some old mouldering nation” indicates something of the very perception by which White navigated her denial of Milton, gives to that perception a contextual surround, moreover a means for understanding White as not entirely in opposition to her time, nor ignorant of it, not even necessarily naïve within it, but interacting with the most challenging of ideas – at least the ideas then most challenging to the mainstream of American intellectual culture, eventually to occupy the center of that stream via Emerson’s fame and influence. Scharnhorst goes so far as to suggest an early shared sense of “ancestry” between the Transcendentalists and the Millerites, the Transcendentalists opposed to a literalized millennium but at moments likening it to their own wish for “a spiritual millennium inaugurated through the symbolic agency of Nature.”¹⁸ That millennium through Nature depends for its potency upon “an original relation to the universe,” just as White’s visionary experience receives its authority from a supposed original relation to God, uninterrupted by interceding texts.

White, we find reason to conjecture, relies upon Milton only until she feels herself ready for “old things [to] pass away, – means, teachers, texts, temples [to] fall,” observing yet another condition set by Emerson: “The great poet makes us feel our own wealth, and then we think less of his compositions. His best communication to our mind is to teach us to despise all he has done.”¹⁹ Milton remains the clearest example of this condition, in America especially, insofar as his American celebrity pinnacled in the early years of the Republic then slipped into a critical slide, which at moments comprised a full-scale inquisition into the terms and limits of his stature. That slide has never really ended: only intermittently in the intervening years have Milton’s peaks topped his valleys. Doubts ensued and by the middle of the nineteenth century were well-worn regarding the quality of Milton’s prosody, the efficacy of his descriptions, the strength of his short poems, and – with the discovery of *De Doctrina Christiana* in 1823, more saliently its translation and distribution in 1825 – the orthodoxy of his treatment of Biblical messages. This is the background for Fuller’s grievance against an America “disposed to forswear her lineage” when that lineage led to Milton, for after *De Doctrina*, “the image of greatness Americans had cherished so long had become definitely flawed; Milton could no longer serve as a pattern of poetic expression, nor stand as an incorrupt witness for God.”²⁰ Yet more, perhaps, than a general uneasiness with the specter of Arianism and the defense of polygamy discovered in Milton’s theological treatise, which also recommends, significantly to our present discussion, a seventh-day Sabbath, Americans discovered in themselves a certain fatigue with their once-favorite author, found

that author incommensurate to “Their current journey into the wilderness” which was “purposed less to establish a new spiritual Canaan than to subdue and exploit a vast, virgin land. To such an ambitious enterprise, Milton’s story of man’s disobedience had little to say.”²¹

Another way of putting it would be to say, following Emerson, that so thoroughly had Milton infused the American cultural landscape, so entirely had he occupied the American mind, that the American mind, itself occupied at the time with landscapes, vistas, the prerogatives of Manifest Destiny and the Western frontier, needed to expand in order to contain him. But this observation, although faithful enough in drift, would be to overstate the case while curbing unfairly the complexity of Emerson’s argument. Indeed, Emerson goes on from his statement that the poet’s “best communication to our mind is to teach us to despise all he has done” again to censure contemporary man, who is, he writes, “timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say ‘I think,’ ‘I am,’ but quotes from some saint or sage.”²² Stanley Cavell detects the rift:

There is a gag here that especially appeals to contemporary sensibilities. Emerson writes, ‘Man...dares not say...but quotes.’ But since at that moment he quotes Descartes, isn't he confessing that he too cannot say but can only quote? Then should we conclude that he is taking back or dismantling (or something) the entire guided idea of 'Self-Reliance' [the essay in which the quotation appears]? Or is he rather suggesting that we are to overcome the binary

opposition between saying and quoting, recognizing that each is always both, or that the difference is undecidable?²³

This last question Cavell dismisses, but not before submitting “the difference between saying and quoting” to be a difference of postures, differently decided upon. Denying her reading of Milton, White decides upon a posture, held through generations, which also holds her in a certain position with regard to language. I think she knew her posture to be Miltonic. On the other hand, I think she did not know her position to be Emersonian. Yet it was. Cavell’s elaboration upon “Emerson’s gag” is useful. It – the gag –

condenses a number of ideas. First, language is an inheritance. Words are before I am; they are common. Second, the question whether I am saying them or quoting them – saying them firsthand or second hand, as it were – which means whether I am thinking or imitating, is the same as the question whether I do or do not exist as a human being and is a matter demanding proof. Third, the writing, of which the gag is part, is an expression of the proof of saying ‘I,’ hence of the claim that writing is a matter, say the decision, of life and death, and that what this comes to is the inheriting of language, an owning of words, which does not remove them from circulation but rather returns them, as to life.”²⁴

When I suggested in the prior chapter that an American owning of Milton interlocks with an energetic disowning of him, my hope was to place Milton within the crucible of these varieties of problems, thereby preparing for an argument that prophetic experience, like the complex act of saying “I think, ‘I am”” (for evidence of which complexity one need look no further than the accumulation of quotation marks surrounding this last coupling of those clauses) persists always within an oscillation between quoting and saying. To say “I think, therefore I am,” *Cogito, ergo sum*, is absolutely to quote, which we know because, instinctively, we know – that is, we understand – that anybody brash enough to claim the statement as an original thought will soon find himself or herself on the wrong end of incredulity. Yet, in quoting, one finds oneself inhabiting an original relation to the words spoken, not affirming Descartes’ existence (an absurdity: *Descartes thinks, therefore Descartes is*), nor in this case affirming Emerson’s existence, nor, now in my case, Cavell’s, but one’s own. Emerson’s attraction to the *Cogito* axiom so clearly rests in the talismanic quality with which it animates all who speak it, authorizing, we might say, all its readers, that we are able to return through it to Emerson’s paraphrase – a kind of quotation – from Socrates wherein “the soul is cured of its maladies by certain incantations, and...these incantations are beautiful reasons.” The incantatory power of “I think, ‘I am,”” after all an act of reasoning in accord with Socrates’ “beautiful reasons,” occurs precisely in its ability, as with all incantations, to “return...as to life” that phrase to freshness, a “vehicular and transitive,” not an enclosing, power. It does not rely therefore does not lie.

It is more difficult, possibly, to see how Milton's texts achieve this status of incantation which Emerson approves, although White's use of Milton and her obscuration of that use so closely match Emerson's placement of the Descartesean quotation in the very act of declaring independence from quotation – the difference is that White's act is bigger and not a “gag” – that we can begin to understand hers in the light of his. Robin Sandra Grey points to Emerson's recitation of “Lycidas” during a storm at sea, following his apostasy from the Unitarian ministry, as “a perverse talisman against his own possible death and foreclosed career.” Remembering and reciting Milton was, for Emerson, Grey continues, “tied in some powerful way to his desire to survive”: “I think” instantiates “I am,” or at least, *I go on*.²⁵ In Emerson, therefore, White finds at least one companion in her talismanic uses of Milton. This company resolves to grow a good deal larger. For even beyond her unconsciously Emersonian position, White was not alone in her habit of intoning Miltonic images and themes in the service of more explicitly theological messages. Those images and themes, often quoted directly, just as often dispersed in paraphrase, emerged often enough in the sermons of colonial America and the early Republic to be heard, retrospectively, as incantations.

Milton among the Ministers

In *Milton in Early America* (1964), George Sensabaugh narrates the frequency with which quotations from Milton would appear in the rhetoric of early American Protestantism, and Stavely supplies a persuasive account of the importance of Milton to the very founding of that rhetoric in the patterns of

clerical migration. In June 1824, in “A Sermon Delivered before the Female Benevolent Society, in East Randolph,” Massachusetts, the Reverend Luther Sheldon of the Evangelical Congregational Church of Easton deferred to Milton in the first lines of his description of women’s role within Christian history and practice: “Women have been made instrumental in some of the greatest changes, and most important events, which have ever taken place on earth,” he begins, before embedding that statement of apparent esteem in a most inauspicious example:

Satan made our common mother the means of effecting a complete change in the moral characters of our race; and subjecting them to the most direful woes. Regardless of her maker’s mandate, and fearless of his awful threat,

“her rash hand in evil hour

Forth reaching to the fruit, she pluck’d, she ate;

Earth felt the wound, and nature, from her seat,

Sighing thro’ all her works, gave signs of woe,

That all was lost”

Eternity will never fully disclose, will never, never finish the lamentable consequences of that fatal deed.²⁶

There are two reflexes discernible in this, Sheldon's preamble. First is an automatic invocation of Milton as an authority in the maintenance of a gendered hierarchy of morals in which women have always already transgressed, proved insufficient first, through Eve whom Adam describes as "resembling less / His image who made both, and less expressing / the character of that dominion giv'n / O'er other creatures" (*PL* 8.543-46). Sheldon's deployment of Milton illustrates a genre of interpretation wherein Milton is availed upon for reinforcement of female subjection ("He for God only, she for God in him" [*PL* 4.299]) and domestic responsibility ("due at her hour prepared / For dinner savoury fruits, of taste to please / True appetite" [*PL* 5.303-5]), as well as critique of licentiousness. The second reflex is the application, within sermons, of lines of poetry without authorial attribution, a practice not exclusively keyed to Milton but especially prevalent in Milton's case because of the broad recognition his lines could be expected to extort.

However, as the Romantics by this time had amply demonstrated, Milton's depths are often counteractive to his surfaces, especially when encountered by an active reader, that is, a reader turning the texts to new, to transitive purposes, and because of this I am tempted to identify another Milton, a second Miltonic echo, in the following passage from Sheldon. Though women may not preach, Sheldon contends, they may pray:

It is encouraging and animating to the friends of truth and piety,
that, while they behold so many fathers destitute of the fear of God,

and living without prayer, there are many mothers who have hearts to feel and pray for their unconverted husbands and children. To them it is an affecting, lamentable consideration, that in their dwelling is no domestic altar to which they can repair, and around which meet and worship, evening and morning, with their beloved family. Such only, know what unutterable sighs swell their bosoms, when obliged to retire to some uninhabited mansion, or silent grove to pour out their tears and their anguish before the throne of God. Ah, blessed woman, with inexpressible delight I follow thee to thy secret places; behold thee bending low before the mercy seat; and listen to the fervent aspirations of thy heaven born soul.”²⁷

Speaking to an audience of women, Sheldon confesses to acting as a variety of Peeping Tom to their most private moments – a confusing maneuver, his confession, nothing more perhaps than a moment of rhetorical awkwardness, except that we know Sheldon’s mind to rest at least partly in Milton, and with this knowledge we cannot neglect the invitation it communicates, the sense of recognition we feel as Sheldon slips (to say slithers would be perhaps a step too far) into Satan’s part, “a thing,” in C. S. Lewis’s depiction, “that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows.”²⁸ Satan seeks Eve where she has wandered alone, whereon

her every air

Of gesture or at least action overawed

His malice, and with rapine sweet bereaved
 his fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
 That space the Evil One abstracted stood
 From his own evil, and for the time remained
 Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed,
 Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge....” (PL 9.459-66)

The momentary cure, however, turns immediately to inward disgust as “the hot Hell that always in him burns, / Though in mid-Heav’n, soon ended his delight” (PL 9.467-68). Disgust turns outward to “Fierce hate” (PL 9.471), and in his need for mask and outlet for that hate the voyeur now casts himself as sycophantic teacher to the woman he has lately watched. Satan’s pedagogy is entirely contained within his wish to harm his pupil, whereas Sheldon, however misled, appears to hold no such deliberately ill intentions. His intentions, nonetheless, fall prey to the allusive overtones of his epigrammatically brief yet eminently revealing self-portrait, and he, like Satan, suffers degradation as a leader with a superior mien yet whose best prospect is to gain a qualified paternalistic authority over his too-credulous audience. Again like Satan, contorted in Uriel’s sight, “visage...marred” (PL 4.116), Sheldon the voyeur reveals himself to our view, his lessons revealed as expressions of *self*-concern while the “inexpressible delight” of his voyeurism, his desire to *know* women (“Such only, know what unutterable sighs swell their bosoms, when obliged to retire to some uninhabited mansion, or silent grove”), sluices into a desire to *control* women.

One wants to imagine such manifestations of the Miltonic presence as factoring into White's perception that for a woman adopting a position of leadership within an already destabilized religious movement, the subterranean Milton would prove a far more valuable ally than the other, the surface entity. Churchgoers of White's parents' generation – the family was Methodist – would have found the surface entity familiar enough, given Milton's popularity among the ministerial community as an authority in supplement to scripture. Yet the date of Sheldon's sermon is notable, and I discuss Sheldon as an exemplar of clerical habits partly for this reason: White, born too late, could not directly have been influenced by the moment Sheldon exemplifies. As Sheldon spoke in New England, court scholar Charles R. Sumner was industriously at work in London translating *De Doctrina Christiana*, as yet unseen by the general public, into English from Milton's original Latin. This first edition, hastened to press at the insistence of George IV, was a massive folio equipped with a lengthy introduction by Sumner – who recognized his commission to involve the unraveling of a momentous, improbable, and tantalizing mystery – supplying a (largely speculative) account of Milton's authoring of the text, a (largely mistaken) chronicle of how it might have been lost, and a narration of the (largely accidental) circumstances by which it was regained. Sumner's translation effected a radical shift in Milton's status among readers, confirming the Romantics in their comprehension before-the-fact of Milton's now apparent heterodoxy, intercepting and turning back the alternative line of thinking, still predominant despite the Romantic intervention, which held Milton up and out as a model of

conventional faith and his *Paradise Lost* as an annex to scripture, so often invoked as often to be confused *with* scripture.

Sheldon, speaking prior to *De Doctrina*, is fully comfortable, even, as I have suggested, reflexive in quoting Milton as a buttress to his characterization of Christian women. In contrast, the Reverend Ebenezer P. Rogers – shortly to become pastor of the South Reformed Dutch Church on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, an offshoot of the South Church, which was the oldest New York church organization, established 1628 – spoke in all essentials the same message in 1849 of early female dissolution overcome in Christian obligation but with no reference to *Paradise Lost*, no reference at all, in fact, to Eve’s transgression in the garden, beginning instead with a quotation (he names no source, as Sheldon neglects to name Milton) describing the “licentiousness” of women in ancient Rome and the role of that loose morality within the eventual decline of the empire.²⁹ We might discern a slight Miltonic inflection – the concern Adam concedes to Raphael that “Greatness of mind and nobleness their seat / Build in [Eve] loveliest, and create an awe about her” (*PL* 8.557-59), followed by Raphael’s fast rebuke – in Rogers’s observation of “that unseen, unostentatious, but almost omnipotent influence” of women “which is like the sunshine and the dew to earth,” but if this echo is an echo, not an accident, its provenance is effectively buried, again in contrast to Sheldon who much more conspicuously paves our way in his quotation from Milton to listen also for Milton in sidelong hints and resonances.³⁰

Although Rogers restricts the sphere of “omnipotent influence” to the home and family, he goes further than Sheldon in crediting “woman” with an “intellectual equality with the stronger sex,” viewing the Christian religion as particularly generous in this regard: “it assigns to her as her peculiar province, poetry, music and painting – it commits to her care the opening mind, to be furnished with those seeds of truth and knowledge, which shall in after years ripen into such a splendid harvest, and to be moulded and guided by that chastening and refining influence which is felt only at woman’s hands.”³¹ The figural planting of seeds in minds convenes an appealing dialogue with the Emersonian treatment of John’s falling stars, but more than that, Rogers takes poetry explicitly from the province of masculine influence, transferring it as “her peculiar province” to “woman.” In this way we discover our second minister not so much subtracting Milton from discourse (and other poets along with Milton, insofar as Rogers consistently prefers history to poetry in constructing his rhetoric) as elaborately redirecting him into “that chastening and refining influence” so badly needed – the inference now presents itself – by a poet once universally loved, now tainted with revelations of excess and heresy. Milton’s wish for “aftertimes” finds assurance in Rogers’s “after years” into which “truth and knowledge” “shall...ripen,” but only if “guided” by “woman’s hands.”

In other words, Milton doesn’t influence but is influenced. Of course, placing Milton within the terms of this sermon is my own interpolation, yet if we are to follow Joseph Wittreich’s argument that until roughly 1830 “women could and would enlist Milton as a rebel in their cause,” then Rogers’s casting of poetry

as a feminine office resounds *vis-à-vis* Milton as an emphatic statement to women that they, if they want him, can have him.³² This, incongruously, comes at the very moment, again following Wittreich, that Milton falls from availability to women as an “early sponsor” in the establishment of a discourse suitable to feminist priorities, at least insofar as a masculinist discourse had successfully cornered the market of methods for reading Milton and paved the way for “what [the] response now is”: that is, of Milton presumed helpful to men, harmful to women, “he for God only, she for God in him” singled out as the keynote, the delegate line, disregarding the possibility that this line too, like countless of Milton’s lines, might contribute no uncomplicated position, meet flush with no merely single nor unambiguous idea.³³ The line is, we must remember, delivered under the auspices of Satan’s first glancing Adam and Eve. To trust that glance in its problematic shades and modulations as identical to Milton’s own might not be wrong, but should at least impel a pause.³⁴

“The paradigmatic response of women to Milton’s poetry shifts perceptibly at the onset of the Victorian period” away from a discourse identifiably feminist, yet, once again incongruously, women remained during the subsequent two thirds of the nineteenth century among Milton’s strongest – if sometimes most critical – readers.³⁵ They included Margaret Fuller, Mary Baker Eddy, and Ellen White in America and George Eliot in England.³⁶ Moreover, at least on American turf, these women were more likely to read Milton in a “transitive and vehicular” sense than the men of the “literary circles and schools” where Milton’s texts found some measure of refuge after their precipitous decline in popularity.³⁷

Whereas men remained likely to cite Milton as a literary authority, some women took up the very project abandoned by an earlier ministry of turning Milton to more dynamic purposes, returning him, in other words, “as to life.” Even Emerson, whose early writing has been described by both Grey and Van Anglen as a kind of protracted meditation upon Milton’s prose and verse, and who, as Joan Richardson observes, alludes in his journals to Milton and especially to *Paradise Lost* every year between 1820 and 1836 and seems in this early period to have been constantly busy rereading Milton’s epic, found it necessary to retreat from Milton over time, preferring Shakespeare and Goethe as his “representative men.”³⁸ Herman Melville, as disclosed in a recent edition of his annotations of Milton along with commentary by Grey and others, might too have found constant footing in Milton’s texts, yet he was always testing that footing and often found the Miltonic ground unsteady.³⁹ It was in this “climate” – the word is Balachandra Rajan’s – that Ellen White obscured her “vehicular” reading of Milton within a “posture” of denial.⁴⁰ I submit this posture to be the central element enabling White to succeed, we will see, as thoroughly as, quite possibly more thoroughly than, any other writer of the nineteenth century in furthering Milton’s passage into “aftertimes.”

Seventh-day Adventism and the (Revolutionary) War in Heaven

White’s ongoing denial of having read Milton, reinforced in her son’s denial, was perhaps her most Miltonic, and, by the same token, her most visionary act. Milton, after all, was the poet who with great dexterity and even greater humor stepped forward to tell of “Things unattempted yet in prose or

rhyme” (*PL* 1.16), meanwhile borrowing that line, in a nearly word-for-word translation, from Ariosto. We are left, then, with the question of why White’s Miltonic appropriation, in the spectrum of Milton’s broad influence, not just in Europe and America but indeed worldwide, actually matters.

Seventh-day Adventism has always been by policy and principle an unassuming denomination, more or less avoiding the mystique of otherness and also the scrutiny drawn by controversy often endured by and bracketing together the other surviving nineteenth-century sectarian movements, in particular the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. It is therefore remarkable that of this sectarian triune Adventism presented in its first decades absolutely the most extreme, the most concentrated challenge to American mainstream religious thinking and to the self-conception of America itself.⁴¹ “The American nation, which orthodoxy had seen as the persecuted woman in the wilderness or the growing mountain of Daniel 2,” writes Malcolm Bull, “was pictured in the Adventist heresy as being an agent of the dragon,” sometimes *as* the dragon of Revelation 13:11-18, the beast with two horns, lamb-like yet monstrous.⁴² The separation of the two horns, the nation’s “Republican civil power and...Protestant ecclesiastical power,”⁴³ would eventually, inevitably, collapse, the trigger for which moment was increasingly imagined to be the legal enforcement of a Sunday Sabbath against which serious and recurring threat the Adventists would break their customary antipolitical stance – antipolitical insofar as the American political system was, to them, a lie, an abomination of liberty – to lobby. All of this bespeaks an arresting complication, that a sectarian movement staging its

apocalyptic principles upon a variety of American exceptionalism no less entrenched than the exceptionalism of its Mormon counterpart could meanwhile harbor such profound ambivalence toward the American reverie of religious freedom and republican idealism. Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart identify this ambivalence as precisely “the source of [the] identity” of Seventh-day Adventism and also of the “global success” of a religion outside the Protestant mainstream yet offering itself as a viable “[alternative] to the American way of life.”⁴⁴

Membership in the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists today exceeds fifteen million.⁴⁵ Missionary efforts were initiated in the 1870s, helped by Ellen White’s move to Australia in 1891 where she stayed until 1900, and by the end of the 1920s international membership had outstripped the North American Division (NAD).⁴⁶ In 1995, eighty-six percent of Seventh-day Adventists resided in developing countries – the NAD representing less than ten percent of membership – while “In recent years, 75% of the new members added to the [NAD] of the Adventist Church, which includes both the U.S. and Canada, have been immigrants from countries in the developing world.”⁴⁷ Eight hundred and eighty-five languages are used in two hundred and three nations for the purposes of Adventist work and publication.⁴⁸ As the church has progressed in the twentieth century toward an identity more in line with the mainstream of American Protestantism, seeking, in Ronald Lawson’s description, a “trajectory from sect to denomination,” the international and immigrant contingent remains “more literalistic in their hermeneutics and more conservative in their beliefs”

than multigenerational North American Adventists, more likely, moreover, to believe absolutely in Ellen White's prophetic eminence.⁴⁹

That eminence insists upon an ethic of and recommends a method for living as an outsider in relation to powerful governance, an ethic and a method correlative to those identified separately by Griswold, Fuller, and Martyn as emblematic of, perhaps even *coming from*, the poet John Milton. As Bull and Lockhart write, "The source of [White's] interpretation [of the war in heaven] was probably Books V and VI of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, for she follows Milton's narrative almost completely, including his descriptions of Satan's speeches." Bull and Lockhart see White's Satan as "go[ing] significantly beyond Milton's in standing on an unambiguous republican platform" and "[White's] account of the war in heaven in *The Spirit of Prophecy* [as] conceived like the War of Independence, with Satan acting like the American revolutionaries and the Godhead representing the reigning monarchy." "Satan," they suggest, "makes what appears to be a diabolical 'Declaration of Independence.'"⁵⁰ Although insightful with regard to White, this description loses sight of Milton's own revolutionary priorities, the priorities very much with him during those "evil days.../ with dangers compassed round" (*PL* 7.26-27), when, in his blindness, revolution over, he completed his epic poem. Also obscured is the troubling maneuver by which Milton again and again docks his republicanism with Satan's crew, docks meanwhile the rhetoric of hated monarchy with the Godhead and the Son.

We will furthermore remember that Thomas Jefferson himself encountered Milton's Satan with notorious enthusiasm, his "response anticipat[ing] that of subsequent Romantic readers, such as Blake and Shelley, who similarly regarded Satan as the poem's hero." This observation I adopt from John S. Tanner and Justin Collings, who continue, "as far as we can determine, Jefferson *never* alludes to Milton's Satan as anything but heroic – although it was common for both Federalists and Republicans in early America to tar each other with invidious comparisons to Milton's archfiend." Sensabaugh documents Jefferson's reliance on Milton's prose in the composition of several key tracts, including his Act for Exempting Dissenters from Contributing to the Anglican Church (1776) and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1786), while others have discerned a Miltonic influence, in some cases even direct reference to Milton, in the actual Declaration of Independence.⁵¹

White does in fact seem to follow Milton in narrating the sequence of events leading up to Satan's revolutionary action. She writes:

The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that he might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon his Son. The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that it was ordained by himself that Christ, his Son, should be equal with himself; so that wherever was the presence of his Son, it was as his own presence. The word of the Son was to be

obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son he had invested with authority to command the heavenly host. Especially was his Son to work in union with himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His Son would carry out his will and his purposes, but would do nothing of himself alone. The Father's will would be fulfilled in him.⁵²

Compare the above to Milton's corollary lines:

Hear all ye angels, progeny of Light,
 Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
 Hear my decree, which unrevoked shall stand.
 This day I have begot whom I declare
 My only Son, and on this holy hill
 Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
 At my right hand; your head I him appoint;
 And by myself have sworn to him shall bow
 All knees in Heav'n, and shall confess him Lord:
 Under his great vicegerent reign abide
 United as one individual soul
 For ever happy: him who disobeys
 Me disobeys, breaks union, and that day
 Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
 Into utter darkness, deep engulfed, his place

Ordained without redemption, without end. (*PL* 5.600-15)

Especially pronounced is the echo and the syntactical straightening out of Milton's "him who disobeys / Me disobeys" in White's "The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father," and both authors turn immediately to Satan's internal jealousy upon the occasion of the heavenly counsel, externalized later in his polemical routing of the very concepts of obedience and authority. Milton's Satan "could not bear / Through pride that sight" – the sight of the Son's coronation – "and thought himself impaired" (5.664-65), goes forward, now in White's account, "to create sympathy for himself, by representing that God had dealt unjustly with him in bestowing supreme honor upon Christ." Yet that self-pity finds a mask and a foothold in Satan's complaint to the other angels of injustice across the board and in his prediction that "liberty was to be abridged" "and us eclipsed under the name / Of King anointed" (5.776-77); "All evil he declared to be the result of the divine administration...He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of...liberty, and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of Heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence."⁵³

Whatever Milton's intention in this "intangling" of principles, White is absolutely more concerned with questioning the foundations and the motives of republican democracy than with worrying the snarls and the knots of monarchical authority and divinity.⁵⁴ She straightens out Milton in more than

syntax, then, snarling not as Milton was inclined to do at monarchy *per se* but at what she sees as the disguised grab for power of her own country's supposedly representative variety of government. Her Satan's republicanism mimics Milton's Satan's equivalent values, but whereas Satan in *Paradise Lost* stands as a riddle to readers in seeming to promote (hence to render as sinful) the poet's own dearly held beliefs, White's Satan is simply and clearly wrong in White's view – wrong because he is a liar, and because he seeks to distort what he pretends to promote.

It is unsurprising that White's prophetic discomfort with American government and policy would find continued relevance among a perpetually renewed international contingent, whereas the North American branch of the church, more than halfway into its second century, wishes to relax into a normalized relationship with its cultural and political surroundings. The same structure of oppositions goes back to the very beginning. John Greenleaf Whittier, attending a Millerite meeting, wondered of the Millerites, "How [it was] possible in the midst of so much life, in that sunrise light, and in view of all abounding beauty," at a moment, more broadly, when national mood was distinctively buoyant, the nation itself expanding in industry as well as territory, "that the idea of the death of Nature – the baptism of the world in fire – could take such a...shape as this."⁵⁵ Miller was not exactly a prophet, instead arriving at his eschatology, he thought, through reason and methodical calculation, but when Miller's methods failed, White found traction in new principles, the principle of trust, especially, in vision over against reason.⁵⁶ In this she answered

Whittier's bewilderment with a revaluation and fresh injection of revolutionary, antiauthoritarian thinking into an atmosphere of escalating complacency. Her rebellion, accomplished by fitting the language of American independence into Satan's mouth, was to paint that independence as a deception of a satanic order and in so doing to reclaim the language for herself and for her remnant sectaries who would question the underpinnings of the American state.

Although Lawson equates foreign Adventist fundamentalism in adherence to early doctrine and sectarian identity with conservatism, no doubt accurately from a theological perspective, Douglas Morgan sees in Adventism a propulsive, persistent rejuvenation of revolutionary values within a standing apocalyptic worldview: "Adventists have seen it as their duty, in the brief interim expected between the present and the Second Coming, to uphold liberty and to resist measures which would overstep the state's limited role as guarantor of freedom."⁵⁷ As a prophetic author practicing a narrative approach to telling prophecy, White displayed less sympathy for the devil than did Jefferson the legal scholar and politician, arguably less even than Milton wished to evoke, yet Milton helped White, as he helped Jefferson, to conceptualize the framework for a resolution against custom, to construct a language and a repertoire of symbols for a break, in White's case, from faltering Millerism and from unquestioning nationalism. In the process White joined Milton in a "line of vision" requiring her "to forswear her lineage in so many ways." Among these ways was the requirement to shelve Milton's book. Yet as the Seventh-day Adventist church continues to absorb and convene around its growing international community, a

community showing itself to be, at present, the most receptive audience among Adventists for a tradition of opposition to the American cultural and political mainstream, Milton's presence, "the primitive vitality of that thought from which America is born," no less vital for the subterranean quality of its bearing, finds a surprisingly expansive new field of application and significance.

In the nineteenth century, however, for nearly fifty years following its inception, Seventh-day Adventism went routinely unnoticed, overshadowed by memories of the dramatic Millerite disappointment, and when recognized, was recognized as an anomalous throwback to and remnant of that disappointment. The 1877 *Illustrated Handbook to All Religions*, billed as an inclusive survey "from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time," discusses Miller and the Millerites in a general article on "Adventists," but does not directly mention White's Seventh-day bloc, by then quite solidly established. Instead, "The persons who hold Millenarian views are not...confined to any one section, but are scattered throughout the United States. They belong to different organizations," although "Sufficient unity prevails to support a paper of moderate size, which is issued weekly."⁵⁸ The unspecified weekly paper is almost certainly the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Ellen White's first vehicle for publishing her testimonies, but such a distortion of the *Review and Herald* as representing "different [scattered] organizations" indicates a certain stoppage in the Seventh-day Adventists' campaign to solidify the church within an identity discrete from Millerism. By 1892 the *Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties, and Schools of Religious Thought* would mention neither the Millerites nor the

Seventh-day Adventists, as though the distance in time from the Great Disappointment made Miller irrelevant to a such a catalogue of “schools of...thought,” and furthermore as though, without Miller’s anchor, the Adventists were totally forgotten.⁵⁹ This signifies a distinct falling-off from a much earlier volume of a similar type, Gorrie’s *The Churches and Sects of the United State: Containing a Brief Account of the Origin, History, Doctrines, Church Government, Mode of Worship, Usages, and Statistics of Each Religious Denomination, So Far as Known* (1850), wherein, after the Great Disappointment but before the official formation and naming of the Seventh-day Adventist church, Miller receives a high measure of praise – surprising, perhaps, given his failure – in the volume’s concluding article:

Many false reports have no doubt been circulated in reference to [William Miller]; but we believe that in morals his character was unimpeachable, while there can be but little doubt of the sincerity of his intentions in the promulgation of his honestly-formed opinions. He has sometimes been called the ‘Prophet Miller;’ but it is scarcely necessary to add, that he disavowed entirely the name and functions of a prophet. He pretended to no extraordinary degree of inspiration. His peculiar doctrines were not advanced as original predictions. He gave what he sincerely believed to be the true exposition of the prophetic declarations of Scripture in relation to the end of time; and many of those who, through ignorance,

scoffed and sneered at his conclusions, might have become wiser by examining his propositions.⁶⁰

Still roundly unknown, Ellen White would not and did not warrant mention here, but an awareness of embryonic movements such as hers emerges from Gorrie's observation that "the leaders and promoters of the excitement are many of them still living in the belief that the time of the end is nigh," and in the very last sentence of the volume, "it is only necessary to remark, in concluding this Article, that there are still public teachers of the doctrine in different parts of the United States."⁶¹

Such a conclusion would seem to forecast a propitious future for White and the Adventists, essentially offering the prophetess a final word in the matter of "Churches and Sects in the United States." Indeed, one might reasonably expect the bearer of such promise to catch the attention of as keen an observer of cultural – especially religious – irregularities of the American people as, for example, Mark Twain. Yet when Twain in his well-known deconstruction of Christian Science, serialized in 1902 and 1903 in the *North American Review*, compiles a preliminary list of groups of "insane" people, he names the Millerites and the Mormons but *not* the Seventh-day Adventists. No doubt he would have gotten around to that identification – there are "millions" of insane groups, he avers, filling only two half-page columns before ending his list – but the Adventists are certainly not foremost in his consciousness and are moreover upstaged in their relative insanity, Twain's gauge for worthiness of notice, by

Mary Baker Eddy and her newer innovations, e.g. her characterizations and unusual methods of worship of “Jesus Christ, Scientist.”⁶² It may even be the case, because the Millerites were no longer a viable presence, and because White’s following was the last significant offshoot of Miller’s movement, that Twain, like the authors of the 1877 *Handbook*, in fact *meant* the Adventists when he mentioned the Millerites. If so, then we will understand that he too held a misconception of Adventism as only a holdout, an antiquity. The Adventists were not viewed as a self-contained faction with a unique doctrinal attitude, nor was it known that most Adventist sectaries were too young or too newly converted to remember or to care very much about Miller’s eschatology. This is to say that a church founded in disappointment yet which for decades had been gaining through birth and resolute proselytizing a significant membership consisting largely of individuals who had never been disappointed – despite an early condition as defined in Ellen White’s “shut-door doctrine” that “Not only...belief in the Second Advent but also the experience of the Great Disappointment”⁶³ were necessary certificates of salvation – still found itself caught in the gravity of its origin, a satellite, not a system.

Anonymity was at least partly strategic. Interested in spreading its message, the church was also interestingly hesitant to enter into relations with a mainstream political culture. This ambivalence, after long and often fractious debate in the pages of the *Review and Herald*, led to a position of noncombatancy during the Civil War among a membership generally sympathetic to the abolitionist platform.⁶⁴ It was only in regard to an issue so

important to their way of life that they could not possibly stay out of the fray – the Sabbath itself – that these vestigial Millerites found their identity recognized in the eyes of a wider culture as a movement unto themselves. We begin to see evidence of this in a lecture at Chautauqua in 1881, when Reverend Abram Herbert Lewis concluded his argument against the enforcement of Sunday legislation with a survey of compatriots in his cause. After naming the railroad as an industry with the strength and the will to shatter any Sabbath law, then discussing the Seventh-day Baptists as “Among the theological influences which will have a more prominent part in the work of agitation in the future,” Lewis moves on to the Adventists:

In addition to this the Seventh-day Adventists, who hold the same doctrine [as the Seventh-day Baptists] concerning the Sabbath have sprung up within the last twenty-five or thirty years. They are essentially a proselyting people, and have developed unusual powers, and effective agencies for spreading their views. All this will serve to keep agitation alive and vigorous. Thus it is easy to see that history and the present state of the case combine to assert that the question of Sunday legislation, and its enforcement is one of the coming questions of the hour.⁶⁵

A more complete discussion of Adventist opposition to Sabbath legislation will follow in the next chapter. For now I would like to point only to the paradox this passage would seem to communicate in its identification of Adventists’ “unusual

powers, and effective agencies for spreading their views,” given all we have seen of the invisibility of Seventh-day Adventism within the scope of mainstream religion. The Sabbath issue provides the angle by which the Adventists – hitherto obscured in the prism of their own history, the light in which they might be viewed at one moment bending around them, at another moment shooting their image out in every direction – finally materialize into a singular focus.⁶⁶ With such an angle and such an issue allowing for White’s visionary interpretation of scripture not only to be brought into focus but exercised, tested, and sharpened, we discover in the controversy over Sabbath legislation a new battleground, not the first since Jefferson’s but among the most dynamic, for Milton’s rebel angels issuing – angling – into the American contest for liberty.

Yet unlike Jefferson’s encounter with Milton, sufficiently celebrated, this new battleground remains a site without a monument. For this reason, before entering into the story of the battle, I wish to attend to the grounds by which such moments of intellectual opposition are or are not marked, the structures wherein their histories are or are not housed, returning then, if only provisionally, to our earlier questions of vehicles and houses, streams and statues, so restoring to our discussion a sense of White’s literary context as that context transitions, or if we are to measure according to the extraordinary and exponentially increasing reach of Adventist membership, explodes, into the twentieth century.

In Search of *Paradise Lost*

Of great concern to Milton's readership in the nineteenth century was the lack of a monument to mark the poet's burial site at St. Giles's, Cripplegate. Lady Morgan, for example, took this lack to be part of a famine, the ill regard for "sites hallowed by the memory of compatriot genius" to be symptomatic of a more general failure among Britons to honor their representatives in verse so well as the Continental nations seemed readily to manage – "the very stone which marked the hallowed spot" of Milton's burial "having been removed," Lady Morgan protests, "and never replaced." She foos her protest with a note of repaired circumstances, having learned betimes "This injury" to have been "compensated through the liberality of the late Mr. Whitbread, at whose expense a bust, by Bacon, of the great poet, was erected in the church."⁶⁷ Yet even with that bust doing justice to the resting place, she extends, still the *residences* of such top-shelf poets as Shakespeare, Milton, and Byron go rudely without commemoration. Indeed, it seems as if houses and statues, in that order, are the proper if unacknowledged containers – not crafts – for the quantity of a poet's greatness.

Lady Morgan writes by her habit with a strong dose of tonic irony, but the same concerns precede her in Elijah Fenton's biographical essay on Milton, written early in the eighteenth century, routinely reprinted alongside Milton's poetry in England and America through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. In this biography Fenton remarks without any great emphasis that

Milton's body "neither has nor wants a monument to perpetuate his memory," yet a "Postscript" elaborates (emphasis mine):

To what has been said in the Life of our Author's having no monument, it may not be improper to add, that in inquiry at St. Giles's church, the sexton shewed a small monument, which he said was supposed to be Milton's; but the inscription had never been legible since he was employed in that office, which he has possessed about forty years. This, sure, could never have happened in so short a space of time, unless the Epitaph had been industriously erased; *and that supposition carries with it so much inhumanity, that we ought to believe it was not erected to his memory.*⁶⁸

We need to place aside the artlessness of this reasoning in order to make sense and then make use of what Fenton apprehends and, his "Life" first appearing in 1725, to some extent anticipates. After all, Milton's rest has never been peaceful: an original stone marker was removed within years of his burial; his bones were disinterred in 1790, some of them stolen along with some of his hair; later a statue of Milton was toppled during a *Luftwaffe* attack in the Second World War. What I want to bring to center is not this but Fenton's expression of a wholesale preference for no monument over a desecrated one – "so much inhumanity" – and his equation of erasure with nonentity which, if the erasure had indeed taken place, falls directly into the terms and purposes of the erasing agent.

The same equation can be applied to Ellen White's erasure of Milton's name within Adventism – an erasure that left traces, the traces themselves transformed as testimony to Milton's nonentity for, or non-entitlement to, or disentitling by, White and then her successors. White turns Milton's very monument, in this case his book on her shelf, from evidence that he *has* been memorialized in her writing to evidence that he *has not* been so memorialized, insofar as being able to point to the book in order to deny having read it occasions an advantage in the mechanics of the near term of her denial. But in the long term, the book haunts the history. It turns back again to speak against White's purposes. In *turning back*, unfortunately, it cannot be said exactly to have *turned up*. There is a record of a copy of *Paradise Lost* in the inventory, created after her death, of White's personal library, and I find no reason to think this was not the same copy given to her by J. N. Andrews in 1858. Numerous items from the library, however, were subsequently distributed to various Adventist schools, no register kept of what items went where, and the volume in question seems to have been lost in the distribution.⁶⁹ Yet this does not, perhaps needless to say, cancel out the possibility of speculation as to the material reality of the book, not only its existence but its shape and size, what we might describe as its quality of presence within the house as well as its editorial features and publisher's provenance, all of which will communicate something of what the book communicated to Ellen White. And because Lady Morgan insists upon the importance of residences in our consideration of authors, we might comment too on how the house, which is to say the household, comported itself around the book as an object among objects, a material fact.

I am prompted in this last element not only by Lady Morgan but also by the much more current research of Carol A. Nickolai, an anthropologist who targets the residence of Ellen and James Whites in Battle Creek, Michigan as an example of “The Relevance of Nineteenth-Century Religion to the Archeological Record” – the title of Nickolai’s paper (2003) on this topic. While Nickolai is instructive in observing of religion that “Although it has been an important area of archaeological research in the past, an archaeology of religion does not need to be focused on attempting to prove or disprove particular religious beliefs about events in religious history or the nature of history itself” – proposing instead an approach to research by which material and religious history are understood in each other’s light – she is even more instructive in describing the difficulty of structuring such an archaeological encounter with materially-inflected belief. She adopts the Battle Creek residence for her case study but finds that residence (a “small Greek Revival house...on Wood Street,” “still standing,” still in the possession of an Adventist organization for the preservation of historic properties) nearly devoid of an identifiable archaeological record. No objects of interest were discovered there even after the implementation of “a grid of shovel tests, geomagnetic surveying, electrical conductivity testing, and ground-penetrating radar which were used together with historic documents to target several areas for test excavation in the backyard of the house.”⁷⁰

Undeterred, Nickolai turns to assurances that “In fact, the kinds of artifacts and features absent from this site may shed very interesting light on

issues that make further work at this house...particularly intriguing.”⁷¹ The record, in other words, exists in the erasures, and although our own methods differ radically from Nickolai’s, the central problem of locating absent objects at the center of a dynamic history is the same.

By the mid-nineteenth century, mass production, marketing, and consumption had made a suite of objects available to the public, and relatively few people continued to manufacture a substantial quantity of their own household goods. Even those things that were made by each household, such as clothes or meals, would have been created out of the raw materials available on the market and considerably influenced by the emerging mass media of national – even international – newspapers and magazines. So while attempting to live out their ideals, and separate themselves from nonbelievers, groups such as the Seventh-day Adventists would have had to use the same material culture available to everyone else, even if it was not precisely what their beliefs dictated. While it would be nearly impossible to derive the particular meanings given for any single object by a specific individual, the patterns of using and not using these objects by households and groups of households may be sufficiently distinguishable to provide a glimpse inside the systems people used to determine their material lives.⁷²

As much as clothing and crockery, we must take books as entering into this “suite of objects” shared within an increasingly uniform cultural environment, reliant upon markets, hence buffering against “an original relation to the universe,” at least against an original relation to the manufacture of goods. The “household goods” of an individual such as Ellen White – the very embodiment of “the spirit of prophecy” – would necessarily include the trappings of her faith, not least the texts that serve to organize and facilitate that faith and finally to speak it.⁷³

White can be said then to belong among the “relatively few people [who] continued to manufacture a substantial quantity of their own household goods” in that her visionary texts were precisely the result of a do-it-yourself approach to the manufacture of an exegetical apparatus, the type of commodity which most households would gain in the marketplace – in churches and in the purchase of sermons printed as pamphlets. Nickolai’s observation that even goods “made by each household” rely upon “the raw materials available on the market,” if we add books to her examples of “clothes or meals,” will bring us back to Milton as nothing more and nothing less than what White found available to work with in the manufacture of her prophecies. Even after his fall from popularity (perhaps especially afterward: his presence more diffuse, less specific) Milton supplied a common language for the American tradition of looking through a typological past into an apocalyptic future, a tradition White not only could not escape but championed more successfully than most of her contemporaries. “So while attempting to live out their ideals, and separate themselves from nonbelievers,” therefore setting aside those texts most freighted with the concerns of a

surrounding culture, “groups such as the Seventh-day Adventists would have had to use the same material culture available to everyone else,” including the material made available, for example, in *Paradise Lost*, and “even if it was not precisely what their beliefs dictated,” this material could be manipulated to *become* an aspect of belief. In the process of manipulation, the household succeeds in absorbing Milton into its “patterns of using and not using,” by means of which patterns we can read something of a particular history of reading and not reading.

White’s copy of Milton was probably small in size. We can infer from the title included in her library inventory that it was not a compilation of Milton’s poetry but *Paradise Lost* alone, editions of which tended to appear in slighter format – octavo or small quarto – than the often more elaborate collected works. From here, to narrow the field of candidate editions, we must indulge several assumptions: first, that Willie White is correct in stating that J. N. Andrews purchased the volume for the purpose of giving it to Ellen White, which would limit its time in his possession; second, that he purchased it new, and that it was therefore printed no more than a few years prior to the purchase; third, that it derived from an American publisher. We might be wrong in any of these elements, and the failure of any of them would launch us into an unnavigable sea of alternatives. Yet our assumptions allow, conditionally, for a concrete image to form of the book on a high shelf in the kitchen of the Battle Creek home.

The volume was most likely published in Hartford, New York, or Philadelphia. If Hartford, then the publisher was almost certainly S. Andrus & Son; if New York, perhaps Leavitt and Company were the publishers, or Baker and Scribner, or A. S. Barnes, or Clark, Austin, and Smith; if Philadelphia, it would have been Geo. S. Appleton, or Troutman and Hayes, or Hayes and Zell, or John B. Perry.⁷⁴ Several of these houses produced multiple distinct editions of *Paradise Lost* in the decade preceding Andrews's gift to White, and while I will not here embark upon a full bibliographical account of these, instead I hope a "reading" of the 1856 S. Andrus illustrated edition – exemplary of broad trends – will serve in substitute. Bound in green covers, gilt with foliage and birds, the volume supplies among its front matter two engravings of Milton: one a standard portrait, by C. Burt Sc., the other a more elaborate image of "Milton Dictating to his Daughters," attributed to Benson J. Lossing's reputable New York company. This second engraving depicts two daughters, not three, sitting on the ground in a garden strewn with books, the daughter on the left holding paper and pen, the daughter on the right gazing in adoration toward an enthroned, regal Milton framed by large doors set in a stone façade behind him. The books on the ground meet and merge with the shrubbery of the garden, there reconstituting the leaves embossed upon the green covers and spine of the edition itself and conditioning a visual mayhem of leaves (as foliage) and more leaves (as pages). Various birds occupy the branches surrounding Milton and his daughters, toning the Blakean felicity of the scene – a scene that is purely fantasy, and puzzling, even comical, insofar as Milton's familial discord was in "aftertimes" a widely broadcast and widely embellished component of his life. Yet the comedy is also a comment upon

a changing tradition of reading Milton, casting back to Blake in more than decoration. The downward cascade of elements in the engraving, from stones to leaves to books and daughters, resuscitates Blake's prescription for "stony law" to be "[stamped] to dust" wherein "the deserts blossom," this blossoming to "burst the stony roof" (*America a Prophecy* Plate 10). It matters not at all, according to these terms, that the girls pictured, Milton's first readers, are so clearly not his real daughters, not the daughters who felt imprisoned in his residence, constrained within the "stony law" of his apparently oppressive needs. Between the stone of his domicile and the ears and eyes of those who as readers will carry his language forward, in this striking composition, the hinge, or rather the hilt of the transfer, is Milton's head, which is, importantly, without detail, obscured, hence directing attention downward to his books, the books confused with foliage, appearing then to blossom with the leaves into the life of those who sit and listen at the poet's feet.⁷⁵

It is perhaps not incidental, therefore, that a later engraving, accompanying Book 2, places Satan in posture similar to Milton's, seated upon an imposing throne, encircled by dark doorway and stone architrave, yet flames, in this instance, replace the foliage, and Satan, in contrast to Milton, is fully alone although we know he must be surrounded by legions who stand just outside the frame. The contrast is shrewd. Satan pretends to republican principles in convening the infernal council, but his governance stands ideologically as well as methodologically opposed to republicanism: he listens to his followers but ultimately does nothing less or more than what he wants, indeed what he has

already decided to do in conversation with Beëlzebub before ever entering the company of the council. There is an equivalency in these engravings between the figure of Milton and the figure of Satan, we might say, in posture but not in position. The difference is a matter of methods of reading. The image of Milton emphasizes the presence of readers, the springing to life, the animation of text in readership, whereas the image of Satan memorializes, emulsifies, makes a statue of the author, an agent of hell, living yet dead, who, like *Il Commendatore*, “can no longer be killed.”

In America in the middle of the nineteenth century, it should by now be clear, there was a need to read and to see Milton in the firelight of this contrast. Just as the daughters in the garden cannot be Milton’s real daughters, too loving, too willing an audience, so the real Milton, with the revelations of *De Doctrina*, had fallen from viable candidacy for the throne upon which this new, this imagined Milton sits. In opposition to the opinion of Dr. John Aikin, whose “Critical Essay” was used, for example, as an introduction to an 1805 Charlestown edition of Milton’s *Poetical Works*, and who held *Paradise Lost* to be “essentially a *theological poem*,” the “Memoir of the Author” (unattributed) accompanying our 1856 edition presents Milton as “the most learned of the English poets,” celebrating his “erudition” and praising him for having “explored” so thoroughly “the learning of all ages, the opinions of the wisest men, the superstitions of the most benighted nations, the truths of philosophy and science, and the most solemn mysteries of religion.”⁷⁶ The sense of Milton as a “theological” poet fades in these praises to an acknowledgement of his grasp of “solemn mysteries”; the

emphasis is decidedly secular, advertising an author drastically removed from that wellspring of ministerial quotations into which service Milton had previously been pressed.

Aiken sees Milton as essentially devoted to and conditioned by scripture as proof-text: like a good scribe or printer he deviates rarely from that text, and if his summoning of deep cosmic history as a “machinery...employed to bring into effect” the fact of “Man’s first disobedience” (*PL* 1.1) strikes some readers as, perhaps, exegetically new-fangled, “It is in this part alone that MILTON appears as an *inventor*; for his deference to the authority of the sacred writings has restrained him, in relating the history or allegory of the fall of man, from making any considerable additions to the original narration.”⁷⁷ The 1856 Andrus edition likewise detects “a reflected, not primitive truth” in Milton’s verse, but only because “The fashion of the times,” *not* the stipulation of theological adherence,

was not in favor of original thinking, and hence he, like other great men of the period, principally employed himself in heaping together all the knowledge which the accumulated learning of ages could afford. One consequence of this was the subjection of passion, thought, and feeling, to memory; and there is, therefore, to be discovered no beauty of a sentimental kind, even in his freshest and earliest poems. The same cause will also account for the absence of that heart-reaching spiritual eloquence with which poetry sometimes awakens us. There are scarcely any thoughts to be found

in Milton which can be ascribed to his sympathy with individual suffering, or to his consideration of human nature in its simple but deep workings. He gave himself no time for this unincumbered view of humanity. He sought the true philosophy of nature, but it was in the history of sects and kingdoms; and he learned to excite wonder but not passion. Whatever, therefore, might have been the tendencies of his nature, truth in his poetry is a reflected, not primitive truth; the truth which learning searches for and discovers, not what every heart feels and recognizes.⁷⁸

Placing Milton in this way “among the philosophers,” not among the ministers, the “Memoir” evokes a dead Milton deadened to “passion” and “spiritual eloquence,” awake on the other hand to “memory,” therefore to “history,” but not to prophecy.⁷⁹ We might recognize in this gesture a first round of thinking about Milton as “a monument to dead ideas,” ideas to which future Miltonic monuments will also stand in memory, and we might go further to recognize such gesturing toward the act of memorializing as a necessary step in venerating, that is, resuscitating, what sleeps in the ideas. Unseated from prophecy in the revelations of his heresy, *this* Milton, a historicist Milton (of history and concerned with history), a Milton with a heart of stone, might still supply value, even if a secondary rather than a primary value.

In this depiction the “Memoir” wavers only in imagining the process whereby Milton gained sufficient power for authoring *Paradise Lost*, “the

cramped scholasticism of his philosophy” culminating “When years, continued study, and experience of the world, had altered the general tone of his feelings” and “The great voice grew instinct with life.” “No mortal ever saw that vision,” the vision of the “creating light of heaven,” “so distinct as Milton, and seeing it, he could but write as he did,” yet “It was from sight, not feeling, his inspiration came, and hence the grandeur, but coldness, of his genius.”⁸⁰ The Andrus edition is a compelling candidate for Ellen White’s archive not because it was certainly the most available to her – this question may very well be unanswerable – but because it enfolds in its visual cues and in its choices for describing and enthroning Milton a precise scenario for the kind of reading and denying we encounter in the house at Battle Creek. Explicit in establishing Milton’s relevance, the grounds for the presence of the volume in the house, the volume also insists upon a reevaluation of Milton under which terms he is explicitly withheld from the prophetic tradition.

Meanwhile, we are asked upon picking up the volume to envision a methodology of vision – even if, for Milton, vision turns out to have been *not visionary* – as an application of reading and careful study, a slow pressurizing out of which “grandeur” erupts. This places *Paradise Lost* in a middle territory: unfit for prophecy but also an authorization of prophecy by fiat; fixed in time, a stone-cold monument to dead ideas, but also a fixative in making those ideas available to “aftertimes.” The “high shelf...in back of the stove and under the chimney support” invites therefore an allegorical view of its literal construction, holding the book above a fiery region capable of destroying it – as *De Doctrina*

cast Milton for many as of the Devil's party, although not in Blake's or Jefferson's admiring sense – while restraining it from flight up the flue “with bolder wing” to “see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight” (*PL* 3.13, 3.54-55). Like the equivocating language of the “Memoir,” White's response to Milton stipulates a place for him in the later nineteenth century while restricting him to that “middle flight” (*PL* 1.14) which he declared so unacceptable in the earliest moments of *Paradise Lost*. In her strategy of positioning Milton on the shelf, in authoring and presiding over this allegory within the cabinetry, White assumes a posture for her own adventure “down / The dark descent, and up again to reascend, / Though hard and rare” (*PL* 3.19-21).

Interlude

Twain's appraisal of Christian Science, in which his acknowledgement of Seventh-day Adventism is no acknowledgement at all, overlapped in *The North American Review* with the serialization of Henry James's novel *The Ambassadors*. Together these texts give an initial impression of how far apart the concerns of their authors, the foremost representatives of American Realism along with William Dean Howells, really were. But this impression may very well be an illusion. In *The Ambassadors* Lewis Lambert Strether purchases on a whim a set of "seventy volumes in red-and-gold" of Victor Hugo, "a miracle of cheapness, parted with, he was assured by the shopman, at the price of the red-and-gold alone." This is a signal and a code, and the very information that the signal is coded emerges in the disturbance of what Strether's purchase isn't: the purchase at the center of this novel, the "cheapness" of which purchase Strether considers as he sits alone, "eyes aloft," in Hugo's beloved Notre Dame cathedral, is markedly *not* a set of volumes by Honoré de Balzac, for whose Louis Lambert the character Strether is named. Were these books Balzac's, we would ask no questions of them. They would simply strike the chord of confirmation – too transparent for James – that Balzac stands in precedence to James's present

novel. The thought of *what the purchase isn't* is a perch instead for further thinking, thinking, for example, that the set in red bears some resemblance (not only in color but also in number) to the weathered set of Swedenborg recalled by James as always present in his father's traveling library.¹ Richardson indeed deems Strether precisely a "Swedenborgian hero" and argues that Balzac's interest in and study of Swedenborg is part of what makes Balzac interesting to James.² Hence the set in red-and-gold both urges and enables a fantastic crystallization of influences and authorities – Balzac, Swedenborg, and Henry James, Sr. – while mentioning none of them.

Stated otherwise, Hugo's volumes are herrings, red ones. James wants us to understand that their value is in their covers, their bindings, their status as material objects to be viewed from without, *looked at* as much as *looked into*, moved from place to place, picked up and put down. Strether is proud, after all, to have paid for them (ostensibly) "the price of the red-and-gold alone." The bindings, in this sense, bind James to Twain, bound together as they are in *The North American Review*. James like Twain is weighing the antinomian enthusiasms of the American past and considering the effects of these upon the ideas of a new century. His father's admiration for Swedenborg, an admiration shared by Emerson, found traction very much within the context of religious innovation that spanned the Civil War and that conditioned Eddy's intellectual and exegetical activities no less than White's.

If James Sr.'s *Secret of Swedenborg* (1869) was a secret well kept, as Howells quipped in a review, the secret was kept again in *The Ambassadors* – not this time as a critique, however, of the father's opacity but as an inscription of the son's fascination with the secrecy communicated via the closed covers of books.³ The fact that Strether's nominal occupation at home in Woollett, Massachusetts is the editorship of an unspecified Review is less important than the fact that nobody reads this Review; rather, everyone "sweetly ignore[s]" what Strether produces. The Review's only knowable characteristic – that is, the only characteristic Strether describes – is its green covers "of the most lovely shade," a recapitulation, perhaps, of the Emersonian preference for Nature over text.⁴ A corresponding design emerges as essential to the climax of *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), which turns on Merton Densher's dilemma of whether to read or not to read a letter that will decide the course of his future: in this way a variety of prophetic document. His choice *not to read* is to regain a previously sacrificed ethical posture, but it is also to lose, in some sense, the promise of paradise with Kate Croy, his Eve. The presence of the Edenic story is unmistakable here as Kate urges Merton to read – reading and eating, as for White, herein gain a strange equivalency – and Merton contends with the desolation of the kind of landscape that might have stretched before Adam had he refused Eve's offer. Uncertainty in standing proves as merciless as uncertainty in falling when the only sure knowledge, in Kate's last statement, which can be read as a reverberation of and correction to Eve's last statement in *Paradise Lost*, is that "We shall never be again as we were!"

Kate herself, viewed through the lens of Merton's desire, is at first "a whole library of the unknown," her pages "uncut" in contrast to other women whom "one has already read," yet when she finally consents to his reading, "when she had come, that once, to stay," Merton recognizes "the fact of the idea" as having been "converted from a luminous conception to an historic truth."⁵ What once was a text is now an "ordered drama," a "play on the stage" of Merton's memory.⁶ Because sex in this narration is explicitly a matter of knowledge, not only new knowledge of intimacy but still more crucially for Merton a confirmation of Kate's intentions toward him, and because it is precisely Kate's inscrutability, her unread status, that fascinates Merton, we must understand this conversion of text to performance at least in some proportion as a loss of something, loss of a certain potency, indeed of a potential energy stored in the desire to read, even as something else, perhaps knowledge, is gained.

This interest in fidelity and infidelity in the late novels, rounded out in *The Golden Bowl* (1904), especially as broadcast through the symbolic matrix of reading and not reading, opening and closing of books, sealing and unsealing of letters, cutting of pages, revelation in its etymological origin as *velum*, has a clear forebear in the writer whom James considered to be the first and "the most valuable example of the American genius" "in the field of letters," Nathaniel Hawthorne.⁷ It is in his critical biography of Hawthorne that James supplies his clearest and most direct description of what we will continue to call the potential energy of the closed covers of books. In a passage worth quoting at length, he remembers his earliest encounter with Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850):

The writer of these lines, who was a child at the time, remembers dimly the sensation the book produced, and the little shudder with which people alluded to it, as if a peculiar horror were mixed with its attractions. He was too young to read it himself; but its title, upon which he fixed his eyes as the book lay upon the table, had a mysterious charm. He had a vague belief, indeed, that the "letter" in question was one of the documents that came by the post, and it was a source of perpetual wonderment to him that it should be of such an unaccustomed hue. Of course it was difficult to explain to a child the significance of poor Hester Prynne's blood-coloured A. But the mystery was at last partly dispelled by his being taken to see a collection of pictures (the annual exhibition of the National Academy), where he encountered a representation of a pale, handsome woman, in a quaint black dress and a white coif, holding between her knees an elfish-looking little girl, fantastically dressed, and crowned with flowers. Embroidered on the woman's breast was a great crimson A, over which the child's fingers, as she glanced strangely out of the picture, were maliciously playing. I was told that this was Hester Prynne and little Pearl, and that when I grew older I might read their interesting history. But the picture remained vividly imprinted on my mind; I had been vaguely frightened and made uneasy by it; and when, years afterward, I first

read the novel, I seemed to myself to have read it before, and to be familiar with its two strange heroines.⁸

James reminds us of the phenomenon we have already ascertained in the example of Willie White, who was so impressed with the presence of *Paradise Lost* in his parents' house, introduced into that house when he was only four years old, that he would remember it nearly eighty years later. We are reminded moreover through James's childhood interpretation of Hawthorne's title (a misinterpretation, it turns out, but this does nothing to interfere with and much to enrich the point) that a kind of reading happens even before the reader opens a book; through his pictorial encounter with Hester Prynne and Pearl that the edges of texts are not watertight but permeable, so that portions will seep into other texts, other forms, and there condition later readings of the original text; and finally through a captivating anticipation/reversal of Freud's "uncanny" (*der unheimlich*: what was once familiar returning as unfamiliar) that we often experience unfamiliar texts with a haunting sense of familiarity.

Hester Prynne like Kate Croy is a woman whose involvements with desire are distilled into lettering – for Hester, a letter as alphabetical cipher, for Kate, a letter as “one of the documents that came by the post.” Both varieties of letter are markers of guilt, yet also of loss, and therefore of the complex moral terrain each woman has come to occupy. One can imagine James thinking back upon his early misreading, his transposition of one variety of letter for another, in designing this structure of resonances between Hawthorne's novel and his own. Such a

speculation will then open into our further awareness that Hawthorne precedes James in contrasting the red hue of one text (Hester's red *A* is interwoven with threads of gold, prescriptive, alongside the elder James's Swedenborg, of the red-and-gold of Strether's purchase) with the green of another: on the beach, to her mother's wonder and dismay, Pearl fashions seaweed – material Emerson might prefer – into a second *A*. And even if James regards Hawthorne's style as overburdened with these devices, especially the “mystic *A*,” endured in secret by Arthur Dimmesdale, “too much” an indulgence of “symbolism,” still we might find value in noticing how Arthur's secret text attracts a secret readership when Roger Chillingworth *pretends* not to have read the letter burned upon Arthur's breast but most certainly *has* read it and conducts himself always in reference to it.⁹ This returns us to White, likewise oriented perpetually toward a text she denies having read, and to Strether, who finally reads the “deep, deep truth” of Chad Newsome's “intimacy” with Madame de Vionnet upon the occasion of a chance meeting in the country and goes on to maintain a pained and a delicate secrecy (albeit with eternally greater benignancy than the villainous Chillingworth) about his revelatory act of reading.¹⁰

The place of this last revelation is the Cheval Blanc, the White Horse, where Strether has been dining in a garden and watching boats pass on the river when he suddenly becomes conscious that one of these boats carries Chad and Madame de Vionnet.¹¹ Strether experiences the sequence of scenes and encounters leading to this most essential moment as “more than anything else a scene and a stage” and imagines

that the very air of the play was in the rustle of the willows and the tone of the sky...Not a single one of his observations but somehow fell into a place in it; not a breath of the cooler evening that wasn't somehow a syllable of the text. The text was simply, when condensed, that in *these* places such things were, and that if it was in them one elected to move about one had to make one's account with what one lighted on.

Merton Densher and Lewis Lambert Strether share this sense of events and surroundings as texts that require only attention, only reading, to shift from potential to dynamic energy, from print to performance. As in prophecy, the choice to “move about” in such environments, upon such stages, is to consent to terms already established, whether one likes them or not. The “deep, deep truth” condenses for and around Strether because he is able now to see, in choosing a particular “line of vision,” that is, an angle of vision as well as a tradition of visionary experience, deeply into it. I am indebted to Joan Richardson for her observation that the passage describing Strether's sojourn at the Cheval Blanc contains yet another “beautifully hidden reference to Swedenborg,” specifically to Swedenborg's treatment of Revelation 19:11 wherein “A horse,” according to Swedenborg, “signifies understanding of the Word, and ‘a white horse’ interior understanding of it,” and again, “the interior understanding of the Word is signified by ‘the white horse.’”¹² If Twain's house is explicitly a ferry, James's inn – as a house where revelation happens – is equally explicitly a horse, and

Emerson, whose possible reference to William Miller occurs in “The Poet” within pages of an homage to Swedenborg, stands once more at the crystalline center of these ideas as they refract and multiply.

Emerson discovered early that “the interior understanding of the Word” exacts a price. He ponied up, so to speak, for the position of treating language as a horse by leaving the house of the Unitarian ministry along with the sheltering, stabilizing language it afforded.¹³ In weighing this transition and in seeking a way to appreciate its weight, he turned to Milton for guidance, copying into his journal the Miltonic dictum that “*He who would write heroic poems should make his whole life a heroic poem*” (italics original) before catching himself in the capitulation of taking shelter in quotation and turning that quotation to a new “vehicular” use. He inscribes Milton’s name behind the quotation, then, beneath the name, he writes, “We want lives. We want characters of worthy men[,] not their books nor their relics.”¹⁴ Ellen White, acceding in her own way and by her own route to the same principles, “throws reins on [her] horse’s neck” and travels forward in “the line of vision” discovered in her “vehicular” reading of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, and there in the wilderness of her challenge to the limits of American government – a monumental undertaking, though approached with reluctance – she “trusts to the instinct of the animal,” the language that carries her, “to find the road.”¹⁵

Part II.**Many Days and Several Years**

But *Paradise Lost* excited different and far deeper emotions. I read it...as a true history. It moved every feeling of wonder and awe, that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence...Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.

– Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Chapter 3.

The Devil His Due: Sunday Laws and Silence in the Early Adventist Church

Ellen White was silent throughout her life about the name of the angel, always the same one, who was her regular visitor and guide in vision. Along with her reading of Milton, this name was her most sustained and carefully guarded secret. Observing in *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* that “Tradition from the Apocrypha through the Kabbalists to [Mormon founder] Joseph Smith always had been very specific about the naming of angels,” Harold Bloom identifies White’s secrecy as helping to “give a particular tone to her Testimonies, enhancing their odd impersonality” – an impersonality, Bloom remarks, “precisely opposite to [the visions] of Swedenborg, whose weird greatness of personality informs everything he saw.”¹ This last is a kind of aside, delivered without elaboration, punctuating Bloom’s bewilderment that White’s writing, which he dislikes, or her personality, which he finds insufficiently captivating, could have had such a magnetic effect in attracting new members to the Seventh-day Adventist church. Swedenborg’s allure Bloom can understand on charismatic grounds, but White he finds “badly

[in need of] education in religious writing,” so much so that while he confirms “hav[ing] gotten through *The Great Controversy*,” still White’s “murky drabness” caused him to become “bogged down” in the major multivolume works.²

Yet Bloom is unable to deny White’s successes, and he turns for an explanation to the idiosyncrasies of her theology. “Nothing else in American spirituality is quite as baffling as Ellen White’s Testimonies,” Bloom writes:

Their appeal, initial or protracted, is irrecoverable, even by many Adventist believers. The [Millerite] Disappointment demanded some supernatural evidences of consolation, and there were only her visions to provide it. But she lacked the religion-making imagination of Joseph Smith; audacity and humor were no part of her. Something else, stubborn and complex, took their place and endures still, though more in the outward armature of Seventh-day Adventist theology than as a manifestation of what might merit being called the spirit of prophecy. Call it Ellen White’s desperate will-to-health, a quest for survival amidst every kind of disappointment, secular and spiritual. It is the exercise of that will, still flickering among Adventists around the world, that keeps her church a cult rather than another Evangelical Protestant denomination, which in so many ways it has become.³

In certain respects this is a dynamic and convincing assessment of why Seventh-day Adventism, organized around Ellen White's private religious experiences made public in her "murky" prose, mattered and continues to matter in the history of American religion, and Bloom, who remains one of only a few non-Adventist scholars to take Adventism seriously in writing that history, likewise must be taken seriously in his brief yet cogent treatment of White's work. Yet in the context of the present study, and because Bloom is who he is, it is an extraordinary fact of his discussion of Adventism that he either does not notice or chooses to pass over without addressing the presence of John Milton in Adventist theology. Such an omission is especially arresting because in the same volume Bloom speculates with some insistence upon Milton as essential to the Southern Baptist tradition, meanwhile declaring that he "cannot think of another American doctrine, even among the Jehovah's Witnesses, that assigns so crucial a role to Satan" as does the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of apocalyptic expectation.⁴

Had he noticed the Miltonic presence – perhaps taking a cue from Bull and Lockhart (upon whom he relies heavily) in linking White to Milton via their shared representation of Satan's behavior and emotional convolutions during the waging of the war in heaven – and had he then uncovered and pursued the troubling matter of White's denial of that presence, Bloom might have been less ready to characterize White as entirely deficient in "audacity and humor." White never named her angel, but in perhaps her clearest statement regarding the uncorroded originality of her writing she allowed for the presence and importance of that angel's voice. The context is whimsical: in 1867, answering

questions from the faithful in the *Review and Herald*, she attempts to clear up some confusion about her conflicting statements on the appropriate length for women's dresses as that length had been demonstrated to her in a vision. If her messages at times contain errors or contradictions, she indicates on this occasion, it is not because the divine messenger is fallible, but because she, as a mortal person, is fallible, and "the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless" – a crucial proviso – "they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation." This statement was composed with a specific purpose in mind, and we should not take it as necessarily descriptive of her work in total. But if White indeed means to communicate that she never borrows, never quotes, unless quoting an angel, then we might begin to see the presence of quotation marks – especially those undocked from any clear identification of source – in a very particular light.

An excellent example of such usage is the single quotation from *Paradise Lost* in White's *Education* that proves beyond reasonable doubt her familiarity with Milton's poem. The quotation, cutting as it does against the grain of the denial of familiarity, stands not only as an audacious but equally as a humorous maneuver, in much the same way that Milton's boast of embarking on a journey "unattempted yet" while borrowing the language of the boast from Ariosto is characterized by audacity and humor. While it almost certainly would not have been White's intention to allot Milton a heavenly or at all a supernatural status, the invitation is tempting to take her two secrets as two iterations of a single secret: that is, in light of the evidence that Milton was among her most significant

influences, and in attempting to understand the immovability of her denial as part of the strategy and of the energy, not anxiety, of her bid for prophetic eminence, White's gesture of surrounding Milton's lines in quotation marks while elsewhere explicitly reserving those devices of punctuation for angelic language now seems an appealing opportunity to suppose Milton to have been the unnamed companion of her visions, the voice compelling her prophecies.

Even allowing that the above, for us, is an imaginative more than a realistic leap, allowing also that the precision of White's language involves an imprecision of meaning insofar as she does quote elsewhere in her work (not often, yet decidedly not always from angels), nonetheless we find a new platform from which to view White as persisting still more in a category with Blake, for whom Milton was exactly a type of angel, a messenger and a guide within visionary experience. We find cause upon that platform, moreover, to revalue the experiential and the phenomenological aspects of White's visions and perhaps to recognize her as standing not fully opposite to Swedenborg, as Bloom suggests, but in certain ways aligned with him.⁵

Although White believed literally in a coming apocalypse, her radical departure from Millerism was to eliminate the practice of identifying specific dates or days in the forecasting of doom. This correction was enfolded into every aspect of her idea of the end of time, an idea the present chapter will explore in depth. One effect, often noted in studies of Adventist life and thought, is that members of the church live in constant expectation of an event that appears, if

anything, only to recede always further into the future. The *language* of apocalypse advances over time, and at times, as we will see, is advanced systematically, to overtake and overshadow the anticipated event. Eventually, as Jonathan Butler writes, Adventists “wished to delay the end in order to preach that the end was soon.”⁶ Bloom is right to characterize the contemporary church, at least the leading communities of the North American Division, as persisting within the “outward armature” of White’s theology, and I will add that his characterization recalls the concerns of my prior chapter in that animated armor evokes a kind of living statue. Yet White and her compatriots, very much like Milton, were concerned with crafting a language capable of traveling forward, a language so resilient, “so written to aftertimes,” that it should suffice where Miller’s experiment proved insufficient. If the “*outward* armature” was so designed as to support the church in the physical, the present world, still the record of White’s visionary experiences promised entry into “the *interior*...of the Word” to occur at the moment of Revelation.

J. N. Loughborough, an early convert to the Whites’ Sabbath-centered adaptation of Adventism, describes Ellen White in vision as ceasing entirely to breathe for incredible stretches and gaining a “superhuman strength” whereby “In whatever position [her] hand or arm may be placed, it is impossible for any one to move it.”⁷ On one occasion she lay rigid on a bed yet with “the body from the hips upward...flexed [unsupported] at an angle of about thirty degrees....And in that position she remained during the continuance of the vision, which was thirty minutes.”⁸ On another occasion, “She arose while in vision, and took [a]

heavy Bible on her left arm, the book lying open, and held it out at right angles with her body; and then for over half an hour, with her right hand, turned from place to place, and pointed to different texts of Scripture, which she repeated while her eyes were looking upward, and in an opposite direction from the book.” Loughborough is careful to specify that White, then “a delicate girl,” weighed “only seventy pounds” and that the Bible weighed “a little over eighteen.”⁹

Writing at a much later date, it was Loughborough’s stated purpose, as a believer, to demonstrate Ellen White’s legitimacy to nonbelievers, and we must understand his emphasis upon as well as the particular quality of his descriptions of “the body” of Ellen White as specifically employed in the development of a metaphorical structure in support of Adventist belief. These impossible postures from which White’s body cannot be moved, that is, her “outward armature,” are but conditions for and indeed fortifications of her position within language, that is, her perfect scriptural fluency and her insight into “the interior...of the Word.” What Adventists hold as proof beyond doubt of White’s prophetic status will strike most non-Adventists as nothing more than a parlor trick, especially in the context of the elaborate spiritualist hoaxes that gained a vogue in the nineteenth century and that White herself often condemned. But with or without our credulity, the narrative supplied by Loughborough succeeds in embodying, literally as much as figuratively, the paradoxes of Seventh-day Adventist theology and of the role of that theology in an evolving politics of liberty – paradoxes which are actually tensions, to continue the metaphor, between posture and position.

“The Great Controversy”: Seventh-day Adventist Theology

For a Christian sect actively expecting the end of the world, the Seventh-day Adventist church and its auxiliary institutions remain surprisingly occupied with worldly matters. “There is something odd,” in Michael Pearson’s assessment, “about an organization which, on the one hand, proclaims that Christ’s return is imminent, and, on the other, regularly engages in the construction of institutions costing untold millions of dollars.” These institutions include schools and colleges for the education of new generations and hospitals for the protection of the lives of individuals: both ostensibly hopeful projects, expressive of an ongoing rather than a curtailed future. Ellen White herself had no patience for “fanaticism” of the type that led to a devaluation of work and wellbeing, expending some of her harshest condemnation upon a man she met in New Hampshire who “claimed perfect sanctification, declaring that [he was] above the possibility of sin” because “above all earthly thoughts,” yet wore fine clothes and compelled his wife to work for his food and his child to go in rags.¹⁰

The balance between earthly action and heavenly thought proved difficult at first to achieve. The fledgling movement’s earliest significant controversy transpired between 1845 and 1846 when James White, having censured a young Adventist couple for their engagement on the grounds that the vows of marriage spoke against the coming apocalypse, then married Ellen Harmon, apparently without misgiving. Pearson notes that the Whites’ union “in turn unsettled some believers, who saw it as an indication of waning faith in an imminent advent.”

Rather than signaling a turn away from Adventist conviction, however, the marriage of James and Ellen White was the first step in a clarification of principles for living in the world while anticipating its end. The birth of their first son Henry a year later further transmitted the Whites' belief "that normal social arrangements should continue until the advent."¹¹

This was more than accommodation to the realization after the Great Disappointment that time on earth would continue. Instantiated in the prosaic events of marriage and birth among the Sabbatarian Adventists are several theological innovations different from anything that came before yet drawing on myriad and in some cases competing traditions. Strictly speaking, the chief innovation was not Ellen White's but emerged from a vision experienced by Hiram Edson, a disappointed Millerite, on October 23, 1844, the day after the Great Disappointment. Having kept vigil through the night, Edson and his confounded brethren shared a breakfast before starting out to "go and see, and encourage" others. Perhaps it was the fact of eating, confession of corporal need, hunger a reminder that the human corpus remained, that triggered Edson's vision and supplied its message: "We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly, and clearly...that [our High Priest] had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth."¹² Instead of returning to earth, Christ had entered "the second apartment" of "the heavenly sanctuary" and begun the process of cleansing it for the eventual occupancy of the saved. Ellen White's

visions, which commenced in December of that year, confirmed Edson's insight that Miller had not been wrong about his date but only about its significance.

White adopted the view that the importance of the Millerite moment was to identify and designate the faithful; the door of mercy, she initially thought, now had been shut to nonbelievers. Ten years later, under pressure to attract new followers to her burgeoning movement, she would withdraw this exclusive Shut-Door doctrine, but it was the first organizing principle of her ministry – a call to those, in Milton's words, "elect above the rest" (*PL* 3.184), whose redemption was not predestined in a Calvinist sense but who even so were favored by God at the most critical of junctures. The saved among the living and the dead would number 144,000 as indicated in Revelation 14:1. Well before lighting on the seventh-day Sabbath as a scaffold for her theology, White urged reciprocal foot washing among her followers along with salutary "holy" kissing.¹³ These practices, prescribed in White's very first vision, were to be emblematic of sainthood, yet the fact that over time they were displaced unequivocally from a central to a peripheral status within the new Adventism illustrates the way in which Adventist principles were compiled as much by trial and error as by pure visionary fiat. It was only in 1846 upon reading a pamphlet by Joseph Bates, who was soon to become a key player in the early Adventist church, that White began to think of Saturday as a more fitting day than Sunday for the Sabbath, and only in 1847 that she took this position firmly and publicly. Once adopted, however, the Sabbath doctrine grew increasingly important within White's thinking, and it remained, after the retraction of the "Shut-Door" restriction, as the single most

radical and therefore most identifying feature of her brand of apocalyptic millennialism.

For Bull and Lockhart, this new emphasis marked a distinguishing shift away from a worldview accenting *place* – in contrast to the Mormons, who sought and found a theological home at the Great Salt Lake – and toward another accenting *time*.¹⁴ After reading Bates’s pamphlet, although as yet not fully persuaded of its argument, White saw in vision the fourth commandment (“Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God” [Exodus 20:8-10]) positioned at the very center of Moses’ tablets “with a soft halo encircling it.” Because this “is the only one of the ten which defines the living God who created the heavens and earth and all things that are therein,” and because “When the foundations of the earth were laid, then was also laid the foundation of the Sabbath,” the fourth, White decided, is the precedent commandment, indeed persisting at the very center of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan: “I was shown that if the true Sabbath had been kept, there would never have been an infidel or an atheist. The observance of the Sabbath” on the seventh day rather than on the first “would have preserved the world from idolatry.”¹⁵ It was Satan’s success in insinuating himself into Christian doctrine via the rise of the Papacy, by this argument, that led to the broad misreading of Sabbath law.

The extravagance of such a claim is fully in line with White’s accumulating critique of American religious culture – too willing to follow the Roman Catholic

example, she thought – and of the culture’s distortions of scriptural messages and consequent disorders of body and mind. As in the case of Miller’s wrong reading of the signs he rightly (according to Edson and White) discerned in the books of Daniel and Revelation, it was not a matter of *malevolence toward* the law but *misunderstanding of* the law that led to error. In the postlapsarian world, for White, the Sabbath replaces the fruit of the tree of knowledge as the single pertinent test of obedience. What Satan introduces into any such test, for White *and* for Milton, is an interpretation falsely suggesting abrogation of God’s proclamations. Hence the keeping of a Sunday Sabbath is a weekly reverberation of Eve’s mistake, the Fall as a perpetual occurrence. As summed by Kenneth Newport, “Sunday observance was the ‘mark of the beast’ mentioned in the book of Revelation (13:17; 14:11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4), for it was the visible sign that an individual had chosen to obey the dictates of ‘the beast’ (Rome) rather than the clear law of God.”¹⁶

Others of the disappointed were strongly opposed to “tests” of any kind in separating, so to speak, the wheat from the chaff.¹⁷ But first the Shut-Door doctrine and with it the very understanding of salvation emerging from White’s renovation of Miller’s eschatology necessitated the adoption of an instrument – ultimately emerging as the Saturday Sabbath – by which the saved could know themselves and substantiate their revolution. It was a revolution in no way concerned with gaining control over land or state, instead replacing in its terms a geographical with a teleological span; hence “The Adventists experience of America has...been one of a common space but an anomalous sense of time,” as

Bull and Lockhart observe, and “perhaps the central problem in Adventism [is] how to share American space without sharing American time.”¹⁸ While this problem certainly bears upon the keeping of a Saturday Sabbath, which required at certain moments and in certain state-level jurisdictions in the nineteenth century a sustained commitment to civil disobedience, still the experience of “anomalous” time extends into deeper and even more elaborate aspects of the Seventh-day Adventist system of belief.

Prior to the Great Disappointment, Miller’s view of the near future was unapologetically pre-millennial in principle, in other words anticipating the return of Christ to earth as triggering a new thousand-year paradise. This was something of a regressive doctrine, disavowing union with a generation of American *postmillennialists*, led by Charles G. Finney and others, who declared the progress of the age to represent a process building toward earthly perfection: once perfected, the earth would be ready for Christ’s return at the end rather than at the beginning of a thousand years of paradisiacal existence.¹⁹ When Miller’s calculations failed, Edson’s solution, echoed and enacted by White, was to imagine “a pre-millennial movement which behaves very much as though it were post-millennial.”²⁰ More specifically, Seventh-day Adventism “conforms broadly to the premillennialist pattern in that the Second Advent inaugurates the millennium. But it is also partly postmillennialist insofar as Christ returns to the earth again at the end of the thousand-year period.”²¹ At issue is the question of whether human achievement, good or evil, may or may not influence or instigate the end of the world and the world’s rebirth as the site of the New Jerusalem.

White rejected with Miller the Finneyite assurance that humankind might actively and consciously build its paradise – indeed, that there could be any room for human volition in the unfolding of the divine plan. Against the grain of this position, however, she recommended a mindful and a constructive stewardship of the material world during the time that such a world remained.

Conditioned partly in practical response to the embarrassment suffered by those Millerites who had left their crops untended and their affairs in disarray in anticipation of the end, White's thinking about living in relation to imminent apocalypse went further to comprise, eventually, a complex admixture of theological innovation and social engineering. The earth, by this thinking, was decidedly not the sanctuary described in Daniel 8:14 – an exegetical reorientation serving the compound purposes of deemphasizing geographical space, especially American space, in the eschatological narrative *and* delaying expectations of Christ's return *while* preserving the importance of the Millerite moment. There was no way to tell, absent visionary insight (and this was one insight to which White claimed no special access), exactly how long Christ would keep his residence in the "holy of holies," the sanctuary in heaven. His cleansing of the sanctuary was to be laborious, conceived by White as an extraordinary legal proceeding in which the case of every individual of every generation "of the professed people of God" would be addressed in an elaborate "investigative Judgment," with God as judge and Christ as advocate for the flock.

Satan too would be present as a kind of prosecuting attorney. The typological manifestation of this court of law in White's description is the Old Testament ceremony of the Day of Atonement – a scriptural element likewise featuring centrally in Miller's countdown to the end of the world – which concludes annually with a scapegoat carrying all sin into the wilderness. Hence at the end of the “investigative Judgment” all sin redounds to Satan's head, and he is released into the earth's wilderness exactly as this sacrificial animal, “bearing the guilt of all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit.”²² The dead have all been raised, although only long enough to witness the second coming, and the wicked among the dead are struck dead again alongside the wicked among the living. Meanwhile the saved among the living and the dead have been lifted with Christ to the heavenly sanctuary.²³ Satan consequently finds the planet emptied of its human population, and “for a thousand years confined,” robbed in his solitude of his power to tempt, he wanders an environment “which will then be desolate” and endures “the full penalty of sin.”²⁴

Startlingly, however, the Great Controversy does not conclude with Satan's imprisonment. At the end of the thousand years, the New Jerusalem moves from heaven to earth, and the wicked are raised once more to receive their final verdict. After a protracted battle, the wicked, together with Satan, are consumed in fire and destroyed forever, at which moment, “The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation.”²⁵ It is the apparent redundancy of this last sequence of events that Bloom finds most difficult to tolerate, identifying in the doctrines of the “amiable” prophetess Ellen

White something “dangerously unamiable,” even “inhumane,” indeed “scarcely Christian,” reflective of “an outcast pride” which “leads to horrid figurations of the end of time.” Bloom contrasts the “lust for slaughter and sadistic delight in Adventist apocalypses” with Ellen White’s early and sustained promotion of health reform.²⁶ Raising the dead twice in order to destroy them as many times, offloading sin onto a Satan who participates “unwillingly” in the process, staging a final round of punishment after the saints have already found millennial paradise – all this indeed transmits a forceful and perhaps a ruthless standard for the offices of last judgment.

Yet with the devil in this case very much in the details, White’s tortuous structuring of a torturous eschatology reveals the scope and complexity of her encounter with Milton. Often availed upon by Adventists, if unknowingly, as a reservoir of symbols for the articulation of theological as well as political ideals, the hidden Miltonic precedent to this eschatology has been as often the source of dissonance within Seventh-day Adventist history, influencing many of the principles and compelling many of the positions that characterize that history’s fragile balance of worldly and otherworldly concerns.

Before exploring the effects of these principles and positions, we should note that White held in common with Milton any number of idiosyncratic – from some perspectives heretical – ideas that she almost certainly did not gain directly from her reading of *Paradise Lost* or from any further study of Milton’s work. As Bryan Ball argues in *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day*

Adventist Belief (1981), the disappointed Millerites gained much of their second theological wind from a tradition of seventeenth-century antinomianism surviving within the rapidly growing yet still young American republic. Ball, himself a member of the Adventist church, identifies a point-by-point correspondence between Adventist doctrine and some of the most radical doctrines of Milton's moment, not a few of which Milton either delved into gamely or adopted outright in the development of what Philip Pullman might call his experimental theology.²⁷

Among these, for example, is the doctrine of Mortalism, contending that the soul is not immortal but dies along with the body. Milton's first notoriety accompanied the sequence of publications in the mid-1640s of his prose agitations for expansion of acceptable legal grounds for divorce, and these "divorce tracts" were regularly named in conjunction with Richard Overton's Mortalist treatise *Man's Mortality* (1644) as representative of the most egregious heresies of the age. Probably beginning in these early years to contemplate the viability of the idea that death resembles sleep, the body and the soul together, unconscious, awaiting the events of the millennium, Milton would incorporate the heresy into key moments in *Paradise Lost* and give it full voice in *De Doctrina Christiana*.²⁸ Like Milton, White and her followers understood the body and soul to be monadic, indivisibly created and therefore indivisible in death, although where Milton deduced the delay between death and resurrection specifically *from* his understanding of the body-soul relation, the Adventists followed an opposite course of reasoning: damnation to hell or translation to

heaven at the moment of dying would have negated the rationale for White's apocalyptic sequence, hence death needed (for the Adventists) to involve an interval during which the dead are rendered temporarily inactive. The early Adventist leaders took their cue in these matters from D. P. Hall's *Man Not Immortal: The Only Shield Against the Seductions of Modern Spiritualism*, and not by any identifiable measure from Milton. Yet insofar as Hall's book appeared in 1854, less than a half-decade prior to White's first recorded encounter with Milton's *Paradise Lost*, we might speculate that her reading of Milton complemented what White had already gained from Hall and moreover that she would have been far more sensitive, indeed more attentive, certainly more receptive to traces of the Mortalist heresy in Milton's poem – traces indelibly etched with the discovery of *De Doctrina Christiana* – than almost any of her contemporaries.²⁹

Ball's explanation of Seventh-day Adventist theology as descending from the debates of the English seventeenth century parallels Staveland's argument that the patterns of clerical migration in Milton's century were crucial in preparing the American mind for its reception of Milton. In other words, the conditions engendering a specifically American Milton, first Jeffersonian, later Emersonian, were the same as those conditions allowing for the Seventh-day Adventist church to emerge and flourish. Colonial designs for religious liberty among the clergy evolved into a contest for the political liberty of a nation and lengthened into thoughts of transcendental liberty for the individual; hence what sense of recognition accompanied American readings of Milton had partly to do with a

shared point of origin and synthesis of contexts. Similarly, the early Adventists sought as participants in the Second Great Awakening to rejuvenate in America a revolutionary approach to theological practice, reaching, in the service of this project, to the priorities of the colonial era. Indeed, according to Ball, the Adventists distinguished themselves from some of their sectarian counterparts in looking even further backward to the English contexts that preceded and precipitated those colonial priorities.

Van Anglen supplies a next step in identifying Milton's Arianism, that is, the anti-Trinitarian understanding of Christ as a created, not an eternal being, as an element thoroughly underlying the various responses to Milton in America, enthusiastic and antagonistic alike. James White was unequivocal in declaring the Trinity an "absurdity," while Uriah Smith, an early editor of the *Review and Herald* and second only to the Whites in his influence among the Adventist leadership, "referred to Christ as 'the first created being,' and he continued to hold an Arian or semi-Arian position for the rest of his life."³⁰ The doctrine of the "investigative Judgment," establishing a clear hierarchical relation between the Father as judge and the Son as counselor for the defense, helped to reinforce the prevailing anti-Trinitarian position. To what degree Ellen White's own early thinking followed Arian parameters was never clear, yet, as Bull and Lockhart note, "[she] always carefully avoided using the term 'Trinity,' and her husband stated categorically that her visions did not support the Trinitarian creed."³¹ It was only in reaction against a trend of pantheistic thinking among some Adventists at the end of the century, a trend championed most vocally by none

other than Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, the creator of cornflakes, who supposed the presence of God to infuse all material and immaterial things, that White adopted a fully Trinitarian position in 1898 with the publication of *The Desire of Ages*.³² That moment marked a sea change in Adventist theology, following as it did the death of James White in 1881 and signifying a decline in his posthumous authority, but, in the prior decades, Milton's own Arianism, like his Mortalism, would have found among Adventists an unusually friendly audience.

The most significant coincident – if not quite coincidental – relation between Milton's heretical innovations and Seventh-day Adventist practice is certainly the identification of Saturday as the scriptural Sabbath. In his *History of the Sabbath*, J. N. Andrews turns for authority to “no meaner man than the great poet Milton” and that poet's affirmation of the seventh day in *De Doctrina Christiana*, “a text,” Andrews remarks, “which Elzevir, of Amsterdam, feared to print,” and in which Milton takes an unmistakable position on the timing of the Sabbath. Andrews quotes Milton: “For if we under the gospel are to regulate the time of our public worship by the prescriptions of the decalogue, it will surely be far safer to observe the seventh day, according to express commandment of God, than on the authority of mere human conjecture to adopt the first.” Because this is the same Andrews who first introduced *Paradise Lost* into the Whites' household in Battle Creek, we might find reason here as elsewhere to imagine Milton as a principle guide in the evolution of doctrine, in this case the core doctrine of Seventh-day Adventist identity. However, the 1846 pamphlet by Joseph Bates that originally drew Ellen White's attention to the importance of the

fourth commandment does not mention Milton's reflections on the matter, nor does the 1845 pamphlet by T. M. Preble that Bates cites as *his* guiding authority. Andrews's *History* would eventually supply the authoritative rationale for seventh-day Sabbatarianism, placing the Adventists in a context spanning centuries, yet Andrews was neither the original authority within nor the primary author of the Sabbatarian movement among the Millerite remnant. Moreover, Milton's brief appearance in Andrews's capacious work represents a supporting rather than a leading role. Even with these caveats, the 1861 publication – on the heels of the gift of Milton's poem to Ellen White in 1858 – affords evidence that Andrews was more than nominally conscious of Milton's compatibility with the tenets of the new sect, and that he was looking to Milton explicitly as an anchor for his and his fellows' emerging worldview.

Milton, then, was not the source of these various Adventist heresies, but furnished through Andrews's intervention a narrative framework by which those heresies, already established in exegetical terms, could exceed exegesis and provide a way of life. It is simply underscored in his sparing mention of the troubled publication history of *De Doctrina Christiana* that Andrews regarded Milton not only as a theological father but also as a revolutionary partner in the taking of positions against the mandates of convention and custom. If Ellen White would need to hide her reading of as heretical a poet as Milton, Andrews, in his less visible role, clearly saw in Milton a compatriot in the struggle to communicate unpopular ideas and found Milton's dissenting habits instructive in imagining a methodology for dissent in the long term.

Such long-term thinking grew increasingly important as the reality of an ongoing future, once unthinkable to Millerites, became impossible to ignore. As time passed without the world's ending, the Adventists found themselves contending with the problem of why Christ's cleansing of the sanctuary was proving so lengthy a process. The problem was answered in part by the dramatization of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan, itself a Miltonic maneuver that served, in Milton's Raphael's terms, to enclose in "procés of speech" for "human ears" those "acts of God" which were imagined hitherto to be "Immediate" (*PL* 7.176-78). Strength in prosody for Milton is located "not in the jingling sound of like endings," i.e. rhyme, but in "the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another" (*PL* "The Verse"). The strength of White's theology to survive its own paradox of apocalyptic urgency interwoven with temporal longevity is in transforming the process exactly into a "procés of speech" – a heavenly legalese – with Miller's conception of instantaneous judgment now "drawn out" into something like a long parentheses in time. White borrows, therefore, not only certain of the core details of Milton's narrative, but also the importance of the experience of language in establishing the viability of the narrative itself. Arguably, the significance for Adventists of the narrative of the Great Controversy resides less in the messages and morals conveyed by its events than in the narrative's extraordinary success in *keeping time*, not metrically as for Milton's blank verse, but actually *keeping*, that is, *preserving*, the ongoing fact of time on the planet. White's version and extension of Milton's narrative unfolds much as a shaggy dog story, locking a Miltonic Satan and an

equally Miltonic God and Son in a discourse that will last fully as long as it needs to last, hence rebutting Samuel Johnson's glib critique of *Paradise Lost* that "None ever wished it longer than it is" precisely by wishing that poem, or rather the effects of the poem, to be, essentially, *interminably* long, without a determined terminus.³³

Christ's role as advocate on behalf of the faithful in the cleansing of the sanctuary can be described as an attempt to justify the ways of men to God. At the conclusion of this "process of speech," the saved will join him in heaven where they will remain for a thousand years. None will be idle during the millennial idyll, as Newport writes, for "It is fundamental to the Seventh-day Adventist scheme of things that God must not only be right, but be seen as right. The millennium itself is the time that God has allocated for the saved to examine for themselves the fairness of His decisions in relation to the ultimate fate of the wicked."³⁴ The transcripts of the "investigative Judgment" will be opened to heaven's newest tenants, who will spend their thousand years perusing that enormous record, not confirming so much as enjoying its correctness. Justification of the ways of men to God, then, gives way to a requirement to "justify the ways of God to men" (*PL* 1.26). This is one line of Milton's verse of which White was verifiably aware: it appeared as the epigraph, Burgeson notes, to "an early edition of *Patriarchs and Prophets*," in which volume White thoroughly explores and explains God's endgame.³⁵

“The themes embedded in the great controversy narrative constituted the guiding principles for the political stance Adventists formulated and remain foundational to the present,” Douglas Morgan writes in *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement*.³⁶ The narrative, as I have argued, is situated in Miltonic tropes and images, including the details of the war in heaven and the specific qualities of Adam and Eve’s prelapsarian life in Eden. Even those aspects of White’s imagination of the Great Controversy that are *extra*-Miltonic, such as the “investigative Judgment,” the millennium in heaven, and Satan’s isolation on a desolate earth, rely heavily and identifiably upon narrative strategies as well as characterizations of key players – an envious Satan, a God concerned with justification – that White earlier had absorbed in her encounter with Milton’s poem.

Moreover, to the extent that Milton stood as a significant influence in the emergence of many of the principles and priorities of early American religion and culture, he might be seen as helping to prepare the ground for Ellen White’s success in staging and sustaining her own religious and cultural movement. But above all, it is the maneuver of not only interpreting but going further to *amplify* imaginatively those components of scripture most lacking in detail (what life was like in Eden; how war took place in heaven) and to introduce “facts,” returning to Burgeson’s account, on which “the scriptures are silent” that allows White to balance apocalyptic expectations against the as yet unending burden of living in the world. Therefore, White’s “desperate will-to-health” and her “quest for

survival amidst every kind of disappointment” is indeed “stubborn and complex,” complex because it is Miltonic in its DNA, stubborn because White was so “disposed” as perpetually to “forswear her lineage.” Milton coincides with White’s unnamed angel in delivering the message that conveyance into “aftertimes” would require a narrative “armature” promising entry into the “interior” of a heaven conceived as an arena for the perpetual exchange of “the Word.” In other words, the narrative would resolve in the saved looking into the narrative, discovering, with the record of prophecy revealed as history, what it all means.

Negotiations with the Two-horned Beast

This is the upshot of Loughborough’s description of White at seventeen contorted immovably into impossible postures yet moving, traveling, with perfect fluency in the language of prophecy. Newport, without offering evidence, sees White’s eschatology as emerging largely from Revelation 19:11-21, the very passages adopted by Swedenborg in his reading of “the white horse” as “the interior understanding of the Word.”³⁷ The white horse carries a rider – “he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself...and his name is called the Word of God” – with a sword extending from his mouth “with which to strike down nations.” The sequence of events culminating in the elevation of the saints and the destruction of Satan begins for White, in Newport’s estimation, with the arrival of the rider on the white horse, yet I have been able to locate only one instance, in the *Review and Herald*, June 19, 1900, in which White refers to the horse itself. Elsewhere the horse is refigured as the “small black cloud...about half as large as a man's hand” of White’s first vision: “In solemn silence we all gazed

on the cloud as it drew nearer, and became lighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till [the small black cloud] was a great white cloud.”³⁸ Together the Adventists enter the cloud, and it bears them away “to the sea of glass” where they finally reach “the pearly gate.”³⁹

The gesture of replacing the horse with a cloud – in Emerson’s terms, a “ferry” upon “the sea of glass”; in Milton’s terms, “thy Savior and they Lord, / Last in the *clouds* from Heav’n to be revealed / In glory of the Father, to dissolve / Satan with his perverted world” (*PL* 12.544-47) (italics mine) – serves to emphasize and ratify the very interiority of the discourse into which the saints will have entered.⁴⁰ It also supplies a means for White’s innovation of the removal of the saints from the earth during Satan’s solitary confinement. Yet whereas the conveyance of the Word of God grows whiter, lighter, more legible as it approaches, it meanwhile “seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness.”⁴¹ Except for Ellen White’s periodic glimpses into it, the “interior...of the Word” would remain in this way “shrouded” for the waiting Adventists as the decades passed without apocalypse and as the faithful forged, of necessity, their “outward armature.”

Such an accumulation of symbols finds evocative instantiation in the church’s foundational moment, when an initial resistance among post-Millerite Adventists to formalization or organization of religious principles ultimately yielded to the priorities of the ministry, along with, and perhaps still more crucially, a burgeoning commitment among Adventists to writing and publishing.

“By 1861,” writes Pearson, “a brick publishing building had been constructed, and a number of meeting places erected.” With real estate came real challenges, as “These properties, although financed by groups, were registered in the names of individuals. In the event of their death, properties would have reverted to the next of kin, and so the sabbatarian adventists stood to lose considerable assets.” The solution, proposed by James White, was for the church to seek corporate status, i.e. government sponsorship, hence to share ownership of property. It was therefore the need for brick-and-mortar structures, another kind of “outward armature,” all in support of the transmission of language via preaching and publishing, that spurred the organization and with it the naming of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in May 1863.⁴²

Yet the evolution from loose affiliation to resolute codification of principles occurred in friction with a strong alternative set of attitudes, which increasingly viewed government, and especially the American state, as suspect. Like the adoption of a seventh-day Sabbath, such a view emerged in stages. Morgan clarifies that “Adventism’s identification of the two-horned beast of Revelation 13 with the United States...did not originate with Ellen White; in fact, it was formulated in the early 1850s when her influence in the community was at a low point.”⁴³ Responding to criticism from other Sabbatarians that “the visions were being elevated above the Bible,” James White exerted his patriarchal privilege in 1851 to withhold his wife’s visionary writings from publication in the *Review and Herald* – at that moment the primary vehicle for transmission of the visions. James White’s injunction against publication occasioned an abrupt and

singular decline in the frequency of Ellen White's visions, to be reversed only when Uriah Smith, as a young convert, assumed editorship of the *Herald*: "One of Smith's first acts as the new editor was to reopen the journal's pages to Mrs. White, who happily predicted that God would now smile on the church and 'graciously and mercifully revive the gifts'" of prophecy.⁴⁴ Even while this dry spell opened the way for other influences to teach resistance to state power, "Yet [White's] ministry fortified the teaching. In a general sense, her gift strengthened the conviction that God was present in the community, guiding it to its eschatological destiny."⁴⁵

One "indication" that White's presence – even in the temporary absence of her voice in print – supplied divine authority to the early Adventists was the identification of the "spirit of prophecy" in Revelation 12:17 and 19:10, Morgan continues, as "a crucial component in the 'system of truth' convincing Adventists that their movement and the powers they encountered were the key participants in the final struggle between good and evil."⁴⁶ In the terms of that struggle, "It is freedom that drives the great controversy, and thus imbues history with meaning. The exalted angel Lucifer was free to rebel against God, and God could not immediately destroy him, for that would have caused the other angels...to serve God out of fear, rather than love freely given." The same allowances apply to human beings, to whom God supplied "a freedom so great that it makes sin possible," hence "no 'human authority,' White explained, has 'the right to take away that freedom."⁴⁷ Milton's narrative, repeatedly disowned, emerges as the unmistakable if never explicit authority for the Seventh-day Adventist conception

of the limitations of government, and in this manner the narrative has served throughout Adventist history to support *and* propel successive challenges to what Adventists repeatedly have viewed as efforts on the part of the state to “take away...freedom,” especially freedom to worship without threat of interference.

Ronald Lawson persuasively describes the progress of Seventh-day Adventism in the twentieth century as an evolution “from *sect* toward *denomination*” (an evolution I will discuss more fully in the next chapter), adopting from Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge’s *The Future of Religion* (1985) “a single dimension” sufficient to define the differences between these types of organizations, that is, quoting Stark and Bainbridge, “the degree to which a religious group is in a *state of tension* with its surrounding sociological environment” (*italics original*).⁴⁸ In attempting to short-circuit the growing national idealism that placed “American society,” in Bull and Lockhart’s account, “as the means of universal redemption,” first the Millerites and then the Adventists effectively “negated the optimistic dream of progress. The world was not on the verge of perfection,” as the Finneyites preached, “but at the brink of catastrophe.” This alone was enough to place Ellen White’s followers “in a *state of tension*” with the dominant culture, but the Adventists went further than the Millerites in undercutting the terms of any kind of American nationalist teleology. “They saw the early days of the U.S., when it had adopted its Constitution and Bill of Rights, positively,” according to Lawson, yet the nineteenth century, as Bull and Lockhart convey most evocatively, brought with it a very different America:

Not only was the world about to end, but America, according to many the instrument of the world's salvation, was actually a diabolical monster bent on the destruction of the saints. In opposition to this malevolent force, there was only the remnant, a group whose defining characteristic – the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath – made it more or less coterminous with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. It was this group, not America, that would be the vehicle of redemption. Its members would be the sole survivors of the last judgment, the only persons for whom eternity could become continuous with the present.⁴⁹

The most salient articulation of this variety of antinationalism was J. N. Andrews's 1851 article in the *Review and Herald* in which he equates the American state with the second beast of Revelation, the beast with "two horns like a lamb" yet which "spoke like a dragon" (Rev. 13:11). Morgan writes that "Dissent was a necessary element in the Adventist view of history, for it was primarily through a dissenting church – small bands of faithful witnesses through the centuries, separate from the world and persecuted by it – that divine purposes were achieved."⁵⁰ Resistance to government, however, went beyond generalized principles to involve a thorough and indeed a highly cognizant engagement with the tensions and contradictions of the very founding of the American nation. For if the typological identification of America as a beast departed from the more popular view of the young nation as the woman in the

wilderness of Daniel 2, still Andrews was neither alone nor first to the table in his exegesis. Bull and Lockhart continue from their description of the Adventist interpretation of Revelation 13 to identify “two former Antifederalists, Isaac Backus and John Bacon,” both writing in the 1790s, as “the first individuals in the new republic to associate America with the two-horned beast.” Backus indeed anticipated Andrews’s designation of the two horns as the separate institutions of church and state, and Bacon, in the last year of the century, heard the beast’s voice, which was “like a dragon,” as “advocat[ing]...the cause of civil despotism...thunder[ing] out anathemas against all who oppose.”⁵¹ A string of Whig presidencies in the mid-nineteenth century – from Harrison to Fillmore, even allowing for Tyler’s break from the Whig party as well as Polk’s successful run on the Democratic ticket – renewed the varieties of oppositional anxiety voiced by Backus and Bacon, injecting therefore a new urgency among Jeffersonian libertarians like Andrews. In replicating the rhetoric of early Antifederalism in his article on the two-horned beast, Andrews consolidated and solidified the suspicions of government already prevalent among the Adventists.

Added to this was the perspective shared among the majority of Ellen White’s followers that the protraction of the institution of slavery supplied amplification to the beast’s dragon-like voice. Andrews, who had considered a career in politics, “denounced the effort to shelter slavery from Christian opposition by labeling it a ‘political’ issue, and thus off limits for Christians, as ‘one of the most ingenious devices imaginable,’ but one that would not stand up on judgment day.”⁵² Just as the rest of the country, the Adventists met the

outbreak of the Civil War as a moment of ethical crisis, yet the nature of the crisis for the Adventists was unique, and despite their commitment to abolition, most refused to entertain military service. They argued that the fourth commandment, against Sabbath-breaking, and the sixth, against bloodshed, made soldiering absolutely incompatible with the particular accents of their faith. Meanwhile, the very terms upon which the war was being waged struck Adventists in “their moral and religious cast of mind” as “temporizing,” writes Eric Syme, and Lincoln’s “initial emphasis upon saving the Union rather than freeing the slaves they interpreted as evidence of a growing national degeneration.” Indeed, this new presidency had softened not at all the persistent ill regard for national government: “Uriah Smith, citing the views of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Jackson, and Benton, contrasted those men with what he termed ‘the contemporary views of pro-slavery demagogues,’” those demagogues including, Smith thought, Abraham Lincoln.⁵³

Despite this perspective, the war necessarily drew Adventists into closer association with government authority. Federal conscription, beginning in July 1863, compelled a response from the staunchly pacifist Sabbatarians and secured the trend of circumspect negotiation and uneasy cooperation with government that had begun with incorporation of the church only months beforehand – once again placing the Adventist leadership in a measure of discord with their laity. Without explicitly endorsing participation in combat, James and Ellen White discouraged draft-resistance insofar as such bold maneuvers “only served to bring that peculiar class, Sabbath-keepers, into special notice, and expose them

to be crowded into difficult places by those who have no sympathy with them.”⁵⁴ It seemed to many that this advice from their leaders amounted to an irresolvable incongruity of principles. Still, the earliest draft law allowed for substitutes as well as purchased exemptions, and with some of the men among the Adventists availing themselves of these options, others opting for civil disobedience, and meanwhile the debate over the efficacy of resistance continuing to rage in the pages of the *Review and Herald*, the situation remained fluid for roughly a year.

In July 1864, however, the conditions for substitution and exemption were restricted to members of churches recognized officially as supporting pacifist doctrines. An earlier failed attempt by Adventists in Iowa to gain legal recognition as pacifists had earned criticism from Ellen White precisely for attracting “special notice” to their “peculiar class,” but now the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists appealed to the federal government for noncombatant status. The agreement they struck would prove decisive in the much longer process of developing and articulating the future identity of the church. “Declaring themselves ‘a people unanimously loyal and anti-slavery’ but unable to shed blood because of their views of the Ten Commandments and the teachings of the New Testament,” Morgan relates, “they obtained an exemption from Provost Marshall Gen. James Fry that gave them the option of either accepting assignment to hospital duty or care of freedmen or paying the three-hundred-dollar commutation fee.”⁵⁵ Unburdened of the requirement to kill, the Adventists consented to set aside their strict Sabbath law for purposes of medical care. If the primary effect of this decision was – and was felt to be – important

enough, enabling service during wartime, the secondary and still more crucial effect was the paving of the way for an emphasis upon and esteem of the medical professions among Adventists and over time the construction of a vast Seventh-day Adventist medical enterprise.

Today, the Adventist system of denominational hospitals in the United States is second in size only to the Catholic network, and significant resources are devoted annually to the training of doctors and nurses. This returns us to Pearson's detection of "something odd" in the catalogue of Adventist priorities. Ellen White's childhood indisposition resulted in her *predisposition* as an adult toward concerns of health and health reform. She championed a vegetarian diet, believed sex to be a dangerous drain upon energies, and emerged as an influential supporter of temperance. These, however, were held to be matters of personal conviction, communicated between White and her followers, and it was only in regard to the consumption of alcohol – and only because she came to believe that "ardent spirits" induced a "moral paralysis upon society" – that White took a public and a political position.⁵⁶ Yet it is notable that the opening of the first Adventist medical foundation, the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, Michigan, later renamed the Battle Creek Sanitarium by Kellogg when he assumed the directorship, occurred in September 1866, just a year and a half after Lee's surrender to Grant in April 1865 at Appomattox. Relaxing theological positions – their Sabbath law as well as the belief that participation in government action was the same as subscription to the demands of the beast –

the Seventh-day Adventists began the long process of hardening their posture within American society.

It was through the work of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and subsequent medical institutions that the Adventist church gained its earliest public recognition, however slight, as *other than* a fringe apocalyptic sect. As Lawson contends, “Although these institutions were created in order to facilitate Adventists in their goals of spreading their ‘last warning message’ and thereby ushering in Christ’s kingdom, the result was gradual goal displacement: there was an inevitable tension between longer-term building and organizing and the urgency of their message.”⁵⁷ However “odd” it might be for a group awaiting imminent relocation to heaven to outlay “untold millions of dollars” in building up what Blake might have dubbed a “mundane shell” for corporeal enterprises, still the Adventist hospitals, along with publishing houses and eventually schools and colleges, supplied a durable, indeed immovable exterior – like White’s body in vision – as a cocoon for paradisiacal expectations.

Sunday Laws and Liberty

The Seventh-day Adventists believed Lee’s surrender to have resulted directly from their prayers, these prayers reinforced by a four-day fast, beginning, at James White’s urging, on the first of March 1865.⁵⁸ With each successive step toward organization and expansion, the church had grown increasingly entangled in the American social and political mainstream that was the object of its most energetic censure. Yet prayers for peace, without which, James White predicted,

“our work in spreading the truth must stop” because failure to achieve an end to the war would mean the end of the world, initiated a new understanding that the Adventist voice could speak actively against national trends and even at moments overwhelm the dragon-like voice of the American government, delaying that government’s prophesied decline into greater violence and ever more total corruption.⁵⁹ After the war, as years passed, the once overriding “sense of *imminence* about the Second Coming diminished somewhat,” yet the Adventists remained watchful, and “in periods when the sense of imminence reintensified, [their] involvement in society *increased* rather than decreased.”⁶⁰ Stemming from the insight that prayer might provide a method for intervention into national catastrophe, hence into the eschatological timeline, even as this insight worked against the vestigial Millerite condition that the time of the end was foreordained, a new sense of agency (along with the “[wish] to delay the end,” as Butler terms it, “in order to preach that the end was soon”) took hold in progressively more material and – eventually – political maneuvers, compromises, and alliances.

Zdravko Plantak writes of Seventh-day Adventism as “the silent church” in reference to its longstanding tendency to remain in the background at moments of social turbulence, to discourage loud announcements of dissent, and to avoid worldly controversy in favor of attending to the Great Controversy in heaven.⁶¹ By these principles, early Adventists managed for the most part to escape the varieties of prosecution, often violent, leveled against the Mormon pioneers as well as the mockery endured by Christian Scientists under the satirical scrutiny of

Mark Twain. But the silence of the church persisted always in contrast with the details of its critique of American nationalism, however sensitively such a critique was managed and however cautiously it was communicated. There was no way for a group of faithful who regarded the federal government as the single most significant force on the opposing side of warfare both cosmic and imminent to dodge entirely an ideological confrontation with that government. The confrontation evolved in the context of the evolving threat of Sabbath legislation at the national level.

If slavery represented a sign of the times, the declaration of Sunday as a national day of rest would signal, according to Adventists, the end of times. Such dangerous legislation, which found precedent in state-level Blue Laws, had cycled through the U.S. Congress with various degrees of traction and seriousness from well before the Adventists' adoption of the seventh day. It was Loughborough, elaborating in 1857 in the *Review and Herald* upon Andrews's prior interpretation of the two-horned beast, who imagined first among his brethren that the final stage in the dissolution of the line between government and religion, the beast's horns coming together, would occur in the transfer from state to national enforcement of a Sunday Sabbath. The emphasis upon Sunday legislation had found urgency in practical concerns, as Adventists, along with Jews, struggled to compete in business when not one but two days of the week were restricted, one by faith and one by law. In the early and mid-1880s, during a period of especially severe enforcement, conducting business on Sundays resulted in arrest and imprisonment of Adventists, Jews, and Chinese first in

California – exceeding sixteen hundred prosecutions in that state alone – then in smaller numbers in Arkansas and Tennessee.⁶² Not all prosecutions resulted in convictions, but the numbers were nonetheless alarming: Lawson estimates that “By 1892 about fifty Adventists had been convicted under the state laws and thirty of these sent to prison.”⁶³ These practical concerns reinforced the view of government as always ultimately of the devil’s party, hence confirmed for the Adventist church its theological position and emboldened a turn for backing to the First Amendment – specifically to the most expressly Jeffersonian of clauses, the protection that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

One of the three accomplishments of which Jefferson was most proud, along with his penning of the Declaration of Independence and founding of the University of Virginia, this triptych inscribed at his instruction on his tombstone, was his authorship in 1779 of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, enacted in 1786. Acknowledged as the guide and model for later federal adoption of language guaranteeing freedom of religion, moreover demonstrating, as Sensabaugh argues, Jefferson’s sustained reliance upon Milton’s prose, the statute stands as one of the principal contingencies in the conditioning of the Seventh-day Adventist worldview. In it, Jefferson insists that “Almighty God hath created the mind free,” and “all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions

on either, as was in his Almighty power to do.”⁶⁴ Couched in this language is the Miltonic message, adopted through Milton by Ellen White, that at the heart of the narrative of creation is a concern for freedom of the mind, and that such freedom is obtained through God’s modulation of his own power, his decision, that is, to suspend certain aspects of his power in promoting the principle of individual freedom. God in these terms supplies a ready pattern for the crafting of a new government.

As Jefferson turns to Miltonic theology in framing his political rhetoric – his argument for liberty in worship, after all, supplied the backbone for his articulation of other liberties – Ellen White turned to Jeffersonian political rhetoric in framing her defense of Adventist theology. “When our nation shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law,” she wrote, “Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery; it will be nothing else than giving life to the tyranny which has long been eagerly watching its opportunity to spring again into active despotism.” Yet if this event is inevitable, it is not to be awaited complacently as the Millerites awaited their end:

Let none sit in calm expectation of the evil, comforting themselves with the belief that this work must go on because prophecy has foretold it, and that the Lord will shelter His people. We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience. Fervent, effectual prayer should be ascending to heaven that this calamity may be deferred until we can

accomplish the work which has so long been neglected. Let there be most earnest prayer, and then let us work in harmony with our prayers.⁶⁵

Specifically, “the work which has been so long neglected” is the spreading of the word of the impending apocalypse, which White wishes “deferred” in order to warn of it. As Milton’s God explains to Raphael (*PL* 5.229-45), it is not to save Adam and Eve, not to preserve their conscience, that he sends his warning missives, but to preserve, in White’s words, their “*liberty* of conscience,” wherein, like the angels, they are “Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (*PL* 3.99).

White took an enormous step further into “the work” within a short span of urging it, relocating to Australia in 1891 for nearly a decade of missionary advocacy for her church, and with this adventure the active preservation of “liberty of conscience” would adopt an increasingly international cast. Yet the language of liberty remained fastened within a uniquely American legislative history, bearing with it a manifestly American ideological vocabulary. Through White’s example, Adventist missionaries learned to carry the constitutional language of rights outside the American sphere and there to turn it back upon what they perceived to be the diabolical increase of their home country’s power. Even so, White expressed sincere anxiety about the will of the North American conference of Adventists to confront and combat this power: “We have been looking many years for a Sunday law to be enacted in our land; and, now that the movement is right upon us, we ask: Will our people do their duty in the matter?”

And again, “A vast responsibility is devolving upon men and women of prayer throughout the land to petition that God will sweep back the cloud of evil and give a few more years of grace in which to work for the Master.” These “few more years of grace” were necessary, White believed with growing certainty, in order to caution populations distant from the American domain of imminent American despotism, which would trigger the end of days. The missionary project was therefore a crucial development in the thinning pages of history: “We do not believe that the time has fully come when He would have our liberties restricted...Let us cry to God that the angels may hold the four winds until missionaries shall be sent to all parts of the world and shall proclaim the warning against disobeying the law of Jehovah.”⁶⁶ Looking outward to the world, the Adventists conceived, at least temporarily, a justification for wishing to delay their ascent to heaven and thereby began to view the significance of American principles, “our liberties,” in a global context.

Conjured, then, within the political battle at home against Sunday laws was an impression – illusory or otherwise – of extreme consequence. This single legislative issue was the cord upon which the fate of “all parts of the world” would hang, and it appeared to be fraying. While maintaining an active temperance platform, Adventists found themselves uncomfortably aligned with liquor interests in arguing against mandatory Sunday closings of businesses. The railroad companies were similarly unlikely allies in this peculiar mutual priority, despite the fact that large-scale corporate interests and the push for national expansion were more often anathema to Adventist desires for moral

improvement. Religious liberty was the single most pressing of concerns, trumping all others, and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists would over time forge temporary alliances with Jews, with Jehovah's Witnesses, and even, crossing Milton's bridge-too-far as articulated in *Areopagitica*, with Roman Catholics in defending the right of individuals to choose and practice their own form of worship.⁶⁷ Losing the seventh-day Sabbath would have constituted a disaster of great enough magnitude, as the threshold for apocalypse, that in their vigilance the Adventists were willing to set aside any and all differences in order to gain political ground.

It was not, however, the fourth commandment *per se* that dominated Ellen White's own thinking. By the close of the 1880s, with James White's posthumous influence already diminishing, two new voices had emerged in the church: Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones, editors of the Oakland, California publication *Signs of the Times*, contentiously recommended "righteousness by faith" – that is, individual faith in Christ – as a higher authority than the Ten Commandments in the pursuit of sainthood. George Butler, president of the General Conference, was appalled, but at the 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis, Ellen White sided with Waggoner and Jones against an older generation who regarded the Sabbath commandment, *largely on the basis of White's own visionary writings*, as the bedrock of the Adventist movement. But White had grown far too concerned with the cause of liberty on whole to push for the enforcement of any law, divine or worldly, over against individual choice. She had reached this position at least in part through the return again and again to the narrative

structures and themes of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan – themes emphasizing “liberty of conscience,” structures reinforcing the Miltonic message of mutual justification between God and men.

Among those arrested in California for challenging Blue Law restrictions were Ellen White’s son Willie and Joseph H. Waggoner, Ellet’s father: the two were caught on a Sunday in 1882 operating the *Signs of the Times* press.⁶⁸ A few years later, after the arrest of five Adventists in Arkansas, as Morgan writes,

Butler recommended civil disobedience as the means for arousing the sympathies of a free Republic. He urged the Arkansas believers to refuse to pay fines and instead go to jail as a means of public witness and of rallying support for their cause. Declaring that ‘we know of no sermon so eloquent as suffering for the truth’s sake,’ he argued that if Adventists would accept imprisonment for the sake of conscience, they would stir a public outcry causing their persecution to boomerang against their opponents.⁶⁹

The events in Arkansas, Butler thought, were “evidence of the rapid approach of the final struggle,” and all his instincts as an Adventist of old-guard apocalyptic expectations primed him for a fight.⁷⁰ On the other hand, when Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire introduced two bills in 1888 threatening the Adventists’ conception of religious liberty, W. C. White “urged believers against complacently viewing the recent developments in Congress simply as inevitable fulfillments of

prophecy. He called on them to join in gathering signatures to petitions protesting the bill, in order to ‘give a little more time of quiet in which to prosecute our God given work of carrying the truth to various nations.’”⁷¹ It should be clear that W. C. White is echoing his mother’s injunction to delay the end, and that he is therefore choosing a side in the variance between Ellen White’s assurance that she “[does] not believe that the time has fully come when [God] would have our liberties restricted” and Butler’s insistence that precisely such a time has come. Against the most powerful elements of her own church, yet now with the support of a younger generation, we find White again hardening an armature, adopting a posture, in protecting and preserving a language of opposition and a narrative of liberty. Butler’s approach to resistance, taken too far, she saw, would have introduced a decline of the Adventist movement as complete as the Millerite disappointment, whereas her own more measured approach, newly international in scope, relinquished nothing of its oppositional rhetoric yet gained resiliency in its path into “aftertimes.”

Adventists were active in challenging and repealing the California Sunday law in 1883, breaking generally Republican affiliations to aid a Democratic victory in the state legislature that year. Blair’s two bills in the U.S. Senate, the first codifying Sunday as a day of rest, the second mandating instruction in Christian faith in public schools, ultimately failed, owing in no small part to the intervention of A. T. Jones and his bombardment of Congress with petitions and polemics. The education bill comprised not substantially less of a threat than the proposed Sunday legislation, insofar as both, according to the Adventist bloc,

were steps toward government endorsement and enforcement of particular religious conditions. In response to these close calls, the Adventists convened a meeting in Battle Creek in 1889 to form the National Religious Liberty Association (NRLA), conceived as a watchdog organization for First Amendment rights. The NRLA's 1914 "Declaration of Principles" inscribes the Miltonic axiom, also axiomatic for Waggoner and Jones, and ultimately for Ellen White who would die the following year at the age of eighty-seven, that "the religion of Jesus Christ is founded in the law of love of God and needs no human power to support and enforce it. Love cannot be forced."

During its earliest years, the NRLA had its hands full with further challenges and setbacks to its core priority of staving off a national Sunday law. In 1892, to the dismay of Adventists who discerned a fissure in their fortifications, Supreme Court Justice David Brewer named America a "Christian nation" in *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*. The same year, President Harrison signed an order to grant federal funding to the Chicago World's Fair *only on the condition* that the fair would be closed on Sundays. This was the first piece of Sunday legislation ever signed into national law, and its side-door success, circumventing Congress altogether, alarmed Adventists immeasurably and put them on more watchful guard than ever against the federal menace to religious liberty.

Still, on the far side of the turn of the century, the question of the right to worship freely stood together with other First Amendment principles in the

phrasing of the NRLA “Declaration”: “We believe in the inalienable and constitutional rights,” this document asserts, “of free speech, free press, peaceable assembly, and petition.” It is absolutely of the essence to note that the contests for religious liberty in the nineteenth century were crucial in the working out of the ways in which the First Amendment could and would serve later in defense of the other liberties named in it; that these forerunning contests were conditioning factors in the free speech and civil rights debates of the twentieth century; and that the voices of nineteenth-century Adventists, decisive in the push-and-pull over religious liberty, can be heard as echoes, however faint, in subsequent legislation and rhetoric. With this, it is therefore also of the essence to note that in a 1956 recapitulation of the “Declaration of Principles,” framed after the NRLA was reborn as the *International* Religious Liberty Association, all mention of free speech, free press, and free assembly has vanished. This contrast begins the story of the transition of Seventh-day Adventism into the twentieth century, which is the story of the church after Ellen White, after the voice of her angel, or perhaps of Milton, had fallen silent.⁷²

Chapter 4.

The Deep Blue Sea: Milton and Adventism in the Twentieth Century

Along with describing the importance of Milton to Seventh-day Adventism, I have sought more generally in the previous chapters to join George F. Sensabaugh, Kevin P. Van Anglen, and Keith Stavely, among others, in plotting Milton's recurring appearances within American history. The argument I hope to contribute to the compelling work of these critics, who not only pave a broad path but light it well, is that the presence of Milton in America resembles Stephen Fallon's description of Milton as an authorial presence in *Paradise Lost* and elsewhere: his image flickers, "complicated by...fragmentation," readily apparent at one moment, "diffuse and veiled" at another. If against Roland Barthes's "death of the author" Milton remains "one author who has resolutely refused to die," still "Through the surface of [his] texts" – and no less through the surface of the history of his reception – "erupt now and then unintended and displaced" manifestations of Milton's presence, "allowing us to view a Milton normally hidden from us" and evoking "a version of the return of the repressed."¹ Fallon's turn to Freud is useful, albeit in a different context, as Milton emerges again and

again in America with something more of an uncanny mien, an instantiation of Freud's *der unheimlich*, than generally or substantially has been observed.

And in a very real sense Milton is *not at home* in America; his surfacing there is exactly an uncanny, an uncomfortable, event. When Paul Stevens reminds us that "For the historical Milton, America was explicitly a wasteland," we are invited to consider the traction in the position occupied by those critics who would govern and limit our recognition of either an American Milton or a Miltonic America that such identifications involve – indeed require – any number of severe misreadings of Milton's own politics and priorities. Writing upon the same occasion as Stevens, i.e. a 2008 volume of the *University of Toronto Quarterly* devoted to the subject of Milton in America, Christopher Kendrick confesses, "To witness Milton becoming American, to have him adopted as one of the grand-fathers of the American way, stirs considerable ambivalence. It seems in equal measures wrong and hard," wrong because of the myriad "ways in which [Milton] is un-American," hard because Milton is, "on the whole, better" than America's "ruling classes" whom Kendrick cannot imagine "ever having been more than expediently radical." Yet if he finds "by turns stifling and mildly irritating" the "consensus" among American critics from Margaret Fuller to Van Anglen that "the principles avowed in [Milton's] works are more American than English," Kendrick nonetheless locates value in the "literary" (as opposed to the critical) responses to Milton of American writers like Barlow and Melville.² David Hawkes goes further to dismiss a tradition of American pragmatism as completely off its rails when it adopts Milton as its representative poet. It might

be true that “The early luminaries of American pragmatism were steeped in Milton,” Hawkes notes: “William James learned to recite book 1 of *Paradise Lost* in its entirety as part of a thought-experiment; similarly, John Dewey was studying Milton’s prose at an impressionable age.” Yet in the hands of neo-pragmatists and scholars of pragmatism like Richard Rorty, Donald Guss, and most culpably, according to Hawkes’s assessment, Stanley Fish, the “interpretation” of Milton as a “precursor of...pragmatism” somehow “does violence to Milton’s original meanings and intentions.”³

Although Fish’s approach to Milton is more nuanced and certainly more concerned with preserving “Milton’s original meanings and intentions” than Hawkes allows, we might concede that American appropriations of Milton tend to mistake or even at times manipulate Milton’s purposes.⁴ More difficult to grasp, however, is Hawkes’s and to a lesser extent Kendrick’s perceived obligation to protect Milton from the “violence” of these appropriations, or moreover the need to regard Milton as vulnerable to them in the first place. Without valuing one or the other as “better,” we surely are able to realize that Milton almost certainly did not intend his Satan to be as entirely a champion of liberty as Jefferson judged and at the same time to encounter Jefferson’s judgment as a remarkable and moreover a historically significant interpretive gesture. In other words, our reading of Milton needn’t change to accord with our reading of Jefferson, yet our reading of Jefferson would be incomplete without accounting for *his* reading of Milton. Fuller signals her own awareness of the difference and the newness of the American Milton when she quotes Wordsworth’s “London, 1802” – a celebration

of Milton as England's potential savior – yet excises the following lines, which mark Milton as specifically English:

England hath need of thee: she is a fen
 Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men:
 O raise us up....

The result is certainly violent in its revision, not only appropriating Milton for American purposes but more elaborately annexing the very perspective and privilege of Milton's national poetic legacy. That is, Fuller takes and slices into the language of an English poet, Wordsworth, who wishes with great pathos to restore a lost predecessor, Milton, to the service of a very English cause, the "ancient English dower / Of inward happiness," and in this maneuver she neglects to "raise...up" and instead buries, or sinks in the "stagnant waters," the concerns with the bodies of those "selfish men" who would selfishly keep Milton all to themselves.

I can't imagine that Fuller's audacity here, so extreme, isn't itself a variety of joke, perhaps an example of what Liam Rector calls, in a poem, "joking past grieving," dark humor of a very American kind, haunted by the anxiety that American identity remains a scarring over of the not entirely successful excision

of Old World culture.⁵ The redacted quotation from Wordsworth shows the scar, not least in its all-too-visible mutilation of the sonnet form:

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour.
 Return to us again,
 And give us manners, virtues, freedom, power.
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the Sea:
 Pure as the naked Heavens, majestic, free:
 So didst thou travel on life's common way
 In cheerful Godliness, and yet thy heart
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay.⁶

Without the intermediary critique of England as a “fen” and the reasoned argument for why Milton might fill a particular set of “need[s],” the first lines of Fuller’s version enact a much more chilling necromancy than Wordsworth’s, moving abruptly from wish (“thou shouldst be living at this hour”) to command (“Return”). Moreover, without the softening influence of “bower” and “dower,” a rhyme insisting upon Milton’s legacy (“dower”) as dwelling at home (“bower”) and not in the “wasteland” abroad, the fiat of “power” is brought hard against the urgency of “hour,” and suddenly Milton inhabits again, as for Ellen White, the position of the angel of American millennial urgency, informing the new country’s bid for a front-row seat and perhaps even a leading part in the endgame of history, conditioning the widespread American belief that the “hour” of the

articulation and actualization of divine “power” was at hand in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, “Return to us again,” an uncomfortable half of a line, floats, without a rhyme, as an acknowledgement that America’s adoption of Milton constitutes the very act that orphans him and leaves him homeless. Insofar as a rhyme is an utterance that happens once before it happens again, Wordsworth’s request that Milton “Return...*again*” to the aid of “selfish *men*” makes ample sense in its rhetoric as well as in its prosody. But Fuller’s “Return to us again” is a *non sequitur*, making Milton return from nowhere – unrhymed – or at least making him return from the now literally repressed language of English tradition.

To restate, Milton’s image in America is explicitly uncanny, an emergence from the occluded past. Hawkes writes, in my view wrongly, “Milton’s reputation has enjoyed a notoriously bumpy ride in his native country, but *no such vacillations have troubled his posterity in America*. In that nation he has consistently been regarded, in every era and by people of every political hue, not merely as the apex of the poetic pantheon, but as a prophet of a distinctively American way of thinking” (italics mine).⁷ While Sensabaugh demonstrates sufficiently that Milton’s ride in America, especially in the nineteenth century, was at least as bumpy as his trajectory at home, of greater importance to our present study is the matter of how interpretations of Milton have differed among Americans and by extension how these competing interpretations (as between Jefferson and Adams, or between Emerson and Fuller) have supplied a stage for the rehearsal of competing visions for the country and its people. Meanwhile, we must continue to attend to the fact of the habit, embodied by Emerson, Ginsberg,

and White, enunciated by Fuller in her observation that Americans are “disposed to forswear [their] lineage,” of owning Milton via an eccentric process of *disowning* him. We must also remember that the manner of misreading Milton attributed by Kendrick and Hawkes to an American readership is not at all unique to America. Blake, for example, felt his role as a reader of Milton to require a corrective approach to Milton’s verse: “of the Devils party without knowing it” (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Plate 6), Milton appeared to Blake in what amounts to another uncanny return with a confession of “an error in his Par. Lost wh. he wanted me to correct in a poem or picture.” On this occasion we meet an image of Milton consenting to the “violence” of revisionism *not* as a burden upon but unequivocally as an enhancement of what Hawkes calls his “original meanings and intentions.”

Lest we misunderstand and thereby undervalue Blake’s “idea of Milton” as a special – and an extreme – case, we will recall Charles Darwin’s identification of *Paradise Lost*, his copy always with him when he went ashore during his voyage on the *Beagle*, as a “chief favorite” at the moment of his earliest thinking about natural selection.⁸ “But what was Milton, that most famous creationist, doing in the hands of the incipient evolutionist?” asks George Levine, noting that in old age Darwin could not read poetry at all without experiencing nausea.⁹ Joan Richardson points to Darwin’s feeling of recognition in his encounters with the natural world as he read and reread Milton’s descriptions of chaos: “Darwin...used Milton’s telescoping, tumbling forms as theoretical frames in which to view emergent aspects of evolution.”¹⁰ Gillian Beer sees Milton

essentially as mediating between the religious certitude of Darwin's early life and the disorientation that attended his most radical discoveries. These discoveries Darwin understood to represent "tracts of forbidden knowledge" of a biblical scope, and he used this understanding to recast Milton's metaphorical landscape in new methodological terms, combining the tree of life and the tree of knowledge into a single branching evolutionary tree while transforming the *fall* of man (in what I take to be a deliberate pun) into a *descent*.¹¹ It goes without saying that these were not forms into which Milton, as the poet of the very narrative of Creation which Darwin was challenging, would have wished his work to be pressed. English readers, even so, as much and as often as American readers, found cause to turn to Milton for intellectual backing, and in *turning to him turned* him to new and active purposes.

Fallon persuasively hints that such readers found more than cause: they found an invitation. Distinguishing between the Barthesian *intransitivity* of authors such as Marvell and possibly Shakespeare (for whom "Actions are not performed with a view of affecting reality, but narrated") and a "more transitive" version of authorial "practice" exemplified by Milton (who "call[s] into question Barthes's assertion of the intransitivity of the literary text"), Fallon sees Milton seeing poetry as no less than a chance to keep himself alive, hence to continue to act – to *do things* – in history. For Barthes, "The author performs a function, the writer an activity"; "The author participates in the priest's role, the writer in the clerk's"; and whereas "the author's language is an intransitive act (hence, in a sense, a gesture)," "The *writer*, on the other hand, is a 'transitive' man, he posits

a goal (to give evidence, to explain, to instruct), of which language is merely a means; for him language supports a *praxis*, it does not constitute one.” Milton fits neither of these categories, Fallon argues, behaving instead as an author who is also a writer, a priest who is also a clerk, a literary subject who is also “a ‘transitive’ man.” As writer, then, Milton has and asserts purposes; as an author, he “is always an inductor of ambiguity,” hence those purposes are obscured.¹² I don’t want to misrepresent Fallon’s argument, which itself attempts to resuscitate an interest in (and a confidence in the knowability of) Milton’s intentions, reminding us, “For his part, Milton simply assumed that one should read texts...according to the intention of the author.” But from this *a priori* arises a more intricate consideration, for Fallon, of those “unresolved tensions in the author that emerge in the work” and an acknowledgement that in his authorial angling to rescue himself from death, “The self-representing Milton is a tense, divided Milton.”¹³ Supposing Milton (at least) to have been aware of (at least many of) the tensions and points of divide in his own work, even if he could not have forecast and would not have owned to every possible resolution attempted by his readers, we might observe that readers have been consistently responsive to and monumentally *right* about one aspect of Milton’s intentions for his own poetry: he wished for it to *make an impression* in more than the sense of intransitive marking, in the sense, instead, that it would play an active role in history’s unfolding.

Indeed, in his description of authors *living in their documents*, Milton comes very close to articulating what some American Constitutional scholars

would eventually employ as an argument for the Constitution as itself a *living document*: “Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are” (YP 2:429). The wording of this famous sentence is ever so precise, implying that texts are “continuous” with their authors, as Fallon states, but decidedly not, and here I depart from Fallon, “inseparable” from their authors.¹⁴ “To be as active as” an author is different from acting always in an author’s service, and we cannot fail to notice the distance Milton places between texts as “progeny” and authors as ostensible parents. Progeny, as Milton would eventually know first-hand, can be notoriously unruly. The genealogical metaphor leads me, for one, to the thought that if “a good Booke” is flesh and especially blood “of a master spirit,” and if the “precious life-blood” is “imbalm’d and treasur’d up on purpose to a life beyond life” (YP 2:493), still the *purposefulness* of this process does not necessarily work to preserve one’s *purposes*, i.e. one’s intentions. The whole endeavor instead involves a wonderful trust in those representatives of “aftertimes” who will assume custody of the corpus-as-corpse of the author. Like the Constitution of the United States of America, into which Milton’s influence was introduced in the crafting of the First Amendment, it is not the points of certainty nor the points of specificity that keep Milton’s documents alive, but it is rather the tensions and the divisions, the ways in which the poems invite interpretation, that provide the fuel for a “life beyond life” – which is different, after all, from a life without death, different indeed from the hope of eternal youth associated with other, earlier European fantasies of the North American continent.

Milton accords with American pragmatism, then, in holding a place for William James's dicta that "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea," and elsewhere, "An idea, to be suggestive, must come to the individual with the force of a revelation."¹⁵ The caveat that James is skeptical of absolutes and universals in opposition to religionists of Milton's stamp who wholeheartedly embrace a universalizing worldview is less important (as James attempts to clarify in his Preface to *The Meaning of Truth* [1909]) than the shared requirement that ideas contain a "potencie," "the force of a revelation," producing action and with it the possibility of value. Nigel Smith asks with his tongue only slightly in his cheek whether "Milton [is] better than Shakespeare"; one answer is that even if Shakespeare's works have been more insistently present than Milton's in their constant reproduction on stage and later on screen with only small modifications from iteration to iteration – intransitive in type, to return to Barthes's vocabulary – still Milton's poetry achieves a persistent transformation, *truth* constantly *happening* to his ideas.¹⁶

In this way, one can argue that Milton has had a more significant and lasting influence than Shakespeare upon the technology of film, for example, in that form's early newness as a method for looking into and knowing the phenomenal world. Of course, there have been innumerable versions of Shakespeare's plays produced in film whereas *Paradise Lost* seems oddly impervious to the efforts of screenwriters and filmmakers to harness it.¹⁷ But Sergei Eisenstein turned to Milton and remarkably *not* to Shakespeare in seeking

“a first-rate school in which to study montage and audio-visual relationships,” deriving from Milton’s fracturing images and masterful enjambments certain of the principles of film editing still in use today.¹⁸ Instances of this variety abound: should we remain momentarily within media studies, we will note that it is through a shared reading of *Paradise Lost* that Captain James T. Kirk and the Nietzschean superman Khan, ideological enemies, find common ground upon their earliest meeting in the original *Star Trek* television series. Choosing exile upon an inhospitable planet, Khan needs only to mention Milton’s name for Kirk to understand and accept his apparently self-destructive priorities. The name stands in for a more complex set of ideas to which “truth happens” (“A word is a conceptual system,” as James writes), and it is only upon the engineer Scotty’s puzzled inquiry that Kirk intones, “It is better to rule (*sic*) in Hell, than serve in Heaven” (see *PL* 1:263).¹⁹

Scotty is embarrassed as a “good Scotsman” to be “not up on Milton,” and after Kirk’s explanation, he simply smiles and nods in deference to his Captain’s official as well as literary authority. The moment would pass as not a particularly extravagant reference to Milton if not for Scotty’s involvement, but that involvement, an afterthought, sums an extravagantly involved and tremendously fertile drama of international readership. Khan’s full name, we learn, is Khan Noonien Singh. A genetically augmented human being of northern Indian origin, also a tyrant who was “absolute ruler of more than a quarter of [the] world,” he has drifted through space in a cryogenic sleep since the 1990s: the near future for the *Star Trek* writers, the distant past for the crew of the USS *Enterprise*. Just as

Milton looks into the past to discover Adam and Eve looking into the future under Michael's instruction, so *Star Trek* looks into the future to encounter a new Adam (Khan is described as "space seed," deposited on Ceti Alpha V with the ship's historian, Lieutenant Marla McGivers, who is unsettlingly responsive to the physical and psychological abuses of her ancient new lover) looking backward into the past. A full "reading" of this episode must wait for another occasion. For now, it will suffice to observe that a mid-twentieth-century American projection of the future of not only the planet but of the entire colonized galaxy preserves Milton in American memory (Kirk's) as well as Indian memory (Khan's) but conspicuously *not* in the memory of the show's only recurring character of British nationality.

I stay with this detour into television and popular science fiction because Khan is so literally an embodiment of the "life after life" of Milton's ideas and because the questions being asked are so precisely about colonial expansion and the burgeoning postcolonial moment, about the relationships between power and literary imagination, and about the unexpected conduits by which Milton enters into a twentieth-century discourse. Khan's ambition for "a world to win, an empire to build" refracts the visage of Western colonial tyranny through a generalized dread of international competition and a more specific anxiety that the so-called Third World might advance to gain control over *a third* (that is, "more than a quarter") of the world. Even while Kirk describes Khan in a strange moment of historical nostalgia as having been "the best of the tyrants," even while Scotty confesses "a sneaking admiration for this one," nevertheless Khan

returns as a belligerent reminder and remainder of those repressed nations still menacing, it would seem, to *Star Trek's* imagined future of peaceful international accord and famously noninterventionist policies (Starfleet's "prime directive") of interplanetary exploration.

The poet and novelist Rabindranath Tagore is somewhat more pointed and probably more conscious in his project of conscripting Milton into the contest for decolonization. At the center of his 1916 novel *The Home and the World* – which adopts a twelve-chapter structure from the twelve books of *Paradise Lost* and mirrors the tendency of the narrative voice in Milton's poem to disappear into a cacophony of multiplying perspectives – the character Nikhil turns to Milton for support in describing his frayed relationship with the megalomaniacal, indeed Satanic, rebel Sandip. Cued by an elder to the observation that he and Sandip "do not rhyme," although their "rhythm is the same," Nikhil extends the metaphor: "Fate seems bent on writing *Paradise Lost* in blank verse, in my case, and so has no use for a rhyming friend!"²⁰ Tagore saturates his narrative with images of fruit and gardens, turning persistently inward, like Milton, from a back-story of revolutionary conflict to focus instead upon the stresses threatening a paradisiacal marriage as Sandip tempts and corrupts Nikhil's wife Bimala with an appeal to her vanity. Despite these echoes, however, the only direct mention of *Paradise Lost* is reserved for the poem's unrhymed form. This mention – call it a cairn along the road – simultaneously marks and memorializes Milton's argument for his epic as "an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome

and modern bondage of rhyming” (*PL* “The Verse”). In Milton’s boast, the recovery of blank verse supplies an engine for combating “the invention” – rhyme – “of a barbarous age,” thereby convening a way of thinking according to which nothing stands between the aesthetics of literary form and the urgencies of “liberty” and “bondage.”

Tagore stakes a great deal upon this way of thinking. His close friendship with Gandhi, for whom he was the first to assign the honorific Mahatma, or “Great Soul,” was strained by their disagreement over the limits of nationalism as Tagore renounced the *Swadeshi* movement in protest against the burning of British goods, including clothing made from British fabric that he pointed out could have been supplied – just as easily and more productively – to the poor. *The Home and the World* is Tagore’s appeal for reason against what he described as the untenable romanticism of the new radicals. (Georg Lukács mistook Sandip for “a contemptible caricature of Gandhi,” clearly not Tagore’s intention in crafting this scheming, murderous scoundrel.²¹) Positioning a protagonist who adopts Western habits and is persuaded that “man’s history has to be built by the united effort of all the races in the world, and therefore this selling of conscience for political reasons – this making a fetish of one’s country, won’t do,” against a villain who is cynical enough yet also self-aware enough to acknowledge his chant of *Bante Mantaram* (“Hail to the Mother,” that is, to the country) to be just one more way of controlling people, the multitasking Tagore fleshes in fiction a skeleton of his political ideals. But he also was frustrated by the overwhelmingly political and in large measure negative response of his earliest readers to what

many of these readers viewed as pandering to British interests, and in his reliance upon Milton's epic structure, acknowledged in the description of political difference as an absence of rhyme, he broadcasts something of his appreciation for aspects of an imported – and forcibly imposed – literary culture. It “won't do,” in Tagore's assessment, to discard the valuable elements of texts any more than textiles. More than a *modus vivendi*, this represents an argument that the “bondage” of nationalism in the “fetish” of *Bande Mantaram* and *Swadeshi* – as Milton deems the incantatory “jangling sound of like endings” to be a “barbarous” tyranny, although seductive – must give way to international engagement and a rethinking of how to structure the “liberty” of self-governance.

To rhyme is to be governed by what comes before, and both Fuller (implicitly in her neglect of rhyme in summoning Milton to “Return to us again”) and Tagore (explicitly in the weight he places upon the blank verse of *Paradise Lost*) invoke Milton's equation of rhyme with “custom” and “bondage.” Milton is no more at home in India than in America, but in both countries he fortifies an ethic of and endows a vocabulary for revolutionary politics. Neither Fuller nor Tagore, neither Jefferson nor Blake, neither Darwin nor Emerson looks to Milton for the neat satisfaction of a “rhyming friend.” All on the other hand find what James would call “cash-value” in Milton's ideas as patterns for articulating new revolutionary truths. As Lydia Dittler Shulman writes of the American revolutionary period, “The influence of *Paradise Lost*...is a striking example of the active role poetry can play in shaping political culture. The effect of this kind of art on life is more subtle, but also more profound, than that of topical satire,

occasional political poems, and other works visibly written out of a desire to influence the immediate course of events.” Going on to observe that Milton was no stranger to “the topical or the occasional,” involving himself in those categories in his sonnets and pamphlets, still Shulman estimates *Paradise Lost* to be “political not in any topical sense but on the subtler and deeper level at which great art shapes the values of generations of readers,” precisely the level occupied by “the sort of unacknowledged legislator Shelley had in mind in his *Defense of Poetry*.” It bears repeating that this is by design: the work of Milton’s right hand, as distinct from the “topical” prose of his left, is addressed to “aftertimes,” and indeed “Milton himself understood poetry, especially epic poetry, to have...a long-term, value-forming effect.”²²

Locating Milton’s influence at certain of the most formative moments of crisis and progress in American history is relatively straightforward work and necessary not because it represents a matter of scholarly dispute but because the importance of Milton to America is an indisputable circumstance too often overlooked. Thus when Shulman portrays “the influence of *Paradise Lost* during the founding of the American Republic” as “a compelling – perhaps unparalleled – case of a poem’s conditioning a major historical event through its impact on key leaders and on society at large,” the quality of insistence in her language has to do with an incredulity, which I share, that the “case” needs stating at all, that it has not been more widely understood or more often taken into account in historical descriptions of how American independence transpired and of how a unique social and literary culture subsequently evolved.²³

But it seems to me that a different project demands attention, a project related to Shulman's but differently framed and involving a different kind of urgency. My interest is in Milton's disappearance into the intensity of his own influence as the principles of the American revolutionary period and of the early republic continue forward in debt to Milton yet without a sustained articulation and eventually without full consciousness of that debt. To extend and complicate the metaphor, with which I opened my first chapter, I want to pursue a speculation that the debt, in effect, was amortized, hence prolonged, and that in the twentieth century, in certain sectors and at certain moments, it ballooned. This ballooning brings Milton back into visibility, sometimes in surprising and often in extraordinary ways. The process is especially concentrated, therefore especially instructive, in the example of Seventh-day Adventist life and worship.

In cataloguing the variety of "self-representations" in Milton's texts, Fallon discerns "A key for identifying" the "tense, divided Milton," as opposed to other "explicit and intended self-representations," in such phenomena as "a disturbance in the surface of the text, a contradiction, an elision, or a syntactic crux."²⁴ I suggest that by adopting a similar method, yet deploying this method with a different focus and target, we will turn up otherwise hidden instances of Milton's attendance in American history. At the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, those instances came to include an international perspective, eventually merging with the ongoing postcolonial intervention into revolutionary politics, religious imagination, and literary culture. The version of

Milton that I call postcolonial is also, as I will begin to argue, a *postcolloquial* Milton, rarely invoked, having exited the trends of popular discourse, yet unflaggingly a presence in disproportion to his silence. Milton returns through the agency of Seventh-day Adventism into several discrete areas of crisis in the twentieth century that together convene an echoing of crucial themes and considerations. In the following pages, I will turn to three apostate Adventists who attempt after their departure from the church to make sense of their separate and in many ways very different experiences through a mutual process of revaluation, although articulated to greater and lesser degrees, of what we now understand to be the church's Miltonic foundations. Fascination with violence and dread of alienation as explored in the work of two novelists, Richard Wright and Jamaica Kincaid, coalesce within the disastrous realities of the career of David Koresh and his eventual confrontation with government agents at Waco, Texas.

Richard Wright and the Nothing That Is

For as often as Locke is written about as the *sin qua non* of the language of American liberty, there are very real and enduring consequences to neglecting Milton's similarly considerable influence. Pointing as an example to John Adams's recurring emphasis of "public Passion" always above "private Passion," Shulman notes, "Milton and American republicans...agreed not only on the nature of tyranny and the lawfulness of just revolution but also on the danger to the public good posed by the unbridled private interests and passions, which allowed people to tolerate tyranny."²⁵ Indeed, as Gordon S. Wood records in his

seminal *Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1992), the colonists and Adams especially were at first “surprised and indignant” to learn that they faced accusation of “fomenting rebellion” because “The spirit of republicanism, they said, the spirit of Milton, Needham, and Sidney, was ‘so far from being incompatible with the English constitution that it is the greatest glory of it.’”²⁶ And Shulman concludes: “In their concern with the socially disruptive nature of private interests, the American leaders were closer to Milton and the classical republican school than to those Enlightenment figures – chiefly Locke – who traditionally have been hailed as the theoreticians of the Revolution.”²⁷

Locke’s calculation of the relationship between society and the individual was certainly a contingency in Jefferson’s writing of the Declaration of Independence, yet the Lockean confidence in compatibility of self-interest with the interests of society, in Shulman’s view, was *not* entirely compatible with American revolutionary thinking. This matters in thinking about what we mean when we place liberty – and its adjunct, liberalism – at the center of a rhetorical schema. In determining the extent to which we can understand American liberalism through an understanding of Milton’s “shifting” conception of liberty, Feisel G. Mohamed relies on Paul Kahn’s distinction between “liberalism of faith” and “liberalism of speech”: “Where a liberalism of faith imagines the state as living ‘in the shadow of the church’ in limiting the claims it can make on individuals, a liberalism of speech demands that religion, like all legitimate public acts, ‘be tested in the forum of reason.’” It is Mohamed’s contention that Milton begins his polemical career in advocacy of a liberalism of speech and ends it in a

much more troubling, from a public perspective, defense of faith at the core of his values. Yet the latter, according to Mohamed, “cannot be called liberalism at all. It is rather a liberty of conscience quite menacing to liberal notions of freedom of religious expression.” Indeed, “The state is no longer an agent, or even a handmaiden, to national destiny, but finds its highest calling in non-interference with the righteous few who are the beneficiaries of cosmic destiny – no matter how much popular will must be ignored to institute such protection.”²⁸ Another way of delineating this distinction is to recognize Milton’s early prose tracts such as *Areopagitica*, *The Reason of Church-Government*, and *Of Reformation*, widely reprinted and read in America before and after 1776, as locked in competition with Locke’s sponsorship of individual self-interest in the framing and in the phrasing of America’s originating documents.

Ellen White, who, as I have discussed, wrote forcefully in defense of a “liberty of conscience,” might be seen as falling under the “menacing” portion of the rubric that Mohamed outlines. Yet her conception of “conscience” was inextricable from “religious expression,” and it was only in the twentieth century that Seventh-day Adventism underwent a shift from a liberalism of speech to a liberalism of faith as legible in the subtraction of free speech, free press, and free assembly from the “Declaration of Principles” of the NRLA in its reconstitution as the IRLA. The new articulation of an international perspective illuminates the new ethical problems attending that perspective. Lawson observes another modification to the 1956 “Declaration”: “Religious liberty replaced separation of church and state as the first principle,” thereby generalizing the language of the

document as the need increased to accommodate governments unreceptive to the specific timbre of American Constitutional rhetoric.²⁹ This revised document emerged out of the context of a decades-long uncertainty over how the Adventist church in America should respond to differing international views and crises. “Adventists made no attempt to raise the issue of separation of church and state outside the U.S.,” Lawson continues, which “left them free to foster relationships with political leaders that would facilitate their missionary endeavors. They were often especially successful in developing exchange relationships with authoritarian governments of the Left and Right.”³⁰ It was an uncomfortable fact that Adventists in Germany had widely supported the Nazi regime. An element of self-preservation almost surely informed this position, as Adventists shared with Jews the Sabbath as well as numerous dietary practices. Yet Plantak documents enormous enthusiasm among German Adventists for Hitler and for the Nazi platform well before the escalation of racial and religious persecution.³¹ In the Soviet Union, meanwhile, an underground group calling themselves the True and Free Adventists split from the official church in protest against what they saw as unquestioning and unprincipled cooperation with restrictive government policies. The leaders of this group were persecuted and imprisoned, yet the General Conference in the United States, refusing to recognize the unregistered True and Free schismatics, withheld both verbal and material aid. Plantak identifies similar failures of social ethics in response to Adventist struggles spanning the twentieth century, especially in Hungary and Romania and in the nations of the former Yugoslavia.³²

“This pattern [of] toadying to whatever regime held power” in nations abroad was matched by a mounting reluctance among Adventists to take strong positions in the United States on pressing social issues.³³ J. N. Andrews’s equation of the nation with the two-horned beast of Revelation had derived in part from his exasperation with government-sponsored slavery, and Ellen White hewed to “the principle that all men, white and black, are free and equal”; even so, the church that “[had begun] as it did as a minority group,” facing discrimination, and therefore in the nineteenth century “was very careful not to discriminate against its minorities,” proved surprisingly hesitant in the twentieth century to meet the new stipulations of civil rights.³⁴ Lawson writes,

Until the end of 1944, Adventism was organized geographically, so that the U.S. was subdivided into local conferences which were in turn clustered into unions. Although Adventism had grown steadily among African Americans to that point, none of their pastors had been promoted to administrative positions. By 1944 their demands for such opportunities had become so urgent that the Church’s totally Caucasian hierarchy chose to defuse the discontent – not by opening positions in the existing structure, but by creating separate conferences for black congregations where African Americans could occupy leadership positions. These ‘black’ conferences overlapped geographically with what now became ‘white’ conferences.”³⁵

Interpretations differ of the events leading to this separation of black conferences from formerly integrated regional groupings. Plantak and Morgan stress that it was black ministers and students who requested and fought for segregation. This construal needs to be qualified, however, in Bull and Lockhart's reminder that the plan for separate conferences was simply "better than nothing" and that "In this context, at least, African Americans could experience something of the sense of autonomous community, which immigrant groups had long enjoyed in virtue of their linguistic separation."³⁶ African Americans, in fact, typically fared worse than black immigrants from Africa and the West Indies, who were often welcomed readily into white congregations in a church eager to embrace its international identity. Malcolm X held from youth a warm regard for white Adventists after a visit to a Michigan congregation with his mother, an immigrant from Grenada. This echoed the much earlier experience of Sojourner Truth, who lived either in or near Battle Creek from 1857 and whose associates included many Seventh-day Adventists. But in the early and mid-twentieth century, unlike Malcolm X and his mother, Sojourner Truth would not have been able to count on the same ease or warmth of reception as could a new immigrant population, and this kind of ethnic and racial differentiation caused significant and lasting tension between the targeted groups.³⁷

These details signal an extreme atrophy in the church's willingness to contend with a history of race in America even as missionary efforts intensified and as the NAD appeared to meet its increasing international diversity with enthusiasm. These, too, were the rapidly accumulating contradictions into which

Richard Wright was introduced in his childhood while living with his highly religious Adventist grandmother. Wright's encounter with Adventism shaped not only his early economic struggles, as he describes in his autobiographical *Black Boy* (1945), but also his later thinking about prejudice and its entrenchment within religion, about America and its relationship to the world, and about violence and its presence within the literary imagination. He spent relatively little time in the church and reports never having believed in the tenets or found value in the dietary or Sabbath-keeping practices to which his grandmother insisted he adhere. Still, at more than one juncture he places his experiences with Seventh-day Adventism as profoundly important to his intellectual development and finally to his authority as a cultural critic and political observer.

Wright moreover counts among those authors, as I will demonstrate, who have subscribed to and actively extended Milton's sponsorship within American literary innovation. I should stipulate that I can cite no instance in which Wright explicitly acknowledges a debt to Milton, and I will attempt shortly to account for my conjecture that Milton constitutes an important presence within Wright's work, especially within the novel *Native Son* (1940). Indeed, it is my sense that this relationship, for Wright, is consciously, intentionally, and intricately conceived both in its coming into being and in its simultaneously being blotted from view. Wright comes to Milton through the information of his Adventist upbringing, turning Adventism back upon the precedent author who turns up so often within Adventist theology. Here, at some length, is Wright's most extended as well his most ecstatic description of that theology, communicating the degree

to which he was simultaneously drawn to and repelled by such apocalyptic energy and imagery:

Granny was an ardent member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and I was compelled to make a pretense of worshipping her God, which was her exaction for my keep. The elders of her church expounded a gospel *clogged with images* of vast lakes of eternal fire, of seas vanishing, of valleys of dry bones, of the sun burning to ashes, of the moon turning to blood, of stars falling to earth, of a wooden staff being transformed into a serpent, of voices speaking out of clouds, of men walking upon water, of God riding in whirlwinds, of water changing into wine, of the dead rising and living, of the blind seeing, of the lame walking; *a salvation that teemed* with fantastic beasts having multiple heads and horns and eyes and feet; sermons of statues possessing heads of gold, shoulders of silver, legs of brass, and feet of clay; a cosmic tale that began before time and ended with the clouds of the sky rolling away at the Second Coming of Christ; chronicles that concluded with the Armageddon; *dramas thronged* with all the billions of human beings who had ever lived or died as God judged the quick and the dead.... (italics mine)³⁸

The extraordinary second sentence, which trails at the end of a paragraph into Wright's own ellipsis, suggests an even greater unstated abundance of "images"

and “dramas” all extending as participial phrases from the verbal “clogged,” as though this wellspring of symbolic language backs up into its own multiplicity and cannot drain from the burgeoning authorial imagination of an incredulous Wright. But here we would do well to attune our reading to “disturbance,” “contradiction,” and “elision” after Fallon’s method, as Wright distinguishes between two kinds of belief and in so doing chooses the kind of author he will become: “While listening to the vivid language of the sermons I was pulled toward emotional belief, but as soon as I went out of the church and saw the bright sunshine and felt the throbbing of life of the people in the streets I knew that none of it was true and that nothing would happen.”³⁹ That “nothing” is confusing, bridging, perhaps, what Wallace Stevens identifies as “Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.”⁴⁰ Or, stated otherwise, “truth” would not “happen” for Wright to the ideas encased in “the vivid language of the sermons,” but certainly *something would happen* in the context of “the bright sunshine” and “the throbbing of life of the people in the streets.” Indeed, Wright uses his description of resistance to religious conversion as a backdrop exactly for *things* beginning to *happen* within his youthful writerly ambitions. Toward the end of *Black Boy*, in the often-cited “library card” chapter, Wright will narrate his gravitation toward Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser, observing, “All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel,” but in this earlier passage he acknowledges the extent to which his own realism, adapted for the complexity of African American experience, is steeped in (although not clogged with) the language of religious symbolism.⁴¹

In other words, if there was *nothing to* the apocalyptic expectations of his grandmother, still Wright attempts to reconcile the “line of vision” stored within those expectations – Milton’s tradition – with his earliest impulses to chart “the uncharted conditions of life.”⁴² We have already explored the attempts of Mark Twain and Henry James to achieve a similar reconciliation; hence Wright’s distinction between an unsustainable “emotional belief” in scriptural narrative and the possibility of redeploying visionary language in the project of documenting “the throbbing of life of the people in the streets” extends and amplifies certain longstanding preoccupations of American realism. Perhaps this is part of Wright’s message when he explains his Miltonic antihero Bigger Thomas as “the embodiment of a past tragic enough to appease the spiritual hunger of even a James” and characterizes “the oppression of the Negro” as “a shadow dense and heavy enough to satisfy even the gloomy broodings of a Hawthorne.”⁴³ Wright finds his background and his material uniquely appropriate to, and therefore crafts a variety of narrative fiction readily appropriative of, both the visionary-religious and the literary-secular traditions so often in tension for his white precursors.⁴⁴ “Many of the religious symbols appealed to my sensibilities and I responded to the dramatic vision of life held by the church,” Wright acknowledges, but “I felt that I had in me a sense of living as deep as that which the church was trying to give me, and in the end I remained basically unaffected.”⁴⁵ The assertion that “nothing would happen” and the confidence of having “remained basically unaffected” begin in the disturbance of Wright’s apostasy from the church and end in his elision of the church’s importance to his education and to his literary aspirations. In between, we

recognize the “nothing that is not there,” i.e. the fantasy of the Seventh-day Adventist apocalypse, contributing to a way of thinking and writing about a very specific “nothing that is”: that is, a sector of life in America, black and impoverished, neglected to the point of disappearance but always on the verge of surfacing, in Wright’s assessment, into a violently rebellious, potentially apocalyptic visibility. The difference is of emphasis: “*nothing* would happen,” on one hand; “nothing *would happen*,” on the other.

In a conciliatory moment, Wright tells his grandmother, “You see, granny, if I ever saw an angel like Jacob did, then I’d believe.” She misunderstands him, and soon he finds himself face to face with the elder of the church, who reports, “She says that you have seen an angel,” then, becoming insistent after Wright’s denial, “Look, this is serious. If you saw an angel, then tell me.”⁴⁶ Following Ellen White’s example of communion with angels is far from Wright’s expectation for his role in the congregation. He describes instead the distraction of his lust for the elder’s wife and his consequently agonizing self-image as distinctly devilish: the “concrete religious symbol” of his desire is “a black imp with two horns; a long, curving, forked tail; cloven hoofs, a scaly, naked body; wet, sticky fingers; moist, sensual lips; and lascivious eyes.”⁴⁷ Given this ashamed experience of his awakening sexuality, a shame constantly reinforced in his religious upbringing, he occupies the center of attention only with discomfort:

The church members were staring at me. My fists doubled.

Granny’s wide and innocent smile was shining on me and I was

filled with dismay. That she could make such a mistake meant that she lived in a daily atmosphere that urged her to expect something like this to happen. She had told the other members and everybody knew it, including the elder's wife! There they stood, the church members, with joyous astonishment written on their faces, whispering among themselves. Perhaps at that moment I could have mounted the pulpit and led them all; perhaps that was to have been my greatest moment of triumph!⁴⁸

In his critique of his grandmother's religion, Wright is awake to the element of opportunism coupled with the potential for cynicism and fraud inherent in prophetic identity, and although he does not mention Ellen White, his youth and his intelligence place him at this moment in close resemblance to her. Having grasped the exigencies of the Millerite disappointment and understood the spiritual vacancy left by that event, Ellen White parlayed her own gifts and enthusiasms – whatever these were, they were undeniably considerable – into a leadership position and spent the rest of her life, with rising and falling degrees of success, stopping the gaps of her visionary imagination with a *mélange* of literary texts and exegetical precedents, a generous number of these drawn from Milton. Wright illustrates a similar moment of crisis wherein his community is poised to receive and submit to a new prophetic authority, perfectly conditioned “to expect something like this to happen.”

But while Wright refuses the office of that authority, he is explicit in linking its attraction to his first steps into an authorial identity. After his brush with prophecy, surveying the nature and consequence of his failure, Wright tries to pray, and when prayers “became a nuisance, spoiling my days...I stumbled on a way to pass the time in my room, a way that made the hours fly with the speed of the wind. I took the Bible, pencil, paper, and a rhyming dictionary and tried to write verses for hymns. I justified this by telling myself that, if I wrote a really good hymn, Granny might forgive me.” If the exhilaration even of this effort proves ultimately abortive, if as he concedes “the Holy Ghost was simply nowhere near me,” it is because Wright is still caught in the customs and in the imaginative procedures that were the source of his embarrassment in church.⁴⁹ But he needs only to take the step that Milton recommends (although Wright was certainly not yet thinking of Milton) to abandon “the troublesome...bondage of rhyming” in order to find his way from “nothing that is not there” to “the nothing that is.”

The result is Wright’s first work of fiction, inspired, he remembers, by “a series of volumes of Indian history I had read the year before,” yet still distinctly imprinted with “the dramatic vision of life held by the church” which had “appealed” to Wright’s “sensibilities” even in his skepticism. The “Indian maiden” who is his only character “sat alone upon the bank of a still stream, surrounded by eternal twilight and ancient trees, waiting...The girl was keeping some vow which I could not describe and, not knowing how to develop the story, I resolved that the girl had to die.” Such an Edenic setting and its native Eve, especially for a

neophyte writer whose narrative “sensibilities” are infused with Adventist amplifications of Genesis, all but requires a vow dividing life from death. It is perhaps pure accident that this Native American Eve also experiences Milton’s Eve’s attraction to water and the desire for a narcissistic union with it: “She rose slowly and walked toward the dark stream, her face stately and cold; she entered the water and walked on until the water reached her shoulders, her chin; then it covered her. Not a murmur or a gasp came from her, even in dying.”⁵⁰ In resistance to Wright’s own critique of his story that “There was no plot, no action, *nothing* save atmosphere and longing and death” (italics mine), the purported “nothing” turns out again to be quite something as this is the first but very much not the last time that Wright will thread a narrative equally through themes of eroticism and sacrifice, violence done to women in the confusion of male desire.⁵¹ What kills the “Indian maiden,” we are meant to understand, is Wright’s own adolescent voyeurism, the “lascivious eyes” of the same internal devil that watches the elder’s wife, like Milton’s Satan watching Eve (“a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows,” to recall C. S. Lewis’s convincing portrayal), desiring her, then desiring her death. The “religious symbol” of a “black imp” returns when Bigger Thomas accidentally kills Mary Dalton, with the difference that such reflexive symbolism is revalued within Wright’s now much more conscious inquiry into the status of blackness as devilishness and – the crucial stride – of devilishness as rebelliousness.

The writing of *Native Son* preceded Wright’s memoir of childhood and early adulthood, so it is difficult to determine how far the reminiscences in *Black*

Boy are focused and transformed through the inventions of the fiction versus how faithfully the fiction derives from and illuminates the reminiscences. In either case, just as Blake commented in regard to Milton, the most compelling moments in Wright's work, as well as the moments when he begins to achieve success as a writer, occur when he allows the devil to come into view. In the eighth grade he writes a story titled "The Voodoo of Hell's Half-Acre" and publishes it in the local newspaper. His grandmother's Sabbath has prevented him from obtaining a regular job, and he blames this Adventist idiosyncrasy for his outsider position among his peers and for his tardiness in understanding the nuances of the interactions between whites and blacks. This latter delay heightens his sense of defiance and eventually encourages his constant and careful observations of social relations, thereby preparing his instincts as a writer. His first published story creates a further distance from his peers – they "could not understand why anyone would want to write a story" and "looked at me with new eyes, and a distance, a suspiciousness came between us" – and aggravates his disconnection from his family, who found sin in the story's very title. The only detail Wright supplies about this second effort at fiction is that "It resolved itself into a plot about a villain who wanted a widow's home," once more evoking a variety of Eve (although again oddly without an Adam) in a variety of Eden (if a shrunken, subdivided one, a mere half-acre) besieged by a variety of Satan.⁵²

At this point, specifically because of the altogether disapproving responses to his publication, Wright begins to imagine the North as a more convivial location for his ambition to make a living as a writer, and "by imagining a place

where everything was possible, I kept hope alive in me.” Having already begun to see himself as a devil and as an emotional exile (such identifications cemented in his grandmother’s assertion that his writing is “the Devil’s work”), the teenaged Wright might have felt a kinship with the Miltonic Satan who retreats to the north of heaven upon realizing the depths of inequality to which he has been and will be subjected. But as Wright was probably then unfamiliar with Milton (he “never had any instruction in literary matters at school” and describes his early reading as more or less limited to “Horatio Alger stories,” “pulp stories,” and the “Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford series”), the North of his fantasy is more plausibly a version of Eden, where, as in both Ellen White’s account and Milton’s, a wandering Satan admires life, hopes for liberty, and pursues happiness. Of course, the older Wright, the critic of Northern indifference to the devastating conditions of black urban life, must have thought back upon his inexperienced younger self with an understanding that Satan’s hopeful sojourn in Eden ended in yet another chapter of violence. “[W]here had I gotten this notion of doing something in the future,” he asks, “of going away from home and accomplishing something that would be recognized by others?”⁵³ He supplies no definite answer, but his sense of solidarity with the devil of Adventist theology suggests one source for his dream of wayfaring.

This was “a dream which the entire educational system of the South had been rigged to stifle.” The structures of inequality are explicitly a matter of psychological coercion in Wright’s account, and he narrates coming to his

awareness of mental bondage in terms that echo Satan's awakening from servitude to rebellion. The following passages are representative:

I was feeling the very thing that the state of Mississippi had spent millions of dollars to make sure that I would never feel; I was becoming aware of the thing that the Jim Crow laws had been drafted and passed to keep out of my consciousness; I was acting on impulses that southern senators in the nation's capital had striven to keep out of Negro life; I was beginning to dream the dreams that the state had said were wrong, that the schools had said were taboo.⁵⁴

In me was shaping a yearning for a kind of consciousness, a mode of being that the way of life about me had said could not be, must not be, and upon which the penalty of death had been placed. Somewhere in the dead of the southern night my life had switched onto the wrong track and, without my knowing it, the locomotive of my heart was rushing down a dangerously steep slope, heading for a collision, heedless of the warning red lights that blinked all about me, the sirens and the bells and the screams that filled the air.⁵⁵

In a peculiar sense, life had trapped me in a realm of emotional rejection; I had not embraced insurgency through open choice. Existing emotionally on the sheer, thin margin of southern culture,

I had felt that nothing short of life itself hung upon each of my actions and decisions; and I had grown used to change, to movement, to making many adjustments.⁵⁶

We might say that Wright is reading the lessons of Seventh-day Adventism in the way Blake elected to read Milton, discerning a tyranny behind the façade of a heavenly government that works to keep a subset of carefully guarded ideas out of the minds of those it governs, recognizing too a way of reading the warnings of that government – “the red lights,” “the sirens and the bells and the screams that filled the air” – as provocation to revolt. As Satan is only emboldened by Abdiel’s argument for obedience in *Paradise Lost*, as Adam and Eve neglect Raphael’s various cautions in their decision to fall (“O for that warning voice” [*PL* 4.1], pleads Milton’s narrator, indeed puzzlingly as Adam and Eve are in fact warned repeatedly of Satan’s presence), Wright “embrace[s] insurgency” not “through open choice” but as the only viable response to oppressive conditions; he is “acting on impulses” that “come to the individual” – to return to William James’s phrasing – “with the force of a revelation.”

But “The wrong track” is only nominally wrong, hence once on it Wright must make pragmatic decisions, each carrying life and death consequences, in order to follow the changes and movements of his “heart” which is a “locomotive.” Rather than overcome his devilish persona, he seeks the value in its “marginal” yet principled position and adopts unconditionally its posture. At the same time, he maintains a constant awareness of the danger in this “kind of

consciousness” and this “mode of being” as the “dangerously steep slope” threatens to give way to a dead drop and his precipitous “rushing” to plunge into a freefall. The metaphor is consistent with the social messages of Wright’s fiction: in *Native Son*, for example, as he attempts a language of sustained, indeed unrelenting anxiety, Wright draws even more openly and elaborately upon the Miltonic precedent of a morally ambivalent, enthrallingly rebellious Satan.

While Wright could have absorbed this precedent from his exposure to Seventh-day Adventism, given Ellen White’s reliance upon Milton, or from any number of other sources in combination with his Adventist roots, I detect in *Native Son* a distinct mixture of awareness and intentionality accompanying the rounding up of Milton’s themes and seeming contradictions. The impressive catalogue of authors whom Wright in *Black Boy* acknowledges having read while living in Memphis does not include Milton, but it also does not include Shakespeare, Dante, Chaucer, Homer, or Virgil. His catalogue is constructed instead to house a loosely defined tradition of twentieth-century modernism as emerging from nineteenth-century realism. It is Wright’s purpose to establish his own belonging within that tradition, to which tragedy and epic are exterior, and moreover to increase the distance between his rigorous social analysis and the apocalyptic fantasies of his upbringing where “nothing” was happening in either literal or literary terms. Whereas it would be counterproductive to this general goal for Wright to advertise his reading of Milton, as opposed to his reading of H. L. Mencken or Dostoevsky, his ranging appreciation for books, which he describes as a “hunger,” would certainly have led him to the essential texts of the

Early Modern period, and he certainly would have recognized in *Paradise Lost* the “vivid language” and the “dramatic vision of life” that held his attention in his grandmother’s church. Moreover, he would have discovered a way of reinterpreting the language and the symbolic richness of his churchgoing childhood to inquire more deeply into the pressures as well as the penalties of disobedience to power. He would have been looking backward to Milton through the intermediary of Seventh-day Adventism, and what he felt to be the distortions of Adventism would have gained a new quality of focus when angled, as a kind of telescoping glass, toward Milton. Hence when Bigger Thomas, thinking of the feeling he endures when compelled to think about white people, reflects, “It’s like I was going to do something I can’t help,” his friend Gus is more than perceptive, is in an important sense prophetic, when he replies, “I know what you mean. It’s like you going to fall and don’t know where you going to land....”⁵⁷

The questions and the challenges that face Bigger Thomas are those that Milton places variously before Satan, Adam, and Eve. In the trial that concludes *Native Son*, the prosecuting attorney describes Bigger in the most uncomplicated, unambiguous terms as a “fiend” and as a “black lizard” whose “wooly head” “Every decent white man in America ought to swoon with joy for the opportunity to crush...to keep him from scuttling on his belly farther over the earth and spitting forth his venom of death.”⁵⁸ Buckley, the prosecutor, is a racist and a zealot, and we have to distrust the certainty with which he deploys images of Satan as Bigger’s typological source. Yet neither is it exactly the narrative position of the novel to confute such a characterization. If the extent of Bigger’s guilt is in

doubt after the death of Mary, his rape and murder of Bessie Mears, as many critics have observed, leaves no defense. The issue Wright wishes to explore is not *whether* his angry, disoriented antihero is guilty or innocent, but rather, in the mold of Milton's approach to a clearly culpable gallery of characters, precisely *what* the nature is of guilt and *how and when* it gets decided, assigned, performed. The spiritual no less than the legal territory at stake in the trial of Bigger Thomas is what *kind* of Satan stands accused.

The prophetic quality of Gus's apprehension of a "fall" comes to bear when Bigger, imprisoned, imagines "the dark face of ancient waters upon which some spirit had breathed and created him" and wishes "to sink back into those waters and rest eternally." In this, after the manner of Milton's fallen Satan, still working within the system against which he has rebelled, Bigger's "desire to crush all faith in him was in itself built upon a sense of faith." This is perhaps the moment in *Native Son* when the concerns of the fictional murderer are closest to those of the author. For Bigger to regain his "pride and dignity," "There would have to hover above him, like the stars in a full sky, a vast configuration of images and symbols whose magic and power could lift him up and make him live so intensely that the dread of being black and unequal would be forgotten; that even death would not matter, that it would be a victory."⁵⁹ In his article "How 'Bigger' Was Born," attempting to articulate the motivations for his character's revolt, Wright gestures in two "psychological" directions: "First, through some quirk of circumstance, he had become estranged from the religion and folk culture of his race. Second, he was trying to react to and answer the call of the dominant

civilization whose glitter came to him through the newspapers, magazines, radios, movies, and the mere imposing sight and sound of daily American life.”⁶⁰ While Bigger’s story ends in tragedy and Wright’s own in historic success, this profile could serve as a précis for the autobiographical events and inward-looking concentrations of *Black Boy*. The “vast configuration of images and symbols” belong to “the religion and folk culture” from which Wright, just as Bigger, has “become estranged,” but looking back to this heritage enables a liberating “magic and power” within the justifying – in the sense of bringing distorted reality into alignment – methodologies of realism.

Improbably, compellingly, and with a supreme yet compassionate futility, the lawyer Boris Max presents the following argument in Bigger’s defense: “The actions that resulted in the death of those two women were as instinctive and inevitable as breathing or blinking one’s eyes. It was an act of *creation!*”⁶¹ Max is intuiting something of Bigger’s own feeling that “To live, he had created a new world for himself, and for that he was to die.”⁶² This recurring description of murder as creation, an apparent contradiction which Wright conceives in the language of Jamesean philosophy as a “*will to believe* in a new picture of the world” (italics mine), makes little sense without remembering the various layers of correlation between Bigger and Milton’s Satan, whose fall “comes...with the force of a revelation” and results in the birth of Sin – “a goddess armed / Out of thy head I sprung” (*PL* 2.757-58) – importantly *before* the birth of Death as the issue of Satan’s coupling with his “daughter and...darling” (*PL* 2.870).⁶³ Milton’s allegory of the creation of Sin and the birth of Death backlights Max’s elaboration

in his closing argument that “What does matter is that [Bigger] was guilty *before* he killed!”⁶⁴ Satan too seeks, after all, to “live so intensely that the dread of being...unequal would be forgotten,” and he anticipates that introducing “death into the world,” though he cannot hope for jurisdiction of his own world or for control over his own death, “would be a victory.”

White people, in Bigger’s words, “own everything. They choke you off the face of the earth. They like God...” Here the profound frustration of a Satan for whom God is purely authoritarian, hence without sympathy, becomes the bewilderment of an Adam and Eve who cannot understand the legal system into which they have been born, in large measure because they have been granted no means by which to decode the very terms of lawbreaking under which they are to be punished: godlike white people, Bigger continues, “kill you before you die,” evoking the slippage in *Paradise Lost* between the scriptural injunction that “of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen. 2:15) and, after the fall, the explanation that the “instant stroke of death” has been “removed far off” (*PL* 10.210-11). The confusion of the timeline of death – Adam and Eve and all their descendents killed before they die – in fact allows for part of Eve’s argument to Adam, having eaten, that “I feel / far otherwise th’ event, not death, but life / Augmented,” and that therefore he should “freely taste, / And fear of death deliver to the wind” (*PL* 10.983-85, 988-89). Adam, of course, cannot even conceptualize “whate’er death is,” inferring only that it is “some dreadful thing no doubt” (*PL* 4.425-26), hence his education by which to make a decision to eat or not to eat might strike us as alarmingly

fragmented. When Eve dreams, to return with only slight alteration to the language of Wright's *Black Boy*, it is "a dream which the entire educational system of [Eden] had been rigged to stifle" (see *PL* 5.28-94), and eating, for both Adam and Eve, involves "becoming aware of the thing that [God's law] had been drafted and passed to keep out of [their] consciousness."

Bigger's own awareness of his untenable position within mortality emerges largely in the context of a visit from his mother's pastor, who supplies "familiar images which his mother had given him when he was a child at her knees; images which in turn aroused impulses long dormant, impulses that he had suppressed and sought to shunt from his life. They were images which had once given him a reason for living, had explained the world." It is specifically the pastor's description of "the garden of earth" and his reference to "a voice saying *eat not of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, neither touch it, lest ye die*" that provokes for Bigger "a sense of guilt deeper than that which even his murder of Mary had made him feel":

He had killed within himself the preacher's haunting picture of life even before he had killed Mary; that had been his first murder. And now the preacher made it walk before his eyes like a ghost in the night, creating within him a sense of exclusion that was as cold as a block of ice. Why should this thing rise now to plague him after he had pressed a pillow of fear and hate over its face to smother it to death?⁶⁵

Later Bigger will ask his lawyer, imploringly, “Mr. Max, how can I die!” He will realize that the answer is available in the symbolic language of trees and fruit, which is the language of life and death, and which (peculiarly like Darwin; in certain ways like Blake) he relies upon in seeking to disown it. “[K]nowledge of how to live,” he tells himself, is all that affords “knowledge of how to die.”⁶⁶

Wright is highly aware that he has entered into something of a confessional mode in these passages. Fiction, he writes, “is at once something private and public by its very nature and texture. Confounding the author who is trying to lay his cards on the table is the dogging knowledge that his imagination is a kind of community medium of exchange: what he has read, felt, thought, seen, and remembered is translated into extensions as impersonal as a worn dollar bill.”⁶⁷ However “impersonal” it might be, that dollar carries sufficient “cash-value” to purchase a vocabulary for decoding and describing private experience – or, returning to an earlier metaphor, to service one’s debt to the “community medium of exchange.” Debt becomes ownership, one supposes, when the debtor succeeds in turning his purchase – “treasur’d up...to a life beyond life” – to new and active purposes. Yet in a certain sense Wright does not so much cancel as divert his debt to Ellen White when he indebts himself to her creditor: that is, when he takes the step of revaluing with Milton’s currency what he has gained in his encounter with Seventh-day Adventism. Having spent his youth denying his debt to Adventism in a manner remarkably similar to White’s denial of her debt to Milton, he turns to Milton in order to clear the “guilt” he

shares with Bigger Thomas, which is the feeling that he has murdered not a person but a language. This step allows him to conclude:

There seems to hover somewhere in that dark part of all our lives, in some more than in others, an objectless, timeless, spaceless element of primal fear and dread, stemming, perhaps, from our birth (depending upon whether one's outlook upon personality is Freudian or non-Freudian!), a fear and dread which exercises an impelling influence upon our lives all out of proportion to its obscurity. And, accompanying this *first fear*, is, for the want of a better name, a reflex urge toward ecstasy, complete submission, and trust. The springs of religion are here, and also the origins of rebellion.”

Milton returns into a twentieth-century context, whether in Freud's “uncanny” sense or otherwise, through the nineteenth-century conduit of Seventh-day Adventism in the insight that the “springs” of religion and rebellion constitute a single coil.

Jamaica Kincaid's Flat World

This insight into the relation between religion and rebellion would carry forward into the revolutionary politics of the mid-century civil rights movement, which, especially under Martin Luther King, Jr.'s stewardship, plumbed scriptural traditions for radical messages.⁶⁸ Yet the Seventh-day Adventist church

was remarkably absent from the debates of this period, and its occasional presence generally involved opposition to civil rights. Adventists were still actively campaigning for religious liberty in and out of the courts, as in 1963 when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of church-member Adell Sherbert's claim for unemployment benefits despite her unwillingness to break the Sabbath for work. But the principles behind such efforts, as differing from the idealism of the nineteenth century when Seventh-day Adventists took a broader view of religious liberty, were called into question in the 1970s and afterward when the church repeatedly ran afoul of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: "in instances where the government has challenged its internal policies," state Bull and Lockhart, "Adventist officials have boldly argued that the church is outside the jurisdiction of civil laws," specifically resisting equal pay for women under the argument that church coffers should be governed by religious and not state authority.⁶⁹ Most recently "the General Conference has invoked a supposed breach of the trademark name of the church to sue schismatic and gay Adventists to enjoin them from using 'Seventh-day Adventist' as part of their names" and endorsed "the widespread use of a legal loophole that allows Adventist institutions, because they are church-run, to discriminate in hiring on religious grounds," all of which Bull and Lockhart view as "suggest[ing] a basic lack of commitment to the principle of religious liberty."⁷⁰

Ellen White's commitment to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Independence and the First Amendment extended even to the corporate and Catholic elements she considered to be her adversaries. Even though her most

occupying concern was religious liberty, she was practicing something akin to a liberalism of speech according to which one's own rights come inexorably under threat upon the threatening of the rights of others. Indeed, she was constantly working to achieve a viable balance for her theology within and upon the shifting tectonics of contemporary culture, and in her later years she turned from the increasing conservatism of her own generation in order to voice her support for the upstarts A. T. Jones and Ellet Waggoner and other young Adventists who did not always read her prophecies as permanent doctrine.⁷¹ White had been in Australia for most of a decade when the United States took military action to quell the independence movement in the Philippines, and perhaps we can grasp the disposition of the church's new internationalism in Jones's response to that action: in Morgan's paraphrase, "The claim that the Filipinos were not fit for self-government...was the very same as that set forth by Spain and others, against which the United States had initially joined Filipinos in fighting. [Jones] urged that it was time to say again what Lincoln had said in the debate over slavery: Americans must either tear the Declaration out of the statute book or stand firmly by it."⁷² American aggression overseas seemed to confirm the Adventists' persistent warnings that its homeland had "a voice like a dragon," yet Jones, a careful thinker about the relationship between his religion and his nation, saw a through-line of tolerance in the nation's history. "In *Rights of the People*," his 1895 volume, "[Jones] encouraged the idea that the freedom to worship on the Sabbath is based on Jeffersonian, Madisonian, Washingtonian and *Lincolnian* principles."⁷³ This reversed the church's position during the Civil War that Lincoln was simply another agent of tyranny. Seventh-day Adventism seemed for

a brief period to have achieved a balance of priorities: looking outward to the world, still willing to oppose American expressions of power, yet without the gloom and certainly without the paranoia of its past oppositional rhetoric.

But this balance did not long survive Ellen White, tipping toward a policy of “conscientious cooperation” with American military efforts during the World Wars and congealing into a mostly hawkish response to the Vietnam War. Morgan writes, “In contrast to their predecessors at the turn of the century, Adventist leaders [in the 1960s and 1970s] exhibited little concern about the way that American military power was being used”; Jones’s support for Filipino independence had vanished into a new church-wide temperament and a very different set of policies, as declared by the Adventist National Service Organization, that “Your church believes that it is not its prerogative to make a judgment as to whether or not nations should enter into war, whether general or particular.” This “complex combination of political passivity and selective activism, zeal for liberty and narrowness of vision” today remains the norm.⁷⁴

Bull and Lockhart, Lawson, Morgan, and Plantak all speculate that a growing immigrant population will push the profile of the NAD toward a more pluralistic attitude and into a reaffirmation of its theological precepts.⁷⁵ This shift can be read (with Morgan) as a revitalization of the church’s tradition of political liberalism or (with Lawson) as a retrenchment within a “literalistic” and “conservative” religious epistemology. In either case, the international “cash-value” of Adventism derives largely from its original resistance to the American

promise of expansion, a message with perhaps less and less purchase inside the United States but certainly more and more outside the nation's borders.⁷⁶ An oddball nineteenth-century theology with America at its center – retaining a Jeffersonian revolutionary rhetoric yet starkly critical of American potential for abuse of power – has turned out to be extremely well suited to the complexities and modulations of twentieth-century geopolitics. Indeed, Richard Wright viewed his experience of Adventism as one of the elements of his background that qualified him to bear witness as a journalist at the Bandung Conference in 1955: “I felt that I had to go that meeting; I felt that I could understand it,” in large measure because “I grew up in the Methodist and Seventh Day Adventist churches and I saw and observed religion in my childhood; and these people,” the representatives of Asian and African states joining for the first time in general solidarity and recognition of their shared postcolonial condition, “are religious.” It was his Adventist background much more than his mother's Methodist faith that informed Wright's understanding of religion as coiled with rebellion, so that we are reminded of his struggle to achieve “emotional belief” and ultimately his revelation and reevaluation of the worth of Adventism's symbolic language when he writes (of his religious past in conjunction with his race, his working-class origins, and his former Communist membership) that “These emotions are my instruments.”⁷⁷

Although Wright envisions African American perspectives as occupying an important place within Bandung's postcolonial planning, he cannot avoid wondering, “What will happen when millions upon millions of new people in the

tropics begin to speak English?” His concern is not so much the opposite as the reverse of Tagore’s when Wright surmises that “Alien pressures and structures of thought and feeling will be brought to bear upon this our mother tongue and we shall be hearing some strange and twisted expressions.” Whereas Tagore contends with and controversially acquiesces to “alien pressures and structures of thought and feeling” in his consent to a Western literary canon, with Milton at its center, Wright finds himself jittery about the reciprocal effects of this “alien” element upon the canon’s language. “But this is all to the good,” he resolves, evoking Milton’s sense of “aftertimes” and of language rendered “on purpose to a life beyond life”: “a language is useless unless it can be used for the vital purposes of life, and to use a language in new situations is, inevitably, to change it.” And like Milton’s Satan rebelling even while occupying God’s system of creation, like Darwin casting off creationism with a recasting of creationist vocabulary,

Thus, the strident moral strictures against the Western world preached at Bandung were uttered in the language of the cultures that the delegates were denouncing! I felt that there was something just and proper about it; by this means English was coming to contain a new extension of feeling, of moral knowledge. To those who had heard (or, more exactly, read) similar strictures leveled against the French and the English in bygone days by Frenchmen and Englishmen during the French and American Revolutions, these Bandung preachments had the tonal ring of a closing of a gap in history. For, if those past French and English revolutionaries had

had the moral courage to have extended their new and bold declarations of a new humanity to black and brown and yellow men, these ex-colonial subjects would never have felt the need to rise against the West...”⁷⁸

Adventism’s export of anti-American assumptions, returning via immigration into a church environment that has sought to repress its radical beginnings and to deemphasize its sectarian opposition to the American mainstream in favor of a new denominational identity, likewise convenes “a closing of a gap in history” in reminding the Adventist establishment of its own language and ethical terms *in its own language and ethical terms*. Jamaica Kincaid, raised in a Seventh-day Adventist family in Antigua yet no longer a member of the church, supplies an example of the way in which this version of the return of the repressed is in part a return of the Miltonic influence into an Adventism deliberately, indeed systematically forgetful of its origins.

Unlike Wright, Kincaid leaves no doubt about her fascination with and debt to Milton, yet against anxieties such as Hawkes’s regarding “violence [done] to Milton’s original meanings and intentions,” she is clear that Milton’s presence in her intellectual development represents a violence done to her. She conflates her religious upbringing with Milton’s poetry, discussing her fiction in a 2002 interview with an awareness “of the influence of the things I read as a child – images from Christian mythology and *Paradise Lost*,” portions of which poem she was compelled to memorize as punishment for misbehavior. As a result of

these influences, she continues, “My sense of the world is that things are right and wrong, and when you’re wrong, you get thrown into a dark pit and you pay forever. You try very hard not to do a wrong thing, and if you do, there’s very little forgiveness.”⁷⁹ It is a captivating irony that *Paradise Lost* – the book on the high shelf that was Ellen White’s fruit of the tree of knowledge, mediating between her flight up the flue into prophetic authority and her plummet down into the furnace of an authorship of a more compromised variety – emerges again in Adventist practice, reinforcing the messages of the theology from which it has been erased, but now as a punishing instrument rather than as an instrument of temptation.

Still the violence is broader and Kincaid’s response to it deeply informed by her “uncomfortable” reception of those “structures of thought and feeling” that reach her through colonial dissemination and leave her feeling precisely “alien”: “I was brought up to understand that English traditions were right and mine were wrong. Within the life of an English person there was always clarity, and within an English culture there was always clarity, but within my life and culture was ambiguity.” The darkness of such “ambiguity” proves illuminating, however, indeed shines with a kind of “darkness visible” (*PL* 1.63) upon our earlier inquiry into authorship and national tradition, our inquiry into “original meanings and intentions” versus “a life beyond life.” “A person who is dead in England is dead,” Kincaid notes; “A person where I come from who is dead might not be dead. I was taught to think of ambiguity as magic, a shadiness and an illegitimacy, not the real thing of Western civilization.” Hence it is appropriate that Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, a work shot through with ambiguities and apparent contradictions,

“wand’ring mazes” (*PL* 2.561) for the fallen mind, would be resuscitated in Kincaid’s colonial setting, “not [an] absolutely dead [thing], but contain[ing] a potencie of life.” There the poem becomes a site for resistance (“Language,” writes bell hooks, “is also a place of struggle”) as “The thing that I am branded with and the thing that I am denounced for, I now claim as my own.”⁸⁰ In fact, Kincaid’s relationship to Milton supplies a curative to Ellen White’s elaborate denials of reading, cooling the uncanny fevers of the return of the repressed by refusing the process of repression: “I was forced to memorize John Milton and that was a very painful thing. But I’m not going to make myself forget John Milton because it involves a painful thing. I find John Milton very beautiful, and I’m glad that I know it. I’m sorry that the circumstances of how I got to know it were so horrid, but, since I know it, I know it and I claim every right to use it.”

Her pronominal identification of Milton as “it” *encourages* an understanding of the poet as a plastic entity, a center of gravity for ideas, his as well as those of his pluralistic audience, and *discourages* any obligation to maintain the integrity of the historical or biographical person. One can imagine Kincaid’s impatience, implied if not quite verbalized, with arguments enforcing the “original meanings and intentions” of a poet whose presence in her education is itself a matter of colonial enforcement. The drama of her turning the violence and violation of compulsory reading in youth to pragmatic value and ownership – “since I know it, I know it and I claim every right to use it” – unfolds still more plainly in Kincaid’s loosely autobiographical novel *Lucy* (1990). The very title of the novel chimes a Miltonic tone, which I will discuss, but Kincaid, like Fuller,

triangulates to Milton from Wordsworth. The narrator, Lucy Josephine Potter, who shares one name with Kincaid (born Elaine Cynthia Potter Richardson), recalls having “been made to memorize” and then recite a poem about daffodils that she does not specify but is recognizable as Wordsworth’s “I Wander Lonely as a Cloud.” After a successful recitation, receiving praise, “I made pleasant little noises...but inside I was making a vow to erase from my mind, line by line, every word of the poem.” What Wordsworth describes as “a crowd, / a host of golden daffodils” is to Lucy a horror, and “I dreamt...that I was being chased down a narrow cobbled street by bunches and bunches of those same daffodils that I had vowed to forget, and when finally I fell down from exhaustion they all piled on top of me, until I was buried deep underneath them and was never seen again.”⁸¹ Kincaid’s novel chronicles Lucy’s work as an au pair in the United States, and when her employer takes her to view a field of daffodils in an effort to ameliorate the memory of her recitation, Lucy challenges the basis of the gesture, snapping, “Mariah, do you realize that at ten years of age I had to learn by heart a long poem about some flowers I would not see in real life until I was nineteen?” Her discomfort then deepens into a dismay that signals Milton’s presence behind Wordsworth’s: “As soon as I said this, I felt sorry that I had cast her beloved daffodils in a scene she had never considered, a scene of conquered and conquests; a scene of brutes masquerading as angels and angels portrayed as brutes.”⁸² The “crowd” or “host” threatening to overwhelm her is the population of Milton’s heavenly warfare; the chiasmatic confusion of angels and brutes renews in form as well as content the idea, vertiginous as ever, that “The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n” (*PL*

1.254-55); and the point emerges that literature removed from its native environment must evolve to survive and might produce shapes unrecognizable – “strange and twisted” – upon return.

Yet following this point back to Darwin, even “In the wildernesses of South America,” as Levine writes, “maneuvering among genocidal attacks, on the Argentine pampas where Darwin ate nothing but red meat for long periods, off the Cape of Good Hope, in Tasmania and New Zealand, Milton's battered myth of origins did not seem incompatible with the wildness Darwin was trying to understand.”⁸³ Wordsworth's daffodils might grow legs, teeth, claws, but Milton somehow arrives survival-ready in Darwin's vision of nature as a multivalent chaos, in Tagore's thinking about revolution as in Jefferson's, in the interplanetary space of *Star Trek* and in the intermillennial time of Ellen White. What Milton affords specifically is a framework by which to revalue prevailing systems, a way of turning ideas back against themselves, thereby inverting custom and cutting through the obscurations of tyranny. Whether or not Milton was an early pragmatist, this is what made him valuable to American pragmatism; whether or not he was an early feminist, this is what allowed for his “early sponsor[ship]” of feminism. And this is the upshot of Kincaid's most sustained deployment of Milton on Lucy's behalf, in which Milton's Lucifer is revealed as Lucy's namesake:

I asked my mother why she had named me Lucy. The first time I asked, she made no reply, pretending that she had not heard me. I

asked again, and this time under her breath she said, “I named you after Satan himself. Lucy, short for Lucifer. What a botheration from the moment you were conceived.” I not only heard it quite clearly when she said it but I heard the words before they came out of her mouth. And yet I said, “What did you say?” But she wouldn’t repeat it; she only said, “Why do you torment me so?” and wouldn’t speak to me anymore. In the minute or so it took for all this to transpire, I went from feeling burdened and old and tired to feeling light, new, clean. I was transformed from failure to triumph. It was the moment I knew who I was. When I was quite young and just being taught to read, the books I was taught to read from were the Bible, *Paradise Lost*, and some plays by William Shakespeare. I knew well the Book of Genesis, and from time to time I had been made to memorize parts of *Paradise Lost*. The stories of the fallen were well known to me, but I had not known that my own situation could even distantly be related to them. Lucy, a girl’s name for Lucifer. That my mother would have found me devil-like did not surprise me, for I often thought of her as god-like, and are not the children of gods devils? I did not grow to like the name Lucy – I would have much preferred to be called Lucifer outright – but whenever I saw my name I always reached out to give it a strong embrace.⁸⁴

Like Mary Shelley's monster, who learns self-knowledge and adapts his ethical priorities from the "emblem" of Milton's Satan, and like Wright, who converts a shamefully, cringingly devilish persona into its rebellious and daring obverse, Lucy finds in the preparation of her reading an opportunity to be "transformed," to derive "triumph" from "failure."⁸⁵ If this moment represents a kind of christening, a rebirth through naming, it also convenes a way of speaking the unspeakable, as the very name Lucifer, the morning star, is only a metaphor describing the devil's fall while "his former name / is heard no more in heaven" (*PL* 5.658-59), and along with his companions, "of their names in Heav'nly records now / Be no memorial, blotted out and razed / By their rebellion, from the Books of Life" (*PL* 1.361-63). Kincaid through Lucy "embrace[s]" the idea of Satan as a model for rebellion, gaining this idea from Milton directly *and* from Milton *through* Ellen White. Although his name is "blotted out and razed" from Adventism, Milton remains an active presence.

We should conclude, however, with an acknowledgement that his presence is not at all moments helpful or even benign. In my first chapter, I discussed Blake's certainty that "the world...is quite flat" as an expression of the prison of perspective, the senses hemming a horizon constantly. Milton's "Mental Fight," according to Blake, is to break that horizon through revolution as revelation, urging the annihilation of imprisoning identity through the world's millennial death. Kincaid also "[understands] finding the place you are born in an unbearable prison and wanting something completely different from what you are familiar with," but whereas Blake wants to become paper, velum, the page of

revelation, Kincaid experiences a different kind of subjectivity, subjected, she writes, to British “dominion” and fearing her own disappearance under Wordsworth’s terrifying daffodils. The flat world is not a prison she carries with her but a precipice with real limits: speaking of Mariah, Lucy says, “She acted in her usual way, which was that the world was round and we all agreed on that, when I knew that the world was flat and if I went to the edge I would fall off.”⁸⁶

At Bandung, representatives of the world’s postcolonial nations were free to express their critique of the Western world in the language of the West and simultaneously constrained by their history to do so. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak famously argues, “imperialism cannot be justified by the fact that India has railways and I speak English well.”⁸⁷ This contours Kincaid’s position of insisting on her right to “use” Milton but refusing to forget the “horrid...circumstances” by which she came to know him (or rather “it”). To adopt Satan’s role, to go as far as to take his name, is after all to acknowledge one’s prison, as the Satan of *Paradise Lost* at the moment of what is meant to be his triumphal return to hell (*PL* 10.504-77), as the Satan of *Paradise Regained* at the moment of falling from the precipice where he has attempted to trap the Son (*PR* 560-71). The very language by which Kincaid articulates her opposition, the language permitting the education that shapes her subjective horizon as well as the horizon she knows as a colonial subject, is similarly a void, a gulf at the edge of the world, into which she fears falling. Or we might shift to a different effect of circumnavigation – that pre-modern adventure disproving the world’s flatness – in noticing that Milton’s resilience, or in Darwinian terms his fitness, that is, the

degree to which his “battered myth of origins did not seem incompatible with the wildness,” is a weedy quality, akin to seeds in soles of sailors’ boots, as Darwin carried *Paradise Lost* again and again to shore from the Beagle, as Milton’s revolutionary principles all but took over colonial America, as the drama of the war in heaven rooted itself in Ellen White’s visions, and as Tagore found Miltonic prosody sprouting in India in the early twentieth century.

Recognizing and naming the weed enables Kincaid to put it to use, despite what native plants it might have choked from the garden of her awareness. But in Adventism in the United States, Milton’s precedent remained and remains unacknowledged, spreading roots (or in Deleuzian terms rhizomes) without always sprouting, at times perhaps opening fissures in the grounds of Adventist actions. Returning from postcolonial articulations of Milton’s complicated and often troubling influence within international perspectives, we find the same influence, evolving differently, causing a different kind of trouble at home.

From Dingos to Waco: Seventh-day Adventism and Disaster

Before turning entirely from themes of internationalism, I should note the odd and fragmentary ways in which Australia haunts my narrative. The country, then under British colonial governance, was Ellen White’s home throughout the 1890s. It enters into one of Lucy’s dreams, after which she “remembered...that Australia was settled as a prison for bad people, people so bad that they couldn’t be put in a prison in their own country.”⁸⁸ The name of the ship in *Star Trek* wherein the crew of the *Enterprise* discovers Khan’s inert body is the *Botany*

Bay, after the notorious British penal colony: set adrift in space, Khan and his fellow prisoners face an exile similar to that of the rough customers of New South Wales, with a pun on the “botanical” experiment of spreading “space seed.” As Wright reports, Australians were distressed for their country to have been excluded from the Bandung Conference, maneuvered into isolation with South Africa in the broadly conceived regional neighborhood. And beginning in 1980, the Seventh-day Adventist church received perhaps the most intense and negative scrutiny of its history when Australian church-member Lindy Chamberlain reported that dingoes had mauled and carried off her infant daughter Azaria. A highly public trial found Chamberlain guilty of murder in 1982; in 1988 the conviction was overturned.

The impact and cultural reach of this last case is perhaps most visible in the breezy referencing of the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which aired from 1997 to 2003 and in which one character, a goodhearted werewolf, plays guitar for the band *Dingoes Ate My Baby*. The story of the Chamberlain family moreover has been documented in two television miniseries (*Who Killed Baby Azaria?*, 1983; *Through My Eyes*, 2004), an opera titled *Lindy* produced at the Sydney Opera House (2002), and a book by John Bryson titled *Evil Angels* (1985) followed by an Australian-produced film of the same title starring Meryl Streep (1987; released internationally as *A Cry in the Dark*). The decidedly Miltonic title of the latter book and film refers to widespread attempts in the media to portray the Chamberlains as devilish and their church as a dangerous cult; even their vegetarianism – a norm among Adventists – seemed to corral

them among a social fringe, and the almost baseless conviction and sentencing of Lindy Chamberlain owed partly to prejudicial views of her religion. A rumor circulated in Australia that “Azaria” means “sacrifice” in an undisclosed but undoubtedly Satanic language spoken among Adventists. Similar anxieties about Adventism came to bear in 1984 in the United States after the death of another infant reached popular consciousness: media responses were at first optimistic and indeed praising when a surgeon at a Seventh-day Adventist hospital, in the first attempt of this kind, transplanted a baboon’s heart into the chest of an ailing newborn known as Baby Fae; when Baby Fae died twenty days later, some reports were extreme in their criticism of a perceived Adventist disconnection from American family values and disregard for human life.⁸⁹

It is certainly true that Adventists continued in the twentieth century to stand outside the theological mainstream, donning perhaps more than ever “a conspiratorial outlook, nervously anticipating threats to their liberty that could be fitted within the narrow confines of their eschatology.”⁹⁰ Yet in terms of lifestyle and cultural involvement, it was increasingly the policy and practice of the NAD and its members to adopt those priorities associated with mainstream American conservatism – patriotism replacing antinationalism, support for displays of military strength replacing a commandment-based hesitation to participate in killing, and segregationist policies in regard to race replacing early if limited integrationist impulses. There were, however, elements affiliated with and/or emerging from Seventh-day Adventism that took a much less sanguine view toward mainstream culture, and suspicions of Adventists as potential

cultists were reinvigorated a decade after Lindy Chamberlain's trial when information spread that a group calling itself the Branch Davidians – staging a dramatic and eventually deadly resistance to attempts by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and later the FBI to search their Texas compound – was in fact a splinter of Ellen White's remnant church.

The Davidian Seventh-day Adventists were established in 1929 by Victor T. Houteff, who was active in the Adventist church in Los Angeles but developed a reputation as an agitator when he began preaching a doctrine that he called the "Shepherd's Rod," whereon "church leaders...threatened that anyone who listened to his teaching or read his literature would be disfellowshipped."⁹¹ A devoted and incredibly thorough reader of Ellen White's prophecies, Houteff wanted to return the Adventists to what he imagined to have been an original moment of visionary insight and scriptural adherence, as he wrote in the mid-1930s: "Some of our schools discredit the spirit of prophecy; some students adopt a style of dress which shows their preoccupation with worldly fashion, many Seventh-day Adventists, including leaders, adhere to worldly pleasures such as beach parties and moving picture shows. Just how far can we go in the matter of worldly conformity?"⁹² A second Great Disappointment occurred, although in miniature, when Houteff died in 1955 and his wife, assuming leadership yet missing the lesson of Ellen White's disinclination to set a timeline for eschatological prophecy, projected the date of the second coming to be Passover, April 22, 1959. Nine hundred Davidians gathered to await the event at Mt. Carmel, Texas, near Waco, where in 1935 Houteff had moved his ministry and

established a small publishing house. Much as the Seventh-day Adventists in the wake of the Millerite disappointment, the Branch Davidians, led by Houteff's devotee Ben Roden, were the most successful of several splinter groups. "Branch" was the name favored among Davidians for Christ, referring to the branch from the roots of Jesse of Isaiah 11:1.⁹³

Vernon Howell, a former Seventh-day Adventist, took control of the Mt. Carmel compound in 1987 after a sequence of legal disputes and a dramatic gunfight with Roden's son George. Howell changed his name to David Koresh in an effort to cement his place within a Davidic lineage of messianic leadership and began to promote himself as a second, but sinful, appearance of Christ. Once an aspiring rock guitarist, he was a charismatic leader and highly persuasive exegeticist who drew ninety percent of his following not from the fractured community of Davidians but directly from the Seventh-day Adventist membership.⁹⁴ He was also a paranoid who stockpiled firearms and a sexual predator who claimed scriptural authority for his seduction of minors – often achieved through marathon Bible study sessions designed to exhaust the individual will and focus attention on his own imminence within prophecy. Reports of his misdeeds began to emerge in 1992. The following year the ATF attempted to search the Branch Davidian compound but succeeded only in shooting and killing six residents. Four ATF agents also died in the raid. The confrontation resulted in a fifty-one-day standoff, ending on April 19, 1993 when the FBI attempted a second entry into the compound. Koresh and his close follower Steve Schneider died in what was probably a joint suicide. More than

seventy other adults and children died of gunshot wounds, the origins which are disputed, and in a fire, the source of which is likewise disputed.

At this point we must distinguish in historical terms between *causes* and *contingencies*. The causes of the Waco disaster encompass the massive arrogance and aggression of government agencies – resulting in deadly miscalculations by officials up to and including Attorney General Janet Reno, who approved the final raid – along with the disturbed psychology of David Koresh and the willingness of his followers to calculate their safety and the safety of their children upon the framework of Koresh’s messianic reading of scripture. Waco captured national attention even before the inferno of its conclusion because the events there revealed the impasse of competing American narratives: one of civil security and cultural consensus, the other of privacy and religious liberty. It was in vicious defense of the second of these that Timothy McVeigh exploded a bomb killing one hundred and sixty-eight people at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on the second anniversary of the end of Koresh’s resistance.

Indeed, attitudes of certainty on both sides proved destructive, and as Feisel Mohamed writes, again referring to Milton’s early arguments for a liberalism of speech as opposed to a liberalism of faith, “Perhaps our post-liberal negotiations of liberty will do best to doubt wisely in the spirit of a young Milton’s, and America’s, moral energy and bewilderment.”⁹⁵ Distinct from the causes of the deaths at Waco, it is worth noting among the contingencies (those

ranging ideas and accidents that set the *mis en scene* of occurrences in history and determine the angle of perspective according to which those occurrences will be viewed) the factor of Milton's influence upon Ellen White's prophecies. The Seventh-day Adventist Church worked to distance itself from the Branch Davidians, and there was no formal affiliation shared between the two ministries. But the facts are that from Houteff to Koresh the Davidian Adventists believed strongly in Ellen White's prophetic authority, wishing to rescue that authority from what they felt to be its deterioration, and Koresh himself, judging from his recruitment record, held a strong attraction for some members of the NAD. The Davidians aimed to reconstitute among themselves some of the visionary energy and urgency of Ellen White's post-Millerite moment. They drew from that moment two elements that White drew from Milton: first, a narrative of cosmic warfare into which they would inexorably be drawn, and second, a policy of vigilance exercised from a position of enclosure and steeped in images of the Garden of Eden and Satan's invasion of it.

The Seventh-day Adventists have always expected, based upon Ellen White's prophetic narration, one day to endure persecution at the hands of the majority during a "time of trouble" when some will be imprisoned and others will escape to "solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains."⁹⁶ For David Koresh and his followers, the Mt. Carmel compound was unmistakably the site of the last stand predicted before Christ's return. Their world was "quite flat," their horizon in time and space quite close, and "with dangers compassed round" (*PL* 7.27) it was not their split from Seventh-day Adventism that ensured catastrophe but

instead their return to a nineteenth-century apocalyptic perspective within the context of a twentieth-century secularism that could not accommodate nor understand such an obsolete religious standard.

And because Ellen White had obscured her reliance upon Milton, a potential road was closed for Davidians on the fringe as well as Adventists in the mainstream to make sense of and to synthesize the antitheses of power and rebellion, obedience and liberty. Adapting from Milton a method of stretching out the prophetic timeline in a continually expanding narrative, hence extending, in effect, the lifespan of those living in relation to prophecy, White then closed and shelved the source of her method. This is not to say that Milton would or even could have supplied Koresh with a way out of his ideological quagmire, only that White's denial of Milton constituted a trap in "aftertimes" when her own modulation of prophecy through Miltonic narrative ceased with her death. What remained was not the saving practice of narrative but the images and atrocities described within it, emphasizing warfare, violence, judgment, and the threat of extreme power. Moreover, Ellen White herself never took the step that Wright and Kincaid achieved in working backward from Adventism to Milton, which was also Blake's step of identifying not with a Urizenic, tyrannical God but with a creative, revolutionary Satan. The step traded faith for speech. Without that trade and that step behind them, the Adventist establishment no less than the Davidian fringe was enabled to act within the certainty of divine sanction, to view any public opinion – whether of the Civil Rights Act, of the anti-gun lobby, or of those who regarded Koresh's sexual predations as cause for legal intervention – as

expressions of the dragon-voice of the two-horned beast, and thereby to abandon their formerly legitimate place within the American effort to achieve and give voice to liberty.

A hint of the distortion of Milton's presence in Adventism is legible in Koresh's approach to exegesis. Koresh advocated "repeating, repeating, again and again His ultimate wisdom through many different facets. This is the way God teaches. As we've been learning the prophets over and over again, every different prophet is saying the same thing." By this method, writes Eugene V. Gallagher, Koresh expected "to lay bare the single, coherent message of diverse portions of Scripture by discerning the implicit connections among them."⁹⁷ Stanley Fish argues that this is precisely Milton's aim in more or less every moment of his poetry throughout his career as he sought "a single focused context" wherein (here Fish quotes Freud) "we shall be compelled to say that *'the aim of all life is death.'*"⁹⁸ But Fish – with Fallon – also sees Milton as desiring a lasting fame: "He wants at once to celebrate humility and to be celebrated as the celebrator of humility...He longs to be absorbed by a power greater than he, and he experiences absorption as a threat...to his very being." A parallel tension has emerged in recent years, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, as critics have begun rethinking Milton's *Samson Agonistes* as potentially "a work in praise of terrorism." This last quotation, punctuated in the original with a question mark, is the title of John Carey's article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, September 6, 2002, in which the core question is whether Samson's last exertion, pulling down the temple on top of himself and on top of his religious foes, is for Milton

an uncomplicated act, hence anticipating and promoting suicide bombing, or quite the opposite *the most complicated of acts*, hence promoting constant inquiry into the principles and contexts in which suicide bombing might emerge as an option in opposition to power. The crisis facing Koresh in his final moments is not far from Samson's crisis, even though Samson sacrifices only himself and his enemies whereas Koresh placed his own followers in danger. Repetition without variation in exegetical practice is no doubt part of what compelled Koresh in his devastating decisions, as he possessed no facility for changing course or for turning the texts of his theology to new and active purposes, seeking instead to live and die according to "original meanings and intentions."

Martin E. Marty groups Ellen White alongside William James in a category he terms the "transmoderns," designating, Morgan elaborates, "those who offered therapies for recovering a wholeness that transcended the compartmentalization and alienation of modernity."⁹⁹ James and White also shared a fascination with John Milton, and White deployed this fascination as an important part of her resistance to "compartmentalization and alienation" in what amounted to a Jamesian maneuver as she adjusted, pragmatically, her reading of Milton to the context of her prophetic efforts. Rather than "repeating, repeating," she approached Milton in something like the spirit of Henry James, Sr.'s advice to his sons to "Convert, convert, convert."¹⁰⁰ Despite some of the failures of her project in the twentieth century, her encounter with and absorption of Milton, mediated in her denial of ever having opened his book, resulted in extraordinary insights into the language and ethics of millennial

narrative, from her earliest grappling with the devil, which never, perhaps unfortunately, resulted in sympathy, to the postcolonial extensions of her messages as they travel across the deep blue sea.

Epilogue

There is a relation between the hours of our life and the centuries of time. As the air I breathe is drawn from the great repositories of nature...so the hours should be instructed by the ages and the ages explained by the hours.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson, “History”

“Space,” Jonathan Edwards noted in his private writings sometime before 1726, “is a necessary being (if it may be called a being); and yet we have shown that all existence is mental, that the existence of all exterior things is ideal.” From this observation, pedestrian enough, he leapt, triangulating his path from Locke to Newton like the so-called flying spiders that fascinated him: “It is hence easy to see in what sense it is true, that has been held by some, that when there is nothing between any two bodies they unavoidably must touch.”

Supposing the central task of scholarship to be the amplification of objective description in a given area of thought, it would seem a countermanding act to invite the personal, the subjective, even once through the door. Yet at the center of my own work on Milton and Seventh-day Adventism stands an entirely personal set of associations and reflections. I have delayed discussion of my wife

Lacy Schutz's relation to Adventism in the narrative and argument assembled here, and I have gone around and around the option of simply leaving out that discussion altogether. But such a course would comprise an obscuration, finally, of the very thing I have been most at pains to illuminate, which is the already cloudy event of the giving and receiving of texts across times, the embrace and consent involved in such transfers, and also the conversion, in the lingo of the James family, the bending to interest, that always takes place when texts change hands. Edwards's insight, his transposition of discrete theories, the Newtonian physical world of collision and energy transpiring upon the Lockean metaphysical terrain of the mind, relays an understanding that because material objects are ideas and their touching ideal, and because they enter into our experience as so many potential connections and relations, therefore the relations between ideas themselves, their collisions, their connections, are no different from those between things: ideas touch as bodies touch "when there is nothing between them." In other words, to perceive a connection, to see what one thing has to do with another, is not to draw a line between two points. Instead, it is to witness the collapse of interfering space and to occupy the urgency of contact created within that vacuum.

I imagine something like this to be the case when Blake came to believe that Milton was visiting and speaking to him, and when Ginsberg came to believe the same about Blake. Establishing a mental connection to a prior author, both Blake and Ginsberg can be said to have inhabited an "ideal" relation to that author whereby – to recall the erotic details of these experiences – "they

unavoidably must touch.” Such thinking is of real concern, partly for its value as a way of conceptualizing historical structures as they occur across removes of time and space and partly for its place *within* the particular historical account we have been pursuing. Edwards was instrumental in paving the way in the eighteenth century for the religious enthusiasm, steeped in an interest in the mind’s relation to what it encounters, of the nineteenth. In his formula, the indicative “nothing” of Newtonian space shares its estate with a second connotative “nothing,” a colloquial-metaphorical condition of relations wherein two bodies having *nothing between* in actuality *share nothing*, are unrelated, have *nothing to do* with one another. The upshot is that if “all existence is mental” and if “the existence of all exterior things is ideal” then relationships might and “must” emerge even between those objects of thought for which there exists no exterior proximity – at which moment of emergence there is nothing *between* them just as there is *nothing* between them.

More recent agitations of the same problems have tended to spotlight specifically textual ramifications, framed in regard to the blurred edges of that structure amorously known as *the archive*. For Derrida, these ramifications are markedly Freudian, predicated upon what arises, and when, from the abysses of a broadly imagined “transgenerational” subconscious. The past is a pest and also a kind of post – a system of messages sent and received:

Without the irrepressible, that is to say, only suppressible and repressible, force and authority of this transgenerational

memory, the problems of which we speak would be dissolved and resolved in advance. There would no longer be any essential history of culture, there would no longer be any question of memory and of archive...and one would no longer even understand how an ancestor can speak within us, nor what sense there might be in us to speak *to* him or her, to speak in such an *unheimlich*, “uncanny” fashion, to his or her ghost. *With* it.¹

Derrida recalls the canonical example of the younger Hamlet speaking to the elder – the ghost on the ramparts, the injunction to “remember” – but we might arrive at the same figuration in replacing the Shakespearean example with Blake’s vision of Milton or Ginsberg’s vision of Blake. Each case poses its encounter in terms of prophetic transmission; each as well, however, holds forward a textual history, a history of physical objects – books – as they inter into and affect the lives of individuals. Even for Hamlet the pressure of textual accounting stands in overlay against the prophetic event as he reaches for his “tables” upon which to “set...down” the ghost’s messages, hence to fasten an uncanny event to history with words.² For Blake and Ginsberg it is impossible to determine exactly where mystical communion departs from textual communication, insofar as their experience as *readers* (in turn, of Milton, of Blake) sets the stage for their conditioning as prophetic receptors.

One possibility for handling and describing prophetic experiences such as Ellen White's in a historical context is not to dismiss them but to regard them as *nothing but* intensely felt and powerfully concentrated acts of readership, deemphasizing magic in favor of mind and text. Yet such distinctions are perhaps beside the point, with all layers of (at least Christian) prophetic tradition emerging from the solidly textual mediation of exegetical technique: what in literary studies we call interpretation. William James contends in shaping and reshaping a relatively steadfast set of ideas from *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) to *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) to *Pragmatism* (1907) that the neural mind is fundamentally indissoluble from the religious mind and that both announce and know themselves only as participating aspects of the mind that makes its solitary way through language. In the century having since elapsed, James's heirs in neuroscience have managed with some sidetracking, backtracking, and retracing of steps to maintain and augment principles strikingly consistent with his own. To recapitulate one enormously valuable example from Joan Richardson's *A Natural History of Pragmatism* (2007), Andy Clark discusses "The role of public language," also termed "public thinking," in his article – pertinently titled for our purposes – "Magic Words: How Language Augments Human Computation" as "not limited to the preservation and communication of ideas" but "Instead...mak[ing] available concepts, strategies and learning trajectories which are simply not available to individual, un-augmented brains." Quick to provide that "Of course, words aren't magic," he asks us in trade to "Consider the idea of words as filters" in the sense that

learning to associate concepts with discrete arbitrary labels (words) somehow makes it easier to use those concepts to constrain computational search and hence enables the acquisition of a cascade of more complex and increasingly abstract ideas. The claim...is thus that associating a perceptually simple, stable, external item (such as a word) with an idea, concept or piece of knowledge effectively freezes the concept into a sort of cognitive building block – an item that can then be treated as a simple baseline feature for future episodes of thought, learning and search.³

In the last chapter I adopted Wallace Stevens's distinction between "Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" in exploring Richard Wright's relations to Seventh-day Adventism and to Milton; to "behold" these different nothings, Stevens prescribes, "One must have a mind of winter." Given this, and adding to it Edwards's "nothing," compare Clark's statement to a sympathetic passage from James, noting the coincidence of Clark's term "freezes":

'Winter' is only the name for a certain number of days which we find generally characterized by cold weather, but it guarantees nothing in that line, for our thermometer tomorrow may soar into the 70's. Nevertheless the word is a useful one to plunge forward with into the stream of our experience. It cuts off certain probabilities and sets up others.... It is a summary of things to look for. It names a part of nature's habits, and gets you ready for their

continuation. It is a definite instrument abstracted from experience, a conceptual reality that you must take account of, and which reflects you totally back into sensible realities.⁴

Clark's instructive term for the phenomenon under scrutiny in both of the above passages is "scaffolding," or "augmentations which allow us to achieve some goal which would otherwise be beyond us."⁵ Similar to these "augmentations" is Derrida's sense, his "Freudian impression," of the archive – the broadly imagined concerns of which can be pressurized to the scale of single words – as a "prosthesis" for memory.

The idea of language as *prosthetic* returns us to James, who writes often of the "grafting" of one experience upon another, while in the process "All human thinking gets discursified; "All truths thus get verbally built out, stored up, and made available for everyone"; and, in effect, "we must *talk* constantly just as we must think constantly: for both in talk and thought we deal with kinds."⁶ The rebound this time goes to Clark, first in his understanding of some forms of language (notes to self, for instance, and other recursive texts, recordings, mutterings) as an "external control loop" whereby the mind cycles back via "augmentation" to a prior moment of attention, and second in his magnification of James's "kinds" to acknowledge a second order of relations, or "relations-between-relations": "Merely matching (first order) relations might involve e.g. training...chimps to match...identical items in an array. Matching relations-between-relations, by contrast, involves e.g. getting the chimps to match pairs of

identical items (e.g. two identical shoes) to other pairs of (different) identical items (such as two identical cups).” Clark argues that “The higher-order task is thus not to match the items themselves but to match the relations that obtain between them – it is to match the pairs in terms of the relational properties they exhibit irrespective of the specific items involved.”⁷ Once more to James:

Kinds, and sameness of kinds – what colossally useful *denkmittel* for finding our way among the many! The manyness might conceivably have been absolute. Experiences might have all been singulars, no one of them occurring twice. In such a world logic would have had no application; for kind and sameness of kind are logic’s only instruments. Once we know that whatever is of a kind is also of that kind’s kind, we can travel through the universe as if with seven-league boots. Brutes surely never use these abstractions, and civilized men use them in most various amounts.⁸

All of which is nothing so much as a wide circuit to Edwards, who has already taken account of James’s “seven-league boots” – the boots being words, hence the apparel as well as the carrier of “kinds,” connections, relations – in his description of space as the collapsible element stretched between bodies.

Like physical archives, words bring discrete objects of thought into proximity. One might say that Ellen White and John Milton have “nothing between” them in the sense that they are separate in time, distant in space, and

broadly speaking have *nothing to do* with one another. Yet one might also say that Seventh-day Adventism, extending from White's prophetic (prosthetic) writing, is in effect an archive for Milton's poetic, political, and theological messages. If one is concerned with information as it is "built out, stored up" in texts both spoken and printed – in other words, if one involves oneself in literary critique and interpretation from any posture or position – one must also be attentive to the means of travel and retrieval by which the information reaches and is rescued from its eventual place of storage, in sum its archive. An archive as Derrida conceives it, whether a single uttered word or a warehouse spilling over with troves of documents preserved and catalogued, is a site where time laps over time, and not in simple forward or reverse, what's more, but as multifariously pocketed, folded, seamed with possible directions. It is a house, Derrida reports (from Greek, *arkheion*, a house of state, but we should also imagine a house of mirrors), where knowledge simultaneously gets saved and guarded, granted privilege, made permanent as well as unavailable.⁹ To retrieve this knowledge-under-guard is always after a fashion to break and enter: to smash a window here; to lift a key-ring there; to "[teach] the thief," as Blake writes in *The Four Zoas*, "a secret path into the house"; then to elude the sentries and escape with what one came for carefully pocketed, or folded at the bottom of a shoe, or seamed within the lining of a coat.¹⁰ In her role as the "thief of Paradise," taking Milton's messages from and indeed *carrying them away from* the massive authority of his precedence, Ellen White then erects a structure of intellectual governance whereby she becomes the archivist of what she took. In some sense that structure is built exactly of the minds of White's followers across generations

as they absorb then reify the language of her appropriated prophecies. This “transgenerational memory,” more than “only suppressible and repressible,” resolves as Derrida’s “irrepressible...force” via which “an ancestor can speak within us” and we can “speak *to* him or her, to speak in such an *unheimlich*, ‘uncanny’ fashion, to his or her ghost. *With it.*”

In my Preface, I described Lacy Schutz’s coming to awareness of this circumstance – what we might call her uncanny acclimatization to Milton in her Adventist education. What Ellen White suppressed – a reading of Milton – emerged as “irrepressible” in Lacy’s reading of Milton. Lacy left Adventism early, as a teenager, largely in protest against the ways in which the church sought to maintain a cultural enclosure and thereby to control and limit individual experience. Even so, the urgency of apocalyptic narrative constitutes a significant presence in her thought and work:

What dormant carnival do I pass through
 at dawn? Air redolent with frying dough
 and cinnamon, strong coffee, horse manure.
 My dew-wet clothes hang heavy from my frame.
 I trudge forsaken fairgrounds. Lights tremble
 beneath the fog. I’m weary, chilled all through
 and looking back across the midway as
 the shipwrecked sailor gazes from the shore
 toward the sea that almost drowned her. I’m

compassionate. I am bewildered. Sword
 and scepter, crow, please pass me by. When I
 look up I'll see the raven and recall
 this thing forever 'til tomorrow. What
 could have shaped us but a swarm of bees?
 And I am not ready, Lord. Not ready.¹¹

The last line of this poem, which is titled, after Dante, “Descend, So that You May Ascend,” darts out to and ricochets from the conclusion of Milton’s Sonnet XVI, his famous bid for heavenly service: “They also serve who only stand and wait.” But Schutz’s fifteen lines in blank verse exceed the lines of Milton’s sonnet by one. A sonnet’s ending hides behind the appended “Not ready” – that percussive last line behaving as a complete unit of its own, or perhaps convening an afterthought leading from the conjunctive “And” – in the interrogative “What / could have shaped us but a swarm of bees?” The creative swarm evokes Milton’s scale-bending metaphor (itself borrowed from the *Iliad*’s first simile) describing the devils entering their newly forged Pandemonium “As bees / In springtime, when the sun with Taurus rides, / Pour forth their populous youth about the hive / In clusters...” (*PL* 1.768-71). In this possible allusion to Milton, standing as a reminder of the ability of devils to create (albeit from rough already-made materials), combined with the worried concluding plea to the “Lord” (effectively reversing Milton’s “blind” acceptance of God’s demands upon him), Schutz incites an important uncertainty as to what power, exactly, one is meant after all to serve.

In other words, having identified a doubt regarding the origin of one's person – the question “What / could have shaped us” working both rhetorically and searchingly, offering while wishing for an answer – Schutz's poem opens itself to a barrage of claims upon it: Milton appears as a clear precursor, providing the raw stuff, the influence, from which Schutz begins to shape a new and original coherency, even while Ellen White's Adventism persists somewhere before, or behind, or beneath the Miltonic presence. This is to say that for a writer like Schutz (or for that matter like Jamaica Kincaid or Richard Wright) Milton might be described as both primary and secondary to White. The seventeenth-century poet informs and in some cases compels the nineteenth-century prophetess's visions insofar as she read and gained from him; meanwhile, however, for a former Adventist, Milton's verse is oddly noisy with resonances and echoes of Adventism. We might remember Satan's incredulous reply to Abdiel when presented with the information of his creation at the hands of the Son:

That we were formed then say'st thou? and the work
 Of secondary hands, by task transferred
 From Father to his Son? strange point and new!
 Doctrine which we would know whence learnt: who saw
 When this Creation was? remember'st thou
 Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?
 We know no time when we were not as now;

Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised
 By our own quick'ning power, when fatal course
 Had circled his full orb, the birth mature
 Of this our native Heav'n, ethereal sons.
 Our puissance is our own.... (*PL* 5.853-64)

Satan talks himself into a case for spontaneous origin, “self-begot, self-raised,” but what he is really talking about is bewilderment – as in Schutz’s figure, “I am bewildered” – in the midst of an inability to remember how he came to arrive at the present moment, at the present location, occupying the present identity. He acknowledges this chasm in his memory in the instant of denying it – a paradox convened again when Schutz undertakes a task of recall concomitantly infinite and limited, “forever ‘til tomorrow.” These complications are only amplified by the stipulation that the “bewildered” creature must contend with multiple gradations of creators, given the “strange point and new” of “secondary hands” responsible for one’s existence: the Son’s authority extending from the Father to bring Satan into being, Ellen White’s authorship extending from Milton to condition Schutz’s imagination.

To archive information is to store it so that it may be for practical purposes forgotten. This is as much the idea behind Andy Clark’s “scaffolding” as behind William James’s probabilistic “winter” and his “seven-league boots.” Ellen White’s high shelf, holding her copy of *Paradise Lost*, therefore served the most central archival function: the permission to forget. It also commits the most

central archival transgression, the “archive fever” as Derrida deems it, or to take the more expressive phrase from Derrida’s original French, *un mal d’archive*, which is the locking down of the archive so that memory becomes impossible – unless, as we have seen, it happens against the law of the archive, as a trespass, a theft, a breaking-in. For Lacy Schutz, as I understand the event in my role as witness and accomplice, the discovery of Milton in Ellen White – the high shelf, the stove, the chimney support – was also a discovery of an archive of the mind, with information stored yet disguised, known yet unknown. The *nothing* between Milton and Ellen White becomes nothing *between* them: in Schutz’s intervention, which is to say her reading, “they unavoidably must touch.” To return to our haunting phrase from Donald Hall, if White’s house, her archive or *arkheion*, was haunted by Milton, it is exorcised by Schutz, haunted “not anymore.” Now the task of memory becomes a task of conversion, of turning old language to new purposes. I will end with a few lines from another of Schutz’s poems, “That Root Old Spirit Song”:

...the carnival

has come and gone. Your chapped, rough lips
brush mine two times, then three. Oh, take
this miserable inheritance,
this wretched transfer, turn it to
new paradise and ecstasies.¹²

Abbreviations

I quote Milton's poetry from *John Milton: The Complete Poems*, ed. John Leonard (New York: Penguin Classics, 1998). *Paradise Lost* is designated in parenthetical citations as *PL* and *Paradise Regained* as *PR*, with book and line numbers. References to Milton's prose are from *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols., ed. Don M. Wolfe et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–82), hereafter designated YP, followed by volume and page number in the text. References to Blake's poetry, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Complete Illuminated Books* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000) and cited in the text with plate number. References to the Bible are from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and cited in the text with book, chapter, and verse.

Notes to Preface

¹ Alice Hansmann, email to the author, June 4, 2009.

² Whitney Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York State, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1950).

³ W. Carlos Martyn, *Life and Times of John Milton* (New York: American Tract Society, 1866), 4, quoted in Kevin P. Van Anglen, *The New England Milton: Literary Reception and Cultural Authority in the Early Republic* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 73.

⁴ Ronald Lawson, “The Persistence of Apocalypticism Within a Denominationalizing Sect: The Apocalyptic Fringe Groups of Seventh-day Adventism” in *Millenium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, eds. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 208.

⁵ See Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). Fish titles his first chapter after a phrase from Milton’s *Tetrachordon*, “not so much a teaching, as an intangling” (YP 2:642).

⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1963); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

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¹ The supposition, bordering on faith, that texts draw upon prior and surrounding texts in coming into being, that these new texts then stand to “fructify,” we might say, “in the lives of others,” still other texts, comprises a branching hermeneutics. One branch observes a serial anxiety wherein influence inscribes itself in the very attempt to evade or mask it. Another imagines not a series of influences but a radius of them – text as textile, as woven, as an immense and potentially infinite intertextuality assembling and assembling itself again, quite apart from the anxieties of authorship, in the subjectivity of a reading mind. Still, whether serial

or radial, purchased of authors or compounded in the accounts of readers, allegations of debt remain.

² Keith Stavely, *Puritan Legacies: Paradise Lost and the New England Tradition, 1630 – 1890* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), 1-2. Stavely quotes from Charles Francis Adams’s remarks delivered in Massachusetts on Milton’s three hundredth birthday, December 9, 1908: “John Milton was both a Puritan poet and the poet of the Puritans.” Stavely then stresses that it is “even more platitudinous today than it was...in 1908 to assert that Milton was the most distinctly Puritan literary figure and New England the most distinctly Puritan society.”

³ S. Margaret Fuller, *Papers on Literature and Art*, 2 vols. (New York: John Wiley, 1848), 1:38-39.

⁴ See Preface note 3; Van Anglen quote at 45.

⁵ Joseph Anthony Wittreich Jr., ed., *Milton and the Line of Vision* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), xiv-xv.

⁶ Allen Ginsberg, *The Visions of the Great Rememberer* (Amherst, Mass.: Mulch Press, 1974), 5.

⁷ Paul Stevens, “Milton in America,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77 (2008): 791.

⁸ Stavely, *Puritan Legacies*, 3-5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰ Barbara Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 9.

¹¹ Wittreich, *Milton and the Line of Vision*, xiv-xv.

¹² Bloom, too, deploys “the story of intra-poetic relationships” in the first sentence of his *Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (2nd ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 5), but his meaning is substantively different from Wittreich’s.

¹³ See Stanley Fish, *How Milton Works* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ Gordon Teskey, *Delirious Milton: the Fate of the Poet in Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸ Van Anglen, *The New England Milton*, 86.

¹⁹ William Blake, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), 707.

²⁰ Henry Crabb Robinson, *Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamb, Etc.: being Selections from the Remains of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. Edith Jay Morley (London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1922), 10.

²¹ Peter Ackroyd, *Blake* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995), 323.

²² Paul Mann, “*The Book of Urizen* and the Horizon of the Book,” in *Unnam’d Forms: Blake and Textuality*, eds. Nelson Hilton and Thomas A. Vogler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 67.

²³ Jerome J. McGann, “The Idea of an Indeterminate Text: Blake’s Bible of Hell and Dr. Alexander Geddes,” *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (1986): 317-18.

²⁴ See Stephen B. Dobranski and John Peter Rumrich, eds., *Milton and Heresy* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998); see also Michael Lieb, *Theological Milton: Diety, Discourse, and Heresy in the Miltonic Canon* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 2006).

²⁵ Thanks to Joan Richardson for this observation; see *OED*, online ed., s.v. “Reveal.”

²⁶ Fish, *How Milton Works*, 72-74.

²⁷ Plates for *Jerusalem* correspond to Copy E.

²⁸ Wittreich, “A Poet Amongst Poets’: Milton and the Tradition of Prophecy,” in *Milton and the Line of Vision*, 103.

²⁹ Plates for *The First Book of Urizen* correspond to Copy D.

³⁰ Joseph Wittreich, email to the author, October 24, 2007.

³¹ Teskey, *Delirious Milton*, 6, 23.

³² *Ibid.*, 23; Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton*, x-xi. Teskey argues that the Renaissance paradigm of authorship persists into modernity. I suggest that while this may be true, it does not necessarily *survive* the modernist moment nor persist into what has been perhaps inadequately termed postmodernity. If the only thing authors accomplish under the postmodern umbrella is to rewrite other authors, we may perhaps surmise a reimagining of what in political science has been called the “New Medievalism.”

³³ Ellen Gould White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (1902), 1:58-60, 62, <http://www.whiteestate.org/search/search.asp>.

³⁴ See Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 24-30; see also Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 12.

³⁵ W. C. White, "How Ellen White's Books Were Written: Addresses to Faculty and Students at the 1935 Advanced Bible School, Angwin, California," Ellen G. White Estate, <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/HowEGWbksWCW.html>.

³⁶ Ellen Gould White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 19.

³⁷ W. C. White, "How Ellen White's Books Were Written."

³⁸ Willie was only four years old at the time of these events, and he was in his early eighties when he reported them. Almost certainly Willie's "memory" was supplemented by his mother's own telling. If so, Ellen White acted as the key agent in constructing a story then retold by Willie and retold again, still later, in similar (though interestingly not identical) terms, by Willie's son Arthur:

In the spring of 1858, soon after the vision of the great controversy between Christ and Satan was given to Mrs. White, she related it to the believers in Battle Creek on a Sabbath and a Sunday. As she spoke of the fall of Satan and the fall of man and the plan of salvation, it reminded J. N. Andrews of John Milton's *Paradise*

Lost, and when he next had opportunity he asked Mrs. White whether she had ever read the book. She replied that she had not, and he said, "You will be interested in it." So the next time he came to the home he brought a copy and placed it in her hands. She was in the midst of her writing on the controversy story. She took the book to the kitchen and placed it on a high shelf out of reach and out of sight, determined that if there was anything in it which was in any way similar to what had been shown to her in vision, she would not read it until she had finished her writing. She did not wish anything to obscure her clear view or open the way of anyone to say that she received her inspiration from others. It was not until she had written her first views of the controversy that she read with interest...*Paradise Lost*. (Arthur White, "The Prophetic Gift in Action," *Ministry*, June 1944, 35-37.)

Arthur elides the possibility that Andrews read parts of *Paradise Lost* aloud to Ellen White, a departure from his father with the effect of enhancing the argument that his grandmother had no prior knowledge of the poem in writing her visions. Yet Arthur also takes the step of allowing that Ellen White did indeed read the poem at some later point. I discuss this complication below.

³⁹ W. C. White, "How Ellen White's Books Were Written."

⁴⁰ Joseph Wittreich, *Why Milton Matters: A New Preface to His Writings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xx.

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- ⁴¹ W. C. White, "How Ellen White's Books Were Written."
- ⁴² Ellen Gould White, *Redemption; or, The Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness* (1877), <http://www.whiteestate.org/search/search.asp>.
- ⁴³ John Leonard, ed., *Complete Poems*, 875.
- ⁴⁴ *OED*, online ed., s.v. "Record."
- ⁴⁵ Ruth Elizabeth Burgeson, "A Comparative Study of the Fall of Man as Treated by John Milton and Ellen G. White," (MA thesis, Pacific Union College, Department of English, 1957), 73.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 36; Leonard, *The Complete Poems*, 831.
- ⁴⁷ Ellen Gould White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), 54, <http://www.whiteestate.org/search/search.asp>.
- ⁴⁸ Ellen Gould White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 54-55.
- ⁴⁹ Ellen Gould White, *Early Writings* (1882), 147, <http://www.whiteestate.org/search/search.asp>.
- ⁵⁰ *PL* 6.893-912; Ellen Gould White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 53.
- ⁵¹ Ellen Gould White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 56; *PL* 9.834-55. The King James translation reads: "she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband *with her*; and he did eat" (italics mine).
- ⁵² *PL* 9.911-16, 9.952-59, 9.1008-11, 9.1134-42, 9.1162-86, 10.137-43; Ellen Gould White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 56-58.
- ⁵³ *PL* 9.781; Ellen Gould White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 55; Burgeson, "A Comparative Study," 37-38.
- ⁵⁴ Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie* (Turlock, Calif., 1982).

⁵⁵ Ronald Numbers, interview by Steve Paulson, “Seeing the Light – Of Science,” *Salon*, January 2, 2007,

<http://www.salon.com/books/int/2007/01/02/numbers/>.

⁵⁶ Ellen G. White Estate, “The Truth about the White Lie,”

<http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/whitelie.html>.

⁵⁷ Fred Veltman, “*The Desire of Ages Project: The Conclusions*,” *Ministry*, December 1990, 12, 14.

⁵⁸ White Estate, “Truth”; see Kenneth L. Woodward and Janet Huck, “A False Prophetess?,” *Newsweek*, January 19, 1981, 72. To some degree, Veltman’s conclusions are at odds with the numerical arguments deployed by the White Estate. Veltman is explicit in stating that White’s appropriations must be understood as more than – and more complex than – simple line-by-line copying.

⁵⁹ Vincent Ramik, “The Ramik Report: Memorandum of Law, Literary Property Rights, 1790-1915” (1981), Ellen G. White Estate, <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/ramik.html>.

⁶⁰ White Estate, “Truth.”

⁶¹ Rea, Veltman, Ramik and the White Estate all mention a handful of authors to whom White was especially indebted. They include J. H. Merle D’Aubigne, James Aitken Wylie, Alfred Edersheim, William Hanna, and others. Numbers examines White’s debt to L. B. Coles and Horace Mann. Milton, when mentioned, is mentioned only in passing – except by Rea, who grants the Miltonic debt significant weight. Milton’s name tends to disappear into the background,

perhaps, because in contrast to her use of other authors, White does not *typically* replicate Milton's exact words. The controversy tends to focus on the presence or absence of overt plagiarism, leaving little attention for less audacious yet potentially more significant appropriations. Even so, the general (if late) acknowledgment of White's absorptive tendencies as a reader opens our way for an acknowledgment of her absorption of Milton.

⁶² Arthur White, supplement to Ellen Gould White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 4 vols. (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1945), 4:535.

⁶³ White Estate, "Truth."

⁶⁴ Ellen Gould White, *Education* (Oakland, Calif., 1903), 150.

⁶⁵ Of course, such evidence reveals only that White read the first page of the epic of which Samuel Johnson observed, "None ever wished it longer." But Eve, though "Greedily she engorged without restraint" (*PL* 9.791), needed only one bite to fall.

Notes to Chapter 2

¹ Louis Menand, Introduction to *Civilization and Its Discontents*, by Sigmund Freud (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 9.

² Richard R. O'Keefe quotes Mark Edmundson that "Freud read Emerson indirectly, through Nietzsche," before going on to detail a much more elaborate set of relations between Emerson's ideas and Freud's as similarly concerned with archetypes. *Mythic Archetypes in Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Blakean Reading*

(Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1995), 89. Freud's bizarre and widely documented denial of having been influenced by Nietzsche supplies an interesting parallel to Ellen White's denial of reading Milton.

³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," in *The Portable Emerson*, eds. Carl Bode and Malcolm Cowley (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 260.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 7, 56.

⁵ Samuel Langhorne Clemens, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, eds. Sculley Bradley, Richmond Croom Beatty, E. Hudson Long, and Thomas Cooley (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1977), 7.

⁶ Emerson, "The American Scholar," in *The Portable Emerson*, 55.

⁷ Clemens, *Huckleberry Finn*, 229.

⁸ Emerson, "The American Scholar," 55.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 257-58.

¹⁰ Sir Walter Alexander Raleigh, *Milton* (London: Arnold and Co., 1900), 88.

¹¹ Frank Kermode, "Adam Unparadised," in *The Living Milton: Essays by Various Hands*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 85-86.

¹² *Ibid.*, 256.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁶ Gary Scharnhorst, "Images of the Millerites in American Literature," *American Quarterly* 32 (1980): 24.

¹⁷ Moncure Daniel Conway, *Emerson at Home and Abroad* (London: Trübner & Co., 1883), 188.

¹⁸ Scharnhorst, "Images of the Millerites," 23.

¹⁹ Emerson, "The Over-Soul," in *The Portable Emerson*, 222.

²⁰ George F. Sensabaugh, *Milton in Early America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 303.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Emerson, "Self-Reliance," in *The Portable Emerson*, 151.

²³ Stanley Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even (Descartes, Emerson, Poe)," in *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 91-92.

²⁴ Ibid., 92.

²⁵ Robin Sandra Grey, "'A Seraph's Eloquence': Emerson's Inspired Language and Milton's Apocalyptic Prose," *Modern Philology* 92 (1994): 36-37.

²⁶ Rev. Luther Sheldon, *A Sermon Delivered Before the Female Benevolent Society, in East Randolph, June 1824* (Taunton, Mass.: Samuel W. Mortimer, 1825), 3.

²⁷ Ibid., 14.

²⁸ C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 99.

²⁹ *The New York Times*, "The Old South Church," February 22, 1875; Rev. E. P. Rogers, *The Obligations and Duties of the Female Sex to Christianity: An Address Delivered at the Annual Examination of the Washington Female*

Seminary, Thursday, June 14th (Augusta, Ga.: James McCafferty, 1849), 4. For a parallel in *Paradise Lost*, see 11.580-627, wherein Michael shows Adam “A bevy of fair women” who seem at first to “[portend] more hope / of peaceful days,” but in fact are “Bred only and completely to the taste / Of lustful appetite, to sing, to dance, / To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye.” Their seduction of men leads to destruction of faith and to “a world of tears.”

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 5.

³² Joseph Wittreich, *Feminist Milton* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), xi. One of the eighteenth-century women Wittreich draws upon in support of his argument supplies another example of Emerson and Cavell’s *Cogito* convolution, complete with shifting quotation marks: “‘The mind is its own place,’ says the great Milton; the mind is its own place, says the little Elizabeth Montagu” (2). Like “I think, therefore I am,” this line of Satan’s does more to animate the reader than affirm the author.

³³ Ibid., ix, xi.

³⁴ Ibid., 85-87; see also William Shullenberger, “Wrestling with the Angel: *Paradise Lost* and Feminist Criticism,” *Milton Quarterly* 20 (1986): 74-77.

³⁵ Wittreich, *Feminist Milton*, xi.

³⁶ See Anna K. Nardo, “*Romola* and Milton: A Cultural History of Rewriting,” *Nineteenth Century Literature* 53 (1998): 328-263. Nardo’s goal is “to historicize and expand Gilbert and Gubar’s insight that Milton is present in [Eliot’s] *Romola*, but also to confute their widely accepted conclusion that Milton was for

Eliot, as for other women writers, what Harold Bloom calls ‘the great Inhibitor, the Sphinx who strangles even strong imaginations in their cradles’” (331). To this end, see also Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*.

³⁷ Sensabaugh, *Milton in Early America*, 304.

³⁸ Van Anglen, *The New England Milton*, 109-49; Grey, “A Seraph’s Eloquence,” 36-63; Joan Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism: The Fact of Feeling from Jonathan Edwards to Gertrude Stein* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 86.

³⁹ Robin Grey, ed., *Melville and Milton: An Edition and Analysis of Melville’s Annotations on Milton* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer, *Milton and the Climates of Reading* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

⁴¹ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), adds Christian Science as a fourth “major cult,” while Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2000), investigates the Pentecostals and Southern Baptists.

⁴² Malcolm Bull, “The Seventh-Day Adventists: Heretics of American Civil Religion,” *Sociological Analysis* 50 (1989): 183-84.

⁴³ J. N. Andrews, “Thoughts on Revelation XIII and XIV,” *Review and Herald*, May 19, 1851, quoted in Bull, “The Seventh-Day Adventists,” 184.

⁴⁴ Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2007), xiii.

⁴⁵ Seventh-day Adventist Church, “World Church Statistics” (2007), http://www.adventist.org/world_church/facts_and_figures/index.html.en.

⁴⁶ Ronald Lawson, “When Immigrants Take Over: The Impact of Immigrant Growth on American Seventh-Day Adventism’s Trajectory from Sect to Denomination,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38 (1999): 87.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

⁴⁸ Seventh-day Adventist Church, “Church Statistics.”

⁴⁹ Lawson, “When Immigrants Take Over,” 89.

⁵⁰ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 249. The second edition of *Seeking a Sanctuary* is vastly expanded from the first edition (1989), wherein Bull and Lockhart observe the resemblance of White’s account of the war in heaven to Milton’s—it “bears some similarity” (110)—but avoid assigning direct knowledge of Milton to White.

⁵¹ John S. Tanner and Justin Collings, “How Adams and Jefferson Read Milton and Milton Read Them,” *Milton Quarterly* 40 (2006): 211; Sensabaugh, *Milton in Early America*, 137–46; on Milton’s influence on the Declaration of Independence, see Tanner and Collings, 214, and Stevens, “Milton in America,” 790.

⁵² Ellen Gould White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 1:17–18.

⁵³ Ellen Gould White, *The Great Controversy* (1888), 495, 496, 498-99.

<http://www.whiteestate.org/search/search.asp>.

⁵⁴ See Preface note 5.

⁵⁵ John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Writings of John Greenleaf Whittier*, 7 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1889), 5:420, quoted in Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 3.

⁵⁶ Bull and Lockhart place Miller “in the context of the Common-Sense philosophy that was becoming popular in nineteenth-century New England” with Francis Bacon as a forerunner: “Miller followed the Baconian injunction ‘to proceed regularly and gradually from one axiom to another.’ As he recalled, ‘I determined to lay aside all my prepossessions, to thoroughly compare Scripture with Scripture, and to pursue its study in a regular and methodical manner.’” Moreover, “Miller spoke to his audiences as if to a jury, gradually building up the evidence for his case. This approach appealed to exponents of the Common-Sense philosophy. As Alexander Campbell noted, Miller benefited from his critics’ un-Baconian arguments, which far transcended ‘the oracles of reason and the canons of common sense.’” *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 26-27.

⁵⁷ Douglas Morgan, “Adventism, Apocalyptic, and the Cause of Liberty,” *Church History* 63 (1994): 236.

⁵⁸ *The Illustrated Handbook to All Religions: from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: John E. Potter & Company, 1877), 18-19.

⁵⁹ John Henry Blunt, ed., *Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties, and Schools of Religious Thought* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1892).

⁶⁰ P. Douglass Gorrie, *The Churches and Sects of the United States: Containing a Brief Account of the Origin, History, Doctrines, Church Government, Mode of Worship, Usages, and Statistics of Each Religious Denomination, So Far as Known* (New York: Lewis Colby, 1850), 238.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 238, 240.

⁶² Mark Twain, “Christian Science,” *The North American Review* 175 (1902): 757.

⁶³ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 41.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 186. The Civil War was an important moment generally for the Seventh-day Adventist church, but not for the same reasons – not entirely – that the war was important for the rest of the country. While refusing to endorse combat *per se* on the grounds that combat would lead to violations of the fourth and sixth commandments, those against Sabbath-breaking and murder, James and Ellen White discouraged the laity from resisting the draft. Draft-resistance “only served to bring that peculiar class, Sabbath-keepers, into special notice, and expose them to be crowded into difficult places by those who have no sympathy with them” (Ellen Gould White, quoted in Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 187). This was a tricky scenario all around, and led after the war to extensive medical training among Adventists in the long view of nurturing non-combat skills which could be volunteered during wartime. Bull and Lockhart:

To prepare members for such service, the church established Red Cross-

type training schools in several Adventist colleges and sanitariums in the years before America's entry into the First World War. What made these viable was a key decision, taken after the Civil War, to relax the rules that had hitherto governed the keeping of the Sabbath. As the church built up its network of hospitals, Adventists came to believe that medical practice was the one secular activity that could be conducted on their sacred day. This change, which was not applied to any other form of work, had enormous repercussions throughout the church. Not least was the way in which it enabled Adventist conscripts to follow orders on a Saturday, provided their duties on that day, as indeed on the other days of the week, were confined to caring for the sick and wounded. (187)

See also J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists with Tokens of God's Hand in the Movement and a Brief Sketch of the Advent Cause from 1831 to 1844* (Battle Creek, Mich.: General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1892), 235-45.

⁶⁵ Rev. A. H. Lewis, *Sunday Laws, Past and Present* (Chautauqua, N.Y.: 1881), 13, 14.

⁶⁶ J. N. Loughborough, an early member and a close advisor to Ellen White, describes the Adventists as "...a people of whom some of their opponents have said, 'Although they number only about thirty-six thousand, from the energy and zeal with which they work one would judge that there were two millions of them'" (*Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists*, iii).

⁶⁷ Sir T. Charles and Lady Morgan, *The Book without a Name*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1841), 1:125-26.

⁶⁸ Elijah Fenton, "Postscript," *Paradise Lost* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1725), 23; for an example of an American reprinting of Fenton's biographical essay, see *The Poetical Works of John Milton* (Brookfield, Mass.: T. Mirriam & Co. Printers, 1810).

⁶⁹ Tim Poirier, Vice Director/Archivist, Ellen G. White Estate, in an email to the author, July 23, 2008.

⁷⁰ Carol A. Nickolai, "The Relevance of Nineteenth-Century Religion to the Archaeological Record: An Example From the Home of Ellen White, Prophetess of Seventh-Day Adventism," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 7 (2003), 147, 152-53.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 148.

⁷³ In regard to the impressive frequency of Ellen White's visions, Harold Bloom writes, "Unlike Saint Paul and Joseph Smith, Ellen White may be said to have domesticated, even routinized, her visions" (*The American Religion*, 150).

⁷⁴ I rely for this précis upon the short title listings of the Robert J. Wickenheiser collection, housed at the University of South Carolina. The catalog is available online at <http://www.sc.edu/library/spcoll/britlit/milton/title.html>.

⁷⁵ In the copy I examined, a reader has doodled faces of women, in pencil, in the margins and corners of Books I and II. This is a bored reader (not unlikely a student: no markings appear after Book II, suggesting a schoolroom introduction,

not a full reading of the poem), but, with Ellen White as a model, I imagine here another young woman who attends to Milton precisely in her glance away from him. The marginal faces replicate the daughters in the prefatory engraving, implying perhaps a militia of such daughters, gazing upon the text, rebelling against the text – not against its substance but against its authority.

⁷⁶ J. Aikin, “Critical Essay” in *Poetical Works of John Milton* (Charleston, N.C.: S. Etheridge & C. Stebbins, 1805), 21. Aikin, a friend of Erasmus Darwin, was best known for his *Essays on Song-Writing* (1772). “Memoir of the Author” in *Paradise Lost: A Poem in Twelve Books*, by John Milton (Hartford, Conn.: S. Andrus & Son, 1856), xi.

⁷⁷ Aikin, “Critical Essay,” 21.

⁷⁸ “Memoir of the Author,” xii.

⁷⁹ See Stephen Fallon, *Milton among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-century England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁸⁰ “Memoir of the Author,” xiii.

Notes to Interlude

¹ Henry James, *Autobiography*, ed. Frederick W. Dupee (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 332, in Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism*, 133.

² Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism*, 138.

³ *Ibid.*, 113 and note.

⁴ Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 51, 52. In this extraordinarily rich passage, Strether laughingly describes the Review's unpopularity as "the very secret of the prison-house" (52), another nod, perhaps, to Emerson and to the mistrust of language as enclosure, language that entraps rather than propels its practitioners. Strether's description of the Review to Maria Gostrey is interspersed with his refusal to identify the manufactured product that is the source of the Newsome wealth. He will say only that it is "a small, trivial, rather ridiculous object of the commonest domestic use" (49). As in Nickolai's archaeological study of the Whites' house in Battle Creek, literary material (supposedly unread) shares real estate with the objects of domestic life – which, in James's account as in Nickolai's, though for different reasons, fail beguilingly to materialize fully into our view.

⁵ Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 222, 315.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁷ Henry James, *Hawthorne* (Garden City, N.Y.: Dolphin Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., n.d.), 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁰ Henry James, *The Ambassadors*, 331.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 323-25.

¹² Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism*, 165; Emanuel Swedenborg, *Apocalypse Revealed* (New York: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1981), 186-87, quoted in Richardson, 165.

¹³ When I presented this passage to a working group of writers, artists, and scholars in April 2009, historian Ryan Carey heard a pun that I had not intended yet eagerly adopt: for “stabilizing,” read “stable-izing.”

¹⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, 16 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960-83), 4:54, quoted in Van Anglen, *The New England Milton*, 116.

¹⁵ Two additional quotations from Emerson’s “The Poet” interlock with our themes. The first refers to the hypothetical poet of the title; the second refers to Swedenborg. Italics are mine: “He knows why the plain or meadow of space was strown with these flowers we call suns and moons and stars; why the great deep is adorned with animals, with men, and gods; for *in every word he speaks he rides on them as the horses of thought*” (252); “Certain priests, whom he describes as conversing learnedly together, appeared to the children who were at some distance, like dead horses” (261).

Notes to Chapter 3

¹ Bloom, *The American Religion*, 152-53.

² *Ibid.*, 149.

³ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 156, 193, 199, 206.

⁵ Just as she probably did not read Emerson, I can find no evidence that White was familiar with Swedenborg. Once again, she is pursuing the same ideas as some of her predecessors and contemporaries even if her path never crosses theirs.

⁶ Quoted by Martin E. Marty, Forward to *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement*, by Douglas Martin (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), xiii.

⁷ Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 95.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 218-19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 103-4.

¹⁰ Ellen Gould White, *Life Sketches*, 79-94.

¹¹ Michael Pearson, *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-day Adventism and Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 19.

¹² Hiram Edson, manuscript reprinted in *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, 2nd ed. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 215-16; see also Kenneth Newport, "The Heavenly Millennium of Seventh-day Adventism" in *Christian Millenarianism: From the Early Church to Waco*, ed. Stephen Hunt (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 135, note 20; and Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*, 13-14.

¹³ See Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 40-41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁵ Ellen Gould White, *Life Sketches*, 96.

¹⁶ Newport, “The Heavenly Millennium of Seventh-day Adventism,” 138.

¹⁷ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁹ For a thorough discussion of pre- versus post-millenarianism, see Stephen Hunt, “The Rise, Fall and Return of Post-Millenariansim” in *Christian Millenarianism*, 50-61.

²⁰ Newport, “The Heavenly Millennium of Seventh-day Adventism,” 132.

²¹ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 56.

²² Ellen Gould White, *The Great Controversy*, 480-85; see also Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 75-76.

²³ Ellen Gould White, *The Great Controversy*, 635-57.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 486.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 662-78.

²⁶ Bloom, *The American Religion*, 156-57.

²⁷ Bryan Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Cambridge, UK: J. Clarke, 1981).

²⁸ In *Paradise Lost*, Adam takes comfort in the presumption that, at death, “All of me then shall die” (10.792), to which Michael later makes a slight adjustment, describing death as “like sleep, / A gentle wafting to immortal life” (12.434-35). In *De Doctrina*, Milton writes, “There is no reward for good or evil after death until the day of judgment” (YP 6:414). See Timothy J. Burbery, “From Orthodoxy to Heresy: A Theological Analysis of Sonnets XIV and XVIII” in *Milton Studies* 45

(2006), 1-20; see also various discussions of Mortalism in Dobranski and Rumrich, *Milton and Heresy*.

²⁹ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 89-90.

³⁰ Ibid., 74-75. Bull and Lockhart quote from James White, "The Faith of Jesus," *Review and Herald*, Aug. 5, 1852, 52; also Uriah Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1865), 59.

³¹ Ibid., 75.

³² Ibid., 80.

³³ Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, 4 vols., ed. Roger Lonsdale (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1:290.

³⁴ Newport, "The Heavenly Millennium of Seventh-day Adventism," 140.

³⁵ Burgeson, "A Comparative Study," 2; Burgeson does not identify the specific edition.

³⁶ Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 51.

³⁷ Newport, "The Heavenly Millennium of Seventh-day Adventism," 139-40.

³⁸ Ellen Gould White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:60. See also Ellen Gould White, *The Great Controversy* (1911), 641, <http://www.whiteestate.org/search/search.asp>. In this revised, expanded version of *The Great Controversy*, White explicitly cites Revelation 19:11 as the precedent for her vision of the "small black cloud."

³⁹ Ellen Gould White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:60-61.

⁴⁰ A more troubling interpretation is possible: if the cloud is a horse *inside which* the saints approach the gates of a golden city, then the horse resembles less the descending animal of Revelation 19:11 than the instrument of siege of Homer's *Iliad*. Such a resonance allows for a repositioning of the saints as insurgents – of Satan's crew, not God's. This is a Miltonic complication indeed.

⁴¹ Ellen Gould White, *The Great Controversy* (1911), 640.

⁴² Pearson, *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas*, 20.

⁴³ Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 25.

⁴⁴ Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*, 28.

⁴⁵ Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 25.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁸ Lawson, "The Persistence of Apocalypticism Within a Denominationalizing Sect," 208-9; see also Lawson, "When Immigrants Take Over."

⁴⁹ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 246.

⁵⁰ Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 53.

⁵¹ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 58.

⁵² Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 56.

⁵³ Eric Syme, *A History of SDA Church-State Relations in the United States* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1973), 177. Syme quotes Uriah Smith, "The Degeneracy of the United States," *Review and Herald*, June 17, 1862, 22.

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- ⁵⁴ Ellen Gould White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:357, quoted in Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 187.
- ⁵⁵ Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 33.
- ⁵⁶ Ellen G. White, "Temperance and the License Law," *Review and Herald*, Nov. 8, 1881, 289-90; see also Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 36-38.
- ⁵⁷ Lawson, "The Persistence of Apocalypticism," 210.
- ⁵⁸ See Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 34.
- ⁵⁹ James White, "The Time Has Come!" *Review and Herald*, Feb. 21, 1865, 100, quoted in *ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 31.
- ⁶¹ Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).
- ⁶² See Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 41-42.
- ⁶³ Ronald Lawson, "Church and State at Home and Abroad: The Evolution of Seventh-day Adventist Relations with Governments," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (1996): 286.
- ⁶⁴ William Waller Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large of Virginia*, vol. 12 (Richmond: George Cochran, 1823), 84.
- ⁶⁵ Ellen Gould White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:712-14.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5:716-18.
- ⁶⁷ See Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 107.
- ⁶⁸ See Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 41; Syme, *A History of SDA Church-State Relations*, 27; and George R. Knight, *A Brief History of*

Seventh-day Adventists, 2nd ed. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 88.

⁶⁹ Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 43.

⁷⁰ George I. Butler, "The Sunday Crisis Approaching," *Review and Herald*, July 6, 1886, 424, quoted in *ibid.*, 42.

⁷¹ Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 48.

⁷² For transcripts of both "Declaration[s] of Principles," see Morgan's Appendix to *Adventism and the American Republic*, 213-14.

Notes to Chapter 4

¹ Stephen Fallon, *Milton's Peculiar Grace: Self-Representation and Authority* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007), 12-13, 62.

² Christopher Kendrick, "Un-American Milton: Milton's Reputation and Reception in the Early United States," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77 (2008): 906-8.

³ David Hawkes, "Milton among the Pragmatists," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77 (2008): 923, 926. Hawkes cites no source for his contention that William James memorized Milton, and I have been unable to find corroboration for this detail elsewhere. He cites Lewis S. Feuer, "John Dewey's Reading at College," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (1958), for Dewey's study of Milton. Feuer's contribution is simply a list of Dewey's library borrowings as a student at the University of Vermont. Griswold's edition of Milton's prose (Vol. I) is

included, but Feuer's commentary is slight and does not touch upon what Dewey may have thought about Milton.

⁴ As Fallon clarifies, "This is the Fish who both sees meaning as a construction of interpretive communities, who goes so far as to say that we 'write' the texts that we read, and who at the same time says that 'I *do* think that meaning is a function of what a particular speaker in a specific set of circumstances was trying to say.... To put the matter baldly, the act of construing meaning is ipso facto the act of assigning intention within a specific set of circumstances; you cannot do one without the other.'" Then: "The tension between these positions is not a function of Fish's development over time; it is a constant throughout his career." And finally: "If Fish looks in two theoretical directions, his readings of Milton are virtually all relentlessly author-centered. Early and late, Fish elucidates what he sees as the response carefully and deliberately elicited by an intending author." Fallon, *Milton's Peculiar Grace*, 11-12.

⁵ Liam Rector, *American Prodigal: Poems* (Brownsville, Oreg.: Story Line Press, 1994), 60.

⁶ S. Margaret Fuller, *Papers on Literature and Art*, 1:35; the excised portion of the sonnet I quote from William Wordsworth, *The Poems*, ed. John O. Hayden, 2 vols. (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), 1:579.

⁷ Hawkes, "Milton among the Pragmatists," 923.

⁸ The phrase "Blake's Idea of Milton" is the subtitle of Joseph Wittreich's *Angel of Apocalypse* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); for an instance of Darwin's attachment to *Paradise Lost*, see *The Life and Letters of Charles*

Darwin, ed. Francis Darwin, 2 vols. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1911), 1:57.

⁹ George Levine, "Darwin and Pain," *Raritan* 15 (1995), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9511292255&site=ehost-live>.

¹⁰ Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism*, 84.

¹¹ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 33.

¹² Roland Barthes, "Authors and Writers," in *A Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 186-190.

¹³ Fallon, *Milton's Peculiar Grace*, 5-13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵ William James, *Pragmatism and Other Writings*, ed. Giles Gunn (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 88; *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), 113.

¹⁶ Nigel Smith, *Is Milton Better than Shakespeare?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ As of this writing, there are two film versions of *Paradise Lost* in preproduction. One is a major studio production, the other an independent film. Both projects have suffered recurring delays. Insofar as Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy draws upon Milton not only for a title but also for intellectual backing along with certain specific narrative features, the film

adaptation of *The Golden Compass*, the first book in the series, might be said to have captured something of *Paradise Lost* in film, if only from an oblique angle.

¹⁸ Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, tr. and ed. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947), 58.

¹⁹ James is quoted in Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism*, 131.

²⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2005), 106.

²¹ See Anita Desai's Introduction to *Ibid.*, xxiv.

²² Lydia Dittler Shulman, *Paradise Lost and the Rise of the American Republic* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 9, 13-14.

²³ The role of Milton in early America, according to Shulman, was once widely recognized even among Milton's most influential detractors: "Samuel Johnson, Boswell reports, blamed the American Revolution on the unassuming Thomas Hollis of London because he had rescued so many tracts of the Interregnum and presented these 'liberty books' to impressionable Americans." As Johnson would have known, Milton's prose tracts were mainstays of Hollis's efforts. Shulman continues, amplifying, "Hollis's chief correspondent in the colonies was Jonathan Mayhew, the illustrious minister of West Church in Boston; the decade-long correspondence between Hollis and Mayhew provides a vivid example of the transmission of the Commonwealth's legacy to America, showing Milton's central place in that legacy and the effect of Commonwealth ideas on colonists' perceptions of the growing conflict with Britain." John Adams called Mayhew's *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Nonresistance to the Higher*

Powers, in Shulman's paraphrase, "the opening salvo of the American Revolution." *Ibid.*, 118, 120.

²⁴ Fallon, *Milton's Peculiar Grace*, 13.

²⁵ Shulman, *Paradise Lost and the Rise of the American Republic*, 152, 154, quoting John Adams, letter to Mercy Otis Warren, April 16, 1776.

²⁶ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 110, quoting John Adams, *Works of John Adams*, ed. Charles F. Adams, 10 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1854), 4:68-69.

²⁷ Shulman, *Paradise Lost and the Rise of the American Republic*, 154.

²⁸ Feisel G. Mohamed, "Liberty before and after Liberalism: Milton's Shifting Politics and the Current Crisis in Liberal Theory," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77 (2008): 941-42, 953, quoting Paul Kahn, *Putting Liberalism in Its Place* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 74, 77.

²⁹ The 1914 document begins, "We believe in God, in the Bible as the word of God, and in the separation of church and state as taught by Jesus Christ." The 1956 revision begins, "We believe in religious liberty, and hold that this God-given right is exercised at its best when there is separation of church and state." The first insists upon whereas the second merely *suggests* the church-state separation.

³⁰ Lawson, "Church and State," 301.

³¹ For these differing accounts, see *Ibid.* and Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 17-21.

³² Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 21-23, 36.

³³ Lawson, "Church and State," 305.

³⁴ Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 74, 82, quoting Ellen White, Manuscript 7, 1896 (“The Colored People”). Ellen White’s views on race were idealistic, yet she was not unwilling to sacrifice them in the pursuit of broader goals. Having insisted upon integration of churches in the 1890s, she conceded shortly after the turn of the century that Adventist recruitment efforts in the South would fail without segregation. See Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 280.

³⁵ Lawson, “When Immigrants Take Over,” 86.

³⁶ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 281.

³⁷ See Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 278-81; see Malcolm X et al., *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 17.

³⁸ Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 89.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Wallace Stevens, *The Palm at the End of the Mind: Selected Poems and a Play* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 54.

⁴¹ Wright, *Black Boy*, 219.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴³ Richard Wright, “How ‘Bigger’ Was Born,” in *Native Son* (New York: Perennial Classics, 1998), 462.

⁴⁴ Wright describes his relationship to white writers as follows: “I read their novels. Here, for the first time, I found ways and techniques of gauging meaningfully the effects of American civilization upon the personalities of people. I took these techniques, these ways of seeing and feeling, and twisted them, bent them, adapted them, until they became *my* ways of apprehending the locked-in

life of the Black Belt areas. This association with white writers was the life preserver of my hope to depict Negro life in fiction, for my race possessed no fictional works dealing with such problems, had no background in such sharp and critical testing of experience, no novels that went with a deep and fearless will down to the dark roots of life." Ibid., 443.

⁴⁵ Richard Wright, *Black Boy*, 98.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 102-103.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 104.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 105; see also *PL* 4.449-76.

⁵¹ Wright, *Black Boy*, 105.

⁵² Ibid., 144-46.

⁵³ Ibid., 147-48.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 148.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 226.

⁵⁷ Wright, *Native Son*, 22.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 374, 409.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 274-75.

⁶⁰ Wright, "How 'Bigger' Was Born," 439.

⁶¹ Ibid., 400.

⁶² Ibid., 285.

⁶³ Ibid., 364. The reference is to William James's essay "The Will to Believe," which can be found in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956).

⁶⁴ Wright, *Native Son*, 403.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 283-84.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 424.

⁶⁷ Wright, "How 'Bigger' Was Born," 433.

⁶⁸ For an account of radicalism and civil rights that looks beyond King, see Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).

⁶⁹ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 184; see also Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 145-46; and Ronald Lawson, "Seventh-day Adventists and the U.S. Courts: Road Signs Along the Route of a Denominationalizing Sect," *Journal of Church and State* 40 (1998),

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=1207726&site=ehost-live>.

⁷⁰ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 305.

⁷¹ Morgan points out that White's support for Jones was not unmitigated. When Jones "denounced a proposed gift of twelve thousand acres of land to the church from Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Land Company as impermissible government aid to religion and collusion in an imperialist land grab," White "rebuked him for his inflammatory rhetoric" and led the church in accepting the land. This exchange was, in Morgan's assessment, an early factor in the church's

path to its twentieth-century convolutions: “Here was a basis for cultivating cooperative relationships with governments and accepting their benevolence. At the same time the tendency of subsequent leaders to stress [White’s] efforts at bridling Jones would contribute to a greater *disengagement* from social and political protest.” *Adventism and the American Republic*, 56-57.

⁷² Ibid., 69.

⁷³ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 197.

⁷⁴ Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 155-56, 177.

⁷⁵ See Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 147-48, 289, 363-64; Lawson, “When Immigrants Take Over,” *passim*; and Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 177-208. Plantak, in *The Silent Church*, calls for greater attention to human rights in the Adventist establishment, framing his polemic in the church’s pluralism and internationalism: i.e. he implicitly rather than explicitly calls attention away from the white North American perspective, which is at present politically right-leaning, by emphasizing the multiplicity of international perspectives.

⁷⁶ Bull and Lockhart: “Most converts are inspired by Adventism’s apocalyptic vision of the world. Demonstrations of American economic and military strength can only serve to reinforce the Adventist message. But the fact that Adventists foresee themselves being persecuted by America suggests that Third World converts may not be wholeheartedly enthusiastic about those aspects of American power with which they are already familiar. Adventism may thus function as one means of coming to terms with America’s dominating presence in the world. To

become an Adventist is to join an American religion but one distanced from, and wary of, the most obvious manifestations of American power.” *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 249.

⁷⁷ Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 15.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 200-201.

⁷⁹ Interview with Jamaica Kincaid, Kay Bonetti interviewer, *The Missouri Review* 25 (2002),

http://www.missourireview.org/content/dynamic/view_text.php?text_id=1947.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” in *Yearning: Race, Gender, & Cultural Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 1990), *passim*.

⁸¹ Wordsworth, *The Poems*, 619; Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002), 18.

⁸² Kincaid, *Lucy*, 30.

⁸³ Levine, “Darwin and Pain.”

⁸⁴ Kincaid, *Lucy*, 152-53.

⁸⁵ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 87.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 95, 37, 32.

⁸⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 371

⁸⁸ Kincaid, *Lucy*, 9.

⁸⁹ See Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 9-10, 16.

⁹⁰ Lawson, "Church and State," 293-94.

⁹¹ William L. Pitts, Jr., "Davidians and Branch Davidians: 1929-1987," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 21-22.

⁹² Victor T. Houteff, *The Shepherd's Rod* (Waco, TX: Universal Publishing Association, 1930), 52-53. The unusual punctuation is Houteff's.

⁹³ Pitts, "Davidians and Branch Davidians," 30-32.

⁹⁴ See Eugene V. Gallagher, "David Koresh's Christian Millenarianism," in *Christian Millenarianism*, 201.

⁹⁵ Mohamed, "Liberty before and after Liberalism," 956.

⁹⁶ Ellen Gould White, *The Great Controversy*, 613, 635.

⁹⁷ Gallagher, "David Koresh's Christian Millenarianism," 200, quoting from transcripts of Koresh's bible study sessions (1987).

⁹⁸ Fish, *How Milton Works*, 2, 4-5.

⁹⁹ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1:251-68, cited in Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, 59.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism*, 103.

Notes to Epilogue

¹ Jaques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 35-36.

² William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 1997), 1076.

³ Andy Clark, “Magic Words: How Language Augments Human Computation,” in *Language and Thought: Interdisciplinary Themes*, eds. P. Carruthers and J. Boucher (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 162, 173-74. See Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism*, 137-50.

⁴ William James, *Pragmatism*, 116.

⁵ Clark, 163.

⁶ William James, *Pragmatism*, 214. An example of James’s usage of “grafting”:
 “That new idea is truest which performs most felicitously its function of satisfying our double urgency. It makes itself true, gets itself classed as true, by the way it works; *grafting* itself then upon the ancient body of truth, which thus grows much as a tree grows by the activity of a new layer of cambium” (italics mine) (*Pragmatism*, 32-33).

⁷ Clark, 174.

⁸ James, *Pragmatism*, 179.

⁹ Derrida, 2.

¹⁰ Blake, *The Complete Poetry and Prose*, 325.

¹¹ Lacy Schutz, “Descend, So that You May Ascend,” *Post Road* 17 (2009): 108.

¹² *Ibid.*, “That Root Old Spirit Song,” *Post Road* 17 (2009): 107.

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