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EPIC, SIMILE, ALLEGORY:

PROBLEMS IN THE RECEPTION OF SPENSER AND MILTON

Wm MOECK

Volume One

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1997

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Abstract

Epic, Simile, Allegory:
Problems in the Reception of Spenser and Milton

Wm Moeck

Adviser: Professor Joseph Wittreich

Spenser's Faerie Queene has always been upheld to be allegorical, whereas Milton's Paradise Lost has not generally been received as such. The Miltonic simile has generated a mountain of scholarship, whereas the body of critical literature on the Spenserian simile is relatively slender, considering that The Faerie Queene uses far more extended comparisons than Paradise Lost. Is there a connection between these two facts of reception? The following dissertation addresses the intersection of three fields of discourse in order to probe the relationship between similes in long narrative poems and allegory.

Allegory had long been associated with extended metaphor when viewed from the perspective of the writer, though modernist critics of Spenser first observed that, from the perspective of the reader, the relationship of allegory to its meaning was structured as a simile. After tracing an eclectic history for the reception of epic similes, I embark on the close reading of several examples

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in order to develop a post-modernist hypothesis that Spenser's comparisons are allegorical and Milton's, ironic.

Because Spenser very closely follows the models set by forebears when he illuminates the persons, places, and events of his own tale, the epic similes of The Faerie Queene evince an allegorical reception of the past. The extended comparisons of Paradise Lost, on the other hand, consistently deny the similarity between his story and its predecessors, which gesture suggests a different attitude towards the role of description. Milton's originality has been variously dubbed as sublime, imaginative, and transumptive, these labels being, I conclude, varieties of irony.

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Acknowledgments

Samuel Johnson, who had a knack for the unexpected definition, described a patron in his dictionary as someone whose insolence was repaid with flattery. I cannot call either Joseph Wittreich or Angus Fletcher patrons, for I have rarely sought to flatter them. Nor have they ever condescended to tell me what next to do in the process of having seen my project through to the light. They would probably want to regard themselves as midwives, though their responsibility was, nevertheless, felt in terms of another Platonic analogy. Their differing approaches to scholarship motivated me more in the manner of irascible and concupiscible horses: the one urging an active engagement with the fray of debate; the other, seducing me to contemplative retirement.

Having read every word on Milton I have ever set to paper--in multiple drafts and over the course of several years--Joe deserves special commendation for having patiently regarded the growth in my response to a complicated subject. Never attempting to choreograph the dance, Joe reined me in when I had overstepped the bounds of clarity, or when I was about to tread on the toes of my fellow dancers. Angus, on the other hand, listened in an unending conversation to some of my more far-fetched soundings of Spenser. No matter how strange the airs I put on, he could top them effortlessly with notes even more

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costly and precious. The following dissertation is, in the broadest sense, a study of the relationship between allegory and irony, between which the differences are as real as the differences between people, and into which my friendship with Joe and Angus has given me genuine insight.

Many other readers and interlocutors deserve thanks for their wisdom and support during what has often seemed to me a prolonged emotional crisis rather than a rigorous intellectual endeavor. I am grateful to David Greetham, Richard McCoy, Joan Richardson, Jackie DiSalvo, Patrick Cullen, and Scott Westrem, as well as numerous colleagues and peers. They have all been instrumental to my literary researches in the manner of efficient causes, though they are not the final cause to whom I dedicate the fruits of my learning. After years of thinking about the intersection of epic, simile, and allegory, I have learned perhaps that which I already knew--that literature is only a dream. Yet I have also discovered special moments within literature, and the epic simile is one of them, which prove that "we are close to waking when we dream that we are dreaming" (Novalis 25). This insight I share with my parents, who gave me life, and with Tom, who gave me to love life, and with José, who is life.

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Three Examples and an Introduction

What can I say about the similes of Spenser and Milton that has not been said before? A simile affords a local habitation and a name to a unit of figurative language whereby we can puzzle out larger issues regarding the nature of poetry. But it is also a locale with twisting streets and shifting horizons, and a name for a piece used by Spenser and Milton to put their puzzles together differently. Let us look at three pairs of examples in order to assess a difference in the way Spenser and Milton use epic similes:

1. As when faire *Cynthia*, in darkesome night,
Is in a noyous cloud enueloped,
Where she may find the substaunce thin and light,
Breakes forth her siluer beames, and her bright hed
Discouers to the world discomfited;
Of the poore traueller, that went astray,
With thousand blessings she is heried;
Such was the beautie and the shining ray,
With which faire *Britomart* gaue light vnto the day.

(FQ 3.1.43)

He scarce had ceas't when the superior Fiend
Was moving toward the shore: his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,

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Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the *Tuscan* Artist views
At Ev'ning from the top of *Fesole*,
Or in *Valdarno*, to descry new Lands,
Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.

(PL 1.283-91)

2. Of that same wood it fram'd was cunningly,
Of which *Caduceus* whilome was made,
Caduceus the rod of *Mercury*,
With which he wonts the *Stygian* realmes inuade,
Through ghastly horrour, and eternall shade;
Th'infernall feends with it he can asswage,
And *Orcus* tame, whom nothing can perswade,
And rule the *Furyes*, when they most do rage:
Such vertue in his staffe had eke this Palmer sage.

(FQ 2.12.41)

His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on *Norwegian* hills, to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,
He walkt with to support uneasy steps
Over the burning Marl, not like those steps
On Heaven's Azure, and the torrid Clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with Fire;

PL 1.292-99)

3. As when two rams stird with ambitious pride,

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Fight for the rule of the rich fleeced flocke,
Their horned fronts so fierce on either side
Do meete, that with the terrour of the shocke
Astonied both, stand sencelesse as a blocke,
Forgetfull of the hanging victory:
So stood these twaine, vnmoued as a rocke,
Both staring fierce, and holding idely
The broken reliques of their former cruelty.

(FQ 1.2.16)

Nathless he so endur'd, till on the Beach
Of that inflamed Sea, he stood and call'd
His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't
Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks
In *Vallombrosa*, where th' *Etrurian* shades
High overarch't imbow'r; or scatter'd sedge
Afloat, when with fierce Winds *Orion* arm'd
Hath vext the Red-Sea Coast, whose waves o'erthrew
Busiris and his *Memphian* Chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
The Sojourners of *Goshen*, who beheld
From the safe shore thir floating Carcasses
And broken Chariot Wheels; so thick bestrown
Abject and lost lay these, covering the Flood,
Under amazement of thir hideous change.

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He call'd so loud. . . .[1]

(PL 1.300-14)

The three epic similes from Spenser were easily detached from unrelated episodes in The Faerie Queene; the three examples from Paradise Lost form a sequence in a larger verse paragraph. Many of Milton's readers have written beautifully about his similes, especially the last quoted, and we shall spend many pages considering their remarks in order to analyze an evolution in thought over the centuries about the function of the epic simile. But what can I say about Vallombrosa in advance of trying to figure out what others have said? I discern a closeness in Milton's picture to Spenser's extended comparison about the rams, though the Vallombrosa simile is a triple simile, in fact, the images being compounded together so quickly, that the last picture detailing the "floating Carcasses / And broken Chariot Wheels," is not even linked to the "Angel Forms" with a relative adverb such as as or like. Nor is it clear, as Milton winds to a close, whether the antecedent of "these" is the vanquished Egyptian cavalry or the rebellious demons, or if, in a manner of a speaking, "thir hideous change" refers to the metamorphosis of the one into the other.

Spenser's description of two contestants battling with

---

[1] All citations are from The Faerie Queene, ed. A.C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 1977) and John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (NY: Macmillan, 1957).

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their "broken reliques" for the hand of Duessa is far simpler, to be sure, than the complexity of image heaped upon image in the Vallombrosa simile. It would be forward to suggest without explanation that Spenser's rams are a source for Milton's angels, and without regard for the more obvious analogues the Vallombrosa simile calls to mind. Calling the Ram simile an intertext, on the other hand, would not help matters much, for what is the difference between a source and an intertext? If an intertext is just an unconscious source, I might profess that Milton uses Spenser here without being aware of it; yet I feel nervous about professing to know Milton's mind better than he did. In order to avoid an argument, I shall simply say that Spenser's comparison reminds me a great deal of Milton's, and stress that which seems manifestly true to me: that both similes are about astonishment. Milton gives us the entranced amazement of angelic legions, whereas Spenser represents the dazed forgetfulness of more earthly combatants. It may seem to the reader, and rightly so, that I am thinking of Spenserian precedents for Miltonic similes in a peculiar light, as the next set of similes demonstrates.

The spear simile of Paradise Lost is importantly related to the simile about the Palmer cited from the second book of The Faerie Queene. Yet I admit the more obvious analogue to have produced would have been the one describing

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the club of Orgoglio:

> Such now he marcheth to this man forlorne,
> And left to losse: his stalking steps are
> stayde
> Vpon a snaggy Oke, which he had torne
> Out of his mothers bowelles, and it made
> His mortall mace, wherewith his foemen he
> dismayde.

(FQ 1.7.10)

Pride's oaken mace, however, is not described in a comparison--it is not like an oak. It is one. But then, neither is the description of the hewn pine of Polyphemus given by Aeneas, nor the uprooted olive tree of Odysseus's Cyclops, a simile:

> We saw the giant shepherd stalk before
> His following flock, and leading to the shore--
> A monstrous bulk, deformed, deprived of sight,
> His staff a trunk of pine to guide his steps
> aright.

(Dryden's Aeneis, 3.863-66)

> . . . a huge club lay
> Close by his milk-house, which was now in way
> To drie and season, being an Olive tree
> Which late he feld, and, being greene, must be
> Made lighter for his manage. Twas so vast
> That we resembl'd it to some fit Mast

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> To serve a ship of burthen that was driven
> With twentie Ores, and had a bignesse given
> To beare a huge sea.
>
> (Chapman's Odysses, 9.441-49)

In respect of not using a simile, Spenser more closely follows Homer and Virgil than Milton, who likens the demonic spear to a pine. On the other hand, Spenser changes the material out of which the bludgeon is made to oak, whereas Milton alludes to the Virgilian recipe for the monster's weapon. Milton's spear is, moreover, amazingly well-coordinated with the two adjoining similes: the "leaves" from pines shelter Vallombrosa, which is a river valley in Tuscany, as is Valdarno, whence Galileo took his sightings of celestial bodies.

Like the Vallombrosa simile, the spear-pine comparison is far more complicated than what Spenser gives us, as if Milton were trying to compress Spenser together with Virgil and Homer:

> His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
> Hewn on *Norwegian* hills, to be the Mast
> Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand . . .

The lines purport to convey the dimensions of spear with a double simile or proportion. That is, the spear is to the tallest pine, as that pine, once fashioned into a ship's mast, is to a wand. But how large is a wand? Well, if it is of the sort that we ordinarily picture fairies with,

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themselves tending to the diminutive in stature, the wand must be rather small, thus making Satan's spear out to be quite enormous. And though Norway was conventionally associated with the manufacture of planks for shipping vessels, Milton does not pull a conventional wand out of his hat. It is, in the next line, the very prop with which Satan uneasily supports his steps across the burning marl. The mathematics of the proportion are problematized because the wand doubles as a suitable walking stick for Milton's character. What is to distinguish it from the spear--held a certain way--in the first place? If Satan's spear is not like but <u>is</u> a fairy wand, the proportion collapses upon close inspection, when, just as the pine is transformed into a mast, the spear is confounded with the wand. Is it clear whether we are to regard the wand as potent rod endowed with magical powers, or a crutch used to mask Satan's infirmity? And why does Milton go through the trouble of making a double simile, of creating the illusion of a vehicle or a vessel, when in the end it doesn't hold water?

The answer lies, I think, in Virgil's revision of Homer's description of the cyclops, which, when viewed in certain light, is what Milton is picking up on. Virgil, too, confounds an image of strength with an image of debility; however, his description is not a simile, nor does it belong properly to the Virgilian narrator, but to the speech related to Dido by Aeneas about his travails. The

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Homeric description of the cyclops contains, of course, the similitude between the fresh, green olive tree and the ship's mast; but it is important to underscore that it is the hero speaking about how the tree seemed to him and his companions. That is, while Odysseus tells Alcinous and Arete about his journeys, he draws a comparison in order to drive home his point.

But is a comparison related by one character to another the "same" as an epic simile, or is it only "like" one? If they were the same, we would be able to say more about epic similes in terms of the rhetorical ends they served, by extending the relationship between characters to that between the epic narrator and his audience. But the two descents to the underworld in the Odyssey--one given by the hero, the other by the Homeric narrator--are so different in style and theme that the poem's earliest critics suspected "Homer's" nekyia to be a late interpolation. We might likewise believe that not every reader of Homer lumped the similes belonging to the narrator together with those of the characters. If one thought they didn't carry the same weight of authority, he might entertain an altogether different experience of epic similes in the narration, one divorced from a readily paraphrasible analysis of the psychological motives governing the ways people speak to one another.

Spenser and Milton were also readers of Homer, my point

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being that they seem to me to have regarded his similes so differently, that they re-use the same ones in startlingly different ways. The episode of cyclops in the Odyssey is particularly rich and resonant, because it keeps coming up again and again in epic and romance poetry and because Odysseus first names himself when he taunts the giant. Polyphemus had also been first named when, calling out for help after being blinded by Nobody, he was answered by his comrades. The uprooted olive signifying the giant's strength was, moreover, the very same instrument with which, when it was hardened in the fire and sharpened to a fine point, vengeance was executed in return for the giant's cruelty. We see where Virgil's Aeneas and the Miltonic narrator are coming from, when they conflate an image of strength for one of weakness in their descriptions. But Aeneas drops the comparison of the tree to the mast in his speech, as if the metamorphosis, whereby forests are converted into sailing ships, were already internalized in the image of the blind giant guiding his steps with a giant cane. Milton, on the other hand, restores the superficial appearance of a simile, all the while undermining the difference between the spear and the pine. And by giving his lines to his narrator rather than to a character, Milton seems to want to insinuate himself into the fabric of the poem. He alludes to Virgil because Virgil alludes to Homer, but he goes a step further in adopting the position of an

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Odysseus-like character in his own narration.

Spenser's description of Orgoglio seems pallid in comparison to the descriptions drawn by Homer and Virgil, but only because the details which he omits are given life elsewhere in The Faerie Queene. The "sayling Pine" (1.1.8) turns up in the catalogue of trees leading the way into the Den of Error, the epithet "saylynge" having been previously applied to the fir in Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls (179). Both Spenser and Chaucer, however, are merely following the example that Ovid sets for the evergreen, though less the specimen on display in the arboretum created by Orpheus's song, than the tree used to describe the unfallen world of the Golden Age:

> To visit other Worlds, no wounded Pine
> Did yet from Hills to faithless Seas decline.
>
> (Sandys's Metamorphosis, p. 28)

Ovid's earthly paradise, somewhat like Milton's, is mostly defined by negatives--the pine had not yet declined--while Ovid's Orphic resurrection restores the "up-right Pine, whose leaves like bristles rise" (10.103). The adjectival use of "sayling" by Chaucer and Spenser maintains both the nautical and the vertical senses. Indeed, most of the forested trees visited by Redcrosse and Una in the first canto of The Faerie Queene are taken from the Orphic catalogue, by way of moralizing the more physical attributes Ovid gives them. For example, the variegated hue of the

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maple, described by Ovid as "flect with different granes" (10.93), Spenser interprets as being "seeldom inward sound" (1.1.9), and Duessa's skin, when exposed for all the world to see, is "as rough, as maple rind" (1.8.47).

If Milton's reading of Homer was informed in this instance by clues given him by Virgil, Spenser's description seems mediated by Ovid, or at least interpretations of the Metamorphoses circulating in the Renaissance. Ovid's Polyphemus represented, according to Sandys, a type of "wrath, violence, and dissolute appetite," which could yet be tamed by love (614). Sandys names three vices for Polyphemus, whereas Spenser primarily focuses on disdainful pride in his representation of Orgoglio. Yet no one ever doubted that the seven deadly sins were all interrelated with one another, least of all Milton, who avows in his Christian Doctrine (1.11) that every vice was comprehended by the Fall, whereby "the atrocious offence" of Adam and Eve "broke every part of the law. For what fault is there which man did not commit in committing this sin?" (6:383).

Polyphemous was equated by Renaissance allegorists of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid with a type of sin, but it is the version of the cyclops in the Metamorphoses to which Spenser seems most sensitive, as Ovid metamorphoses a scene of heroic conflict in Homer and Virgil into a romantic interlude. Ovid's cyclops, before he has been blinded, appears the frustrated lover of Galetea rather than the

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antagonist of Odysseus or Aeneas. To Scylla, who is still a beautiful young thing, Galetea narrates her experience of being wooed by a giant:

> Seated on a rock;
> His staffe, a well-growne Pine, before him cast,
> Sufficient for a yard-supporting mast . . .
>
> (Sandys's Metamorphosis, 595)

Galatea uses the same rhetorical device whereby Odysseus conveyed to Alcinous an idea of the giant's size and strength. But Ovid transforms the battle between Odysseus and the cyclops into the love story of Galetea, who had preferred Acis.

Ovid's dramatic revision of Homeric myth is a handy way of thinking about the difference between epic and romance. While he relies on the Greek tragedians and Apollonius for literary precedents in turning warfare into a metaphor for making love, and for esteeming valor as a kind of constancy, it is Plato who partly supplies a rationale. In the Cratylus (398D), Socrates traces his infamous etymology of the word hero by deriving it from eros. The main characters of epic poetry get their name from love:

> [They] were all born because a god fell in love with a goddess, or a mortal man with a goddess. . . . [T]he word 'hero'. . . has only slightly been altered from the name of love (Eros), the source from which the heroes spring, to make a name for

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them. (57)

Socrates was less interested in Achilles or Odysseus than with the heroic dialectitian, the lover of wisdom, nor could he foresee Ovid and Longus, or Dares Phrygius, Guilluame de Meung, and Spenser.

The different emphases on war and love in the epic and romance is a handy distinction, but it also gets slippery, for a romantic element is present even in the Iliad. Hera dons the girdle of Aphrodite to inflame Zeus with passion at the same time as she seeks to divert the course of the Trojan War. The relationship is more complex in Virgil when Aeneas kills Turnus because is inflamed by seeing the "girdle" of Pallas; and because Dido, to whom Aeneas relates his second-hand encounter with the cyclops and his pine, is soon to be "dismayde." The irreconcilable split between wrath and passion in the Aeneid is slightly deceptive, which Dante recognizes, I think, when the narrator of Inferno crosses the threshold to the lower circles of fraud, by removing the cord girdling his waist to summon up the Geryon (16.106). The Girdle of Venus still fascinates Spenser in the episodes concerning Florimell, although the power of the image seems to have been exhausted before the epic of Milton, whose poem drains talismans of their magic in face of the virtue of Adam, Eve, and Paradise.

Spenser, like Ovid, treats the romantic and epic elements in his poem as if they were interchangeable. The

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power of Orgoglio's "mortall mace, wherewith his foemen he dismayde," does not distinguish the giant's capture of Redcrosse from his triumph over Duessa, a dubious conquest. Nevertheless, we never for a moment question that Orgoglio's club is a bad thing, and quite unlike the staff with which the Palmer, in another book, supports his steps. The powers invested in the Palmer's staff banish the monstrous shapes assailing him and Guyon on sea and land outside the Bower of Bliss, and also enable him to restore human shapes to Acrasia's lovers. The simile of the Palmer's staff is more allusive than the other two extended comparisons cited, more like Milton's, insofar as its proper names refer us to classical precedents.

But Spenser's allusiveness is also quite different from Milton's. I suggested a trick in the Vallombrosa and the Spear simile, that something peculiar was going on. In the Vallombrosa simile, it was unclear whether the "hideous change" referred to the angels or the cavalrymen. In the Spear simile, the introduction of the line qualifying the wand, "He walkt with to support uneasy steps," confused the proportion set in place. The "trick" in each case seems too calculated to be mistaken for a slip on Milton's behalf. I tried to explain the reason I thought the Vallombrosa simile was related to Spenser's ram simile; I am in the process of fathoming how the Spear simile stands in relation to the Palmer's simile; but I don't think that either example from

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The Faerie Queene is deceptive, or that Spenser is trying to pull the wool over our eyes.

Spenser writes of the Palmer's staff, that "Of that same wood it fram'd was cunningly, / Of which *Caduceus* whilome was made." That is, his staff is not identical with the more famous caduceus. Nor is it of "better" quality, nor framed "more" cunningly. It is only of the "same wood." Spenser defers his wand to the magic powers of the caduceus formerly described by Homer, Virgil, and Ovid: when Hermes conducts the souls of the slain suitors to the underworld; when Jupiter dispatches Mercury to prompt Aeneas to abandon Dido; and when Mercury primps and preens for a date with Herse. Virgil and Ovid, however, make changes to the staff of Hermes, which the narrator of the Odyssey had called a "golden rod" (Chapman, 24.1). The element of gold is transferred by Virgil to the winged sandals; whereas in Ovid, it is the cloak carefully adjusted around Mercury's shoulders that is golden.

The Virgilian narrator is mute on the subject of the wand's composition:

> *Hermes* obeys; with golden pinions binds
> His flying feet, and mounts the western winds;
> And whether o'er the seas or earth he flies,
> With rapid force they bear him down the skies.
> But first he grasps within his awful hand
> The mark of sovereign power, his magic wand:

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With this, he draws the ghosts from hollow graves
With this he drives them down the Stygian waves,
With this he seals in sleep the wakeful sight,
And eyes, though closed in death, restores to light.

(Dryden's Aeneis, 4.350-59)

Pope observes that Virgil has no precedent for mentioning necromancy in his copy of the description of the "golden pinions" from the Iliad (1138). When Hermes descends to Priam, only the wand's soporific powers are mentioned: "the wand that causes sleep to fly, / Or in soft slumbers seals the wakeful eye" (24.421-2). Pope is partly right, for the wand's force to command the dead is only described in relation to the psychopompos of the Odyssey: "The wooers' soules (that yet retained abod / Amide their bodies) call'd in dreadfull rout / Forth to th' Infernals, who came murmuring out" (Chapman, 24.2-4). The Aeneid juxtaposes the powers of the caduceus in the two Homeric epics, which Dryden synthesizes more vividly by translating sleep as a metaphor for death. Yet Virgil is oddly silent about mentioning that the wand is made of gold.

In the Metamorphoses, the narrator is likewise silent about the material it is made of:

He curles his haire; his mantle, wrought with gold,
He in the most becoming garb doth fold;

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> And his fine feet adornes: then, in his hand
> Takes his sleep-causing and expelling wand.
>
> (Sandys, 100)

Ovid's caduceus operates with the same soporific powers it possessed in the Iliad, though in the previous book Mercury lulled Argus to sleep with it before lopping off the monster's head. That is, we infer the same powers described in the Odyssey through Ovid's narration. By dispatching the soul of Argus to the underworld, the magic wand in the Metamorphoses, like that of the Aeneid, combines both those powers described separately in the Iliad and Odyssey, though Ovid achieves a different effect than Virgil. Yet in contrast to Homer, neither Virgil nor Ovid is specific about what substance the wand is made of. Virgil and Ovid are confident about changing the club of the cyclops to pine, but they seem more hesitant in talking about the magic wand of Hermes.

Why does Spenser say that the caduceus is made of wood? When Ubaldo and Charles are en route to rescue Rinaldo from the charms of Armida in the Gerusalemme liberata, Tasso is explicit about calling the magic wand with which they subdue enchantments "golden" (15.49); nor is Tasso shy of calling Michael's wings "golden feathers" when the angel wings his way to rout the demons back to Hell (9.60). But whenever the caduceus comes up again in The Faerie Queene, Spenser never specifies what kind of wood it is; much less does he

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gild it as Homer had. The rod was glossed by Natales Comes as signifying "the divine reason and wisdom of God" (qtd. in Variorum, 1:370) and interpreted by Sandys to be a "reconciler of dissention" (99). Spenser uses the caduceus in its peace-making aspect, when Cambina soothes the warring brothers:

> In her right hand a rod of peace shee bore,
> About the which two serpents weren wound,
> Entayled mutually in louely lore,
> And by the tailes together firmely bound,
> And both were with one oliue garland crownd,
> Like to the rod which *Maias* sonne doth wield,
> Wherewith the hellish fiends he doth confound.
>
> (4.3.42)

And Spenser uses it as an agent of Jove's divinity, when the son of Maia momentarily arrests the revolt of Mutabilitie:

> . . . He on her shoulder laid
> His snaky-wreathed Mace, whose awfull power
> Doth make both Gods and hellish fiends affraid. . .
>
> (7.6.18)

On the one hand, the bold innovations that Virgil and Ovid make upon Homer's design, as well as their silences, allow room for Spenser's own invention. But while the Palmer simile shares the recalcitrance of Virgil and Ovid in

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forbearing to be exact, it also suggests that Spenser thought they were trying to avoid having to mention something more unspeakable. What if the caduceus was really made out of olive or pine or oak? What would distinguish the "snaky-wreathed Mace" of Cambina from Orgoglio's "mortall mace"?

The problem is that every elf and his brother in The Faerie Queene sports a magic wand at some time or another. The "Geauntesse" in the battle with Satyrane carries a "mace" as well as "sun-broad shield" (3.7.40), against which the fairy knight's formidable lance shatters, though "the beame in bignesse [was] like a mast." I guess one could argue that the Palmer, unlike Orgoglio and the Giantess, is not a fairy. But Guyon and Cambina are elves, and the difference between semi-historical and out-and-out fictitious personages in Spenser's poem rapidly becomes as difficult to tell apart as that between Christian and Saracen in Ariosto. The icon of the goddess in the temple of Isis holds "a long white sclender wand" (5.7.7). The "royall virgin" predicted of Merlin also wields a "white rod" (3.3.49), while Merlin and Busirane both are depicted "writing strange characters in the ground" (3.3.14) and "Figuring straunge characters of his art" (3.12.31), though with what, we never find out. All the same, we do not think of the Palmer and Orgoglio as the same kinds of figures in The Faerie Queene. Nor are the Giantesse and Satyrance, or

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Busirane and Merlin, or Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis, intended to be mistaken for one another, despite their similarities.

It would be foolish to say that Spenser's version of the club of Polyphemus and the caduceus of Hermes are the same thing viewed from different angles, except that Spenser goes out of his way to make the Palmer's staff out of an unidentified wood, as if identifying it would have implicated him in a kind of error. Perhaps Spenser thought that Virgil and Ovid were only being decorous in hushing up the matter of Homer's caduceus. But the bough plucked by Aeneas to gain entrance to Tartarus is half-gold, like the caduceus, and half-wood, like the club. And when Jove sends Mercury to deceive Argos, Ovid explicitly transforms the caduceus into a "Rod: / With which he drives his Gotes (like one that feeds / The bearded Heard) and sings t'his slender Reeds" (Sandys 44). Does Spenser sense that the sacred truths hidden in the ancient caduceus cannot be voiced without the violation of a taboo? Do such reservations make him give to Mutabilitie, when she ascends to the throne of the Moon and threatens to strike her, a "golden wand" (7.6.13)?

Spenser and Milton wrote in response to the same books, but the stories they come up with are quite different, and the epic similes of Milton seem to effect a commentary on those of Spenser. The Ram and the Vallombrosa simile are

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both about astonishment, but Spenser looks upon the charmed state of his contestants as a human frailty, whereas the languor of Milton's demons is less innocent. While both the Palmer simile and the Spear simile are about transformation or mutability, Spenser represents the caduceus as an agent of change, whereas Milton, as if to do Spenser one better, enacts the magical transformation of the spear into the wand. Doing Spenser one better, Milton spells out the relation between the Spear and Palmer simile by giving us the simile of the Locusts, when Satan hushes the demonic throng:

> As when the potent Rod
> Of *Amram*'s Son in *Egypt's* evil day
> Wav'd round the Coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud
> Of *Locusts*, warping on the Eastern Wind,
> That o'er the Realm of impious *Pharaoh* hung
> Like Night, and darken'd all the Land of *Nile* . .
>
> (1.338-44)

Sandys had explained a generation before Paradise Lost that Circe bewitched the crew of Odysseus by "waving her rod over them. Wherein the devill perhaps aped that rod of *Moses* wherewith hee performed such wonders" (652). And Milton uses the eighth plague brought down upon the Egyptians in Exodus (10:12) to describe the powers of Satan's spear, and to show that the power of every pagan caduceus is a metaphor for the rod of Moses. When thrown to the ground, the wooden

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"caduceus" of Moses and Aaron turned to serpents devours the snakes of the Egyptian wizards (Exodus 4:3, 7:11). Thus Milton puts into words something that is hardly recondite, but which exists only tacitly in Spenser. The Locust simile, far from creating an ironic disparity between Satan and Moses, illustrates the parody of the divine inherent in the nature of Satan.

The Locust simile renders explicit the hidden knowledge, implied in Spenser to be a secret that Virgil and Ovid found safer to avoid. The rod and club of Hermes and Polyphemus come back in The Faerie Queene in almost infinite variety of maces, wands, spears, and sticks, all refracted through the lens of Judeo-Christian myth. Spenser dilates the invention of pagan literature into a kaleidoscopic array of good and bad magical instruments, and sometimes it is hard to keep them separate without some kind of divine dispensation. Milton compresses the same theme in order to make a point: good and bad wands in Paradise Lost are one and the same; the problem lies in the illusion of human perspective. The secret wisdom of the allegorists, once put into words, shifts the burden of interpretation to the individual, and Milton's shift in emphasis seems to me a move away from allegory. The difference between Milton and Spenser in this regard appears most strikingly in the last set of similes.

Milton compares Satan's shield to the moon, but the

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moon as seen through a telescope. Spenser also compares the shield of Radigund to the moon:

> And on her shoulder hung her shield, bedeckt
> Vppon the bosse with stones, that shined wide,
> As the faire Moone in her most full aspect,
> That to the Moone it mote be like in each respect.
> (5.5.3)

Radigund's buckler paraphrases the description of the arming of the hero in Homer's Iliad:

> His greaves first used, his goodly curets on his bosome shin'd,
> His sword, his shield, that cast a brightness from it like the Moone.
> (Chapman 19.358-59)

Yet the emphasis on perspective in the shield simile of Paradise Lost points to a different analogue from The Faerie Queene. In order to describe the doubtful quality of the light in the Cave of Mammon, Spenser asks us to envision a dying lamp, or:

> Or as the Moone cloathed with clowdy night,
> Does shew to him, that walkes in feare and sad affright. (2.12.29)

Spenser is no longer paraphrasing Homer but Virgil, though the source comparison in the Aeneid, of course, concerns neither battle equipment nor the atmospheric

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conditions of Tartarus, but the climactic moment in which Aeneas, near the exact center of the epic, comes upon the shade of his former lover:

> Herr wofull Dydo late arry'd did rawnge,
> in that wyld wood with wownd yet fresh to see,
> Her good Eneas did agnyze eftsoone,
> by glims of lyght moche lyke the rysing moone.
>
> (Haringtons Aeneid, st. 66)

Harington's translation also allows us to hear Spenser's Den of Error, in which the reflection from Redcrosse's shield cast "a litle glooming light much like a shade" (1.1.14), but it enfeebles the more purposeful ambiguity of the original, rendered more crisply by Dryden:

> Not far from these Phoenician Dido stood,
> Fresh from her wound, her bosom bathed in blood,
> Whom when the Trojan hero hardly knew,
> Obscure in shades and with a doubtful view
> (Doubtful as he who sees through dusky night,
> Or thinks he sees, the moon's uncertain light) . .
>
> (Dryden's Aeneis, 6.610-15)

The revision within the line from "sees" to "thinks he sees" better captures the subjectivity of perception on which Milton capitalizes in the shield simile, and subsequently, when a "belated Peasant sees / Or dreams he sees" (1.783-84).

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The Virgilian narrator tells us that Aeneas is to Dido as an observer is to the moon, whereas in Spenser, the shadows suffusing the cave of Mammon are likened to the gloom cast by the dimmed moon. Spenser transfers the uncertainty of Aeneas to the dubious quality of light in his cave, which he compares to another kind of dubious light, but Milton goes a step further. Virgil describes how Dido appears to Aeneas, while the Miltonic narrator is in the process of relating the appearance of Satan's shield to us, thus making us partake in the astronomer's vision; and the shift from active to passive perception forces us to ask: Who is the astronomer?

The return of Galileo's vision in two other instances from Paradise Lost is characterized with increasing doubtfulness. Satan appears again as a blot on the scutcheon of the sun:

> There lands the Fiend, a spot like which perhaps
> Astronomer in the Sun's lucent Orb
> Through his glaz'd Optic Tube yet never saw.
>
> (3.588-90)

Now we are seeing something quite unlike that which the astronomer gazes on, Milton says, while more forcibly suggesting the defectiveness of the astronomer's vision. The moon's spottiness ought already have given us pause, when the unnamed astronomer was able to translate the stains and specks apparent to his eye into something recognizable.

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Did Milton's choice of coordinating conjunctions, "new Lands, / Rivers *or* mountains," mean it did not matter which Galileo was seeing? Or did the word *or* imply the difficulty he had in discerning objects, which faultiness the third simile renders expressly imaginary:

> As when by night the Glass
> Of *Galileo*, less assur'd, observes
> Imagin'd Lands and Regions in the Moon .(5.261-63)

Raphael descends to earth from a long way off, and his eagle eye scans the cedars crowning the garden of Paradise with surety. The presumption of the astronomer's endeavor is rendered most strongly when he is named, and as a result of the three increasingly strange comparisons, we cease to partake in Galileo's myopia. Milton represents what he has to show us by three gradations: first, in such a way that we must adopt the viewpoint of somebody else; secondly, as like something never before seen; and thirdly, as unlike something imaginary. These patterns, which I shall subsequently dub as "metamorphic," "more than," and "fabled" comparisons, are repeated throughout Paradise Lost.

Milton begins with the subjectivity of perception present in Virgil to give us an extraordinary kind of objectivity, though Virgil was already acting on hints in the Homeric original. The shield to moon simile used by Homer for Achilles is, in fact, elaborated into a double comparison:

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His sword, his shield, that cast a brightness from
it like the Moone.
And as from sea sailers discerne a harmfull fire,
let runne
By herdsmen's faults, till all their stall flies
up in wrastling flame;
Which being on hils is seene farre off, but being
alone, none came
To give it quench, at shore no neighbours, and at
sea their friends
Driven off with tempests: such a fire from his
bright shield extends
His ominous radiance, and in heaven imprest his
fervent blaze.

(Chapman's Iliad, 19.359-65)

The shepherds' fires, as seen by the storm-tossed sailors, evoke an uncertainty in perception by setting up an impassible gulf between the seer and the seen, though the second comparison is wholly detachable from the one about the moon. To say that both similes illustrate the same quality would be true, but it would also be an interpretation, which, I suppose, is partly in what Virgil's advance over Homer consisted.

Milton and Virgil utilize the moon as cause for suspicion in the episode of Satan's shield and Aeneas's underworld journey. Yet how unlike is Spenser's simile

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about Britomart, in which the comfort afforded by the moon is not modelled on Virgil, but a plagiarization of a different Homeric simile. Homer relates the Trojan watch fires at night:

> Fires round about them shinde.
> As when about the silver Moone, when aire is free from winde
> And stars shine cleare, to whose sweete beames high prospects and the brows
> Of all steepe hils and pinnacles thrust up themselves for showes
> And even the lowly vallies joy to glitter in their sight,
> When the unmeasur'd firmament bursts to disclose her light
> And all the signes in heaven are seene that glad the shepheard's hart;
> So many fires disclosde their beames, made by the Troyan . . .
>
> (8.486-93)

When Britomart raises her visor at the castle of Malecasta, Spenser likens her to the moon in the manner set forth by Homer. The revelation of the moon is an experience of joy and beauty in Spenser, whose substitution of the weary traveller for the shepherd unites both of Homer's moon similes: the watch-fire and the arming of the hero. That

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is, the moon similes of Milton and Spenser both stem ultimately from Homer and Virgil, though Spenser follows his forebears more exactly in every instance, whereas Milton more radically compresses the imagery already reduced by Virgil. Milton synthesizes and distills, whereas the changes made by Spenser to the epic similes of Homer and Virgil are more syncretic, more an amplification of the original imagery into a miniature ecphrasis.

A useful way to think about the role of the epic simile in The Faerie Queene is as a kind of ecphrasis, in contrast to which it is striking to consider that, in the one place in Paradise Lost Milton could have given a full-blown elaboration of the figures on Satan's shield, he chooses not to do so. The ecphrastic simile about Britomart closely follows the moon simile of Homer, which, in his translation of the Iliad, Pope called "the most beautiful night-piece that can be found in poetry" (419). As a "A Night-Piece," Spenser's epic simile is re-translated in Wordsworth's nature lyric:

> --The sky is overcast
> With a continuous cloud of texture close,
> Heavy and wan, all whitened by the Moon,
> Which through that veil is indistinctly seen,
> A dull, contracted, circle, yielding light
> So feebly spread that not a shadow falls,
> Chequering the ground--from rock, plant, tree, or

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tower.

At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
Startles the pensive traveller while he treads
His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
Bent earthwards; he looks up--the clouds are split
Asunder,--and above his head he sees
The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens.
There, in a black-blue vault she sails along,
Followed by the multitudes of stars, that, small
And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
Drive as she drives: how fast they wheel away,
Yet vanish not!--the wind is in the tree,
But they are silent;--still they roll along
Immeasurably distant; and the vault,
Built round by those white clouds, enormous
clouds,
Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
At length the Vision closes; and the mind,
Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.

(2:208-9)

I copied the poem in its entirety, for nothing else comes before or after, in order to ask if it makes sense to think of the Romantic nature lyric as an epic simile without the epic. It is a strange thought, though Wordsworth also wrote

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a short lyric about "Vallombrosa," and few will argue that ideas about nature were in voluble transition between the time of Spenser and Wordsworth. However, my study is not expressly about nature, but about the relation between simile and allegory.

What is the relation between simile and allegory? The question forms the basis of the following reception history and close reading of examples, though it could only be answered definitively if we knew the answer to another question first: what is a relation? A verbal telling? The visual demarcation of space? A cousin twice-removed? In the practical half of this introduction, I sought to foreground how Spenser and Milton appear to be responding differently to the same sources. And by sketching this difference throughout the next several hundred pages, I hope to make the case that the sheer conventionality of Spenser's borrowings is allegorical, whereas the originality of Milton's imitation is not. Nevertheless, a truism of critics has been to think of epic similes as having to do with nature, the cliche being that the figure of speech connects the materials of the narrator's story with a fund of experience, drawn from the natural world and common to both author and reader. Indeed, in the evolution of critical thought from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, epic similes were inextricably bound up with nature, but a nature understood first to be mediated by

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ideas about the sublime, and then, about the imagination. Thus, an investigation into the relationship between simile and allegory can foreground particular examples only with the shadow of nature looming in the background.

What is the relationship between simile and allegory in Spenser's Faerie Queene and Milton's Paradise Lost? The following pages seek to elucidate how a qualitative difference between the similes of the two narratives necessitates a different description of the function of allegory in each poem. To state my case as simply as possible, I propose that allegory in the Faerie Queene is primarily a mode, whereas Paradise Lost represents allegory as if it were a genre; and that what makes possible these two different ways of treating allegory is a split down the middle of our thinking about how extended comparisons function in the first place. Our thinking, after all, has not advanced much towards answering fundamental questions about the function of making a comparison. Though a simile seems to be a species of analogical thinking, can we say whether such a process of thought is either visual or verbal? How could we know if we were only able to respond by making another analogy, if we could only replace one relation with another?

By way of an introduction, I want to say something simple about allegory, but a reader acquainted with its rapidly growing bibliography suspects too well with what

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difficulty any author hazards a simultaneously true and intelligible analysis of the subject. I intend nothing mystical nor obscure in proposing that allegory can be regarded as either a mode or a genre. By a mode, I mean only to give a name to a way of looking at the world, in the way we casually say that so-and-so is a pessimist or an optimist, or that someone else is a idealist or a realist. The words mood or frame of mind would serve equally well to depict an allegorical attitude--one in which the world of appearances presents itself as full of omens and portents speaking to a higher reality. By contrast, allegory located as a genre means that we are singling out one special kind of composition to be different from others. We are assuming in this case that allegory is the written record of a certain kind of vocal address or "other speaking," which itself departs from a normative, transparent use of language. Allegory's associations with darkness stem from this sense of the term, the obliquity of the words being the mirror of an indirect rhetorical purpose.

I am thus using the words mode and genre quite differently: the former to evoke a way of looking or seeing; the latter to denote a way of telling. Thinking about allegory as a mode is a broader, more inclusive approach to that which the idea of a genre attempts to define more narrowly. A mode is broader and more inclusive than a genre because it is easier to say, nowadays as it was in Spenser's

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time, that "everything is allegorical," rather than to figure out how and in what cases something might not be functioning allegorically. The allegorists of Spenser's day were a dying breed, however, and were superceded by a growing number of literary critics increasingly skeptical about whether the approaches to pagan texts taken in the past had been rationally justified.

The development of genre studies in the Renaissance equipped future critics with an instrument that helped them to mark off allegorical poetry from other kinds. But not only did the number of works included under the allegorical heading dwindle to a perilous few by the time of the Romantics, the reasoning adduced to explain how generic allegory functioned also became increasingly rigid and unserviceable except in the abstract. As a result, critics of the present century began the rehabilitation of the term in order to deal more adequately with poems like that of Spenser, but in so doing they opened a Pandora's box. More and more works of literature came to be regarded as allegories, until with poststructuralist theorists, the foregrounding of interpretation, and the dissolution of genre studies, it is once again patently unclear whether any work of literature could be said to be non-allegorical. The present quandary, however, puts us in the unexpected position of being better able to understand what it might have felt like to have lived in the allegorical climate of

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the Renaissance, when readers were also a little uncertain whether there was such a thing as literature.

On a practical level, let me admit at the outset, neither describing allegory as poststructuralists such as Benjamin or De Man do, or defining it as literary critics such as Lewis and Tuve used to do, is wholly satisfactory. It is a mystery as to whether either the genre or the mode has precedence in the history of ideas, or even if one is the logical extension of the other. The two appear to be simply different, though they seem to be as closely connected as chicken and egg. And, like those for the chicken and those for the egg, arguments can be made one way or the other as to which came first. Indeed, my hunch is that The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost make just such different arguments.

As far as Spenser goes, the allegorical mode is useful in depicting the mood out of which sprang Renaissance interpretations of Virgil, Ovid, and Ariosto, and towards which Spenser appears highly sympathetic. But the mode becomes problematic as it blurs the distinction between interpretation and composition. That is, if Spenser's assimilation of Virgil and Ovid in The Faerie Queene was as allegorically like-minded as the interpreters upon whom he relied, we become hard-pressed to explain how his achievement differs from the mystics, mythographers, and allegorical interpreters such as Alain de Lille, or Natali

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Conti and Sperone Speroni. No one wants to say that creation is exactly the same as interpretation. Presenting a like situation, the Commedia of Dante and the Cosmographia of Bernard of Tours are both allegorical world-pictures, but Dante was at pains to discriminate between the allegories of the poets and those of the theologians, though his reasoning failed to convince all his readers that the Commedia didn't belong to the second camp. While Bernard's version of the Judeo-Creation through the lens of the Timaeus describes created nature with an unPlatonic wonder at the material world that is prophetic of the Mutabilitie Cantos, it is yet important nowadays to remind ourselves that Dante is great as a story-teller, however one chooses to define narrative poetry, and that Bernard stinks. Fortunately, no member of the School of Chartres survives to take umbrage at my vilification. But it is equally unfortunate if we suppose that any one ever enjoyed reading the Cosmographia as much as the Commedia. Spenser's achievement is difficult to gauge on account of the vicissitudes of literary taste, but merely because tastes change, we oughtn't throw the baby out with the bath water. Literary pleasure has become a vulnerable sticking point on which to erect any critique, but any study that dismisses it out of hand must inevitably render The Faerie Queene duller and less original than it is.

On the other hand, the allegorical genre is helpful for

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culling the themes and motifs which distinguish Spenser's story from those of others, but it becomes an albatross around our necks if we are put in the awful position of having to explicate a secret meaning for his poem. Allegory as a genre has become a problem because we have taken to heart what the rhetoricians used to say about it: we have to find out an "other" meaning for Spenser's poem because he says it is an allegory. But the rhetorical definition of the term ultimately affords no insight into how we, as readers, can recognize the allegorical genre to differ from other kinds. Nor was there any indication among Spenser's coterie of readers that, when The Faerie Queene was first published, anyone was stumped by Guyon's faint any more than, when A Tale of Two Cities was published, a voice among Dickens's reading public cried out to discover the mystery behind Madame DeFarge's compulsive knitting. Questions directed towards the content of literature are what allegories, by their rhetorical definition, seem to call out for. But what if Spenser is as realistic an author as Dickens? We need be on guard that the distinction between allegory and realism is a red herring. Maybe what changed between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries was our notion of the real, even though Dickens, whose historical romance is set in the previous century, does not antiquate his vocabulary to approximate the effects of the Gothic novels then being written.

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As a compromise between having to choose between allegory as either a mode or genre, I am proposing that the concept of the allegorical genre was a rationale present in Spenser's mind, the spirit of which is more accurately reflected by the allegorical mode. His poem, however, is not identical with the allegorical mode, but rather an extension of it. By an extension, I mean an amplification, or a doubling, or the dressing up of old stuff in new garb. That is, the Christianized and Neoplatonic interpretations of pagan myths with which he was acquainted form the foundation on which Spenser builds: they are his basis for loosely weaving together episodes from Virgil, Ovid, and Ariosto. But Spenser differs from exegetes such as Landino, Conti, and Speroni, by taking the characters and places figuring in the plots of the Aeneid, Metamorphoses, and Orlando Furioso and giving them new names. Spenser, unlike the exegetes, does not explicate his forebears in regard to religious or philosophical doctrine, but makes Virgil, Ovid, and Ariosto look new, while making his own world seem archaic. His originality consists in making his versions of tales seem older than they are, not alone by the patina of antique diction, but by foregrounding nearly exact replicas of the epic similes of Virgil, Ovid, and Ariosto. Their epic similes stand as citations or footnotes in the midst of The Faerie Queene, to which they lend authority. In order, then, to understand the way in which allegory is the

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assimilation of past literary works, or the way that allegories depend on pretexts, a study of the relationship between allegory and epic simile is essential.

But what happens when the mood is shrugged off and the rationale for the genre is recognized to be a defense? Neither allegorical mode nor genre alone adequately addresses the difficulties raised by Paradise Lost, but the problem is of a different order than that of The Faerie Queene. If Spenser's poem suggests that the concept of an allegorical genre was framed to defend a certain way of looking at things, Milton's poem suggests the reverse. The interpretations foisted upon pagan myths in the Renaissance were for Milton a pack of lies arising out of mistaken notions about epic and romance poetry and the inability to explain their function in secular terms. Milton's reading of Virgil and Ovid was primarily literary insofar as the worth of the Aeneid and the Metamorphoses was defined for him within the humanist tradition as exerting a civilizing and ethical influence, rather than mystically conceived as concealing divine truths. But what kind of frame of mind would we call Milton's, if it wasn't allegorical?

We might until recently have said that Milton's attitude toward poetry, because it was literary, was closer to our own, especially had he written a novel like Moll Flanders instead of Paradise Lost. Milton had little use for allegory, because it belonged for him to the realm of

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the fabled lie rather than the province of the disguised truth, and the slight-seeming difference between a disguised truth and a fabulous lie is crucial. On the one hand, he could blame the allegorical genre of fiction as responsible for a whole approach to literature with which he would have no truck. And we can see that Milton within Paradise Lost contains allegory within the bounds of specific episodes, as if it were just one more genre to be represented alongside others. But if Milton's poem seeks to contain allegory, the unfortunate result for us is that we have no name for the container.

As I see it, allegory in Paradise Lost presents a special problem for two reasons, although these two reasons, when tackled individually, are not sufficient to be alarming. The poem is not problematic because it dresses up a plot from the Genesis with themes assimilated from antiquity, for it had been preceded by a long line of scriptural redactions decked out with pagan trappings. Yet these retellings of biblical events usually took the form of dramas, and dramatic poetry--no matter what we think of it now--had not traditionally been subject to the merciless analogizing of allegorical interpreters. Secondly, it was not Milton's understanding of pagan mythology as a distortion of the one true myth that which distinguished him from party hard-liners such as Tertullian, Savonarola, Cornelius Agrippa, or Gosson and Prynne. But the squint-

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eyed Zoili of the history did not habitually write poetry. Paradise Lost is stunning in the conjunction of these two separate elements--that it is the poem itself that represents all other myths to be fallacious--because there was in Milton's time no category for a true poem. And while it is easy for us to forget that Defoe's story, too, begins in a prison-house with a character so steeped in vice that her real name cannot be given, it is impossible, I maintain, to be altogether comfortable with a secular narrative in which God has an active role, because He thumbs His nose at any notion of mimesis we can come up with.

Mimesis and poetics, to be sure, go back a long time. But no Renaissance critic, in sorting out the relationship of the epic and romance to reality, ever had to deal with a literary God as more than an instigator of the action. On the one hand, the medieval drama frequently gave a speaking role to the Judeo-Christian God, but these plays were not read until well after Milton as literature. The neo-Latin epics of the Italian Renaissance, more conspicuously poetic in ambition, represented the deity obliquely rather than explicitly, though they veered continually closer towards Paradise Lost's achievement of giving God a character. Until Milton, mimetic theories did not really have to give a place to God. No writer in antiquity had been obliged to nail down a function more precise for the pagan deities in literature than to regard them as personifications, or the

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outward projections of human attributes. Aristotle and Horace set an example, perhaps, by not treating the Olympic pantheon very seriously, but then they did not have to contend with a distinction between sacred and secular texts. That distinction was blurred by the allegorists of the Middle Ages, who rooted revelations from out of even homely incidents in the epic. They took the pagan gods seriously, as metaphors standing for the angels and demons of their own religious myth, or as having represented the scaffolding of a complex philosophical framework.

Literary critics like Aristotle and Sidney were able to evade the issue of the divine in their poetics with the concept of mimesis. From the Aristotelian account of poetry to be the imitation of an invisible ideal world, to the Sidneyesque version of it as the creation of a new and improved nature, mimesis was employed to express something perhaps similar to the allegorists, but at a one-step remove. Classical literary theory collapsed with the Roman Empire and the triumph of Christianity, and when its ashes were rekindled by Renaissance critics, their theories, too, proved unstable. That the Renaissance critic should find the relationship between poet and poem to parallel that between the Author of Creation and His Book of Nature was one matter. But it was another matter entirely, when, alternately, he drew into his account the idea that the poet was a mouthpiece of God. Sidney let himself in for trouble

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when he pronounced the literary value of narrative episodes and hymns from the Bible, and when he supposed that certain kinds of poetry veiled sacred wisdom. He and others could explain with some confidence the way that mimesis operated in comedy and tragedy, the epic and romance. But the juxtaposition in their poetics, of the vatic element of scripture alongside with the classical notion of the poet as artificer, was about to backfire.

No one was prepared for the combination of genres that Milton came up with. While the literary value of Milton's achievement was immediately hailed, its theological propriety was often doubted because it deployed the Judeo-Christian deity as a character in a story featuring allegorical personages as well. That debate excites us no longer, for values have changed since the Renaissance, and will continue to change in a hand-in-hand march with a parade of permutations in the meaning of mimesis. In retrospect, Paradise Lost seems to have paved the way for new versions of mimesis, such as were to valorize sincerity in the lyric, psychological verisimilitude in the drama, and realism in the novel. Milton's poem anticipated these qualities, but it resisted definition in its totality then, and it does so now because it stands on the cusp of different mimetic traditions. Spenser, I had said, replicates the epic similes of others. How, then, do historical figures such as Columbus and Galileo manage to

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get into those of Milton?

We call Paradise Lost a container, or compendium of literary forms, of those past and those to come. We can fragment the poem into its constituent parts, the sum of which fall short of its total effect as narrative whole, and encouraged by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, we can confidently call it an "encyclopedia" (23), but without knowing exactly what we mean: for what is the form of an encyclopedia? The Faerie Queene, too, is encyclopedic in regard to the past, but allegory is not one of the entries. I think every honest critic will admit that Paradise Lost is a much more satisfying unity than The Faerie Queene; even the dishonest ones will not have objected when I called the informing spirit of Spenser's mind allegorical; but all critics are equally at a loss to describe the mode in which Milton's narrative whole was written. Is it literal or symbolic? Prophetic or transumptive? Each appellation holds a grain of truth, but if we can not fix on a single one, it is perhaps because each is a different way of grappling with the same thing: it is a way of naming the non-allegorical.

I had wanted to say something simple about allegory, something simultaneously true and easy to comprehend. The provisional conclusions I have sketched will strike some readers as a tissue of unsubstantiated generalizations, or as having missed the point altogether in accounting for the transition in literary history between Spenser to Milton.

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Indeed, my conclusions are not conclusions at all, so much as a hypothesis or an inference I made to keep afloat upon a tumultuous sea of books. I cannot prove that Spenser's similes are allegorical or that Milton's are not, but I did want to offer a logically consistent framework for dealing with the problem stemming from two mutually opposed ways of thinking about subject. The distinction between allegory as genre of composition and allegory as mode of interpretation is not a critical convention peculiar to me, but it is also a Scylla and Charybdis when it comes to dealing with Spenser and Milton. By having drawn the outer dimensions of the spectral castle in which I chase epic similes and their critical literature from room to room, I hope at least to have forewarned readers whose interests lie elsewhere, and to have anticipated for others more sympathetic, the direction I am following.

Because the extended comparisons of Spenser's The Faerie Queene and Milton's Paradise Lost differ qualitatively, we need to describe the nature of allegory in each poem differently. And by a qualitative difference, I am beginning with a fact no more subjective than the words used by previous critics. Located according to the kinds of things that have been said about epic similes, the critical heritage on Spenser and Milton reveals a discrepancy, if not an abyss, in reception. Milton's similes were instantly recognized to be something special. Nearly every book-

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length treatment of Paradise Lost has indexed some kind of commentary on similes, if it doesn't devote a chapter to the subject. Meanwhile, the attempt to gather together a bibliography of the scattered remarks on the Spenserian simile has proven a remarkably more elusive goal, considering with how much greater frequency epic similes appear in The Faerie Queene than Paradise Lost. Spenserian commentary is often buried within a larger treatment of themes and motifs in the poem, as if there were something utterly conventional about Spenser's use of trope, or as if the difference between an image and a trope in Spenser was not as clearly demarcated. The chorus of Miltonists is paradoxically the more vocal not only on account of the relative infrequency of his similes, but also because it has occurred to no one to ask the reason that the weight of tradition in Spenser should be so silencing a burden for his critics. Why should the conventional attributes of his similes be so unspeakable? Is it because they were allegorical all along in a sense now unfamiliar to us?

What follows is a lengthy two-part history of thinking about epic similes, covering the Renaissance discussion of them in terms of the imitation of precedents, the Enlightenment and Romantic critiques of similes as imitations of nature, the Victorian focus on style, and the more formal concerns of the twentieth century. Modernist critics first observed that the structure of allegory is

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like that of simile, though that observation was only ever made in discussions of Spenser. And my reception history was inspired by a very great Modernist on Milton, Christopher Ricks, whose focus on an eighteenth-century dilemma I expand forwards and backwards and supplement with commentary on Spenser. Yet in sketching the development of two separate critical vocabularies, I do not aim to prove any past Spenserian or Miltonist wrong. Their difference is my evidence for two different ways of dealing with the subject.

The wealth of material canvassed, however, is presented with a circuitousness for which I must beg the indulgence of the reader. The Modernists regarded Spenser's allegory to be structured like a simile, and in exploring the way in which Spenser's similes are allegorical, I have adopted a post-modernist position in order to ask how the Miltonic simile is different. As a result, I have chosen an idiosyncratic chronology for my reception history, because post-modernism is not quite the logical outgrowth of New Criticism, but a violent ebb-tide against the springs of Romanticism. Therefore, I begin the path with the Victorians and Moderns, resuming the thread again in the Renaissance and spinning it out to the Romantics. Paul de Man's reading of allegory, the minotaur at the center of my interest with the problems in reception, is intelligible only in juxtaposition with Coleridge, whose apprehension of

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the relation between allegory and metaphor is inverted by de Man.

Ricks knew the waters of criticism were murky and that we never had a very sound grasp of what epic similes were supposed to do. In bringing a long-simmering pot to boil, my goal is suggest that allegory is dissolved in the solution. I propose that Spenserian simile, in the simple act of comparing something to something else, is itself already an allegorical use of language. This topic is addressed in the third part of the present study, and is followed by two parts in which the close reading of specific examples is arranged to explore the epic simile, first in terms of its relation to shorter Spenserian and Miltonic examples, and, lastly, in relation similes that are ironic.

A few words remain about important omissions in my reception history of simile. The two most accomplished and thorough accounts the past decade are by Stephen Nimis and Suzanne Wofford. They are in agreement, as am I, that epic similes function as more than mere ornament, unless we invest the word with Angus Fletcher's interest in its profounder implications, and that epic similes importantly signal a moment in the narrative when the narrative represents itself. Nimis and Wofford part company, Nimis concerning himself with the semiotics of signs, and Wofford, with the degree to which the political gesture of extended comparisons subverts the ideology of epic poetry.

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Nonetheless, in their analysis of the semiotic and ideological aspects of epic similes, Nimis and Wofford are, I think, wrestling with the same issues I develop in a discourse more particularly trained on the difference between allegory and irony.

Four unpublished dissertations also deserve credit. Doyle Fosso organizes his study of Spenser's similes around the imagery of particular examples in order to show how they conveys value judgments on characters in the narrative. William Menda, questions Fosso's evidence that lions, for instance, are necessarily associated with good characters, and claims instead that Spenser' similes serve to draw the reader into an imaginative landscape by invoking nature and myth. John Bowers more ambitiously looks at the role that Spenser's epic similes play in conferring unity on the overall design of the poem. Moreover, Bowers provides an extremely useful reception history on the Spenserian simile, as Shane Gasbarra does on the Miltonic, and who also fruitfully examines similes as a cognitive device in reflecting shifts in epistemology from Homer to Milton.

Contemporary writers on allegory, on the other hand, put into action the intuition of the formalists that, in order to understand allegory better, we have to understand allegorical interpretation better. Northrop Frye breaks down the problem for contemporary critics with a simple stereotype: "It is not often realized that all commentary is

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allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas the structure of poetic imagery" (89). Thus, the New Criticism is just a more sophisticated version of the medieval mythography. Yet his definition of allegory--"when a poet explicitly indicates the relationship of his images to examples and precepts, and so tries to indicate how a commentary on him should proceed" (90)--necessarily robs the Iliad and the Aeneid of their status as allegories. Frye cannot uphold the allegorical readings of Homer and Virgil as "indicated" by the poems, nor can he invalidate over two thousand years of such commentary as not truly allegorical.

Frye, moreover, rigidifies the problematic distinction between allegory as composition and allegory as interpretation, by pretending that literary criticism, insofar as it is a response to reading, is just a another version of allegoresis. Even a cursory glance at Fulgentius and Poschl on the Aeneid renders Frye's assertion as dubious. Victor Pöschl was attempting to say something he thought was true about the poem; whereas Fulgentius sought to expand the Aeneid's meaning so as to make the poem congruent with a different order of truth. The difference is slight, but important, because the allegorical exegetes would not, I suspect, have claimed that they were explicating a text, so much as amplifying it. Truth for the allegorist was elsewhere--be it in Pythagorean lore,

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Platonic philosophy, or Christian doctrine, of which the allegorical author was a mere exponent.

Yet Frye's problem has stuck, for subsequent critics on allegory have sought to bring to light the poetic elements of allegorical interpretation rather than describe the allegorical features of poetry. In the wake of the ground-breaking researches by Jean Seznac, Frances Yates, and D.C. Allen, critics have generally felt that we need more fully to grasp the operation of allegorical interpretation in the Renaissance before we can attempt to define allegory in The Faerie Queene. Alastair Fowler and A. Kent Hieatt pioneered an exploration of the extent to which Spenser's poetry incorporates a profound appreciation of number symbolism, which S. K. Heninger traced to sources in Pythagorean influences. And Maureen Quilligan elegantly developed the thesis of Martha Craig's short essay in order to do for words what Fowler and Hieatt had done for numbers. A Cratyllian nostalgia for the true meaning buried in a word's etymology informs, claims Quilligan, not only Spenser's choice of names, but the way that his plot unfolds. Quilligan, thus, endeavors to bridge the gap by having it both ways: allegory is a genre of composition, but the genre of composition that specifically incorporates the methods of allegorical interpretation.

Yet the approaches of Fowler and Quilligan court disaster, I think, because any poem can be made to submit to

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allegoresis. Given enough ingenuity, one could argue that Bennett sisters also figure forth emanations of the Monad and Dyad, and that a trickle of eighteenth-century Neoplatonism unconsciously filtered into Austen's mind when she sat down to pen Pride and Prejudice. Researches into numerology and etymology, the bread and butter of allegorical readers, can always be made to serve our purposes. But the end result is a loss of the sense of the difference, not only between criticism and interpretation, but between interpretation and poetry. A sentence taken out of context from The Western Canon could be misconstrued just that way:

> Poems, stories, novels, plays come into being as a response to prior poems, stories, novels, and plays, and that response depends upon acts of reading and interpretation by the later writers, acts that *identical* with the new works. (Bloom 1994:94)

The hasty use of the word *identical* opens a trap: Samuel Johnson's Life of Milton addressed "Lycidas," to which Shelley also responded in "Adonais," but Bloom's out-of-context statement cannot have intended that the two were indistinguishable, for Johnson is lauded the most "canonical critic" (183), and Shelley, a very great "lyrical poet" (439).

Nevertheless, the lines separating poetry from

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interpretation, and interpretation from criticism have become increasingly tangled by contemporary students of literature. The erasure of the distinction between the allegorical genre and the allegorical mode is part culprit, the most recent books on the subject elucidating the poetic aspect of allegoresis rather than attempting to locate an allegorical function in literature. A case in point is Jon Whitman's superb analysis of Bernard's Cosmographia, which rewrites the Judeo-Christian creation through the lens of the Timaeus:

> Bernard *interprets* the story of creation by *creating* allegorical agents to act out the story; he thus radically integrates the act of interpretation with the act of personification. Although this strategy does not wholly resolve the internal dilemmas of the two allegorical traditions, it subtly plays their tensions off each other, producing an allegory at once conceptually controlled and imaginatively diversified. In the process, the work consolidates the internal dynamics of allegorical writing, stimulating the sophisticated allegorical movement of the late Middle Ages. (10)

The importance of Bernard in Whitman's intensive analysis of the development of medieval poetry is worth every ounce of our attention, yet, as a literary critic, Whitman loses

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sight of the fact that the Cosmographia has been on no one's list of great, let alone favorite, poems. The place of Bernard, Martianus Capella, Macrobius, and Boethius in the history of ideas in undeniable, but how important are they, as compared with Virgil and Dante, in the history of the imagination?

From the academic common-place that criticism's relationship to the act of reading must inevitably be a form of interpretation, has sprung the conceit that a new poem is but the marriage of an old poem and its interpretation (Lamberton 286). Protestors maintaining the distinction between criticism and poetry have been either silent or violent in their resistance, such as Harold Bloom, in contrast to whom legions of academics writing on allegory have sought to elucidate how interpretation itself is a poetic activity, having given up on trying to locate an allegorical function within poetry. Medieval allegoresis, according to Jane Chance, is an attempt "to feminize the essentially patriarchal and misogynistic exegetical traditions of the Church" (6). Yet the insight forces Chance to a particularly difficult conclusion about the difference between allegoresis and poststructuralist interpretation:

> [Poststructuralism is] "referential in the manner of 'narrative allegory' rather than 'allegoresis'. Allegoresis, the mode of commentary long practiced

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> by traditional critics, 'suspends' the surface of the text, applying a terminology of 'verticalness, level, hidden meaning, the hieratic difficulty of interpretation,' whereas narrative allegory' (practiced by the post-critics) explores the literal--letteral--level of the language itself, in a horizontal investigation of the polysemous meanings simultaneously available in the words themselves--in etymologies and puns--and in the things the words name. The allegorical narrative unfolds as a dramatization or reenactment (personification) of the 'literal truth inherent in the words themselves.' (493 n. 10)

Chance asserts that poststructuralists utilize the methods of allegoresis temporally (consciously?) as opposed to the spatial (unconscious?) orientation of their medieval counterparts. Yet Chance, still dependent on Quilligan's thesis (as paraphrased by Ulmer) that allegorical poems are those which make use of allegoresis, accidentally turns Frye's distinction between allegory and allegoresis on its head, so that we are compelled to regard Derrida in the light of authors of narrative allegory. Derrida's Postcard, however, reminds me more of secular mystics such as Macrobius and Robert Burton than it does Spenser, or, for that matter, Samuel Johnson. Poststructuralist readers of literature seem to me to be very much like allegorical

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interpreters of the Middle Ages, who, instead of referring everything to sacred text, subsume literature to a rhetorical analysis that privileges orality over the written word.

The most thoughtful and difficult book published recently on the subject is by Gordon Teskey, who also tries to characterize the split between the allegorical genre and mode: "The very word *allegory* evokes a schism in consciousness . . . which is repaired, or at least concealed, by imagining a hierarchy on which we ascend toward truth" (2). Whether that split is "repaired" or "concealed" is finally (and I think, rightly) undecidable for Teskey, who, echoing Northrop Frye, writes that neither the Song of Songs or the Odyssey is an allegory, because neither "contains instructions for its own interpretation" (3). Yet, two pages later (and still sounding Frye's paradox), he adds that an "allegory is an incoherent narrative (or, in the visual arts, an incoherent picture) that makes us interpret throughout" (5). Does allegory give us the means for interpretation (a mode), or is it itself in need of interpretation (a genre)?

Teskey's foray into a poetics of Allegory and Violence asserts that allegory tries to marry the rift between figurative language and thought in a project of "instrumental meaning" or the "creative exertion of a force" (6). As a figure of the thought or mode, the violence of

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the allegorical yoking is only revealed as coercive in retrospect, that is, when the marriage between image and idea is recognized as uncompanionable in its "aim of imposing a single, intelligible form on the material remains of the past" (156). But as a figure of speech or as an allegorical genre, "narrative and personification are inversely prominent," the description given over to a personification being a "violent" moment "in which the materials of narrative are shown being actively subdued for the purpose of raising a structure of meaning" (23). A personification, such as Furor in The Faerie Queene, raises a structure of meaning, though so do other poetic images, I would argue: epic similes, a basic building block of descriptive imagery, achieve exactly such an end. Teskey addresses many of the same authors and issues as I, and our conclusions differ as widely as our approaches since he, somewhat in the manner of Mindele Anne Treip before him, ambitiously searches for a poetics of allegory. My own sense is that the quest is futile, and that, because the allegorical genre and the allegorical mode are incommensurate, a poetics of allegory is a contradiction in terms.

The methods of the allegorical interpretation were once, and are again, extremely powerful tools in the hands of academics, but hardly critical in spirit, which, aside from being primarily evaluative and descriptive in its

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handling of art, used to believe the existence of literature was distinct from other forms of discourse. The allegorist and the literary critic were always one another's worst nightmares, because allegorical interpretation, unlike the critical formulation of a poetics, is without a concept of mimesis: to embrace one position fully is to surrender all pretense to the other. Our predicament is further complicated by, if not a result of, the state of the arts, which, I think, is without a concept for mimesis to account for the simulacrum of an oral culture we live in. I realize I may sound a little belligerent in extolling the virtues of acorns while everyone else is enjoying bread, but I am also painfully aware that my history of critical thinking about the relation of "epic, simile, allegory" is counterbalanced by a close reading that is sheer interpretation. Nevertheless, the "problems in the reception" invoked in my title concern not only how Spenser and Milton have been received, but address the remarkably different ways in which Spenser and Milton respond to antiquity.

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Part One--From Victorian to Modern Criticism

Taking the liberty of the epic poet to begin in the midst of things, I point out that the Victorian critics carry on the controversy initiated among the Romantics about whether the poetry of Milton was more musical than visual. The similes of Paradise Lost prove integral to discussions of the Miltonic style, whereas those of The Faerie Queene receive less attention, perhaps because Victorian critics were already agreed that the style of Spenser's poetry was descriptive. With Spenserians, controversy centered around the allegory: whether it was best ignored or essential to a full appreciation of the poem. With Miltonists, Puritanism became a sticking point as Victorian critics contrasted his poem against Dante's, elaborating a thesis of Shelley's "Defense" (1821) that the Commedia was Paradise Lost's "rival" (7:129), though the Richardsons had long before noted similarities between the two poems in their Explanatory Notes to Milton (Oras 105).

Because a debate existed about what constituted a Miltonic style, the Victorians frequently juxtaposed his similes with those of Dante; they did not, alas, contrast those of Spenser with Milton's. But I do not think it wholly presumptuous to interject Spenser sometimes for what they have to say about Dante's relationship to Milton. It might be putting the cart before the horse to say that

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Spenser's similes are, after all, more visual than those of Milton, but that evaluation would hardly be original. To substitute Spenser for Dante in order to reflect on nineteenth-century remarks about style, we would be doing no more than what was done by critics of the next generation such as Lewis and Tuve. The new breed of Spenserians and Miltonists outgrew the nineteenth century headings under which readings of epic similes had been subsumed--as either the description of nature or the testimony of the poet's personal style--by more closely attending to the use of grammar, rhetoric, and logic in poetic language.

A. Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin

Thomas Babington Macaulay's essay on "Milton" (1825) investigates similes within the precincts of style. His most memorable comments on Milton draw on a scientific metaphor:

> The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors.

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Homer, conversely, being the poet of a simpler, less sophisticated society, "sets the images in so clear a light, that it is impossible to be blind to them" (158). Milton "does not paint a finished picture" so much as he "sketches."

Dante more closely resembles Homer than Milton because he is closer to an age in which poetry is already built into experience of the world. Dante's images "speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are" (162). No matter how "strange" or "grotesque" his images, "Dante "gives us the shape, the colour, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. . . . [T]hey are introduced . . . not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn; not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem; but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself" (163). Milton, on the other hand, is more poetic because he "never thought of taking the measure of Satan":

> He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mistakes for an island. When he

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> addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels, he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas: his stature reaches the sky. (163)

If Dante's similes record "the exact details" seen by a man wandering through the world, is Macaulay suggesting that "the dim intimations" of Milton's similes are the observations of a man so centered that the world itself comes to him?

Macaulay perceives that poetry after the transition to the early modern period became markedly artificial, which sentiment Thomas Carlyle characterizes as a decay rather than an advance. In his series of 1840 lectures on "The Hero as Poet," Carlyle has less to say about Milton than he does on the subject of Shakespeare and Dante. They belonged to an age in which the claims of "the Hero as Divinity, the Hero as Prophet" had not yet been countermanded by "the progress of mere scientific knowledge" (78). The words poet and prophet used to be interchangeable, Carlyle says, because they "penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the Universe." That mystery, according to his reading of Fichte, openly hides "the Divine Idea of the World, that which lies at the bottom of Appearance" (80). The modern distinction--that prophecy pertains only to morality whereas poetry addresses beauty--is false, states Carlyle, because "the Beautiful includes in it the Good" (81). The logic behind Carlyle's exalted train of thinking

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paves the way for an aesthetic response to literature, intimated in the maxim that "We are all poets when we read a poem well" (82).

I forebear, however, from spending more time with Carlyle because he does not discuss Dante's similes, let alone those of Milton. But without creating too much fuss over what is not there, I would like simply to ask whether his omission has a rightness of its own. On the one hand, Carlyle is trying to resurrect an older way of looking at literature, which sounds increasingly anti-critical, when in full flight he lets drop, "Shakespeare and Dante are Saints of Poetry . . . so that it is impiety to meddle with them" (85). On the other hand, what faculty of mind do we call on in order to recognize an epic simile? Does a sensitivity to rhetorical devices, which seems to constitute an important part of a critical cast of mind, lead by nature in a direction different from that taken by Carlyle?

John Ruskin's criticism is considerably more complicated and he warrants more space than any other Victorian, though Ruskin's subtle approach to Spenser and Milton is so complex that can be outlined only in brief. On the one hand, he echoes Carlyle when he writes that "the imagination is never governed; it is always the ruling and Divine power. . ." (45). But refusing to be swept away by his enthusiasms, he attempts to delineate between a gothic and sublime imagination, for which purpose the description

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of the effects of the Miltonic simile is essential.

Ruskin's 1846 volume of Modern Painters contrasts different passages in Paradise Lost to weigh the extent to which the imaginative faculty was given free rein. The "commonest" details in Milton's composition of Eden were not imaginative, because their accumulation was merely an aggregate selected from the "variety of the most striking scenes which he had seen, crowded into his mind" (4). "Milton," says Ruskin, "would not copy his Eden from any one scene, but would select from each the features which were most eminently beautiful. The power of abstraction enabled him to make the separation, and taste directed him in the selection." Against the description at the beginning of Book Four, Ruskin sets the more imaginative simile of Book Two likening Satan to a comet:

> on th'other side
> Incens't with indignation *Satan* stood
> Unterrifi'd, and like a Comet burn'd,
> That fires the length of *Ophiucus* huge
> In th'Artic Sky, and from his horrid hair
> Shakes Pestilence and War.
>
> (2.706-09)

The simile is imaginative for Ruskin by virtue of Milton's use of the word "Incens'd," which is "to be taken in its literal and material sense, set on fire" (5).

In the extended comparison, likewise imaginative,

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initiated when Satan receives a blow during the War in Heaven,

> as if on Earth
> Winds under ground or waters forcing way
> Sidelong, had pusht a Mountain from his seat
> Half sunk with all his Pines.
>
> (6.195-98)

Ruskin underscores the last two lines concerning the description of Satan's fall. The passage shows "a particular mode of regarding the qualities or appearances of a single thing, illustrated and conveyed to us by the image of another; and the act of imagination, observe, is not the selection of this image, but the mode of regarding the object" (6).

Ruskin keeps worrying his definition of the imagination, however, as a dog gnaws on a bone, so that its complexity
continually increases in scope: "It combines . . . it treats, or regards . . . it penetrates, analyzes. . ." (6). Nor do all of Milton's similes equally demonstrate the imaginative faculty for Ruskin. When Satan rears himself up from the burning lake, Milton follows the description of the "flames / Driv'n backward" (1.222-23) with an extended comparison that Ruskin calls "a fiercely restless piece of volcanic imagery" (16). But the comparison is a rung down the imaginative ladder from a simile describing heat in

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Dante. Milton "is too far detailed, and deals too much with externals: we feel rather the form of the fire-waves than their fury; we walk upon them too securely; and the fuel, sublimation, smoke, and singeing seem to me images only of partial combustion; they vary and extend the *conception*, but they lower the thermometer" (17, my emphasis). The idea of heat that Ruskin thinks the simile conveys is important, for the "conception" of similes is tied up for him in the way that the imagination differs from a more prosaic fancy. That difference is, of course, Ruskin's spin on his Romantic heritage, as is his identification of the fanciful elements of Milton's description of Eden.

After a brief excursus on the difference between the imagination and the fancy, Ruskin returns to the examples he began with. In the comet image from Book Two, Ruskin had focused on the play on words effected by "Incens't," "burn'd," and "fires." He subsequently adds that in the simile, "the bodily shape of the angel is destroyed, the inflaming of the formless spirit is alone regarded; and this, and his power of evil, associated in one fearful and abstract conception, are stamped to give them distinctness and permanence with the image of the comet" (28). The shape of the former archangel is reduced to ideas shared by the comet, though they do not originate with it, for the comet, too, "is in a measure indistinct." The ideas or conceptions alone are what are being given "distinctness and permanence"

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in the simile.

Ruskin returns to the "Sidelong mountain" simile from Book Six in much the same manner, the ideas now being "the thunder, the resistance, the massy prostration," although the addition of the "pines" are the means "whereby a vitality and spear-like hostility are communicated." In addition to these examples, Ruskin brings in the final simile of Book Four:

> as thick as when a field
> Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bends
> Her bearded Grove of ears, which way the wind
> Sways them; the careful Plowman doubting stands
> Lest on the threshing floor his hopeful sheaves
> Prove chaff.
>
> (4.980-85)

Ruskin takes this simile to be imaginative in representing the angelic squadron "in their unity and multitude and stooped hostility, by the image of the wind upon the corn." The "ideas" to which Satan is reduced in this simile are "god-like strength and endurance . . . infinitude of size, and the vagueness and terribleness of spiritual power" (29).

Ruskin profitably unites Spenser with Dante in the 1853 installment of The Stones of Venice in order to speculate about the gothic imagination: "so far as the truth is seen by the imagination in its wholeness and quietness, the vision is sublime; but so far as it is narrowed and broken

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by the inconsistencies of the human capacity, it becomes grotesque. . ." (46). The grotesque had its origins, claimed Ruskin, in superstitions about evil "which represented the devil as assuming various contemptible forms or disguises" (40). Spenser's fiends are like those of Dante--they are both grotesque--but Ruskin wants to make a difficult distinction between the "noble" and the "satiric" grotesque.

He suggests that Dante more closely approximates the originary or "noble" form of the grotesque, whereas Spenser verges at times upon a more decadent or "satiric" variety when he represents evil as ludicrous. Spenser's allegorical scheme (though "allegory" is a word that Ruskin typically avoids) is more mutable than Dante's: "the same vices and virtues occurring under different forms in different places, in order to show their different relations to each other" (39). But Spenser excels also Dante "in completeness of personification," for which assertion Ruskin adduces the description of Maleger:

> All in canuas thin he was bedight,
> And girded with a belt of twisted brake,
> Vpon his head he wore an Helmet light,
> Made of a dead mans skull, that seem'd a ghastly sight.
>
> (2.11.22)

Ruskin analyzes the iconography of the second half of a stanza, in which "the horror and the truth are . . . out of

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the pages of Inspiration" (40). He enumerates the ideas of "wasting" and "coldness" and "loss" set forth by the various images, "the belt of brake, the tiger steed, and the light helmet, girding the head with death." Yet in so doing, he ignores the first half of the stanza, *likening* the Captain in quick succession to "ashes," "a rake," "a dryed rooke," and "a Snake" (40).

Ruskin downplays the use of the word "allegory" in his discussion of Spenser, I think, because he wants to avoid falling into the trap that snared Coleridge: how to explain the way in which The Faerie Queene is imaginative, if the imagination and allegory are at odds with one another. Ruskin appends to The Stones of Venice a very tidy analysis of the allegory of Book One of The Faerie Queene. He reduces its plot to a demonstration of theological precepts, which he bases on the symbolic meaning inhering in the names of the characters and the order in which the action unfolds. His analysis of the allegory is striking because it minimizes as much as possible his own interpretative act; the "allegorical meaning" of Book One, far from being recondite, stares Ruskin in the face. What interests Ruskin more than allegory is the way that Spenser's poem evinces a grotesque imagination, which he defines anew:

> The expression, in a moment, by a series of symbols thrown together in bold and fearless connection, of truths which it would have taken a

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> long time to express in any verbal way, and of which the connection is left for the beholder to work out for himself; the gaps, left or overleaped by the haste of the imagination, forming the grotesque character. (60)

Ruskin goes on to paraphrase the meaning of the iconography whereby Spenser depicts Envy in the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins (1.4.30). The example furnishes Ruskin with an instance of Spenser when he is most nobly grotesque, but the stanza contains no similes or short comparisons. Though the Miltonic simile proves integral to his examination of the sublime imagination, Ruskin consistently avoids speculating about the role of simile in Spenser. Why?

In the earlier volumes of Modern Painters, Ruskin operated under the influence of Coleridge when he discriminated between the fancy and the imagination, seeking to elucidate how a concept and the way it is represented by the fancy differs from an imaginative synthesis of idea and image. "Every great conception of the poet or painter is held and treated" by that which he had just unhappily named to be the "penetrating possession-taking faculty Imagination" (18).

> There is in every word set down by the imaginative mind an awful under-current of meaning . . . it is often obscure, often half-told; for he who wrote it, in his clear seeing of the things beneath, may

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> have been impatient of detailed interpretation. . . . The unimaginative writer on the other hand, as he has never pierced to the heart, so he can never touch it. If he has to paint a passion, he remembers the external signs of it, he collects expressions of it from other writers, *he searches for similes*, he composes, exaggerates. . . . (19, my emphasis)

Similes are not normally associated with the imagination, but with the fancy, though Ruskin never regards the Miltonic simile as normative. The fancy "sees the outside, and is able to give a portrait of the outside, clear, brilliant, and full of detail. The imagination sees the heart and inner nature, and makes them felt, but is often obscure, mysterious, and interrupted, in its giving of outer detail" (20). The difference in the effect on a reader between a fanciful work of art and an imaginative one is clear enough in Ruskin's early writing, but he soon abandons the distinction in favor of looking at the problem from another angle, from the inside of the poet's head.

Ruskin explores the possible relations between the conception and the image inhabiting the mind of the imaginative poet. When he had produced Dante's simile as having done a much better job than Milton's in conveying the idea of hotness, he explained that Milton's volcanic imagery failed in imaginative strength insofar as Aetna was an image

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extrinsic to the idea. He later admits that "in our examination of the combining imagination, we chose to assume the first or simple conception to be as clear in the absence as in the presence of the object of it" (26). That is, he assumed that the idea of heat was self-evident in the examples taken from Milton and Dante. This need not have been the case, he goes on to suggest, because "distinctness of conception" is not necessarily "a characteristic of the imaginative mind." Moreover, he observes that "many persons have a thorough and felicitous power of drawing from memory, yet never originate a thought, nor excite an emotion."

The difference, then, between the fancy and the imagination is not simply a matter of the relative concreteness with which the two faculties seize upon images. Conception appears necessarily without form for "ordinary minds," or as:

> indefiniteness; for there is an unfailing charm in the memory and anticipation of things beautiful, more sunny and spiritual than attaches to their presence; for with their presence it is possible to be sated, and even wearied, but with the imagination of them never . . . yet I think this charm is not justly to be attributed to the mere vagueness and uncertainty of the conception, except thus far, that of objects whose substantial presence was painful, the sublimity and

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> impressiveness, if there were any, are retained in the conception, while the sensual offensiveness is withdrawn. . . . (26)

The fancy's selection from the storehouse of memory differs from the workings of the imagination, but the difference has less to do with the relative concreteness of images assembled from memory versus those produced by the imagination, than with those feelings to which those images pertain.

Ruskin evades one of Coleridge's problems--that of ferreting out what in Spenser is imaginative rather than fanciful--by attempting to spell out the difference between a grotesque and a sublime imagination. That difference concerns the way the terrible and the beautiful are represented. Homer and Spenser can write about things "(the latter frequently with too much grossness), which could not for a moment be regarded or tolerated in their reality, or on canvas" (26). When Spenser has something terrible to relate, the indistinctness of conception is rendered by his imagination as grotesque. His grotesque imagination, however, works in conjunction with his fancy when it comes to representing beauty: "But of those parts of anything which are in themselves beautiful, I think the indistinctness no benefit, but that the brighter they are the better, and that the peculiar charm we feel in conception results from its grasp and blending of ideas,

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rather than from their obscurity" (27). The imagination of a single happy moment is rendered by bringing to bear upon it "all the other glories with which it was associated," for which purpose the Fancy lends assistance "more easily and actively with the memory of things than in presence of them."

Ruskin puts to rest one of Coleridge's problems with Spenser, but unleashes one of his own when his thoughts shift to Milton and the sublime imagination. He struggles to extricate himself from having to explain the special problems posed by the episode of Sin and Death:

> All art is, in some sort, realization; it may be the realization of obscurity or indefiniteness, but still it must differ from the mere conception of obscurity or indefiniteness; so that whatever emotions depend absolutely on imperfectness of conception, as the horror of Milton's Death, cannot be rendered by art; for art can only lay hold of things which have shape, and destroys by its touch the fearfulness or pleasurableness of those which 'shape have none.' (27)

Has Ruskin tripped himself up by suggesting the Spenser had a different sort of imagination than did Milton? The terrible and the beautiful were rendered by Spenser's imagination as grotesque and picturesque. Milton, on the other hand, sometimes renders beauty not sublimely but, as

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in the description of Eden, merely fancifully. But what happens when the sublime imagination has to cope with ideas such as Death, terrible and obscure to begin with?

Ruskin's thoughts evolve in the third volume of Modern Painters to a consideration of two types of pathetic fallacy; that excited in creative poets such as Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare; and that "willed" by the various Romantics and Victorians he studies (63). The difference finally turns on a theological point, revolving around the changed relation to nature between polytheistic and monotheistic man, which is represented in the way landscape is treated differently in poetry. Though the implication is, I think, that The Faerie Queene exhibits the former kind of pathetic fallacy, and Paradise Lost the latter, Ruskin does not explicitly address either Spenser or Milton in these terms, much less to what degree their epic similes are evidence of such broad conceptions. My own hunch is that their epic similes have very much to do with differing views of nature, but I will come at this question after my own fashion, rather than risk misrepresenting Ruskin, who, as Macaulay says of Milton, only sketches and leaves the rest for us to fill in.

B. Poe, Lowell, Arnold

On the other side of the Atlantic, Edgar Allen Poe's

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remarks on Milton and Spenser are as scant as they are profound. Milton's famous oxymoron, "No light, but rather darkness visible" (1.63) is derived from the Spenserian line, "A litle glooming light, much like a shade" (1.1.14), Poe speculates in Pinakidia (49). Light like a shade, of course, is not identical with darkness visible--the emphasis is different. Nor is it self-evident what it would mean if the dubious illumination cast by Redcrosse's shield in the Den of Error were the chief model for the positively atmospheric murkiness of Satan's Hell. But if Poe is right, I should merely like to reformulate his observation by saying that what appears to be a particular kind of metaphor in Milton is the result of contracting a simile in Spenser.

Spenser's simile derives, I think, from the Parliament of Fowls, in which the resplendent light whereby Nature is recognized is contrasted by Chaucer against the gloom of the cave of Venus, "unnethe it myghte be lesse" (1.264). Yet Spenser's light like a shade becomes in Milton a shade like a light--or darkness visible--by an inversion of emphasis. The substantive with priority in Spenser's line becomes adjectival in Milton's with the final contraction of the comparison. I shall not yet attempt to demonstrate how Spenserian similes tend by their very nature towards being a sort of allegorical expression; but at present I would merely like to point out the prescience of Poe's 1836 bit of source hunting. His intuition that Milton's figure of

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speech is a reduction of Spenser's prophesies an entire school of criticism concerned with how Paradise Lost transumes its precursors.

James Russell Lowell's 1875 essay on Spenser picks up where Hazlitt and Hunt left off. William Hazlitt counselled the reader not to meddle with the painted dragon of allegory, and Lowell proposes "we may fairly leave the allegory on one side, for perhaps, after all he adopted it only for the reason that it was in fashion, and put it on as he did his ruff, not because it was becoming, but because it was the only wear. The true use of his poetry is as a gallery of pictures which we visit as the mood takes us. . ." (291). As a critic, Lowell develops Leigh Hunt's sense that the poem is picture gallery; he ardently admires Spenser's attempt "to bring poetry back again to some kind of understanding with nature" (82).

Unconcerned with the moral didacticism of The Faerie Queene, Lowell expounds on "the variety and sweep of his measure, the beauty or vigor of his similes, the musical felicity of his diction, and the mellow versatility of his pictures" (284). Under this heading, an epic simile becomes a little snap-shot of natural description, or yet one more picture nailed to the wall. Britomart's misapprehension of Artegall's infidelity is likened by Spenser (after Ariosto's Orlando, 32.12) to a peevish child and his nurse:

Like as a wayward childe, whose sounder sleepe

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Is broken with some fearefull dreames affright,
With froward will doth set him selfe to weepe;
Ne can be stild for all his nurses might,
But kicks, and squals, and shriekes for fell despight:
Now scratching her, and her loose locks misusing;
Now seeking darkeness, and now seeking light;
Then crauing suck, and then the sucke refusing.
Such was this Ladies fit, in her loues fond accusing.
(5.6.14)

Lowell writes that Spenser "descends to a Teniers-like realism" and that he affords "but a glimpse of the real earth and that far away beneath" (272). Lowell's note suggests, moreover, that the lack of correspondence between the narrative and the material of the comparison takes its cue from "Homer's comparing Ajax to a donkey."

Lowell cites a chronographia from Spenser to illustrate the slowing effect of his verse:

> [O]ne leading characteristic of Spenser's style was its spaciousness, that he habitually dilates rather than compresses. But his way of measuring time was perfectly natural in an age when everybody did not carry a dial in his poke as now. He is the last of the poets, who went (without affectation) by the great clock of the firmament. Dante, the miser of words, who goes by the same

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> timepiece, is full of these roundabout ways of telling us the hour. . . . [T]ime itself becomes more noble when so measured. . . . The generous indefiniteness, which treats an hour more or less as of no account, is in keeping with that sense of endless leisure which it is one chief merit of the poem to suggest. . . . (296-97)

A chronographia is a picture or a spatial representation of time, just as an epic simile is a picture for Lowell, who is remembered for treating the whole Faerie Queene as a gallery. But quoting his essay out of context as I have done, and as Edward Dowden did in his 1884 response to Lowell, lends Lowell's more interesting remarks about allegory to lesser misrepresentation.

Lowell makes clear that the educative purpose professed by Spenser in his introductory letter ought not concern the reader, and that "when the personal allusions have lost their meaning and the allegory has become a burden, the book should continue to be read with delight" (284). The "personal allusions," he has explained, are references to the court and historical events, but what is "the burden" of the allegory? Spenser distinguishes himself from the posture of his contemporaries, on the one hand, by his treatment of allegory, which

> as then practiced, was imagination adapted for beginners . . . and would thus serve both his

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> ethical and pictorial purpose. . . . But he so bordered it with bright-colored fancies. . . that . . . the holy function of the book is forgotten in the ecstasy of its adornment. (289)

Lowell says that "whenever in the 'Faery Queen' you come suddenly on the moral, it gives you a shock of unpleasant surprise, a kind of grit, as when one's teeth close on a bit of gravel in a dish of strawberries and cream" (300). But it is the depiction of Concoction and Digestion from the House of Alma (2.9.31) that was taken by Lowell to be exemplary of Spenser when he "sinks now and then, through the fault of his topics, to the level of unmistakable prose" (287). Does Lowell mean that the representation of Concoction and Digestion were unendurably moral in intent?

On the one hand, Lowell seems to regard moral didacticism as a species of prosaic expression. On the other, the burden of Spenser's allegory is distinguishable from the influence of Platonism:

> [T]he bent of his mind was toward a Platonic mysticism, a supramundane sphere where it could shape universal forms out of the primal elements of things, instead of being forced to put up with their fortuitous combinations in the unwilling material of mortal clay. He who, when his singing robes were on, could never be tempted nearer to the real world than under some subterfuge of

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pastoral or allegory. . . . (279)

The pictures of nature in Spenser, Lowell seems here to suggest, already involved an allegorical way of looking at things before the first nail could be hammered in the wall. "He is, of all our poets, the most truly sensuous, using the word as Milton probably meant it," writes Lowell, ceasing to discriminate between allegory and sensuality: "A poet is innocently sensuous when his mind permeates and illumines his sense; when they, on the other hand, muddy the mind, he becomes sensual" (280). The definition of the epic simile as a description of nature, to which an abbreviation of Lowell's comments inclines, obscures his more thoughtful appraisal of the allegory inherent in Spenser's innocent sensuality:

> One sometimes feels in reading him as if he were the pure sense of the beautiful incarnated to the one end that he might interpret it to our duller perceptions. So exquisite was his sensibility, that with him sensation and intellection seem identical. . . . This subtle interfusion of sense with spirit it is that gives his poetry a crystalline purity without lack of warmth. (290)

Nineteenth-century criticism of Spenser and Milton comes to a head with Matthew Arnold, who valuably contrasts their styles as did Ruskin, though less with Dante than in the light of Homer. Moreover, Arnold's tack to literature

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moves away from the perplexities involved in Ruskins's trying to understand what is going on in the artist's head towards establishing an aesthetic response as the proper business of criticism. The 1861 lectures On Translating Homer are more than a diatribe against the efforts of Newman to update the Iliad, for Arnold's way of defining what makes a good translation turns out to describe the parameters for all discussions of literature. A good translation should not aim at reproducing peculiarities and eccentricities perceived in the original, nor vainly seek to "affect our countrymen as the original may be conceived to have affected its natural hearers" (98). The translator should aim instead to please Greek scholars with "adequate poetical taste and feeling . . . [because] they alone can say whether the translation produces more or less the same effect upon them as the original. They are the only competent tribunal. . ." (99). The translator cannot, "unless he feels him [Homer] truly . . . render him truly" (101). Homer, the well-spring of all literature, suddenly becomes important to readers insofar as they are *affected* by the poetry. The function of criticism is to standardize a response to literature though an enlightened discussion of the effects of style.

Homer's style, Arnold pithily informs us, is "rapid," "noble," and "plain and direct . . . in the evolution of his thought and in the expression of it" (102). The summary

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becomes a mantra repeated throughout the essay with shifting degrees of emphasis, and serves as his touchstone for discussing not only the failures and strengths of translations, but the styles of Spenser and Milton. Arnold cites a chronographia:

> By this the Northerne wagoner had set
> His seuenfold teme behind the stedfast starre
> That was in Ocean waues yet neuer wet,
> But fime is fixt, and sendeth light from farre
> To all, that in the wide deepe wandring arre:
> And chearefull Chaunticlere with his note shrill
> Had warned once, that *Phoebus* fiery carre
> In hast was climbing vp the Easterne hill,
> Full enuious that night so long his roome did fill.
>
> (1.2.1)

Homer's rapidity is the touchstone for Arnold's introduction of the passage from The Faerie Queene, taken to argue for Spenser's "fluidity and sweet ease" (143). Exactly the same stanza was quoted by Lowell, however, as being more leisurely than quick about telling us it is dawn. Though the chronographia is not a simile, I venture to observe that the expression "By this" and the omission of the word "time" lends the passage the feel of an epic simile. Time is, so to speak, understood; the stanza is a spatial rendering of time. But it also literally juxtaposes an elaborate image next to the narrative, yet separate from it, which invites

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us to speculate whether a comparison is being made. My speculations, however, are not Arnold's; the similarity between chronographs and similes will be developed in Part Four.

On the relation of Spenser and Milton to Homer, Arnold suggests Spenser has not Homer's plainness and directness of thought, which lack also marred Chapman's rendering of the Iliad, on account of his even more intricate rhyme scheme. Spenser's stanza exacerbates the problem of Pope's heroic couplet, for "the simple system of correspondences that its rhymes introduce, changes the movement of Homer" (142). Milton, on the other hand, shares Homer's nobility but not his rapidity, because the movement of Paradise Lost is "laboured" and "self-retarding" (145). Describing the poem's hypotactic style, Arnold writes,

> Milton charges himself so full with thought, imagination, knowledge, that his style will hardly contain them. He is too full-stored to show us in much detail one conception, one piece of knowledge; he just shows it to us in a pregnant allusive way, and then he presses on to another. . . . Homer is quite different; he says a thing, and says it to the end, and then begins another, while Milton is trying to press a thousand things into one. . . . With Milton line runs into line, and all is straitly bound together: with Homer

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> line runs off from line, and all hurries away onward. (144)

Milton's blank verse is the product of "the complicated evolution of thought" (147); or, as Milton himself prefaces to the 1668 Paradise Lost: "true musical delight . . . consists only in apt Numbers, fit quantity of Syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another" (210).

It is Milton together with Homer and Dante who employ the grand style, defined to be "when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject" (188). Homer demonstrates the grand style simple; Milton, the grand style severe; Dante, both. "Severity" turns on that "which comes from saying a thing with a kind of intense compression, or in an allusive, brief, almost haughty way, as if the poet's mind were charged with so many and such grave matters, that he would not deign to treat any one of them explicitly" (189).

Arnold inveighs against Ruskin's "tender pantheism" (102) and condemns the state of modern criticism in his 1877 "A French Critic on Milton." Arnold praises Scherer's unsentimental, Johnsonesque approach to the Paradise Lost, while damning the conventionality of Addison and the rhetoric of Macaulay, because they told a reader nothing that might help him with his experience of the poem. In the late address of 1888 on the fortunes of the English people,

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Arnold speaks of Milton in terms of an aesthetic response, "The mighty power of poetry and art is generally admitted. . . . The soul of this power . . . resides chiefly in the refining and elevation wrought in us by the high and rare excellence of the great style" (331). Finally, his 1880 introduction to The English Poets gives pride of place to the pain of Ceres in Book Four's Enna simile as a standard whereby to "keep clear and sound our judgments about poetry" (508). Arnold's elucidation of the grand style was a formidable influence on Miltonists, but the latent subjectivity of his aesthetic approach was rejected by the succeeding generation of simile critics, for whom Arnold's tribunal of poetical scholars must have appeared to have been a tribunal of one.

C. Modernists on the Miltonic Simile

If it were not too blithe to say that the Romantic critics assert their independence from the Neoclassicists by repudiating the three unities, I would glibly add that the New Critics get started by rejecting the three fallacies of their predecessors. James Whaler's treatment of the Miltonic simile, at any rate, valiantly steers between the excesses of biographical criticism and the centripetal pull of aestheticism. Nor does he attempt to investigate similes as instances of the pathetic fallacy in his almost

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scientific account of their logical and grammatical patterns. The four articles published in the early thirties are nothing short of an heroic effort to establish what can be said about the Miltonic simile that is indubitably true, and his failures are interesting for several reasons.

The essay on "Compounding and Distribution" details which epic similes are compounds, that is, are made up of a number of shorter comparisons arranged "climactically." The epic similes are spread unevenly across Paradise Lost, the highest concentrations being, in descending order, in Books One, Two, Four, and Nine. Though he is scrupulous about trying to count them all up, Whaler is never quite clear about why he calls those of more than five lines "long" (329), or if every other use of "like" or "as" or its equivalent is to be deemed a short comparison. The article on the number of "Animal Similes" used in Paradise Lost shows a marked decrease from previous epic poems, but he leaves Spenser's and Dante's long poems out of the tabulation. One is forced to suppose Whaler thought the one too romantic to be classed under the heading of epic, and the other perhaps more lyric than epic in conception. Or is it because, to have included them, the figure would begin to rise rather than continue to fall between Statius and Milton?

Whaler's most thorough-going analysis of "The Miltonic Simile" tries to reduce a given narrative moment in Paradise

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Lost and the imagery of the accompanying simile to symbolic proportions in order to demonstrate Milton's high degree of "homologation." Whaler's pseudo-precise term for mere "aptness" is an attempt to nail down the "logical" connection between the narrative and the simile, or "the point of relationship or resemblance between these two terms, logically expressible as an abstract *noun*" (1037, my emphasis). Why does Whaler think similes exist in order to show us nouns? Why not adjectives or qualities? Or is it that expressing substantives is what the Miltonic simile does particularly well?

Whaler hosts a seemingly endless parade of Miltonic similes, some long and others short, among which he discerns four distinct patterns of logical connections, the first of them being simple, such as comparison made when the gates of hell, "like a Furnace mouth / Cast forth redounding smoke and ruddy flame" (2.888). The simplest pattern of all, however, Whaler forebears to discuss (1039n), when he omits single words such as "Tartarean" (2.69), "Atlantean" (2.306), "Plutonian" (10.444), and "Dove-like" (1.21). Complex or compound similes are used ("five times as often") with often "perfect" homologation, such as threefold comparison making up the Vallombrosa simile (1041). The most complex kind of perfect homologation takes the shape of a four term proportion used in order to express relative magnitudes. Whaler can find only eight examples of it,

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among which he numbers the Spear-Pine-Mast-Wand simile, though he does not seem to notice the Pine works overtime as the mast, and that the Wand doubles as the Spear (1064).

When similes digress, Whaler defends them for serving to "emphasize a contrasting picture of peace by setting it in the midst of terror or peril" (1061). Even their digression is regularized as following three different patterns. The addition of human observers, such as in the Ploughman simile, is occasionally unaccountable to him. Extraneous details from myths or legends constitute the second sort; Ceres in the Enna simile prompts Whaler to exclaim, "the poet lets Ceres wander through eleven splendid monosyllables without so much as a suggestion of homologue unless it be God himself" (1061). Thirdly, though the details in the simile may dovetail with the narrative, the overall tenor may be wrong, as when "Satan, in the Garden, is likened to a city-dweller relieved and happy to find himself among the sweet sights and sounds and odors of a restful rural scene. But how different is his purpose in leaving the city from Satan's in quitting Hell!".

On the plus side, the article on "Grammatical Nexus" studies Milton's use of the relative pronouns at the beginning and end of similes in relation to other epic poets. The Homeric ritual of scrupulously starting and finishing a comparison with connectives is illustrated in Milton by:

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> As when a Ship by skilful Steersman wrought
> Nigh River's mouth or Foreland, where the Wind
> Veers oft, as oft so steers, and shifts her Sail;
> So varied hee . . .
>
> (9.513-16)

Milton, however, is more Virgilian than Homeric in habit, Whaler observes, by frequently omitting the second word framing the end of the comparison, as in:

> So rose the *Danite* strong
> *Herculean Samson* from the Harlot-lap
> Of *Philistean Dalilah*, and wak'd
> Shorn of his strength, They destitute and bare
> Of all thir virtue: silent, and in face
> Confounded long they sat, as struck'n mute,
> Till *Adam* . . .
>
> (9.1059-64)

A logically-minded reader would, I suppose, supply the missing "as" between the words "strength" and "They" (1061). But this practice in Milton is all too common, and Whaler is sharp as a tack in noticing it, though he does not feel the ambiguity of the pronoun's referent. The effect does not concern Whaler especially, though it justifies a reading that Adam and Eve, together as one, are being likened to the pair from Judges and Satan to Dalilah, rather than singling out Eve to be Dalilah-esque.

Milton is also more like Virgil, claims Whaler, than

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Silver Latin epicists in refusing to let similes conclude a passage of verse. The later narrative poets of Rome "developed this decorative function into an ecphrasis which was often used to conclude a division or subdivision in the fable. Such rhetorical emphasis Milton ignores or barely acknowledges. When he introduces a rural scene into simile, it is either for relief or for emotional accent. It is never purely decorative" (1037).

To the conventional attributes of illustration, aggrandizement, and relief, Whaler finds in the "Miltonic Simile" the function of prolepsis, "a definite narrative device. . . [of] anticipating event in the fable by means of simile" (1036). Whaler's insight, however, was long ago noticed by Spence and by Peck, whose 1740 "Examination of Milton's Style" observed that his "poetic prevention is, when we speak of things yet to come, as if they were already present" (qtd. in Shawcross 1972: 116). Peck cites two similes (6.216; 7.293), whereas Whaler takes as his example the comparison likening Satan to a scout and his prospect of a great city, "Which now the Rising Sun gilds with his beams" (3.551). The compared image foreshadows Satan's experience of the sunrise in the narrative, "The golden sun, in splendor likest Heaven / Allur'd hie eye" (3.572-3). The anticipation in the simile of subsequent events in the poem confers upon the whole a kind of formal "organicism" for Whaler, than whom no one tries harder to save the

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appearances, or brings more ingenuity to bear upon the effort to find aptness.

Whaler has Samuel Johnson's trustworthy aim for zeroing in on those lines that make Miltonic similes idiosyncratic. For example, when the angelic squadron hunt out Satan's whereabouts in Eden at the end of Book Four the fiend is prodded with the tip of Ithuriel's spear, "As when a spark / Lights on a heap of nitrous Powder," and "the Smutty grain / With sudden blaze diffus'd, inflames the Air" (4.811-18). Whaler represents the logical connections of the simile to narrative to make the point that Satan is like a heap of gunpowder in terms of explosiveness, and the perilous instability of his lack of moral equilibrium is imaged in the absence of chemical equilibrium. The touch of Ithuriel's spear is like a spark causing the "sudden blaze diffus'd," though Satan's starting up in his own shape is glossed as a return "into the flaming substance of his spiritual being" (1044). What, I should like to ask Whaler, is the difference between the "sudden blaze" and Satan's "flaming substance"? Is something being compared to something else? Or are we left with the distinct impression that Satan somehow literally explodes?

Whaler ignores the context of the epic simile within the larger verse paragraph, in which Satan was initially found, "Squat like a Toad, close at the ear of *Eve*" (800), essaying with his "venom" (804) to corrupt her "animal

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spirits that from pure blood arise / Like gentle breaths from Rivers pure..." (805-06). Satan, we understand, or misunderstand at first, has adopted the posture of a toad, until the good angel expressly catalyzes his return to his "own likeness." The choice of the words "venom," "animal," "river," and even the desires, "Blown up", all conspire to suggest we are witnessing a metamorphosis rather a simile. That the expression "up he starts" is reiterated at the conclusion of the subsequent comparison to nitrous powder suggests again a second transformation, not that Satan is like a toad and then like blazing gunpowder, but that he successively becomes them. Is this homologation? Or is there such a thing as too much aptness before a simile ceases being a simile?

Whaler's approach to Miltonic simile proved influential in showing many subsequent scholars what to look for in their approach. Working in the same vein, Balachandra Rajan, in his 1947 study of Paradise Lost, notices that "these huge similes reaching both backwards and forwards, with all space and all history caught in their towering span, have about them some quality of superhuman permanence" (124). Though he is perplexed by the uneven distribution of the similes, his observation that Milton's extended comparisons are not only proleptic of events, but retrospective in their allusiveness, is picked up by Isabel MacCaffrey's 1959 book on Milton. She details how certain

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ones recapitulate imagery described earlier in the poem and divides similes according to the kind of imagery they employ--either mythological, biblical, or natural. The similes effect a synthesis showing "that what appear to be many different themes and legends are in fact one" (127).

MacCaffrey's conclusion about similes seems to me to have been more a premise constraining her to find aptness; for her 1976 book on The Faerie Queene entertains a different set of assumptions about what similes do. There, the continued metaphors making up allegory are, in fact, like similes, or "Aristotle's fourth type of metaphor, the most complex and interesting. . . . In a complex metaphor where the tenor is wholly or partly unexplicated, only the third and fourth terms of the analogy will be visible, but their relationship can indicate, implicitly, the direction commentary should take" (46). The structure of allegory, as we shall see other critics develop at greater length, is reflected in the simile.

The energy behind the search for aptness has more recently unearthed ever more obscure sources and analogues for Milton's similes--e.g., John Shawcross's 1981 coupling of the Bee simile with Milton's readings in Purchas, or John Mulder's 1991 ruminations on the affinity between Etruscan culture and the demons in Vallombrosa--as if Milton's learning were not onerous enough already. To this heavy load of scholarship, I humbly submit one tittle of research.

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The simile of "that small infantry / Warr'd on by Cranes" (1.575-76), used to describe the even larger Satanic legions in Milton's epic, has been observed to refer to Homer, Statius, and Pliny, but not hitherto related, I believe, to Book Six of Ovid's Metamorphoses. The overweening pride of man is shown to be punished by the gods in the tapestry of Minerva, and the last tableau Ovid gives us particularly depicts "the miserable doome / Of that *Pygmaean* matron, over-come / By Juno; made a Crane and forc't to jar / With her owne nation in perpetuall war" (Sandys, 268). Juno changing Gerrania into a crane is interesting because the innumerable demons of Milton subsequently shrink in size "like that *Pigmean* Race" (1.780). Is Milton implying that the demons, aside from their relative number and diminution, are at war not with God, but with themselves in another guise? Or is my inference dependent on the desire to find aptness in the first place? How do we know what a simile is supposed to do?

By way of contrast, another line of criticism dismisses "homologation" and aptness as operative words in describing the Miltonic simile. C.S. Lewis's 1942 Preface to *Paradise Lost* sensed that "the Miltonic simile does not always serve to illustrate what it pretends to be illustrating" (42). Lewis considers Miltonic similes within the precincts of style like Arnold. But unlike Arnold, Lewis links Milton arm in arm with Virgil as a master of the secondary epic,

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which tries to offset the loss of "those external aids to solemnity which the Primary enjoyed. . . . The Virgilian and Miltonic style is there to compensate for--to counteract--the privacy and informality of silent reading in a man's own study" (40). The grand style of Milton's epic makes up for the experience of ritual in the primary epic by means of an exaggerated grandeur and elevation, which are achieved through three means: 1) the use of unfamiliar diction; 2) and proper names alluding to the "splendid, remote, terrible, voluptuous, or celebrated things"; 3) and by "continued allusion to all the sources of heightened interest in our sense experience . . . with an air of magnanimous austerity" (41). The result of such manipulation is an "excitement without surrender" in the reader, who is as "the organ and Milton as the organist."

The Miltonic simile, Lewis finds, is a manipulative device in which "the likeness between the two things compared is often trivial, and is, indeed, required only to save the face of the logical censor." On the comparison of demons with elves at the end of Book One, "Smallness is the only point of resemblance. The first use of the simile is to provide contrast and relief, to refresh us by a transition from Hell to a moonlit English lane" (43). The contrast at the end of the same passage, with the great demonic councillor whose stature remains fixed, conveys an "intensity" on account of which "we are so well prepared for

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the opening of Book II."

> It would be possible to go further and to say that this simile is simply the point at which the whole purpose of transforming the fiends to dwarfish stature is achieved, and that this transformation itself has a retrospective effect on the hugeness of Pandemonium.
>
> (43)

Like Macaulay, Lewis indulges in analogy drawn from the sciences, when he finds every sentence demonstrates "the power of action at a distance."

Lewis thus improves on Whaler's clinical observations in trying to ascribe a more artful motive for the Miltonic simile when he finds it digressing. Of the Enna simile, "the deeper value . . . lies in the resemblance which is not explicitly noted as a resemblance at all, the fact that in both these places the young and the beautiful while gathering flowers was ravished by a dark power risen up from the underworld" (43). Sometimes, as in the Asmodeus simile (4.160), Milton "goes too far and the feint of logical connexion is too outrageous to be accepted." That Satan breathed in the fragrant scents of Paradise with a pleasure exceeding the revulsion with which the odor of burning fish annoyed Asmodeus, is an "absurdity." Lewis draws back, however, from singling out digressive similes as conferring a mock-heroic quality to Paradise Lost.

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But not William Empson, who takes irony to the depths of the unconscious while musing on "Milton and Bentley" in 1934. The excision, in the editions of Bentley and Pearce, of similes smacking of digression, strikes Empson as a cover up for divisions riddling the poem. The plowman simile, for example, inadvertently undermines the omnipotence of God and vouches for Satan's heroism. And the proleptic nature of the Miltonic simile turns ominous in his 1961 Milton's God, in which Empson frets that Milton feared to show us Adam and Eve as doomed from the start. The theological contradictions Empson finds at the heart of Milton's epic, however, were the same which Arthur Lovejoy had pinpointed at the heart of Christianity. His 1935 formulation of religious doctrine in "The Paradox of the Fortunate Fall" locates irony in the fact that though human history may appear to be getting worse, it must be regarded as making progress toward a providential goal: "not only did the Fall make possible more good for man, but God himself *needed* a fallen race to evoke fully the divine attributes and powers" (294). The difference in the sensibility of Lovejoy and Empson hangs on the question of Milton's intention.

The unconscious irony found by Empson is complemented by the intentional kind described by Widmer, Hartman, and Knight in three beautiful essays all strongly indebted to Lovejoy. Kingsley Widmer's "The Iconography of Renunciation" (1958) observes how Miltonic similes express a

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"double view" of evil as simultaneously "trivial and immense." Because "it is the fallen, not the good, which must be understood in pagan, cyclic, and heroic terms," the presentation of "immutable transcendent authority" necessarily precludes the use of similes in Heaven (265). In Geoffrey Hartman's "Counterplot," Miltonic similes "intervene between reader and object" and evince a double view of divine imperturbability and demonic self-determination (3). The plot-counterplot shows that "the hand of Satan is not ultimately distinguishable from the will of God" (7) and that the outcome is determined "only by these two arbiters: man's free will, and God's foreknowledge" (12). Lastly, Douglas Knight's "Dramatic Center" (1964) contrasts the connection in Homer between subject and simile, where "the stress is on what we already know" (46), with the similes of Milton, which enmesh the reader in the subject because "we have not made the connection between them and beyond them which Milton makes. We make it for the first time as we read" (47).

For Knight, the reader of Paradise Lost discovers that the poem's "action is a part of him" (48), which conviction is developed most powerfully by Stanley Fish in his 1967 Surprised by Sin. Fish reads Paradise Lost as an invitation to choosing between multiple interpretative strategies, in which the choice, however, finally redounds on the fallen reader's head. Similes ostensibly concerned with dimension

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and magnitude digress not for the sake of an ironic contrast, but to picture an extraneous observer who represents an ideal reader engaged in the poem's intellectual trials. Fish's reading of Miltonic similes turns away from the theological paradoxes underpinning the poem as read by Knight, but avoids Empson's subversion of Milton's intentions, by locating irony somewhere in between the rhetorical framework of the poem and the reader's ability to see past the rhetoric.

I have often felt that the single best essay on the Miltonic simile is the concluding chapter of Christopher Rick's 1963 Milton's Grand Style, because it reports a crux in reception without dismissing it. Ricks, acutely aware of the paradox implicit in the treatment of the Miltonic similes, writes, "if a simile does turn out to be relevant, then that is good; and if it turns out not to be, then that is good too, since it is 'ironic disparity'" (127). Relevance is illustrated, for example, by the Vallombrosa simile, on which the eighteenth-century commentary of Falconer is cited by Ricks. Falconer provides a pre-Whaleresque exposition of the different ways in which the simile can be said to be homologous, such as the witheredness of the leaves corresponding to the decayed spiritual state of the demons. Irony, on the other hand, manifests itself in the instance of Satan's comparison to Moses, "As when the potent Rod" (1.338). The example

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"brings out the piety of Moses by stressing the impiety of his adversary" (129).

Ricks finds some examples, such as the Plowman simile (4.490), ambivalently perched between irony and aptness, though he manages to transcend the binary categories of classification when discussing his favorite examples. The "negative" Enna simile is the "most haunting" in the poem because "Milton's gaze is not directly on Paradise" (148), which, like the description of Heaven, is less visually realized than Hell. For Ricks, the comparison of Eve to Proserpine is apt because of the Fall, but falls short of complete logical consistency on account of Ceres, whose gender checks the identification with the Son, and to whom Eve is subsequently likened in another book (9.395). The label, "haunted," seems valuable to apply to Milton in order to avoid the straightjacket of aptness and irony, but the term would be more practically useful if we had a new binary with which to oppose it. If Milton's similes are haunted, would it make sense to contrast them with the "spiritedness" invested in Spenser's digressions?

D. Modernists on the Spenserian Simile

It is of immense interest to me that no one ever tried to do for the epic similes of The Faerie Queene what Whaler did for those of Paradise Lost. Is the reason that

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Spenser's comparisons are, after some fashion, not apt enough? Or is the predilection for seeing close correspondences just a fashion bred among Miltonists, whose Spenserian counterparts could have undertaken the same task with a like ingenuity, if only they had wanted to? But they didn't want to, and the tacit consensus among Spenserians has been that homologation was patently the wrong thing to look for, though they, as literary critics, were not without the disquieted sense that they had to say something about the epic similes of The Faerie Queene. Scholarship reached a high-water mark with the 1932-8 Variorum edition, in which Greenlaw, Osgood, and Padelford hung the trophies of source hunting among the classical, medieval, and Renaissance analogues for The Faerie Queene. In addition to collating the sources found by Spenser's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editors, the Variorum team uncovers additional precedents used by Spenser in copying the extended comparisons of his forebears.

Though criticism began on the similes of The Faerie Queene by tracking down sources, the passion was sooner sated with Spenserians than Miltonists, as if saying that "Spenser was using Ariosto, here" was a dead end. Commentary on Spenser's similes the first quarter of the century, furthermore, is characterized with analyses less concerned with the rigor of his logic or grammar, than with making qualitative assessments. Florence Rowe's 1899 essay

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on "Spenser's Short Similes," for example, judged them more Homeric than Virgilian in flavor on account of the greater reliance on "common animals" (38). Merritt Hughes shares her taste when he argues in his 1929 Virgil and Spenser that the Aeneid better integrates similes into the narrative than The Faerie Queene, which, influenced by Lyly's Euphues, used them for "principles of suspense and relief or of simple ornament" (394). More significantly, Hughes's book, together with Henry Gibbons Lotspeich's 1932 Classical Mythology, turns the tide of looking for Spenser's authorities in a new direction, by uncovering the details for certain of Spenser's similes in the mythographic compilations of Boccaccio and Conti.

For lack of a satisfying account of the function of Spenserian similes, I think, critics begin to decamp from the pictorial school, which for two centuries claimed The Faerie Queene as the descriptive poem par excellence. Signs of unrest came with the doubt that the primary purpose of his similes was for relief, for critics seldom want to be relieved. Kathleen Lea's 1925 essay on "Conceits" of the Elizabethans finds their "besetting sin . . . the overemphasis of the simile, the tendency to digress upon the comparison" (398). Her disparagement confirms the guilty apprehension of Zaidee Green's 1935 "Observations" that Spenser's similes are "in danger of taking over the scenes in which they appear" (217). Rudolf Gottfried's 1952

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"Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry" underrates the use of sight in The Faerie Queene in favor of sound. And Carl Robinson Sonn's essay on "Spenser's Imagery" in 1959 takes the incomplete rendering of visual objects to be a deliberate stylization that shows art competing with nature.

Paul Alpers's 1967 Poetry of *The Faerie Queene* and John Bender's 1972 Literary Pictorialism still submit to the influence of the picturesque in the poem, though their readings are more phenomenologically oriented. That is, they are concerned with the way that Spenser makes us form images in our mind, and, in some regards, they mirror the reader-response theory of Fish insofar as they are concerned with how Spenser's images do not always match our expectations. Alpers develops the notion of irrelevance in Spenser's imagery--under which similes are subsumed--as a purposeful distortion that belies the author's intent to modify continually the psychological response of the reader. Similarly, Bender defines the argument of the poem to be the cognitive process of visualization, through which the reader's education in organizing the ever-shifting visual phenomena is tantamount to learning how to pass moral judgments. Both are splendid books with brilliant insights. Yet the organizing framework of each rests on the conviction that The Faerie Queene is rhetorical, which I suppose it is, although no non-rhetorical poem is produced by either critic for the sake of contrast.

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In my introduction I explain the reason I do not trace some of the developments in studies on Spenserian and Miltonic similes past the nineteen sixties. The foregoing overview of reception was meant not to be comprehensive, I remind the reader, but to follow an evolution in thinking about similes across a hundred and fifty years. The general pattern revealed, and worth recapitulating before turning the page, was that we went from thinking about similes as a description of nature to similes as a testimony of style. Nature, however, started as a curious mix of something actually out there, and the way that something was perceived. And style became regarded less the product of the author's personality or expressive of a world view, but problematized with that which are literally "trivial" pursuits: grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Before the paths on The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost drew near in reader-response accounts of the poems, and finally converge in poststructuralist readings, the two roads travelled by Spenserians and Miltonists had been marked with different signposts to point out similes: the ornamental, irrelevant, and the picturesque, on the one hand, versus the apt, ironic, and grand, on the other. No single vista existed to descry both poems together or to translate one vocabulary into the other. I am aiming at such a middle ground in claiming that Spenser's similes are allegorical and Milton's are not. The remainder of the chapter is given to an

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examination of the Spenserians most important to my thesis. For C.S. Lewis, Rosamund Tuve, and Harry Berger remark that allegory, when considered in a certain light, is structured like a simile.

1. Lewis

C.S. Lewis in his Allegory of Love (1936) follows Dowden's heart-felt effort to read the allegory of The Faerie Queene as at one with its beauties. Particular similes often get the short-shift of Lewis's comprehensive attention, though noteworthy is his remark on the comparison introducing the House of Busirane's picture gallery:

> For round about, the wals yclothed were
> With goodly arras of great maiesty,
> Wouen with gold and silke so close and nere,
> That the rich metall lurked priuily,
> As faining to be hid from enuious eye;
> Yet here, and there, and euery where vnwares
> It shewd it self, and shone vnwillingly;
> Like a discolourd Snake, whose hidden snares
> Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht back declares.
>
> (3.11.28)

Lewis writes that "any moralist may disapprove luxury and artifice, but Spenser alone can turn the platitude into

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imagery of such sinister suggestion. It is thought completely converted into immediate sensation" (329). The comparison, it is worth additionally pointing out, falls short of the stanza-length elaboration of Spenser's longest comparisons. Nor is it a single simile, but two similes. The one, in which the "metall lurked" as if "faining to be hid," sets us up, or prepares us for the next, describing the "hidden snares" of the snake. More than a suggestion of the sinister, I think, the alexandrine's "declaration" derives strength from the doubling of similes, the first comparison introducing an "enuious eye." The extraneous point of view in the second comparison becomes hidden in the grammatical equivocation of the final quatrain's pronoun, "It shewd it selfe." Is it the "eye" itself that shines "vnwillingly"? And that distorts the "goodly arras of great maiesty" into sinister proportions? The tapestry's golden thread prompts Lewis--perhaps in the fashion of Eliot on metaphysical wit--to find a synthesis of "thought" and "sensation," which reaction, we shall see, is resonant in terms of what he thinks about allegory. My own sense, however, is that the double simile is far too pointed to be allegorical, that the effect Spenser creates, and with which Milton was struck, is ironic.

Lewis pulls three chronographs from out Spenser's hat in order to contrast them with his depictions of dawn. Though night is always represented with "aversion," the

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consistency is not "the result of any conscious plan," but "a background, hardly noticed at a first reading, to those great passages where the conflict of light and dark becomes explicit" (313). Dusk and dawn in Spenser, with their differing poetic valences, mimic a larger structure, the representation of which, Lewis sees to be an aspect of "the primitive or instinctive mind, with all its terrors and ecstasies" (312). Likewise, the dualistic separation of characters into good and evil is the "translation into the visible of feelings else blind and inarticulate," stemming from Spenser's "humble fidelity to the popular symbols which he found ready made to his hand." But Spenser is no Manichean, for "from the final heresy he abstains, drawing back from the verge of dualism to remind us by delicate allegories that though the conflict seems ultimate yet one of the opposites really contains, and is not contained by, the other. Truth and falsehood are opposed; but truth is the norm not of truth only but of falsehood also" (315). "What delicate allegories?" we should like to ask Lewis, since Spenser's typecasting was for him a sign that "not everything in the poem is equally allegorical, or even allegorical at all" (334). He cites the episodes of Paridell and Blandamour, Timias and Belphoebe, and from Book One, Satyrane, as examples of the "many characters in the poem who are types rather than personifications" (335).

Personification is for Lewis the calling card of the

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allegorical genre, of which his literary treatment is colored by a theological bent of mind. Spenser "has been represented as a man who preached Protestantism while his imagination remained on the side of Rome" (321), but this misapprehension results, Lewis says with Ruskin in mind perhaps, from the way that "all allegories whatever are likely to seem Catholic. The truth is not that allegory is Catholic, but that Catholicism is allegorical. Allegory consists in giving an imagined body to the immaterial; but if, in each case, Catholicism claims already to have given it a material body, then the allegorist's symbol will naturally resemble that material body" (322). Spenser's representation of a Protestant theology will per force tend to seem Catholic; his House of Holiness is, for example, walled off from the world in the poem:

> [B]ut when the wall becomes one of real bricks and mortar, and the Rule one in real ink, superintended by disciplinary officials and reinforced (at times) by the power of the State, then we have reached that sort of actuality which Catholics aim at and Protestants deliberately avoid. Indeed, this difference is the root out of which all other differences between the two religions grow. The one suspects that all spiritual gifts are falsely claimed if they cannot be embodied in bricks and mortar, or official

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> positions, or institutions: the other, that nothing retains its spirituality if incarnation is pushed to that degree and in that way . . . . When Catholicism goes bad it becomes the world-old, world-wide *religio* of amulets and holy places and priestcraft: Protestantism, in its corresponding decay, becomes a vague mist of ethical platitudes. Catholicism is accused of being much too like all the other religions; Protestantism of being insufficiently like a religion at all. Hence Plato, with his transcendent Forms, is the doctor of Protestants; Aristotle, with his immanent Forms, the doctor of Catholics. (323)

Spenser cannot help but give imagined bodies to the immaterial, Lewis says, which process, like Catholicism, pictures the relationship of form to substance, or of spirit to matter, to be immanent or indwelling rather than separable or transcendent. But why should the representation of indwelling essences, rather than transcendent ideas, be inherently allegorical? It strikes me peculiar that Lewis grants Aristotle, rather than Plato, to be the good fairy of allegory. Nor does his analogy to Catholicism and Protestantism altogether bear out the historical evolution of genre he mapped out earlier.

The courtly love tradition in provençal poetry, of

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which Spenser's Faerie Queene is the culmination, signifies for Lewis not so much the Christianization of Ovid's Ars Amatoria as the Ovidization of Christianity. The anguish and the ecstacy of romantic love poetry follows the Passion, but "the love religion begins as a parody of the real religion. This does not mean that it may not soon become something more serious than parody" (21). Lewis means, in fact, that it soon becomes allegorical. To describe the body of courtly love poetry, he says,

> as the revenge of Paganism on her conqueror would be to exaggerate; but to think of it as a direct coloring of human passions by religious emotion would be a far graver error. It is as if some lover's metaphor when he said 'Here is my heaven' in a moment of passionate abandonment were taken up and expanded into a system.
>
> (21)

That system, which organizes the lover's trials and the states of mind of the beloved, is allegory.

The structure of allegory is reflected in troubadour poetry by "a struggle between personified abstractions" (1) and marks, in Chretien's Lancelot, "the subjectivism of an objective age" (30), which assertion Lewis expands in his discussion of the Roman de la Rose:

> [A]llegory was in no sense a mere device, or figure of rhetoric, or fashion. It was not simply

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> a better or worse way of telling a story. On the contrary it was originally forced into existence by a profound moral revolution occurring in the latter days of paganism. For reasons of which we know nothing at all . . . men's gaze was turned inward. (30)

Allegory filled a need insofar as it served "to supply the subjective element in literature, to paint the inner world" (113). But is Lewis invoking the objectivism of the medievalists in the same way Auerbach's Mimesis countered the objectivity of the Homeric poems with the subjectivity of Hebrew sacred text?

Though personification is the hallmark of an allegorical genre of poetry, as well as the cosmographic world schemes of Bernard and Alain, it has its roots in the "moral revolution" effected by Prudentius, Claudian, and before them, Statius. In the Thebaid, "the gods are becoming more and more like mere personifications" (50), meaning, for Lewis, that Mars, for example, begins to act with a degree of consistency that does not admit ambiguity:

> But that is not the nature of a genuinely mythological figure. The Homeric Ares has many interests besides war. Poseidon has a life and character of his own part from his quarrel with Odysseus. The *esse* of Juno is not exhausted in her opposition to the Trojans. (52)

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The historical evolution of allegory is a function of an increasingly monotheistic world view, as "the twilight of the gods is the mid-morning of the personifications." The gods of the Thebiad "are only abstractions, and its abstractions, though confessedly belonging to the inner world, are almost gods" (56). The "inner world" is a product of philosophy, the conceptual framework of which mediates between mythology and monotheism, and which "should not be regarded as the rival of polytheism, but rather as its maturity" (57).

First pagan religion, then philosophy, Lewis says of the evolution of the Western mind, then monotheism with its concomitant use of allegorical personifications in literature. But which philosophy intervenes between polytheism and Judeo-Christianity? The earlier chapters depict the development of an allegorical "inner world" as the movement to a non-Aristotelian treatment of ethics, "characteristic, not of Christianity alone, but of the whole period from which the Christian empire emerged" (59). Of the increased subjectivity of moral conflict, such as represented in St. Paul and Statius, and such as we still mean when we think of "temptation" or the problems of a "divided will," Lewis writes:

> But to be thus conscious of the divided will is necessarily to turn the mind in upon itself. Whether it is the introspection which reveals the

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> division, or whether the division, having first revealed itself in the experience of actual moral failure, provokes the introspection, need not here be decided. Whatever the causal order may be, it is plain that to fight against 'Temptation' is also to explore the inner world; and it is scarcely less plain that to do so is to be already on the verge of allegory. We cannot speak, perhaps we can hardly think, of an 'inner conflict' without a metaphor; and every metaphor is an allegory in little. And as the conflict becomes more and more important, it is inevitable that these metaphors should expand and coalesce, and finally turn into the fully fledged allegorical poem. (60)

The use of personified concepts stems in the movement away from--not toward--Aristotelianism, which statement seems to contradict what Lewis later says about the Peripatetic as the doctor of Catholicism, and hence allegory. The inconsistency devolves, I think, upon a crux, and a very important one, inherited from Coleridge.

Like Coleridge, Lewis frequently asserts that every metaphor is an allegory, which gives an imagined body to the immaterial. And like Coleridge, Lewis draws a line between the two different ways that material and immaterial stand in relation to one another, between allegory and symbolism. As

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a method, or way of seeing the world, allegory "belongs not to medieval man but to man, or even to mind, in general. It is of the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms" (44). Lewis disclaims any special insight as to where it all began, though he is pregnant with hunches. Still he wishes to maintain the distinction between an allegorical way of looking at the world and a symbolic one:

> This fundamental equivalence between the immaterial and the material may be used by the mind in two ways... you can start with an immaterial fact, such as the passions which you actually experience, and can then invent *visibilia* to express them. This is allegory... But there is another way of using the equivalence, which is almost the opposite of allegory, and which I would call sacramentalism or symbolism. If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an invisible world. The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism.... The allegorist leaves the given--his own passions--to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is a

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> fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is more real. To put the difference in another way, for the symbolist it is we who are the allegory. We are the 'frigid personifications'; the heavens above us are the 'shadowy abstraction'; the world which we mistake for reality is the flat outline of that which elsewhere veritably is in all the round of its unimaginable dimensions. (45)

Lewis reiterates Coleridge's point that allegory begins with the abstract and general, and moves to the concrete and particular, whereas symbolism inverts the process by starting with the image and ending with the idea.

The great original of the problem of symbolism and allegory was suggested earlier, by Lewis's foray into the history of ideas, to lie with the indwelling essences read by Aristotle into Plato's transcendent forms. Although Lewis seemed initially to link Plato's "Protestantism" to a kind of symbolism, and Aristotle's "Catholicism" to a kind of allegory, Lewis placed his bets on literary allegory a little more cunningly:

> Now allegory exists, so to speak, in that region of the mind where the bifurcation has not yet occurred; for it occurs only when we reach the material world. In the world of matter, Catholics and Protestants disagree as to the kind and degree

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> of incarnation or embodiment which we can safely try to give to the spiritual; but in the world of imagination, where allegory exists, unlimited embodiment is equally approved by both. (323)

The debate over literary allegory and symbolism, as I have said, enters English criticism not with Plato and Aristotle, nor Protestants and Catholics, but with Coleridge, whose words in Lewis's mouth suggest the problem boils down to simile and symbol rather than image and idea.

"Symbolism," Lewis says, "does not find its greatest expression in the Middle Ages at all, but rather in the time of the romantics" (46). The historical evolution of symbolism mirrors the growth of man's mind insofar as "Symbolism is a mode of thought, but allegory is a mode of expression. It belongs to the form of poetry, more than to its content" (48). As a form of expression, the allegorical genre becomes separable from a mode of thought, or method of interpretation. On the one hand, "the habit of applying allegorical interpretation of ancient texts naturally encouraged fresh allegorical constructions, and this method was freely practiced by both pagans and Christians" (61), but "what is not to be thought of is that the mere practice of allegorical interpretation or the mere impetus of rhetoric, by themselves, could have imposed 'an allegorical period' on the literature that followed" (62).

That which "is not to be thought of"--that allegorical

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interpretation leads imperceptibly into allegorical poetry--is the core of the problem. Symbolism or "a mode of thought," at least in the terms of the literary critic, works most simply as a revision of something else that didn't work as well. In other words, it is only because we can retrospectively recognize that allegorical interpretations were primitive and wrong-headed, that we are able to ferret out a difference between the allegorical method from the allegorical genre, and hence to postulate more sophisticated or right-minded readings. But symbols were always implicitly valorized whenever true meaning was read into a text. Allegory as interpretation only seems analogical to us, because we at best grant a "similarity" in hindsight to the letter of the text and the meanings read into it. Hence, the debate over symbolism falls out of the necessary and unfortunate separation of allegory as genre and mode; necessary, insofar as criticism is not, or never used to consider itself to be, self-conscious in its interpretation; unfortunate, insofar as the debate is without resolution.

Lewis disavows that we even entertain for an instant the thought that interpretation is the same as composition, which taboo is the delight of poststructuralism. As a result, when Lewis discusses allegory from the vantage of the allegorical poet he focuses on extended metaphor, but when he tries to put him self in place of the allegorical

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reader, Lewis shifts gears to simile in an illuminating way:

> The danger of reading allegories is that we are always tempted to attend to the signification in the abstract and to throw aside the allegorical imagery as something which has now done its work. But this is not the way to read an allegory. Allegory, after all, is simile seen from the other end; and when we have seen the point of simile we do not throw it away. We keep in mind the dawn 'walking', 'in russet', although we know that the reference is to colours in the sky and not to a human figure in a cloak: nay, we imagine that dawn precisely because we keep the 'untrue' imagery in mind. And in reading allegory we must do the same. It is not enough to see that the dreamer gazing into the fountain signifies the lover first looking into the lady's eyes. We must feel that the scene by the fountain side is an imaginative likeness of the lover's experience. If it occurred in a simile no reader would find this difficult; and to read an allegory as a continued simile, but a simile which works backward, is hard for us only because we have lost the habit. (125)

Lewis means something quite simple, but something quite other from what has gone before, when he likens allegories and their meanings to similes and the narrative moments they

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represent. The break of day being compared to a human figure promenading in a reddish cape would be like allegory in reverse--dawn being the concept informing the image--just as we always presume allegorical meaning to precede its literal embodiment. To understand allegory from the point of view of the poet Lewis suggests we think of extended metaphor, but to understand allegory from the point of view of the allegorical exegetes Lewis suggests we treat ideas behind the poem not as extended metaphors, but as extended (read: epic) similes.

Lewis is the first of several twentieth-century critics to rely on extended simile in order to explain how allegory works; to the other camp members we presently turn, but not without a final comment and a question. Lewis discusses simile in the above paragraph only in the abstract, that is, he has a general idea about what similes do, which he counts on his reader as sharing, but I wonder if an example drawn from Milton would have served his purposes equally as well. That is, what if only certain kinds of similes are illustrative of what allegories do? Comparing dawn to a russet-clad woman seems conventional enough, but what do we do with unconventional similes? Or, to go full circle with Lewis, is the simile about the thread in the tapestry from the House of Busirane conventional enough to be illustrative of allegory? Or does the way in which "thought was completely converted into immediate sensation" in that

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example overgo allegory, if it depends upon a degree of difference between image and concept?

2. Tuve

Rosamund Tuve attempts to rehabilitate allegory from the wounds inflicted on it by Romantic criticism, giving back to tropes a properly Elizabethan function. The figures of amplification, under which head she often classes simile together with chronographia, effect "that curious phenomenon recognized by every reader--that the manner in which the language has been used has somehow moved him to an active state of mind regarding whatever is the subject of poem" (1947:90). More than mere superficial ornament, the vividness aimed at by such speech figures pertain to what Renaissance rhetoricians understood by the Aristotelian concepts of *energia* and *enargia* (114).

Tuve cites Peachum on the chronographia describing midnight in Book Four of the Aeneid. Peachum sees Virgil "'to amplifie the dolorous sorrow of Dido'" (qtd. in Tuve, 112), which amplification Tuve herself amplifies as meaning not "a beautiful though irrelevant description of his [Virgil's] perception of night's qualities . . . nor a laboriously purposeful way of saying Dido was sorrowful . . . [but] a way of magnifying the *depth and importance* of Dido's sorrow." But Tuve's comments on simile are pervaded

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by a deep ambivalence about its difference from metaphor, which Tuve firmly and persistently equates with allegory:

> *Allegoria* does not use metaphor; it is one. By definition a continued metaphor, *allegoria* exhibits the normal relation of concretion to abstraction found in metaphor, in the shape of a series of particulars with further meanings. Each such concretion or sensuous detail is by virtue of its initial base *already* a metaphor; and a poet desiring full comprehension will be chary of introducing double metaphors. (106)

Tuve admits that medieval and Renaissance poetry employs concretely articulated images, and "an understanding of the consistent emphasis upon sensuous imagery in a vast body of poetry--allegorical poetry--depends upon a clear understanding of trope" (100). But how is it that poets go about creating the illusion of something clear and concrete? Tuve squints through the same glass whereby Eliot descried Donne's limpid synthesis of sensory vividness with intellection, when she responds: "When one scrutinizes examples of single descriptive figures praised by the theorists for sensuous vividness...one finds that one unexpectedly holds in his hand a persuasive similitude..." (99). Tuve observes that sensuous vividness in Dante and Shakespeare is often the result of a simile. But in contrasting the Inferno's famous simile of the tailor's

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needle with a Shakespearean comparison describing Cleopatra, Tuve matter-of-factly concludes that "Dante within this figure is using language literally--they peered as the tailor peered" (100). Shakespeare's use of the metaphoric expression "strong toil of grace" inside the body of a longer simile, on the other hand, is "a translatio; it operates immediately to furnish many meanings--which are possible, not compulsory, suggested, not stated, uncountable, not limited." Similes create sensuous vividness in their amplification of narrative material, but they are inherently literal rather than allegorical. By explicitly linking allegory to metaphor as opposed to simile, Tuve comes across the crux plaguing every philosophy of language that attempts to differentiate the two.

The example she quotes from Spenser's inexhaustible store of similes is extraordinary, I venture to claim, rather than typical. For that reason I quote it here in full:

> Before her stands her knight, for whom she toyld so sore.
>
> Much like, as when the beaten marinere,
> That long hath wandred in the *Ocean* wide,
> Oft soust in swelling *Tethys* saltish teare,
> And long time hauving tand his tawney hide
> With blustring breath of heauen, that none can

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bide,
And scorching flames of fierce *Orions* hound,
Soone as the port from farre he has espide,
His chearefull whistle merrily doth sound,
And *Nereus* crownes with cups; his mates him pledg
around.

Such ioy made *Vna*, when her knight she found;
And eke th'enchaunter ioyous seemd no lesse,
Then the glad marchant, that does vew from ground
His ship farre come from watrie wildernesse,
He hurles out vowes, and *Neptune* oft doth blesse:
So forth they past, and all the way they spent
Discoursing of her creadfull late distresse...

(1.3.30-2)

Tuve is hardly alone in finding that the two similes compounded on one another serve to make "the sly unspoken dig which defines the nature of an Archimago and foreshadows his victimizing of Una" (103). Hamilton's edition likewise glosses the second comparison as "answering" the first, "now from Archimago's perspective and pointing to his over-confidence" (61). Certainly, legions of twentieth-century critics are united in wanting to find a use for the epic simile that effects some kind of commentary on the narrative action. But this late attitude, I fear, stems as a result of reading Spenser through the lens of Milton: Milton's

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aptness makes us look for it in Spenser, who hides it for Tuve under a veil. Her interpretive strategy seems to me partly justified, although the interesting question is to ask how in the present instance, especially since a far greater number of Spenserian similes are classed by Berger under the head of "conspicuous irrelevance."

Tuve's train of thinking on the passage bears out her position on allegory as metaphor. On the one hand, she generally discusses the imagery of similes in The Faerie Queene in the same vein as the tailor simile from the Inferno, as if it served the ends of amplification and vividness rather than allegory. But Tuve concedes the example to be unusual: "if *sight* were being spoken to, a simpler figure would have been used, and it would not have included a metaphor of the type *hurls*" (103). In its interjection of metaphor, the passage is more Shakespearean than Dantean. Tuve's point is that similes aid in visualization, whereas metaphors in Elizabethan verse lead to an abstract process of thought. The mental movement toward abstraction is tantamount for her to allegorization, because, as she had said in her definition, "*allegoria* exhibits the normal relation of concretion to abstraction found in metaphor." By inferring a "sly dig" at Archimago, we undo, Tuve is claiming, the ulterior rhetorical aim behind Spenser's extended comparison.

I find Tuve's claim problematic, not least because only

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a smattering of Spenser's extended comparisons admit readings of such sophisticated rhetorical intent. And while it is easy to assume that every epic simile comments on the action, the argument does not take its bearings from Renaissance criticism on epic similes, which we shall look at in the next section. Moreover, finding a critique of Archimago in the metaphoric mariner simile is not so much the unveiling of an allegorical intent, but the discovery of the use of irony, or as an example of Spenser's occasional tendency towards self-parody. Whether irony is a subset of allegory or vice versa, of if, as my intuition leads me suspect, the two are quite opposite, is too thorny a topic to embark on here. For the moment, I would rather ask whether it is Spenser's rare doubling of epic similes that Milton adopts as a habitual means of making comparisons, when in Paradise Lost he makes, as Whaler remarked, compounded similes into a cottage industry. But why is it that a doubling of similes leads to an ironic response? Would we still feel a sly dig if we had only the one comparison likening Archimago to the "glad marchant"?

Spenser frequently compounds short, rather than epic, similes as in the rapid fire description, for example, of Maleger:

As pale and wan as ashes was his looke,
His bodie leane and meangre as a rake
And skin all withered like a dryed rooke,

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Thereto as cold and drery as a Snake,
That seem'd to tremble euermore. . . .

(2.11.22)

Or, for example, in the passage in which Duessa is stripped bare:

Her dried dugs, like bladders lacking wind,
Hong downe, and filthy matter from them weld;
Her wrizled skin as rough, as maple rind,
So scabby was, that would haue loathed all womankind.

(1.8.47)

The first passage was ignored by Ruskin; the similes of the second are commented on by Tuve as an example of Spenser's use of icon, distinct for her from his allegory: "Spenser uses an icon or an emblem rather than an *allegoria* for simpler concepts, when he desires immediate emotional response rather than careful perception of distinctions" (109). The icon does not, according to Tuve, require any mental skill to unravel hidden meanings. It is not metaphoric, as was the combination of mariner similes for Una and Archimago: "Icon is not a continued trope like *allegoria*, but a scheme, and is properly a descriptive scheme, meeting the criterion of accurate representation in its parts, and meeting a further criterion only in sum." All the things to which Maleger and Duessa are compared, do not add up to anything, Tuve says. The summation of the parts, though descriptive, is not so much a picture, as the

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analysis of one. The two parts of double mariner simile, on the other hand, were meshed together for her in the creation of an allegorical metaphor.

Tuve's iteration of the passage slips a little when she writes that "here each detail of dugs like bladders, rough maple-bark skin, fox-tailed rump, is not meant as a metaphor" (109). In paraphrasing Duessa's "maple-bark skin," Tuve's turn of phase interchanges the original simile with a metaphor, the interchange partly justified on account of Spenser's own vacillating turns of phrase: at Duessa's "rompe she growing had behind / A foxes taile," but of her two feet, he writes, one "was like an Eagles claw, / . . . The other like a Beares vneuen paw" (1.8.48). The momentary conflation of simile and metaphor in Tuve's commentary is all the more surprising in such a careful account of the relationship between allegory and metaphor, though her slip is instructive. The facility with which we can turn short comparisons into metaphors allows us to reformulate the problem already present in Whaler's attempt to count up similes. Is every use of "as" and "like" to be considered a testimony for whatever we see epic similes doing, or do comparisons only become epic after going on for some unspecified length? Do short similes--by virtue of their mutability into metaphors--"do" something inherently different from extended comparisons?

The confusion over simile and metaphor is as old as the

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hills, and Tuve takes her sights by standing on the shoulders of Quintilian's definitions. Dante's simile is "a comparison used to describe action; no competent poet would use it to direct a reader into the realm of values, concepts" (101). Metaphor, on the other hand, is needed "because there are no words for naming things" and it "directs the mind inward to supply from remembered experience what is unstated." She argues against Hulme when he says that the use of metaphor by the earlier Elizabethans makes us see "a physical thing": "on the contrary, the earlier writers use metaphor...to fairly push one into an abstract process" (102). The use of metaphor entails a conceptual thought process to discern meaning, whereas similes straightforwardly render concrete images.

Tuve's point of view on simile and metaphor depends on thinking that the realm of values and concepts resides within us, which does not seem to be necessarily true across the board for the earlier Elizabethan. What if it were the case that similes directed his mind outward to a world embodied by ideas, by supplying an experience remembered in the form of a common property, a myth? Though her distinction is, from one point of view, so obvious that it hardly bears restating, the notion of a literal language has been since confounded by poststructuralist revolutions in theories of language. A clear understanding of trope is exactly what we no longer have.

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Tuve backs off from the difference of simile from metaphor, when she returns once more to Dante and whether or not his comparisons were inherently poetic. Tuve adds that "none of the 'literal' comparisons adduced (like Dante's) *is* literal if it comes out of allegorical writing" (106), thereby setting in place the problem of her book on Allegorical Imagery--how do we know in the first place if the poem is allegorical? Here at least Tuve attests to the poetic nature of similes:

> The tropical nature of the details comes from their being parts of a larger figure...often so large or so primitive that it is universally comprehensible, like the great elemental tropes--Love : Flame, or Evil : Darkness, or Life : Voyage, or Form : Masculine. No wonder, then, that, as Eliot remarks, Dante's image is more translatable than Shakespeare's. Shakespeare's is already a *translatio*. Detail in allegory, *at the really figurative level of its meaning*, is equally difficult to translate completely from language to language, shades of meaning in words differing as subtly as they do. But the level at which the allegorical figures of Dante or Spenser are untranslatable is the level on which myth enables us to communicate by symbols rather than by naked words.... The writer of an *allegoria* breaks down

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> his figure for me into that which my sense can apprehend; it is hence perfectly possible to translate the statement that Una's face 'made a sunshine in the shadie place' (I,iii,4), while at the level of the translatio that Light is Truth I encounter a symbol common to many myths and many languages. If all metaphor could not count upon some degree of such shared understanding, no reader would have ever understood any poet. (107)

Tuve recognizes that describing similes in such a manner involves looking at allegory in an altogether new light. The details filling out Dante's and Spenser's similes are literally paraphrasible, but untranslatable except by a reference to universal myths. The sunshine made by Una's face signifies nothing recondite, but that "Light is Truth" by virtue of "metaphors" already built into language. Tuve's quote, however, wrests less than I would have liked her to supply from the context of Book One, in which Una takes respite from the search to find her lost knight:

> Her angels face
> As the great eye of heauen shyned bright,
> And made a sunshine in the shadie place;
> Did neuer mortall eye behold such heauenly grace.

The "metaphor" expressive of the similarity between light and truth is a simile.

Tuve gives up the wrangle in her earlier book with

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metaphor's relation to allegory in order to tackle the problem anew by advancing an appreciation of the poetic value of *entrelacement*. The approach in Allegorical Imagery (1966) is complicated by considering the hermeneutic problems attached to allegorical interpretation, which questions were already implicit in her first book: How do we know which poems are allegorical? How do we know whether the allegorical meanings found are really there, or if they have been arbitrarily imposed? Allegory as interpretation in the Middle Ages was generated by over-reading the parallels existing between pagan literature and Judeo-Christian scripture. The end product of a medieval exegesis of Ovid, for example, was the "nullification of figurative sense in the supposed figure, [which] result[ed] from mistaking a mere statement of a likeness seen for the 'translation' of meaning" (309).

Allegory as composition, on the other hand, Tuve now identifies through the study of the plot structure. As a consequence, she delivers the study of The Faerie Queene from a rhetorically based understanding of allegory--that the purpose of reading is to put back into words the secret meaning veiled behind Spenser's literal sense. Reading Spenser's "complex interweaving of seemingly unrelated parts that unobtrusively take shape as a pattern" (369), we "realize, realize, and realize again, the full import of something we can only lamely point to by its abstract name"

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(370). Spenser's plot, which is "neither episodic nor articulated like an epic action," and which "weaves a tapestry before us, is particularly well suited to allegory, where pattern must steal upon us. He was also supremely successful at this secret conveying of unparaphrasible meaning." Allegory resides in the structure of the poem, which pattern constitutes a meaning that, to re-name, is error.

Epic poems and novels use episodes, or "multiple action with multiple actors," differently than does the romance, but that difference is not as hard and fast as one could wish:

> One must distinguish entrelacement from the mere practice, ubiquitous in narrative, of taking one character through a series of actions, then deserting him temporarily--often with the object of introducing suspense--while another character is given primary attention, then returning to the first, and so on. This is a simple device to get around the fact that the medium of words cannot recount events happening simultaneously to different persons living through the same time. . . . But the events connected by entrelacement are not juxtaposed; they are interlaced, and when we get back to our first character he is not where we left him as we finished his episode, but in the

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> place of a psychological state or condition of meaningfulness to which he has been pulled by the events occurring in following episodes written about some one else. Moreover, though the intervening episode will look like a digression from the line previously followed, it will transpire that line could not go on without something furnished in the seemingly unrelated second line of narrative, the 'digression.' Or, if the digression has rather the character of a flashback or an elaboration or a supplying of background, it will turn out to carry onward some second 'new' theme as well as the first one which needed the background; and from that in turn we digress, or seem to, and then come back, not to precisely what we left but something we understand differently because of what we have since seen. (362-3)

Between a novelistic technique that introduces "suspense" and the inherently allegorical quality of entrelacement, the distinction is slippery. Rather than seeing the novel's indebtedness to a suppression of allegory, Tuve posits a somewhat different kind of purpose for romantic entrelacement in its representation of some kind of "psychological state or condition of meaningfulness." Yet I quoted her at such length not to quibble over juxtaposition

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and entrelacement, but to remind the reader that epic similes digress, and many of the things Tuve says about romantic episodes are applicable to the Spenserian simile. But is there a difference between the "suspense" and the "relief" attached to the function of similes? And what does it mean that Spenser's similes, most emphatically "flashbacks," are flashbacks from someone else's memory?

3. Berger

What Ricks does for the Miltonic simile, Berger's 1957 Allegorical Temper does for the Spenserian simile by coming to grips with the irrelevance of the comparisons. Berger lavishes a heretofore unprecedented amount of attention on individual examples in order to uphold the workings of their digression, mirrored in the imagery and canto structure of The Faerie Queene at large. But all is not irrelevance for the sake of irrelevance for Berger, who carries with him baggage about the purposefulness of similes from his New Critical heritage:

> The function of an epic simile is achieved, as Wimsatt has pointed out, by the confrontation of two distinct sets of terms, the subject and the comparison. The subject of a simile is always a denoted 'reality' of the fable; the comparison, whether or not it is an equally 'real' denotation,

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is always an *authorial comment* of the fable. (204, my emphasis)

In this light Berger approaches the comparison describing the pair of nymphs in the fountain of the Bower of Bliss:

The suddeinly both would themselues vnhele,
And th'amarous sweet spoiles to greedy eyes reuele.

As that faire Starre, the messenger of morne,
His deawy face out of the sea doth reare:
Or as the *Cyprian* goddesse, newly borne
Of th'Oceans fruitfull froth, did first appear:
Such seemed they, and so their yellow heare
Christalline humour dropped downe apace.
Whom such when *Guyon* say, he drew him neare,
And somewhat gan relent his earnest pace,
His stubborne brest gan secret pleasaunce to embrace.

(2.12.64-65)

Berger writes that "if the simile expresses Spenser's feeling about the two bathing girls it is neither consistent nor appropriate" (218). He is at first uncomfortable that the girls, christened Cissie and Flossie by Lewis, should be compared with a goddess, and that the shallow depth of their pool should be imaged in the ocean. But Berger extricates himself from his difficulties by making the simile out as a description of how the nymphs appeared not to Spenser, nor "to us, but to Guyon, for the details of the comparison

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project the nature and level of his response."

Never mind, Berger effectually says, that the simile is a direct appropriation from Tasso's Gerusalemme (15.60), or that Una is also likened to Venus's manifestation as the morning star, when her father calls her forth to pronounce the marriage banns:

> As bright as doth the morning starre appeare
> Out of the East, with flaming lockes bedight,
> To tell that dawning day is drawing neare,
> And to the world does bring long wished light;
> So faire and fresh that lady shewd her self in sight.
>
> (1.12.21)

To liken a character to Venus is not necessarily making a value judgment, Berger claims, for it depends on who is doing the comparing. The residual qualm we feel appreciating the nymphs' beauty in the example from Book Two, Berger is confident, results from a shift in point of view away from the narrator speaking to the reader, to a representation of Guyon's inward experience.

> [T]he positive aspect of the image suggests . . . the impulse of lust is connected to the principle of the generation of beauty; the simile places the hero's response on a different plane from the reader's. . . . The simile projects and compares two kinds of experience, one the tinsel reflection of the other: the half-bashful, half-confused

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> emergence of Aphrodite into consciousness from the dark and fruitful depths, and the crude parody of that miracle in which the two girls even act out the *verecundia* of the goddess (xii, 67). The self-consciousness they inspire is quite different from the self-consciousness they possess. (219)

Berger's reading is extremely hard to argue with, once we accept his determination to find authorial comment, no matter how indirect, and he ties simile to allegory in a beguiling way.

In order to understand allegory, says Berger, much like Lewis and Tuve before him, we need grasp the relationship between concrete image and informing idea:

> Though Image A is introduced into the fable to illustrate Idea B, the image has its own concrete character. The relationship between A and B is therefore one of similarity rather than identity, and it must include unlike elements; these differences between A and B constitute the body of irrelevance in the poem, the ornament which critics praise or damn. Now clearly the irrelevance is in the poem cannot be wished away. But what can be questioned is the equation of irrelevance with ornament. (122)

Epic similes are paradigmatic of "the technique of conspicuous irrelevance," also "the basic strategy of

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Spenser's allegorical method" (123). But that which appears as conspicuous, however, turns out not to be real in Berger's accounts of particular examples, in which, like Tuve, he reads ostensible digression to be tantamount to some oblique purpose on behalf of the author.

In theory, at any rate, the apparent irrelevance of Spenser's similes is part and parcel of the nature of allegory:

> [T]he structure of the epic simile is in many ways a miniature of that which characterizes Spenserian allegory. In both cases it is possible but not desirable to collapse vehicle into tenor, ignoring the differences and completely identifying the tenor--the argument--with the simile's subject or the allegorical idea. In both cases it seems better *to assume that two different perspectives on the poetic subject confront each other*, momentarily demand equal consideration, and by remaining thus distinct focus a new light on the subject. (128, my emphasis)

This is a hefty assumption to make, but with some truth in it. Berger finds epic similes to be like allegories, but that is not the same as to say they are allegories, for "an apparent difference results from the placement of the tenor" (129). Lewis suggested allegory was like simile in reverse, and so Berger writes that "In an epic simile the purely

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formal tenor is the term contained in the fable; the tenor in a conventional allegory of levels is the term outside of, and illustrated by, the fable (Woman A stands for Idea B, Una is Truth)." In sum, simile and allegory are kith and kin because each offer a play of "double perspective, forcing us to distinguish between (a) what the characters see and (b) what the poet makes the reader see; the complex meanings of the poem are generated by the confrontation of these two perspectives" (129).

An example on which Berger dwells, and to which I would like to provide an alternate reading in order to presage the way in which I find Spenserian similes allegorical, is the extended comparison describing Belphoebe absorbed in the pleasures of the chase. Spenser gives us a portrait of Belphoebe's appearance when she comes rushing in, the noise sending Bragadocchio for cover, to be faced by Trompart alone:

> As through the flouring forrest rash she fled,
> In her rude haires sweet flowres themselues did lap,
> And flourishing fresh leaues and blossomes did enwrap.
>
> Such as *Diana* by the sandie shore
> Of swift *Eurotas*, or on *Cynthus* greene,
> Where all the Nymphes haue her vnwares forlore,
> Wandreth alone with bow and arrowes keene,

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To seeke her game: Or as that famous Queene
Of *Amazons*, whom *Pyrrhus* did destroy,
The day that first of *Priame* she was seene,
Did shew her selfe in great triumphant ioy,
To succour the weake state of sad afflicted *Troy*.

Such when as hartless *Trompart* her did vew...

(2.3.30-02)

According to Berger, Belphoebe is a virgin huntress, as is the goddess Diana, who provides "an exalted precedent" for the human's "intense concentration on the chase" (123). Spenser's modification of the Virgilian simile by way of omitting the attendant nymphs, Berger sees, is an attempt to enhance the similarity between the Belphoebe and Diana. Diana is rendered solo in order to emphasize Belphoebe's lack of "self-consciousness" (124), and a sense of utter independence from "social feeling" (125). The image of the Amazonian queen, on the other hand, offers instead a contrast to the icy chastity of Belphoebe. Spenser could have learned about Penthesilea's unlucky fascination with Hector from the numerous romantic redactions of the Troy stories, such as the one published by Caxton. In sum, "the simile likens Belphoebe not only to her fabulous counterpart, the chaste and withdrawn Diana, but also to a mortal queen committed to history, impelled by passion, and killed in war" (126).

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Berger's tactic here begins to resemble the strategy he employed with the bathing nymph simile. The shift from the Penthelisea to the general affliction of Troy at the end of the stanza is an "apparently irrelevant reference to death and war . . . [which] insinuates the perspective of mortal existence into the dramatic tissues of the poem" (127). The interjection of Trompart's coward perspective after the simile's conclusion evinces another of "the faces of mortality." No one, it turns out, wishes away irrelevance harder than Berger when he reconciles it to a kind of ironic discrepancy, and when he concludes that "the digressive details serve to complicate the comparison, projecting a rich awareness, a comprehensive attitude toward life that refracts the poem's central issues onto the image of Belphoebe. The subject and comparison of a simile are seldom completely homologous; digressive elements are therefore part of its standard equipment. In a simile badly used the digression becomes meaningless, and example of 'relief,' 'pleasing incongruity,' or some other mode of ornament" (128).

However Caxton might have regarded his material, I am not convinced that Spenser thought of Penthesilea as a historical figure. Ariosto or Tasso would have been more logical interlocutors to pursue than Caxton, since Marfisa and Bradamante, Clorinda and Erminia, all have Amazon blood in them. It is as plausible to suppose, unlike Berger, that

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Spenser felt he was restoring to Penthelisea that which Caxton had taken away--the mythic status she had in the wall paintings at Virgil's Carthage. Among the stories of Achilles, Agamemnon, and Hector that feature in the Fall of Troy, her episode comes last:

> Penthesilea there with haughty grace
> Leads to the wars an Amazonian race.
> In their right hands a pointed dart they wield;
> The left, for ward, sustains the lunar shield.
> Athwart her breast a golden belt she throws,
> Amidst the press alone provokes a thousand foes,
> And dares her maiden arms to manly force oppose.
>
> (Dryden's Aeneis, 1.688-94)

Aeneas is touched by the Carthaginian sympathy for the woes of mortal men, his reverie interrupted by the entrance of Dido and her train:

> Such on Eurotas' banks or Cynthus' height
> Diana seems; and so she charms the sight,
> When in the dance the graceful goddess leads
> The choir of nymphs and overtops their heads.
> Known by her quiver and her lofty mien,
> She walks majestic and she looks their queen.
> Latona sees her shine above the rest
> And feeds with secret joy her silent breast.
> Such Dido was.
>
> (1.699-707)

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That Spenser copies the moment of the Virgilian simile together with the wall painting suggests to me that both simile and ecphrasis served the same end for him.

Spenser not only leaves out the nymphs and their dance, but the pride of mother Latona, though Virgil, of course, also makes changes when he imitates Homer. Odysseus, washed ashore among the Phaiacians, is wakened by Nausicaa disporting herself with her handmaidens:

> As when the Chast-borne, Arrow-loving Queene,
> Along the mountaines gliding, either over
> Spartan Taygetus, whose tops farre discover,
> By Eurymanthus, in the wilde Bore's chace
> Or swift-hov'd Hart, and with her Jove's faire race
> (The Field Nymphs) sporting--amongst whom, to see
> How farre Diana Had prioritie
> (Though all were faire) for faireness, yet of all
> (As both by a head and forhead being more tall)
> Latona truimpht, since the dullest sight
> Might easily judge whom her paines brought to light:
> Nausicaa so (whom never husband tam'd)
> Above them all in all the beauties flam'd.
>
> (Chapman's Odysses, 6.145-57)

Crafty Odysseus inquires whether Nausicaa is a goddess, though he knows plain well that she is not, just as Aeneas

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never mistakes Dido for a heavenly apparition when they meet. Yet the very question posed by Odysseus to Nausicaa is diverted by Virgil into the mouth of Aeneas, in the episode in which he first sees, with genuine uncertainty, his mother disguised:

> Lo, in the deep recesses of the wood,
> Before his eyes his goddess mother stood.
> A huntress in her habit and her mien,
> Her dress a maid, her air confessed a queen.
> Loose was her hair, and wantoned in the wind;
> Her hand sustained a bow, her quiver hung behind.
> She seemed a virgin of the Spartan blood.
>
> (Dryden, 1.433-40)

The modification that Spenser makes to Dido simile of Virgil was, as Merritt Hughes noted long ago, to combine its imagery with the more solitary pursuits of Diana in the Venus simile. Venus plays a more active role in the Aeneid than in the Homeric epics, and Spenser is, I think, sensitive to the fact that the love goddess is momentarily shown as a type of Diana. Berger is right to adduce Caxton for the material Spenser takes for his simile, but I would argue a different reason for Spenser's reliance on a version perpetuating the rumors of Penthesilea's love for Hector. The Amazon's fatal attraction would have spelled out for Spenser a hint already implicit in Virgil, that the goddess of love and the goddess of chastity are not mutually

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exclusive, but rather aspects of the same thing.

Berger claims that it is Diana who sets a precedent for the virgin huntress Belphoebe, though it seems to me to be rather the Carthaginian queen with whom Spenser wants to ally his character. Spenser aligns Belphoebe with Dido because her relationship to the goddess and the warrior of chastity, as depicted by Virgil, has yet something in it of the goddess of love. But without shifting gears to investigate how Virgil's idea of chastity differs from Spenser's, can we pursue a more purely formal line of inquiry to ask if the tie between Spenser and Virgil is itself allegorical? From Paul de Man's point of view, allegory concerns the relationship of a text to a pretext. De Man's thinking on the subject, dragged in prematurely only because the timing is right, would account the relationship of The Faerie Queene to the Aeneid to be allegorical, because Spenser imparts a legendary aura to his own invention by citing an authority. De Man's approach to allegory, we shall see when we come to treat it at greater length, is admittedly anticlimactic in bypassing the content of a subject usually vested with a mysterious obscurity for critics. It cannot answer for a reason that, if Spenser is compelled to copy from his predecessors in order to assume authority, the epic simile should be the place he chooses to do so. Nor would it be fair to digress further by asking how, in the mere imitation of epic similes, Spenser is able

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to transfer onto his own invention the qualities belonging to such an august creation as Dido.

Yet a measure of anti-climax also pervades The Faerie Queene and reflects Spenser's self-doubts, for standing face to face before Belphoebe is Trompart, who has the temerity to use the words of Aeneas:

> O Goddesse, (for such I take thee to bee)
> For neither doth thy face terrestriall shew,
> Nor voyce sound mortall...
>
> (2.3.33)

But how can we admit De Man into the argument to explain away Spenser, without giving Milton his due? Eve bids her husband farewell in the garden:

> Thus saying, from her Husband's hand her hand
> Soft she withdrew, and like a Wood-Nymph light,
> *Oread* or *Dryad*, or of *Delia's* Train,
> Betook her to the groves, but *Delia's* self
> In gait surpass'd and Goddess-like deport,
> Though not as shee with Bow and Quiver arm'd,
> But with such Gard'ning Tools as Art yet rude,
> Guiltless of fire had form'd, or Angels brought.
>
> (9.385-92)

If Belphoebe is simply like Diana, what do we make of Eve being more like Delia than the daughter of Latona herself? Spenser's comparison is allegorical because it defers to a pretext, and though Milton's simile is a response to

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Spenser's and Virgil's, Milton's "more than" comparison seems to me not only a way of surpassing Spenser, but of attempting to break free from allegory. Though Trompart's reception of Belphoebe is a self-parody on behalf of Spenser, no form of irony adequately describes the more than Odyssean wiles in the forthcoming address to Eve, not mistaken for a divinity, but called a "sovran mistress" who "shouldst be seen / A Goddess among Gods" (9.547).

E. Ecphrasis and Simile

I turn now to the relation between epic simile and ecphrasis, though in advance of Angus Fletcher's remarks on allegory, it would not be amiss to give credit to the related thoughts of two other Spenserians on simile. Thomas Roche expands Berger's point about the analogical nature of allegory in The Kindly Flame (1964), when he expatiates on the Elizabethan world-picture:

> In a hierarchical universe where each thing has a fixed place the relationship of any two things in the same world or sphere may adumbrate the relationship of two other things in another world or sphere. The original pair do not lose their identity or relationship by such adumbration; they simply call attention to other possible relationships through the fact that they

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themselves are related in such a way. (8)

The attitude of Lewis, Berger, and Roche, that the structure of allegory is best expressed by a proportional relationship, is not palpably different from Foucault's position on the "Classical" world-view in the first chapter of his The Order of Things. A one-to-one correspondences cannot be found between the literal and figurative planes of allegories, nor, by extension, between a narratives and its epic similes. Lewis, in his parting glance at allegory as a kind of simile, wisely abjured over-interpreting allegories, while Berger and Roche divorce theory from practice in not leaving well-enough alone. As literary critics, they feel compelled to say something about individual epic similes in addition to what the comparison already tells us.

Anne Ferry's Milton's Epic Voice (1967) develops Berger's and Roche's position and juxtaposes for the first time a discussion of Spenserian and Miltonic similes. Spenser represents veiled truths through his allegory, which "like extended simile, implies a separation between the terms it is apparently comparing, between the familiar and the unknown, the portrait and its conception" (92). Milton's version of Adam and Eve in Paradise, on the other hand, is a de-allegorization of the Genesis story, so that they no longer represent the division between "Reason or Judgment and Feeling or Imagination" (127). Milton's application of simile, according to Ferry, is illustrative

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of the effect of original sin on language, but her intuition does not lead her to develop a difference from the Spenserian simile, nor to ponder how the same figure of speech can at once serve the ends of veiled truth in Spenser, and clarity in Milton.

Angus Fletcher's Allegory (1964), unlike Lewis's study, suspects that Coleridge's distinction between symbolism and allegory is misleading. Fletcher's monograph, more detailed yet than Edwin Honig's Darke Conceit (1959), explores common features in the poetry of Spenser and a range of authors as diverse as Swift, Hawthorne, and Camus. He cautions that it is imprudent to read The Faerie Queene as if it were different from other narratives merely because it professes to be an allegory and the others do not. Aside from linking allegory to narrative themes such as the battle, the quest, and demonic agency, Fletcher explodes the idea of ornamental devices in poetry. Ornament is less a function of style for Fletcher than of allegory, and on the relationship of epic simile and allegory, his comments have been particularly inspiring:

> Epic simile would be an instance of effective, but isolated, decorative illustration of a more basic procedure. . . . In Homer epic simile is frequently used to give a microcosmic-macrocosmic contrast between the two worlds of war and peace. There is, always, some sense of interruption when

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> epic simile is used, and this discontinuity seems essential to the use of the figure. A simile is always a partial digression...
>
> (103 n. 53)

One of allegory's "basic procedures" is the isolation of ornament, such as that effected by similes or the Shield of Achilles in Homer's Iliad, and "if the Iliad is predominantly a mimetic nonallegorical poem, it *is* allegorical at precisely those moments of ornamental emphasis" (117). A simile is allegorical in the way that an ecphrasis is, as an "ornament requir[ing] such a reduction of the universal genus to the universal species, of kosmos in its macrocosmic sense to kosmos in its microcosmic sense" (215). Moreover, an understanding of Spenser's allegory necessitates understanding his use of simile: "The intention of The Faerie Queene is not very sharply revealed by the narrator's persona. It may be that the aim of the epic as a whole is more clearly revealed by Spenser's use of simile, as Harry Berger has suggested, than by any direct commentary of the "I" of the poem" (319).

Fletcher's sense that ornament reads allegorically is developed by two other critics in a way that sheds some light on simile in Spenser and Milton. Kurman's all-too-brief article on "Ekphrasis in Epic Poetry" (1974) finds the origin of the word in the Greek term for "description." Kurman quotes Buffiere to observe that, since the

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description of Shield of Achilles contains "all the elements of life," "it is not surprising that early allegorical commentators on the Homeric poems saw in the description of the shield 'la grandiose allegorie de la creation'" (2). Yet the allegory of the shield is akin to that of similes:

> We can begin to see certain similarities between ecphrasis and the simile in epic poetry. From the analogy drawn between God and the epic poet as creators, respectively, of the cosmos and the world of the epic poem, it is but a short step to see all artists, including playwrights and painters, alongside divine metalsmiths and epic poets as creators of a world. (4)

The two devices are "not syncretic but rather in complementary distribution," because they serve a similar function (5). They "involve the presentation of tableaux not at all or only remotely related to the main narrative of the epic, and both serve to slow the pace of the narrative in characteristic epic retardation."

Kurman contrasts the development of use ecphrasis from Homer to Hesiod: "unlike Homer, Hesiod explicitly phrases the nostalgia for timelessness that was to make the device of ecphrasis so attractive to later poets" (3). Hesiod "repeatedly stresses the imminent quickening of the figures" on the shield, whereas in Homer, ecphrasis originally was the "heroic embodiment of a creation legend". Hesiod's

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"historicity, imminent quickening, and timeless striving" modifies Homer's use of the device, so that it becomes "the poet's commentary on the power of art to illustrate history, create life, and frustrate time." The development of the ornament over time allows us, Kurman says:

> to witness in the tension between the epic verse and the object of art described, the straining of the depicted figure toward a dramatic enactment of life. It is in ecphrasis that the epic poem on occasion passes from narration to representation, from the treatment of a story that exists primarily in time to an event ontogenetically situated in space. And it is in this mixture of the dimensions of time and space--also embodied in the convention of timelessness--that ecphrasis strikes a further resemblance to drama. (12)

Berger's play of dramatic perspectives is partially vindicated by Kurman, though as I have suggested, it is an analysis that works better in the abstract than in the concrete. It also works better, I think, with Milton than with Spenser, Hesiod than with Homer, and especially well, according to Kurman, with Virgil.

Virgil takes ecphrasis one step further in the shield of Aeneas by developing "a feature that was to prove most influential in the epic poetry of the Renaissance: he used the shield to represent the past history of a people, or,

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from the point of view of narrative time, to convey what can be termed 'apparent prophecy'" (6). Just as Virgil can depict the "future" history of Rome, from the time of Romulus and Remus to Caesar's victory at Actium, so I would add, can Spenser trace the genealogy from Brutus to Britomart to Gloriana; and Milton, from Adam and Eve to Noah and the Incarnation. But Spenser cannot predict a wedding for Gloriana with safety, whereas Milton can always refer to the Apocalypse confidently. "Prophecy," finishes Kurman, "like similes and ecphraseis, is a commonplace in epic poetry, and like them grants a respite from the spatial and temporal confines of the narrative" (6).

That prophecy is one and the same as allegory, however, is not self-evident to me. Auerbach goes to great lengths in his essay on "Figura" to show how the allegorizing tendency of Philo and Origen towards sacred text was in conflict with the typologizing of church fathers such as Origen and Augustine: "one party strove to transform the events of the New and still more of the Old Testament into purely spiritual happenings, to spirit away their historical character--the other wished to preserve the full historicity of the Scriptures along with the deeper meanings" (36). And on the difference between Spenser's and Milton's use of prophecy, no one has argued more eloquently than Wittreich in his 1979 Visionary Poetics for an understanding of Spenser's "prophetic epic" versus Milton's "epic prophecy"

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(76).

Murray Krieger's thoughts on ecphrasis are also worth citing in light of the connection with epic simile. He sees ecphrasis as a device "central to a poem's becoming successfully poetic" and the source of "the poem's achieving a formal and linguistic self-sufficiency . . . the sense of roundness":

> That is, through all sorts of repetitions, echoes, complexes of internal relations, it converts its chronological progression into simultaneity, its temporally unrepeatable flow into eternal recurrence . . . it converts its linear movement into circle. . . . The spatial metaphor inevitably becomes the critic's language for form. (1967:105)

His 1992 book on the subject takes his earlier thoughts on the subject to their extreme extension so that ecphrasis, no longer a literary devise, is the principle governing all literature: ecphrasis, "no longer a narrow kind of poem defined by its object of imitation, broadens to become a general principle of poetics, asserted by every poem in the assertion of its integrity" (124).

Beye's 1993 Ancient Epic Poetry notes the discovery that "the human world they [Homeric epic similes] sometimes describe, displays customs and artifacts that anthropologists and archaeologists contend belong to a period toward the end of the epic tradition rather than to

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Mycenean times" (105). The diction and grammatical forms used by the epic similes of the Iliad and Odyssey are "datable to a later development of the Greek language," offering additional evidence that they are late interpolations. In conjunction with Kurman, Beye's study supports the notion that simile in the recitation of the ancient epic had something to do with the drama in terms of audience appeal. Three-fourths of the *Iliad*'s extended comparisons occur in battle narratives; and the *Odyssey*, because it has less fight scenes and more dialogue, uses proportionally fewer similes (106). Beye inadvertently answers to the uneven distribution of similes in Paradise Lost: they abound in passages only with little reported dialogue. "The focus," Beye adds, "is always on action in epic, and [in books emphasizing dialogue] the action is redefined by the emotional and intellectual reaction of the speakers. Where there is little speaking, as in battle narrative, similes supply a reconsidered point of view." Yes, but whose point of view?

Beye goes out on a limb to answer his own question, since he doesn't have access to Homer's sources:

> The world described in the similes is more homely than the heroic or aristocratic situation of the main stories. Farm people and their occupations, little people caught up in the necessary details of daily existence. . . . Homeric similes,

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> therefore, are perhaps the ground line that makes perspective for the poet's audience. Composed of a divine world, a heroic world, and a simile world--or the eternal and changeless world, the 'once upon a time' world of heroic deeds, and the contemporary world of quotidian events--the Homeric narrative displays an extraordinarily ecumenical view of things, which in turn has remained a hallmark of epic poetry. (108)

Without unnecessarily idealizing oral culture, it seems safer and more fitting for my purposes to consider ancient epic only in its Renaissance appropriations, of which, no two differ more markedly in terms of their use of similes than The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost.

Ecphrasis is a useful way of thinking about epic simile, and if Milton abjures ecphrasis in his poem, the logical line of questioning to pursue would be to ask, in what sense the vision revealed to Adam in the Eleventh Book, and then accommodated to his hearing in the Twelfth, constitutes the sole ecphrasis. Can we say that Milton's vision attempts to supplant allegory with history? And that the representation of time as a progress towards a goal in sacred history is inherently different from a cyclical sense of time? Ecphrasis is a handy term, but it also displaces the problem of exploring the allegorical nature of similes onto new terminology.

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In terms of extended comparisons alone, Milton's are extraordinary, I hope it is obvious, and that whatever description one arrives at for the similes of Spenser is bound to fail those of Milton, and vice versa. The effect created by the use of contemporary history in the Galileo and Columbus similes of Paradise Lost is startling. Meanwhile, Spenser's reiteration of the stock imagery of authors, whom he supposed were writers rather than speakers, gives the similes of The Faerie Queene an inherently anti-dramatic effect, which I suggest we think of as allegorical. The effect of Milton on critics after the Renaissance irreversibly changed the course of thinking about epic similes. Moreover, the deconstructive approach I introduced to Spenser's similes bears an eerie resemblance to approaches to literature taken by writers earlier in the Renaissance, to whom we now turn.

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Part Two--From the Renaissance to the Romantics

In the preceding section, we followed a slow evolution from thinking about extended comparisons as a description of nature, towards looking at the grammatical, logical, and rhetorical connection between simile and narrative, towards describing the relationship between simile and allegory. By going one step further and proposing that an ordinary comparison is an inherently allegorical use of language, my claim is not alone the modish byproduct of a post-modernist poetics, but already suggested in treatments of the epic simile at the other end of its history of reception: the beginning of the Renaissance. The present chapter turns back the hands of the clock way past the nineteenth century, to the source of the reception of Spenser's and Milton's similes; for the Spenserians and Miltonists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not burst fully armed out of the head of Zeus. They had already inherited the standards wherewith they were to assess Spenser's and Milton's similes from continental readers of Greek and Latin epics. Before attempting to understand Addison on Paradise Lost and Hughes on The Faerie Queene, we need divert our course to ask after the presence of classical literature in the Italian Renaissance.

Amid the Humanist revival of letters in Europe, the first critics who addressed the Homeric simile were Vida and

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Scaliger. They were literary critics, rather than rhetoricians, because they attempted to evaluate Homer's merits and faults, and they said what no rhetorician ever had before them: that Homer was great, but that he proved, when his Iliad and Odyssey were measured against the Aeneid, inferior to Virgil. Nobody can explain, I suppose, exactly why they felt this way, but a predilection for championing Virgil was partly the product of historical forces already in motion.

Homer did not enjoy the same reputation as Virgil during the Middle Ages for two well-known reasons. Medieval readers had access, after the closing of the pagan schools in late antiquity, to only incredibly distorted versions of the originals that circulated in the form of romances or Troy stories, and which were regarded as historical documents. Secondly, the poetry of Virgil, once fallen into the hands of Christianizing exegetes, steadily acquired a halo of spirituality that was hard to shake off. Virgil was thought to have hidden insights consistent with Christian doctrine: the Messianic eclogue was upheld for its prophecy of the return of a golden age with the birth of a child; the Aeneid, for the parallels between the foundation of the Roman empire and the spread of the Catholic Church.

Though the assumptions underpinning the interpretations of the allegorists sometimes appear to have been made self-consciously, Virgil's preeminence among medieval readers

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blossomed, once established with the Fulgentius's De continentia Virgiliana, amid the glosses of the Vatican mythographers amid Bernard's Commentum super sex libros Eneidos Virgilii, and survived well into the Italian Renaissance with the Disputationes Camaldulenses of the Florentine academy. Augustine's rare praise for Virgil's representation of Christain revelation "with complete truth, *if* the picture is referred to Christ" (De civite Dei 10.27, my emphasis) seems to have prompted no one to doubt in the centuries intervening before Dante, that there was a difference between the allegory of the theologians and the allegory of the poets--between interpretation and composition.

Neither Joel Spingarn, George Saintsbury, nor Wimsatt and Brooks, nor Bernard Weinberg can pinpoint exactly when and where literary criticism begins anew in Europe, or explain wholly satisfactorily the reasons that it did revive. But I think the reconstitution of literary criticism depended on the recovery of Homer and a concomitant sense of literary history, alongside the establishment of a standard for expression in the vernacular whereby to measure new poetic achievement. Dante is honored with having initiated the defense of the Italian language, as Du Bellay is of the French, and Sidney and Puttenham, the English tongues. And credit for the restoration to the West of Homeric texts more nearly resembling our own rests with

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Petrarch. But neither Dante nor Petrarch were true critics in the sense that Vida and Scaliger were, for they did not attempt in their prose to evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of Virgil or Homer.

Nonetheless, the Commedia opens the heart to a humanist response to the Aeneid, not because the works of Virgil are portrayed therein as the summit of human accomplishment, but because the relationship between Dante and Beatrice is expressly made to echo that between Dido and Aeneas. Because Dante momentarily identifies with the doomed lover, Dido has a poignancy in the Commedia that the Virgilian episode never presented to the allegorical interpreters of the Aeneid. When the narrator at the top of Mount Purgatory recognizes himself in the presence of Beatrice veiled, he quotes--in translation--the words uttered to Anna by Dido after she meets Aeneas. Dante's version of "I know the tokens of an ancient flame" (Purgatorio 30.48) forces us to ask in what way the journey to Mount Purgatory is a re-telling of Book Six of the Aeneid from Dido's point of view. Dante appropriates Virgilian material in an important new way by making it beautiful and moving. While the Virgilian episode appears to a critic obviously moving and beautiful to begin with, the original episode, as seen through the eyes of a Fulgentius or Bernard or Landino, was barren for a millennium, or at least stripped bare, in their clinical analyses of it, of any kind of emotional impact.

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Bernardus Silvestris of Tours, for example, who was associated with the School of Chartres, regarded Virgil as a kind of historian chronicling the adventures of a Christian Everyman in his pursuit of the wisdom necessary for an active life of virtue. Though Bernard cites Horace to claim that the Aeneid was written for both instruction and delight, he locates satire, interestingly enough, as the expressly didactic mode of poetry rather than allegory (4). The episodes pertaining to Dido in Book One of the Aeneid represent the experience of desire obstructing man's pursuit of wisdom. In Book Four, the cave in which Dido and the Trojan consummate their passion stands for "the impurity of the flesh . . . since it beclouds the clarity of mind and discretion" (25).

Though Dante re-uses many of Virgil's similes, Bernard allegorizes one comparison in manner suggestive of revision rather than re-vision. When Dido's ghost appears to Aeneas in the underworld of Book Six, the narrator describes the uncertainty of her appearance as being like that of the rising moon when it is partially concealed behind clouds. Bernard amplifies Virgil's trope:

> While Aeneas contemplates the various classes of passion, he sees his former passion in his imagination and thus he sees the shade of Dido. . . . She did not seem so beautiful to him; just as the moon is at first shining, then hidden, and

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> again resumes the flickering flame, so passion, which before flourished in beautiful visions and died, now returns with weak remembrance. . . . Aeneas weeps, repenting because he erred so shamefully. (90)

Bernard refrains from identifying with Aeneas, much less Dido, the pair taken together figuring forth the machinery operative behind the human psyche for him. Dante, on the other hand, accords the same profound respect for Virgil's insight into human nature as Bernard had allowed, but the sympathies underlying the poetic vision of the Commedia depart radically from the allegorization of the theologian.

Allegorical interpretation came under suspicion throughout the Renaissance, such as when Francis Bacon guessed that the meanings attached to ancient fables were appended afterwards, rather than expressing any content intended by the author. The distrust was founded, as I have said, upon the invention of literary history, Petrarch's greater acquaintance with Homer than Dante paving the way for comparisons of the Aeneid with the Iliad and Odyssey. Once Virgil was set beside Homer and no longer read in isolation, the conditions favorable for interpreting him allegorically started to wane. A reader might have begun to suspect that the Aeneid was not a thinly veiled theological or philosophical tract, but written as a response to, if not an advance over, the kind of fables recorded in Homer. The

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juxtaposition of two poets would have suggested similarities as well as differences but, more importantly, it would have allowed for the possibility of some rude speculations about a genre of heroic poetry.

Shortly after the time Vida was writing in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the re-entry of Aristotle's Poetics into the canon of Western thought lent final authority to the quest for codifying a set of rules for the epic. The earliest critics applied their common-sense to wrangling over a problem unforeseen by Aristotle, the difference between epic and romance. But the clearheadedness of their approach to classical literature was counterbalanced by a little fuzziness when *allegory* moved over from the rhetorical to the critical lexicon. For as a name reserved for certain kinds of compositions, the allegorical genre could not explain the reason that Homer and Virgil had been read allegorically. And though the label in application to the classical epic lingered on sporadically up until the Enlightenment, *allegory*--as signifying a narrowly moralizing, albeit veiled, intent--marked a drastic revision of the broader, all-encompassing sense of allegoresis we get from Neoplatonist and Christian readings of the Iliad and the Aeneid.

Of course we could argue that Scaliger, too, extracted hidden senses from Homer and Virgil, when he wrote that the epic poem "describes the descent, life, and deeds of heroes"

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(96), but his meaning is expressed in secular rather than philosophical and religious terms. And while definitions of the role of the hero in the epic fell out of contrasting Homer and Virgil, the comparison for Renaissance readers usually turned out to be invidious, for it was Homer who was being brought before a Virgilian standard and not the other way round.

A. Vida, Scaliger, Conti, Chapman

Marco Girolamo Vida's De Arte Poetica (1527) discusses the invention of poetic material in terms of a Neoplatonic divine furor. He grants a place to inspiration, but when it comes down to the brass tacks, Vida cites the precedents of Virgil as being primarily that which is worth imitating. In relation to Virgil, every poet steals or borrows, his imitation being either unacknowledged or acknowledged. In this light, Vida's prescriptives for the use of similes devolves into taking from Virgil, whose comparisons are consistently superior to Homer's, marred by pettiness and impropriety.

In the same passage in which Vida advises poets to include "the sort of maxim which parents may some day commend to their children's remembrance" (61), Vida discusses the use of comparisons and cites acceptable examples drawn from the Aeneid. To imitate a Homeric

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comparison and liken soldiers to flies, Vida says, "would not be proper . . . nor will the poet's words gain much esteem," if the poet compares his hero to a donkey (63). The context in which the first of Vida's two passages on similes appears suggests the possibility that he thinks about similes as a kind of sentence or proverbial expression. The second passage in De Arte addressing simile discusses double comparisons, or comparing "one subject with another in sequence, referring to both by their proper names" (95). He warns against prolixity in the double simile and counsels to "draw your comparisons concisely, lest perhaps it should appear that you have forgotten what you presented earlier and are leading your reader's mind elsewhere by simply passing insensibly from one set of ideas to new ones" (97). The effect of a bad compound simile is that which we call digression.

Vida's discussion of the simple simile was connected to the use of maxims, and the comparisons making up a compound simile were regarded as if they were a kind of periphrasis for a proper name. Both remarks are provocative, though they do not provoke J.C. Scaliger to develop them in his 1561 Poetices libri septi, the Third Book of which provides a detailed account of the superiority of Virgil's similes over Homer's (Saintsbury 32). Scaliger does add to Vida's critique when he complains that the digressiveness of Homeric similes make for a lack of "cohesion" in contrast to

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their Virgilian counterparts (qtd. in Gasbarra 4, n. 6). And while the combined sensibility of Vida and Scaliger suggests the importance that decorum was to take on later in full-blown Neoclassicism, it is profoundly stimulating to contemplate the fact that the literary evaluation of similes begins with the recognition that those of Homer's lacked propriety or were digressive.

It was as if in order to recognize a broken axe, one already had in mind an idea of what a serviceable axe should look like: and Virgil's admirers found that his similes more closely approximated that ideal axe than did those of Homer. Though Le Bossu in the next century formulaically expressed the ideal simile for the epic poet--derived from the one prescribed fledgling orators by rhetoricians--the recognition of Homeric digressiveness at the outset suggests to me an incapacity for seeing something else. If the broken axe we thought we were looking at was not a kind of axe at all, but, let us imagine, a vial of insulin, we would not be able to avail ourselves of a treatment for diabetes. In other words, what if the Homeric simile was not a slightly-less-than-serviceable tool--a defective rhetorical device--that Virgil sharpened to fine point? Is digression the only name we can give to that which is not rhetorically effective? In what sense is "allegorical" a more positive label for expressing the same idea?

Amid the parade of Maronolaters marched one soldier to

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a slightly different drummer. Antonio Maria De'Conti (also known as Marcantonio Maioragio) evades comparing Homer with Virgil, and though he is best known as an editor of Aristotle, he praises Homer in his Orationes et praefationes (1582) in a distinctly non-Aristotelian manner:

> [Homer] frequently uses parables and similes [*similitudnibus*] for divine matters, by means of which untutored minds are easily raised from known things which are apparent to the senses to those which are unknown and sublime.
>
> (qtd. in Weinberg 1:268)

Is there a difference between a simile and a similitude in Conti's mind? Conti has good company in his confusion, for future critics, we shall see, will continue to be woolly about the distinction. And by linking the Homeric simile to an oblique expression of the divine, Conti attributes an allegorical function to it.

Conti's effusion is admittedly less that of the literary critic than that of the Neoplatonist allegorist, eager and ready to find support in Homeric episodes for a philosophy about how to get from the One to the Many, and back again. Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus had cornered the market in late antiquity on allegorical interpretations of Homer, and the renewed interest in the Homeric poems on behalf of the Florentine academy was permeated by Christianized versions of Neoplatonic, Pythagorean, and

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Hermetic lore. But medieval allegorists between Macrobius and Landino only use epic similes from the Iliad or the Aeneid as material on which to interpolate a reading with extreme rarity. And though Macrobius had observed that many of Virgil's similes to be derivative of Homer's in his Saturnalia, the esteem he showers on the rhetorical polish of the Aeneid seems to be identical with his praise of the poem as a repository for all human knowledge. It is a pity Conti is not specific about which Homeric episodes are parabolic or which similes are the divine ones. As is, his remark doesn't get us much further along with thinking about digressiveness than my analogy of the axe and insulin. Yet the association he makes between simile and allegory is prescient, for the two were to be linked together again in the twentieth century, though allegory as a genre had long ceased to be taken seriously as a covert revelation of the divine in poetry.

Virgil-worship reached its apogee in France as the Homeric detractors vociferously shouted down his defenders, while in England the battle lines were a little more evenly drawn. Before Homer's glory was celebrated by Hobbes, Dryden, and Pope, George Chapman had pronounced Scaliger's judgments to be "soule-blinde" (Nicoll 545). In the letter prefacing his 1598 translation of The Shield of Achilles, Chapman exclaimed, "Homer's Poems are writ from a free furie, an absolute and full soule--Virgil's out of a

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courtly, laborious and altogether imitatorie spirit. Not a Simile hee hath but is Homer's" (543). The emphasis on Virgil's secondariness was a blow struck to the moderns on behalf of the ancients, and one to which Pope would lend the force of his pen. But what is at the source of Chapman's admiration? As part of the marginal apparatus accompanying the text of the poem, Chapman paraphrases the action and notes changes in the speakers. He also scrupulously highlights epic similes in the margin as they come along. Why? On account of digressiveness?

Chapman's account of Homer more closely resembles Conti's sensibility than it apes a Neoclassic fastidiousness. In the "Preface to the Reader" of the complete Iliads of 1611, Chapman states:

> Of all bookes extant in all kinds, Homer is the first and best. . . . For to the glory of God and the singing of his glories (no man dare deny) man was chiefly made. And what art performes this chiefe end of man with so much excitation and expression as Poesie--Moses, David, Salomon, Job, Esay, Jeremy, &c. chiefly using that to the end abovesaid? And since the excellence of it cannot be obtained by the labor and art of man (as all easily confesse it), it must needs be acknowledged a divine infusion. . . . For out of him [Homer] . . . are all Arts deduced, confirmed or

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> illustrated. It is not therefore the world's vilifying of it that can make it vile, for so we might argue and blaspheme the most incomparably sacred. It is not of the world indeed, but (like Truth) hides it self from it. (14)

Chapman was persuaded that Homer was in the possession of secret truths, which position bridges his notes with the tradition of allegorical commentary in the Renaissance. The allegorists had been interested in the Homeric poems as vehicles for secrets to which they held the key, but neither the vehicle itself, nor the pilot at its helm concerned them. Chapman, and Conti before him, straddle the fence between allegorical and critical attitudes toward literature, though the positions they take differ in one important regard. Conti puts "divine matters" in Homer first, whereas Chapman stresses his "soule." Chapman distinguishes himself from the allegorists by printing a biography with his edition, for Homer's "divinity" needed a receptacle into which it could be "infused."

Chapman's sense, moreover, that a poetic value inhered in the books of Moses and Job shows the influence of an emergent critical strain in England, of which Sidney sang the top note. Scripture demonstrated a poetic excellence for Chapman, the effects of which "cannot be obtained by the labor and art of man," and which, like the excellence of Homer, must be "infused." Sidney's Defense of Poesy (1595)

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had broken down the offices of the poet into two categories, the artificial and the vatic. Sidney thought the best examples of the poet as vates, "which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or prophet," to have been Delphic oracles and the Psalms of David, "which . . . is nothing but Songs; then, that it is fully written in meter, as all learned Hebricians agree, although the rules be not yet fully found" (106). On the other hand, the poetic art for Sidney also had "the works of Nature for his principal object" (107), a function which interests Chapman less than its prophetic aspect. Nor did Sidney labor over-zealously to reconcile the two elements: somehow, the claims for the poet as vates and the poet as maker simply "went" together.

Conti and Chapman are closer to an allegorical outlook on Homer than Vida and Scaliger, but are the revelations to which they were sensitive exactly interchangeable with what incipient Neoclassicist had labelled as digressive? I doubt it was the case that Conti was reacting to a different kind of Homeric simile than Scaliger. But is it the case that each is just seeing the same elephant differently? How is it possible that the simile, which struck one reader as irrelevant and arbitrary, was perceived by another to raise his mind to divine matters? Digression is a perplexing issue for criticism, whether on the large scale of the romance, or the smaller scale of the epic simile, though the comments of Conti and Chapman hardly show them off as

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critics. That is, they do not turn that which initially appeared irrelevant into something more relevant by bringing a greater degree of ingenuity to bear on their material than Vida and Scaliger had at their disposal. That is, the allegorists and the critics of the sixteenth century do not seem to be describing one and the same elephant merely according to differing personal predilections, for their responses are not in the same veldt. It might be fairer to say that one saw the elephant, and that the other one heard it; that the two experiences of digression in the epic simile are fundamentally incommensurable with one another.

I invented the elephant in order to describe two incompatible experiences of the epic simile, that of the allegorist and that of the critic. But I also want to ask to which camp Spenser and Milton belong, since they, too, were readers of epic similes. Does the very conventionality of Spenser's use of the trope in The Faerie Queene bespeak a mind more akin to that of a Chapman or a Conti in its occult fascination with extended comparisons? Is his allowance for extra stuff in his comparisons--what looks to the critic like digression--that which essentially imparts its allegorical aura? Conversely, do Milton's improvements, like those which Virgil made upon Homer, evince a restiveness, a desire to emerge from the cave of allegory into the light? Thus far my assumption has been that we cannot divorce ourselves from what other people have thought

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about similes, and that we cannot ascertain in a vacuum what an epic simile is supposed to do without considering what it has done for other readers. In trying to elaborate on the difference between an allegorical and a critical sensibility towards digression, I would like to depart momentarily from my historical overview to talk about the difference in terms not of a hypothetical elephant, but by interjecting two, more familiar, examples.

B. Digression

When the Trojan king comes to the tents of the Achaians to beg the corpse of his son, he discovers their champion still grieving for the loss of Patroclus. While kissing the hand of Hector's butcher, Priam puts Achilles in mind of his father, Peleus, so that "Achilles' thoughts now with his sire, now with his friend, were fed" (Chapman's Iliad 24.459). The hero responds by commending the old man's mettle for having braved the way to his chamber; he urges that they mourn together since "The gods have destinate / That wretched mortals must live sad. Tis the immortall state / Of Deitie that lives secure" (24.470-2). Then he tells a story--not unlike that of Pandora's box--in a digression of sorts:

> Two Tunnes of gifts there lie
> In Jove's gate, one of good, one ill, that our

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mortalitie
Maintaine, spoile, order; which when Jove doth
mixe to any man,
One while he frolicks, one while mourns. If of
his mournfull Kan
A man drinks onely, onely wrongs he doth expose
him to.
Sad hunger in th'abundant earth doth tosse him to
and froe,
Respected nor of gods nor men.

(Chapman, 24.470-476)

The fable of the urns digresses, on the one hand, because Achilles has already reconciled himself to Zeus's wish, related to him by Thetis, that he give over the body. Achilles has only to hear the king's pleading, accept the ransom, and return Hector. Like an epic simile, the fable crosses a threshold away from the immediate concerns of the narrative because there is no need to detain Priam with a story. Yet Achilles continues his tale by saying that his father was one who drew from both cups and that Peleus, even though beloved of an immortal, was not fated to be supported in old age by his only son. Priam also partook of the same mixed blessings, Achilles adds, since neither his empire, wealth, nor family could stay the loss of his favorite son and chief protector. After he finishes, Achilles raises Priam up to sit beside him so that they can find a term to

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their woe. But Priam, impatient to exchange his son with the ransom, renews his suit and momentarily sparks the ire of the hero, who confirms the promise he has made to the gods.

The fable seems to digress, but takes on a deeper significance as it draws Peleus and Priam into its brief narration. The fable turns on the identification of two fathers, thereby expanding the theme of the passage in which Hermes earlier had provided safe convoy to Priam through the enemy camps. The heavenly messenger, disguised as a Myrmidon, had pretended to take pity on the old king on account of the resemblance he saw with his own father. The incident inspires Priam, when he meets Achilles, to entreat the hero to think on Peleus in distress. Already affected by the death of Patroclus, Achilles's thoughts are diverted to the sorrows he anticipates his father feeling. He tells the story of the urns identifying the two fathers as one, and the compassion he demonstrates towards Priam is also that which allows him consolation for the death of Patroclus. By imagining Peleus bereft of his only son, Achilles envisions his own death through the eyes of his father. Achilles's ability to mourn for himself is what finally releases him from mourning over Patroclus, as if his anger at the loss of his friend, as if all anger, were in the end only a displaced grief at one's own mortality. In sum, the fable of the urns is no digression but a story,

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which in its telling, allows Achilles to adopt an outside perspective on his life. The shift in perspective is, on the one hand, condescending: Priam's impatience indicates that he receives it as an impertinence. But it is also upwards-looking: the story's theme of parallel fathers originates with Hermes. Though we first regarded it as if it were a digression, the fable is centrally integrated with the working out of Achilles's wrath.

To overturn one aside with another, I call the reader's attention to the Iliad's beginning, when Achilles, at the prospect of having his war booty snatched away and his honor besmirched among men, is first angry. He hesitates over taking immediate vengeance on Agamemnon:

> His heart
> Bristled his bosome and two waies drew his discursive part--
> If, from his thigh his sharpe sword drawne, he should make roome about
> Atrides' person, slaughtring him, or sit his anger out
> And curb his spirit. While these thoughts striv'd in his bloud and mind
> And he his word drew, downe from heaven Athenia stoopt and shind
> About his temple, being sent by th'Ivorie-wristed queene

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Saturnia, who our of her heart had ever loving
bene
And carefull for the good of both. She stood
behind, and tooke
Achilles by the yellow curles, and onely give her
looke
To him apparance--not a man of all the rest could
see.
He, turning backe his eye, amaze strooke everie
facultie,
Yet straight he knew her by her eyes, so terrible
they were. . . .

(Chapman, 1.192-203)

The episode digresses from the affairs of human characters in the Iliad, for even though the gods very frequently descend, their descent is always a special event that is never treated lightly. The intervention of the gods, moreover, is disguised more often than not in Homer's narration; they are usually recognized only at their departure, or in retrospect. Though Athena intervenes on several occasions, it is a rare occurrence that Achilles, yanked by his hair here, should know her instantly.

But what can we say of Athena? The hand of Achilles is restrained by the goddess when she tells him his present shame will be rewarded with greater glory. His desire for praise is as much a cultural given as Arthur's Prays-desire

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in The Faerie Queene, but the irascibility of Achilles, initiating the action of the poem, is of a different order than Arthur's if the value he puts on his reputation is the sole means whereby he can tolerate the idea of his own death. Athena merely holds out a promise, and though we know the poem's outcome, I doubt what more we can say as literary critics about the deity who diverts the wrath belonging peculiarly to Achilles. It has always been tempting to think of Athena as wisdom; though certainly, three books later, when Athena incites Pandarus to break the truce accommodating the one-on-one combat between Menelaus and Paris, she ceases to appear wise, at least, without twisting the definition of the word. Athena is too inconsistent to be like Sleep and Discord, for example, or a figure that obviously personifies a human attribute, just as we cannot say that Duessa represents Mary Queen of Scots at all times in The Faerie Queene. Wisdom is only one aspect of Athena, it seems safer to say, while taking her and the whole frustrating bunch of Olympians at face value, as deities. We are without a guide for assigning a function to the riotous behavior of Hera and Zeus, who violated Plato's sense of theological decorum, just as Jahwah in the Old Testament is also beyond the pale of literary criticism. Nevertheless, it was possible to extract religious precepts from the Pentateuch, whereas no ideology can be culled from a conscientious reading of Homer, save that it is important

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to bury the dead and to worship the right god at the right time--or else. My reason for introducing unrelated episodes in the Iliad-- neither of which are similes--is to ask: "Which of the two better exemplifies the effect on the reader traversing the vast plains of epic narrative, when he stumbles across yet another long-winded extended comparison?" Do these episodes--a contrived fable inset within the narrative, and the sudden intervention of a god from outside the narrative--represent the poles of experience toward which a reading of epic similes may go? The example of the tale told by Achilles turns out to be eminently well-suited to the rhetorical demands of the situation, so well-suited that we can translate its effect into other words and explicate what is going on. But the representation of Athena is in excess of rhetorical analysis. Though she persuades Achilles to a course of action, her being in the poem is not self-evidently rhetorical.

I have introduced the story of the urns to illustrate how Scaliger approaches similes as miniature fables, those of Homer being not very good when compared to those of Virgil. The remarks of Conti and Chapman, on the other hand, suggest another sensibility, alien to the first, and about which we can say little. Their apprehension of the divine is also a valid way of thinking about how epic similes function--the wilder the digression the better. The

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word function, of course, is a little bit of a misnomer; it misappropriates the impetus behind a mental state aware that it is being raised to celestial matters. Nor is the word valid, in the sense of being admissible by proof, wholly satisfactory. I can not prove the case of the allegorists any more than they could, because their arguments were not rational, though they seem to me to have been less irrational as they were hyperrational.

The examples I drew from the Iliad were also chosen with an auxiliary, sneakier design. Can we ask of the two episodes cited, which is the allegory? Is it the fable of the urns, which we have figured out to impart a second meaning? Or is it the revelation of the god, about which we can say no more? Alexander Pope calls both episodes allegorical, though the first only by taking the agency of Athena out of the context of the whole poem. "Pallas the Goddess of wisdom descends," he notes in his translation of Homer, and "the allegory here may be allow'd by every reader to be unforc'd: The prudence of Achilles checks him in the rashest moment of his anger, it works upon him unseen to others. . . . All this is a most beautiful passage whose Moral is evident" (59). Athena's descent is allegorical, though Pope's reduction of her into a single meaning is more a critical response than the effusions of a Proclus. Pope picks through the same Stoic and Euhemerist readings of the poem that were preserved by Eustathius, and which had

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fascinated Dacier, but he is scarcely a mystic when he has to account for a definition. But while the second episode, the fable of Achilles, is likewise for him "an admirable allegory and very beautifully imagin'd by the poet," Pope does not go on to educe a secondary, more recondite, meaning from it (1144). He cites Plato's objections to the passage for its representation of the gods as a source of evil, and notes scriptural analogues out of Psalms and Proverbs. His commentary on Homer uses the word "allegory" loosely throughout to denote those episodes with a moral value, though some episodes require a little more interpretative energy on his behalf than others.

Pope was using the idea of allegory loosely when he reduced the intervention of the Homer gods to paraphrasible moral applications, but not nearly so loosely as medieval readers of the same classical poems. Allegory regarded as a form of moral instruction, we shall see, continues to sharpen in focus until the Romantics, though more recently it has come to be linked with any process of conceptualization. "Allegorism," according to Howard Clarke's splendid overview of Homer's readers, is "one aspect of the general rationalizing process that began in sixth and fifth-century Greece and led to the birth of philosophy, science, and history" (61).

Clarke takes the story of the urns to be prototypical of allegory, to which example he adds the inset tale about

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Prayers following upon the heels of Ruin, told to Achilles by Phoenix in the Ninth Book. Also functioning in the same manner, argues Clarke, is the Nineteenth Book's personification of Ate, given in self-justification by Agamemnon to Achilles:

> Figurations like these are as close as Homer's characters come to reflecting on their own experience or describing psychological processes. Their analysis inevitably turns into narrative, and abstract categories of good and evil, impulse and inhibition, pride and shame, and innocence and guilt develop into symbolic stories. It is significant, too, that each of these incipient allegories leads into myth. (67)

Rudolf Pfeiffer also regards personification as the hallmark of Homer allegory (5), and, like Clarke, he overlooks the problem that the use of personification had never been linked to allegory in the rhetorical treatises of antiquity (Rollinson 15). Moreover, both Pfeiffer and Clarke zero in on passages in which a story is related by one character to another. Yet such inset tales are only indirectly a part of "Homer's" third-person narration, even though it contains the reports of what its characters have to say.

By taking the speeches of particular characters to be paradigmatic of the way we should understand allegory as a whole, Clarke is forced into regarding naive allegory as the

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origin of complex allegory:

> This is the Homeric process, from concept to personification to story, and so the allegorist could feel justified in simply reversing the process to discover the ideas, implicit and intended, beneath the Homeric narrative. Thus Homer, within the Iliad and Odyssey, seemed to anticipate and even justify all subsequent directions of allegory. (68)

Homeric characters who invent personifications to explain their actions afford a model for naive allegory, a rhetorical trope which serves critics as well as poets:

> Milton's conception of the disciplined life early became and remained his citadel, the fortress from which he sallied out to battle in the field of prose for the right to exercise self-government, the tower in which, under the guidance of Urania, he celebrated the struggles and victories of the resolved soul. While that tower stood apart from the world, new and untried as yet by severe assault, grass and flowers and trees flourished around it, pastoral music was in the air. When it was no longer on the outskirts of life but in the center, when years of warfare had battered its masonry and altered its contours, grass and flowers almost vanished, trees stood gaunt and

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> leafless, there was no music but the trumpet's. This impromptu allegory embodies the history of Milton's poetic craftsmanship, and the changes are mirrored in his treatment of mythology. (Bush 266)

But what is the relationship between simple and complex allegories? Like Clarke, we can treat simple allegories as rhetorical tropes veiling abstract categories of good and evil, but the fact that the speeches of Homeric characters are inset within the larger body of the narrative ought make us doubt how much insight they give us into the Iliad and Odyssey or their reception, much less The Faerie Queene, for it is not obvious that simple allegories come first in an evolution towards the complex.

Nor can Clarke extricate himself from the impasse we come to when we consider that, if the naive fables told by Homer's characters inspired the interpretations following on the whole of the poems, they were exactly the sort of passages that, along with the epic similes, were ignored by "sophisticated" exegetes. For example, passages garnering the attention of Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus, according to Robert Lamberton, were incidents such as the deception of Zeus, his Chain, the Cave of the Nymphs, and the intervention of Athena. The meanings they found can scarcely be characterized, as Clarke, to be moral lessons about "pride and shame, and innocence and guilt." The episode of Athena was popularized by Plotinus as

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representing "a universally known and striking archaic image for a deeply felt spiritual breakthrough, but simultaneously also a complex image for the powers of the mind--conceived as a universal acting upon individuals--over actions and events" (95). The "spiritual breakthrough" that Athena's appearance was taken for in the Enneads was not the Judeo-Christian revelation found by the Renaissance Neoplatonists, but, according to Plotinus, the experience of the divinity as "The One" [to on]:

> Were one able to be spun around, either by his own effort or through the good fortune of being yanked by Athena herself, he will find himself face-to-face with the god, with himself, and with the universe. . . . Abandoning the definition of himself as something separate from the entire on, he will enter the total universe. . . .
>
> (qtd. in Lamberton, 94)

Any mention of the fable of Achilles among the glosses of the school of Plotinus was rare, and came later, because Plato himself had specifically objected to it. Proclus dismisses its surface level--that Zeus dispenses misfortune--by relegating the urns to "contain only *apparent* goods and evils, only those things dependent on fate, those externals that can be turned to good or to evil, depending on the condition of the soul to which they are attached" (Lamberton 221).

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My defense for having strayed into Neoplatonic hinterlands is to stress a problem hounding attempts to define allegory. By separating allegory as composition from allegory as interpretation, we tend to come up with a definition of the former, which in no way accounts for the latter, unless we are to deny that Plotinus and Proclus were, in fact, allegorizing Homer, or unless we are to call, as Frye did, any response coming after a text allegorical. But that solution overlooks important differences between allegoresis and literary criticism, not the least being that they do not address the same passages of text. Literary critics can have nothing to say about Athena, whereas Plotinus and Proclus were not remotely interested in comparing Homer with Virgil, though they were in the position to do so; nor had they anything to say about the personifications like Discord and Rumor, much less the epic similes. Their approach was altogether more teleological than empirical, but, given their assumption that the Iliad and the Odyssey are a working out of Platonic ideas, their method is rigorously logical.

Alexander Pope expresses a truism in regarding allegorical poetry to oblique express a moral; but even a cursory glance at the Enneads, anything but an ethical treatise, suggests its allegorization of Homer to be the re-figuring out of matters divine. Yet to call not Homer but the response that comes after him, the allegory, is to

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conflate the interpretation with composition, thereby obscuring the way in which Neoplatonic exegesis is not poetry, or not very good poetry. I touch on the problem here because it parallels the one that will plague our discussion of epic simile. Literary comparisons seem to be a species of analogizing, as is allegorical interpretation. Yet from a rhetorically oriented point of view, they also seem to be a way of expressing something obliquely, as is allegory conceived as a genre of composition.

What is our impulse as literary critics when, traversing the vast plains of epic narrative, we come across a digressive simile? Do we uphold the utter change of topic to be a crossing of thresholds, a vision from beyond? Do we accept the pleasure of stumbling as a revelation of the divine? Is not our impulse rather to try to regularize what appears to be extraneous so that it better conforms to the story? In my paraphrase of the final scenes of the Iliad, I omitted the extended comparison made when Priam kisses the hand of Achilles:

> And as in some strange land
> And great man's house, a man is driven (with that
> abhorr'd dismay
> That followes wilfull bloodshed still, his fortune
> being to slay
> One whose blood cries alowde for his) to pleade
> protection

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> In such a miserable plight as frights the lookers on:
> In such a stupefied estate Achilles sate to see,
> So unexpected, so in night, and so incrediblie,
> Old Priam's entrie.
>
> (24.423-30)

When Priam is likened to a murderer, how do we respond? Is the critical response to try to understand in what way the king is guilty of a crime? Would it be uncritical to take the simile at face value and accept the consternation of Achilles to be illustrated in the surprised host of the refugee? If the vision of the murderer in the great house exists only to illustrate a quality in the narrative, why should a roundabout emphasis on quality, on an idea or form, be an allegorical use of language? In working out the relation of simile and allegory, I cannot prove, but can only make a plausible case, that the illustration of quality, by likening something to something else, is an allegorical use of language--though it is less in the sense of concealing something, than in revealing it. Spenser's similes are conventional insofar they often closely copy the digressive comparisons of his forebears; but what does it mean for Milton to claim that his something is not like something else?

C. Hobbes and Dryden

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Something happens in the critical outlook on the epic simile in England, between the poetry of Spenser and Milton and between the translations of Chapman and Pope, which corresponds, I think, to a changed notion about allegory. Alexander Pope regularized the doings of the Homeric gods so far as he could, according to Reuben Brower, partly in response to his reading of Paradise Lost: "The many parallels between Pope's Jove and Milton's deity are not surprising, since Pope like Milton was attempting to interpret a primitive myth in terms acceptable to a more 'advanced' religious and moral consciousness" (125). Though a relationship between allegory and morality is already in place by the time of Pope, what has simile got to do with it? Brower does not explicitly address the question, but his remarks are leading: "In Pope's translation, moral sentiments are discovered and brought out when there is little basis for them in the Greek," but moral sentiment "is closely connected for Pope and his contemporaries with description" (129). Pope's straightening out the Olympian act corresponds, moreover, to cleaning up Homer's extended comparisons: "Homer's similes vary considerably from those with only one or two point of likeness to others having many close correspondences. In the notes Pope seems to stress the second type, and in his translations he tends to fill in the Homeric outline" (134). Description is the link in the chain between epic simile, on the one hand, and moral

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allegories, on the other. But when, after Vida, does thinking about extended comparisons leave behind the domain of theft or borrowing and enter the realm of description?

Thomas Hobbes's 1650 Answer to Davenant recalls what Chapman had said about Homer, but Hobbes puts a new twist on Homer's divine infusion:

> For verse amongst the Greeks was appropriated anciently to the service of their Gods, and was the holy style; the style of the oracles; and the style of the laws; and the style of men that publicly recommended to their Gods the vow and thanks of the people; which was done in their holy songs called hymns, and the composers of them were called prophets and priest before the name of poet was known. When afterwards the majesty of that style was observed, the poets chose it as the best becoming their high invention. (4:445)

Hobbes differs from Chapman in claiming that Homer adopted the oracular style so as to mimic the religious impulse underlying a false religion. Chapman was not looking for differences between polytheism of the poets and the monotheism he knew, but for similarities wherever he could find them.

Hobbes goes on to commend Davenant as a good Christian for having abjured the habit of invoking muses in Gondibert, though the practice among the ancients was "an accessary to

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their false religion":

> For their poets were their divines; had the name of prophets; exercised amongst the people a kind of spiritual authority; would be thought to speak by a divine spirit; have their works which they writ in verse (the divine style) pass for the word of God, and not of man; and to be harkened to with reverence. . . . But why a Christian should think it an ornament to his poem, either to profane the true God, or invoke a false one, I can imagine no cause, but a reasonless imitation of custom; of a foolish custom, by which a man, enabled to speak wisely from the principles of nature, and by his own mediation, loves rather to be thought to speak by inspiration, like a bag-pipe. (4:447-48)

Milton and Spenser are circumspect about naming which muse or muses they are invoking, perhaps on account of the emergent critical climate. And while we may bewail the absence of Hobbes's imagination when it comes to poetry, he is proud of it. The pagan religion was for him a mistake, and he regarded Chapman's apprehension that Homer spoke an oracular truth to be equally false. The two wrongs add up to a right for Chapman, but the purported divinity of Homer had, at best, the status of a metaphor for Hobbes.

Metaphor is Hobbes's strong suit when it comes to writing about poetry. The preface "To the Reader concerning

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the Vertues of the Heroique Poem" of his 1676 translation of Homer hits on diction as that which materially distinguishes poetry from non-poetry. In the Leviathan (1651) he had sought to extirpate metaphoric expressions from all writing that aspires to accurate representation. One cause of absurdity in non-poetical tracts is "the use of metaphors, tropes, and other rhetorical figures, instead of words proper . . . in reckoning, and seeking of truth, such speeches are not to be admitted" (44). But Hobbes does not class similes alongside with metaphors because similes are acceptable in philosophical and scientific writing

> In demonstration, in counsel, and all rigorous search of truth, judgement does all; except sometimes the understanding have need to be opened by some apt similitude and then there is so much use of fancy. But for metaphors, they are in this case utterly excluded. For seeing they openly profess deceit, to admit them into counsel or reasoning were manifest folly. (61)

Similes, then, do not lie in the way that metaphors do; for this reason Hobbes addresses only the degree of perspicuity whereby poetic comparisons tell us something about what is going on in the narrative.

In his letter to the reader, Hobbes makes some general observations about poetry before weighing the similes of the Iliad with those of the Aeneid. He says, "an image is

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always a part, or rather a ground of the poetical comparison. As, for example, when Virgil would set before our eyes the fall of Troy, he describes perhaps the whole labour of many men together in the felling of some great tree, and with how much ado it fell. This is the image. To which if you but add these words, 'So fell Troy,' you have the comparison entire" ("To the Reader Concerning," vi). This tidy formula, it is important to underline, explicitly discusses the epic simile as "an image" or a kind of description. That is, similes are not merely borrowings or thefts from the ancients but represent something seen. Hobbes goes on to stress the importance of clarity in poetic comparisons, "the grace whereof lieth in the lightsomeness, and is but the description of all, even the minutest, parts of the thing described. . . . For a poet is a painter."

Hobbes, like Chapman, wants to upset the judgment preferring Virgil's similes to Homer's: "If we compare Homer and Virgil by . . . the clearness of images, or descriptions, it is manifest that Homer ought to be preferred, though Virgil himself were to be the judge. For there are very few images in Virgil besides those which he hath translated out of Homer" (viii). Yet Hobbes is unable to find the wherewithal to accord Homer the prize. He juxtaposes two comparisons--Homer's likening a slain warrior to a fallen tree versus Virgil's description of Troy's overturn using a similar image--but when pressed to bequeath

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the laurel, he demurs: "neither these two descriptions, nor the two comparisons can be compared together. The image of a man lying on the ground is one thing; the image of falling, especially of a kingdom, is another" (xi).

The questions that Hobbes dances around without answering are two: "What makes a poetic simile different from the kind used in argumentation? And what need does a long narrative poem have of epic similes?" Epic similes work for him somewhat in the manner that, were he or any other scientist to choose to explain something via recourse to analogy, the success of the explanation would depend on his choice of the parallel. While the analogy of the scientist must be apt, that of the poet need only be clear. In answer to the second question, Hobbes interposes a rhetorical end for the use of the epic simile. Virgil wanted to tell us about the fall of Troy, so he likened it to the overturn of the tree. But the poet of Aeneid starts sounding like the social scientist when Hobbes fails to pin down the distinction between clarity and aptness. He would have said, I suppose, that epic similes are not very different finally from certain kinds of arguments that are not poetic at all, and that they are not nearly as poetic as metaphor, the ground of all poetry. He answers the second question only by evasion.

What need have epics of similes? Hobbes cannot give us a good answer and John Dryden would prefer we questioned not

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the need. Dryden was thinking in response to Hobbes on the issue of poetry being inherently metaphoric, when, in the 1700 preface to the Fables Ancient and Modern, he censured Hobbes for telling that "the first Beauty of an Epick Poem consists in Diction, that is, in the Choice of Words, and Harmony of Numbers" (556). Dryden would have it that diction follows upon more important considerations in the epic poem such as plot, the way it is arranged, and the thought contained therein, to all of which, the choice of words, including the use of metaphors and similes, is but a finishing touch. Dryden also attacked Hobbes's unusual scheme for classifying literature, in which three kinds of poetry were each subdivisible into two types, depending on their manner of representation. Of satiric, pastoral, and heroic poetry, Hobbes's Answer divided the lattermost kind into two branches, epic narrative and the tragic drama, which differ "no more but in that they are pronounced by one, or many persons" (4:444). The tragic drama serves to stimulate pathos, whereas the intention of the epic narrative is, Hobbes said, "to raise admiration, principally, for three Virtues, Valour, Beauty, and Love" ("To the Reader" iv).

Leery of the systematic lumping together of epic and tragedy, Dryden applies the role played by epic similes as a clog upon the heels of Hobbes. The epic exists to raise admiration, Dryden concurs, but the prime function of epic

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simile is also to raise admiration. Dryden regards the passions expressed by dramatic speeches as too violent to sustain the use of extended similes. He therefore assigns metaphor to be the vehicle most suited for tragedy and comedy

> A Metaphor is almost all the Stage can suffer, which is a kind of Similitude comprehended in a word. But this Figure has a contrary effect in Heroick Poetry: There 'tis employ'd to raise the Admiration, which is its proper business. ("Dedication to the Aeneis" 307)

Yet the simile can only manage this feat if it obeys certain limits:

> Similitudes and Descriptions, when drawn into an unreasonable length, must needs nauseate the Reader. Once I remember, and but once; Virgil makes a Similitude of fourteen Lines; and his description of Fame is about the same number. He is blam'd for both; and I doubt not but he would have contracted them, had he liv'd to have review'd his Work. (308)

Dryden is the first to wonder how long similes are supposed to be, but, whatever their length, their use is what distinguishes tragedy from epic. The motivation governing the epic poet's choice between plot, disposition, and thought, was the same as the "proper business" of the

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simile, and that, above and beyond being clear or apt, was to elicit a particular kind of response. As finishing touches on the epic, extended comparisons bring the poem full circle for Dryden back to where it began.

D. Boileau and Le Bossu, Dennis and Addison

Though Hobbes and Dryden were in the position to comment on the Miltonic simile, they do not take precedence over John Dennis and Joseph Addison as the first critics of importance to tackle the subject. At first, it appears the similes of Paradise Lost are pretty much like those of the Iliad and the Aeneid to Addison:

> In short, if we look into the Conduct of Homer, Virgil and Milton, as the great Fable is the Soul of each Poem, so to give their Works an agreeable Variety, their Episodes are so many short Fables, and their Similes so many short Episodes; to which you may add, if you please, that their Metaphors are some many short Similes. (3:91)

Addison here seems to lean towards a Hobbesian persuasion by giving pride of place to metaphor in the making of epic poetry. The fable or plot of the epic can be divided into episodes, he says, which can, in turn, be subdivided into similes, these being divisible into their constituent

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metaphors. But the wording of the passage is distinctly odd. Rather than declaring outright that similes are understandable by the metaphors that comprise them, the phrasing suggests the reverse: a metaphor is a short simile; a simile is a short episode; and an episode is a short fable. Thus, metaphors are to similes as episodes are to the "fable entire"; but we would be no closer to knowing what a metaphor was, without knowing first how episodes operate in the fable, or the simile in the episode.

Although the sentence suggests that Milton wasn't doing anything differently in his similes than Homer and Virgil, the fuller context of Addison's column (Spectator 303) differentiates the Miltonic simile from the epic tradition. Milton, Addison writes:

> never quits his Simile till it rises to some very great Idea, which is often foreign to the Occasion that gave Birth to it. The Resemblance does not, perhaps, last above a Line or two, but the Poet runs on with the Hint, till he has raised out of it some glorious Image or Sentiment, proper to inflame the Mind of the Reader, and to give it that sublime Kind of Entertainment, which is suitable to the Nature of an Heroick Poem. Those, who are acquainted with Homer's and Virgil's Way of Writing, cannot but be pleased with this kind of Structure in Milton's Similitudes. I am the

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> more particular on this Head, because ignorant Readers, who have formed their Taste upon the quaint Simile, and little Turns of Wit, which are so much in Vogue among Poets, cannot relish these Beauties which are of a much higher Nature, and are therefore apt to censure Milton's comparisons, in which they do not see any surprising Points of Likeness. (3:90)

Milton's similes explore foreign territory, says Addison, led by a "Hint" in order to give rise to an "Idea" or an "Image or Sentiment." Sounds good, but what does it mean? Does he mean that the Miltonic simile progresses, via some kind of associative train of thinking, to end up elsewhere than it had began? And that this "other" place is either an idea or an image or a sentiment? And is this what all similes in the epic tradition do, but only those of Milton do it better?

Many of Addison's cues are taken from Dennis, and before him, Nicholas Boileau-Despreaux, whose poetics provided a transition for critics of the Homeric and Virgilian simile to those writing on Milton. Boileau's "Reflexions critiques sur quelques passages du rheteur Longin" was a hit against Rapin, La Motte, and Perrault, who had condemned the "Long-tail'd comparisons" of the Iliad and the Odyssey for their irrelevant details and repetitiveness. Addison intercepts Boileau's most significant observation on

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the Homeric simile in between the two passages quoted above:

> 'Comparisons, says he, in Odes and Epic poems are not introduced only to illustrate and embellish the Discourse, but to amuse and relax the Mind of the Reader, by frequently disengaging him from too painful an Attention to the Principal Subject, and by leading him into other agreeable Images. [The comparisons of Homer] . . . abound with such images of Nature as are proper to relieve and diversifie his Subjects. He continually instructs the Reader, and makes him take notice, even in Objects which are every Day before our Eyes, of such Circumstances as we should not otherwise have observed. To this he adds, as a Maxim universally acknowledged, that it is not necessary in Poetry for the Points of the Comparison to correspond with one another exactly, but that a general resemblance is sufficient, and that too much nicety in this Particular savours of the Rhetorician and Epigrammatist.' (3:91)

Similes "illustrate and embellish," but they also "amuse and relax": the comment is remarkable not only because it pits the similes of epic poetry against the comparisons used by an orator, but also because it stops just short of asserting that epic similes are supposed to be digressive. In rejoinder to Boileau's sense that similes ought provide

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relief, Charles Rowan Beye quips, "Was the epic tradition one of boredom?" (106). Boileau proves irksome by flying in the face of the conventional wisdom that it is literature which is supposed to provide a pleasant diversion from the anxieties of life, not similes from the story. Boileau transfers to similes the function that used to be reserved for epic poetry at large, though it makes sense to claim that epic poems exist for the sake of their similes if one assumes a divine function for them.

As influential as Boileau's ruminations, the 1695 English translation of Abbe Le Bossu's Treatise of the Epick Poem established a prescriptive definition of simile that had existed previously only in rhetorical handbooks. The epic simile has two essential characteristics for Le Bossu, of which "the first is, that the thing we make use of be better known, and easier to apprehend, than that we would make known by its assistance; and the second is, that there be an exact Relation between them" (244). That is, a narrator ought use an epic simile to compare the unfamiliar to the familiar, and with no fooling around. Le Bossu wrote his treatise in 1680 partly in response to Boileau's 1674 L'Art Poetique; and both were admirers of Homer, though for different reasons. Boileau might have thought Le Bossu insensitive to the distinction between rhetorician and poet, whereas Le Bossu could have countered that Boileau, in his posthumously published remarks about the dual purpose of

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similes, was only hedging his bets. Le Bossu was confident that the explicative power of the simile coincided with its pleasurable effects. He reconciles himself to any perceived lack of exactness in comparisons by witnessing changes over time in the manners and customs of men. Thus, Homer's notorious likening of Ajax to an ass, Le Bossu supposes, was once a tolerable enough comparison because Homer's culture had a different sense of decorum than his own, that difference accounting for the beast's fall into disrepute (246).

Sir Richard Blackmore, to whom W.J.'s English translation of Le Bossu had been dedicated, also operates under the spell of the hard-edged French Neoclassicist. He defines similes in the 1716 "Essay on the Nature and Constitution of Epick Poetry":

> A Similitude is an Illustration of an Object, by comparing it with another in some Qualities and Respects in which they agree; and this is a great Embellishment of the Writing, when the Resemblance between those two Objects is expressed fully, clearly, and with Strength and Spirit; but if the Comparison is lame and imperfect, or if it runs off into Circumstances remote and foreign to that Quality or Relation in which the Similitude is founded, it will lose its Effect, and not illustrate, but rather obscure the Poet's

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Sentiments. (138)

Like Dryden, Blackmore is not interested in Hobbes's distinction between simile and metaphor, since both are ornaments of style:

> Similitudes, like other Figures, being the Ornaments and Jewels of the Diction should therefore be sparing; the Garniture and Trimming should be enough to set off and adorn, not so profuse as to cover and hide the Garment; and these Comparisons should be most us'd, where the Subject is dry and uniform, as in Sieges and Battle, where the same Matter often returning, would otherwise grow flat and tedious to the Reader. (139-40)

Blackmore reiterates the dictates of Le Bossu on the importance of strict resemblance, though he also shares Boileau's heresy in suggesting that epics tend toward dullness. But not to scorn him overmuch, let us note his recognition of an important puzzle in criticism when he adds: "There is no Rule to settle the Length of a Comparison, it must be determin'd by the Nature of the Thing. If it does not fully and clearly express the Resemblance between the Objects compar'd, it is too short; if it does more, it is weak and redundant" (139). His point, that there is no set length for epic similes, revises Dryden's critique of those of Virgil, which becomes

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significant in light of Whaler's attempts to tabulate Miltonic similes. How long are epic similes supposed to be? Do we have to invent an arbitrary definition before we can distinguish shorter comparisons from epic ones?

In the notes to Pope's 1719 translation of the Iliad on the offensive passage about Ajax, Pope cites Dacier, who had staunchly defended the ancient's choice of word "ass" on account of the noble connotations it bore when Christ rode a donkey into Jerusalem. H.A. Mason proposes that Anne Dacier and Pope are both following Boileau's prescriptives for epic decorum in their translations rather than Le Bossu's (104), although Howard Clarke disagrees (135). No doubt there is a certain amount of overlap between the Le Bossu and Boileau, but Boileau's hesitations about too much "nicety" in the simile indicates his willingness, unlike that of Le Bossu, to entertain the possibility that comparisons should digress. Siding with Clarke, I think that possibility is one which Pope and Dacier are less willing to consider. In the same note justifying his rendering of the original as "the slow Beast with heavy Strength indu'd" (11.683), Pope defers to "the Taste of the Age in which he lives." The circumlocution combines the brute force and mental dullness frequently attributed to the character of Ajax, while avoiding the "indecent and ridiculous" connotations of the word "ass" seen by Le Bossu as latter-day accretions (557). It seems paradoxical that Pope should have recognized the

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relativity of values only of cultures other than his own; and that in trying to capture the flavor of the ancients, he should defer to the taste of the moderns. But Pope's emphasis on a heroic style we can see clearly now only because it is no more. That style was already mediated by certain ideas about what the hero of the epic poem was supposed to be like: the hero worthy of being emulated was never to appear mean or contemptible.

While Pope could reason away digression in Homer on account of the vicissitudes of cultural values, Addison could rely on no such tactic to regularize the appearances in Milton, since Paradise Lost had been written less than two generations earlier. Boileau's translation of Traite du Sublime, published the same year as his L'Arte Poetique, comes to the rescue in effectively displacing Horace and Aristotle from being the twin lodestones of literary criticism, by adding a new center of gravity: Longinus. Boileau didn't get pseudo-Longinus right in making a distinction between sublime expressions and sublime thoughts nowhere to be found in Peri Hupsous (Monk 31). All the same, Boileau's notice of a sublime style gave critics engaged in the practical evaluation of the credits and debits of Paradise Lost, an escape from the pressurized cabin in which Le Bossu tried to box extended comparisons. Thus when the details of a given example in Milton proved to be in excess of the requirements of narrative description,

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Addison could call it sublime.

Addison was elaborated on Dennis's discussion of Paradise Lost in his 1701 Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, which also defended the Miltonic simile under Boileau's aegis rather than Le Bossu's. Dennis quotes the same example that was thought by Milton's licensor to be treasonous to Charles II, and which was commented on not only by Addison, but Toland, Blair, Burke, and Keats:

> he above the rest
> In shape and gesture proudly eminent
> Stood like a Tow'r; his form had yet not lost
> All her Original brightness, nor appear'd
> Less than Arch-Angel ruin'd, and th'excess
> Of Glory obscur'd: As when the Sun new ris'n
> Looks through the Horizontal misty Air
> Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon
> In dim Eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
> On half the Nations, and with fear of change
> Perplexes Monarchs. Dark'n'd so, yet shone
> Above them all th' Arch-Angel. . . . (1.589-600)

Dennis upholds the "Greatness of the Ideas" in Milton's passage, which he says is an infusion into the poet of:

> Admiration, and a noble Pride, which express'd,
> make the Spirit; which is stately and majestick
> till the last, and then it grows vehement, because
> the Idea which causes it, is not only great, but

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> very terrible. For all the afflicting Passions that are violent, are express'd with Vehemence. The Reader cannot but observe of himself, that the greatest of these noble Ideas, *is taken from Religion*:
>
> but his face
> Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht. . . .
>
> (1:220, my emphasis)

Milton's extended simile is thought great by virtue of its having melded a sublime thought with a sublime style, just as Boileau had accounted the creation of light by the author of Genesis.

But why does Dennis single out the scars of Satan's punishment, which seem not to be a part of the extended comparison at all, as expressing a religious idea in particular? What's so religious about the Frankenstein-like brand? Dennis does not explain, nor does he quote further when the ostensible metaphor is undermined a few lines later. The assembled troops beheld by Satan stand faithful:

> Thir Glory wither'd. As when Heaven's Fire
> Hath scath'd the Forest Oaks, or Mountain Pines,
> With singed top thir stately growth though bare
> Stands on the blasted Heath. (1.612-15)

Was the face of Satan deeply intrenched by thunder? Or had it only appeared so? The token of Satan's rebeliousness is expressed in a metaphor ending the first epic simile, but

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the thunder-brand upon closer inspection suspiciously starts looking like a simile appropriated from pagan poetry:

> As when Jove's bolt by the rootes rends from the earth an Oke,
> His sulphure casting with the blow a strong, unsavoury smoke,
> And on the falne plant none dare looke but with amazed eyes. (Chapman's Iliad, 14.345-7)

That Satan appears to us branded by God is possibly what Dennis has in mind by an idea "taken from religion." Yet his focus on the scar--at once the effect of thunder, and also *like* the mark left by Jove's bolt--suggests that the religious idea underlying Milton's verse is the result of the intersection between a metaphor and simile--a metamorhosis.

Dennis explains the superiority of Milton's creation scenes over those of Ovid and Virgil "in his Thought, and in his Spirit, purely by the Advantage of his Religion" (1:271). Like Hobbes, Dennis sees ancient poetry as stemming out of a religious impulse. But unlike Hobbes, Dennis vouches for Milton's excellence on account of his "joining the Christian Religion with Poetry" (1:278). Nevertheless, the advantage of Milton's monotheism over ancient polytheism fails to present itself convincingly twenty years later when Dennis revises his weighty pronouncements in the letters to Sewall:

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> For tho' the Machines with which the Christian Religion supplies us, must be allow'd to be greater, more wonderful, and more terrible, than any which the Pagan Religion affords us, they are less delightful: For that which comes nearest to humane Nature, must in Poetry be most delightful to it; but the Gods and Goddesses of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Poetry, being feign'd to have manifest Bodies, and apparent humane Shapes, and the agreeable Distinction of Sexes, come incomparably nearer to humane Nature, than the Machines of the Christian Poetry, and are therefore more delightful to it; and likewise for the following Reason, because we have, beyond all Comparison, more clear and distinct Ideas of them, than we have the Christian Machines.
>
> (2:228-29)

Chistianity, far from being Milton's trump card over Virgil, now seems his handicap, according to Dennis. The introduction of the deity into poetry necessitates error, since only the Olympic pantheon is clear and distinct "beyond all comparison." The problem in hindsight devolves on the commingling of material and immaterial by Milton in having given "Helmet, Spear, Shield, Sword" to his angels, because "Form and Shape suppose Extension, and Extension implies Matter." Is the admixture a debit in Paradise Lost

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rather than the source of its sublimity, or does the concept of spatial extension have a spiritual reality for Milton that it does not have for us?

Addison uses the term *sublime* in relation to Paradise Lost with a greater degree of consistency than Dennis over the course of his ruminations. But though registered Boileau's wisdom--or was it confusion?--that similes "illustrate and embellish" on the one hand, "but" seem to "relax and amuse" on the other, it is not wholly clear in the Spectator columns whence comes the sublimity he sees in the Miltonic simile. Does it start in an amusement giving way to admiration raised to an ineffable pitch? Or is Addison linking the sublimity of the Miltonic simile to an opposition between the virtue of illustration and power of entertainment? If so, his analysis would go beyond a mere quibble with words to get around the problem of digressiveness. The opposition of illustration to amusement would contain an upset to the Horatian precept that literature ought simultaneously teach and delight. The sublime, if conceived to be the product of opposing tendencies, would pit instruction against delight as being at odds with one another.

The spin I am putting on Addison seems justifiable since he had already rejected Le Bossu's demand for exactness in the relationship between the simile and the narrative. One rejection leads to another when Addison

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subsequently (Spectator 369) subverts Le Bossu's mania for reducing epic poetry to a set of specific moral lessons: "Those who have read Bossu, and many of the Criticks who have written since his Time, will not pardon me if I do not find out the particular Moral which is inculcated in Paradise Lost" (3:390). All that Milton teaches is "that Obedience to the Will of God makes Men happy, and that Disobedience makes them miserable," and that lesson he learns, as do Adam and Eve, rather too late (3:391). In this light, Addison's version of the sublime, derivative as it is from Boileau and Dennis, becomes a revision of Horace, so that the didactic and recreative ideals of literature come to take a back seat to its transportive and emotional effects. As Monk puts it, "the canonization of Longinus . . . had left the way open for the introduction into the neo-classic system of ideas forces which eventually were to play an important part in its destruction" (53).

In Spectator 315, Addison locates epic in the middle ground between romance and history:

> Aristotle observes, that the Fable of an Epic Poem should abound in Circumstances that are both credible and astonishing; or as the French Criticks chuse to phrase it, the Fable should be filled with the Probable and the Marvelous. . . . If the Fable is only Probable, it differs nothing from a true History; if it is only Marvelous, it

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> is no better than a Romance. (3:144)

Whereas the romance tended for him in the direction of the wholly irregular or marvelous, history perforce need to be grounded firmly in the true. The epic genre was that which mediated between the two and was differentiated from them by its sublime admixture of the marvelous with the versimilitudinous. Never mind that the term *sublime* comes to be used so frequently and variously by 1809 that one could write:

> Those who talk rationally on other subjects, no sooner touch on [the sublime], than they go off in a literary delirium . . . and rave like methodists, of inward lights, and enthusiastic emotions, which if you cannot comprehend, you are set down as un-illumined by the grace of criticism, and excluded from the elect of Taste.
>
> (qtd. in Monk, 3).

Epic sublimity, though virtually meaningless for us, is important to remember as a reconciling or mediating agency, forming an important bridge to Romantic discussions of the imagination.

E. Trapp and Voltaire

Joseph Trapp's remarks on simile in the Lectures On Poetry delivered at Oxford from 1715-9 evince an attitude

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more skeptical than Addison's: "If Milton did not write an Heroic Poem, properly so call'd, yet he certainly wrote an excellent one, such as deserves, or rather is above all Commendation. He is no slavish Imitator of Homer and Virgil, he opens a Way entirely new, and entirely his own" (351). He is quick to grant Paradise Lost its sublimity and its worthiness of being imitated. Though he recognizes its originality as readily as Dennis and Addison, he is puzzled about how to classify it. His helplessness is not aided by the poem's similes: "If I must give my Opinion of those luxurious Comparisons that deviate from the Subject, which Homer, chiefly, among the Ancients, and Milton, among the Moderns, run into; I must confess, they neither deserve Commendation, nor are capable of Defence. But as they have the Sanction of so great Authority, it is not for me to pass Judgment on them, but leave every one to follow his own" (138).

Immediately after mentioning Milton, Trapp notes that "there are few or no Similes in the Tragedies of the ancient Poets," unlike the case with the dramas of his contemporaries. He raises the issue, I think, to rehash Dryden's counterattack on Hobbes, that epic poems ought in some measure be dramatic, if not positively tragic in scope. Trapp is critical of extended comparisons in the drama when they "are introduced uttered by Persons labouring under the Height of Passion, or in the Agonies of Death; than which,

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nothing can be more absurd, or unpardonable" (138). Trapp adds that similes in the epic narrative had always belonged, not to the characters speaking in it, but to its narrator. The reminder is valuable, although Trapp is of two minds about what epic similes do, according to whether their narrator was ancient or modern.

Trapp observes that modern narrators not only make more elegant use of the epic simile than those ancient, but also "have found out an Use of Comparisons which they were utter Strangers to. Theirs are merely Ornamental; ours often contain the Points of Epigram, the Jibes of Satire, and the Banters of Comedy." Like Voltaire, then, he is sensitive to irony and the mock-heroic, but doubtful whether these are appropriate to the genre: "Tragic and Epic Poets ought totally to avoid these witty Allusions; which are below the Severity of their Style, and the Dignity of their Compositions. The Comparisons that serve for Illustration only, come within their Province; such as we meet with very frequently in Homer and Virgil" (138). I find it striking that those similes which are epigrammatic, satiric, or comic, Trapp should call allusions, as if some comparisons could be allusive, while others, not. The difference he has in mind between simile and allusion is not clear, neither if it is possible to compare without allusion, nor to allude without comparison.

The introduction to the passage devoted to simile is

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helpful:

> In Narrations 'tis no small Art to make a Transition from one Fact to another: Several Instances of this, we have in Ovid's Metamorphoses, the Nature of which Work requir'd them, where the Connection, indeed, is sometimes near and artful, sometimes hard and forced, not to say ridiculous.
>
> Under this Head we may reckon those Excursion of another kind, in which the poet, by some sudden Allusion or Comparison, diverts from his Subject to a new Matter, and immediately returns to it again. (135)

Trapp ushers in the discussion of similes under the head of Ovidian episodes, or stories inset within a larger narrative, because the beginning of an epic simile marks the crossing of a threshold from one tale to another. But at the outset Trapp is already using the word "simile" interchangeably, sometimes with "comparison," other times with "allusion," the former carrying with it the notion of illustration, the latter bearing a connotation of wit.

Trapp ventures to explain the reason that the modern simile is likely to be more allusive, if not ironic, than those of the ancients:

> [E]ven the best Writers among the Ancients seem on this Head to labour under a Poverty of Matter. In

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> the Description of a Battle, for Instance, the Similes of a Lion, a Bull, a Serpent, an Eagle, and other Animals of the fiercer kind, recur too frequently under some small Variations. But in After-Ages the Increase of Arts, and Sciences, and of Religion more particularly, open'd a new Field, which has minster'd abundantly not only to the Emolument of mankind in general, but in this, and in all other Respects, to the refinement of Wit. (138)

Wit, then, is an adjunct of artifice, and the increase in poetry's sophistication over time is directly commensurate with the march of civilization towards goals ordained by providence. We cannot blame Trapp for failing to see how the Romantic lyric exploded much of the previous century's advance in theory; yet Trapp himself is even more naive than Voltaire about recognizing sophistication on behalf of ancient writers. Ovid, Martial, Juvenal, Horace, and Terence, in relation to the moderns, are all regarded by Trapp to be unacquainted with satire, wit, and epigram.

One last bit of his advice is thought-provoking in its description of the place similes have in the making of narrative poems:

> When they are ill drawn, nothing is more ridiculous; when well, nothing more beautiful. No kind of Style is excluded from them, and they are

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> not only an Ornament, but often an Illustration of the Subject. They ought always to appear natural, never forced, or far fetch'd. Avoid, therefore, the Fault of those Writers, who find out what they call Similes first, and afterwards Matter to apply to them. Not that they are guilty of it, whose Comparisons don't in every Respect coincide with what they were brought to illustrate. Even the most elegant of them agree sometimes with the Description but in one Adjunct. (137)

Some kinds of similes are forced and far-fetched--that is, digressive--because the writer begins with them and tries to add narrative material to match afterwards. But who does he have in mind? Homer? Spenser? For an example of the other kind of simile, Trapp draws on an instance in the Aeneid in which Virgil begins with the narrative and adds a simile with elegance, but one which agrees with its subject matter only "in one Adjunct." Merely because a simile digresses from the narrative, Trapp is saying, doesn't mean the author didn't try to begin with the story first and attach the simile after.

The scenario we envision of the epic poet looking for a good comparison to fill out his story is what most people have in mind when they call similes an ornament of style. But Trapp also raises what is at first an odd possibility--a writer starting with a simile and adding a story line--and

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it is one I would like to rephrase in asking, "What would it mean if epic poems existed for the sake of their similes?" That is, if narrative poems have tended at different periods in history to be read allegorically, what role do epic similes play in supporting such a sensibility? From such a point of view, a simile is less an ornament of style than a figure of thought, though we also need elucidate what other figures of thought similes can present. Does a different sort of extended comparison inspire not an allegorical response, but a critical one?

Among those who were uncomfortable with the tension between the marvelous and the true in the epic was Voltaire. The sublime seems to have rubbed him the wrong way, for in his 1727 An Essay . . . upon the Epick Poetry of the European Nations from Homer down to Milton, Voltaire complains of the inordinate praise lavished on the irrelevance of Homer's comparisons by critics:

> 'Tis strange that Homer is commended by the criticks for his comparing Ajax to as Ass pelted away with Stones by some Children, Ulysses to a Pudding, the Council-board of Priam to Grasshoppers: 'Tis strange, I say, that they defend so clamorously those Similes tho' never so foreign to the Purpose, and will not allow the natural Reflexions, the noble Digressions of Milton tho' never so closely link'd to the

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Subject. (112)

Voltaire is not defending Milton's similes for being Homeric, but rather censuring those of Homer for not being Miltonic enough. When he says that Milton's similes are on the whole more closely linked to the narrative than those of Homer's, he seems sensitive to the paradox that enhanced aptness of the Miltonic simile--like that noticed by the Renaissance admirers of Virgil--is what makes his digression stick out all the more.

The same similes which had transported Addison to raptures struck Voltaire as absurd. The diminution of the demons in the final comparison of Book One was found by Addison to be "Probable" and "Marvelous," but it seemed to Voltaire, who also deplored the puns and jests in Book Six, "Ridiculous." Addison justified the exactness of the comparison by referring the reader to the epic catalogue of demons preceding it (3:88). Amid the fallen names of the demons and their attributes in human history, Milton depicts the condensation and dilation of the spirits who "had general Names / of Baalim and Ashtaroth" (1.421-2). The size-changing, Addison argued, set the precedent for the subsequent simile, "Now less than smallest Dwarfs" (1.789), thus conferring the credibility demanded of epic to distinguish it from sheer romantic allegory. The action ending Book One comes, of course, before the fall into human history that gives rise to the catalogue, though Raphael

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explains on several occasions how angels can assume whatever shape they like. The blend of immateriality and materiality troubles Voltaire, however, as it was to distress Johnson, when "the Devils turn dwarfs to fill their Places in the House, as if it was impracticable to build a Room large enough to contain them in their natural Size" (114). That the chiefs preserve their size "heightens the Ridicule" and causes Voltaire to reject the epic simile as not being distinguishable from the mock-epic.

In his introduction to Voltaire's Essay, Stuart Curran observes that Voltaire's main concern is not to demystify the sublime, but to dethrone Bossu from his position as rule-giver for the epic poem (xiii). Le Bossu's readings of the ancients can serve as no model for the moderns, says Voltaire, because the epic genre was never the product of a set of rules, but of custom. Voltaire still admits Le Bossu's claim that Homeric irrelevance stems from the inability to grasp fully the cultural milieu in which the poems were composed. But it was one custom of Voltaire's own age to be sensitive to irony, for which reason, perhaps, he assigned digression in Milton to the mock-heroic rather than try, as Addison had done, to reconcile relevance with irrelevance via recourse to the sublime. In hindsight it seems curious that Voltaire never gave Homer the benefit of the doubt to wonder whether the Iliad, too, could be ironic--that maybe Ajax was intended to look like a Dogberry. But

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more importantly, Voltaire, by identifying Miltonic similes as alternately apt or ironic, sets in place a new category for thinking about digression that was to prove more durable than the vogue of the sublime. The sublime was on the way out and the imagination on the way in, though the idea of the imagination, as what set Milton apart, also fell from grace in the twentieth century as critics found increasingly sophisticated means of weaving an ironic sensibility into their own responses to the Miltonic simile.

F. The Eighteenth-Century Editors

William Empson, Ants Oras, and Christopher Ricks do a far better job than I can do in outlining the attempt by eighteenth-century editors and annotators of Paradise Lost to cope with the digressiveness of its similes. Ricks praises Falconer's pre-Whaleresque account of how logical aptness functions below the surface in the Vallombrosa simile insofar as it describes position in addition to multitude (123). Oras gives us Callander's investigation into the climatic conditions of the Red Sea, which "enables him to point to the suggestive pale greenish coloring of its sedge, a feature harmonizing with the 'withered glory' of the angels" (256). Empson has rather different reasons than Oras and Ricks for detailing Richard Bentley's tamperings with similes in his 1732 edition of Paradise Lost, which

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Zachary Pearce's review the next year implied, whatever the merit of the liberties taken by the doctor, ought not have been called Milton. Bentley rid the comparison of Satan to a "Fleet" (2.636) of its inconsistencies in number, and Pearce protested:

> [H]ere is no Contradiction at all; for Milton in his Similitudes (as is the practice of Homer and Virgil too) after he has shew'd the common resemblance, often takes the liberty of wandering into some unresembling Circumstances; which have no other relation to the Comparison, that they gave him the Hint, and (as it were) set fire to the Train of his Imagination: (see my Note on I.306.) So here the common Resemblance ends at *Tidore*; what M. adds, *Whence Merchants bring* &c. is a new description, and in no part of it is bound to have any Resemblance or relation to what went before. . . . (qtd. in Shawcross 1972:70-71).

And when Bentley complains again of the contradiction in the comparison likening the still, rapt attention of Satan's audience to "Night / Or Summer's Noon-tide Air" (2.308-9), Pearce returns, prompted by the ghost of Addison, with a defense resting on Milton's acting on his "Hints." At the heart of the disagreement between Bentley and Pearce are still the same two differing sensibilities with which we began; one, which would see digression as a flaw or form of

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error in the poem; and the other, which would try to assimilate existing complexity into a higher order.

Whether the authorship of the 1741 Essay on Milton's Imitations of the Ancients can be attributed to Falconer (Ricks 120), or must remain anonymous (Shawcross 1972:26), the Essay was the springboard from which Lauder launched his spurious attacks on Milton's plagiarism of contemporary sources. The distinction between plagiarism and originality becomes central in Edward Young's 1759 Conjectures, but already appears in the Essay's discussion of the role of epic similes. Pope's translation of Homer's similes treated them as ways of describing landscape, which new attitude is given critical justification in the Essay:

> [I]n every Simile we have a double Pleasure; *the first, in comparing the Image it conveys with its Objects*; the other, in comparing it with the Subject it was designed to Illustrate: But, if the Simile be imitated from another Author, we have still one Pleasure more. . . . [W]hen a Poet imitates a Description from another Poet, which very Description had been imitated from a Third, our Pleasure is still the greater; therefore, in the Respect, the Imitations in Milton are beyond those in Virgil; because he has imitated some Places of Virgil which are Imitations of Homer.
>
> (2, my emphasis)

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Like Hobbes, the author describes similes as presenting an image, although he adds the pleasure such representation gives us. He sounds a paradox, however, in setting forth the different kinds of pleasure yielded by comparisons. The pleasure in the description of the natural world attends upon the closeness with which the simile "conveys its Objects," whereas the pleasure derived from the imitation of past similes depends on its "Variation" from precedents. As a result "there ought generally to be observed a Medium betwixt a literal Translation and a distant Allusion; as the first destroys the Pleasure we have from what is new, and the latter encroaches on that we receive from Imitations" (3).

The newness or originality conferred on the author by his description of nature therefore cannot be altogether severed from his reproduction of past masters. Yet too much originality is worse than slavish plagiarism:

> The Passages a Poet is to imitate ought to be selected with great Care, and should ever be the best Parts of the best Authors, and always ought to be improved in the Imitation: So that vastly less Invention and Judgment is required to make a good Original than a fine Imitation. . . . Homer has used the Simile of a Flight of Fowls twice in his Iliad to express the Number and the Motions, the Order and the Clamours of an Army: As Virgil

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> has done the same Number of Times in his Aeneid. We also find the same Simile in the 4th *Georgic*, only in more general Terms, to delineate the Multitude of Spirits in the *Elysium*; and, again, with some Alterations, in the 6th *Aeneid*, for the same Purpose. Hence, Milton has taken both a Simile and Description; the first, in Book 6th, to represent the March of Michael's against Satan's Army [6.74]; and the other in Book 7th [7.295]; and, notwithstanding they had so often gone thro' the Hands of Homer and Virgil, yet has given them farther Embellishments.
>
> (6-7)

The position adopted by the essayist, that simile as description and simile as imitation do not work in conjunction but are at odds with one another, was novel enough when it was published. But its own novelty becomes time-worn with Johnson, so that by the turn of the century, Romantic critics of the Miltonic simile are less interested in the way that Milton departs from sources than in the way his comparisons integrate the life of the poet into the poem.

Patrick Hume's "Explanatory Notes," accompanying his 1695 edition of Paradise Lost, took the first dip into the pool of Milton's sources; it was followed by the Richardsons' Explanatory Notes (1734) and the commentary of

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Newton's edition (1749). Hume's indices, moreover, of the poem's imagery, speeches, and extended comparisons also set a model for Pope's "Poetical Index to Homer's Iliad." Before them, Chapman had only highlighted Homeric similes in the margin of his translation, as had Harington in his translation of Ariosto. Yet the English were only catching up with the Italian critics in response to Ariosto's Orlando Furioso. Ariosto was central to the sixteenth-century poetic treatises of Cintio, Trissino, and Pigna and enjoyed extensive allegorical commentary by Speroni, Fornari, Ruscelli, and others (Murtaugh 24). Furthermore, the Orlando generated two full-length catalogues of the poem's epic similes and maxims, Dolce's 1543 Brieve Dimostratione de molte comparationi et sentenze, being expanded by Lavezuola's 1584 Osservazioni. Dolce and Lavezuola, in their lavish praise of the poem's extended comparisons, "give little critical evaluation," says Murtaugh, though they note Ariosto's sources in the ancients as well as in Dante, Boiardo, and Pulci (29).

Hume nowhere faults the simile of Milton for deviating from a rule, nor expounds a thesis prescribing what similes ought to do, yet his "Table of the Most Remarkable Parts . . . Under the Three Heads of Descriptions, Similes, and Speeches" is worth a detour. Hume was evidently the first Englishman to recognize, in a schematic representation, a difference between a poem's similes and its speeches and

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descriptive passages. Pope, too, organizes his indices according to a list of Homer's "Similes," one for the poem's "Speeches, or Orations," and a catalogue for its "Descriptions, or Images." Pope, moreover, fine hones his list, grouping extended comparisons under headings such as "from Beasts," "from Fires," "from Rural Affairs," and "Miscellaneous." And while the difference between the three categories may seem obvious to us in retrospect, I venture to claim it was less well recognized before Hume and Pope, or Milton.

Hume's Table is, in fact, maddening. Under the sub-heading of similes pertaining to Satan, Hume observes that the fiend is compared to the moon, to the rising sun, and to sun-spots, but not to the Leviathan. Milton's two mentions of the sea-beast in Paradise Lost both come under the rubric of descriptions in Hume's Table, never mind that we have subsequently come to regard the one instance as the poem's first epic simile, and not part of Satan's rising up from the lake. So is the "Glass / Of Galileo" (5.261-2), used to describe Raphael's vision in terms of the astronomer, listed as one of the poem's descriptions. The vulture of Imaus simile (3.431) is recognized to be a simile, but not one pertaining to Satan, suggesting that Hume thought the bird of prey was being compared to something else.

The category of descriptive passages is just as confused. Hume cites an image of Shame, which I think we

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would more readily class as a narratorial apostrophe, or a definition, or anything but a description: "Then was not guilty shame: dishonest shame / Of Nature's works, honor dishonorable, / Sin-bred, how have yet troubl'd all mankind" (4.313-15). One of the "descriptions" of morning singled out by Hume (4.623) is, in fact, part of Adam's speech enjoining Eve to the necessity of rising early for work; and the "description" of earth's position in the universe (3.722) comprises Uriel's directions to Satan.

Some of the sources adduced for Milton's similes in the "Explanatory Notes" are equally bizarre. The Leviathan "description" is indebted, notes Hume, to the legend of the wandering island of Delos, on which Apollo and Diana were born, but also to Tasso's description of the demons mustered together by Satan in Gerusalemme (13). Tasso does refer to Aetna, the lair of Typhon, though I cannot hear a single splash of any Leviathan in the fourth canto's opening stanzas, to which Hume directs us. Yet if Hume mistakenly supposes the whale is situated *with* Satan and Beelzebub on the lake, then the citation from the Gerusalemme begins to make sense, for Tasso depicts the arch-fiend reigning over the various figures associated with him. The subsequent Aetna simile in Paradise Lost, Hume associates, on account of the word "stench" (1.237), with a passage from The Faerie Queene relating the final battle between Redcrosse and the dragon:

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And that more wondrous was, in either iaw
Three ranckes of yron teeth enraunged were,
In which yet trickling bloud and gobbets raw
Of late deuored bodies did appeare,
That sight thereof bred cold congealed feare:
Which to increase, and all atonce to kill,
A cloud of smoothering smoke and sulphur seare
Our of his stinking gorge forth steemed still,
That all the ayre about with smoke and stench did fill. (1.11.13)

Of the two other instances of "stench" in The Faerie Queene (1.11.44; 3.12.2), Hume's citation seems the likeliest source for Milton, if Milton's use of the word necessitated finding a precedent in Spenser. But Milton's "stench" figures in an epic simile about a volcanic eruption; the passage in Spenser is not an extended comparison, however redolent both authors are of Virgil.

The marvel of Hume's index is that it advances the development of criticism by distinguishing similes from poetic images on paper, even when Hume doesn't do an especially good job. Nor does Jonathon Richardson's table of the poem's "Pictures" satisfactorily address the difference between Milton's depiction of Raphael's "Blush" (545) and that of "Fairies Dancing by the Moon-Light" (544).

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Their confusions still register a holdover from the Renaissance, when the earliest critics treat of simile as a species of imitation, an invention carried from one poem to another, and when the misty-mindedness of allegorists did not permit them to distinguish between a comparison from an image. While Hume's tabulation of similes is without a supporting theory like that of Boileau or Addison, it seems striking that his awareness of epic similes was a development concomitant with his recognition that Milton's representation of Paradise was not allegorical, but influenced by Origen and Ambrose, who had supposed Eden to be "part of Asia, known by the name of Mesopotamia, attested to by Moses's description of the soil" (1).

Although Milton criticism exploded with a bang in eighteenth century, commentary on Spenserian similes evolves more gently, as almost an afterthought, in the notes appended to editions of The Faerie Queene. Hume, Richardson, and Newton helped foster the critical atmosphere in which scholarly researches were conducted into the similes of The Faerie Queene, whose earliest editors, as Jewel Wurtsbaugh demonstrates, are primarily concerned to defend the poem against Dryden's complaint that it lacked unity, Davenant's strictures against the use of fairies, and Rymer's charge that Spenser's judgment was debauched by Ariosto. But neither Hughes (1715), Jortin (1734), nor Upton (1758) in the textual emendations they make to the

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poem, essay to make Spenser's extended comparisons more apt, as if that were a hopeless enterprize. The "sublime" epithet is applied charily to The Faerie Queene, and no Spenserian, to the best of my knowledge, called its epic similes sublime. The poem's editors, along with Warton and Hurd, studied its similes with an eye trained on classical and Renaissance precedents against which the success of Spenser was measured mainly on the basis of his diction and versification. If criticism on the Spenserian simile does begin as an afterthought--a way of looking for something noticed missing only after Milton--there is perhaps a danger in trying to unthink the Miltonic simile in order to speak rationally of digression in The Faerie Queene. Perhaps we can only see Spenser's achievement through the lens of Paradise Lost.

In fact, John Hughes employs a passage from Milton, when writing about The Shepheardes Calender, in order to set forth the simple and unaffected manner essential to pastoral poetry. He cites the comparison of Satan in Paradise to the vacationing city dweller:

> As one who long in populous City pent,
> Where Houses thick and Sewers annoy the air,
> Forth issuing on a Summer's Morn to breathe
> Among the pleasant Villages and Farms
> Adjoin'd, from each thing met conceives delight,
> The smell of Grain, or tedded Grass, or Kine,

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> Or Dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound;
> If chance with Nymphlike step fair Virgin pass,
> What pleasing seem'd, for her now please more,
> She most, and in her looks sums all Delight.
>
> (9.445-54)

Hughes treats the simile as if Milton were making a critical assessment rather than waxing poetic: "This indeed seems to be the true Reason of the Entertainment which Pastoral Poetry gives to its Readers: for as Mankind is departed from the Simplicity, as well as the Innocence, of a State of Nature, and immers'd in Cares and Pursuits of a very different kind. . ." ("Remarks on the Writings," ci). Those "cares and pursuits" are not so much Satanic, Hughes seems to infer from Milton's simile, as artificial. The argument for the artifice of the pastoralist, like "one abstracted . . . / From his own evil" (9.463), advances a claim over Italian Renaissance theorists who speculated that the pastoral was the oldest and most venerable genre (Scaliger 21).

In his "Remarks on the Fairy Queen," Hughes, importing the debate from Italy over Ariosto and Tasso, argues for the autonomy of The Faerie Queene over and against its epic precedents:

> as it is plain the Author never design'd it by those Rules, I think it ought rather be consider'd as a Poem of a particular kind, describing in a

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> Series of Allegorical Adventures or Episodes the most noted Virtues and Vices: to compare it therefore with the Models of Antiquity, wou'd be like drawing a Parallel between the Roman and the Gothick Architexture. (lx)

He cites two epic similes pertaining to the battle between Orgoglio and Arthur as very great images of "Strength," such "as we may imagine our excellent Milton to have study'd in this Author" (lxxvi). Source-hunting among the Spenserians seems to have begun from the opposite direction--which comparisons influenced Milton, rather than where Spenser got his. The simile of The Faerie Queene, likening the thrust of Orgoglio's club to the "Dart" of Jove (1.8.9), was noted almost simultaneously by Pope to derive from the Iliad (14.481), and the comparison of the vanquished giant to a fallen tree (1.8.22) from the Aeneid (2.626) as well as the Iliad (4.452)--the two similes weighed in the balance by Hobbes, who was unable to give the advantage to either Homer or Virgil.

In the "Essay on Allegorical Poetry" prefacing his edition, Hughes offers a traditional account of allegory as "a Fable or Story, in which under imaginary Persons or Things, is shadow'd some real Action or instructive Moral; or . . . it is that in which one thing is related, and another thing is understood" (xxviii-xxix). Somewhat in the manner of Addison, Hughes adds, "that as a simile is but a

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more extended Metaphor, so an allegory is a kind of continu'd Simile, or an Assemblage of Similitudes drawn out." The relationship between metaphor and simile applies to that between the "assemblage of similitudes" or episodes and the fable entire. But the parallel observed in Hughes, as in Addison, fails to address how we can recognize an allegorical poem from one which is not, save without some special dispensation into the poet's mind.

Hughes paraphrases an episode from Milton to provide an illustrative example: "*Death is the Offspring of Sin* . . . is a Metaphor, to signify that the former is produc'd by the latter, as a Child is brought into the World by its Parent" (xxix). Using Milton to come up with a definition of allegory is a slippery business, for it is not at all clear that Sin and Death behave in Paradise Lost the way that the allegory operates in The Faerie Queene overall. Hughes implies that a version of the same sentence utilizing a simile--*Death is to Sin as the Child is to the Parent*--would not be allegorical, because it is not metaphoric. The implication, which comes up explicitly in Coleridge, depends on the notion of a literal language from which metaphor and extended metaphor, or allegory, departs.

Hughes admits the distinction between allegory as interpretation and allegory as composition. While he denies classical epic status as proper allegory, he allows that the journey of Aeneas from Troy could be read as "emblematical

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of Augustus's modelling a new Government out of the Ruins of the Aristocracy" (xxxv). Hughes's analogizing of Virgil, however, more closely approximates the sensibility of Le Bossu than that of any Christian or Neoplatonic exegete. Allegory, as a species of composition, differs from interpretation insofar as it is a story consisting of:

> "fictitious Persons or Beings, Creatures of the Poet's Brain, and Actions surprising, and without the Bounds of Probability or Nature. In Works of this kind, it is impossible for the Reader to rest in the literal Sense, but he is of necessity driven to seek for another Meaning under these wild Types and Shadows. (xxxvi)

As a result, Hughes views certain episodes in Homer and Virgil as being allegorical. The moral of Circe and Dido, for example, "represent a Hero obstructed by the Allurements of Pleasure" (xxxix), whence derive the allegorical episodes of Renaissance narratives: Ariosto's Alcina, Tasso's Armida, Spenser's Acrasia, and Milton's Sin and Death.

Cracks start to emerge in Hughes's theory when he addresses other episodes in the classical epic, such as the speaking horses in Homer or Virgil's Harpies, as not being allegorical because he can find no moral attached. These marvels exist solely "to fill the Reader with Astonishment and Concern, and with an Apprehension of the Greatness of an Occasion" (xl). They belong more appropriately in

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allegories than in the epic genre because the allegorist, "for the sake of the moral . . . frequently gives Life to Virtues and Vices, Passions and Diseases, to natural and moral Qualities" (xli). Hughes withholds praise for the allegorical personages of Paradise Lost, though his misgivings register the uncertainty of the age, as Steven Knapp details, whether Sin and Death were a violation of epic propriety (53ff).

In sketching a few ground rules for the composition of allegorical fables, Hughes fails to answer how we can tell apart those agents appropriate to epic and those to romance, when the historical and the sheerly marvelous are allowable in both. Though The Faerie Queene is appropriately full of "visionary Beings," Spenser's fairies are not "diminutive" enough to distinguish them from the non-fictitious characters in the poem ("Remarks on the Fairy Queen" lxv), among whom, Arthur's preeminence is insufficient to establish the unity of the poem's overall scheme. Warton and Hurd will go on to develop Hughes's defense of Spenser on the grounds of chivalric romance rather than the classical epic, but is it possible that lines drawn between epic and romance are non-Euclidean? When Milton shrinks his rebels to the unheroic proportions of fairies, it is to lessen the importance of the demons in our eyes, or to elevate the rank of romantic personifications to angelic stature?

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Hughes usefully contrasts The Faerie Queene with Orlando Furioso, in which "we every where meet with an exuberant Invention, join'd with great Liveliness and Facility of Description, yet debas'd by frequent Mixtures of the comick Genius, as well as many shocking Indecorums" (lxii). Spenser used the same "Knights, Giants, Castle, and Enchantments, and all that Train of Legendary Adventures" of Ariosto, but somehow "found a way to turn them all into Allegory." Ariosto's material was amusing, but also distracted and scarcely instructive enough, while "Spenser's Fable, tho' often wild, is as I have observ'd, always emblematical." The synonymous disposition of emblem and allegory carries a lot of weight still, though we have come to sneer at a simple-minded reduction of allegory into primarily moral stories. Yet Hughes taps into the mysteries of reception, for if Spenser turned the comic invention of Ariosto into allegory, how come it was Harington's immensely popular translation of Orlando in 1591, and not The Faerie Queene of 1590 or 1596, which was published replete with an armory of allegorical paratexts? Why wasn't the poem that proclaimed itself to be an allegory, read allegorically?

When Spenser was faulted before the advent of eighteenth-century scholarship, he was blamed for being too transparent more often than too obscure:

> The Religion of the Gentiles, had been woven into the Contexture of all the antient Poetry, with a

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> very agreeable mixture, which made the Moderns affect to give that of Christianity, a place also in their Poems. But the true Religion, was not found to become Fiction so well, as a false had done, and all their Attempts of this kind seemed rather to debase Religion than to heighten Poetry. Spencer endeavourd to Supply this, with Morality, and to make Instruction, instead of Story, the Subject of an Epick Poem. His Execution was Excellent, and his Flights of Fancy very Noble and High, but his Design was Poor, and *his Moral lay so bare, that it lost the Effect;* 'tis true, the Pill was Gilded, but so thin, that the Colour and the Taste were too easily discoverd.
>
> (348-49, my emphasis)

The Father and the Son are not players in The Faerie Queene, and hazards of using Christian machinery in poetry more properly concern the end of the century debate on the propriety of Milton's achievement.

But William Temple's remark is also provocative in terms of the shifting meaning of allegory. A generation after Temple's Miscellenea, Hughes began the search for oblique historical references in The Faerie Queene. Partly on account of the clue strewn in his path by Dryden, Hughes develops the notion that the poem concealed jabs at all the prominent court figures of Spenser's day. But unless we

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reckon the reading of the poem as a roman à clef--the way we identify MacFlecknoe as Thomas Shadwell--to be a kind of allegorical interpretation, the explication of latent meanings in The Faerie Queene must be regarded as a late accretion in its scholarship, notwithstanding the odd fish like Sir Kenelm Digby. Or, as Michael Murrin puts it:

> While Spenser has a long and respectable tradition of criticism, he did not produce a series of *allegorical* interpretations. His *Faerie Queene* came at the end of the Renaissance, when critics were turning away from symbolism to questions of mimesis, and this shift affected their responses to his poem. Spenser's allegorizers are mostly modern. (1980:56)

The "allegory" of The Faerie Queene, it seems to me, is primarily its response or the way it makes use of Tasso, Ariosto, Chaucer, and a host of classical precedents, though such a position is not without problems. For how does Spenser's poem differ from the interpretive readings, say, of the Orlando by Sperone Speroni, in order to remind us it is a poem?

John Upton's "Preface" to his 1758 edition defends Spenser on account of his similarity to Homer, which parallel Matthew Arnold also noticed: "I have often observed a great resemblance between Spenser and Homer, not only in the justness of their descriptions and images, but likewise

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in their diction, expressions, and construction" (xxxiii). Upton strains, however, to consider that the archaisms of Homer, since the Iliad mixes dialects from different periods in the history of the Greek language, parallel those of Spenser. With greater difficulty yet, he justifies the structural unity of The Faerie Queene on the basis of the Iliad. But more to my purposes, Upton is chiefly interesting for tracing many of Spenser's similes to those of Homer, such as the one concerning Arthur's helmet:

> Vpon the top of all his loftie crest,
> A bunch of haires discolourd diuersly,
> Wtih sprincled pearle, and gold full richly drest,
> Did shake, and seem'd to daunce for iollity,
> Like to an Almond tree ymounted hye
> On top of greene *Selinis* all alone,
> Wtih blossomes braue bedecked daintily;
> Whose tender locks do tremble euery one
> At euery little breath, that vnder heauen is blowne.
>
> (1.7.32)

Upton claims it takes its origin in a description given to Homer's Euphorbos, slain by Menelaus (2:389):

> And when alone in some choice place a husband-man hath set
> The young plant of an Olive tree, whose roote

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being ever fed
With plentie of delicious springs, his branches bravely spred
And all his fresh and lovely head growne curld with snowy flowres
That dance and florish with the winds that are of gentlest powres;
But when a whirlewind (got aloft) stoopes with a sodaine gale,
Tears from his head his tender curles, and tosseth therwithall
His fixed roote from his hollow mines: it well presents the force
Of Sparta's king, and so the Plant, Eurphorbus, and his Corse.

(Chapman's Iliad 17.44-53)

Upton protects Spenser from charges of indecorousness in having drawn similes from low-life, such as when Redcrosse is compared to a gnat-bitten shepherd (1.1.23): "I think a fly or a gnatt is as good in comparison or illustration as an ant: our poet thinks so, I am certain, and his simile here is very picturesque" (2:344). In "the power and harmony of numbers," Spenser must cede the laural to "Homer, Virgil, and Milton":

[Y]et our poet stands unrivalled in the visionary art of *bringing objects before your eyes*, and

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> making you a spectator of his imaginary representations.
>
> (1:xxxii, my emphasis)

Neither Vida nor Scaliger, I recall to the reader, thought that the purpose of similes was "to bring objects" before anyone. But what does it mean for Spenser to bring before our mind's eye the objects belonging to Homer? As the essayist on Milton's Imitation had noted, the pleasure derived from regarding comparisons as a description of the natural world, and the delight generated from simile as an imitation of somebody else's simile, are not at all the same.

Thomas Warton's Observations (1754, expanded to two volumes in 1762) argues an appreciation of The Faerie Queene based on a more thorough acquaintance with not only Ariosto, but Chaucer, Malory, and chivalric romances such as "Huon of Bordeaux" and "Sir Bevis of Southhampton." He notices many similarities between Milton and Spenser, one being that between Satan's shield and that of Radigund:

> And on her shoulder hung her shield, bedect
> Vppon the bosse with stones, that shined wide,
> As the faire Moone in her most full aspect,
> That to the Moone it mote be like in each respect.
>
> (5.5.3)

Warton has nothing more to say than that Milton's moon

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differs insofar as being "discerned through a telescope" (2:207); nor does he notice that Radigund's face is soon described to be

> Like as the Moone in foggie winters night,
> Doth seeme to be her selfe, though darkned be her light.
>
> (5.5.12)

The description of Satan's journey in terms of the prospect viewed by a "Scout" (3.543) having attained the top of summit is discussed by Warton as a case in which Milton imitates himself, a similar description occurring in Milton's History of Britain (2:30). The simile pertaining to the force of Artegall's stroke in his battle with Britomart also appears to Warton in the same light as the Galileo or Vallombrosa simile in Milton. It utilizes material within the ken of Spenser's personal experience:

> Like as the lightning brond from riuen skie,
> Throwne out by angy *Iove* in his vengeance,
> With dreadfull force falles on some steeple hie;
> Which battring, downe it on the church doth glance,
> And teares it all with terrible mischance.
>
> (4.6.14)

Warton observes that "Not many years before the Fairy Queen was written, viz. 1561, the steeple of St. Paul's church was

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struck with lightening, by which means not only the steeple itself, but the entire roof of the church was consumed. The description in the simile was probably suggested to our author's imagination by this remarkable accident" (2:261). In other words, Spenser incorporates into his comparisons as much as his experiences as did Milton.

Spenser's versification is censured by Warton for having "led our author into many absurdities" (1:114). The demands of his complex rhyme scheme resulted in an erratic orthography and was the cause of the fullness of Spenser's descriptions: "It obliged him to dilate the thing to be expressed, however unimportant, with trifling, and tedious circumlocutions" (1:114). Spenser's other major fault for Warton, like Hughes before him, stemmed from his inadequate portrayal of Arthur to tie the whole thing together. Spenser's neglect for the rules of epic was part of a "careless exuberance" shared by Ariosto, neither of whom lived "in an age of planning" (1:15). Yet Warton registers surprise by the lag in time between the recovery of classical poetics in the Renaissance and the start of neoclassical poetry: "We find Ariosto, many years after the revival of letters, rejecting truth for magic, and chusing rather to follow the irregular and ridiculous excursions of Boiardo, than the propriety and uniformity of the great Graecian and Roman Epic models" (1:2).

Warton's defense of Spenser rests in trying to recover

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a Renaissance sensibility because "In reading the works of a poet who lived in a remote age, it is necessary that we should look back upon the customes and manners which prevailed in that age. We should endeavour to place ourselves in the writer's situation and circumstances" (2:87). Although Spenser "copied real manners, no less than Homer" (2:88), Warton argues for a better understanding of allegory, "a popular practice of Spenser's age . . . [which was] applied as the subject and foundation of public shews and spectacles, which were exhibited with a magnificence superior to that of former times. The virtues and vices, distinguished by the respective emblematical types, were frequently personified" (89).

Yet the allegory of The Faerie Queene differs from that of the Orlando, insofar as Spenser's "mode of allegorising seems to have been dictated by those spectacles rather than by the fictions of Ariosto. In fact, Ariosto's species of allegory does not so properly consist in impersonating the virtues, vices, and affections of the mind, as in the adumbration of moral doctrine, under the actions of men and women" (91). Warton explains that the characters of Orlando, Rogero, and Bradamante are fictions used to illustrate "the conquest of the passions, the importance of virtue" for which reason Ariosto's is "a moral poem; but can we call the Fairy Queen, upon the whole, a Moral Poem? is it not equally an Historical or Political Poem?" (91).

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Warton takes us back to Hughes on the difference between Ariosto and Spenser, though for Warton, Ariosto is allegorical on account of his fictitious characters. The masks, pageantry, and personifications, on the other, are that which make Spenser's poem an allegory. Allegory in both cases is clearly connected to a moralizing intent by Warton, though some of blame heaped on Milton the previous century, for attempting things in verse that ought not have been attempted, now washes back on Spenser. Though only Book One of The Faerie Queene demonstrates a kind of structural unity for Warton, as it did Hughes, Spenser's extensive reliance on Revelations proves a debit rather than a credit

> Spenser has mingled divine mystery with human allegory. Such a practice as this, tends not only to confound sacred and profane subjects, but to place the licentious sallies of imagination upon a level with the dictates of divine inspiration; to debase the truth and dignity of heavenly things, by making Christian allegory subservient to the purpose of Romantic fiction. (98)

It seems to me that Warton essays to make Spenser as important as Milton by levelling The Faerie Queene with the same charges of which Paradise Lost was found guilty, though if Temple is indicative of the seventeenth-century response, Warton exaggerates. Warton cites among his evidence a

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compound simile clearly not borrowed from Homer, Virgil, or Ovid:

> That done, he leads him to the highest Mount;
> Such one, as that same mighty man of God,
> That bloud-red billowes like a walled front
> On either side disparted with his rod,
> Till that his army dry-foot through them yod,
> Dwelt fortie dayes vpon; where writ in stone
> With bloudy letters by the hand of God,
> The bitter doome of death and balefull mone
> He did receiue, whiles flashing fire about him shone.
>
> Or like that sacred hill, whose head full hie,
> Adornd with fruitfull Oliues all arownd,
> Is, as it were for endless memory
> Of that deare Lord, who oft thereon was fownd,
> For euer with a flowiring girlond crownd:
> Or like that pleasaunt Mount, that is for ay
> Through famous Poets verse each were renownd,
> On which the thrise three learned Ladies play
> Their heauenly notes, and make full many a louely lay.
>
> (1.10.53-4)

Warton claims that the scandal of simile lies in Spenser's

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prospect having been taken "from a mountain more lofty than either the mount of Olives or Parnassus" (2:100). Yet the line in question, "That done, he leads him to the highest Mount" is not so blatant.

Spenser does indeed link Sinai together with the Mount of Olives and Mount Parnassus in order to give us an idea of the height of his own Mount of Contemplation. But the "highest Mount" to which Redcrosse is lead by the hermit is perhaps only the supreme pinnacle in Fairyland, at least in Book One. Warton may be thinking of Spenser in terms of Milton, but a closer examination of the passage shows that Spenser, unlike Milton, does not venture to claim his purely fictional locale is more exalted than the more-renowned peaks. Unlike the representation in Paradise Lost of the mount whereon Adam sighted worldly empires, the vision given Redcrosse from the summit is such "that earthly tong / Cannot describe, nor wit of man can tell; too high a ditty for my simple song" (1.10.55).

Milton's representation of the mount does not render the hill higher than the one on which Christ was tempted, but he allows it be read as nobler. Michael has explained to Adam that "I am sent / To show thee what shall come in future days / To thee and to they Offspring" (11.356-8). "Ascend / This Hill," commands the archangel, to whom Adam acquiesces:

So both ascend

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> In the Visions of God: It was a Hill
> Of Paradise the highest, from whose tope
> The Hemisphere of Earth in clearest Ken
> Stretcht out to the amplest reach of prospect lay.
> Not higher that Hill nor wider looking round,
> Whereon for different cause the Tempter set
> Our second *Adam* in the Wilderness,
> To show him all Earth's Kingdoms and thir Glory.
>
> (11.376-84)

Thereupon follows a catalogue of earthly kingdoms, which the eye of Adam "nor could . . . not ken" (11.396) and whose Spirit "perhaps . . . also saw" (11.406) the powerful capital cites of Asia, Africa, the Americas, and the Near East. The list ends when the narrator continues by saying that "to nobler sights / *Michael* from *Adam's* eyes the Film remov'd" (11.411-12), but was it, in fact, Adam who beheld Cambalu, Samarchand, and Paquin?

Or was it Christ, the second Adam? Milton appears to have said in a short simile that Adam's mount was "not higher" than that of Christ, but were we being given an extended comparison without realizing it? It is unclear exactly when the short comparison ends:

> To show him all Earth's Kingdoms and thir Glory.
> His Eye might there command wherever stood
> City of old or modern Fame, the Seat
> Of mightiest Empire, from the destin'd Walls

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Of *Cambalu* . . .

First, whose "Eye" (11.385)? It seems logical to suppose that the simile has ended, and that the vision begins to unfold to Adam, but the Miltonic narrator consistently ambiguates the moment when, the comparison finished, we are returned to the narrative. In other words, it is perhaps unto Christ's "Eye" that the splendors of earthly power are unmasked, in comparison to which the sights now revealed to Adam by Michael are "nobler" (11.411). In sum, Spenser's simile evinces a sense of decorum that forbids him directly representing the New Jerusalem--we are only shown the reluctance of Redcrosse to "turne againe / Back to the world" (1.10.63). Milton's simile, on the other hand, goes beyond the pale; and it seems to me rather Paradise Lost which "mingled divine mystery with human allegory" and placed "the licentious sallies of imagination upon a level with the dictates of divine inspiration."

Richard Hurd's 1762 Letters on Chivalry and Romance goes the opposite route of Upton's defense of Spenser to produce a similar result. Instead of trying to make The Faerie Queene out to be Homeric by tinkering with definitions of classical unity, Hurd stresses the romanticism inherent in the Iliad. Hurd thought it as likely that Spenser believed in fairies, as Homer had in speaking horses. He equates the supernatural in Elizabethan poetry with not only "the vulgar belief of enchantments,"

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but the reports of "adventurers into the holy land . . . and the strange things told and believed, on the discovery of the new world" (31). The gothic elements in Homer, monstrosities such as the cyclops and the pagan gods, are improved on by Spenser in raising the mind to a like wonder:

> The current popular tales of Elves and Fairies were even fitter to take the credulous mind, and charm it into a willing admiration of the specious miracles, which a wayward fancy delights in, than those of the old traditionary rabble of pagan divinities. (49)

Hurd follows Upton and Warton, rather than Addison and Hughes, in assessing the credibility of Spenser's story on account of its internal consistency rather than by a conformity to any perceived natural order.

Most significantly, Hurd defends Spenser's apparent lack of regularity as being organized around the twelve adventures enjoined by Gloriana: a "unity of design, and not of action" (67). The character of Arthur woven through the poem is a classical thread sticking out from the gothic tapestry of episodes: "He should either have done nothing, or more" (73). Swedenberg thought, and I think correctly, that Hurd meant that on account of Spenser's allegory "the presence of Arthur may be accounted for and the unity of design is not violated" (109). Spenser's allegory was not a mystery in need of interpretation for Hurd, but pertained to

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the representation of moral virtues in the individual heros of the six books, whereas Arthur was, in Hurd's words, "superior to all by uniting the whole circle of their virtues in himself" (74). Hurd's regard for allegory as being specifically moral is at once typical of his age, and a narrower prospect, say, than that of Rosamund Tuve, who conceived allegory to lie in controlled digression of romantic entrelacement. But Hurd's sensibility is at the same time more broadly encompassing than Tuve's, insofar as he sees allegory as that which combines the classical and the gothic under one head. But if allegory circumscribes both epic and romance narratives, does the term cease being a useful term for discussing literature, except as that which is distinct from the drama and lyric?

G. Johnson

Samuel Johnson's most famous aside on the Miltonic simile was to rebuke Milton for having observed nature through the spectacles of books. Hurd offered little on the subject of epic simile; yet, when bemoaning the declining popularity of "Gothic fictions," he similarly adds that even Milton "durst only admit them on the bye, and in the way of simile and illustration only" (117). Hurd, like Johnson, means that the Miltonic simile is allusive; and Johnson, unlike most of the Miltonists obsessed with sublime effect,

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is more concerned with a definition of trope whereby to measure the success or failure of individual examples. In his "Life of Pope" (1779), Johnson, after pronouncing the poet's "Essay on Criticism" to be a youthful masterpiece, lays his cards on the table:

> A simile, to be perfect, must both illustrate and ennoble the subject; must shew it to the understanding in a clearer view, and display it to the fancy with greater dignity; but either of these qualities may be sufficient to recommend it. In didactick poetry, of which the great purpose is instruction, a simile may be praised which illustrates, though it does not ennoble; in heroicks, that may be admitted which ennobles, though it does not illustrate. That it may be complete, it is required to exhibit, independently of its references, a pleasing image; for a simile is said to be a short episode. (919)

Le Bossu had focused only a clarifying function for the epic simile, but didactic poetry and the epic were, of course, practically synonymous in his mind. In his focus on "nobility," Johnson hearkens back to Dryden's admiration and restores to the discussion of similes an aspect missing from Le Bossu's definition. For Johnson, the clarifying or explicative aspect of a simile pertains to its didactic function; its ennobling aspect, to a more purely literary

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function.

The "nobility" of epic similes is a bitter pill to take nowadays on account of the unpalatable associations conveyed to us by the word. But these same aristocratic associations were relished by Johnson, as well as by Dryden and Pope, who shared his taste for a epic genre, which was supposed to relate the deeds of kings, princes, and the ruling classes. Yet the distinction between "illustrating" and "ennobling" is still difficult to fathom. Jean Hagstrum's splendid study of Johnson's literary criticism paraphrases the binary opposition of qualities in his definition thus: "The prime requisites, then, are perspicuity and majesty, clarity and grandeur, the rational and the imaginative. (117). Of these pairs, the last seems to me to be an unhappy choice: to profess an antithesis between reason and the imagination is putting words into the mouth of Johnson, who has, after all, just finished calling Pope's didactic poem his finest effort. Was the imaginative faculty already at war with the reason before Shelley's "Defence," and before Carlyle played scientific knowledge off poetic truth? Or was it merely subordinate to its chief and master?

The sublime in the eighteenth century, on the other hand, does anticipate some of the qualities that the imagination was to take on in the nineteenth. How the imagination came to replace the sublime as a critical *ne plus ultra* is not easy to follow; but it seems mistaken to

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suppose that the operation of the imagination in a given simile, any more than the workings of the sublime must have belonged for Johnson to a non-didactic element. Johnson cites as an example of the perfect simile Pope's comparison likening the hopes and frustrations attendant upon the progress of learning to the changing vistas of the Alpine climber ("Essay on Criticism" 1.225-32). The simile was thought flawless because it bridged alternates that Hagstrum more fitly names as "perspicuity and majesty" and "clarity and grandeur." This bridging action of Pope's simile is what resulted in perfection for Johnson. And if its perfection was exemplary of the sublime, it suggests the transition from the concept of the sublime into the concept of the imagination, which, as the reconciliation of opposites in the mind of the poet, turns out to be a backward projection of the sublime effect onto its source in the author. Or, as John Payne Collier would soon record Coleridge as having said of Milton's Sin and Death: "the grandest efforts of poetry [are] where the imagination is called forth, not to produce a distinct form but a strong working of the mind . . . and the result is what the Poet wishes to impress, to substitute a grand feeling of the unimaginable for a mere image" (Lectures 1808-1819 on Literature 1:311).

Johnson's distinction is also difficult because of an overlap contained in the word illustrate, which, as the word

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illustrative shows, already suggests both the notions of perspicuity and of majesty. But it is not, I venture to point out, exactly the same overlap as there was in Boileau's description of the effects of epic similes. Boileau juxtaposed illustration with embellishment. As the verbs to embellish and to adorn suggest, ornament is, in the sense of lending graces to that which before had none, not wholly alien from the act of ennobling. But Boileau had put the illustrative aspect of the simile on one side along with its ornamental quality, in order to contrast them with the amusement that a particularly wild Homeric comparison could bring. Johnson, on the other hand, seems to be translating the simile's ornamental quality into an ennobling feature, which is yet separate from the simile's power of clarification. And while for Boileau, the amusement of digression was in excess of the little that could rationally be said about it, the civilized pleasure of Johnson's perfect simile is the result of single image "independent of its references." An epic simile for Johnson can wander away from the narrative matter at hand so long as it does not violate decorum, but the pleasure derived from the best sort of epic similes is the result of mediation--clarity yoked together with grandeur.

Johnson is less concerned than Boileau with the effects of the simile--he never says that a simile "ennobles" the reader--and more concerned than Trapp with pinning down the

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way one is materially constructed. One kind of simile, he had said, "in heroicks . . . may be admitted which ennobles, though it does not illustrate," and this fine point he spells out in his "Life of Addison":

> A poetical simile is the discovery of likeness between two actions in their general nature dissimilar, or of causes terminated by different operations in some resemblance of effect. But the mention of another like consequence from a like cause, or of a like performance by a like agency, is not a simile, but an exemplification. It is not a simile to say that the Thames waters fields as the Po waters field; or that as Hecla vomits flames in Iceland, so Aetna vomits flames in Sicily. . . . A simile may be compared to lines converging at a point and is more excellent as the lines approach from a greater distance: an exemplification may be considered as two parallel lines which run on together without approximation, never far separated, and never joined. (877)

The distinction, directly out of Quintilian (8.3.74), is not an easy one to make at all times, because, though one volcano is made out by Johnson to be the "exemplification" of the other, it is not clear which is the example of which. That is, which volcano comes first?

Johnson is somewhat clearer when he censures Addison

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for drawing a likeness between Marlborough and an angel in the Campaign: "Marlborough is so like the angel in the poem, that the action of both is almost the same, and performed by both in the same manner. . . . The lines on Marlborough are just and noble; but the simile gives almost the same images a second time" (878). Here, "exemplification" sounds more like repetition, on account of which "instead of simile," we have "identity." The simile is imperfect for Johnson because it does not illustrate, but only ennobles. Johnson's assumption, I am supposing, is that we can recognize good behavior when we see it: thus Addison, when he makes the deeds of Marlborough out to be angelic, confers upon them a celestial dignity but does not tell us anything we did not already know. But if Addison's simile falls short of sublime perfection, what would Johnson have thought of Milton's comparison when he says that Satan, weeping, "burst forth Tears such as Angels weep?" Surely not, as Landor and Rajan have said, that it was sublime. Is it an exemplification? Or is it too short to be an epic simile?

H. The Romantics

Excepting Coleridge, the Romantics are not theorists when it comes to similes in their critical reflections. Not one attempts to modify the definition of the perfect epic simile after Johnson. That is not to say they are not

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engaged in writing about particular Miltonic similes, for they argue back and forth about the merits and faults of individual examples; some of them, a little in the spirit of Bentley, see room for improvement and offer free advice. Before sampling some of the practical criticism of Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, Landor, and Hazlitt, I would like to venture the generalization that the overall climate for writing about similes seems to have changed. Perhaps it was because the Romantics felt everything had already been said that could be said about what similes were supposed to do; perhaps they were no longer interested in thinking about similes as ornaments or finishing touches; perhaps they wanted to revolutionize style and diction altogether by throwing out the hierarchy of high, middle, and low corresponding to matching genres; perhaps they had silently assimilated Hobbes' sense that metaphors were inherently more poetic than comparisons. Whatever the reason, they do not seem to be interested in speculating about the idea of the simile per se. Instead, they elaborate on the "very great Idea" that Addison had said Miltonic similes hinted at, and this they called the imagination. The "imaginative" superseded the "sublime" as the defining attribute most frequently attached to the Miltonic simile, but, like the former term, the new label gets hitched up to specific examples in a number of startling ways.

William Wordsworth's marginalia in his copy of Paradise

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Lost and to Richard Payne Knight's Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste offer a few insights into the great Romantic poet's understanding of the function of epic simile. Wordsworth criticizes the dare or taunt made by Heaven to Satan when it let down Jacob-like stairs (2.516-25), because the fiend "could not have had his access to heaven either facilitated or obstructed" (qtd. in Wittreich 1970:103). He suggests, furthermore, that Milton might have improved his description likening Satan's first glimpse of Paradise to the "prospect of some forein land" or "Metropolis" beheld by "a Scout" (3.543-554). Milton could have added "interesting rural images . . . such as Hamlets, cottages & Woods" (104). Wordsworth nevertheless praises Milton's use of the picturesque in this instance and goes on to exclaim: "But how much of the real excellence of Imagination consists in the capacity of exploring the world really existing & thence selecting objects beautiful or great as the occasion may require." Responding to a Johnsonesque critique of Milton's pedantry by Knight, Wordsworth jots down a counter-charge that "Milton wrote chiefly from the Imagination" (qtd. in Wittreich 1970:116). Knight was dull in catching the sublimity of Milton's comparison of Satan to a tower (1.591) and his representation of Death (2.667). Wordsworth imputes to Knight an inability to distinguish between mere "inadequacy of communication" and the indeterminateness of Milton,

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conveying an "Idea" with "the utmost liveliness" (Wittreich 117).

In the notes to his lyric inspired by Vallombrosa, Wordsworth discusses Milton as a naturalist when he queries whether the trees that Milton saw on his Italian voyage and used in his epic simile were deciduous or evergreen (3:498). Wordsworth's sense that similes are supposed to reflect "the world really existing" recalls Le Bossu superficially, or a way of construing his point that the material of the comparison should "be better known, and easier to apprehend." But how is it for Wordsworth that the "better known" world of Milton's comparisons was inevitably drawn from Horton rather than from his library?

Milton compares Satan's flight up to the Hellgate with a fleet of merchant ships passing off the African coast:

> As when far off at Sea a Fleet descri'd
> Hangs in the Clouds, by *Equinoctial* Winds . . .
>
> (2.636-7)

In the Preface to his 1815 collection of poems, Wordsworth locates Milton's stroke of imaginative genius specifically in his use of the word "hangs." The depiction of the fleet in relation to the clouds by the metaphor "hangs" pushes the simile over the edge of the merely fanciful: "Here is the full strength of the imagination involved in the word 'hangs', and exerted upon the whole image" (2:437). But why should the use of a metaphor within an epic simile be so

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overwhelming? Voltaire and Addison were well aware that there was something tricky about the Miltonic simile. But, to the extent that every simile is a trick, or a trope, why should the doubling, or adding to it of another trick, elicit such strong and varied responses?

Joseph Wittreich directs us to the fact the Romantics were hardly unified in their response and were particularly ambivalent about how visual the Miltonic simile was (1970:150 n.8). In a lecture of 1811 Coleridge grants Milton a picturesqueness nearly on par with that of Shakespeare, though Coleridge, like Lessing, is skeptical that sheer description should be the aim of literature. "The power of genius was not shewn," Collier records Coleridge as having said of literary masterpieces, "in elaborating a picture . . . " (1:362). But in unassigned lecture notes attributed to 1819, Coleridge is inspired to call Milton "not a picturesque, but a musical, poet" (2:428). Leigh Hunt, too, leans towards putting Milton in with the musicians in his essay on the "Originality of Milton's Harmonious Use of Proper Names." Milton's "sonorous proper names" result in a "organ-like music" (230), in which the design of "varying and contrasting the vowels" (234) is discovered by Hunt to have originated with Tasso's Sette Giornate.

Hunt is the first, moreover, to notice that the simile describing Eden in terms of Enna (4.268) is a negative

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comparison. He writes in the ninth London Journal of 1834: "No Heathen Paradise, according to Milton, could compare with his; yet in saying so, he lingers so fondly among the illegal shades, that it is doubtful which he prefers" (1:66). Milton is doubtful, according to Hunt, only because he was not privileged enough to share the Romantic intuition of a "universality [that] knows how to reconcile the real beauty of all creeds." Or was it that Milton's certainty about which he preferred inadvertently made Romantic universality possible? Did he put things into words which would have been better left unsaid?

Paralleling Hunt's remark, William Hazlitt, in his 1817 Round Table essay on "Lycidas," writes about the poem's "combining the truths of the Christian religion with the fictions of the heathen mythology" (4:33). The admixture signifies:

> no inconsistency or natural repugnance between the poetical and religious faith in the same mind. To the understanding, the belief of the one is incompatible with that of the other; but in the imagination, they not only may, but do constantly co-exist. . . . Every classical scholar, however orthodox a Christian he may be, is an honest Heathen at heart. (4:34)

If poetry in the Renaissance was popularly conceived to spring from a religious impulse, Hazlitt demonstrates how,

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by the time of the Romantics, that cliche was stood on its head in the apprehension that religious myths were the product of an imaginative faculty. Milton would have been saddened to learn his poem would be regarded a few generations after Hazlitt to be a monument to dead ideas. That his poem could have been held responsible for killing them off the following century (Guillory, viii), I expect, would have been incomprehensible to him.

Of the other Romantic critics, Walter Savage Landor's approach to the epic similes is not much deeper than that of Byron. In a letter of 1821 to John Murray, George Gordon Byron swaggeringly approves Milton's spear simile (1.293), because the proper concerns of poetry are man-made things and not mountains and trees: "I prefer the 'mast of some great ammiral,' with all its tackle, to the Scotch fir or the alpine tannen; and think that *more* poetry *has been made out of it*" (5:551). Landor, like Wordsworth, is not above dispensing advice to Milton about Paradise Lost in his 1846 hypothetical "Conversation" with Southey, though the two are less critical of Milton than they are of Johnson. Landor simplifies the garbled syntax of the comparison likening the assembly of Satanic forces to pygmies (5:241). But responsibility for dismissing the simile comparing the builders of Pandemonium to pioneers (1.676) is given by Landor to Southey, for whom "nothing is gained to the celestial host by comparing it with the terrestrial." The

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two expunge most of the Bee simile concluding Book One for its lack of propriety (5:242-3), but the comparison likening the tears of Satan to those of angels (1.620) surpasses all in its "sublimity" (5:241).

Thomas De Quincey's analysis of the Miltonic sublime in his 1839 essay also groans under the weight of Johnson's accusations of Milton's pedantry. The poem's erudition, far from being precious or "at war with Milton's purpose of exhibiting the paradisiacal state" (10:403), was a kind of learnedness still present, though unobserved according to De Quincey, in the parlance common to his day. The expression, for example, of an "ampitheatre of woods," synthesized two images: one of "populous multitude" and one of "silence" and "solitude":

> Each image, from reciprocal contradiction, brightens and vivifies the other. The two images act, and react, by strong repulsion and antagonism. . . . Out of this one principle of subtle and lurking antagonism, may be explained everything which has been denounced under the idea of pedantry in Milton. . . . (10:403)

The "woody Theatre" (4.141) of Paradise revealed to Satan, we see as deriving in part from the forested "Theatre" to which Belphoebe withdraws the wounded Timias (3.5.39.5). Spenser's comparison of Belphoebe's haunt to an "earthly Paradize" (40.5) anticipates some of the perfection with

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which her birthplace, the Garden of Adonis, is described in the ensuing canto. The natural ampitheatre occurs in Dante and Virgil as well, but what interests De Quincey particularly about Milton's use of it is not the similarity between landscape and architecture but, rather, the difference between them that is reconciled by language. A kind of native intelligence, De Quincey seems to be suggesting, governs our ability to see the resemblance between unrelated things, this faculty being the imagination.

In a note appended to the above passage, De Quincey elucidates "the covert philosophy which governs Milton's practice":

> For instance, this is the key to that image in the 'Paradise Regained', where Satan, on first emerging into sight, is compared to an old man gathering sticks, 'to warm him on a winter's day'. This image, at first sight, seems little in harmony with the wild and awful character of the supreme fiend. No; it is *not in* harmony, nor is it meant to be in harmony. On the contrary, it is meant to be in antagonism and intense repulsion. The household image of old age, of human infirmity, and of domestic hearths, are all meant as a machinery for provoking and soliciting the fearful idea to which they are placed in

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collision, and as so many repelling poles.(10:404)

The imagination, when it operates in similes, consists in the synthesis of contradictory effects, according to De Quincey. Yet he might have added that the comparison in Paradise Regained is modelled partly on Archimago in The Faerie Queene, that "aged Sire, in long black weedes yclad, / His feete all bare, his beard all hoarie gray" (1.1.29).

Una and Redcrosse meet up with a hermit at the start of The Faerie Queene, or someone who appears to be one, until the ruse is uncovered to the reader by the sprite sent to Morpheus by the arch-enchanter. We initially absorb Archimago's false appearance through the eyes of the hero and heroine; whereas in Paradise Regained it is the Son of God seeing approach an aged man, dressed in rural weeds and who "seem'd" (1.315) to be gathering sticks. That is, Satan in Paradise Regained fails to be as engaging as he is in Paradise Lost, I am supposing, because we see him as Milton imagines Christ to have seen him. In Paradise Lost, our main concern here, Satanic wickedness is beguiling and ought to be, given the theme of the story, though the existence of evil in Milton's cosmos is finally no less contingent on goodness than in Spenser's. Adam and Eve fall, as do Redcrosse and Una, but the rectitude of Spenser's protagonists proves frail and vulnerable in the face of their experiences because evil already exists in the world. That is, the emphasis in the poems is reversed, just as the

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stage on which the great events of Milton's "woody theatre" spreads out--not before the bottom rung of the encircling trees, as it does in Spenser--but at the plateau on top.

The remarks of John Keats are difficult. When Satan is compared to the eclipsed sun and the perplexity it causes monarchs (1.594-9), Keats annotates the lines of his copy with the exclamation: "How noble and collected an indignation against Kings. . . . His very wishing should have had power to pull that feeble animal Charles from his bloody throne" (556). For Keats, the lines interject Milton's republican sympathies into the verse, just as the Vallombrosa simile witnessed for Wordsworth Milton's Italian voyage. But the passage containing the comparison likening Pandemonium to a temple, the magnificence of which surpassed those of Babylon and Alcairo (1.717-22), elicits a note that recalls Keats's statements about negative capability: "What creates the intense pleasure of not knowing? A sense of independence, of power from the fancy's creating a world of its own by the sense of probabilities."

The "Tears" of Satan (1.620) are not sublime for Keats but, instead, an example of the "sublime pathetic" (557). The idea that the sublime was a reconciliation of opposites was a useful concept in the previous century, as I have tried to demonstrate, though it was valuable for critics only so long as it could be pitted against something else, whether that was the picturesque, or the pathetic, or the

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beautiful. Keats's remark prompts a consideration of whether the imagination effects a new synthesis between the sublime and its opposite. Does he, like Coleridge, need to invent the fancy in order to make distinctions between differing degrees of the imagination in poetry?

Keats's most complicated response to an epic simile begins when he extols the "extraordinary beauty" of the Enna simile:

> Not that fair field
> Of *Enna*, where *Proserpin* gath'ring flow'rs
> Herself a fairer Flow'r by gloomy *Dis*
> Was gather'd, which cost *Ceres* all that pain
> To seek her through the world . . . (4.268-75)

The description is unrivaled elsewhere in Milton's poem, save for the lines devoted to Orpheus in the invocation to Book Seven (qtd. in Wittreich 1970:559). The half-line that particularly interests Keats, "which cost Ceres all that pain," appears "exclusively Miltonic without the shadow of another mind ancient or modern." What is it about the fragment inset within the epic simile that fascinates Keats? The expression, Keats says, defies paraphrase, and he is accordingly elliptical about how it performs such magic. Does he regard the words "cost" or "Pain" as a trick, the way Wordsworth had expounded on the metaphoric use of the word "hangs"? More obviously metaphoric is the play on the word "flower" in the previous line, "Proserpin gathering

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flowers, / Herself a fairer flower" (4.269-70). And even trickier in general, I think, is very frame of the simile as a negative comparison.

Keats is struck, I think, by the gratuitous nature of Milton's introduction of Ceres. She is a digression in the Miltonic simile, though the abduction of Proserpine by Pluto was another pagan myth of a fall from the Golden Age. In the versions of the story depicted in Claudian's De raptus proserpinae and Ovid's Metamorphoses, the tribulations of Ceres is integral. In Sandy's translation of Ovid, Ceres curses the land because "through all the earth, and all the Maine / the fearefull Mother sought her childe in vaine" (238). Ceres is certainly less alien within the context of the simile's subject matter than Ruth was to the corn, but the response of Keats seems to ask of Milton, "Why mention her suffering at all if Eden is not like Enna anyway?" Milton could have streamlined events, when he adopted the pagan story in order refer one fall to another, but he chose instead to be unnecessarily detailed. He introduced a figure without an obvious analogue to his story, and this is what Keats single outs and takes especial delight in: the pain of Ceres was brought in when it was not essential.

Keats would indeed be seeing digression in the Miltonic simile in a new light if my summary of his response is correct. In a discussion of imagery of Book Seven, Keats writes in the margin to his copy of the poem: "Milton in

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every instance pursues his imagination to the utmost. . . . But in no instance is this sort of perseverance more exemplified than in what may be called his stationing or statu[a]ry. He is not content with simple description, he must station" (Wittreich 559). Keats gives as an example "the simile of Gallilio," which, like the introduction of Ceres, creates the illusion of perspective by making a distinction between foreground and background. The effect produced is, in Keats's words, "a dramatic vastness and solemnity fit and worthy to hold one amazed in the midst of this Paradise Lost" (560). Digression, then, has to do with perspective for Keats, though, whether his take on the Miltonic simile ultimately differs much from that of Wordsworth is ground for speculation.

Wordsworth focused on the gratuitous use of the metaphor inset within the epic simile, which suggests a similar susceptibility to changes in tone. If we stop to consider all epic similes as a modulation in tone, if not in voice, as the narrator turns directly to his audience, what then would a second shift in tone indicate? For Keats, the shift in viewpoint constituted an enhanced perspective on a dramatic vastness. But is it the use of a metaphor within the body of the simile that allows us to hear the first modulation in tone? What would Ceres be a metaphor for? Both Keats and Wordsworth talk of the imagination as if it had to do with the invention of voice, though I wonder if

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either was aware that Milton had written familiarly to Diodati in 1637, that "not so diligently is Ceres, according to the Fables, said to have sought her daughter Proserpina, as I seek for this idea of the beautiful, through all the shapes and forms of things" (1:326). Does Ceres illustrate the essential characteristic of Paradise Lost according to Coleridge's Table Talk, "the subjectivity of the poet, as of Milton, who is himself before himself in every thing he writes" (2:88)? Or how, according to Lowell, Milton had the power "of transforming everything into himself" (5:310)? Lest we cry "Eureka" too soon, we ought bear in mind that the corn-goddess was a favorite figure recurring throughout Milton's prose. Rather than imaging the poet, she is made to stand in the Third Prolusion for the reader, who "is in the end . . . reduced to imitating the weary toils of Ceres seeking for Truth through all the world by the light of a torch without ever finding it" (1:243).

Just as Voltaire had put his finger on the paradox that the enhanced aptness of the Miltonic simile made critics more sensitive when it digressed, so Hazlitt elegantly formulates a related crux in his Round Table essay "On Milton's Versification": "Milton has borrowed more than any other writer; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer." (4:37). Hazlitt explicates the crux thus:

> Milton's learning has all the effect of intuition. He describes objects of which he had only read in

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> books, with the vividness of actual observation. His imagination has the force of nature. He makes words tell as pictures. (4:37)

To drive home his point, Hazlitt cites the simile comparing Satan's voyage to the flight of a vulture (3.431), and, in his 1818 Lectures on English Poets, adapts Pope's turn of phrase for comparing the fire of Milton's invention to Homer's and Virgil's: "The fervour of his imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace, the most contradictory materials" (5:58). "What a force of imagination is there!" he exclaims, offering now instead the Leviathan simile (1.201) and the "Atlantean" description of Beelzebub (2.306) as evidence (5:61).

Hazlitt unknots a tangled skein in the same lecture "On Shakespeare and Milton," when his indebtedness to Coleridge prompts him to locate Milton in the constellation of Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare, so as to fathom the differences between the musical and the visual in poetry. He guesses that Milton's blindness may have contributed to the strengthening of the mind in making vivid descriptions, but reminds us that, because his poetry was musical, Milton need not be "proportionally deficient in other respects":

> The ear predominates over the eye, because it is more immediately affected, and because the language of music blends more immediately with, and forms a more natural accompaniment to, the

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> variable and indefinite association of ideas conveyed by words. But where the associations of the imagination are not the principal thing, the individual object is given by Milton with equal force and beauty. (5:60)

Spenser, too, according to Hazlitt, was musical, though the music he heard was of a different modality.

In the 1818 lecture on "Chaucer and Spenser," Hazlitt declares of the Elizabethan, that "of all the poets, he is the most poetical" (5:34). Hazlitt follows Coleridge in thinking The Faerie Queene "all fairy-land," but he adds that Spenser "paints nature, not as we find it, but as we expected to find it; and fulfils the delightful promise of our youth" (5:35). The simile comparing the crest of Arthur's helmet to an almond tree (1.7.32) is "picturesque from his intense love of beauty," which is "the moving principle of his mind" (5:35). Beauty, as opposed to didactic truth, informs a Spenserian poetics, according to Hazlitt, whose most oft-quoted pronouncement curtails the value of the poem's allegory:

> Some people say. . . . [t]hey are afraid of the allegory, as they thought it would bite them: they look at it as a child looks at a painted dragon, and they think it will strangle them in its shining folds. This is very idle. If they do not meddle with the allegory, the allegory will not

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meddle with them. Without minding it at all, the whole is as plain as a pike-staff.

(5:38)

"Is it necessary," Hazlitt asks, to understand what allegorical role Britomart plays in the poem before one can "understand the beauty of the following stanza?" He quotes a simile likening the female warrior's golden locks to sunny beams piercing through the clouds:

> Tho whenas vailed was her loftie crest,
> Her golden locks, that were in tramels gay
> Vpbounden, did them selues adowne display,
> And raught vnto her heeles; like sunny beames,
> That in a cloud their light did long time stay,
> Their vapour vaded, shew their golden gleames,
> And through the persant aire shoote forth their azure streames. (3.9.20)

The Faerie Queene is not properly dramatic, according to Hazlitt, though neither is Paradise Lost in the Round Table essay on the character of Eve. Milton's Eve forms the basis of a contrast with more dramatic personages of Shakespeare, which difference Hazlitt capsulizes:

> In general, the interest in Milton is essentially epic, and not dramatic; the difference between the

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> epic and dramatic is this, that in the former the imagination produces the passion, and in the latter the passion produces the imagination(4:110)

But how does Spenser's characterization differ from that of Milton? Hazlitt holds the form of romance responsible for Spenser's efforts to "describe beautiful objects for their own sakes," the result being, it seems in the essays of the following year, that Spenser sounds "the perfection of melting harmony" as opposed to "the high-raised tone of Milton" (5:44). The cause, as Hazlitt puts it, is on account of Spenser's having given us things "as we wish them to be," whereas Milton is more moral in describing things "as they ought to be" (5:46).

If the Miltonic sublime had effected one sort of reconciliation in the century previous to Hazlitt, the Romantic describes a new kind of synthesis. In the sixth of 1820 Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, Hazlitt praises Milton's advance over Dante in having "got rid of the horns and tail, the vulgar and physical insignia of the devil, and clothed him with other greater and intellectual terrors, reconciling beauty and sublimity, and converting the grotesque and deformed into the ideal and classical" (6:316). In many respects, Hazlitt on the differences between Spenser and Milton forms a bridge to Ruskin and the Victorians. Ruskin pondered two sorts of pathetic fallacy, that of the grotesque and sublime variety,

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while subsequent nineteenth-century critics develop the disagreement about whether the Miltonic simile was more musical than it was visual. But while we have come full circle, we have yet to delve into the center. Coleridge is placed at the center of the present study for he affords the most profound insight into the perplexing relationship between simile and allegory.

I. Coleridge

Hazlitt was profoundly wise, I think, in having advised us not to worry about allegory and in implying that the term is a more misleading than helpful tool in the critical armory. Though Coleridge also defines allegory as extended metaphor from the point of view of the author, he inadvertently reveals how importantly the concept of simile figures into the equation. I have tried to indicate how problematic the concept of simile has been in criticism on Spenser and Milton, as well as the ancients, though it remains to demonstrate how the problems surrounding epic simile are intimately involved with those plaguing discussions of allegory. I have assembled the remarks of Coleridge on these two subjects, his commentary on specific Miltonic similes preceding his asides on Spenser and his more abstract musings on allegory. Over the course of Coleridge's career as a critic, his early judgments on

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Spenser's allegory spiral outward to encompass a stance on the wider body of allegorical interpretation. In this movement, from allegory as a genre of composition to a consideration of allegory as kind of interpretation, lies the germ of a puzzle that has proved extremely influential on contemporary writers. For his distinction between allegory and symbolism is intimately bound up with his notions of simile and metaphor.

Coleridge seems to be a naturalist when it comes to talking about what sort of material comparisons should draw upon. In a column for the Courier, Coleridge lauds Milton's use of a comet simile in advance of Satan's one-on-one battle with the as-yet-unnamed Death (2.709): "nothing affects the imagination more, than uncommon appearances in the heavens . . . and Comets, from time immemorial, have been beheld with terror and amazement, as executioners of divine wrath" (Essays 2:277). Milton uses a natural event in his comparison, though the word "imagination" here has become a stumbling block at the threshold of retracing the steps of Coleridge's thoughts. Neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth are strictly naturalists in the ordinary sense of the word, because nature was for them a landscape painted by the imagination, the primary faculty that synthesized the input of sensory data. In his 1816 Biographia Literaria, Coleridge famously describes how the experience of nature in poetry is theoretically bound up in the way the secondary

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imagination imitates or recollects the primary one in contrast to which Coleridge adverted the bloodless machinations of the fancy (1:305).

Coleridge knew no better exemplification of the workings of the imaginative, as opposed to the fanciful, faculty in Milton than in the comparison of the Figtree of Paradise, "not that kind for Fruit renown'd," to a banyan,

> But such as this day to *Indians* known
> In *Malabar* or *Decan* spreads her Arms
> Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
> The bended Twigs take root, and Daughters grow
> About the Mother Tree, a Pillar'd shade
> High overarch't, and echoing Walks between;
> There oft the *Indian* Herdsman shunning heat
> Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing Herds
> At Loopholes cut through thickest shade: Those Leaves
> They gather'd, broad as *Amazonian* Targe,
> And with what skill they had, together sew'd,
> To gird thir waist, vain Covering if to hide
> Thir guilt and dreaded shame; O how unlike
> To that first naked Glory. Such of late
> *Columbus* found th' *American* so girt
> With feather'd Cincture, naked else and wild
> Among the Trees on Isles and woody Shores.
>
> (9.1101-18)

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"This is creation rather than painting," says Coleridge in the Biographia (2:129), and we sigh, "Yes, I suppose, but why does it seem to be such a mess?"

Like Keats, Coleridge is a elliptical about why he likes the simile so much. He submits that the "echoing Walks between" the sheltered bower of the trees (9.1107) marks the reversal of an old myth. But how is it that the word "echoing" conjures up a different sort of music to the inner ear from other words associated with sound? The answer is complicated. It entails hearing echoes of Ceres and Proserpine in the Mother and Daughter imagery detailing the banyan trees. The "High overarch't" branches of their shade need also bring to mind the Vallombrosa simile. On the other hand, the Figtree simile recalls the "inwoven shade" (4.693) of the "shadier Bower" (4.705) within Paradise to which Adam and Eve retreat from the "circuit of these walks" (4.586), with their "echoing Hill or Thicket" (4.681). But the echoing walks of Paradise are not in between the trees of the nuptial bower but external to it. Though Adam and Eve's nuptial bower, as well as the Enna and Vallombrosa simile, are present in the Figtree, a full appreciation of Coleridge's insight necessitates, I think, turning back to Book One, where the "Pilasters round" and "Doric Pillars" (1.713,4) of Pandemonium anticipate the "Pillar'd shade" (9.1106) of the Figtree.

Milton compares the pouring of molten ores into

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different molds to the functioning of musical stops in an organ, though for what purpose it is not immediately clear:

> As in an Organ from one blast of wind
> To many a row of Pipes the sound-board breathes.
> Anon out of the earth a Fabric huge
> Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound
> Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet,
> Built like a Temple, where *Pilasters* round
> Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
> With Golden Architrave; nor did there want
> Cornice or Frieze, with bossy Sculptures grav'n;
> The Roof was fretted Gold.
>
> (1.708-17)

That we are given a simile, "As in an Organ," is clear, although we have yet to learn what the demons are up to. When cell upon cell of the stuff together make up a "Fabric huge / like an Exhalation, with the sound / Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet" (1.711-2), the new simile, by erecting itself on the first, leaves us in doubt as to whether anything was meant to be compared with another, or meant to be identified with it. The demonic activity was something akin to making music, such that the end product was, in fact, musical. But the symphonic "Exhalation" turns out in a third simile to be structured "like a Temple." The architectural imagery of the third simile retrospectively reveals--by way of overlooking the fact that it is a simile-

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-that the foundry imagery with which we began concerned the manufacture of building blocks.

Milton's feends busy themselves alike the minions of Mammon in The Faerie Queene (2.7.35-6), though Spenser does not show us how his Cave was constructed, nor, conversely, how the "goodly frame of Temperance" manages later of its own accord "to rise" (2.12.1). But in Paradise Lost, that which appears to be music gives rise to that which appears to be architecture, which metamorphosis Coleridge has in mind, I think, when he says: "the 'Echoing Walks between' may be almost said to reverse the fable in tradition of the head of Memnon, in the Egyptian statue" (2:129). The colossal statue of myth yielded sweet harmonies when struck by sunlight, whereas the musical activities of the Book One demons yields something visible, like a "Temple." We hear strains of their symphony again, along with that of two other similes, in the imagery of the Figtree simile. Coleridge, if I am giving him a fair shake, would probably have wanted to add that Milton's choice of the word "echoing" in the description of the Figtree was far from arbitrary or fanciful, on account of the literal reverberation with earlier similes from Paradise Lost. It becomes less "messy" as the earlier similes are more familiar or better known to us. But the hard question still to ask is how the banyan tree, let alone Columbus, gets into it. Are these fanciful conceits?

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Let us wander a little astray of Coleridge, if only to ask what the reversal of myth he saw has to do with Milton's topical allusion. Spenser, too, makes topical allusions in The Faerie Queene but seldom in his epic similes. Like the Galileo simile, the contemporaneity of the events drawn upon in the Fig-tree simile seems to be without precedent in epic poetry. Tasso makes use of Columbus in a prophecy given Ubaldo and Charles in the Gerusalemme (15.32), though that fact alone hardly justifies saying that Milton uses epic simile for prophecy. Moreover, Ovid's Metamorphoses, not the best example of epic, revises the first simile of Aeneid, in which Neptune calms the waters as the speech of the sage orator soothes the troubled mob:

> As when in tumults rise the ignoble crowd,
> Mad are their motions, and their tongues are loud;
> And stones and brands in rattling bolleys fly,
> And all the rustic arms that fury can supply.
> If then some grave and pious man appear,
> They hush their noise and lend a listenting ear.
> He soothes with sober words their angry mood
> And quenches their innate desire of blood.
>
> (Dryden's Aeneis 1.213-20)

The Ovidian narrator is even more specific when the council of the gods applauds Jove's resolution to punish Lycaon:

> So, when bold treason sought, with impious hand,
> By *Caesar's* blood t'out-race the Roman name;

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Man-kind, and all the World's affrighted Frame
Astonisht at so great a ruine, shooke.
Nor thine, for Thee, less thought, *Augustus*,
tooke,
Than they for *Jove*.

(Sandys's Metamorphosis, 1.201-06)

Ovid seems to be making explicit the modernity implicit in Virgil, who sometimes alludes to Euripidean drama in his similes, just as Ovidian romantic episodes often amplify the events chronicled in Greek tragic drama.

Even Shakespeare's Henry V, his most Virgilian drama other than Antony and Cleopatra, employs a similar effect. Henry is made out to be, like Aeneas, the paradigm par excellence of heroic behavior, though the gulf between his past and his providential calling marks a lacuna as irresolvable as the abandonment of Dido by Aeneas. With a profound poetic insight, Shakespeare puts an "epic simile" into the mouth of the Chorus. In order to describe the return of the triumphant King, the Chorus addresses the audience:

But now behold,
In the quick forge and working-house of thought,
How London doth pour out her citizens!
The Mayor and all his brethren in best sort,
Like to the senators of th'antique Rome,
With the plebeians swarming at their heels,

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> Go forth and fetch their conqu'ring Caesar in;
> As by a lower but by loving likelihood,
> Were now the general of our gracious Empress,
> As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
> Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
> How many would the peaceful city quit,
> To welcome him! Much more, and more cause,
> Did they this Harry.

(Henry V V.Pr.22-35)

The extended comparison is tricky because it involves a doubling of tropes--Henry first like Caesar, then Henry like Essex. If Shakespeare had left off with the first parallel--London after the victory at Agincourt being like "antique Rome" after the civil wars--that comparison alone would have created an effect differing not much, perhaps, from the patina of legend that Spenserian similes impart to the tale told in The Faerie Queene. Shakespeare's addition, however, of the analogy between Henry and Essex is distinctly Miltonic, though if Milton had penned the lines, his ambition would have probably produced a Henry more victorious than Caesar and Essex combined. Shakespeare's Henry still defers to Caesar, and his Essex has proved handy for dating the play, just as the Galileo and the Vallombrosa simile make good fodder for ruminating about the life of Milton. But no one ever doubted that Paradise Lost was written after the discovery of the telescope or Milton's

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holiday abroad, and what seems unfathomable about the Figtree simile is the projection of the near past into the far past. Is Columbus merely an extra on the scene, like the gracious empress in the Shakespearean example, or do we have to regard them each in the way that Keats regarded Ceres in the Enna simile?

Milton doesn't simply say that the Figtree is like a banyan. His simile begins as a negative comparison. The figtree is not the proverbial one we've all heard about, but one he has read about in herbals and travelogues, and whose description recapitulates the Enna, Vallombrosa, and the Organ/Temple simile. On the one hand, we could say that Milton uses the banyan in order to elevate his own poem to the status of a myth; on the other hand, that myth branches out to enclose the discoveries of his own time. How does it manage this? Let us return to the "Indian Herdsman, shunning heat" and cutting holes from the canopy of leaves overhead. "Those leaves / They gathered" to sew together as coverings for themselves (9.1110-1). But who? The change in pronominal number suggests that "they" takes us out of the simile and back to Adam and Eve, though the modulation from the leaves of East Indian trees to "Amazonian targe" pulls us up short. Nor does the apostrophe ending the line, "O how unlike / To that first naked Glory," altogether settle the issue whether Milton is addressing his characters or talking about a second batch of Indians, this time in

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South America.

We pondered with Keats his sense that the Enna simile introduced perspective, while deferring the problem raised by the simile's frame as a negative comparison. The Figtree simile begins with a negation, and the problem presses upon us full hard with the direct interjection of perspective in the apostrophe. The narrator's voice laments that which is no more, but the lament is no more than a negative comparison. Nor is it clear who Milton is lamenting. Is it Adam and Eve who are now unlike what they had been earlier in Paradise Lost, when they were already unlike anyone else to begin with? Or is it the Amazonians who are being implicated in the myth of the fall? If "Those leaves / They gather'd" were intended solely for Adam and Eve, we would expect Milton, after his brief outburst, to take up the thread of the story. But the conclusion of the extended comparison suggests not an either/or, but an and/both, answer: it shifts focus a third time to the American Indian, "Such of late / Columbus found" (9.1115-6). In other words, the covering of our first parents is not only figured in the rude vestments of three kinds of Indians; but the predicament of natives indigenous to unsettled continents is being made out to be an extension of Milton's story. Their predicament, though they might not know it, is that of Adam and Eve after the fall as depicted by Milton. Is this the reversal of myth that Coleridge had in mind? Is Columbus

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just another version of Ceres, both of them lesser myths derivative of the one true myth, Paradise Lost? Or by reversing the myth of Memnon, does Milton only end up giving us the myth of Amphion?

Milton's similes are especially imaginative for Coleridge, but he never satisfactorily explains in what a normative use of similes would consist. His version of allegory, however, bears an uncanny resemblance to thinking about epic similes as being primarily didactic and illustrative in nature. We turn to Coleridge's pronouncements on the fancy and the imagination, but with an eye towards getting at the relationship between simile and allegory. The fancy, that faculty of the mind of man of which allegory is the product, Coleridge distinguishes from the imagination with its symbols. In the Biographia, the fancy "has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will" (1:305). The posthumously published Table Talk records Coleridge as expanding on the explanation of the fancy in the Biographia, and as drawing on material from his lectures on Shakespeare and Milton:

> The Fancy brings together images which have no connection natural or moral, but are yoked together by the poet by means of some accidental

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> coincidence. . . . The imagination modifies images, and gives unity to variety; it sees all things in one. . . . There is the epic imagination, the perfection of which is in Milton; and the dramatic, of which Shakespeare is the absolute master. (1:489-90)

The imagination synthesizes opposites, whereas the fancy syncretizes or aggregates that which the memory has unleashed by an act of the will.

In the 1818 lectures on literature, Coleridge explains how the formal properties of imaginative works differ from those of the fancy. To Voltaire's denigration of Shakespeare, Coleridge answers in the eighth of the "Lectures on Belle Lettres" delivered between 1812-3, that the form of the Shakespearian drama, being imaginative, is organic:

> The form is mechanic, when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material--as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened--The organic form, on the other hand, is innate, it shapes as it developes itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one & the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such as the life is, such is the form. (1:495)

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In an 1819 lecture on Don Quixote, Coleridge ponders how figuration operates in symbolic or imaginative works as opposed to allegorical ones:

> [T]he Symbolical . . . cannot, perhaps, be better defined, in distinction from the Allegorical, than that it is always itself a *part* of that of the whole of which it is the representative--Here comes a *Sail*--that is, a Ship, is a symbolical expression--Behold our lion, when we speak of some gallant soldier, is allegorical--of most importance to our present subject, that the latter cannot be other than spoken consciously/ while in the former it is very possible that *the general truth* represented may be working unconsciously in the Poet's mind during the construction of the symbol. (2:417-18).

Allegory had previously been defined simply, as in Johnson's Dictionary, to be extended metaphor; but since Coleridge here links synecdoche to symbol, we have to assume he intends for allegory a different sort of metaphor. But in the example that substituted the lion for the soldier--an example as old as Aristotle--what difference does Coleridge entertain between metaphor and simile?

Coleridge continually modified his definition of allegory throughout his career as a critic, but usually in contrast to either the imagination or the symbol. The

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simplest definition follows in the notes for the talk delivered to the London Philosophical Society, February 3, 1818:

> We may safely define allegoric writing as the employment of one set of agents and images with actions and accompaniments correspondent, so as to convey, while in disguise, either moral qualities or conceptions of the mind that are not in themselves objects of the sense, or other images, agents actions, fortunes, and circumstances, so that the difference is everywhere presented to the eye or imagination while the likeness is suggested to the mind; and this connectedly so that the parts combine to form a consistent whole. Whatever composition answering to this definition is not a fable, is entitled an allegory. . . .
>
> (Raysor 30)

Allegorical stories employ imagery to convey conceptions, between which the difference is presented to the eye, but not to the mind. Coleridge is lucid in stressing the arbitrary, rather than necessary, combination made by the fancy when the memory is unshackled from the bondage of space and time.

But uncertainties lurk here, however, worth some consideration. A cursory reading of the passage would suggest that Coleridge thinks the author of an allegory

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begins with an abstract, general idea that his fancy cloaks in concrete, particular language. But Coleridge doesn't actually state that the abstract comes before the concrete, or that the general and the particular are strictly separable. Moreover, he says that the "agents and images with actions and accompaniments" sometimes convey "conceptions" but can, at other times, convey "other images, agents, actions." The passage almost seems to be giving imagery a priority over concepts, as if an image could exist without a concept, but other writings of Coleridge will upset this possibility.

Of particular importance to my project is Coleridge's definition of allegory in relation to metaphor, taken from the same lecture notes:

> Substitute a simile for the thing it resembles, instead of annexing it, and it becomes a metaphor: thus if in speaking of the Duke of Wellington's campaign in Portugal against Massena we should say, 'At length he left his mountain strongholds and fell on the rear of the retreating army, as a cloud from the hill-tops,' it is a simile; if more briefly we say, 'At length the cloud descended from its hill and discharged itself in thunder and lightning on the plain,' it becomes a metaphor, and a metaphor is a fragment of an allegory.
>
> (Raysor 28)

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Detach ("substitute") the comparison added ("annexed") to the statement concerning Wellington, Coleridge seems to be saying, and you have the beginnings of a fable. But would we know that the statement, "the cloud descended from its hill and discharged itself" was allegorical all by itself, without the first statement likening the Duke to the cloud? Is Coleridge inadvertently defining metaphor, and hence allegory, to be a simile separated from its statement? Or does he intend that we cannot know metaphors independently of knowing similes?

Coleridge bumps into a related problem when he confesses how hard it is for him to tell allegories apart from fables. He thinks it safest to include the latter as a "shorter and simpler" subset of the former, thereby skirting the issue of the possibility of a non-allegorical fable. Allegory is the larger category, because "in a fable no allegoric agent or image should be used which has not had some one paramount quality universally attributed to it *beforehand*, while in an allegory the resemblance may have been presented for *the first time* by the writer" (Raysor 29, my emphasis). Wellington's military action being likened to a cloud's thunderbolt was hardly unique, though Coleridge would have pointed out, I think, that the hypothetical example described only a simple fable. As the notes were in preparation for a lecture on Chaucer, Spenser, and Italian poetry, it makes sense that Coleridge would want to reserve

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a space for some kind of originality in The Faerie Queene, which he goes on to treat as a complex allegory, rather than a simple fable.

What poems are defined by Coleridge to be allegorical? He makes a bare-bones list of allegorical works: "picture allegories, or real or supposed pictures," the Tablet of Cebes, the inset tale of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius, the Psychomachia (Raysor 30). (As an aside, I would have liked to ask him whether a "supposed picture," by which I guess him to mean an ecphrasis, extends to epic similes, arguably make-believe pictures as well.) The pickings are slim among the ancients, because "narrative or epic allegories [are] scarce," Coleridge continues, "the multiplicity of their gods and goddesses precluding it--unless we choose rather to say that all the machinery of their poets is allegorical." So much for Homer and Virgil. Though Coleridge is hesitant to speculate about the how seriously the pagan deities were intended, the use of the gods precludes their poems from being allegorical. But they were exactly what the allegorical interpreters sought to explicate.

The "pure" allegory of fable comprises only a very narrow band of literary works for Coleridge. The Iliad and the Aeneid put on an allegorical face, he seems to be saying, only when they use agents such as Discord; though "of a people who raised altars to fever, to sport, to fright, etc., it is impossible to determine how far they

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meant a personal power or a personification of power" (Raysor 30). Whether or not Fame and Discord, for example, were truly allegorical, was muddied by the non-allegorical framework of the epic. A similar effect, he says, was raised by the introduction of saints in Roman Catholicism and by Milton's use of the demonic council in Paradise Lost. Beelzebub, Coleridge seems to say at first, is uncertainly like the more clearly allegorical episode of Sin and Death in the same book. The demon has much the same credibility as a St. Francis, or as the Discord, Fame, and Victory in Homer and Virgil, though these latter personifications of power could have been put to serve strictly allegorical ends, had they been divorced from their context in the epic narrative.

With Spenser, whom we subsequent to the Romantics have elected as the exponent of "pure" allegory, Coleridge is remarkably lenient. "The dullest and most defective parts of Spenser," he says, "are those in which we are compelled to think of his agents as allegories--and how far the Sin and Death of Milton are exceptions to this censure, is a delicate problem which I shall attempt to solve in another lecture" (Raysor 31). In the previous century, critics were at war over the episode of Sin and Death; some arguing its sublimity; others, its theological impropriety. Coleridge had earlier praised the vagueness of Milton's description of them, but by the time of the lectures for the Philosophical

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Society, the episode seems to have become a bit of a problem for him. Sin and Death are the most recognizably allegorical characters in Paradise Lost, yet are also somehow different from Spenserian agents. This seems true, but is the difference "delicate," or, in fact, untouchable? Coleridge demurs, as Hazlitt, from the question of Spenser's allegory, but his phrasing is thorny: when are we "compelled" to think of the poem's agents as allegorical, and when not? Does Coleridge mean that a character named "Despair" gives us less freedom in our response than one named "Britomart"? "If the allegoric personage be strongly individualized," he answers, "so as to interest us, we cease to think of it as allegory; and if it does not interest us, it had better be away" (Raysor 33). But what "individualizes" character? Is Guyon's faint less individualized, on account of the apparent lack of volition, than his "decision" to destroy the Bower of Bliss?

As part of his critique of Wordsworth's program for a new poetic diction, Coleridge rallies together two chronographias from The Faerie Queene (1.2.1; 1.5.2) in order to praise the inherently poetic nature of the language. Wordsworth, in the 1802 "Appendix" to the Lyrical Ballads, had railed against the degeneration of "the genuine language of poetry" into eighteenth-century "phraseology":

> Abuses of this kind were imported from one nation

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> to another, and with the progress of refinement this diction became daily more and more corrupt, thrusting out of sight the plain humanities of nature by a motley masquerade of tricks, quaintnesses, hieroglyphics, and enigmas. (2:406)

Coleridge, on the other hand, more sensibly observes in the Biographia:

> [W]hen the torch of ancient learning was rekindled, so cheering were its beams, that our eldest poets, cut off by Christianity from all accredited machinery, and deprived of all acknowledged guardians and symbols of the great objects of nature, were naturally induced to adopt, as a poetic language, those fabulous personages, those forms of the supernatural in nature, which had given them such dear delight in the poems of their great masters. (2:75-76)

In order to deflate Wordsworth's exaltation of natural language, Coleridge specifically adduces Spenser's use of Phoebus and Chaunteclere to usher in the dawn. Natural diction had always been, by necessity, artificial.

Spenser's style is neither the "language of ordinary life" nor a "blot" on the poem. In the lecture notes, Coleridge clarifies what he means by poetic in this instance, when, over the same two examples, he exclaims, "Spenser displays great skill in harmonizing his

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descriptions of external nature and actual incidents with allegorical character and epic activity of the poem" (Raysor 35). When Arthur arrives to rescue Redcrosse from Orgoglio, Coleridge praises the "vividness" of the two-stanza description of his helmet, the crest of which the second stanza likens to the "almond tree" (1.7.32). Coleridge, like the other Romantics, loses sight of the fact that a simile is a borrowing of someone else's comparison. He makes no distinction between description and simile and writes of the stanzas that they "are not, in the true sense of the word, picturesque; but are composed of a wondrous series of images, as in our dreams" (Raysor 35). Then comes his most famous assessment of Spenser's "marvelous independence and true imaginative absence of all particular space and time in the Faery Queene. It is in the domains neither of history or geography . . . it is truly in land of Faery, that is, of mental space" (Raysor 36). Spenser's imaginative absence seems quite important, if only to remind us what Coleridge thought of the primary imagination, as that faculty which made possible our experience of "particular time and space."

Coleridge singles out one of the pilot similes (2.7.1) recurring through the poem as an instance of an image in which Spenser represents himself, "his symbolizing purpose being his mariner's compass" (Raysor 36). Of course, Ariosto had represented the poet's activity in the same

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fashion; and in addition to similar nautical imagery in Quintilian, Statius, and Dante, which was singled out by Curtius as a topos (130), the same "boat of the mind" can be found at the outset of Claudian's De raptu proserpinae, and in the last books of Alain's Anticlaudianus and Boccaccio's Genealogia. Is Spenser figuring himself in the trope, or is he simply representing his own activity in the guise of his forebears? The sudden intrusion, moreover, of the word "symbol" in Coleridge's refrain is jarring note, since he has been laboring to play the imagination off allegory in his theory.

"The great and prevailing character of Spenser's mind," Coleridge adds, "is fancy under the conditions of imagination, as an ever present but not always active power. He has an imaginative fancy, but he has not imagination, in kind or degree, as Shakspeare and Milton have" (Raysor 38). The distinction between the fancy and the imagination was already heady enough without the additional headache given by the "imaginative fancy." Coleridge's theories appear to break down under the load of The Faerie Queene, and one could wish Coleridge had been less fond of The Faerie Queene, if only for the sake of his theory, and that he had relegated the poem to the cold mechanisms of pure allegory. If we are to make sense of Coleridge's thoughts on Spenser, however, we need regard The Faerie Queene not just as a simple fable, nor even a more complex allegory, but as some

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kind of strange hybrid into which the imagination enters.

Yet the imagination enters into Spenser's work through the epic similes, which Coleridge regards as belonging to descriptions of nature inevitably imaginative. Only Warton before him had thought Spenser's similes more than a borrowing from others, the very descriptiveness of which could bespeak the persona of author. The mariner simile takes on an imaginative hue for Coleridge insofar as it projects the author into the poem in much the way that Romantics regarded the Miltonic simile to have done. If Coleridge, following Warton, is dealing with similes in a new way, as did the other Romantic critics we have looked at, is that new way a result of reading The Faerie Queene through the lens of Paradise Lost? And is Coleridge, in particular, giving Spenser's epic similes a treatment that is on par with, or exempt from, the way he deals with simile and metaphor and their relationship to allegory?

Let us move to his more general reflections on the nature of simile and allegory by examining a seminal passage in one of the lay sermons making up the 1816 Statesman's Manual:

> Now an Allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from the objects of the senses; the principal being more worthless even than its phantom proxy, both alike unsubstantial,

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> and former shapeless to boot. On the other hand, a Symbol . . . is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative. (30)

The fancy stands in relationship to allegory the imagination does to the symbolic work of art. The symbol mediates between the literal and figurative levels of poetry, whereas the devices of allegory are wholly separable from their meanings. So far, so good. But in the Notebook, allegory was defined to be an abstraction translated into the concrete imagery, or an image translated into another image; here Coleridge is scrupulous to specify that the concrete image is already always an abstraction "from the objects of the senses."

His obscurity reaches a breaking point in the lines which follow, when Coleridge uses a simile to describe allegory:

> The other [abstract notions and picture-language] are but empty echoes which the fancy arbitrarily associates with apparitions of matter, less

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> beautiful but not less shadowy than the sloping orchard or hill-side pasture-field seen in the transparent lake below. Alas! for the flocks that are to be led forth to such pastures! (30-31)

From the discussion of it in a purely literary context, allegory has evolved to be itself quite other than what it was at first. First, it seemed to be an abstraction translated into an image, which now, too, is an abstraction from the objects of the senses. The abstraction with which the allegorist began, when coupled with the secondary abstraction or "picture-language," are together both "empty echoes which the fancy arbitrarily associates with apparitions of matter." Is Coleridge lapsing into imaginative language himself, or did he think he was using a comparison to illustrate a point?

Of course, using a simile to describe allegory is not exactly the same as describing simile as, or to be, an allegory, though this claim is eventually made by him. The comparison likening allegory to a reflection is framed negatively like so many Miltonic comparisons. Just as the nuptial bower of Adam and Eve was the shadiest of all, so Coleridge makes allegory out to be darker than the hills mirrored in the lake. The hills, however, are more--rather than less--beautiful than either their reflection or their literary analogue. The triple analogy has the feel of Plato's cave: the beauty of the sloping orchard is

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diminished one step in the reflection, and removed a step further from its source when embodied in allegory. But what are the flocks, and who is the shepherd? At this point, the Christian in Coleridge takes over from the Platonist, and the Sun becomes the Son. Coleridge's description of allegory as a reflected pasture makes it clear that allegory can provide no spiritual nourishment, but we have to wonder whether it is allegorical interpretation or composition that Coleridge is talking about.

The context of the discussion in the Manual is theological. Coleridge is contrasting the difference between sacred and secular history in order to show that the former is, as the subtitle of the sermon directs us to understand, "The Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight." The "histories and political economy of the present and preceding century" he condemns as the products of a "mechanic philosophy" (28). Coleridge is distinctly shifting gears in the Manual from literary discussions of allegory in order to attack new ways of thinking about the world. But new ways of thinking about the world are argued by him to be similar to old, fallacious ways of reading scripture. Symbols in scripture, Coleridge points out,

> are the living *educts* of the Imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses

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> by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the *conductors*. (29)

In this light, Coleridge's definition of allegory starts to sound as if he were talking about allegorical interpretations. In ignorance of symbolic figuration are those who have misread scripture and who have presumed to have had access to abstract secrets underlying the Bible, without regarding how far they departed from the literal level. The truth of scripture, Coleridge asserts, cannot contradict its letter, for it is the nature of symbols to mediate between the literal and metaphorical.

In the passage quoted from the Manual, the symbol mediates between the literal and figurative in two distinct ways. The symbol behaves spatially in the manner that a synecdoche relates the part to the whole and the species to the genus. But in his emphasis on the temporal aspect of the symbol, Coleridge evokes metonymy, which, by discovering the link between cause and effect, lets the past and the future be seen as contained in any given moment. Synecdoche and metonymy together describe the way that typological figures cut across the gap between the Old and New Testaments; and typological figuration provides Coleridge with the best model for poetic symbols. But if metonymy and synecdoche approximate the rhetorical effect of the symbol

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in scripture and literature, what rhetorical device properly expresses allegory? The answer given in Coleridge's discussion of allegory as a literary composition was metaphor, though he seemed then to be thinking of metaphor as a truncated simile, a comparison without the statement. What Coleridge has to say about simile next, when the context of the discussion explicitly shifts tenor from allegory as composition to allegory as interpretation, hits the nail on the head.

The inquiry after biblical figuration in the Manual forms the basis, in the Aids to Reflection published in 1825, for a rebuttal of allegorical interpretations of the Bible:

> First then of the *purport*, viz. what the Gospel does *not*, and what it *does* profess to be. The Gospel is not a system of Theology, nor a Syntagma of theoretical propositions and conclusions of speculative knowledge, ethical or metaphysical. But it is a history, a series of facts and events related or announced. These do indeed involve, or rather, I should say they at the same time *are*, most important doctrinal Truths; but still *Facts* and Declarations of *Facts*. (205)

The reason that scripture has been misread, he adds after giving an example, is the result of "a confusion of metaphor with analogy, and of figurative with literal; and has been

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and continues to be a fruitful source of superstition or enthusiasm in Believers, and of objections and prejudices to Infidels and Sceptics" (206).

Coleridge had cited the verse, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; that which is born of the spirit, is spirit" (John 3:6), as a truth that is not metaphorical, but analogical. It is true by analogy because "the latter half of the verse contains the fact *asserted*; the former half the *analogous* fact, by which it is rendered intelligible" (205). As a curb upon one who delves too deeply into the mysteries of religion, Coleridge would ask, "whether he regards the divine justice, for instance, as a metaphorical term, a mere figure of speech? If he disclaims this, then I answer, neither do I regard the words *born again*, or *spiritual life*, as figures or metaphors" (206).

Something strange is going on. What happened to the synecdochic and metonymic symbol? They make a farewell performance, as does allegory, in order to give center stage to "Analogies," which Coleridge answers,

> are the material, or (to speak chemically) the *base*, of Symbols and symbolical expressions; the nature of which is always *tau*tegorial (i.e. expressing the *same* subject but with a *difference*) in contra-distinction from metaphors and similitudes, that are always *al*legorical (i.e., expressing a *different* subject but with a

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resemblance). . . . (206)

Simile is now indiscriminately lumped together with metaphor, and both are explicitly tied to allegorical expression, which still presents a difference to the eye, but likeness to the mind. A symbol, on the other hand, emphasizes difference to the mind, but likeness to the eye. Earlier we granted Coleridge that synecdoche and metonymy breathe more closely down the neck of what they stand for than do similes. However, Coleridge now turns the tables on us by making biblical "analogies" the material on which are built symbolic expressions. How symbolic expressions such as synecdoche and metonymy fall out of analogy, Coleridge does not elucidate. But, more importantly, how is Coleridge supposing an analogy to differ from a simile?

In the discussion of literature, the allegorical metaphor was inextricably bound up with simile. Coleridge had formulated a hypothetical example stating a likeness between Wellington's campaign and some sort of cloud activity. We observed that the latter half of the sentence, the simile, when substituted for the whole, became a metaphor for Coleridge; and, when elaborated in its own right, an allegorical fable. But is Coleridge himself being consistent when he uses similes to get at the vehicle for allegory in literature, but analogies as the medium for truth in the Bible? In the citation from John, Coleridge claimed the Evangelist expressed truth analogically, rather

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than figuratively. John's words are not technically a simile, though I doubt Coleridge is depending on a mere technicality to make his mountain out of a mole-hill. The spirit is to the things born of it, (as) the flesh is to things born of it: we can supply the as or omit it, while still preserving the appearance of an analogy. In sum, I would have to argue that the form of John's expression is pretty much the same shape as the hypothetical example likening Wellington to a cloud.

Coleridge would have wanted to tap me on the shoulder to say that scriptural analogy is not the same as an epic simile in poetry. The words of John are not from Homer but the Gospel. Nor is Coleridge grinding the same old ax about the imagination and the fancy in literature; the context for discussing analogy has evolved to a cure for overly figurative interpretations of scripture. He distinguishes analogy from metaphor thus: "*Analogies* are used in aid of *Conviction*: Metaphors, as a means of *Illustration*. The language is analogous wherever a thing, power, or principle in a higher dignity is expressed by the same thing, power, or principle in a lower but more known form" (205). When he describes analogy as a kind of proof, he sounds superficially like Hobbes, but of whom does he remind us when he goes on to define metaphor? "The purpose of metaphor," he says, "is to illustrate a something less known by a partial identification of it with some other thing

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better understood, or at least more familiar" (318-19). Le Bossu had explained simile as the illustration of the less-well by the better-well known, into which definition Coleridge absorbs metaphor, in contrast to analogy. But let us admit Coleridge's distinction: The Evangelist was not suggesting a "partial identification" between spirit and flesh, but a parallel between spiritual and carnal things. Allegorical interpretation stems from mistaking analogy for metaphor, though the analogy of scripture suddenly sounds like simile.

What is interesting is that analogy constitutes an aid to "conviction" for Coleridge, unlike the mere "illustration" of metaphor. The two definitions in the Aids to Reflection are almost unendurably close. In analogy, "a higher dignity is expressed . . . in a lower but more known form." In metaphor, the "less known" is illustrated by the "better understood," but with a confusion between the two terms related. Symptomatic of Coleridge's discussion of analogy is, ironically enough, the problem of digression besetting discussions of epic simile. We all too easily lose sight of the fact that an analogy in literature or an epic simile is not a simple ratio between two things, so much as a double or triple ratio. One thing is not being compared to one other thing; instead, many somethings are being compared to many other somethings. Yet to have to express myself so already introduces error in the

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implication that analogies and epic similes, rather than concerning actions and qualities, are primarily about "things" or nouns. Hence, I think, the vagueness with which Coleridge produces the language of analogy: a "thing, power, or principle" compared to other things, powers, and principles. A proportion needs to contain at least four terms to keep it going, and the analogy he cites from John fills a quorum by a bare minimum--things born of the flesh, flesh, things born of the spirit, spirit. It is mistaken, Coleridge asserts, to seek a one-to-one correspondence across the two halves of the proportion, or analogy, by treating it as metaphor, which involves a partial identification.

Coleridge's investigations into literature and sacred text seem on the surface to demonstrate a certain parallelism: turning a poetic simile into a metaphor yields allegory as composition; turning a scriptural analogy into metaphor yields allegory as interpretation. But is it so clear? More strictly speaking, Coleridge had said that we can get at truth of scripture by rejecting a reading that collapses analogy into metaphor. In literature, on the other hand, he said that allegory is expressed by metaphor, which simile expands. . . . Expands to what? Truth? An aid to conviction? A *poetic simile* I was constrained to say three sentences ago, though I am not so sure that Coleridge would have agreed. What kind of statement is, "At length he

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left his mountain strongholds and fell on the rear of the retreating army, as a cloud from the hill-tops." The economy of metaphor allows for a single word reduction of what, by virtue of its expansiveness, is more complicated and difficult to get a handle on. It is easy to make the transition from comparing Wellington to a cloud, to calling him "cloud-like," or "cloudy Wellington." But the "poetic simile"-- Wellington's forces attacked the rearguard in the manner that a cloud came down from the hill and discharged thunder--is a proportion or analogy in which it is much harder to find nouns, adjectives, and verbs on one side to mistake for those on the other side of the parallel. With a little gussying up of the cloud imagery, plus some metrical polish, the line might be neatly fitted into some kind of epic, perhaps not a very good one, but you get my drift.

Coleridge can no longer tap us on the shoulder and we are free to entertain the possibility that there is no difference between poetic simile and scriptural analogy. The difficulty with his saying that allegory was the substitution of the simile for the full statement, I had initially proposed, was that we could not recognize extended descriptions of the weather alone for being either metaphorical or allegorical, without having had recourse to the comparison likening Wellington to it. In the case of a reading of scripture, we are plagued by a like problem, but from the opposite angle. Coleridge resists making an

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identification between things, powers, and principles in the analogy of John. His knowledge of the right reading is inseparable from his rejection of the wrong one; in other words, to get at the truth, he has to extirpate metaphor. The movement in his train of thought is from metaphor to simile. But in the discussion of allegory as a literary genre, he had to suppress simile in order to get to metaphor. In other words, in the earlier context, we needed to be able to recognize simile before we could know metaphor. In sum, Coleridge's distinction between analogy and metaphor in the reading of scripture does not parallel, but is an eerie inversion of what Coleridge had to say about simile and metaphor in literature.

If I have not exhausted Coleridge on the subject, I have wearied the reader with his theories, which seem to me nowhere more frail and vulnerable than when he examines the Spenserian simile. The "imaginative fancy" strikes me as grotesque concept for it is overly complex. And without changing the tenor of the discussion to the visual arts as the Victorians did, I would like to pursue the connection Coleridge uncovers between simile and allegory, but without Coleridge. To take his example for one last time, my sense is that likening Wellington to a cloud is already an allegorical use of language, especially if others have already used it. I pledge not to refer to Wellington again, who is more tired by now than any of us, though I should

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mention that the point of view from which he appears to be an allegorical figure is poststructuralist. Indeed, the theories of Coleridge enjoyed a renaissance with De Man, who sought to dismantle symbolism in favor of allegory. But without having to drink the history of literary criticism to its bitter lees, can we single-handedly reason out a way of explaining how a conventional simile is itself allegorical?

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Part Three--Simile and Allegory

Interrupting the flux and flow of epic poetry, epic similes interject a little world that is closed off from the persons, places, and actions of the larger story. What sort of world it is that they interject is a question to which the similes of Spenser and Milton provide different answers; and the degree to which their similes are detachable from their narratives likewise differs. The way we express these larger differences, however, depends on the assumptions we bring to bear on studying epic similes in a literary context. And every literary study of simile, whether it addresses those of Spenser or Milton, or those of Homer or Virgil, makes some kind of assumption concerning function. My own hypothesis is that the role of description in narrative poetry is inherently allegorical because it creates the illusion of meaning. In exploring the way in which it makes sense to say that description is allegorical, I shall address a labyrinth (or a temple, depending on the reader's point of view) of theoretical concerns, but by first to a familiar example:

> The knight of the *Redcrosse* when him he spide,
> Spurring so hote with rage dispiteous,
> Gan fairely couch his speare, and towards ride:
> Soone meete they both, both fell and furious,

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That daunted with their forces hideous,
Their steeds do stagger, and amazed stand,
And eke themselues too rudely rigorous,
Astonied with the stroke of their owne hand,
Do backe rebut, and each to other yeeldeth land.

As when two rams stird with ambitious pride,
Fight for the rule of the rich fleeced flocke,
Their horned fronts so fierce on either side
Do meete, that with the terrour of the shocke
Astonied both, stand sencelesse as a blocke,
Forgetfull of the hanging victory:
So stood these twaine, vnmoued as a rocke,
Both staring fierce, and holding idely
The broken reliques of their former cruelty.

The *Sarazin* sore daunted with the buffe
Snatcheth his sword, and fiercely to him flies;
Who well it wards, and quyteth cuff with cuff:
Each others equall puissaunce enuies,
And through their iron sides with cruell spies
Does seeke to perce: repining courage yields

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No foote to foe. The flashing fier flies
As from a forge out of their burning shields,

And streames of purple bloud new dies the verdant fields.

(1.2.15-17)

Since epic similes tend to be instantly recognizable to the reader, it would seem logical to assume that they were once just as present to the mind of the author who penned them. That is, in order to employ them, the writer must have had some end in view; which, in turn, the reader expresses in other words for his convenience. But what if function is patently the wrong word to use? Though the author may not have been oblivious of having set an extended comparison to paper, maybe he did not intend some ulterior purpose in advance of its execution. Perhaps the comparison just occurred to him on the spur of the moment, in the same way that it is possible for someone to have a sudden vision. If that were the case, it would seem that we could say that much less about epic similes. The ascription of function would be the overstatement of an essentially ineffable experience. And however we might try to qualify the visionary, any verbal description of the ineffable would necessarily entail a certain amount of error.

Let us thus entertain two possibilities: that, on the one hand, similes represent something seen; and that, on the

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other, similes serve a rhetorical function. I had suggested in the introduction that the simultaneously visionary and verbal aspect of similes is at the heart of a problem with allegory. Does allegory allow us to see something? Or is it a way of telling us something else? I quoted an epic simile I had looked at earlier, while including two stanzas of the surrounding narrative background, which, in turn, contain a secondary comparison towards the end, "As from a forge out of their burning shields," that we shall not give much attention to at the moment. For while it is just as much a comparison as the ram simile, it is not an epic simile, for reasons we shall discuss in the subsequent section. For the present, let us focus on the rams and see if we can explain how the simile is allegorical in a way that Spenser would have understood. Do they allow us to see something? Or does their conflict tell us something about the narrative?

To get at this problem, let us pursue the rhetorical function of similes first in connection with allegory, since that path is better trodden by literary critics. What sort of thing could we say about the example quoted from Spenser if we assumed that it had a rhetorical end, that it served to tell us something about the narrative? No one more eloquently articulates a rhetorical account for our example than Mark Rose, who says:

> [P]ride . . . has sexual as well as heroic and

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> moral overtones; and so does 'horned,' an appropriate word since Redcross believes his lady has betrayed him. What the simile's sexual allusions suggest is hardly a struggle between good and evil but rather a contest for domination between two aroused animals. Moreover, the simile emphasizes both contenders' obliviousness . . . implying that Redcross no less than the unenlightened Saracen is ignorant both of his own motives and of the real issues in contention (29-30)

Clearly, Rose does not mean that the epic simile, in telling us something about the narrative, is giving us more information. What the simile "emphasizes" by virtue of its "implications" is of a different order than had Spenser added yet another detail about Sansfoy's armor, or had he supplied some bushes to the field on which the combatants tilted, or had he fleshed out his description of a spear thrust. Spenser's simile is telling us, says Rose, that the battle between Redcrosse and Sansfoy is governed by sexual rivalry. How does the simile accomplish this?

In order to tell us something, the simile makes us cross a threshold, as if Spenser had suddenly turned away from his more immediate concern with telling a story in order to address us directly. We might say that he or any other story teller, if we were generalizing from one example to a rule, uses epic similes to draw on something presumably

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more familiar to his readers or auditors. Thus epic similes comment on the narrative by interjecting something else that is at the same time distinguishable and separate from it. In the manner that an ornament hangs off a supporting framework, Spenser's epic simile comments on the structure that it embellishes. In this light the function of the epic simile, I hasten to point out, begins to share a good deal in common with allegory, especially if we are thinking of allegory as a way of saying one thing and meaning another. Epic similes would be allegorical in this light, because the narrator chooses a roundabout way of executing his purposes. Spenser renders clear some aspect or quality that resides in his story by interjecting a little world, a picture in words.

What's wrong with this picture? We say that the relationship between the narrative and the simile is allegorical, that is, one thing is signified and another thing is meant. But is the case that one of the two, the simile or the narrative, is the thing signified, and one, the thing meant? It feels clumsy to have to answer either that the simile is the "meaning" of narrative, or that the narrative is the "meaning" of simile, but how do we break through this impasse? We were operating on the assumption that the simile tells something indirectly about the narrative, that it is a form of commentary; but what did we mean by indirection in the first place? To explore the

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question of indirect commentary, let us look, by contrast, at an example of direct commentary. And let us drop the cumbersome expressions thing signified and thing meant by substituting a story. Reading a story, and about the way it was read by others, is more pleasant than playing with empty counters such as signifiers and signifieds. It might be contended that the relationship existing between a story and its meaning depends on who is reading it; but one kind of story and its interpretation, the beast fable of Aesop and its moralization, were regarded for centuries to be paradigmatic of the way that allegory functioned.

Direct commentary, or the explication of a text, is illustrated by the moral tags accompanying the collections of Aesopian fables. It is as unclear how many of the fables were the invention of Aesop, as it is unclear how many of the moralizations were the additions of subsequent collectors of the tales. But no matter who was responsible for either, the moralizations are expressed in a language quite distinct from that of the tale. Let us look at one tale and its tag in order to see how the moral purport epitomizes the sense of the story by translating it into conceptual language:

A Crow and a Muscle

> There was one of your *Royston-Crows*, that lay battering upon a *Muscle*, and could not for his Blood break the Shell to come at the Fish. A

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> *Carrion-Crow*, in this *interim*, comes up, and tells him, that what he could not do by Force, he might do by Stratagem. Take this *Muscle* up in the Air, says the *Crow, as high as you can carry it, and then let him fall upon that Rock there; his own Weight, you shall see, shall break him. The* Roystoner took his Advice, and it succeeded accordingly; but while the one was upon Wing; the other stood lurching upon the Ground, and flew away with the Fish.
>
> The Moral
>
> Charity begins at home, *they say; and most People are kind to their Neighbours for their own sakes.*
>
> (L'Estrange 64)

The fable concerns the actions of beasts which happen to have human characteristics. The tag, on the other hand, is worded in human terms and analyzes human nature with brief, proverbial expressions.

The moralizations appended to the tales of Aesop, once we isolate them, seldom point to specific stories. For example, the tags of other tales give us no clue as to their narrative source: "Nothing but the Conscience of a virtuous Life can make Death easy to us" (74); "Temperance keeps the whole Man in order, and in a good Disposition, either for Thought or Action, but the indulging of the Appetite brings a Clog both upon the Body and Mind" (128); "Of two Things

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equally Good, that's the Best that lasts longest" (256). The moral epitome purportedly strips away the extraneous shell of the story to leave behind a kernel of perceptual wisdom. In this respect the moral epitome differs from epic similes, which, if they are indirect commentary, employ a language not unlike that of the narrative in which they are inset. The wording of direct commentary is conceptual, while an epic simile presents the rudiments of another story, as if one fable were being "explicated" by providing a second.

The beast fables and their moralizations supply the earliest instance of story-telling that fits the rhetorical definition of allegory. The fable and tag complement one another so that whoever was responsible for the interpretation must have thought he was putting back into words the didactic lesson the story expressed obliquely. Coleridge thought the allegorical fable was the "translation of abstract-notions into a picture-language," which process was reversed by unearthing its conceptual content. And while the "abstract notions" of the moralizations differ from the "picture language" employed by epic similes, the two share much in common in other respects. Moral tag and epic simile often feel as though they were appended to the fable and narrative with more than a hint of the arbitrary, if not the downright digressive, about them. That is, the relationship of the tale to the tag strikes with greater

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conviction in some instances than in others. The most effective stories achieve the status of metaphor so that, for example, the expression sour grapes no longer requires explication. But in other instances, one has the impression that a wholly different interpretation might as easily have been extracted, just as a wholly different extended comparison might have served to illustrate the narrative quality.

Thus we are forced to be a little more circumspect about how we are using the word allegory. We began by supposing that the simile is trying to tell us something obliquely about the narrative, and we specified that "something" to take the form of indirect commentary. We thought the relationship between the narrative and the epic simile was allegorical because it paralleled the analogical relationship between a fable and its interpretation. But unlike the moralization, we said, the simile is not couched in the language of explication but turns from the imagery of one story to that of another. Moreover, we observed, the very obliquity of its approach gets in the way of finding any exact correspondence between the two sets of imagery paralleling one another. That is, the digressiveness of similes often suggests that another sort of comparison might have done the job equally well. If Spenser had wanted to tell us that the motives governing his hero and adversary were sexual, he might have highlighted this quality by other

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means. Instead of battling rams, he could have used a cock fight; or two bulls would have worked well if the imputation of cuckoldry was important; and a battle between a unicorn and a bull would really put us on the horns of the dilemma. Simile, like allegory, is perennially victim to over-reading but maybe only because simile and allegory are over-readings to begin with.

We refined our starting point when we said that similes tell us something about the narrative as an indirect commentary that uses images instead of concepts. Against similes, we contrasted the directness with which the moral tag purportedly translates the veiled sense of Aesop's fable into a more abstract formulation. I tried to render obvious the difference between the kind of language used in the fable and that in the moralization. The wording, for example, of the proverb, "Of two Things equally Good, that's the Best that lasts longest," is much vaguer than the story from which it is derived. Indeed, it's tempting to generalize that, behind every proverbial expression or abstract formulation, lies a beast fable or a prosopopeia. But here I fear I must admit the difference between the language of the story and the proverb is less an iron-clad distinction than it is a sliding scale. What about one of the other proverbs: "the indulging of the Appetite brings a Clog both upon the Body and Mind"? Is "clog" the same kind of substantive as the word <u>appetite</u>? What about the tag to

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the tale about the crows, "Charity begins at home"? Are we not on the verge of describing what charity was doing at home, what she was wearing, and where she went after she began at home? The prosopopeia or beast fable is explicated by the moral epitome, we agreed, but the moral epitome is on the cusp of slipping into personification. We had said that the tags applied to the tales translated their sense into specifically human terms, but perhaps the humanity separating prosopopeia from personification makes up a very narrow margin.

Coleridge wrestled at length with the difference between concepts and images, as did Nietzsche, who overthrew the same demons haunting Coleridge by explaining that abstractions such as "charity," "justice," and "goodness" were the true metaphors of language. It is strange to think of philosophical schematizations of the world as perpetually flirting with beast fables and personifications, and stranger yet to be compelled to regard, on account of Nietzsche, that the concept of empire is the real allegorical personage of the Aeneid. But putting puzzles aside, let us set forth our new position. Though we fished for a way of calling epic similes a form of indirect commentary, we suddenly became hooked by the suspicion that the direct commentary against which we contrasted it was a bit of a myth. The beast fable of Aesop, coupled with its moralization, suddenly began to look very much like a

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prosopopeia complemented by a personification. Here let us recall the extended comparison in question, and ask whether a prosopopeia is being complemented by a personification in Spenser. When Spenser likens Redcrosse and the Sarazin to duelling rams, isn't it rather the reverse? Aren't two personifications giving the stage up to a beast fable? If, in the case of Aesop's fable, the applied moral concepts were really truncated personifications, wouldn't that mean that the narrative moment in Spenser served to tell us something about the ram simile, and not the other way round? Or is nobody telling anybody anything?

In this light, I should mention that Whaler's article on the relatively scant animal imagery in Milton suddenly becomes quite fascinating. Returning to Whaler on the Miltonic simile, we find him still trying to count them up. There is a problem with arbitrarily defining how long epic similes are supposed to be, but Whaler convincingly demonstrates that animal comparisons in epic poetry generally diminish in number from Homer to Apollonius, and from Tasso to Milton. In a parallel movement, perhaps, the beast fables of Aesop, though they were extended by Avianus and Babrius in late antiquity, were ultimately supplanted in popularity by the Gesta Romanorum. The medieval version of the moralized tale--with its inventions of kings with their three daughters, knights errant, and magic rings--was subjected to explicitly Christian thematizing. Does the

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dwindling use of animals in epic similes, when the epic poem resurfaces in the Renaissance, signify the same glamorization of more self-consciously human conventions in the Gesta? Or is it because the Bible is without talking animals that beast fables begin to lose in authority? It is unfortunate that Whaler's study omits Ovid and Dante, Ariosto and Spenser; for it is unlikely anyone will ever have the patience again to tabulate the results including them. And while many of Spenser's extended comparisons also figure human and mythological images, I wonder if a tally of the vast number of his animal similes wouldn't mark a reactionary streak against the direction of the general trend Whaler observes from antiquity to the Renaissance.

Without belaboring the extended comparison of the rams, let us ask a final, and the single most important, question of it: if the narrative of Redcrosse and Sansfoy, complemented by the simile of the rams, is a personification complemented by a prosopopeia, where then is the "commentary"? Is the answer "nowhere"? Or is it, for lack of a better way of locating it, "in between"? That is, is there some sense in which the narrative moment and the simile *together* constitute the allegory? The simile obliquely brings out the quality of astonishment or the state of being astonished, which Spenser describes to be a kind motionlessness or stasis resulting from the balance of equal and opposing forces. But does this quality actually

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reside in the battle between the knight and the saracen? Or is it simile which makes us aware of it in the first place? That the juxtaposition of the narrative moment and the simile allows us to see an invisible quality hovering between the two? If the lattermost formulation is correct, the "meaning" is neither in the simile or the narrative, but outside the poem altogether. But in getting to this formulation, we have drifted away from saying that simile was telling us something to saying that the simile allows us to see something invisible.

I hope I have not alienated a host of Spenserians who would have preferred to hear more about the sexually charged atmosphere with which Spenser tinctures the struggle for Duessa. Sex is more fun to talk about than stasis, I admit, but I venture to claim that it is something extra, in addition to a simpler way of thinking about the epic simile. I also confess that the idea of stasis could have been just as well illustrated with contending gusts of wind, or two rocks rolling down opposed mountainous inclines into a valley. Spenser chooses animal imagery that is more apt, and what the rams share in common with the human combatants causes us to run into an old problem from around a new corner. Is the enhanced aptness of some comparisons that which sends us looking for it in others when it is not there? And once we are in the habit of looking for close correspondences, do we cease being able to say anything

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about the digressive aspect of similes? When pushed to the extreme, digression in epic similes only underscores the point that only one quality is being illustrated. It appears manifestly true to me now, as it did hundreds of pages ago, that the ram simile is primarily about astonishment; just as the simile of the Palmer's staff is about the power of change; and the simile of Britomart and the moon, about beauty. All three similes, simply speaking, are about qualities. But what's the big idea, you ask, about quality?

A. Plato and Havelock

Having momentarily exhausted the ram simile, let us turn back to the simile given us of Britomart when Malecasta plays host to her:

> Long worke it were, and needlesse to deuize
> Their goodly entertainement and great glee:
> She caused them be led in curteous wize
> Into a bowre, disarmed for to bee,
> And cheared well with wine and spiceree:
> The *Recrosse* Knight was soone disarmed there,
> But the braue Mayd would not disarmed bee,
> But onely vented vp her vmbriere,
> And so did let her goodly visage to appere.

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As when faire *Cynthia*, in darkesome night,
Is in a noyous cloud enueloped,
Where she may find the substaunce thin and light,
Breakes forth her siluer beames, and her bright hed
Discouers to the world discomfited;
Of the poore traueller, that went astray,
With thousand blessings she is heried;
Such was the beautie and the shining ray,
With which faire *Britomart* gaue light vnto the day.
(3.1.42-3)

As the discussion of the ram simile unfolded, I wanted to explode old ways of thinking about extended comparisons by starting with a rhetorical definition. I said that the narrator rendered clear some aspect or quality *residing in his story* by means of the indirection of the extended comparison. Therein lies the problem. Does the quality or idea of beauty *reside in* the narrative about Britomart or, conversely, in the simile of the moon? Or do ideas have a transcendent existence in the realm of forms? The answer depends on what one thinks about Plato, but if we can entertain for a moment a Platonic way of looking at *eidoi*, simile and allegory start to bear an uncanny resemblance.

The epic simile of the moon would still be an indirection because we cannot apprehend the form of beauty directly. That is, beauty is not the sole property of the

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moon revealing her face from behind clouds anymore than it belongs alone to Britomart when she raises her visor. Nor is the experience of beauty reserved only for weary travelers, or an exclusive treat to which Malecasta and her courtiers are privy. It exists in the space between the narrative and the simile as an idea, of which Britomart and Malecasta, the moon and the traveler, remind us. If the qualities illustrated by epic similes are Platonic forms existing independently and before their manifestation in the narrative, it would only be the juxtaposition of the two--narrative and simile--which would allow us to catch a glimpse of them. Every "ordinary" comparison would be an allegory of the cave.

I realize I've climbed out on a limb in trying to put myself into the mind of Spenser when he uses epic similes, although I think there is some precedent for what I say in A Preface to Plato, in which Eric Havelock discusses Plato's debts to Homer. Havelock concerns himself with the thought processes underlying the oral nature of Greek society out of which context emerged the imagistic thinking of the Homeric poems. The very writing down and recording of the Homeric poems, however, instigated a revolution in Greek society, which paved the way for the conceptual thinking of Plato. Between Homer and Plato, information began to be stored alphabetically, and the "the eye supplanted the ear as the chief organ employed for this purpose" (vii). Only semi-

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literacy prevailed at the time of Plato, when "writing skills were gradually but rather painfully being spread through the population without any corresponding increase in fluent reading" (40). Yet the slow evolution towards literacy resulted in Plato's dialectic, according to Havelock, which began with the interrogation of Homeric texts and the separation of the "knower from the known" (209).

Havelock gathers together the various Platonic attacks on poetry in order to speculate that, in the oral stage of culture, the Iliad and the Odyssey were not enjoyed as aesthetic experiences (for which he claims no equivalent to our own), but were regarded as cultural encyclopedias in verse. With the emergence of literacy, Plato is able to address poetry as if it consisted of impoverished thoughts patched up cosmetically with meter and rhythm. While recognizing that poetry evokes an emotional response on behalf of the listener, Plato's approach is hardly aesthetic, since "poetry as an educational discipline poses a moral danger, and also an intellectual one. It confuses a man's values and renders him characterless and it robs him of any insight into the truth" (6). Early in the Republic, Plato seems willing to "tolerate the poetry of dramatized situation and speech, provided the characters thus presented are ethically superiour," but only as part of an undergraduate education that constitutes a propaedeutic for

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dialectic (11). Dialectic, as it unfolds dramatically in the Republic, serves "to isolate the principle of morality in the abstract, and as it may exist as a moral imperative in the soul of man. . . . [I]t is to be demonstrated that this pure type of morality is the happiest human condition" (12). By the end of the dialogue, poetry stands in the way of the educative goal set forth by Plato, who cites Homer and Hesiod as responsible for cynicism toward gods, who often reward the unrighteous.

Arranged for memorization and ready delivery, the Homeric poems had stood as a compendium of all human learning, Havelock claims, for which Plato hoped to substitute his more intellectually rigorous approach to finding truth by dialectic. Homer had no true knowledge, according to Plato, but only offered an illusion thrice removed from reality, in the form of hearsay or opinion, since "mimesis ultimately is a shadow show of phantoms, like those images seen in the darkness on the wall of the cave" (25). The "absolute knowledge," attained through the dialectical process, on the other hand, "or true science if we so choose to call it, is of the Forms and of the Forms alone, and . . . applied science or skilled technique depends on copying the Forms in artifacts" (25). Havelock summarizes Plato as saying the following:

> [R]eality is rational, scientific and logical, or it is nothing. The poetic medium, so far from

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> disclosing the true relations of things or the true definitions of the moral virtues, forms a kind of refracting screen which disguises and distorts reality and at the same time distracts us and plays tricks with us by appealing to the shallowest of our sensibilities. (25)

Once the Homeric poems were recorded, moreover, their original function began to erode:

> Poetry . . . provided a massive repository of useful knowledge, a sort of encyclopedia of ethics, politics, history, and technology which the effective citizen was required to learn as the core of his educational equipment. Poetry represented not something we call by that name, but an indoctrination which today would be comprised in a shelf of text books and works of reference. (27).

The complaint of Plato against the poets in the Republic forms the basis for Havelock's argument for the value the poems had in pre-literate society.

Havelock raises many interesting questions in trying to erect the scaffolding of a historically accurate reading of Homer, which, I think, does more justice to the Republic than to the Iliad. In my own researches into the reception of Homer, I've been fascinated by readers who have been willing to grant the author status as a prophet, or who

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affirmed the divine wisdom of his poetry. Havelock is firm in believing that these were subsequent reactions, and right to point to the commentators in late antiquity and the Renaissance. Plato, of course, never fails to condemn Homer's inaccurate representation of the gods, and he consistently maintains that the poems cannot be taken for scripture, but who is Plato arguing against if, as Havelock insists, nobody had yet felt that way?

Havelock cites as evidence passages in Homer and Hesiod in which the poems depict singing bards and their muses, who were "the symbol of the bard's command of professional secrets, not of his dependence on divine guidance. When the [early] Greek poets voice their claim to fame of immortality they prefer to base it not as in the Hellenistic age upon inspiration but upon their skill" (155). Havelock regards the shift in emphasis as a function of literacy:

> The contrary conception of poetic inspiration was born in Greece precisely at that time, toward the end of the fifth century, when the requirements of oral memorization were no longer dominant and when the functional purposes of poetry as a tribal education were being transferred to prose--that is the philosophers, who were intent upon constructing a new type of discourse which we can roughly characterize as conceptual rather than poetic--were driven to relegate the poetic

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> experience to a category which was non-conceptual and therefore non-rational and non-reflective. Thus was invented the notion that poetry must be simply a product of ecstatic possession, for which the Greek animistic term was 'enthusiasm'. Our equivalent word is 'inspiration' which is more sympathetic to the requirements of Christian monotheism but preserves the essential point, that poetry is a *possession*, not an autonomous exercise of the mental faculties. (156, my emphasis)

Yes, but a possession by what?

Havelock argues that all pre-Socratic philosophy was a response to Homer, a way of understanding the world by wresting from narrative forms a conceptual framework, which was severed by Plato from its source. Teskey, too, makes a similar argument since "personification in the strict sense of the term--the appropriation of material agency to a logically prior, metaphysical idea--is impossible in the Homeric epics because such ideas are unknown" (40). But Havelock is not fastidious, if the Homeric poems originated merely as didactic instruments, about distinguishing between the function of rhapsodic recitals and dramatic performances in pre-literate society. Nor does he consider if the development of Attic tragedy was an alternative response to the same body of oral myths allegorized by Heraclitus and the Milesian pre-Socratics. Even if the drama did not have

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its start in a religious ritual, Havelock's unwillingness to take the Olympic pantheon any more seriously than Plato did is troubling. Did anyone ever believe in gods of polytheism, or were they always just images for thought processes it took Plato to clean up?

I've gone out on a limb in claiming that Spenser's similes are allegorical and before the branch snaps in the wind, let me withdraw the additional weight of suggesting that Spenser ever thought as much I have asserted when he put an epic simile to paper. Like Havelock, I too am trying to reconstruct a historically informed understanding of allegory in the Renaissance, when literature and allegory were often regarded as practically synonymous. In other words, I am trying to explain a way of looking at similes and their allegorical function in terms that Spenser could have understood. Although he does not treat the Homeric simile, Havelock's most valuable point for my purposes is that the Homeric poems seem to have represented, like the beast fables, a primitive form of abstract thinking. Shane Stuart Gasbarra's unpublished doctoral study discusses the epic similes of Homer as a "cognitive model" or "a way of world-making" (1). Homer's similes "make sense as figures of likeness, but they make a particular kind of nonlogical, visual sense" (34). Their digressions from logical consistency with the narrative provide "a focus on a single visual aspect or kinetic motif, rather than on a visual

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whole or the object itself" (35). I am not sure Spenser would have understood Gasbarra's thesis, or that of Havelock, but when Spenser utilizes an extended comparison lifted out of Homer or Virgil, or Ovid or Ariosto for his own narrative, wouldn't he have said that the effect he sought was not cognition, but re-cognition?

Whatever Neoplatonic lore he imbibed at Cambridge or through his friendship with Sidney, Spenser, I am asserting, would have been familiar enough with Plato's dialectic to have been aware that knowledge of the Forms depended on a process of recognition or recollection. Everything worth knowing about the immortality of the soul and its descent from the divine, according to the Meno and the Phaedo particularly, was lost in the recesses of memory and could only be recovered through the dialectical process. That is, Spenser is not just citing the epic similes of those whose poems were invested with an authority he was hoping would rub off on his own efforts. If the Homeric simile served a cognitive function in representing a thought process via images, then reiterating a simile of Homer--or Ariosto or Virgil--would be more than paying lip service to the auctores of the past. It would re-enact the dialectic between the narrative and the simile that gave rise to the Platonic forms in the first place. The Neoplatonists, who sought to reconcile Homer to Plato, took his forms to be ideas in the mind of the One, which by the time of

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Renaissance Neoplatonism, served as a stand-in for the Judeo-Christian God. Renaissance Neoplatonists, such as Pico (Robb 66), understand the forms to be "ideas or types of all things," which the angelic intelligence received from God before becoming embodied in the sublunary world. And if epic similes were intuited as representing forms, it would be at least logically consistent for someone like Chapman to think Homer divinely inspired.

Havelock never addresses the issue of simile, but I have saved one choice tidbit from his chapter on the "Origin of the Theory of Forms":

> Goodness and rightness . . . proportion and size, dimension and weight and shape, odd and eve, the square and the diagonal, solidity, motion, velocity, and volume--what does this kind of vocabulary represent to us? . . . In combination with each other they furnish the terms in which we state both moral principles and physical formulas, both equations and laws. They bespeak the language of categories, and also of universals. The only modern term that would apply to all alike would be the word 'concept.'. . . And it is fair to say that Platonism at bottom is an appeal to substitute a conceptual discourse for an imagistic one. (261)

The Forms are not only moral but physical, though Havelock

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wonders about the reason that Plato had "refused to label them as concepts" (262). He gives the answer, which cost me all that pain to seek through the world:

> What the theory of Forms was properly designed to affirm was the existence of abstract properties and relations of physical objects and so forth . . . No artificer tries to make 'dimension' or 'justice' or 'velocity' or equality'. And these abstractions considered as linguistic devices are all of *adjectival* origin. One could indeed ask whether a Greek noun denominating in the first instance a specific thing should ever be associated with a Form. (270, my emphasis)

The Platonic Forms are qualities having their origin in adjectives. And if the representation of qualities via epic similes is an essential, rather than extraneous, feature of narrative poetry, it is perhaps comprehensible that Dryden thought "the Principle of Platonique Philosophy, as it is now Christianize'd" to be the only suitable *dianoia* for the epic ("Satire" 614).

To speak of epic similes as the indirect representation of a quality or of an adjective out of which sprang the Platonic forms, seems dull perhaps, but maybe only because the idea has become so familiar to us that we would rather not be reminded of it. To claim that Spenser's simile about Britomart is about beauty only re-states the obvious, though

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I was looking for a way to explain the reason why, if Spenser quotes sources in The Faerie Queene, the epic simile should be the place he chooses to do so. Socrates hedges his bets in the Cratylus as to whether names are essentially related to what they stand for, but if the forms are adjectival in origin, I wonder that Plato didn't think of language as inherently allegorical, since a simile could not directly represent the form of beauty, but only remind us of it. Naming the form would be no help, because it turns an adjective into a substantive, and conceals the fact that beauty is a state of being and not a thing; just as the form of the good for Plato was not goodness, but "being good." It's harder to think of adjectives as shades of being than it is to contemplate them as the attributes of substance. Indeed, a grammar that defines a complete thought to be a substantive coupled with a predicate bypasses adjectives as being optional rather than more fundamental qualities of thought. Yet the making of comparisons, I have discovered in the process of writing this book, still has something to do with the representation of being, for in this sentence alone I find the infinitive "to be" *to be* an alternative way of writing "as."

I wish I could breathe into my dissection of the qualities of Spenser's similes some of the warmth with which Plato speaks about triangularity, but I am not recording a dialogue, save with myself. And if the reduction of epic

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similes to statements of the obvious seems cold and jejune to the reader, no doubt Aristotle felt the same way when he rendered Platonic forms to be accidents, secondary to a substance moved by an unmoved First Mover. Aristotle was also probably exasperated by Plato's vagueness with the forms; and the shrewd reader will have noticed that, when I shifted my discussion from the ram simile to the one concerning Britomart, I obviated having to answer whether or not "astonishment" is a Platonic form. Entrancement is not mentioned by Plato. Other than beauty, justice, and goodness and the like, and, at a lower level, the mathematical forms of triangularity, extension, odd and evenness, and so on, Plato never says how many forms there are, though some things, like mud for example, are without one (Parmenides 130D). Nevertheless, many of Homer's similes illustrate a variety of kinetic qualities, among which the stasis resulting from equal and opposite motions Spenser describes by the stalemate between warring combatants. The picture of Redcrosse and Sansfoy, when like two rams, they "Astonied both, stand sencelesse as a blocke," seems more moral than physical, however, by virtue of Spenser's use of the mini-comparison within the epic simile. Stasis is, at any rate, not a very romantic picture; and Spenser may have felt as much when he jettisoned the 1590 ending of Book Three. Amoret and Scudamor join in a Hermaphroditic union:

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No word they spake, nor earthly thing they
felt,
But like two senceles stocks in long embracement
dwelt.

(3.12.45)

The insensate clasp of the two lovers maybe sounded too static in Spenser's mind, or perhaps too akin to the wooden embrace of Fradubio and Fraelissa.

Spenser would have sided with Sidney in believing that the poet was fully capable of inventing new forms such as never had been seen before in nature. "Only the poet," writes Sidney in his 1595 Defense, "doth grow in effect into another Nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature" (108). While the world of nature "is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden." In the revolt of Mutabilitie, Spenser takes his prerogative as poet and departs from whatever Platonic education he received:

Whils't she thus spake, the Gods that gaue good
eare
To her bold words, and marked well her grace,
Beeing of stature tall as any there
Of all the Gods, and beautifull of face,
As any of the Goddesses in place,
Stood all astonied, like a sort of Steeres;
Mongst whom, some beast of strange and

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forraine race,
Vnwares is chaunc't, far straying from his peeres:
So did their ghastly gaze bewray their hidden fears.

(7.6.28)

If astonishment wasn't a traditional Platonic form in the mind of the deity, Spenser certainly makes it a heavenly attribute when he describes the gods as being capable of consternation. Astonishment more properly belongs only to the fallen, on the other hand, among the dramatis personae of Paradise Lost, and reaches a climax when Satan stands stupidly good before Eve. Milton's Father fakes a momentary panic for the amusement of His Son, whereas divine imperturbability in The Faerie Queene is a trait reserved for the figure of Nature, whom Spenser elevates from the realm of the sublunary to a cosmic principle. In the "Cantos of Mutabilitie," Nature is personification, but a personification unlike that of Furor or Britomart since She has continued to exist. No one formally prohibits lust or envy anymore, but a recycling law is telling evidence that Nature is still out there for us.

We began by considering simile and allegory as a way of "other speaking"--a way of conveying a secret message--and turned the tables when we ended by thinking of both simile and allegory as a revelation. The focus of the past two

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chapters has moved from the study of a figure of speech to an exploration of a figure of thought, though the epic simile itself hasn't changed: it compares "A" in one story to a more famous precedent "B" in order to illustrate a quality "x." What is problematic is that the act of illustration, though relegated by Hobbes to a "literal" use of language, is arguably an "allegorical" use of language. In collapsing the distinction between "literal" and "allegorical," however, I am also erasing the boundary between a genre consisting of a specific number of allegorical works of literature, and a broader way of looking at the world. That anything can be read allegorically, however, is not a practical conclusion upon which to build. Unless we have something else to balance it with, the principle is as critically useful as starting with the tenet that "All is fire." Paul de Man's seminal essay on allegory, to which we now turn our attention, also erases the distinction between genre and mode, though allegory he opposes to irony. Thereafter, we shall consider evidence demonstrating that the genre versus mode distinction was already doubtful in the Renaissance, and finally return to a discussion of specific examples. For if the Spenserian simile is allegorical because it illustrates a quality by drawing on a tried and true example, what happens to allegory when Milton describes the persons, places, and events in his story, by saying his "A" is *"more x"* than "B"?

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B. De Man and Formalism

Paul de Man's essay, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," like Benjamin's Origins of German Tragic Drama, launches a poststructuralist expedition to explore allegory. Since I know nothing of the Trauerspiel, I will confine my remarks to de Man, who does not discuss Milton or Spenser, let alone their similes, although he has a lot to say about Coleridge. Both Benjamin and de Man are poststructuralists, it is worth emphasizing at the outset, because they do not define allegory, so much as they describe it. When Benjamin establishes an analogy by stating, "allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (178), he paints a poetic picture that inspires us to think about allegory in terms of mourning for a lost past, but we have no clue as how to distinguish an allegorical poem from one that is non-allegorical. In describing allegory rather than defining it, both Benjamin and de Man are describing a mode of interpretation, a way of reading the past, that is confounded with the genre of composition. Their thoughts on the subject are carried on at a high level of abstraction, which, in the case of de Man, derives from an obsessively close reading of texts. De Man is hounded on his hermeneutic quest by the specters of uncertainty about the way we know how to read a poem. For de Man, as for Nietzsche, the answer is that we don't; there is no single,

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right reading.

De Man does not fuss with the relative merits of an allegorical genre, but seeks to get to the bottom of its underlying concepts. By taking apart the Romantic cliche that allegory is "dryly rational and dogmatic" (189), de Man reverses Coleridge's valorization of symbol over allegory:

> Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or an identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. (207)

De Man resurrects the distinction between allegory and symbolism, but only to throw symbolism out the window, and along with it, subjectivity, for being illusory. For Coleridge, we recall, the symbol mediated between the literal and figurative levels of scripture; the temporal difference between image and meaning was exactly what was conflated by the symbol. But even if true believers found the identification of the historical with the prophetic in the Bible convincing, the question was, and still is, whether the Word of God furnishes a suitable model upon which to establish a human poetics, or if it presents an unattainable ideal.

To postulate a medium between the literal and metaphoric is intrinsically problematic, asserts de Man. He

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cites Gadamer in attacking Coleridge's failure "to distinguish between experience and the representation of experience"; and, again, in debunking the Romantic ideal that sought to "transform all individual experience directly into general truth" (188). Coleridge's presumption, that "the subjectivity of experience is preserved when it is translated into language" (188), is well documented in Biographia, when, for example, Coleridge takes his poetics to its logical conclusion: "What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? . . . . The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity" (2:15). That Coleridge should find the poet symbolized in the poem transposes the symbolism put forth by Milton's Apology Against a Pamphlet, in which the aspiring poet:

> ought him selfe to bee a true Poem, that is, a composition, and patterne of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroick men, or famous Cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy. (1:890)

Notwithstanding the prose insights of Coleridge and Milton, symbolism in any of its guises, according to de Man, takes off from a misapprehension of allegory, which misapprehension is carried into the twentieth century with

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the New Critical "tendency . . . to define the romantic image as a relationship between mind and nature, between subject and object" (193).

The growing intimacy between the two, argued by Wimsatt in "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery," is dismissed by de Man as applying "to the relationships between subjects rather than to the relationships between a subject and an object" (196). Wimsatt concerns himself with formal patterns in the poem that bear witness to the theory of the imagination put forth by the Romantic critics. In the development from metaphysical to neoclassic imagery, Wimsatt discerns that the "severe disparity" between the tenor and vehicle of metaphor "was relaxed" (105). With this relaxation came a new attitude towards nature in the age of sensibility. By comparing a sonnet of Bowles, "To the River Itchin," to one by Coleridge on the Otter, Wimsatt finds that Bowles's sensitivity to nature is without "a poetic structure adequate to embody or objectify the new feeling" (105). But in Coleridge's "To the River Otter," Wimsatt argues that Coleridge achieves a greater inwardness and subjectivity by his attention to surface detail and by the closeness with which he links metaphors to natural events. There can be no bridge between metaphor and natural event, however, for de Man, and any purported affinity with nature is "an intersubjective, interpersonal relationship that, in the last analysis, is a relationship of the subject toward

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itself" (196).

De Man shows Wimsatt the door, as well as Abrams and Wasserman, though a brief look at Wimsatt's article opens up a new vista in the context of our larger discussion. Each poem employs a simile, which, in the sonnet of Bowles, is perfectly nice:

> Itchin, when I behold thy banks again,
> Thy crumbling margin, and thy silver breast,
> On which the self-same tints still seem to rest,
> Why feels my heart the shiv'ring sense of pain?
> Is it--that many a summer's day has past
> Since, in life's morn, I carol'd on thy side?
> As Youth, and Hope's delusive gleams, flew fast?
> Is it--that those, who circled on thy shore,
> Companions of my youth, now meet no more?
> Whate'er the cause, upon thy banks I bend
> Sorrowing, yet feel such solace at my heart,
> *As at the meeting some long-lost friend,*
> *From whom, in happier hours, we wept to part.*
>
> (19, my emphasis)

Coleridge is far more arch:

> Dear native brook! wild streamlet of the West!
> How many various-fated years have past,
> What happy, and what mournful hours, since last
> I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,
> Numbering its light leaps! yet so deep imprest

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> Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
> I never shut amid the sunny ray,
> But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
> Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows grey,
> And bedded sand that, vein'd with various dyes,
> Gleamed through thy bright transparence! On my way,
> Visions of Childhood! oft have ye beguil'd
> Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs:
> Ah! that once more I were a careless child!
>
> (6)

The comparison of Bowles is nice, or, as it was said in the eighteenth century, apt. But Coleridge is so apt that the comparison ceases to be readily evident. Where is the simile? Wimsatt is right on the money:

> One might have thought such experiences would sink *no deeper* in the child's breast *than* the stones in the water--"yet so deep imprest"--the very antithesis (though it refers overtly only to the many hours which have intervened) defines imaginatively the depth of the impressions. When he closes his eyes, they *rise* again (the word *rise* may be taken as a trope which hints the whole unstated similitude). . . . (109)

The impressions cast were as deep as the memories that begin to unfold; and, as stone sank to the bottom, the waters of

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the river appear to rise.

De Man cannot challenge Wimsatt's observation that Coleridge is making an "unstated similitude." But the conclusions they draw are from different planets. Wimsatt sees Coleridge's sympathy for nature to be mirrored in the translucent symbol of the stone, which reveals how deeply childhood scenes affected him. De Man, however, refuses to buy into any communication between inner and outer, or any dialectic between mind and nature. Coleridge's trope does not mirror the process of recollection, but only stands as a rhetorical posture or a defense through which the speaker can never penetrate to his past. Any bridge between inner and outer, or mind and nature, is nothing but a way of mistaking an analogy with an affinity:

> [T]he relationship between mind and nature becomes indeed a lot less formal, less purely associative and external than it is in the eighteenth century. As a result, the critical--and even, at time, the poetic--vocabulary attempts to find terms better suited to express this relationship than is the somewhat formal concept of analogy. Words such as 'affinity,' or 'sympathy,' appear instead of the more abstract 'analogy.' This does not change the fundamental pattern of the structure, which remains that of a formal resemblance between entities, that, in other respects, can be

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antithetical. (195)

Wimsatt's reading of nature into an elliptical simile of Coleridge is itself worthy of the life-long praise Coleridge accorded the imaginative powers of the Miltonic simile. Yet de Man's harping on the difference between analogy and affinity is also oddly reminiscent of Coleridge; for at the end of his career, he wrote in the Aids to Reflection that the misinterpretation of scripture stems from mistaking an analogy for a metaphor.

I had off-handedly asked at the start whether nature in the Romantic lyric was an epic simile without the epic. The question returns in a slightly changed guise in the debate between Wimsatt and de Man about the effect of concealing a similitude. If Bowles's simile, like those of Spenser, is allegorical because it is a recognition, does Coleridge's "symbol" defy the allegorical because it seeks to mirror the process of recognition? When Coleridge has recourse to making comparisons elsewhere in his poetry, he often uses the trope in a frightfully over-determined, if not downright Miltonic, way. In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," we read:

> At length did cross an Albatross,
> Thorough the fog it came;
> As if it had been a Christian soul,
> We hailed it in God's name.
>
> (48: 64-8)

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It looks very much as though Coleridge intended the albatross to be a symbol, though the comparison is not a simple simile such as we have examined in Spenser. What function does the "if" have in changing the value of the simile? In his prose writings, Coleridge models a human poetics of the imaginative symbol on a way of reading scripture, although we questioned, somewhat in the fashion of de Man, whether such an ambition were in the realm of the possible. Does the "as if" simile, of which Jacqueline Brogan shows Wallace Stevens to have been fond in his later poetry, suggest just how hypothetical such a poetics is, and that it must exist only in the realm of possibility? It's a possibility de Man doesn't care to envision, the symbol of the albatross for him having become a white elephant.

In his relentless critique of the Romantics, who were only wearing their hearts on their sleeves, de Man, like Busirane, bleeds Rousseau as well as Coleridge dry. The roots of La Nouvelle Heloise are unearthed to be Robinson Crusoe, Le Roman de la rose, and "Augustinian sources, mostly by way of Petrarch" (208). The novel has lent itself to a Romantic reading, "based on the close interpenetration between observation and passion" and the "close correspondence between inner states of the soul and the outward aspect of nature" (200). Yet the novel's "allegorical language," its "allegorical diction"--and finally what de Man calls its "allegorizing tendency" (205)-

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-all make a counter claim, revealing that "the domination and control over nature . . . submits the outside world entirely to its own purposes" (203). De Man concludes that novel makes an "implied choice in favor of allegory over symbol" (204) and evinces "the rediscovery of an allegorical tradition beyond the sensualistic analogism of the eighteenth century" (205). In sum, de Man is not talking about a genre, but a sensibility: the allegorizing tendency of the allegorical tradition "always corresponds to the unveiling of an authentically temporal destiny" (206). La Nouvelle Heloise does not veil secret meanings in need of explication, but stands in an allegorical relationship to its sources, since in the "relationship between signs . . . the reference to their respective meanings has become of secondary importance" (207).

De Man's vision of the role of time in allegory is suggestive in regard of Spenser's citation of pretexts in his epic similes. An allegorical sign together with its meaning "contains a constitutive temporal element":

> [I]t remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign must refer to another that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the repetition . . . of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority.

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Allegories depend on pretexts, which themselves are responses to earlier pretexts, and so on, in an infinite regress; as if every allegorist were in mourning for his inability to have had the priority of scriptural prophet. In a narrow way, de Man's point of view is useful in suggesting that the poets steeped in tradition are allegorical by virtue of their very conventionality. The epic similes of The Faerie Queene are allegorical insofar as they are untransmuted lumps of pure anteriority. Spenser was just repeating the same similes made famous by others, though those "others" were for him invested with an authority and an importance that was above and beyond whatever pleasure we still derive from reading the classics.

It is hard to imagine ourselves back into Spenser's mindset, though de Man's picture of an allegorical world-view is helpful in suggesting that every allegory reiterates a fall from grace, and positions itself as evidence of further decay. In such a light, Guilory's reading of the Mount Acidale episode becomes paradigmatic for The Faerie Queene entire:

> The poem therefore begins with any Calidore-like transgression, which is to say, anywhere, because The Faerie Queene is the record of perpetual erring. The poet has a vision of a vision--he sees himself inspired--but the experience he needs

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> to recover is the loss itself, the moment at which the sanctity of the poetic origin could still be upheld not because the content of a vision is remembered but because a feeling of loss is remembered, the felling of the vanished god, or the violated sacred place. (44)

Yet the allegorical mode in not a temporal phenomenon peculiar to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, pendant upon a chiliastic frustration at having to wait for the Apocalypse, but also a *topos*.

Curtius traces an "inexpressibility topos" in his survey of medieval literature back to its sources in the classics, where the author has something to tell us, but cannot find the means to put it into words (160). In the place in which the author tells us about his failure, the inexpressibility topos also invokes an allegorical frame of mind. And in its explicit temporal and spatial disorientation, the allegorical mode describes the situation of men living under a curse, because evil has been externalized in the very condition of the language it must employ. The view is beguiling on account of Chaucer's palinode at the end of the Canterbury Tales, and by virtue of the Spenser's repeated reference to the world's having grown "wourse and wourse" on its way toward "dissolution" (5.Pr.1, 4). Whether or not the "Cantos of Mutabilitie" mark a Chaucerian recantation of an allegorical world-view,

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or if Spenser's coda replaces the demonic allegory of the other six books with a more sublime allegory, is difficult to gauge. Teskey writes that the greatness of Cantos "depends to a very considerable degree on its undermining the basis of allegorical expression" (175), not only because Nature holds out the hope of some kind of redemption, I would argue, but because we still take Her very seriously.

Invoking the massive body of allegorical interpretations with which Spenser was more than cursorily acquainted, de Man denies the possibility of a right reading of literature. Though he grants the possibility of different responses, the down-side of his theory is that it is without the supporting backbone of holy writ off of which Renaissance allegorists hung their readings. De Man, like Wimsatt, is interested in formal patterns, though for Wimsatt they are structures in the poem, and for de Man, they are merely the rhetorical tropes recognized by his own mind. In its divorce from content, de Man's purely formal account of allegory throws a wrench into the works, by deliberately blurring the line between a delimited body of literary works and a mode of interpreting the world allegorically. By pointing out the sources of Rousseau's novel in Augustine, he illustrates allegory only insofar as it is a response to the texts that Rousseau read.

De Man's denial of a referential schema for language, moreover, puts us in a peculiar position; for how are we to

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regard his own essays, if not symbolically or literally? Is there a third category we need infer from de Man's own ellipses, a third category of hermeneutic response in addition to the allegorical and the ironic, such as when we throw up our hands in despair at ever coming to an understanding? Enigma he doesn't write about. But it is striking that, in his essay on "Irony," he confesses, "Curiously enough, it seems to be only in describing a mode of language which does not mean what it says that one can actually say what one means" (211). Irony is explicated by reference to a literal language--"MacFlecknoe" makes sense in reference to Shadwell--but de Man refuses to grant the obvious parallel: that we explicate allegories with symbols, that symbolism is the theory of the allegorical mode.

It is a truism that literary criticism as it used to be known is dead in the water. But before being washed away in a tempest of multiple interpretative strategies, I wanted to cast a long, lingering look back at its beginnings. Such a nostalgia, at any rate, informed my overview of the reception of the epic simile. I am indebted to theories of the New Critics and to de Man for my own imaginings on the allegorical function of the Spenserian simile, which speculations I doubt ever crossed Spenser's mind, though I thought it worthwhile to try to represent this function in terms that Spenser could have understood, by meditating on who put the "form" in formalism. The allegory versus

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symbolism debate is an irresolvable issue in the history of Western thought, and it probably goes back on the level of pure theory, as Lewis suggested, to Aristotle's revision of Plato's philosophy. Yet the same problem was available to Spenser and Milton in the more familiar guise of Renaissance criticism when it located allegory as a genre of composition.

C. Genre Versus Mode

To recap my position, I have staked a claim that Spenser's similes, together with the narrative moments against which they are juxtaposed, constitute an allegory. The point of view departs from the literary critic's customary understanding of simile and allegory. But if we summon the fable of Aesop into the witness stand a second time, we hear a similar double testimony. We considered the story of the two crows to signify that "Charity begins at home." But is it the story itself which is the allegory; and the moralization appended to it which is the allegorical interpretation? Or do the tale and the tag together constitute the allegory? I attempted to choose an example of a tale in which the moral tag seemed slightly "off" because of a superfluity of details configured in the story. Why couldn't the moral have been: "Others are often better able to discern the way out of our difficulties than we

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ourselves?" A different reader might have expanded on the difference between "Royston" and "Carrion" crows; or he could have devised a precept by way of focusing on the events from the point of view of the mussel. Because readings tend to reflect the biases of an individual or community at a given time and place, the relationship between the story and its interpretation will always strike an outsider as analogical: that is, the two halves together make up an analogy or proportion.

Such was Coleridge's point in criticizing the relationship between allegorical fables and their meaning for being arbitrary. Coleridge tried to advance a better model for the way literature could function, based on the idea of an imaginative symbol mediating between the literal and figurative level. But at the time of L'Estrange's translation of Aesop's fables, the concept of the imagination was yet in its formative stages, and allegory as a genre had not yet taken on an association with the arbitrary. Indeed, L'Estrange's Aesop was published two years after the English translation of the treatise of Le Bossu, for whom the allegorical genre was the model for understanding how all literature functioned. Like Coleridge, Le Bossu took the fables of Aesop to be paradigmatic for allegory, but allegory for him was a far broader category of literature subsuming epic poetry as well.

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Le Bossu specified that the epic poem was "a Discourse invented by Art, to form the Manners by such Instructions are disguis'd under the Allegories of some one important Action, which is related in Verse, after a probable, diverting, and surprizing Manner" (6). He formulated an expressly didactic function for epic poetry explicitly founded on one way of reading Aesop: Homer and Virgil had begun with a moral lesson they wanted to convey, which, after being decked out with incidents and details, had merely to be recast by the reader back into its conceptual origins. The plot of the Iliad addresses the "Misunderstanding between Princes," which causes "the Ruin of their own States" (19). The Odyssey reveals how a good ruler can learn from foreign customs in order to rectify problems in his own kingdom, though Le Bossu thought the poem marred because Homer neglected the precept that "a King should never leave his own Country" (24).

Searching for a poem's moral was an anathema to most critics between Coleridge and Frye, though if we substituted the word ideology for morality, perhaps fewer would object nowadays. In recalling Coleridge and in poking fun at Le Bossu, however, I wanted to emphasize a serious point about Aesop. It is a critical convention to separate the story from the moral: to call the former the allegory; and to call the latter, its allegorical interpretation. I had been at pains to suggest that perhaps Spenser's simile about the

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rams, in juxtaposition with his story about Redcrosse and the Sarazin, together make up the allegory. And likewise, we need entertain the position that it is Aesop's fable together with its moral that allows us to call the conjunction an allegory. For without the moral tag, the fable about the two crows would simply have been a good story. But if we have recognized allegory in a new light, have we relinquished a critical stance? Are we not one step closer to the threshold of describing allegory as a relationship between readers and texts, and two steps away from the point of saying that everything is allegorical? In entertaining a new position, let us not celebrate over-much and throw in the towel lest, after our drunken revels, we waken only to a wet blanket. The conflation of genre with mode is a problem, but it is not ours alone, for it is embedded in the etymological roots of the word.

Whitman's handy appendix on the history of the term traces its roots to the Greek, in which allegory indicated the activity of speaking "other" in the market place as well as at official assemblies (263). Thus, the conflict between allegory as a concealment from the mob, and allegory as a revelation to the elite, is already present in the first documented uses of the word among rhetoricians. Among earlier readers of Homer, the word hyponoia had been used to uncover a historical, pseudo-scientific, or philosophical under-sense beyond what was warranted by the literal level

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of the text (265). Plutarch first observes the shift in preference from hyponoia to allegory, though the he prefers explicating the significance of the gods symbolically (Rollinson 6), the term symbol becoming as popular among the readers of Homer in late antiquity, though hardly in its Romantic sense, when Proclus applied the word to analyze the Deception of Zeus as signifying its opposite, Zeus's "transcendent awareness" (Lamberton 214).

When allegory appears in the letter to the Galatians, the word is used as participle, though the King James translation obscures the fact. A cursory translation of Paul's verse, "which things are meant by allegory," suggests that the episode in Genesis is the allegory, and that its meaning is found in the New Testament:

> For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman, and the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are said by an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from mount Sinai, which gendereth unto bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jesusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. (4:22-26)

That the Christians inhabiting the New Jerusalem are of

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Isaac, the son of the freewoman, is clear to Paul, but is it clear that the story of Abraham's sons is a fable? Or does the use of the participle in the original suggest the story to be allegorized only when conjoined with its New Testament analogue?

It was never very clear whether allegory was a mode or a genre, though the literary evaluation of Homer and Virgil depended not only on an awareness of history, as I have said, but got off to a running start in rejecting certain readings of ancient texts for being wrong-headed or ill-informed. In the space remaining to this section, I would like to scrutinize three Renaissance instances in which genre is being distinguished from mode, and two earlier moments in which it is not, before emerging from a theoretical labyrinth and returning to a close reading of examples from Spenser and Milton. In examining select passages from Bacon, Harington, Puttenham, and from Boccaccio and Macrobius, I must emphasize that I have no solutions to offer: whether simile and allegory are figures of speech, or whether they are figures of thought is question that does not submit to an "either/or" answer. Yet, an "and/both" solution does not easily reconcile two perspectives, which are as antithetical in nature as the binary opposition between concealment and revelation. The conflict between the two, when it surfaces in the Renaissance, does not suggest the problem is a historical

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phenomenon; the crux appears to be one for which the appetite of the mind can get no fill.

1. Bacon and Parable

Francis Bacon, credited with inaugurating the methods of modern science, turns his back on scholastic attempts to define nature with a body of syllogisms in order to champion an inductive, empirical description of it. Yet his division between the objects of faith and those of reason rests on a separation of scriptural from secular history, and his emphasis on the study of experience is more closely allied, as Cassirer demonstrates, with the Puritan movement than with the intuitions of the Cambridge Platonists (44).

In the 1605 Advancement of Learning, Bacon tests the place of literature against the other branches of man's knowledge. "The parts of human learning have reference to the three parts of man's understanding," says Bacon, and poetry, unlike philosophy and history, has its seat in the imagination (85). Against the objects of secular knowledge, "divine learning" can be similarly divided into doctrine, history, and parable: parable is distinguished from holy doctrine and church history (which subsumes prophecy) as holding the place corresponding to the imaginative faculty. The imagination, however, has not yet been distinguished from fantasy, or what Coleridge was to call fancy. For

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Bacon, the imagination is merely that which is "not tied to the laws of matter, [and] may at pleasure join that which nature hath severed, and sever that which nature hath joined; and so make unlawful matches and divorces of things" (101). Bacon then subdivides poetry into three kinds: the "narrative," which is an "imitation of history"; the "representative" or "visible history," by which he seems to mean drama; and poetry "allusive or parabolical" (102).

With the last category, Bacon posits a genre of allegorical composition that has two uses, the first "applied only to express some special purpose or conceit" (102). He cites for example the fables of Aesop, which "express any point of reason which was more sharp or subtile than the vulgar in that manner. . . . And as hieroglyphics were before letters, so parables were before arguments" (103). The other "use" of "poesy parabolical" is indicated by Bacon to be the "opposite to that which we last mentioned":

> For that tendeth to demonstrate and illustrate that which is taught or delivered, and this other to retire and obscure: that is, when the secrets and mysteries of religion, policy, or philosophy, are involved in fables or parables. Of this in divine posey we see the use is authorised. In heathen poesy we see the exposition of fables doth fall out sometimes with great felicity. (103)

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That is, some allegorical interpretations are "right" and others are "wrong." The assistance of Giants in the War of the Olympians against the Titans, for example, is a pagan myth confirmed by Bacon to have been correctly interpreted as signifying the secrets of statecraft. The myth hides finer points of policy for monarchs; "nevertheless," Bacon goes on, "in many like encounters, I do rather think that the fable was first, and the exposition devised, than that the moral was first, and thereupon the fable framed" (104). Not surprisingly, he is especially disparaging of pseudo-scientific readings of the ancients by Stoics such as Chrysippus:

> Surely of those poets which are now extant, even Homer himself (notwithstanding he was made a kind of scripture by the later schools of the Grecians), yet I should without any difficulty pronounce that his fables had no such inwardnesss in his own meaning. But what they might have upon a more original tradition, is not easy to affirm; for he was not the inventor of many of them. (104)

The Homeric epic is a narrative imitation of history, according to Bacon; and while it makes use of myths which may once have had concealed a secret meaning, Bacon cynically proposes that the majority of interpretations were foisted on them afterwards.

Something curious is going on here. Bacon wants to

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make allegory a literary genre, but he problematizes the relationship between the author's intention and the way his story is read. The fables of Aesop "express a point of reason," while the myths Homer uses "retire" or "obscure" their meaning. The conflict is the source of disagreement between Spingarn and Triep: the first claiming that Bacon sounds the "death knell" for allegory in the Renaissance (276); the latter, countering that Bacon was instrumental in carrying over an allegorical poetics into the Renaissance. Treip supports her argument with Bacon's position in the 1609 De sapentia veterum:

> It may be that my reverence for the primitive time carries me too far, but the truth is that in some of these fables, as well in *the very frame and texture of the story as in the propriety of the names* by which the persons that figure in it are distinguished, I find a conformity and connexion with the thing signified, so close and so evident, that one cannot help believing such a signification to have been designed and mediatated from the first, and purposely shadowed out.
>
> (822, my emphasis)

In her argument with Spingarn, Treip is wholly justified to point out that Bacon was a competent mythographer, ready and willing to read pagan myths allegorically when he wanted to. Treip, however, does not observe that Bacon's division of

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"the frame and texture of the story" from its content already distinguishes him from the majority of the earlier allegorists. Bacon is, moreover, not describing two kinds of parable, but two "uses" of parable, or rather, allegory as a genre and allegory as a mode. Bacon admits into the myths of Homer only those hidden meanings he has already accepted, or those he chooses to reveal himself, though no one had ever bothered to contest the validity of the morals accompanying the fables of Aesop. By positing that some interpretations are valid and that others are untenable, Bacon struggles with separating the genre of composition from the mode of interpretation. Treip is right; but Spingarn is also right. For in his insistence that some readings of the ancients were applied after the fact, Bacon aligns himself with a critical, rather than allegorical, point of view.

The words, "allusive" and "parabolical," the reader will have noticed, are used strangely in Bacon's excursus on allegory. He gives the impression he thinks Aesop is "allusive" because he reveals moral lessons in his tales, and that Homer is "parabolical" when he conceals the wisdom of the ancients. We have tended, since the Renaissance, not to use the labels quite so interchangeably. To acknowledge a poem to be allusive was not thought, before the advent of poststructuralism, to have any bearing on whether or not the poem was allegorical. For de Man, however, we saw that the

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allegorical mode was a temporal relationship in which the author echoed pretexts by repetition. But just as temporal for him is the ironic mode, in which the author positions himself in advance of his pretexts through the use of allusion. Irony is the inverse of allegory for de Man, yet allusion and parable also appear to be two sides of the same coin for Bacon. Indeed, whether a work reveals something or whether something is concealed, is the same question when addressed from a larger perspective. But Bacon is trying to separate the genre from the mode; he locates the difference of perspective in the texts themselves, in the difference between Aesop and Homer. De Man, on the other hand, is conflating the mode with the genre; he essentially argues that Aesop and Homer to be the same, and that the sole difference lies in the varying responses of the reader, who only can provide a larger perspective.

2. Harington and Allegorie

Bacon is not wholly successful in charting the course of an allegorical genre as it breaks off from the mode of interpretation, and earlier critics are even more nebulous on the difference between allusion and parable. Harington's Orlando Furioso, translated in the decades before Bacon's Instauration and the King James version of the Bible, exhibits confusion in its explication of Ariosto. McNulty

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points out the extent to which Harington relies on the commentaries of Fornari and Bononome (xxvii), on whose models Harington furnishes each canto with a fourfold reading of the senses in which the poem is to be taken. Whereas we would be inclined to say that Harington thought Ariosto had written an allegorical fable, to which he was supplying the interpretation, this temptation is not, in fact, justified by Harington's system of classification. The rubric under which falls the allegorical interpretation he calls, canto after canto, not the interpretation, but the "allegorie." As in the example from Galatians, there is still a feeling leftover in Harington that the fable and the commentary together make up the allegory. The other meanings of the poem are described under the headings of the "morall," the "history," and the "allusion," by which Harington seems to mean a literary allusion in the way it was subsequently used by literary critics.

What do we normally mean by allusion? The happy ending to the tale of Ariodante and Genevra in the fourth and fifth cantos, which we are aware of as a possible source for Shakespeare's Much Ado, is changed to notes of woe by Spenser's Phedon, whom no Renaldo nor Dogberry saves from catastrophe (2.4.3-36). Just as we recognize similarities in the plot structures of all three, so Harington also observes the episode in Ariosto to share elements in common with verses of Turberville and a story in "Alciats duello"

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(69). Harington remarks that the transformation of Astolfo into a myrtle by the enchantress Alcina in the sixth canto derives from the Odyssean Circe (80), and that in the seventh, "The comming of Melissas to Rogero alludeth to the comming of Mercurie to Aeneas in Virgil who was then at Carthage stayed by the love of Dydo as Rogero was here by Alcyna" (88). Harington, however, does not pick up on the fact that Melissa in Ariosto, unlike the promptings of Mercury by Virgil's Jupiter, is sent by Bradamante.

Harington, like Puttenham and Sidney, is aware of a tradition of long narrative poetry spanning the ages, but neither they, unlike the Italian critics, explicitly attempt to differentiate romance from epic, or the kind of story told by Ovid from that by Virgil. Ovid borrows from Virgil, and Spenser borrows from Ariosto's romance of Alcina and Rogero, when he deflects attention from Acrasia's enchantment of Verdant onto his rescuer Guyon. But who sends Guyon on his mission? Gloriana is named as having chosen Guyon to succor the Palmer's complaints of a "Fay" (2.2.43), but the enchantress was already identified by Amauia, when she tells of having gone to save her husband dressed "in Palmers weed" (2.1.52). Mortdant and Amauia encapsulate in brief the adventure of Guyon and his Palmer. Yet the latter pair have the advantage of the former's story--or Ariosto's--in addition to Gloriana's inspiration, when, outside the Bower of Bliss and seemingly of its own

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accord, "Now gins this goodly frame of Temperance / Fairly to rise" (2.12.1).

Harington uses the word "allusion" familiarly on the whole, but the "allegorie" he discovers for each canto sometimes skews the parallel. In the fourth canto, the figure of Atlant had been explicated "by many of his gestures and actions . . . [to] signifie Cupid or that fond fancie that we call love" (56). He goes on under the heading of the "allegorie" to note similar passages in Ovid and Petrarch corresponding to the Atlante's victims and the narrator's description of the wings of the hippograph. The "craggie, headlong, and unpleasant" track to the wizard's castle is also noted as being similar to the opening of Dante's Commedia, but Harington's notice falls under the heading of "allegorie." Under the heading of the "allusion," Harington has nothing to say. What do we make of this confusion? That the classical personification of love figured by Cupid, and refashioned in Ariosto's Atlante, is allegorical? Or that Ovid, Dante, and Petrarch are not in the same league with Homer and Virgil? Is it careless exuberance in this instance that causes Harington to mix his categories up, just as at other times the "morall" and the "historie" incroach upon the other senses? He sounds like a literary critic when he explicates what an allegorical personification stands for, or when he cites literary sources for Ariosto in the classics. But when he calls the

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sources for an episode in Orlando Furioso its "allegorie," as if a myth were an irreducible unit of meaning, Harington's allegorie and allusion, like Bacon's parable and allusion, begin to appear to be two sides of the same thing: the one, needful of explication; the other, straightforwardly speaking for itself.

Atlante alludes to nothing for Harington. Conversely, in the episode of Ariodante and Genevra, Harington finds "Allegorie there is none in this booke at all" (69). Yet Harington had no difficulty reading Cupid into Atlante (whose castle, indeed, is the prototypical singles' bar); he found Alcina's island to signify "the pleasure and vanities of this world" (79); and he saw Erifila symbolizing "covetousnesse" (80). It is therefore surprising that he can find no special significance for the deception practiced on Ariodante by Polinesso, when Shakespeare and Spenser were so obviously taken with the lover's testimony that "His death should show that he to much had seene" (64). Polinesso's lust and jealousy, and his desire for retaliation, is particularly externalized in the motiveless malignity of Don John in Shakespeare's drama. And Spenser, on the other hand, reduces the dramatic points of view of Dallinda and Renaldo to the single perspective of Phedon, who has also seen too much, and whose wrath finds its outlet in Furor. Only the Palmer keeps Phedon from merging with his double, his "restored humanity" (Alpers 69) scarcely

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differing from the given moral exemplum.

In the paratexts accompanying the Orlando Furioso, Harington struggles with isolating allegory from allusion. While the intermingling of categories sometimes upsets the critical balance, his search for allegory is usually restricted to Ariosto's use of personifications, so that, for example, "Logestilla in Allegorie is taken for vertue" (122). The "Apologie of Poetrie" prefacing his translation, however, reminds us that Harington is writing at the tail end of an epoch in which all literature, i.e., epic narrative, was read allegorically. In defending Ariosto against those who, like Cornelius Agrippa, condemn the vanity and superfluity of literature, Harington writes:

> But sith we live with men and not with saints and because few men can embrace this strict and stoicall divinitie, or rather indeed for that the holy Scriptures in which those high mysteries of our salvation are contained are a deepe and profound studie and not subject to everie weake capacitie, no nor to the hightest wits and judgments except they be first illuminat by Gods spirit or intructed by his teachers and preachers, therefore we do first read some other authors, making them as it were a looking glasse to the eyes of our minde, and then after we have gathered more strength, we enter into profounder studies of

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> higher mysteries, having first as it were enabled our eyes by long beholding the sunne in a bason of water at last to looke upon the sunne it selfe.(3)

Just as the reader of literature must look to the instructive value of literature in preparing to understand scripture aright, so had Moses received coaching from the Egyptians, and Daniel from the Chaldeans, before God found them fit vessels for prophetic utterance. The very usefulness of allegory undermines its existence, and it prevents us from re-reading the gloss to the first canto as a misprint: "For the Allegorie in this Canto I find not much to be said except one should be so curious to search for an allegorie where none is intended by the Author him self" (28). Searching for allegory is good practice even when it isn't there.

In his classification of the different senses in which to take the ancient poets, Harington makes no mention of allusion:

> First of all for the litterall sence (as it were the utmost barke or ryne) they set downe, in manner of an historie, the acts and notable exploits of some persons worthy memorie; then in the same fiction, as a second rine and somewhat more fine as it were nearer to the pith and marrow, they place the Morall sence, profitable for the active life of man, approving vertuous

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> actions and condemning the contrarie. Manie times also under the selfesame words they comprehend some true understanding of Naturall Philosophie or somtimes of politike governement and now and then of divinitie, and these same sences that comprehend so excellent knowledge we call the Allegorie which *Plutarch* defineth to be when one thing is told and by that another is understood. (5)

The story of Perseus provides an especially rich example that Harington explicates on all three levels, and then some. The historical level concerns the destruction of a tyrant by a prince, who "by the participation of Jupiters vertues that were in him . . . was exalted by men up into heaven." The moral signification of the tale is the triumph of virtue over vice in a wise man. The tale's "natural allegory" illustrates that "the mind of man being gotten by God . . . ascendeth up to the understanding of heavenly things." The "more high and heavenly Allegorie" of the tale shows how "heavenly nature, daughter of Jupiter, procuring with her continuall motion corruption and mortalitie in the inferior bodies, severed it selfe at last from these earthly bodies and flew up on high and there remaineth for ever." And lastly, he gives us a demonstration of the myth's "Theological Allegorie":

> [T]he angelicall nature, daughter of the most high

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> God the creator of all things, killing and overcomming all bodily substance, signified by Gorgon, ascended into heaven; the like infinite Allegories I could pike out of other Poeticall fictions, save that would avoid tediousnes.

His fear of boredom on the reader's behalf is well-placed, for we balk at the fine-toothed discriminations between some of the levels as so much bandying about with words. And for this reason, Harington's cognisance of Ariosto's imitations of the ancients is all the more striking.

The attribution of Ariosto's sources is a departure from allegoresis and a movement towards literary criticism. Ariosto's religious advantage over the heathen poets--with their "false Gods and of them so many fowle deeds, their contentions, their adulteries" (11)--seems to be giving Harington the freedom not read everything allegorically in Orlando Furioso. His commentary suggests that there are limits to allegoresis, which boundary is illustrated by the precarious equipoise between the poem's allegory and its allusion in the canto-by-canto paratexts. Allusion is not mentioned in the "Briefe and Summarie Allegorie" appended to the work, which recapitulates the salient points made in individual cantos and deals with larger issues such as the fact that Alcina and Logistilla were sisters. And unlike the "Apologie," the "Summarie" does not address allegory as a way of reading that prepares us for scripture, but focuses

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strictly on the use of personifications.

Harington's definition of allusion appears only in the "Advertisement to the Reader," where it is given out to be "fictions . . . applied to some things done or written of in times past, as also where it may be applied without offence to the time present. But these happen in verie few bookes" (17). Harington says that Ariosto occasionally aligns himself with the ancients by alluding to older works only when it is safe to do so. It is a tenuous definition, as if recognizing a purely literary imitation involved the most avant-garde kind of thinking. And after the tenth canto, Harington explains: "In Angelica tyde to the rock and delivered by Rogero he alludes manifestly to the tale in Ovid of Andromade and Perseus who with his shield turned the beholders into stones" (122). The Ovidian myth of Perseus was full enough of allegorical import when Harington reconciled it to Christian doctrine in the prefatory "Apologie." Yet his explication of Ariosto's use of it in tenth canto makes no concession to content, as if something were lost in the translation. Harington gingerly treats Ariosto's adaptation of Ovid as an imitation of plot structure because he is fumbling with a literary approach to literature. Though he thought allegorizing to be a good exercise, Harington was, as Bacon would be, suspicious that not every interpretation put upon the ancients was justified. The vestiges of an allegorical approach to

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literature carry over in Harington's Ariosto, as they do in nearly every Renaissance translation of the classics. And his doubts about the over-determined readings of the past coincide with the act of translation itself, which presupposes a stable point of view from which to assimilate a lost culture.

Harington's sole explication of an epic simile comes in his "Summarie" of the poem. It is worth a glance, for it will provide a transition to Puttenham, and because it provides one final instance that allegory as genre was being extricated only with complications from the mode of interpretation. Reviewing Rogero's enchantment with Alcina and his subsequent rescue by Melissa, Harington understands the episode to mean "a man besotted in the fond pleasures of the world, entring into godly consideration with himself of his own estate, heareth . . . the devine inspiration of the grace of God calling him from the damned course of life to an honest and vertuous course" (560). Harington asserts that Ariosto raises our minds to similar heights of contemplation when he uses in another place, one of his many "divine similitudes":

> [M]en are carryed by inconsideration to their everlasting ruine without any striving even as haulkes are carryed hooded verie quietly, which if their sight were free would never leave bating till they had broken their lynes or utterly tyred

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themselves. . . . (561)

The example is called a "simile" in the marginalia, but no such comparison is to be found in the poem. And if we turn to the beginning of the eighth canto, in which Rogero flees from one of Alcina's men, we find the following image:

> This man did beare a faulcon on his fist
> With which he went on haulking day by day
> To Flie in field or river as he list:
> The countrie full of game still yeelded pray.
>
> (8.4)

The falconer, seated on horseback and accompanied by his spaniel, sends the bird in pursuit of the fugitive:

> And first he lets the faulcon take her flight,
> But Rabican as fast as she did flie. (8.6)

Next the dog, and then horse, are dispatched to chase after Rogero before the hunter himself enters the fray. Rogero, encumbered on all sides, fends off the bird, though "The hauke his head amazed with her wings" (8.10), and he has to resort to the magic shield to dazzle all his foes.

If this is the simile that Harington is remembering in his "Summarie," his memory is playing him tricks. He confuses a narrative image, or a similitude, with a simile. Moreover, the explication provided for the hooded hawk in the "Summarie" is the very inverse of the one given the unhooded falcon in the eighth canto, where Rogero's escape signified "a man reforming his course of life and flying

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from sensualitie and pleasure" (99). Of the bird, the dog, the horse, and the falconer, Harington wrote, "I take it that by these foure are ment the foure passions that most trouble the mynde when it begins to encline to vertue." In contrast, Rogero's shield symbolized "the light of understanding and the shining of true worthiness" (100). But in the "Summarie" the hooded bird stands for benightedness; Harington implies that the open-eyed bird in free flight symbolizes the mind in "godly consideration." Harington uses "hauke" as if it were interchangeable with the "falcon" in the "Summarie," and he recollects his earlier gloss by adding, "to say truth I needed not so curiously to have sought for such a hidden meaning in them when as the verie things themselves are untemperatly used by manie that they keepe them from vertues and more honourable actions" (561). This is quite a stunning reversal--the same episode provides two opposite meanings, one recondite and the other obvious--as if it had subsequently occurred to Harington that perhaps Rogero and the falconer were the one and the same with the readers of the poem. Earlier Harington read the figure of the bird to be a metaphor that concealed a meaning in need of explication; in retrospect he remembers only a similitude, or a simile, that provides an analogy straightforward in its signification.

What do we make of this doubleness? Harington cannot always decide if he needs to explicate Ariosto, since his

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meanings are sometimes obvious. Harington is split, but no more divided than C.S. Lewis, who treated allegory as an extended metaphor from the stance of the author but who, from the vantage of the reader, stressed that allegory was like a simile. Though Harington is a the threshold of making allegory a genre, the ebbing tide of allegorical interpretation exerts a backward pull on his forward looking mind. Harington is as scrupulous as Chapman throughout his translation in highlighting extended comparisons in the margin as they come along. He evinces a sense of wonder that is in excess of his ability to speak about particular similes, save from occasionally noting that one is from Virgil or that another is from Ovid. In sum, he is on the cusp between a critical sensibility and allegorical one: from the critical point of view in the Renaissance, similes were regarded as the imitations of somebody else's simile; from the allegorical point of view, they seem to have been thought visions, or the representation of the divine. The blurred line in Harington between simile and similitude, or between comparison and image, is important because subsequent critics try to straighten things out by discussing the Miltonic simile in terms of something he had seen, not something seen by Virgil.

3. Puttenham and Similitude

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Both Bacon and Harington were sensitive to the narrative structure of poetry: Bacon, when he argued that some stories were allegorical on the basis of their "frame and texture"; Harington in his recognition of Ariosto's sources. Their sensitivity to structure descends, I think, from a debt to the rhetoricians of the Renaissance, who, in the divorce they effect between style and content, make possible Pope's "What oft was *Thought*, but ne'er so well *Expresst*" ("Criticism" l. 298). Indeed, the thesis of Murrin's first book on allegory is that the rhetorical analyses of Wilson, Peachum, and Puttenham began to erode the sway of allegorical interpretation maintained with ever ebbing vigor by Nashe, Lodge, and Harington. I have spared the reader a closer examination of the rhetorician's take on the use of similes, since a treatise designed for the practical purposes of oratory would be the last place one might expect to find a link between allegory and extended comparisons. Yet the distinction we so readily admit between a narrative image and an epic simile, and which makes not only Patrick Hume but Harington sound so confused, is ambivalently present in Puttenham's 1589 Arte of English Poesie.

The figures or ornaments of poetry are grouped by Puttenham according to two kinds:

> [O]ne to satisfie and delight th'eare onely by a goodly outward shew set upon the matter with

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> wordes, and speaches smoothy and tunably running: another by certaine intendments or sense of such words and speaches inwardly working a stirre to the mind. . . . (142)

To musical figures of speech, Puttenham grants "enargia . . . because it giveth a glorious lustre and light"; to the figures serving "the conceit onely and not th'eare" belong the property of "energia . . . because it is wrought with a strong and vertuous operation" (143). Yet every figure, according to Puttenham, is "a noveltie of language evidently (and yet not absurdly) estranged from the ordinarie habite and manner of our dayly talke and writing" (159). The division between the two kinds are subsequently called the "auricular" (160) and the "sensable," because "of the figures which we call Sensable . . . they alter and affect the minde by alteration of sense, and first in single words" (178). While allegory and metaphor fall under the second category, simile does not.

Allegory, or the "sensable" figure of the "false semblant," is the "chief ringleader and captaine" of courtly figures wielded by counsellors, princes, and emperors, when they would "speak one thing and think another" (186). Though related to enigma, proverb, and irony, allegory is qualified by Puttenham to be "when we do speake in sence translative and wrested from the owne signification, neverthelesse applied to another not altogether contrary"

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(187). Allegory for Puttenham, as it was for Quintilian, is a "long and perpetuall Metaphore," which is similarly stated to be the "wresting of a single word from his owne right signification, to another not so naturall, but yet some affinitie or conveniencie with it" (178). Simile, on the other hand, is not so easily located, since Puttenham's comments are also direct heir to Quintilian's doubleness about classifying it with figures of speech and with figures of thought, such as analogy. In the Institutio Oratoria, Quintilian complicated matters by granting that "the invention of similes has also provided an admirable means of illuminating our descriptions. Some of these are designed for insertion among our arguments to help our proof, while others are devised to make our pictures yet more vivid" (8.3.72).

Simile in Puttenham is not discussed next to metaphor, or even under the rubric of sensable figures, but falls among another, more complex, group of figures to which the poet has recourse: the "rhetorical." Rhetorical figures "beautifie the language with eloquence and sententiousness" and "may execute both offices" of the auricular and sensable figures (196). After treating a host of rhetorical figures such as paradox, sententia, and prosopopeia, Puttenham comes to "similitude" or "resemblance":

> As well to a good maker and Poet as to an excellent perswader in prose, the figure of

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> Similitude is very necessary, by which we not onely bewtifie our tale, but also very much inforce and inlarge it. I say inforce because no one thing more prevaileth with all ordinary judgements than perswasion by similitude. (240)

Following Quintilian (5.11.22), Puttenham apportions similitude or resemblance into three kinds:

> as Resemblance by Pourtrait or Imagery, which the Greeks call Icon, Resemblance morall or misticall, which they call Parabola, and Resemblance by example, which they call Paradigma. (241)

The word parabola should set off an alarm in the mind, for Puttenham is going to approach allegory from a new direction. Indeed, his treatment of icon already indicates how foreign his understanding of rhetoric is to us. Puttenham is no better than Hume in keeping separate the line between simile and metaphor, and between a comparison and an image:

> [W]hen we liken an humane person to another in countenaunce, stature, speach or other qualitie, it is not called bare resemblance, but resemblaunce by imagerie or pourtrait, alluding to the painters terme, who yeldeth to th'eye a visible representation of the thing he describes and painteth in his table. (243)

Likening Belphoebe to Diana is an icon, and so is the poetic

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representation, for example, of kingly "wisdome, bewtie, and magnanimite" by the use of iconographic similitudes drawn from serpents, lions, and angels. Icons, however, need not draw only from human and animal forms, but can be taken "of any other naturall thing, bearing a proportion of similitude, as to liken yealow to gold, white to silver, red to the rose, soft to silke, hard to the stone and such like" (244). He gives us an example:

> Of silver was her forehead hye,
> Her browes two bowes of hebenie
> Her tresses trust were to behold
> Frizled and fine as fringe of gold.

Puttenham reads "silver" and "hebenie" in the first two lines as iconographic similitudes, whereas we would call them metaphors. Silver, it seems, was less fixed in Puttenham's mind as an icon symbolizing fairness; instead it was implied comparison of the forehead to the metal which for Puttenham could be said to be iconographic. The gulf between Puttenham's perspective and ours is monumental: the silver forehead and ebony brows which we understand to be a metaphoric image is understood by Puttenham to be an abbreviated comparison, "a proportion of similitude," in which the quality of fairness is unstated.

The discussion of parable under the heading of "Similitude" runs counter to Puttenham's previous analysis of allegory:

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> [W]hensoever by your similitude ye will seeme to teach any moralitie or good lesson by speeches misticall and darke, or farre fett, under a sence metaphoricall applying one naturall thing to another, or one case to another, inferring by them a like consequence in other case the Greekes call it Parabola, which terme is also by custome accepted of us: neverthelessse we may call him in English the resemblance misticall: as when we liken a young childe to a greene twigge which ye may easilie bende every way ye list: or an old man who laboureth with continuall infirmities, to a drie and dricksie oke. Such parables were all the preachings of Christ in the Gospell, as those of the wise and foolish virgins, of the evil steward, of the labourers in the vineyard, and a number more. And they may be fayned as well as true: as those fables of Aesope, and other apologies invented for doctrine sake by wise and grave men.
>
> (245)

Puttenham uses the flexible greene twig as an example of a metaphor that stands for a young child, just as Coleridge relied on the example of the cloud descending from the mountain in reference to Wellington. He is claiming, in much the way the Coleridge would, that the fables of Aesop are metaphors for their meanings, but only by the process of

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denying the analogical relationship already in place. The fables of Aesop were always printed with someone's interpretation of them, and the story and the moral together constituted an allegory--it is only by a backwards process of reasoning that we attempt to extricate the kernal from the rind. We say rind is a metaphor for the kernel, when, in fact, they come together. We only recognize allegory by virtue of the juxtaposition, or the comparison of one thing to another, or that which Puttenham himself is calling a kind of "similitude."

Puttenham's notes on parable are inconsistant with what he had earlier said. Allegory had been defined to be an extended metaphor, but now parable is described as a similitude. Furthermore, there seems to be no difference between simile and similitude, which are as fuzzy in Puttenham's theory as, a century later, they were in Patrick Hume's practice. Before expatiating on the difference between icon, parable, and paradigm, Puttenham gives two following two examples for the general class of similitude:

> But as the watrie showres delay the raging wind,
> So doeth good hope cleane put away dispaire out of my mind.

And:

> Then as the striken deere, withdrawes himselfe alone,
> So do I seek some secret place, where I may make

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my mone. (241)

These "similitudes," so far as I can tell, are "similes," such of the sort criticized by Vida in terms of avoiding Homer and copying Virgil, and of the kind Hobbes later treated as the representation of something seen by the author. The middle ground occupied by Puttenham suggests a transitional stance, that everything in poetry which is visually realized was thought at one time to be a sort of comparison, whether or not the poet chose to make his borrowings clear. Indeed, one begins to wonder if anyone in the early Renaissance had conceived of poetic imagery in contradistinction to what a rhetorically-oriented critic like Puttenham had written of similitude. If all such images were regarded an extension of simile, originally thought to be an invention or the imitation of a precedent, is not such a sensibility remarkably close to the poststructuralist description of allegory, but cloaked in the terminology of the sixteenth century?

4. Boccaccio and Sidney

When I said that the allegorical idea revealed by Spenser's extended comparisons was located in between the simile and the narrative, I was thinking not only about Plato, but about Boccaccio. Boccaccio defended poetry from charges of immorality on account of the similarities he

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perceived between scripture and the meanings of pagan myth. But he never gives the impression that he thinks literary allegory to be a genre of poetry separate from other kinds of written compositions, save for the book of revealed truth. Allegory and epic were as synonymous for him as they were centuries later for Le Bossu. Indeed, the strictly moral lessons deduced by Le Bossu are a distillation of one level of a much broader range of interpretations, such as were compiled together in Boccaccio's mythographic encyclopedia of the 1360's. The Genealogia Deorum Gentilium defines poetic fiction to be "a form of discourse, which, under the guise of invention, illustrates or proves an idea; and as its superficial aspect is removed, the meaning of the author is clear" (48). Insofar as similes also "prove" or "illustrate" an idea, we have in Boccaccio the rudiments for what Le Bossu and Hobbes were going to say about their function. The problem was not that the Le Bossu and Hobbes were literal-minded--the problem is that since then we have assumed that being literal-minded is incompatible with being allegorical-minded. And while the mode of interpreting the pagans allegorically in Boccaccio was related to readings of scripture, the difference turns out to be crucial.

Boccaccio keeps calling fiction a "veil" or a "cover," just as Bernard had used the words *integuement* and *involucrum* in application to the Aeneid. As the veil of the Aeneid hid meanings to which Bernard had access, so

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Boccaccio gives the impression that the polysemous senses he brings to light for the ancients are the allegories. To the same myth addressed by Harington's preface, the opening pages of the Genealogia give an even more exalted reading:

> According to the poetic fiction, Perseus, son of Jupiter, killed the Gorgon, and flew away victorious into the air. Now, this may be understood superficially in its literal or historical sense. In the moral sense it shows a wise man's triumph over vice and his attainment of virtue. Allegorically it figures the pious man who scorns worldly delight and lifts his mind to heavenly things. It admits also an anagogical sense, since it symbolizes Christ's victory over the Prince of this World, and his Ascension. But all these secondary meanings, by whatever name, are essentially allegorical. For 'allegory' is . . . so called being alien from the literal or historical sense. (1.3)

Bacon reduces the myth in De sapientia to a parable about the efficacious conduct of war (832), though the express connection in Boccaccio between Perseus and Christ is already submerged by the time of Harington's Apologie. The connection represents the sort of inspired analogizing that Sandys only allows us to intuit of Ovid's redaction of the dragon-slayer, when he calls the victor, "the reasonable

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soule," and the monster, "the inchantments of bodily beauty" (221). It is sorely tempting once again, as a literary critic, to say that Boccaccio thought the Ovidian story to be an allegory; but his wording, "It admits," indicates a rather different possibility: that the Christian symbolism found in Perseus was the allegorization.

Anticipating the Florentine Neoplatonists, Boccaccio takes seriously that which Socrates half-jestingly describes in the Ion to be the divine intoxication of the poets:

> This poetry, which ignorant triflers cast aside, is a sort of fervid and exquisite invention, with fervid expression, in speech or writing, of that which the mind has invented. It proceeds from the bosom of God. . . . The fervor of poesy . . . impels the soul to a longing for utterance; it brings forth strange and unheard-of creations of the mind; it arranges these meditations in a fixed order, adorns the whole composition with unusual interweaving of words and thoughts; and thus it veils truth in a fair and fitting garment of fiction. (39)

And at the back of "strange and unheard-of creations," we hear Sidney's chariot drawing near. Though Sidney more forcibly distinguishes the vatic from the artificial element of poetry, the two are more nearly one for Boccaccio.

In trying to guess at the foundations of poetry,

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Boccaccio weighs the contesting claims of the Hebrews, the Chaldeans, and Greeks. Boccaccio again sounds like Sidney when he addresses the Pentateuch as a heroic poem written down by Moses, though early church fathers had already insisted that all of the tropes of the rhetoricians were present in the Bible. De doctrina (3.29) of Augustine follows Jerome in arguing that "the authors of our Scriptures use all those forms of expression which grammarians call by the Greek name *tropes*" (567). Like Milton's Reason of Church-Government (818), Augustine justifies the use of rhetoric by Christian teachers, because the weakness of man's reason renders him incapable of crediting truth unless she is elegantly dressed (4.2). Nevertheless, Augustine, unlike Milton, is alienated from a working concept of a secular heroic poem.

Nor does Boccaccio have a fully articulated schema for the operations of mimesis, but he signals an important step forward towards Sidney in his disposition to believe that Greek poetry began in a devotional stance towards nature. About the Greeks, he writes:

> While they were still rude, some of them, above the rest in intellectual power, began to wonder at the works of their Mother Nature; and as they meditated they came gradually to believe in some one Being, by whose operation and command all visible things are governed and ordered. (43)

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The first priests added speech to their religious ritual:

> And since it would appear inappropriate to address the Deity as you would a farmhand, an underling, or a familiar friend, the wiser among them wanted a polished and artistic manner of speech devised. . . . Some . . . under the prompting stimulus of the Divine Mind, invented strange songs in regular time and measure. . . To strengthen the authority of these songs, they enclosed the high mysteries of things divine in a covering of words, with the intention that the adorable majesty of such things should not become an object of too common knowledge, and thus fall into contempt. (43)

In advance of Homer, mythical poets such as Orpheus, Musaeus, and Linus, sang hymns to one god. Boccaccio implies that the full complement of the Olympian deities--descended as they were from the Titans, and before them Earth, Sky, and Chaos--were but stories screening a monotheistic view of the cosmos. The suggestion again is Neoplatonic in origin, because Plato's Socrates averred worshipping the gods in all their plurality, though he had warned against thinking of them in the way they were represented by Homer.

The authority of Augustine, however, and before him, Paul, worked against the idea that pagans were really monotheists, and Boccaccio forebears expressing such a

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fanciful conceit directly:

> Nevertheless I cannot believe that the sublime effects of this great art were first bestowed upon Musaeus, or Linus, or Orpheus, however ancient, unless, as some say, Moses and Musaeus were one and the same. . . . I think the poets of the Gentiles in their poetry--not perhaps without understanding--followed in the steps of these prophets; but whereas the holy men were filled with Holy Ghost, and wrote under His impulse, the others were prompted by mere energy of mind, whence such a one is called 'seer.' (46)

Augustine's De civitate Dei had condemned the pagans gods as devils laying snares for mankind (9.22-3), and Boccaccio avoids identifying the "mere energy of mind" with a kind of demonic possession. The energy still came from "the bosom of God" since there were enough hints that demons and angels were both spiritual ministers of the true God, notwithstanding the distortions of they underwent at the hands of the pagan poets.

It is for this reason that Boccaccio attests that the pagan poets were "theologians." They "were the first to ponder theology; and though they got their name from no knowledge or lore of the true God, yet at the advent of true theologians they could not lose it" (122). In worshiping nature, the first poet-priests had the right idea, but not

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the right name. They represented the activity of a plurality of gods according to its physical, civil, and "mythical" aspects (121). Physical theology comprised both moral wisdom and scientific learning; civil theology pertained to the laws of the commonwealth; the mythical aspect of pagan theology, Boccaccio admits, was better suited "to the use of the comic stage" in its ribaldry. Osgood notes that the hierarchy of meanings found in Boccaccio's mythography is derived from Augustine's schematization of Euhemerist, Stoic, and Pythagorean readings of Homer (xviii). Yet Augustine was firm about the pagan gods being demons, while Boccaccio more favorably thinks of them as a species of angels. That is, the same argument cut both ways: the angels or demons of pagan mythology could be used as a defense of poetry and as evidence for its condemnation.

Boccaccio anticipates Sidney but is also unlike him. Boccaccio foregrounds the poet's inspiration, whereas the poem's execution holds Sidney's fascination. Boccaccio suggests that the "idea" underlying poetry can only be ascertained by working through its formal aspect; Sidney develops his "idea" into a "fore-conceit" by turning a spatial analogy into a temporal one:

> [F]or every understanding knoweth the skill of each artificer standeth in that Idea or foreconceit of the work, and not in the work

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> itself. And that the poet hath that Idea is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he had imagined them. (108)

Instead of defending poetry on the basis of its presumed similarity to scripture, Sidney inverts the emphasis by stressing the artifice of the Creator and his Creation. Sidney is only trying to reconcile the Aristotelian version of mimesis to the Platonic one when he says that poets don't lie because they never affirmed the creation of a ideal world. It is an excellent defense of poetry, but a recipe for disaster in understanding allegory because it entails knowledge of writer's purposes in the explication of his work. The model of authorial intention headed allegory towards the translation of abstract concepts into picture language, which, we have seen, has not proven satisfactory in explaining how a poem such as The Faerie Queene was written.

The similarities between Boccaccio and Sidney are illuminating, because they reveal how much the former is steeped in an allegorical mode of interpretation. According to Treip, "the outer dress of poetry, its language and fictive detail" are for Boccaccio "signs or figures of a further reality which preexists the poem as a higher transcendental truth" (44). The word "preexists," as Treip uses it, is nettling, for if poetry proceeds from "the bosom of God," temporal relations as we normally understand them,

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do not play a role between the poet and the poem. Triep would have that it Boccaccio conceives the idea as anterior: "poetic fiction not only illustrates an idea . . . it seems to do so through some natural internal correspondence between the preexistent idea and the poetic fiction, this presumably to be achieved through some particular qualities or forms of speech or perhaps of narrative structures" (45). Is Triep's focus on the anteriority of the idea or the "foreconceit" a reading of Sidney into Boccaccio? She is nevertheless right to fix on the fact that, for Boccaccio, the poetic idea becomes visible through "some particular qualities or forms of speech or perhaps of narrative structures." Epic similes provide just such a structure in allowing us to recognize we are reading a narrative, because they provide the moment at which the narrator turns from absorption in his material to provide a direct address to his listeners.

The simile in the epic narrative, like a placard reading Thebes above a London proscenium, constitutes what Rifaterre calls a "diegesis" (127). As a diegetic device bringing out the fictionality of the fiction, the role of the epic simile can in this light also be seen to fulfill the same role as the chorus in Aeschylean drama, insofar as it, according to Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy, is a mask through which the audience is allowed to see the action:

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> This process of the tragic chorus is the *dramatic* proto-phenomenon: to see oneself transformed before one's own eyes and to begin to act as if one had actually entered into another body, another character. This process stands at the beginning of the origin of drama. . . . In this magic transformation the Dionysian reveler sees himself as a satyr, *as a satyr, in turn, he sees the god,* which means that in his metamorphosis he beholds another vision outside himself, as the Apollonian complement of his own state. (64)

Defining anew an allegorical function for the epic simile is a valuable detour because it helps make sense of de Man's entanglement with Schlegel and his comment that irony, ever opposed to allegory, is a "permanent parabasis" (1996:179).

The word *parabasis* derives from a choric device in the Old Comedy, in which, according to Scaliger, the poet practiced abuse on society in order "that the deterrent fear of a bad reputation would reconcile men to virtue, and incite them to fruitful living" (42). The satirical ends of the comedies of Crates and Stratis were achieved by the means of topical allusion to the playwright's contemporaries and "although this persecution might be introduced at any point where the play warranted it, it was preferably assigned to the chorus." Scaliger notes how, in the evolution from Old to Middle comedy, the role of the chorus

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changed, just as Nietzsche witnessed the increasing extent to which the chorus participated in the unfolding of the tragic action in the shift from Aeschylus to Euripides. Scaliger writes: "In place of the chorus, the Middle Comedy employed what was known as the parabasis, in which passages from other poets, written with no thought of offense and without a suspicion of calling down a storm on themselves, were ridiculed" (44). As a device related to the role of the chorus in either ancient tragedy or comedy, the function of the epic simile, thus, serves a two-fold purpose, either for allegory or irony. It can either emphasize the fictionality of the fiction by being a mask through we which recognize the divine; or it can operate as a parabasis or topical allusion, such as we saw the chorus deliver in Henry V, or we find in Paradise Lost. We ask of Milton, "What does it mean for you to allude to Columbus in a simile, or that your similes are better integrated with your narrative--more apt--than Spenser's?" But the question may only be the obverse of Nietzsche's exploration of the changed significance of the chorus in Euripides, when it ceased functioning as a mask and "brought the spectator onto the stage and thus qualified him to pass judgment on the drama" (79).

Let us stay with Boccaccio, however, for whom the sense that what we are reading is a fiction is equally important:

> I insist that . . . poets are not liars. I had

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> supposed that a lie was a certain very close counterfeit of the truth which served to destroy the true and substitute the false. . . . Poetic fiction has nothing in common with any variety of falsehood, for it is not a poet's purpose to deceive anybody with his inventions; furthermore poetic fiction differs from a lie in that in most instances it bears not only no close resemblance to the literal truth, but no resemblance at all; on the contrary, it is quite out of harmony and agreement with the literal truth. (63)

Paradoxically, the stories of Homer and Virgil have access to truth the more the appearance of them radically departs from scripture. Both biblical and pagan stories are alike in using parable, though the latter kind lacks the credibility of sacred history: "For where history is lacking, neither one concerns itself with the superficial possibility, but what the poet calls fable or fiction our theologians have named figure" (49).

The authority of sacred history as a literal truth for Boccaccio is all but unimaginable for us to fathom in retrospect, but important to try to envision, because a place in Boccaccio's world opens up for poetry in the space "where history is lacking." Poetry is not the same as scripture for Boccaccio, but the poet's reliance on describing the same sort of things as were written about in

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scripture necessitates a link between the two. Charles Osgood observes Boccaccio's debts to earlier allegorists and suggests that his advance over someone like Fulgentius consisted in not only questioning some of the older interpretations put upon the ancients, but in striving after a chronology for different variants of the same story, arranged according to their place of provenance (xviiff). Yet in following poetry to its footing in a religious impulse or a devotional stance, Boccaccio himself relies heavily on a relatively recent myth--that of Nature.

The idea of devotional attitude before natural phenomena, the self-same wonder and astonishment automatically assumed by anthropological investigations into primitive religion, is a late development. Before the medieval theologians wrote about it, the concept of nature had evolved slowly over the course of the hexameral tradition in antique literature in connection to Venus--the muse of Lucretius's philosophical poem. Ovid's myth of origins suspends a decision as to whether a god or nature gives order to the strife of chaos, and by the time of Claudian's unfinished tapestry of Proserpine, the warring elements are depicted as having been knit together by Nature as a cosmic organizing principle (Curtius 106). These pagan works prepare the groundwork the philosophical lyrics of Bernard's Cosmographia and Alain's De planctu naturae and Anticlaudianus, which are intensely allegorical in their

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representations of an idealized nature and the perfect man, and in which the Created takes the place of the Creator as the fit subject matter for poetry.

Thomas Aquinas inadvertently provides a succinct rationale for the philosophical poeticizing of Bernard and Alain. In the Summa Theologica (1.1.10), Aquinas argues that the Word of God is polysemous, but only on account of the fact that nature, to which it in part refers, is itself multivalent:

> The author of Holy Scripture is God, in Whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), by also by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the property that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. (18)

It is a strange argument for the finding out a fourfold level of meanings in the Bible, quite unlike that of Augustine, for whom the internal contradictions of scripture necessarily spell out charity (De doctrina 3.10).

Augustine, too, had recognized two orders of signs--the natural and the conventional--but he is without Aquinas's overarching concept of *natura naturans* under which to differentiate "wood, stone, cattle" from the agreed-upon words of men for signifying them (523). The "things" of nature, which are the immediate concern of one form of

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instruction from God, are only learned about through signs, but it is a semiotics derived from the truth of Scripture. Nature for Augustine was not yet the vicegerent of God, as was represented by Bernard and Alain, nor did she yet signify "the divinely ordained principles of replenishment, continuity, and plenitude," such as was depicted by Jean de Meun (Economou 111). While some of the "things" of the world are for enjoyment and others are for use, Augustine argues that the latter only serve the attainment of former, because "the true objects of enjoyment, then, are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (524).

In between Augustine and Aquinas, nature takes on a reality as a generative principle, independent of, though still subordinate to, its Creator, such as is represented by Spenser's "Mutabilitie." Yet Nature's polysemousness, which appears on the surface to be used in the Summa as evidence for the existence of metaphor in scripture, scarcely seems credible as the grounds for Aquinas's argument: how can the typological correspondences linking the two testaments can be proved on account of the prior, multivalent meanings, say, of the Red Sea? But Aquinas is, I think, arguing the reverse. The truth of scriptural history had already revealed to him that the Red Sea had a second meaning under the new dispensation, and the fact that the Red Sea can have different meanings under the Old and New Laws justifies finding a hierarchy of varying

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figurations in other passages of sacred text. It also grounds studies investigating the order of cause and effect, or the relation of part to whole, in the natural histories of lakes, rivers, seas, and other bodies of water. Aquinas, thus, provides a basis for recognizing what is already prescient in Bernard and Alain: that nature, by the time of Boccaccio and Chaucer, will come out from behind scholastic philosophy into an existence of its own, as the inspiration behind ancient religion, and as the source of material for poets who supply stories "where history is lacking."

Aquinas affords a near-contemporary yardstick for measuring the achievements of the Cosmographia and De planctu in terms of science or natural history. Bernard's allegory consisted in finding a parallel between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost of the Christian trinity with the three Neoplatonic hypostases, the last being the world-soul or nature (Economou 63), whereas

Alain revises his version of the creation in order to write a natural history of the cosmos, a cosmos still given of the Creator and with which he seeks to bring the Timaeus into alignment, but which yet accounts for the presence of death or mutability in the world (Wetherbee 13). Yet however important they were in terms of the historical evolution of concepts about Nature, the Cosmographia and De planctu were, and are, terminally dull as a narratives.

The strength, on the other hand, of the Commedia, whose

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narrator was before himself in every line as much as the speaker of Paradise Lost, lies partly in Dante's affinity with Dido. The reproach of Beatrice at the top of Mount Purgatory comes wholly unexpectedly--it dramatically enacts the narrator's having been of the devil's party while pretending not to have known it. The narrator's Dido-like sympathy for the tears and sorrows of mortal existence makes possible his faint when he hears the passion of Francesca da Rimini. In the allegorical glosses of the theologians, on the other hand, Dido was ever a symbol to be dispatched post-haste. And while sheer pageantry and excessive description sink the action of Bernard's and Alain's lyrics, Dante's strength follows upon his having been moved, like Francesca, by the books he has read. "It is impossible to feel them without becoming a portion of that beauty which we contemplate," writes Shelley of the tradition of courtly love poetry while trying to imagine himself as Dante (128). For Dante is an aesthete and the final superiority of his Commedia over all the allegories of the theologians consists, like the wall-paintings at Carthage, in the poem's having allowed other characters to tell their tales.

Nevertheless, the allegories of the poets, such as were defined by Dante (Convivio 2.12) and Boccaccio, hardly correspond to Shelley's understanding of the aesthetic experience in reading the Commedia or the Decameron. Dante and Boccaccio still lack the wherewithal to justify

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literature on the level of theory, except by reaffirming an analogy with scripture. Yet Statius's personification of nature as the mother of piety (11.465), accounts, I think, for Dante's curious valorization of the Thebiad. Dante's aesthetic reading of the Aeneid follows upon a changed perception of nature in the Middle Ages, which still betrays its roots in pagan myth in Spenser's "Mutabilitie," but it also paves the way for a return of mimesis in the formulation of a literary defense of poetry.

5. Macrobius and Tasso

The allegorical approach to literature in the Middle Ages begins to break down the moment nature is understood as having been granted a history separate from, and a reality independent of, scriptural myth. Like the other Renaissance critics surveyed thus far, Tasso is divided on the subject concerning allegory as a genre and allegory as a mode. He provides a belated allegorization to his own Gerusalemme liberata in 1576, glossing the figures of Tancredi and Rinaldo as the irascible and concupiscible horses governed by the Plato's reasonable charioteer, Godfrey (157). Yet Tasso's allegorization was literally appended to his romantic epic after it was finished, in the manner that the ancient fables were suspected to have been treated by Bacon.

In the Discorsi dell'arte poetica of 1570, Tasso had

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more sanely described the fecundity of the poet's conceptions:

> In this marvelous domain of God that we call the world we see the sky sprinkled and adorned with so great a variety of stars; and, descending from realm to realm we see the air and ocean full of birds and fish, and the earth a hospice to so many animals both wild and tame, and on earth streams and fountain and lakes and meadows and fields and forests and mountains, and here fruits and flowers, there ice and snow, here dwellings and farmland, there wastelands an emptiness. Nonetheless, the earth, which encloses so many and diverse things in its bosom, is one; and its form and essence are one; and one, the knot by which it joins and binds its parts in discordant concord. While it lacks nothing, nothing in it is excessive and unnecessary. Just so, I think an excellent poet--who is called divine for no other reason except that by working like the supreme Artificer he comes to share in his divinity--can shape a poem. (131)

A few years later he defends the Gerusalemme out of a paranoid fear he had written something heretical, but the earlier Discorsi offer a sober-minded account of the difference between romance and epic. More importantly, his

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discussion of mimesis posits an experience of nature as mediating between man's understanding of his relationship to his art.

Macrobius had written similarly on Virgil, though an important difference between the Saturnalia and the Discoursi only underscores the difference between allegoresis and literary criticism. Macrobius also praises the fecundity of invention in the Aeneid:

> And thus it was that with the universal mother, Nature, for his only guide, he wove the pattern of his work--just as in music different sounds are combined to from a single harmony. For in fact, if you look closely into the nature of the universe, you will find a striking resemblance between the handiwork of the divine craftsman and that of our poet. Thus, just as Vergil's language is perfectly adapted to every kind of character, being now concise, now copious, now dry, now ornate, and now a combination of all these qualities, sometimes flowing smoothly or at other times raging like a torrent; so it is with the earth itself, for here it is rich with crops and meadows, there rough with forests and crags, here you have dry sand, here, again, flowing streams, and parts lie open to the boundless sea.

So far, so good, but Macrobius goes on to add:

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> I beg you to pardon me and not charge me with exaggeration in thus comparing Vergil with nature, for I think that I might fairly say that he has combined in his single self the diverse styles of the ten Attic orators, and yet not say enough. (285)

The last line unnerves us: although he and Tasso appear to being saying something similar, Macrobius ends by subordinating nature to the imitation of Attic oratory. That is, the great cornucopia of nature to be found in Virgil is not distinct in Macrobius's mind from the number of ways in which Aeneid subsumes the styles of previous authors into a polished whole.

Though Macrobius astutely discerns that the Aeneid combines "the wanderings" and "the fighting" of the two Homeric poems (287), the Saturnalia falls short of literary criticism because it makes no concession to a mimetic function for art. The illusory knowledge for which Plato banished Homer is upheld by Macrobius to be possessed by Virgil, who blends the know-how of carpentry and navigation with the skills of the astronomer, botanist, and physiologist since he "is an authority in every branch of learning" (107). Macrobius is more reticent than his Neoplatonist teachers had been in exposing the philosophy of Homer, and he sees, of all the liberal arts in which Virgil was master, the consummate refinement of rhetoric that "was

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not without a foreknowledge . . . a prescience born of a disposition divine rather than mortal" (285). Yet that which distinguishes Virgilian from Ciceronian eloquence--what separates the Aeneid from the Dream of Scipio in his mind--appears only to be the chronology of Virgil's poem. While the Aeneid is an epic instead of a history for Macrobius because it begins in *medias res*, its final value for him is determined by its usefulness.

Macrobius's commentary on the Aeneid devolves into rhetorical analysis, about which I say one word more, because he cites an abundance of epic similes. Like Quintilian before him and Puttenham after, Macrobius uses similes interchangeably with the different kinds of arguments by icon, parable, and paradigm (4.5). The Saturnalia duly records Virgil's debts to Homer, quoting every simile out of context with an eye to its "substance" (322), "elegant detail" (325), and "grandeur" (336). On one of the infrequent occasions when Macrobius grants Homeric similes the advantage, he reveals it is not their relationship to the narrative with which he is concerned but their completeness:

> In the Latin the comparison [Aen. 9.551], as you see my friends, has been reduced to so narrow a compass that nothing could be more meager than Vergil's description. But in the Greek [Il. 20.164], on the other hand, the wealth of language

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> and incident is such as to make the comparison a complete picture of the train of circumstances occurring in an actual lion hunt. (339)

His juxtaposition of Homer's description (12.200) of eagle carrying a snake aloft with Virgil's similar account (11.751) is striking. Macrobius complains that Virgil "takes no account of the omen which in Homer the bird imports," and which was "the soul of the *simile*" (340), when, in fact, the Homeric passage quoted is no comparison at all, but part of the narrative. Simile or similitude, what's the difference? For the allegorist, there doesn't appear to have been any.

It has been my working premise that Renaissance criticism depended on a sense of literary history and the concomitant distinction made between allegory as a genre and a mode. One marker of its beginnings was Vida's evaluation of Virgil's similes as being better than those of Homer. And another signpost was the rejection of older readings of the epics as wrong-headed, which sensibility depended on advances made by earlier philologists and scholars such as Valla and Vives, Mussato and Poliziano. Yet criticism was also made possible at the height of the Renaissance by the re-introduction of the concept of mimesis to explain how poetry operates. Nearly two millennia after Aristotle, we have in Tasso and Sidney a new and improved version of how a poem functions: the poet mimics God in his creation of a

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little world, the autonomy of which grounds the critical response to literature. That is, a poem becomes comprehensible without direct reference to God or the mysteries of religion.

Boccaccio was not yet a literary critic, because he is without a concept of mimesis. The value of myth hinged for him on its ability to be read allegorically, the divine insights of the pagans being regarded as more than a mere metaphor. Nevertheless, Boccaccio was in the vanguard of humanism because of his ability to grasp that myth had a structure as well as a content, this heightened awareness allowing him to compare and contrast different versions of the same myth. The division between form and content was, of course, preserved from antiquity in the rhetorical tradition, which, in the treatises of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, illustrated a set of rules for the orator on decorum, and which was continually updated in the Middle Ages in handbooks for lawyers and guides to document and letter-writing. Rhetorical analysis was part cause for the subsequent separation by Renaissance literary critics of the epic narrative from the lyric and the drama, permitting not only the establishment of a hierarchy for the differing genres, but making way for Neoclassical prescriptives for the diction, meter, and ornament appropriate to each genre.

Yet rhetorical analysis and literary criticism do not exactly coincide, for an oration is not exactly the same as

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a poem. Nor is a guidebook contrived to help compose speeches, no matter what use it makes of Virgil's similes, quite the same as appraisal judging whose epic similes were the greatest. In putting together a canon of the greatest works of literature, critics have had recourse to something ineffable, and which transcended their own understanding, whether that something was called the "delightful," the "sublime," or the "imaginative." On the other hand, the rhetorician's discussion, for example, of praise and blame in epideictic orations could only ever appeal to a normative use of language spoken between men, which could never be defined, in order explain how the metaphors to be used were a turn from the literal.

But even though he was the first full-fledged literary critic, Vida had contented himself with advocating the composition of poetry in neo-Latin to recover the glories of Virgil. It was Castiglione, instead, and members of the Florentine academy, who, following Dante, argued for the use of the vernacular. Thus, the inception of literary criticism in the Renaissance--though it appears to flow directly out of the humanist application of historical scholarship and rhetorical analysis to literary texts--is deeply colored by the revival of Neoplatonism. From out the renewed interest in Platonic dialogues, translated between the time of Boccaccio's mythography and Vida's criticism, came the strange confluence of mysticism and humanism in

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fifteenth century Italy, the place assigned Nature by the Neoplatonists giving way to the consignment of allegory to a genre by the latter.

Nature for the Florentine Neoplatonists was a further step taken along the path set out by the School of Chartres, but with a difference. Bernard's allegoresis of the Aeneid reduced Dido to a symbol of the concupiscence deranging the active life in its pursuit of virtue, while his Cosmographia more ambitiously situated Nature between the narrator and his Christianized version of Timaeus. Dido first becomes essential in Dante's poetry, and in the Camaldolese Disputations of Cristoforo Landino, which treats Aeneas and his ill-fated lover, not as Bernard's psychomachia of an everyman, but as the story of a hero and his antagonist that symbolized the dual aspects of nature.

Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on the Symposium discusses the dual goddesses of love (117ff), the distinction between Aphrodite Uranus and Aphrodite Pandemos being applied by Landino to the Aeneid. In Aeneas's love for his mother, Landino sees a figure for the mind's retreat, or its movement upwards toward the heavenly contemplation of Neoplatonic philosophy (66). And in Aeneas's love for the earthly queen of Carthage, Landino finds the heavenly mind descending to the creation of the material world, represented in the active, civic life of city-building (151). Unlike the their counterparts in late antiquity, the

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Renaissance Neoplatonists--less like Plotinus and more like Alain and Bernard--are reconciled to Christian doctrine via the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius and Nicholas of Cusa:

> In Thee, God, being created is one with creating, since the image which seemeth to be created by me is the Truth which created me. (Cusa 75)

Though the negative theologians could predicate nothing of God with certainty, the created world of Nature was yet for them a mirror of its Creator.

In baptizing the two kinds of love as mirror images of one another, Landino and Ficino posit the distinction between the active and contemplative life as forces operative in a world created of Nature, but which exists organized according to rules of its own. The literary critical school following on the heels of the Florentine academy likewise began to treat texts as something existing amid a natural order, even though they were man-made, and about which it was possible to say something true. Vida and Scaliger avoid addressing Virgil as if he covered philosophy with an insubstantial veil, not because the fashion for Neoplatonism had fallen out of favor, I think, but because that same philosophy had paradoxically granted the Aeneid an existence it had not had before: Vida and Scaliger were free to regard it as a poem.

The poststructuralist description of allegory as a mode of interpretation provides a wonderful insight into the mind

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of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, though not without a certain loss of freedom. In proposing that we think of similes as being inherently allegorical I have adopted a poststructuralist position, but I have also been constrained to fathom the silence of medieval readers of epic similes. Though Bernard glosses the comparison of Dido to the moon--a rather extraordinary simile in the first place--he hardly seems to be aware of the fact that he is dealing with a figure of speech. And when Landino tells us that Virgil likens the Carthaginians to bees on account of their "indefatigable" and "unceasing labor" (146), it is only to support his argument that Dido's city represents the active life.

The general lack of commentary on the epic simile between Macrobius and Vida seems to me less a matter of incompetence than speechlessness, for the allegorists had not the wherewithal to read poetry as poetry. The epic simile in Homer and Virgil must have struck them as a figure of thought or as a similitude rather than a figure of speech. Like the Shield of Achilles or the Descent into the Underworld, they seem to have regarded the epic simile as a vision of extreme clarity pointing the minds upwards, rather than a rhetorical trope superadded to the narrative action. Such a frame of mind, I think, belonged also to Spenser in framing the extended comparisons of <u>The Faerie Queene</u>, in contrast to which, the spirit informing Milton's use of the

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simile in Paradise Lost is ironic.

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EPIC, SIMILE, ALLEGORY:

PROBLEMS IN THE RECEPTION OF SPENSER AND MILTON

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Part Four--Simile and Epic Simile

The process of affixing the label "epic" to one simile and not another demands principles of discrimination not wholly objective. For this reason, let us look for qualities shared by Spenser's and Milton's short similes with their longer counterparts in order to determine if there is a point at which a comparison becomes "epic." Though short similes are more recognizable than metaphors, locating one is an easier task than ascertaining what it does or how it differs from a metaphor. Framing words such as as, like, when, thus, and so offer handles with which to grasp the distinction made between the comparison in regard to its referent. Since the comparison and the referent are being paralleled rather than identified, similes introduced with expressions such as "more than" and "less than" also need be included in our discussion, because they more specifically indicate the way in which referent and comparison differ. Likewise to be included are comparisons framed by "not" or "never like," because they negate the relation to the referent by simultaneously presenting the image of comparison to the mind's eye.

Yet even a few elementary postulates about similes become complicated with examples from Spenser and Milton, which demonstrate the difficulty in telling apart what is a simile and what is not. One problem concerns the parts of

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speech that set comparisons off from the narrative. These--to which I shall refer as frame words--are used in other circumstances as when, for example, we use the word as to mark time or to delineate space. "The doorbell rang as I was eating my sandwich" or "Carthage is as about as many miles from Rome as Alexandria is from Jerusalem" are two sentences in which nothing is really being compared to anything except empty units of time and space. Rome is not like Jerusalem any more than eating is like ringing. But when Milton introduces the verse paragraph containing the Galileo, Pine, and Vallombrosa similes, he writes: "He scarce had ceas't *when* the superior Fiend / Was moving toward the shore" (1.283-4). Does the "when" function like "as"? Is Beelzebub's silence another way of expressing Satan's movement? Our notions of time and space do not seem to have been those of Spenser and Milton, whose usage of comparisons often suggests that the one concept is just another way of talking about the other. The present chapter examines short comparisons that employ frame words to represent time spatially, and space temporally; it concludes with an analysis of the first epic similes of The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost, concerning the Nile and the Leviathan. While Spenser and Milton figure a relation to pretexts in both their shorter and longer comparisons, that relationship is represented by each author differently.

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A. "Thus as they past"

Spenser interrupts the stanza concerned with the laziness of Una's dwarf to initiate the action of the poem:

> Thus as they past,
> The daye with cloudes was suddeine ouercast,
> And angry *Ioue* an hideous storme of raine
> Did poure into his Lemans lap so fast
> That euery wight to shrowd it did constrain,
> And this faire couple eke to shroud themselvelues were fain.
>
> (1.1.6.)

The verse sentence interjects a rainstorm that impedes Una's and Redcrosse's progress and figures the storm in the image of Jove and his beloved. Yet we initially receive the phrase "Thus as they past" as a marker of time that means "next." Because the clause "they past" is syntactically subordinated to the climatic condition, we take the squall to be that which happens next in the action, rather than read the frame word <u>as</u> to mark a simile (or the word <u>next</u> in my paraphrase to indicate a juxtaposition). The frame word conceived as a temporal marker translates the picture of Jove and his Leman into a metaphor for rain. The temporal marker works against the sense of the implicit simile linking the situation of the gods with Redcrosse and Una.

In his introduction to Chapman's Homer, Allardyce

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Nicoll explains the difficulties necessitating his textual emendations, one of which suggests precisely the same difficulty: "Chapman never has the spelling 'than' for the comparative and . . . this word, in the form of 'then,' is of frequent occurrence alongside of 'then' in a time sense" (xix). I doubt that Spenser and Chapman merely exemplify an Elizabethan sloppiness with orthography, for the use of "as" in the Spenserian passage goes in two directions, first to mark time, but also to make a comparison. The comparison between travellers and mythological beings is richer and stranger than a marker of time, and causes the passage to stand outside of narrative chronology like so many of Spenser's epic similes. Yet it also raises an interesting question: what do we mean by narrative time in the first place? Is it possible to catalogue a succession of events without giving the impression that one event is meant to be compared with another, or that all things are happening simultaneously?

Hamilton's edition of the poem observes that Spenser's evocation of Virgil (Georgics 2.325) is "a classical simile [which] controls the Christian suggestions in the earlier stanzas" (31). Whether references to polytheism or monotheism are in control of one another is a tough nut to crack on the evidence of one example. Nor is it clear that Spenser is establishing a hierarchy between religions at all, but Hamilton's comment is remarkable, nevertheless, for

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having outright named the image a simile, and a classical one at that. I suggested that though a comparison can be inferred, the reading was more of an interpretation than it was directly indicated by the syntax of the lines. Neither Virgil's rhapsody on the rejuvenation of spring in the Georgics, nor Lucretius's emblem of the creative union between the heavenly father and his bride in De Rerum Natura (1.251) employs an extended comparison:

> The Spring adorns the Woods, renews the Leaves;
> The Womb of Earth the genial Seed receives.
> For then Almighty Jove descends, and pours
> Into his buxom Bride his fruitful Show'rs.
>
> (Dryden's Georgics 2.438-41)

> Lastly, when *Father Aether* kindly pours
> On fertile *Mother Earth* his seminal showers,
> They seem to perish there; but streight new juice
> Ferment, and various Herbs and Trees produce,
> Whose Trunks grow strong, and spreading Branches shoot,
> Look fresh and green, and bend beneath their fruit. . . .
>
> (Creech's De Natura Rerum 10)

Virgil follows Lucretius, but Lucretius is only reiterating the Homeric myth in which Hera's beguilement of Zeus results in spring showers. Homer also does not distinguish between literal and figurative rain:

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There golden clouds conceal the heavenly pair,
Steep'd in soft joys and circumfused with air;
Celestial dews, descending o'er the ground,
Perfume the mount, and breathe ambrosia round.

(Pope's Iliad 14.401-4)

When sodainly there brake
A golden vapour out of aire, whence shining dewes
did fall,
In which they wrapt them close, and slept till
Jove was tam'd withall.

(Chapman's Iliad 14.296-8)

In neither Homer, Lucretius, nor Virgil is the image contained in a simile. We would have granted Hamilton's evaluation of explicit comparison more readily had Spenser's line read instead:

Thus they passed as
The day with cloudes was suddeine ouercast,
And angry Ioue an hideous storme of raine
Did poure into his Lemans lap so fast . . .

In my version, "angry" Jove becomes syntactically subordinated to Redcrosse, who, on his "angry" steed (1.1.1) with Una beside him, stands independent of any figurative accretion. We might have accentuated the distortion by further emending the line, "They passed in the manner that," in order to see more clearly a comparison effected between two sets of figures: Redcrosse and Una, Jove and his Leman.

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But what has changed between Spenser and my tinkering is the priority and dependence of the sets of figures. Spenser's Redcrosse and Una defer to the Zeus and Hera of Homer, who depicted the chief of the Olympians to be angry when he woke from his deceived state of rest.

Spenser's quotation of his predecessors' image stands out more clearly than assessing what, if anything, that repetition does to its content. Hamilton observes that "this storm initiates the action of Book I and so of the rest of the poem" (33), as does Wofford (333), neither of them dwelling on the paradox that the interruption of the sixth stanza dispels the apparent motion of the previous five lines ("A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine," "A louely Ladie rode him faire beside," "Behind her farre away a Dwarfe did lag"). Spenser, we might say, was only setting the stage for the real action of the poem. That the first real action of The Faerie Queene conceals a timeless, figurative archetype, however, suggests narrative chronology in Spenser's poem is an illusion veiling myths.

The myth in this case, moreover, is not any old Homeric episode. For the fourth- and fifth-century Neoplatonist readers of the Iliad, the seduction of Zeus was "seminal" in the true sense of the word, because it illustrated how the monad and the dyad yielded the many. The monotheism they read into Homer was in competition with the of myths of Judeo-Christianity, because the Homeric epics expressed for

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them the immortality of the soul that Plato had proved after a different fashion, and revealed the relationship between three hypostases fundamental to Neoplatonist doctrine: the One, the Mind, and the Soul:

> [T]he story of the copulation of Zeus and Hera represents in a fragmented, mythic form an event on the level of *nous*, which in turn reflects fundamental facts about reality that come yet closer to first principles. Zeus is (or represents) the primal, self-sufficient, finite monad, resembling the "noetic finitude": he therefore generates reality "in the order of the monad." Hera is (or represents) the generative dyad, infinite (and therefore less perfect than Zeus) but containing in herself the generative principle of plurality, without which the perfection of the One would be sterile and nothing could exist but it alone. (Lamberton, 210)

Robert Lamberton paraphrases the fifth-century allegorization of Proclus, who "indicates that, here again, the poets have adapted eternal truths to the needs of language and storytelling by representing events that are in fact simultaneous *as if* they succeeded one another" (173). Answering to Plato's condemnation of the diverse manifestations of the gods in Homer, Proclus responds: "For these things that exist simultaneously with one another the

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mythoplasts have separated, disguising the truth" (qtd. in Lamberton, 173).

The claim of Proclus sounds strange because it forces us to divest ourselves of a concept of time as an empty vastness waiting to be filled with events. Yet the Neoplatonist mindset is not far removed from Spenser. If an event is the temporal aspect of knowledge for Proclus, Spenser re-issues this knowledge back into the form of mythic event. His deployment of the image of Zeus and Hera encompasses Homeric seduction, Lucretian creation, and Virgilian rebirth by allowing us to see the old connections once again, although I hesitate proposing that Spenser's insight is identical with his understanding, anymore than re-vision is one and the same with revision.

B. "So pass'd they"

Narrative time obstructs figuration in the first passage from The Faerie Queene, and a similar moment in Paradise Lost illustrates that temporality can interpose itself in a different way:

> So pass'd they naked on, nor shunn'd the sight
> Of God or Angel, for they thought no ill:
> So hand in hand they pass'd, the loveliest pair
> That ever since in love's imbraces met . . .
>
> (4.319-22)

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We do not read "So" in this example as a simile anymore than the one previous. The verb "to pass" initiates the action concerning Adam and Eve. It stands in an independent clause, which, rendered emphatic by its repetition, yet occupies an uncanny space in relation to the surrounding text. The "passage" comes in the middle of no local action--gardening, eating, dalliance--on either side of it which would give it meaning. On the one side, the quoted lines tail the static depiction of Adam and Eve as "Two of far nobler shape erect and tall" (288). On the other, "passage" precedes "They sat them down" (327).

Any handling of these lines entangles itself in a larger discussion about the way in which the Satanic point of view melds with, or distinguishes itself from, that of the narrator. We can, however, cut the Gordian knot temporarily for our present purposes. For to whomever we allocate this first description of Adam and Eve in Paradise, the apostrophe to sin's effects on nakedness, "how have ye troubl'd all mankind / With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure" (315-6), accommodates the foregoing instance of "to pass" to a transitive sense. "So pass'd they naked on" bequeaths the physical condition of nakedness in transmuted form. The awkwardness of transmitting the quality recurs in the second usage of "pass'd." The handclasped pair, still neither coming nor going, figures forth an unfolding pageant of romantic images, which, in the

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diminished appearance of their embraces, make solid the intangible "hand in hand" that Adam and Eve pass on.

Milton's "So" parallels Spenser's use of "as" in connoting "in the manner that." But the denotation of these frame words--the sense of time passing--obscures the vantage point which would enable us to see them as introducing a comparison. The actions which initiate the stories of Redcrosse and Una, Adam and Eve, belie a stasis, but one in which Spenser marks a figurative movement backward toward sources, and Milton points forward towards them. The difference is clearest in Milton's adaptation of the image we have already discussed:

> So spake our general Mother, and with eyes
> Of conjugal attraction unreprov'd,
> And meek surrender, half imbracing lean'd
> On our first Father, half her swelling Breast
> Naked met his under the flowing Gold
> Of her loose tresses hid: hee in delight
> Both of her Beauty and submissive Charms
> Smil'd with superior Love, as *Jupiter*
> On *Juno* smiles, when he impregns the Clouds
> That shed *May* Flowers; and press'd her Matron lip
> With kisses pure: aside the Devil turn'd
>
> (4.492-503)

Homer, Lucretius, Virgil, and now Spenser are bundled together in an explicit (though still falling short of epic)

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simile with a different effect. The Faerie Queene hinted at a parallel with Redcrosse and Una without constraining us to explain what it is doing there; Paradise Lost renders unmistakable the association between Adam and Eve, Jupiter and Juno. Spenser allows us to see something, whereas Milton appears to be telling us something. The embrace of Adam and Eve does not interfere with the allusion to Homer in the way that Spenser's narration stood in the way of recognizing a comparison. That is, Jupiter and Juno are syntactically subordinate to Adam and Eve. Yet Milton's simile mediates between different narrative actants, with our first parents on one side of the comparison, and Satan on the other. Moreover, the change from the past-tense description of Adam and Eve to the simile's use of present-tense is unsettling, as if Milton were trying to restore some of the vividness the image lost in having been translated into a comparison.

If Milton is telling us something about Adam and Eve by virtue of something we already know about Jupiter and Juno, it would behoove us to put into translatable sense just what that knowledge is. But the unfallen condition of Adam and Eve troubles the association, and we cannot help but be perplexed by his use of word "superior" in connection with the Homeric original. Eve's "unreprov'd" regard of "meek surrender" imply a dependent status, which in turn is mimicked the posture in which she "half imbracing lean'd."

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So, too, the active verb, "press'd," belonging to Jove weakens Eve's autonomy, but Adam's lordship over Eve is nowhere more equivocally validated than in the allusion to Homer, because Zeus' superiority over his spouse is exactly what a straightforward reading of the fourteenth book of the Iliad will not support.

C. "Superior Love, as"

Hera's demurral against sex on semi-public Mount Ida is a ruse contrived to blinker Zeus, so that she can meddle with the Trojan War by aiding the Greeks she feels sorry for. Zeus, once taken in, promises to conceal their intimacy with clouds:

> She ceas'd, and smiling with superiour Love,
> Thus answer'd mild the Cloud-compelling *Jove*.
>
> (Pope 14.387-8)

The momentary ambiguity in Pope's line regarding who is "superiour" is clarified by the context. Neither "smiling" nor "superiour," however, appear in the original: Lattimore and Fitzgerald render the passage respectively as, "Then in turn Zeus who gathers the clouds answered her," and "But the lord marshal of stormcloud said" (14.341). Even Chapman's version is more accurate than Pope's: "The cloud-compelling god, her guile in this sort did receive" (14.264). *Nephelegereta* or "storm-gatherer," according to the Liddell-

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Scott Greek-English Lexicon, is an epithet used for Zeus in the nominative and the genitive cases. To have added in the word "superior" seems to have been an interpretation on Pope's behalf, but one justified by Milton. Pope follows Milton's reading of Homer, just as Fairfax read Acrasia's "late sweet toyle" (2.12.78) into Tasso, when, in Fairfax's rendition of Armida's perspiration, he adds, "Some deal she sweat (tir'd with the game you wot)" (16.18).

But where is Milton coming from? One might ask with equal justification about Spenser's authority for calling Jove "angry." The appellation, "angry," seems to have as much validity as "smiled" or "superior," though the two defenses I can make are not of the same order. Mark Rose defends Spenser on account of the fact that we "perceive the storm from the characters' point of view" who "like children ignorant of the sexual act, perceive the heavenly father as angry when in fact he is loving" (5). This seems to me partly right. But given the swaggering boldness and self-righteous indignation with which Redcrosse undertakes his quest, Spenser's imputation to Jove also reflects back onto Homer a little light from the hero mounted on his "angry" steed. The Homeric narrator, in fact, tells us that Jove is "incens't" (Pope, 15.16), but only after he wakes up. If his union with Juno illustrates a myth of the creation of the world, Spenser's prolepsis may only demonstrate how difficult it is to recover origins while not obscuring the

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fountain of myth with the accretions of time.

It's a little harder to get Milton off the hook. Every Homeric commentator had struggled with discrepancy between Hera's wily deception and other passages in the Iliad asserting the dominion of Zeus. The most oft-quoted example was the image of the golden chain, showing Zeus's power to draw up all the lesser gods after him, as if they were a mere emanation of his divinity:

> Let down our golden everlasting Chain,
> Whose strong Embrace holds Heav'n, and Earth, and Main:
> Strive all, of mortal and immortal Birth,
> To drag, by this, the Thund'rer down to Earth:
> Ye strive in vain! If I but stretch this Hand,
> I Heave the Gods, the Ocean, and the Land,
> I fix the Chain to great *Olympus'* Height,
> And the vast World hangs trembling in my Sight!
>
> (Pope, 8.25-32)

Pope, who was fascinated by Stoic readings of Homer available through Eustathius, comments that he "think[s] it will be not strained Interpretation to say, that by the Inability of the Gods to pull *Jupiter* out of his Place with this *Catena*, may be understood the superior attractive Force of the Sun, whereby he continues unmoved, and draws all the rest of the Planets toward him" (403). Yet Zeus's rank had more than a scientific value for Pope: "*Homer* in this whole

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Passage plainly shews his Belief of one supreme, omnipotent God, whom he introduces with a Majesty and Superiority worthy the great Ruler of the Universe." But while the Homeric narrator tells us the Zeus was angry, it is more often Zeus himself who claims to be sovereign.

If Milton were trying to assert Adam's superiority over Eve, he could not have chosen a worse precedent, unless we were to argue that he was affirming some branch of allegorical commentary on the Iliad. Every allegorist worth his salt tried to reconcile the patent inconsistencies of the fourteenth and the eighth books, whether to a Stoic cosmology, a Neoplatonic hypostasis, or the principles of some other philosophical system. Though such systems wrested from the splendid confusion of pagan mythology a just barely veiled monotheism, one can hardly impute to Milton the same motives, particularly when the chief of the Olympians comes off in an even less flattering light elsewhere in Paradise Lost. The nearest citation is the negative simile used to describe Eden, nonpareil with Enna, the Castalian Spring,

> nor that *Nyseian* Isle
> Girt with the River *Triton*, where old *Cham*,
> Whom Gentiles *Ammon* call and *Lybian Jove*,
> Hid *Amalthea* and her Florid Son,
> Young *Bacchus*, from his Stepdame *Rhea's* eye;
>
> (4.275-9)

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The genealogy of the many-personed Zeus derives from the mythographic encyclopedism of Boccaccio and the Euhemerist historicism of Diodorus Siculus. Yet Ovid also associates Zeus with Ammon in the Metamorphoses (5.318ff), when a daughter of Pierus fatally exaggerates the rebellion of the Titans against the Olympians, "their fayned acts / Shee magnifies; and from the Gods detracts" (Sandys, 234). Zeus and the Olympians are so frightened that they change shapes, which Sandys takes to mean "that here the Gods, pursued by Typhon fly into Aegypt; concealing themselves in the shapes of unreasonable creatures. An invention of the Grecians in derision of the superstitious Aegyptians, who adored the like for the benefit they did them" (251). Sandys thinks the other variants of story a lie, though Milton elsewhere depicts Jove in Egypt (1.512, 9.508) by aligning Cronus with Noah, and a Libyan King with Ham. If Milton had wanted to illustrate the Olympian's sovereignty, why introduce a genealogical muddle that weakens the analogue for Adam, and which intimates even less convincingly the Judeo-Christian God that Pope read into Zeus?

The more obvious source for Adam's superiority over Eve comes from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In the context of discussing whether head-covering during worship is appropriate, Paul adds:

> But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the

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man; and the head of Christ is God. (11:3)

Paul gives us a double simile: God is to Christ, as Christ is to man, as man is to woman. Yet a hierarchy of the sexes cannot simply be deduced from the double proportion: it is patently unclear whether Paul is using divine authority to reinforce the subjugation of women to men, or if he is using a societal construct already in place to help illustrate something more intangible. The scarcely audible echo of the passage in the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (2:347) suggests that the more explicit reference to it in Paradise Lost (4.443) represents only Eve's point of view. And I Corinthians 11:3 is cited in Christian Doctrine as regarding the Judeo-Christian trinity (1.5), not the superiority of one gender over another. Perhaps the narrator of Paradise Lost intends, in contrast to the individual perspectives of his characters, to exemplify a right understanding of the unity of the Father and the Son in the unfallen condition of married love.

Of course, we have been assuming all along that the line, "Smil'd with superior Love, as *Jupiter*" attempts to compare male and female. But does "superior" modify "Love"? Milton's loose syntax offers the possibility that "superior" is displaced from the word "as" in its sense of "than": that Adam smiling with love was superior to Zeus smiling with love. The figures in "as *Jupiter* / On *Juno*" expressly manifest one pair of those "That ever since in love's

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imbraces met"; though the expression looks to be a simile, it turns out to be a negative comparison. Like the frame of negative comparison in which the "Lybian Jove" appears, this comparison, too, would arrogate to Miltonic characters, places, and events, a precedence diminishing all their forebears. The superiority would not be that of Adam over Eve on account of the dubious citation of Zeus and Hera, but the superiority of Milton's characters over Homer's.

In sum, both Spenser and Milton illustrate that a conception of narrative time independent of figuration is problematic. But the figuration lurking privily under Spenserian narrative obtrudes upon the sequence of events, whereas Milton's canceled figuration seems to be inventing a new kind of narrative time in positioning itself at the historical well-spring of true myth. I had suggested earlier that Ovid, when he turned warfare into amorous adventure, marked the full-blown romanticization of epic. And in Spenser's poem, the tensions between the lover and beloved frequently invoke what Lewis called the Ovidization of Christianity in the Romance of the Rose. Martial and marital strife in Spenser's poem often become images of a "sacrament prophane" (3.9.30), in which each lover "of his wonder made religion" (4.6.22), and the nakedness of every beloved is imaged as Serena, her belly,

> Which like an Altar did it selfe vprere,
> To offer sacrifice diuine thereon;

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Her goodly thighes, whose glorie did appeare
Like a triumphall Arch, and thereupon
The spoiles of Princes hang'd, which were in battel won. (6.8.42)

History in The Faerie Queene is made subservient to romantic myth, and while no poem tries harder to be an epic than Paradise Lost, no poem more consistently reveals itself to be a historical romance. The monogamy of Adam and Eve, as Milton's metaphor for monotheistic worship, elevates the religion of love to heights more sublime than any previously imagined by narrators of the promiscuous Olympians. For after Milton calls his muse Urania, he demurs by referring us to "the meaning, and not the Name" (7.5), which deferral suggests not the muse of astronomy but Aphrodite Urania, the erotic aspect of love mythologized in the Symposium (203b) and explicated by Ficino to be the World Soul's "power to create inferior things" (De Amore 117). Perhaps Milton invokes as patron, not the muse governing celestial knowledge of the created cosmos, but the power to create his own cosmos.

D. "By this" and "Now"

In my synopsis of Matthew Arnold's critique of Spenser, I had said that it was often unclear in The Faerie Queene whether we were looking at a description of time, or an epic

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simile. Having now examined a short passage demonstrating this difficulty, I would like to return to the full chronographia that Arnold and Coleridge took to be paradigmatic of Spenser's style. After Redcrosse's sleep is disturbed at the end of the first canto and before Archimago's messengers relate the failure of his demonic scheme, there comes the dawn of the second canto:

> By this the Northerne wagoner had set
> His seuenfold teme behind the stedfast starre,
> That was in Ocean waues yet neuer wet,
> But firme is fixt, and sendeth light from farre
> To all, that in the wide deepe wandring arre:
> And chearefull Chaunticlere with his note shrill
> Had warned once, that *Phoebus* fiery carre
> In hast was climbing vp the Easterne hill,
> Full enuious that night so long his roome did fill.
>
> (1.2.1)

Despite its epic simile-like length, this example also resists classification as a simile. The reason with which we justify our perception is fruitful to examine: Spenser does not link the time of day to a description of celestial events via "as" or "like." Yet the expression, "By this,"

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like "as" in "Thus as they past," momentarily subordinates Redcrosse and Una to another story, but one less readily located in earlier poems. The name "Chaunticlere" is Chaucerian, but it was also proverbial for any rooster, as "Renard" was for every fox. Because neither "dawn" nor "morning" are specifically indicated, the time of day is suppressed; as a result, the stanza can be dismissed as a periphrasis for a temporal event, as Wordsworth was inclined to do when eighteenth-century poets used Phoebus to indicate dawn. Or a more sympathetic reader, following Coleridge, would recognize the stanza to be a literary trope dating back to Homer.

Bush, for one, finds Spenser "nearer the medieval and Chaucerian habit of setting the time in astronomical or astrological terms" (96) and that "the stanza in both substance and tone is a miniature of macrocosmic order, touched, in the middle line, by his characteristic sympathy for human distress" (97). And Rose claims that "as the steadfast star comments upon the events of canto I, it also, as an emblem of constancy, is a primal image for canto II, which is concerned with faithlessness in love" (26). Hamilton notes the etymological connections between Redcrosse and the setting "Northerne" constellation, and the association of Arthur with the 'stedfast starre' (44). Though Rose and Hamilton discuss the chronographia as they do epic similes, as if it were commenting on the narrative,

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it is manifestly unclear to me that the associations they find tell us something we don't already know from the story. Fidelity and inconstancy recall the previous canto and anticipate the next, but they also symbolize truth and wandering, the subject of the entire poem. The stanza may be a microcosm, but it is one which allows us to recognize the macrocosm. The pieces of the image--the wagoner, the steadfast star, the rooster--do not add up to something new, and to Wordsworth's credit, there is a sense in which the chronographia is merely a long-winded way of describing dawn.

Yet to conclude the obvious, that the stanza is "about" dawn just as a given epic simile is "about" a quality, is to risk putting into words that which ought not be said. For it is important in this case to notice that Spenser withholds the word: he describes without giving a name. Maureen Quilligan, developing the thesis of Martha Craig, argues that the narrator of The Faerie Queene often defers naming a character until after unfolding an episode that bears witness to the etymological associations capsulized in his name. That is, the root meanings of the name inform the plot structure of the story surrounding the character, which process Quilligan points out as incorporating one of the techniques of allegorical interpretation. In this example, however, the story of Redcrosse and Una gives over to the pseudo-story of cheerful Chaunticlere and envious Phoebus,

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but the appellation "dawn" is never given. The Spenserian process that Quilligan identifies as episode first, then title, is not only reversed, but the name is held in suspension with the description of a set of adventures that never get under way. The elements of his chronographia may have been chosen for their etymological connotations, though Spenser seems to me to be writing more expressly in an allegorical mode when he refrains from naming something--even when that something is obvious--than when he does. A comparison with Milton's chronographias underscores the difference.

Broadbent remarks similarly to Bush on Milton's description of the sun setting on the animals of Eden:

> others on the grass
> Couch't, and now fill'd with pasture gazing sat,
> Or Bedward ruminating; for the Sun
> Declin'd was hasting now with prone career
> To th' Ocean Isles, and in th'ascending Scale
> Of Heav'n the Stars that usher Evening rose:
> When *Satan* still in gaze, as first he stood. . . .
>
> (4.350-6)

Broadbent's comment is general: "the passage of time in epics had always been marked by elaborately animistic chronographias acting as 'relieving' similes. The original motive for them, in primitive epic, was presumably to conjure times and seasons to reliability. Milton bends

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magic and convention to his own poem" (199). Broadbent is right, I think, but a little vague about how Milton "bends magic." How is Milton's chronographia different from Spenser's? Right off the bat, we can see Milton's trope is much shorter than Spenser's, whose time-piece sticks out of the narrative about Redcrosse and Una, while Milton's animals sit "gazing" and "ruminating" *because* it is dusk. Milton's chronographia, moreover, is not half so animated as Spenser's, since the animals are, in fact, outside it.

In the introduction to his edition of Paradise Lost, Fowler uses the passage as a clue in his astounding solution of the action of the poem into a time span occupying thirty-three days, the sunset in Eden being five days from the creation of man, and twenty-three from the Exaltation of the Son (26). Yet Fowler's analysis is astounding precisely because it flies in the face of the impression Milton gives us, that Adam and Eve enjoy their prelapsarian bliss for an indefinite period of time. Is Fowler's feat possible only because Milton's chronographias are in some sense, not chronographias, at least in the way they might be defined for The Faerie Queene? Broadbent thought that the ancient device of graphically imaging time, "acted" as a simile without being one, which more accurately characterizes Spenser's tropes than those of Milton, which are neither chronographias, I think, nor act as similes. Spenser's elaborate ornament of Chaunticlere and Phoebus obstructs the

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advancement of the narrative. Milton's positioning of the sun in the sky with respect to the stars is a topographia, as is the descent of Uriel "gliding through the Even / On a Sun-beam, swift as a shooting Star . . ." (4.555-56).

The juxtaposition of imagery in Spenser's use of "By this" functions much like an epic simile. Two other examples in Milton, however, feel even less like extended comparisons:

> Now Morn her rosy steps in th' Eastern Clime
> Advancing, sow'd the Earth with Orient Pearl,
> When Adam wak't, so custom'd, for his sleep. . . .
> (5.1-3)

> and now went forth the Morn
> Such as in highest Heav'n, array'd in Gold
> Empyreal, from before her vanisht Night,
> Shot through with orient Beams: when all the Plain
> Cover'd with thick embattl'd Squadrons bright. . .
> (6.12-16)

These two very short "chronographias," replete with the stock Homeric epithets, as well as hints of Lucretius and the Psalms (Fowler 256), measure respectively the time elapsed since Satan's expulsion from the garden, and the second day since the Exaltation. Yet the passages are also topographias: the first establishes the position of Adam; the second, that of the angelic battalions. But instead of juxtaposing a description of morning against one of Adam and

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the Angels, Milton integrates the characters in his narrative into the visualization of a moment in a temporal sequence.

A topographia, or a picture establishing relative positions in space, is what the first "chronographia" of the poem gives us:

> Round he surveys, and well might, where he stood
> So high above the circling Canopy
> Of Night's extended shade: from Eastern Point
> Of *Libra* to the fleecy Star that bears
> *Andromeda* far off *Atlantic* Seas
> Beyond th' Horizon; then from Pole to Pole
> He views in breadth, and without longer pause
> Down right into the World's first Region throws
> His flight precipitant . . .
>
> (3.555-62)

Satan is again portrayed in the glow of evening. But does the canopy cast by the earth's shadow measure how much time has elapsed since the council of Pandemonium, or does it establish Satan's point of view in space? Maybe it can only do the first by virtue of having done the second. That is, Fowler can perform his own magic only because Milton's conjuring depends on the measurement of time by spatial positions relative to the observer. Time most clearly appears as a spot when Milton grounds through Raphael the heavenly perspective:

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There is a Cave
Within the Mount of God, fast by his Throne,
Where light and darkness in perpetual round
Lodge and dislodge by turns . . . (6.4-7)

Spenser's use of chronographias tends to dispel the illusory nature of time by revealing an underlying mythic archetype. Despite the time's habitation in the "Gardens of Adonis" and "Mutabilitie," Spenser continually gives the impression that the same events keep happening over and over again, that we are always battling the same dragon. He makes us believe that time is the unreal consequence of the way myths have to be told, whereas Milton's temporal markers are more familiar to us. They are the knowable aspect of events, and if they do not therefore treat time as if it were real, they have at least one real consequence. Paradise Lost has got something The Faerie Queene hasn't: narrative suspense.

E. "As far remov'd"

I have tried to show that Milton's equivocation with the frame words normally used for comparisons antagonizes the bond between the narrative and its poetic images, by creating the illusion of temporal events. We turn now to the way in which Milton's canceled figuration creates the illusion of spatial dimension. Milton makes a show of defining space in the following lines:

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> Such place eternal justice had prepar'd
> For those rebellious, here thir Prison ordained
> In utter darkness, and thir portion set
> As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n
> As from the Center thrice to th' utmost Pole.
>
> (1.70-4)

The distance between Earth and Heaven multiplied by three equals the distance between Heaven and Hell; therefore Hell lies twice as far below Earth as Earth lies beneath Heaven. The syntax of the passage (unlike Spenser's "Thus as they past") gives to Milton's eternal place of punishment a position independent of the allusion that follows. We ignore the invitation of word "As" to regard the passage as a simile because the style seems to be more declarative than descriptive, closer to the infamous puddle in Wordsworth's "Thorn," than to its sources in Homer, Hesiod, and Virgil. Yet, what appears to be a plain--albeit abstractly worded--statement of relative distances inevitably involves Milton in a relationship with his precursors. That relationship is extremely complex, but needs a thorough look in order to understand how Milton's figuration reduces these pretexts to an echo.

Homer's Zeus pronounces, as if by fiat, the Earth's equidistance between Hades and Olympus, when he threatens the gods with punishment if they meddle with the outcome of the Trojan War:

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> What God but enters yon' forbidden Field,
> Who yields Assistance, or but wills to yield;
> Back to the Skies with Shame he shall be driv'n,
> Gash'd with dishonest Wounds, the Scorn of Heav'n:
> Or far, oh far from steep *Olympus* thrown,
> Low in the dark, *Tartarean* Gulf shall groan,
> With burning Chains fix'd to the Brazen Floors,
> And lock'd by Hell's inexorable Doors;
> As deep beneath th'Infernal Centre hurl'd,
> As from that Centre to th'Aethereal world.
>
> (Pope 8.11-20)

At the threshold of Tartarus, where heinous crimes are already being punished, the Sibyl of Virgil directs Aeneas's gaze into the depths while she remarks the distance to be twice that of the gaze to Olympus:

> You see, before the Gate, what stalking Ghost
> Commands the Guard, what Centries keep the Post:
> More formidable *Hydra* stands within;
> Whose jaws with Iron Teeth severely grin.
> The gaping Gulph, low to the Centre lies;
> And twice as deep as Earth is distant from the Skies.
>
> (Dryden 6.576-81).

In Virgil's revision of Homer, what had been a threat of punishment from Olympus becomes after-the-fact in Tartarus. The omniscience of Zeus is complicated by the Sybil, who not

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only doubles the ratio of relative distances but introduces human perspective into matters of divine knowledge.

The Virgilian doubling of Homeric parity causes a change in the cosmos with two different sets of implications. If the space between Olympus and Earth is regarded as constant between the Iliad and the Aeneid, Virgil increases by a whole the extent of the underworld delimited in Homer's universe. If, on the other hand, the breadth from Olympus to Tartarus--from one end of the cosmos to the other--is regarded as unchanged from the Greeks to the Romans, Virgil's appropriation effectively moves Earth a fraction closer to Heaven. The latter interpretation would support a reading in which the Aeneid was seen as advancing the claims of the Augustan empire over the Hellenistic age; conversely, the former would suggest a further decline from a golden age. Virgil's doubling, however, involves a second complication. He takes Homer's edict from out the mouth of Zeus by delivering it over to the Sibyl. Similarly, the delimitation of space in Paradise Lost is not authenticated by the voice of God, nor given to a character, but to the narrator.

We might tentatively claim that Milton's retention of the Virgilian ratio affirms a paradox of living in the world. Progress from epoch to epoch seems always to be matched by a corresponding decay into wickedness, because the perception of progress or decay is itself inevitably

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tied to point of view. But the Aeneid distinguishes between narrator and character in this instance in a way in which Paradise Lost does not. And while I advanced a reading such as I thought plausible for a literary critic to put forth, the harder question to answer is whether or not Milton was thinking as a literary critic when he penned the lines. For this reason, it is worthwhile to examine some of the glosses on Virgil's lines with which Milton would have been familiar, in order to see whether he was seeking to confirm one of the interpretations of the allegorists.

Fulgentius on Book Six of the Aeneid has Virgil himself explain:

> When I said, 'Then Tartarus itself lies open twice as much in its descent,' notice the full effects of pride, how the punishment for pride is casting down. The more arrogance the conceited man has, the more is he tormented by the casting down of his arrogance, for the man puffed up with pride is struck down by a double penalty. . . . (131)

Bernard further elucidates the doubleness of pride: "the wretched life has two pitfalls--it burdens the flesh with troubles and weighs down the spirit with vice" (101). After citing a pertinent quote from Horace's Satires on the oppression of body and spirit, Bernard continues:

> The evil life pushes down its followers under fallen goods beyond the visible to Olympus, that

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> is, to theology. This is the meaning here: as much as the wise person in taking up divine matters transcends temporal goods, to the same extent does the wicked life push down its followers beneath those same temporal goods. (101)

Harington's 1604 translation of the key passage reads, "thear Hell extends yt selfe in bredth & steepnes / full twyce as far as heavn to earth in deepnes" (St. 85). His gloss suggests that Virgil had not the right heaven in mind, even though scripture supports the Aeneid's description:

> This is not impossible understanding heaven according to the ordinary phrase of the scripture namely the mid region of the aire where all rain and tempests breed, and is an usuall saying, that it rained and thunderd from heaven. Beside the scripture invreth much of the vastity of Hell, saying that hell hath enlarged her womb, that it is never full *Prov 27*. Brought to the deep of hell. *Esay. 14* and infinit like. (41)

Simon Cauchi supplements Harington's citations from Proverbs 27:20 and Isaiah 14:15 with additional scriptural support about the enlargement of Hell from Isaiah 5:14 and Proverbs 30:15-16 (140).

Harington's familiarty with the Iliad might account for his intuition that Tartarus in the Aeneid represents a change from what preceded it. Of the three allegorists,

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only Harington seems to be aware that Virgil's Hell is being depicted as further and larger than Homer's. Harington, of course, only fitfully conceived of the Aeneid as secular literature, while Bernard and Fulgentius were even less interested in the conventions of an epic genre. They were not literary critics, for Virgil's delineation of space was important to them for the resonance of "twice" in symbolizing the doubleness of pride, the fall of the spirit as well as the flesh, and the augmentation of punishment. But if Milton was thinking along the lines of the allegorists, how would his translation of Virgil's ratio with "thrice" bespeaks a sympathetic alignment with Christian exegetes of Virgil?

Pope, as estimable a reader of Paradise Lost as the Iliad, analyzes the passage with a healthy skepticism about the extent to which the ancients could be thought to have anticipated monotheism. He writes:

> This Opinion of Tartarus, the Place of Torture for the Impious after Death, might be taken from the AEgyptians: for it seems *not improbable*, as some Writers have observed, that some Tradition might then be spread in the Eastern Parts of the World, of the Fall of the Angels, the Punishment of the Damned, and other sacred Truths which were afterwards more fully explain'd and taught by the Prophets and Apostles. These Homer seems to

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allude to in this and other Passages.

(401, my emphasis)

Pope's "not improbable," like so many of Milton's double negatives, seems divided between weak affirmation and superior doubt. He betrays a predisposition to believe, if only he could, before he weighs the relative merits of all three authors in question: "It may not be unpleasing just to observe the Gradation in these three great Poets, as if they had vied with each other, in extending this Idea of the Depth of Hell. Homer says as far, Virgil twice as far, Milton thrice" (402).

Pope doesn't realize that Milton is obliged to say "thrice" because he is taking his measurements differently than did Homer and Virgil. They compared Heaven to Earth with Earth to Hell, whereas Milton's ratio juxtaposes the whole line--Heaven to Hell--with the one between Heaven and Earth. B.A. Wright's response to the Miltonic cosmology outlined in Mason's edition of Paradise Lost inadvertently accounts for Pope's seeming want of attention. Masson had diagramed the Miltonic cosmos by restoring the 1:2 ratio of relative distances. Wright rejected Mason's schematization on the basis of Satan's vision of "This pendant world, in bigness as a Star / Of smallest Magnitude close by the Moon" (II.1052-3). To account for the discrepancy in apparent size, Wright argues, Milton's ratio of distances would have to be far greater than 1:2. "Thrice" must be regarded as "an

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intensive, or rather indefinitely extensive, not a computative expression" and used not for "measuring off the distance but saying that it is immeasurable" (43). Wright feels forced into a figurative reading of "thrice" because the first delineation of distance does not jibe with the more convincing depiction of size. The picture of the "pendant world," he concludes, is a "simile (for that in effect is what we have) [that] involves a momentary shift of the point of view from Hell to earth; the confusing effect of this could have been resolved, as at other places, by developing the comparison, but this was no place for an extended simile."

The facility with which we can restore the Virgilian ratio to Milton may be too facile, for it obviates looking for the reason that Milton words Virgil's invention differently. In this respect, Pope's response is simply right--if Milton wants to makes his distances sound the furthest, then let us read them as the greatest. "Thrice" as a metaphor for "very, very far" is what Wright attempts to prove by taking the subsequent difference in apparent magnitudes seriously. Yet Wright's argument fails to be reassuring because the evidence on which he rejects Masson looks even more explicitly like a comparison: the tininess of Earth beside Heaven as a star beside the moon. In other words, his proof that the delineation of distance in "As far remov'd" is figurative depends upon the greater

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verisimilitude or vividness of the depiction of size, "in bigness as a Star." The first passage, instead of being "computative," signifies that Hell is a very long way off, but only because the "evidence" of the second passage is read as a denotative use of language that is independent of figuration. Wright's unwillingness to consider how two logically inconsistent descriptions may peacefully coexist side by side in poetry is a function, perhaps, of the Miltonic simile itself, the notorious aptness of which eggs us on to expect more than is there.

In sum, Milton's use of frame words in this instance puts the problem with short similes into sharp focus. The "as" in "As far remov'd" unsettles a reading of either a portrayal of narrative space or a comparison to Homer and Virgil, because it suggests that that relationship may be antagonistic. Milton gestures with distances as if he were making an expository or computative statement, but the empty spaces between Heaven, Earth, and Hell are not being compared to anything at all, save Homer and Virgil. The exposition turns out to be figurative insofar as "thrice" is an intensifier, that is, not quantifying distance, but modifying the quality of being distant. "Thrice" states not how far away is Milton's Hell, but implies only that it is farther than Virgil's or Homer's. And as a metaphor, Milton's "thrice," if not tautological itself, invents a point of view from which to regard Virgil's "twice" and

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Homer's "once" as such. In other words, Pope and Wright take Milton seriously at just the moment I wonder if we shouldn't regard him as parodic. Milton overgoes Homer and Virgil in this instance, but he does not cut them out altogether because he is still obviously referring to them. The references in Paradise Lost to the Theogony, on the other hand, all but dismember the authority of Hesiod.

F. "Nine times the Space"

Hesiod also justifies the ways of gods to men, though on the surface he less clearly fits the pattern for delineating distance established by the other three authors. The Hesiodic narrator maintains Zeus's ratio, but he image the distance with a hypothetical situation:

> They [Kottos, Briareos, Gyges] drove them [the
> Titans] as far underground as earth is
> distant from heaven.
> Such is the distance from earth's surface
> to gloomy Tartaros.
> For a brazen anvil dropping out of the sky
> would take nine
> nights, and nine days, and land on earth
> on the tenth day,
> and a brazen anvil dropping off the earth
> would take nine

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nights, and nine days, and land in Tartaros
on the tenth day.

(Lattimore's Theogony 720-6)

The story surrounding Hesiod's description of distance concerns those events omitted by Homer and Virgil. Between Zeus's threat of Olympian punishment and the fait accompli of the Sybil's Tartarus, Hesiod's battle gives us the revolt and expulsion of the Titans.

Cosmic distances are described in the Iliad without regard to a scale outside myth, whereas the Aeneid refers to precisely those Homeric myths Hesiod expanded. Virgil's introduction of the Sybil derives from the perspective of the narrator of the Theogony, whose hypothetical physical demonstration eschews the divine fiat of Zeus, but who retains the Homeric ratio by feigning his inspiration from the Muses. Hesiod's style achieves a unique kind of vividness by explicitly comparing celestial distances to those traversed by a falling anvil. But if Virgil uses myth, whereas Homer is myth, does Hesiod's anvil throw a wrench into the works? Of course, there is no reason that a simile can't utilize ordinary objects as easily as assimilate an extended comparison belonging to someone else. Yet the best argument that Hesiod's delineation of distance is a comparison unlike that of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, is that his anvil represents an article of daily life rather than a conventional poetic image. In this respect, Pope, in

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grading the relative merits of the epic poets, was right to have left Hesiod out of the competition.

Raphael, the emissary of God, tells us of the Satanic host that "Nine days they fell" (6.871). Yet the physics of Raphael's account is as impossible as the Miltonic narrator's "thrice." Raphael asserts a fall of shorter duration for the rebel angels than the one Hesiod alleged for the Titans. His argument would suggest the diminution of Hesiodic cosmos, but only if the speed with which they fell were the same. That is, Milton's lesser time could be arguing a more rapid descent for Satan than for Typhon, if the distances traversed were constant. And if the velocity of Satanic crew far exceeded that of the Titanic renegades, and time itself were not always the same so that the Miltonic day could conceivably number more hours than the Hesiodic one, we might conclude the universe of Paradise Lost to be twice or thrice or any number of times greater than that of Theogony. The inseparability of time, space, and motion in Milton renders such speculations vain; but that the three are linked from a human perspective comes perhaps from Hesiod in the first place.

The Book One delineation of distance follows closely on Miltonic narrator's vision that demons languished "Nine times the Space that measures Day and Night" (1.50). Indeed, the iteration of "nine" in Books One and Six poetically provides the complementary halves of the Hesiodic

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line of descent--but awkwardly. The segments making up Hesiod's delineation are both motions, whereas Milton's pieces of "nine" do not fit together neatly. The first "nine" concerns the period of stupor to which the angels are given over; it concerns stasis instead of motion. The second utterance of "nine" belongs to an angelic voice radically displaced from the line, "As far remov'd from God as thrice to th'utmost Pole," which had belonged to the narrator. Is the Milton's first "nine" a bungled quotation, confusing the Hesiodic narrator's space with time? Does the postponement of the angel's second "nine" clarify the Miltonic narrator's benightedness? Or, to take a middle ground, do the two "nines" sounded together allow us to hear Milton clarifying Hesiod without directly giving credit where credit is due?

The body parts of Hesiod's image float to the surface of Paradise Lost so as to indicate Milton's familiarity with the Theogony, but also to suggest that Milton thought of Hesiod differently from the other epic poets. Hesiod evokes distance by proposing to measure how far the anvil moves in a given time; that is, he makes time stand in for distance. In Milton's first echo of "nine," the wording of the narrator's "Space that measures Day and Night" reverses Hesiod's emphasis; that is, space is made to stand in for time. Though motion binds time and space in both accounts, Paradise Lost demonstrates that the fluidity with which the

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Theogony metamorphosed one category of thought into the other can just as easily be reversed. If Hesiod translates space into time, Milton translates Hesiod's metaphor back again. Milton's "Thrice" exceeds Virgil and Homer while yet paying them homage, but the dissection of Hesiod into "Nine times the Space" and "Nine days they fell" is a different kind of revision, more in the manner that Hesiod revises Homer.

The conflation of time and space in the Theogony does not imply that only Homer's Olympians have a more thorough grasp of Kantian a priori categories of thought, but that the Hesiodic narrator's vision is clouded. I had suggested that Hesiod's anvil functioned in a manner different from other poetic images, because, as a man-made artefact, anvils had a meaning outside poetry that was culturally determined. But the conceit of an anvil falling for eighteen days is an invention outside any culture's determination of meaning, if not beyond the imagination. In fact, the effort required to picture such an event forces us to hold the anvil's poetic associations in abeyance.

In the Iliad the anvil resonates as a metonymy for Hephaistos. When Hephaistos grants Thetis's request to forge Achilles a new shield, the god sets to work:

> In hissing Flames huge silver Bars are roll'd,
> And stubborn Brass, and Tin, and solid Gold:
> Before, deep fix'd, th'eternal Anvils stand;

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> The pond'rous Hammer loads his better Hand,
> His left with Tongs turns the vex'd Metal round;
> And thick, strong Strokes, the doubling Vaults
> rebound.

(Pope's Iliad 18.545-50)

Hesiod's choice of the anvil to illustrate the fall of the Titans--rather than the cheekpiece for a warrior's horse, say, or a girdle--recalls the expulsion of Hesphaistos from Olympus. The divine forger had already warned Hera about the outcome of meddling with Zeus:

> Once in your Cause I felt his matchless Might,
> Hurl'd headlong downward from th'Etherial Height;
> Tost all the Day in rapid Circles round;
> Nor 'till the Sun descended, touch'd the Ground:
> Breathless I fell, in giddy Motion lost;
> The *Sinthians* rais'd me on the *Lemnian* Coast.

(1.760-6)

By using the anvil to illustrate the fall of the Titans, Hesiod reads Homer's punishment of Hephaistos as a metaphor for an earlier event in the chronology of the gods to which Homer barely alludes. Hesiod's story carves a place for itself out of the Iliad. As a response to an earlier poem, the Theogony bears relationship to a pretext. But is this relationship allegorical, if we think in terms of Paul de Man?

Homer was an originary source for Hesiod as well as for

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the allegorical reader of the Iliad, but the results they come up with are quite different. We recognize the simile of the anvil in the Theogony as a poetic device, whereas Stoic and Neoplatonist exegeses, for example, of the fall of Hephaistos, are far less entertaining. Pope provides a tidy summary of the former:

> They who search another Vein of Allegory for hidden knowledge in Natural Philosophy, have consider'd *Jupiter* and *Juno* as Heaven and the Air, whose Alliance is interrupted when the Air is troubled above, but restor'd again when it is clear'd by *Heat*, or *Vulcan* the God of Heat. Him they call a divine Artificer, from the Activity or general Use of Fire in working. They suppose him to be born in Heaven where Philosophers say that Element has its proper Place; and is thence deriv'd to the Earth which is signify'd by the Fall of *Vulcan*; that he fell in *Lemnos*, because that Island abounds with Subterranean Fires; and that he contracted a Lameness or Imperfection by the Fall; the Fire not being so pure and active below, but mix'd and terrestrial. (72)

For the Proclus, on the other hand, Hephaistos represented a kind of Timaean demiurge. The god's having been hurled from heaven indicated "generative emanation and free and unrestrained attendance on all things, not separated from

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its own first principle but proceeding from this in an orderly manner through all things" (Lamberton, 204). Yet, Hephaistos as the continual emanation of the world from a first principle should sound to the reader not unlike Proclus's treatment of the deception of Zeus. And Pope's explication that the combination of "pure" fire with air produces "mix'd" fire and moisture verges on his account of the fecundity of the earth resultant from Zeus's copulation with Hera.

I have quoted Pope and Lamberton on the Stoics and Neoplatonists in order to drive home the point that what Hesiod is doing is quite distinct, and to suggest that in this regard, Milton is following Hesiod. The interpretations of different episodes by a given school of allegorical readers always tend to run into one another because the commentators already know what they are going to find before they ever open the text. They are reductive, whereas Hesiod, as a poet, amplifies the same material by dressing up the fall of Hephaistos, or figuring it out, into a new myth. Homer's single-day descent of Hephaistos is translated into a metaphor for the two nine-day falls of the Titans. "Nine" in the Iliad was particularly rich in overtones as a number for measuring human time. Aside from numbering of years of battle before the epic action of the Iliad, "nine" marks the plague days Calchas brings down from Apollo on the Achaians, and the duration of the funeral

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rites granted by Achilles to Priam for his son. "Nine" in the Theogony is used more self-consciously, not only when Hesiod describes the fall, but when he counts off the Muses, as the does the Miltonic narrator in Paradise Lost (7.6). Hesiod and Milton seem to want to divest Homer's "nine" of its allegorical significance in a way perhaps reminiscent of Horace, when he advised the fledgling poet to let his work simmer before serving for nine years.

That Milton was dismissive of allegorical readings of Homer is clearest when the artificer of Pandemonium is presented as the archetype for Homer's distortion of the true myth:

> Men call'd him *Mulciber*; and how he fell
> From Heav'n, they fabl'd, thrown by angry *Jove*
> Sheer o'er the Crystal Battlements: from Morn
> To Noon he fell, from Noon to dewy Eve,
> A Summer's day; and with the setting Sun
> Dropt from the Zenith like a falling Star,
> On *Lemnos* th'*AEgeaen* Isle: thus they relate,
> Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
> Fell long before . . .
>
> (1.740-8)

Satan's debts to Hephaistos enjoy a short half-life until the Homeric myth is denounced as "Erring." While Spenser sought to align Redcrosse and Una with Homeric myth in the passage that we looked at, Milton discriminates between

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Satan and Mulciber by positioning his own character in advance of Homer's. The accretions of allegorical interpretation surrounding the gods of the Iliad are suggested by Milton as so much intellectual baggage in excess of a story about the heroic exploits of men. Homer's Hephaistos remains in Paradise Lost only as literary material available to be used as a metaphor for Satan, though Homer's Hephaistos had been troped by Hesiod's Typhon long before Milton.

Unlike the epics of Homer and Virgil, Hesiod's philosophical poem drew unto itself no venerable tradition of allegoresis. The vagaries of textual transmission may account for this fact, although it seems to me that the Theogony's genealogy of the gods inherits the Iliad in a manner inherently distinct from the way the Aeneid is indebted to it. In its delineation of cosmic space, the Theogony substitutes for the omniscience of Zeus the limitations of a narrator, whose hypothetical demonstration is divested of the authority commanded by Homer. The Hesiodic narrator, no longer able to see the fall of the gods except as mediated by an anvil, exchanges divine exposition for human perspective. Milton likewise gives Satan out to be one who cannot recognizes heavenly descents, when he says:

> I saw
>
> The Prophet do him reverence; on him rising

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> Out of the water, Heav'n above the Clouds
> Unfold her Crystal Doors, thence on his head
> A perfect Dove descend, whate'er it meant. . . .
>
> (*Paradise Regained*, I.80-3)

Satan in Paradise Regained is perhaps not far removed from the narrator of Paradise Lost. Both are obliged to Hesiod's attempt to establish for himself a new kind of authority by self-consciously rendering clear the affairs of Homer's gods. Based on the merest hints in the Iliad, Hesiod's theodicy gives us a celestial battle positioned in advance of Homer's chronology. Likewise, Milton's fall of the rebel angels is an amplification of his models, but an amplification by denial. If allegorical figuration involves laying one's indebtedness to the past out on a table, Milton's dismantling of Hesiod's anvil into bits and pieces is itself Hesiodic. The simile likening the fall of the Titans to the plummeting anvil had already treated Homer as a metaphor. Milton and Hesiod both pit their own narrative exposition of time and space against any comparisons to pretexts. Such a relationship to pretexts seems to me not allegorical, but ironic.

G. "White as snow" and "Blacke as inke"

Similes seem to be one place where Spenser cites sources, though they often seem to be as proverbial in

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origin as they are traceable to specific poems. When Redcrosse charges the serpent and "lept / As Lyon fierce" (1.1.17.), does Spenser have a particular pretext in mind? The straightforward comparison describes one thing in terms of another by virtue of a shared quality. Alpers finds that "the simile renders the energies that impel 'the valiant Elfe' to action" and "makes us see a likeness between the knight and the dragon, who is described as 'turning fierce' and 'threatning her angry sting.'" Because the "same fund of energy can manifest itself as either rage or bold prowess . . . these emotions appropriately register the general point that man's spiritual resources inevitably partake of his earthly, sinful nature" (337). The association between Redcrosse and the Error via the lion problematizes the concept of heroism for Alpers, because he understands allegory as necessitating intellectual discrimination on behalf of the reader. Allegory as a test is an interesting way of crossing a genre of composition with a mode of interpretation. Yet I doubt that Spenser means for us to associate Redcrosse with Error because he means to challenge our responses; it seems that Alpers makes the association because he sees allegory this way. But is the demonic ferocity of Redcrosse so blatant? The quality he shares with the lion is not explicitly named, for the syntax of "Lyon fierce" allows for the possibility that the quality belongs particularly to the beast rather than modifies how

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each one lept. It may be less likely that Spenser has in mind the suddenness or Redcrosse's jump or the length of his bound, but these other potentially shared qualities undermine the force of Alpers's argument for me.

If Redcrosse merely shares an uncertainly specified quality with a lion in his movement, the passage that describes Una's palfrey "more white then snow" (1.1.4) is more specific and more complex. Snow is brought forward as if it were an instance of a principle of whiteness in which the ass partakes, and which even more properly belongs to Una herself: "Yet she much whiter" (1.1.4.). That is, Una stands in the scale of whiteness nearer its source than snow or her ass. Complexion seems to be less at stake than a moral association that whiteness bears. Whiteness in and of itself, however, is of a hypothetical origin, a form that cannot be described except through its manifestations. Indeed, it can only begin to take on the quality of a moral category by dint of prior associations. But no literary precedent presents itself for the comparisons to the lion and snow; or, rather, so many that no particular one can be singled out. Though snow and lion imagery turn up from time to time in The Faerie Queene, the proverbial character of the comparisons precludes looking for a kind of logical consistency in their use that would allow us to say that either snow or lion symbolizes anything, however vivid they are.

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For example, the lion figures in the episode of Abessa and Kirkrapine, and as part of the iconography of Wrath in the pageant of the House of Pride. But during the mortification of Redcrosse's flesh in the House of Holiness, "like a Lyon he would cry and rore" (1.10.28); and, Guyon, beholding the sad spectacle of Mordant and Amavia, groans with pity "As Lyon" (2.1.42). As an object of comparison, the lion is variously applied to protagonists--to Cambello (4.4.32) and Artegall shortly thereafter (4.4.41), to Talus (5.1.20), Marinell (5.3.8), Arthur (5.8.35), the Salvage Man (6.6.22), and to Calidore (6.11.49). But the associations do not amount to anything; that is, the comparison hardly seems to have a fixed meaning outside the given context in which it appears. As for snow, Florimell, according to her dwarf, "on a Palfrey rides more white then snow, / Yet she her self is whiter manifold" (3.5.5). The witch appeases her churlish son with a false image of Florimell, of which "The substance, whereof she the bodie made, / Was purest snow" (3.8.6). These two passages appear to resonate with reference to Book One, but the porter of Orgoglio's castle, more local to Una, wears a "beard as white as snow" (1.8.30). And in Book Two, the water of the well denying ablution to Ruddymane is "chast and pure, as purest snow" (2.2.9). Villainous hoards besiege Arthur outside the castle of Alma with "arrowes, thicke as flakes of snow" (2.11.18).

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In brief, the proverbial reference of these short similes for Una and Redcrosse doesn't tell us anything we didn't already know about them. Milton may not be telling us something new all the time either, but the way he goes about it seems different:

> *Adam* the goodliest man of men since born
> His Sons, the fairest of her Daughters *Eve.*
>
> (4.324-5)

Adam does not share goodness, nor Eve fairness, in the way that Spenserian characters receive qualities. Through the simile of The Faerie Queene, Una partakes in whiteness as if it were a transcendent, Platonic form. On the other hand, the goodness and fairness of Adam and Eve, named here for the first time in Paradise Lost, are instead attributes belonging to substance. Milton's lines follow direct upon the verses we looked at earlier: "So pass'd they naked on . . . So hand in hand they pass'd." The subsequent manifestations of those who "in love's imbraces met" feature increasing degeneration because Adam and Eve have the edge on human virtue and beauty. Milton has no need of a simile to describe Adam and Eve, since their essential excellence obviates the indirection of pointing at something that cannot be represented. Yet the excellence belonging exclusively to the two doesn't last very long, if the apparently intransitive meaning of "to pass" makes equally good sense as a transitive verb. If Adam and Eve's first

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deed was to bequeath their hand-in-hand nakedness to all other couples in the diminished amorous embraces of literature, the margin for their superiority may be so narrow as to be represented only by a third sense of the word: the pun on "past." Or is the difference of their absolute virtue and beauty so vast that it is unthinkable without recourse working our way backwards through the double negative of their "unfallen" state?

The rather ordinary comparison, "white as snow," highlights quality in an unMiltonic way, but one exceptional short comparison provides a point of contact between The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost. Error's spawn is depicted as "blacke as inke" (1.1.22.). This example does not, I think, cite the particular in order to represent blackness as a general principle from which infant serpents take their appearance. While neither lion nor snow serve to explicate the narrative, "blacke as inke" seems more portentous. Charles G. Smith notes that expression occurs in Lyly (43); he also directs us to The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs for citations of it in Barclay's Egloges and Shakespeare's Two Gentlemen of Verona (63). Morris Palmer Taylor observes that the expression is used in Cymbeline and Peele's Old Wives' Tale (340). But it is the sole use of the word, "inke," in The Faerie Queene. And while proverbial in origin, the comparison eclipses whatever sources we unearth for it by the light shed from within the

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context of Spenser's own narrative.

The comparison confirms the similarity implied between Error's infant brood and the tiny toads and reptiles amid the books and papers of Error's vomit, itself "blacke" (1.1.20.). These eyeless creatures, having issued from the Error's mouth, do not, until the simile "blacke as inke," seem necessarily related to the infant serpents. The newborn, however, hide in the serpent's "mouth" (1.1.15.) at the outset of the battle; when vomit spews from her "maw" (1.1.20.), the babies re-emerge from her "sinke" (1.1.22.); lastly, they again seek refuge in their dying mother's "mouth" (1.1.25.). Like an interpretative key, the comparison "blacke as inke" helps to explain the conflation of orifices, and the reason both yield poison (1.1.15,20), but by only confusing the distinction between brood and vomit. The comparison momentarily identifies two kinds of manifestations of Error: those of her womb and those of her mouth.

Most readers of the passage have based their interpretations on the ground that the battle with Error represents the Reformation reaction against the teachings of Roman Catholicism, because Spenser must have in mind the parallel between the regurgitated frogs of Revelation 16:13 and the sophistries of the Papal Antichrist. Hamilton's edition adds that "'bookes and papers' may refer to such published lies, or to learning generally in its opposition

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to faith" (35). For Alpers, the episode problematizes the "psychological motivation" underlying human heroism through "a double perspective" (337) that does not resolve how, or if, Redcrosse adds Faith to his Force (85). Rose, in much the same vein, finds the battle with the serpent to be "a sinister mirror of the earlier moment when the knight and lady became passively caught in the forest's maze" (9). Their error is a mis-perception of heavenly providence, whereas "Error is an intellectual monstrosity" (10). Steadman observes the similarity between the dragon and Hesiod's Echidna, and concludes in the fashion of Hamilton that the printed matter stands for the rhetoric "which (except for faith) would enmesh the Christian wayfarer in fallacy and falsehood" (24).

All four readings are finely tuned, yet miss out on the conflation of Error's brood and her vomit. I think that howsoever we wish to explicate the books and papers, we need first be able to articulate or categorize two things that had appeared as nominally different. Is the relationship between brood and vomit that of fruit versus root, or outward appearance versus inward nature, or the effects of Error versus the causes of it, or some other binary opposition? Redcrosse vanquishes both mother and children, but the victory seems to me incomplete, because the vomit's tiny toads that creep off into grass may some day grow into serpents. Like the Blatant Beast, they get away, just as

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the meaning of the scene before us escapes, when the relationship between offspring and undigested matter is rendered patently unclear by the short simile.

That the vomit is not sheerly decorative we know through C.S. Lewis, who observes the parallel purification that Philology undergoes in The Marriage of Mercury and Philology (80). The lustral rite in which she disgorges unidentified books and papers precedes, according to Martianus Capella, the drink of immortality she receives in the marriage ceremony (47). But what is Philology? Curtius relates that the reading of Homer had developed in antiquity under the aegis of sophistry rather than dialectic. Philology, or the combined branches of the liberal arts, included the study of literature and served from the time of Isocrates to Seneca as a propaedeutic or preparation for philosophical studies (37). With the closing of pagan schools in late antiquity, however, philosophy had become demoted to the position of handmaiden of theology, as illustrated by the ambiguous Consolation of Boethius. In sum, secular learning, as codified by Martianus and perpetuated through the Middle Ages under the name of Philology, bears an unstable relation to the study of religious doctrine. The mysterious written matter of which Philology is purged before her apotheosis in The Marriage, does not differ in substance, perhaps, from the seven gifts bestowed upon her. That is, it's not clear Philology gives

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up anything that she doesn't receive anew, when baptized as the new handmaiden to theology. Spenser would hardly want to be conferring divinity upon his serpent, but the indestructibility of Error plays off an irony of which Martianus, of dubious Christianity, may be suspected. In other words, Spenser's Error starts looking like a different name for all secular learning, under which heading falls the composition of literature: not an Error to be avoided, but a necessary Error.

Nohrnberg makes a similar claim when he writes that "allegory . . . requires the perpetuation of a kind of 'error'" (150). He analyzes the episode in terms derived from Aristotle's theory of tragedy:

> The *mythos* of the episode is a story about the slaying of a dragon, the hero's legend being that of St. George, with mythical overtones of Perseus, Theseus, and Apollo. Error disgorges books, and the larger mythical outline shows something similar: the champion of the Word enters and emerges from the wood, its labyrinthine interior corresponding to the viscera of the monster, and its darkness failing to comprehend him. . . . The *dianoia* for allegory is represented in this episode by the figure of 'veiled Truth,' which is the *dianoia* for the poem as a whole. . . . All allegories 'deform' or alter a story to conform it

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> to the requirements of a secondary pattern of discourse or an 'ulterior' meaning or intention. At the outset, allegory misleads us by allowing us to entertain an error about the literalness of a fiction. In the denouement, it tends toward an exposure of that error.
>
> (149-50)

The episode in which 'Error disgorges books,' in the manner that the Wandering Woods spit out Redcrosse and Una, is for Nohrnberg a microcosm of the whole poem, fitted towards the idea of 'veiled Truth.' Mythic precedents, Nohrnberg seems to be claiming, are adapted for episodes in The Faerie Queene only out of their supposed conformity with an "ulterior meaning," which conformity Spenser finally reveals to be a lie. But what is Una, other than "an error about the literalness of fiction"? It seems to me not to be the case that Spenser ultimately exposes the allegorical interpretations of Perseus as a hoax, or strips bare the veiled truth of Una, but that the 'literalness' of his claim to inspiration is retracted in the end. The movement of The Faerie Queene starts and stops *in medias res* before breaking off with the palinode of "Mutabilitie," in which the poet relinquishes authority.

While the simile, "white as snow," does not tell us something new about Una but serves to align Spenser's narrative with proverb, the comparison, "blacke as inke,"

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rather than clarifying, effects a doubling of meaning that engages us in ever-widening spirals of complexity. Una's whiteness, as a transcendent form, partakes of an unfallen nature that can only be represented by indirection. "Blacke as inke," though it appears to be a simile, begins to function more after the fashion of metaphor by identifying womb with mouth, or a symbol insofar as it mediates between a literal and figurative meaning. But what figurative meaning, other than one which feeds on itself? The momentary identification of outside with inside turns the serpent inside-out. It makes necessary error look less like an enigma and more like a joke challenging Spenser's access to veiled truth. It has the quality of self-parody, something akin to the parody with which Milton frequently confronts us.

H. "Tears such as Angels weep"

The self-referentiality of "black as inke" makes a point of transition to many of Milton's short similes. In Book One of Paradise Lost, Satan marshals his comrades together in order to propose a council to determine which course of action to pursue. Before the gathered assembly, Satan begins to speak but falters:

> Thrice he assay'd, and thrice in spite of scorn,
> Tears such as Angels weep, burst forth: at last

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Words interwove with sighs found out thir way.

(1.619-20)

In the annotations to his edition of Paradise Lost, Hume observes that Milton's circumlocution is a way of addressing something which has no name (41). Like Hume, Pope claims that Milton's "Such as Celestial Spirits may bleed" (6.333) describes Satan's bodily fluids on the precedent of biblical expressions which, for example, as in "bruising the serpent's head," grant literature the authority to render spiritual natures corporeal (273). Yet Pope forbears using the Greek word, "ichor," in his version of Aphrodite's wound: "From the clear vein a stream immortal flow'd, / Such stream as issues from a wounded God" (5.420-1). The circumlocution of Pope's translation suggests that he thinks literature's misrepresentation of the divine ought not be taken too literally.

How is it that Hume and Pope see Milton subscribing to a needful periphrasis in rendering that which has no name, when, in fact, it has a name in the Aeneid? Venus complains to Jove over Juno's treatment of Aeneas, but she does not shed tears such as goddesses weep; Virgil describes her bright eyes as literally "tearful" (*lacrimis*, 1.228). At the other end of the editorial spectrum from Hume, Fowler notes the division of twentieth-century critics such as Rajan and Davie over Milton's expression (80). I had suggested that the critical division over a sublime or

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literal reading of the line stemmed from the differing sensibilities of Keats and Johnson. Johnson seems to have taken his cues from Hume and Pope, but are we any closer to answering which of the two Milton's expression is? Or do we have to find a way for understanding how the literal is linked to the sublime in Milton, as the literal is related to the allegorical in Spenser? Like the line, "At once as far as Angels' ken he views" (1.59), the expression, "Tears such as Angels weep," invites us to contrast the fallen archangel with his former state. In so doing, the comparison follows the pattern of Spenser's "white as snow"; Milton seems to want us to remember that Satan shares something in common with angels. He is like the celestial being he was once insofar as he still weeps. But is shedding tears intrinsically angelic? Fowler seems to be thinking in this vein when he adds that the hesitation, with which Satan "Thrice . . . assay'd" to speak, is paralleled by the legends of Stephanus and Herodotus about "the famous tears of the proud Persian King Xerxes, on reflecting that the vast army he was reviewing would some day all be dead" (80). Satan's heroic compassion for his battalions suspends his customary "scorn" for his enemies, but is his apparent compassion the vestigial remains of some idea of divine mercy? Roland Mushat Frye's sweeping study of the iconographic tradition preceding Paradise Lost uncovers many lachrymose angels. Yet when Frye looks in the other

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direction for visual representations of weeping demons, he can locate only one Florentine statue in his otherwise disappointed quest (105).

Scott Elledge notes that the formulaic repetition of "Thrice . . . thrice" in the same passage occurs in a battle scene in the Iliad, and in the underworld journeys of the Odyssey and the Aeneid (27). Yet a collation of all three precedents teases us out of thought with not only the repetition of "Thrice," but a doubling effect within the narrative action. Asteropeus tries three times and three times fails to extricate the spear of Achilles from a river-bank, while the hero charges on him a second time: "on his foe with doubled fury flew" (Pope, 21.190). Odysseus strives thrice to clasp his mother's shade, and his failure "strooke much more deepe / The wounds my woes made" (Chapman 11.262-3). Tearful Aeneas likewise seeks to hold Anchises (Dryden, 6.950-1); the miscarriage does not so much augment his woes, as it doubles his vain attempt to embrace Creusa (2.1077-80). So Milton's Satan prepares to speak before his "doubl'd ranks"; and so, perhaps, Milton's "from the Center thrice" is poetically, if not numerologically, bound to the double Virgilian ratio of cosmic space. Elledge, however, neglects the "Thrice . . . thrice" formula and its double when it appears in The Faerie Queene. Una misreads the "ruefull moniments" of Redcrosse's imprisonment in Orgoglio's dungeon as signifying his death (1.7.19). Before

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the dwarf can explain his master's predicament, "Thrise did she sinke adowne in deadly swownd, / And thrise he her reviu'd with busie paine" (1.7.24). Though the story of Redcrosse's capture, "almost rent her tender hart in tway" (1.7.27), Una at no point cries.

The only character who weeps in Book One is Duessa, and she provides the iconographic missing-link for the tears of Satan sought by Frye. For the wounds received by Redcrosse at the hand of Sansjoy, Duessa feigns compassion with crocodile tears described in an epic simile:

> And all the while *Duessa* wept full bitterly.
>
> As when a wearie traueller that strayes
> By muddy shore of broad seuen-mouthed *Nile*,
> Vnweeting of the perillous wandring wayes,
> Doth meet a cruell craftie Crocodile,
> Which in false griefe hyding his harmefull guile,
> Doth weepe full sore, and sheddeth tender teares:
> The foolish man, that pitties all this while
> His mournefell plight, is swallowd vp vnwares,
> Forgefull of his owne, that mindes anothers cares.
>
> So wept *Duessa* vntill euentide . . .

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(1.5.17-19)

Duessa's tears are as deceptive as the Nile beast celebrated for its hypocrisy and glossed in Book of Beasts:

> Hypocritical, dissolute and avaricious people have the same nature as this brute--also any people who are puffed up with the vice of pride, dirtied with the corruption of luxury, or haunted with the disease of avarice,--even if they do make a show of falling in with the justifications of the law, pretending in the sight of men to be upright and indeed very saintly. (50)

We shall return to this simile shortly in connection with the other Nile similes of The Faerie Queene, though I wanted to cite it now as a possible source for the passage in Paradise Lost.

It's not clear what we are supposed to do with "Tears such as Angels weep." The line is a literal way of re-naming something, and while Satan's compassion also evinces the sublimity of divine mercy, the line is also facetious. Indeed, to take Satan as a kind of Duessa, we might suspect his show of camaraderie to be a feint contrived to get what he wants. Later he is accused by Gabriel to have "Once fawn'd, and cring'd, and servilely ador'd" (4.959) his superiors in order to dispossess them. From this point of view, Satan's Xerxes-like sympathy would not represent a lapse in his more characteristic pride and defiance, but an

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artful performance designed to advance his own interests. The "Scorn" Satan withholds would apply to the contempt in which he holds his minions, to whom he condescends to appear sympathetic in order to smooth the path of true tyranny. Weeping would still be "in spite of scorn" or in "scorn of spite," in the sense that pity is incompatible with scorn and spite and, this, represented only through a double negative: nowhere else in Paradise Lost do we see celestial beings cry.

"Tears" from these three perspectives--the literal, the sublime, and the ironic--more sharply focuses the alternatives usually given for the allegorical in literature than the way that Spenser's description of the serpent's brood undermined his narrative's stability by confusing imagery already set in place. As an interpretive key, the proverbial "blacke as inke" unlocks more meanings than it can possibly control. The uncertainty of "Tears" is located in a Satan closed off from an objective observer, who can no more decide whether sincerity or archness is at stake than discern the inspiration behind Samson's rousing motions. "Inke" erases a distinction between inside and outside that redounds on Spenser's head, whereas "Tears" sets up an opposition between subject and object, between Milton's reader and Milton's poem. Nevertheless, the intractable hermeneutic dilemmas presented by these two short similes do not bring the stories of The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost

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to a grinding halt. Each narration goes on its way, though their paths unfold quite differently.

Spenser goes on to call the blood of the dying Serpent "cole black" (1.24.9). He arrests the growing confusion by substituting for inky blood, another kind of equally proverbial blood. The narrator elsewhere depicts curtains (1.4.44), steeds (1.5.20), clouds (1.11.44), and hands (2.7.3) to be "coleblack," though blood only ever takes this shade again in connection with Lust or Amoret, or both (4.7.27). In sum, the metamorphosis of Error's mouth into her womb proves to have been only temporary. But it momentarily effected a self-parody in which Spenser expresses the fear of how doubtfully his allegory may be construed once it leaves his mouth. Milton, on the other hand, extricates himself from the hesitation of Satan in a different manner when "at last / Words interwove with sighs found out thir way." Tears, as the preamble to the combination of sighs and words, prove a potent force recurring in subsequent contexts. They form a bridge linking the heavenly, demonic, and human worlds.

After their catastrophe, Adam and Eve, ever sitting down, "weep, nor only Tears" (9.1121), but give vent to sighs in the form of inner "Winds" (9.1122), before they indulge in words of mutual accusation. Their sorrow is not of the sort signalled by Eve, when she "silently a gentle tear let fall" (5.130) for fear of having annoyed Adam with

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her dream. In Adam and Eve's prelapsarian state, tears can stand alone "as the gracious signs of sweet remorse" (5.134). After the fall, tears of remorse need be conjoined with sighs and words to afford relief. Satisfaction comes when Adam proposes to Eve that together they prostrate themselves "with tears / Watering the ground, and with our sighs the Air" (10.1089-90). The narrator climactically takes up Adam's phrasing, "With tears / Watering the ground, and with thir sighs the Air" (10.1101-2), as if to carry it beyond the page into the visions of the next Book, where the "sighs now breath'd / Unutterable" are inspired by "the Spirit of Prayer" (11.5-6). The Son beseeches the Father to "See . . . these Sighs / And Prayers" (11.23-4), thus confirming the magical transformation of sighs into words. Yet the Son also requests the Father to hear man's "sighs though mute" (11.23). The intercession of the divine logos allows God to behold Adam and Eve's "tears" (11.110).

Thus tears and sighs demonstrate throughout the poem a reciprocity--perhaps like that of Adam and Eve themselves, or of sight and sound--which, in its right ordering, illustrates "Prevenient Grace descending" (11.3). Satanic tears and sighs afford a demonic parody of this reciprocity, though those of Adam offer a parody of a more sublime order, when he hears of the fulfillment of God's promise. Michael beholds Adam to be "with such joy / Surcharg'd, as had like grief been dew'd in tears, / Without the vent of words"

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(12.372-4). Like the "as if" similes of Coleridge and Hesiod, the trope, "as had like," stretches the imagination to its fullest reach.

In sum, we have looked at the line, "Tears such as Angels weep," in its literal, sublime, and ironic aspects. Yet the short simile also demonstrates such a resonance within Paradise Lost that its disposition towards the whole poem evinces the kind of typological symbolism warranted by Protestant theologians to link the Old and New Testaments. That is, the simile means something in addition by its reference to other passages in Milton's poem that Spenser's "white as snow" does not achieve when it is compared to other uses in The Faerie Queene. Spenser's short similes are more conventional, while those of Milton are over-loaded. Redcrosse leaps like a lion, and Satan sheds tears like an angel; yet Redcrosse never turns into a lion, whereas Satan still is, in some fashion or another, an angel. Satan's angelic tears may be only an extreme reduction of Spenser's extended comparison likening Duessa to a crocodile, but as a result, Milton's short comparisons are generally unlike Spenser's. Milton dabbles with metamorphosis in the similes of Paradise Lost, both long and short. Insofar as it plays with an identification or substitution, rather than difference, the Miltonic simile seems to me more of the order of a metaphor than a comparison.

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We see Paradise initially through the eyes of Satan, when he leaps over its walls like "a prowling Wolf" (4.183) or "as a Thief" (4.188) and "on the Tree of Life, / The middle tree and highest there that grew, / Sat like a cormorant" (4.194-6). Satan is like a cormorant, but the difference begins to blur:

> Then from his lofty stand on that high tree
> Down he alights among the sportful herd
> Of those four-footed kinds, himself now one,
> Now other, as their shape served best his end. . .
> (4.395-8)

Satan assumes the guise of a lion and a tiger the better to spy on Adam and Eve. But the metamorphosis causes us to re-read "Thence up he flew" (4.194) with some skepticism: Was he a cormorant? Had he also taken the shape of a wolf and a thief to enter Paradise? When the demon is later caught whispering lies, "Squat like a Toad, close at the ear of *Eve*" (4.800), his falsehood, at the touch of Ithuriel's spear, "returns / Of force to its own likeness" (4.812-3). Johnson objected to the simile precisely because it wasn't a comparison, but a metamorphosis confusing materiality with immateriality, since "when he is brought before Gabriel, he has a spear and C, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the arms of the contending angels are evidently material" (420).

That the arch-fiend resumes his shape when found out by

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the angelic patrol seems confirmed by the slightly longer simile:

> up he starts
> Discover'd and surpris'd. As when a spark
> Lights on a heap of nitrous Powder, laid
> Fit for the Tun some Magazin to store
> Against a rumor'd War, the Smutty grain
> With sudden blaze diffus'd, inflames the Air:
> So started up in his own shape the Fiend.
>
> (4.813-9)

But the new comparison is no less strange than the shorter toad-simile, because it only describes the swiftness with which gun-powder ignites. That is, we are expecting the comparison to describe how something returns to its own shape, not how quickly it metamorphoses into something else. The original of "nitrous Powder" is not fire; and the new simile fails to confirm an original shape for Satan, whose name has been erased from the heavenly registers (1.361). Satan's capacity for Protean mutability makes similes describing him problematic, but his shiftiness seems less demonic than it is daimonic.

Why did Johnson suppose Gabriel's spear was more substantial than Satan's? Metamorphosis is a property of all angelic beings, who, as Raphael admits, "Limb themselves, and color, shape, or size / Assume, as likes them best, condense or rare" (6.352-3). Though Raphael imps

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what the narrator had already told us in the catalogue of the bad spirits (1.423-31), Milton goes on to demonstrate that fact when Raphael is dispatched by God to "advise" Adam "of his happy state" (5.234) and to "warn him to beware / He swerve not too secure" (5.237-8). The angel descends:

> [He] Winnows the buxom Air; till within soar
> Of Towr'ing Eagles, to all the Fowls he seems
> A *Phoenix*, gaz'd by all, as that sole Bird
> When to enshrine his reliques in the Sun's
> Bright Temple, to *Egyptian Thebes* he flies.
> At once on th' Eastern cliff of Paradise
> He lights, and to his proper shape returns . . .
>
> (5.270-6)

Raphael appears to have transformed shapes just as Satan had, though such "pseudo-similes" (Fish 310) are not limited only to spiritual personae, if, for example, we witness the mysterious stairs, "such as whereon" Jacob saw angels descending (3.510), "then let down" before Satan (3.523). That the stairs of Paradise Lost were first likened to those in Genesis is not a more extraordinary comparison than such as we find in The Faerie Queene. But the Miltonic narrator's addition that the "The stairs were then let down" suggests a momentary conflation; the conclusion to the elaborate image is a decidedly unSpenserian device.

In exploring a poststructuralist reading of the epic similes of The Faerie Queene, I have claimed that they are

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allegorical because Spenser illustrates a quality "x" by likening a person, place, or event in his story "A" to a more famous precedent "B." I have scrupulously avoided using the term "allusion" in regard to Spenser, for my thesis depends on there being a difference between the allusion to, and the citation of, pretexts. A literal citation or quotation more accurately describes for me Spenser's borrowings (if one forgets for a moment that his similes are translations), since Spenser more closely follows or repeats the examples set by Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Ariosto, than does Milton. The patterns of comparison employed by the Miltonic simile seem to me more properly allusive. When Milton's "A" is more "x" than somebody else's "B" (Adam's love superior to Jupiter's) or when "B" is made out to be a lie or a fable (Mulciber), or when "A" metamorphoses into "B" (Raphael into the Phoenix), the reduced status of the pretext makes me feel Milton trying to break out of the allegorical mold. Yet how is the allusiveness of the epic similes of Paradise Lost tied to a way of reading the past different from the allegorical? The first epic similes of each poem provide opportunity for contrast.

I. "As when old father *Nilus*" and "As huge / As whom the Fables name"

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The problem with studying the short comparisons of Spenser and Milton is that the frontiers between simile and metaphor rapidly become murky. By tinkering with nouns and adjectives, we can paraphrase a simile by omitting the frame word. The description of Una's palfrey can be changed in our minds to "snowy white," just as Satan can be understood to burst forth "angelic tears." Conversely, we can expand the description of the dragon's blood into "black as coal." We can tinker with nouns and adjectives in short comparisons, but they, like substance and attribute, are not the same. Metaphors and similes accord different emphases to each; though if we understand the metaphoric reduction of a short comparison to convey the same meaning more economically, we can argue that similes are redundant metaphors, or prosaic versions of a poetic figure of speech. The valorization of metaphor in literary criticism, as a single word turn from a literal sense, seems to me to have fallen out of the approach of oratorical treatises to language. The rhetorician's ability to separate form from content laid the groundwork for a concept of poetry founded on the use of figures of speech, but the edifice erected cannot give support to the importance of figures of thought. That is, if it occurred to no previous critic that similes were inherently allegorical figures of thought, it was because the cards were stacked against him in having supposed that the allegorical and the literal were mutually

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incompatible.

In parting from snow and tears, it is worth adding that though each short simile is pictorial, neither one is a picture. Because the brevity of short comparisons makes them somehow indistinct from metaphor, they are less memorable than epic similes, the fixity of which depends on their independence from the narrative. As opposed to short comparisons, epic similes, like ecphraseis, stand apart from stories in which they are told. The elaboration of their vehicle cannot easily be translated into another sense. Spenser's and Milton's epic similes are immune to paraphrase. Yet that which is true of Spenser's seems too simple and obvious to be done justice by putting them into other words. Conversely, Milton's epic similes are almost too complex, despite their notorious aptness, to be satisfactorily explicated. The varied responses they have elicited over the centuries is a better yardstick of the history of literary criticism than of progress made toward a definitive analysis. In juxtaposing the first extended comparisons of The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost, I aim to contrast the way the Nile and Leviathan similes stand in relation to their sources. And to suggest that the Nile simile paints a memorable picture, or conveys the vividness of something remembered; against which the energy of the Leviathan, like angelic tears, resonates with imagery recurring throughout the context of Milton's whole

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narrative.

After Spenser's Error regurgitates books and papers, the narrator pauses to describe the mess of "Her filthy parbreake":

> As when old father *Nilus* gins to swell
> With timely pride aboue the *Aegyptian* vale,
> His fattie vaues do fertile slime outwell,
> And ouerflow each plaine and lowly dale:
> But when his later spring gins to auale,
> Huge heapes of mudd he leaues, wherein there breed
> Ten thousand kindes of creatures, partly male
> And partly female of his fruitfull seed;
> Such vgly monstruous shapes elsewhere may no man reed.
>
> The same so sore annoyed has the knight . . .
>
> (1.1.20-22)

Satan's first extended comparison comes before he rears himself up from the burning lake to take refuge on its shores:

> Thus Satan talking to his nearest Mate
> With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes
> That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides
> Prone on the Flood, extended long and large
> Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge

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As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian or *Earth-born*, that warr'd on *Jove*,
Briareos or *Typhon*, whom the Den
By ancient *Tarsus* held, or that Sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream:
Him haply slumb'ring on the *Norway* foam,
The Pilot of some small night-founder'd Skiff,
Deeming some Island, oft, as Seamen tell,
With fixed Anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night
Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delays:
So stretched out huge in length the Arch-fiend
lay . . . (1.194-209)

Both long similes are distinguishable by more than some arbitrarily defined length from shorter ones, because they reiterate the frame word, or a variant of it, in their conclusion. That epic similes repeat in one form or other the framing device ("Like as . . . So did," "as huge . . . So stretched") was first noticed by Hobbes. That the epic similes as result are closed off from the narrative is a feature they share in common with ecphrasis.

In addition to the double frame of the epic simile, the regularity of Spenser's stanzaic form contributes a visual sense of ending to his epic simile, in contrast to which Milton's simile can only be wrested from a longer verse

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paragraph. These differing degrees of closure suggest that the ecphrastic moment of Spenser's epic simile has a being independent of the tale. The ecphrasis of the Miltonic simile, on the other, hand seems more a part of a process of narrative becoming. Indeed, we "saw" the Satan's spear compared to a wand before it was turned into his walking stick, just as Adam is historically linked to the vision of consolation offered him at the end of the poem. The Leviathan simile is not only more visually embedded in Milton's story than the Nile is in Spenser's, but occurs at a different point in time in the unfolding of the narrative. The description of the Leviathan precedes Satan rearing himself up from the lake, whereas the appearance of Nile follows the regurgitation of Error.

Each epic simile interposes a picture of many parts near a moment of action. The picture has life of its own which seems to mimic the story, or to underscore that which is momentarily important about the vomit or Satan. As an analogy, epic similes always invite the attempt to isolate narrative elements that have parallel counterparts in the comparison. There is a problem with reducing epics similes to formulaic equations, but let us indulge the temptation, if only to witness the limitations of too rashly tugging on a golden bough. Just as Euclid described magnitude though a proportions such as a:b::x:y (i.e., "a is to b in the same manner that x is to y"), we might reduce Spenser's simile to

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simpler proportions:

Error : parbreake : flesh, books, frogs : knight

::(in the same manner that)

Nilus : mudd : ten thousand kindes of creatures : man

Milton's, thus compressed, would read as following:

Satan : bulk : Flood : [spectator]

::

Leviathan : size : Norway foam : pilot.

The phrase, "in the same manner that," dividing the comparison from the narrative does not signify an equal sign designating one-to-one relationships from one side of the analogy to the other. Yet epic similes differ from the pure digression of a nonsensical analogies because some of the elements of which they are composed align themselves with those on the narrative level. And while Error does not equal the Nile, nor Satan the Leviathan, the formulaic reduction allows us to ask certain kinds of questions: How, for example, are the many kinds of creatures produced by the Nile related to "great lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw," "bookes and papers" and "frogs and toades"? What is the meaning of the "pilot" in the second, who has no correspondent in infernal scene? And if the Leviathan stands for Satan, what does it mean for him to be sleeping? Or that Hesiod's nominally incompatible figures, Briareos and Typhon, are linked with him?

These schematizations, though they direct the inquiry

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one way, eschew a more difficult line of questioning because of their incompleteness. Both epic similes contain elements in excess of the sum of narrative correspondents, and because no formula can encompasses their fullness, the excess resists translation. We cannot account for all the words making up the comparisons, and to single out substantives as being what are most important is a self-limiting perspective. The emphasis on nouns allows us conveniently to refer to them as the Nile and Leviathan similes, just as it is easier to think of A Maske as Comus, but it obscures those qualities the comparisons do not explicitly name. In a simple sense, the Nile simile is about fecundity, whereas the Leviathan simile is about deception. But unlike Spenser's extended comparison likening Duessa to a crocodile, Milton's is not just about deception: it is deceptive. The portrayal of vomit as a kind of seasonal inundation recalls the providential nature of the storm that initiated Redcrosse and Una's journey into Error. But in this first epic simile of The Faerie Queene, Spenser does not merely borrow a figurative archetype. He cites an extended comparison from Ovid's Metamorphoses nearly exactly. Milton, on the other hand, is not reiterating a simile from the Theogony. Rather, his simile condenses Hesiodic material to the status of a metaphor.

Spenser's dragon comfortably inhabits a ready-made cave, but her regurgitation reveals the Ovidian origins of

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her home. After Deucalion and Pyrrha cast behind them stones in order to repeople an earth destroyed by flood, Ovid describes the regeneration of animals as having being caused by the warming action of the sun on the moisture left behind by retreating waters:

> The pregnant Seeds, as from their Mothers wombe,
> From quickning Earth both growth and forme assume.
> So, when seven chanel'd *Nile* forsakes the Playne,
> When ancient bounds retyring streames contayne,
> And late-left slime aethereall fervours burne,
> Men various creatures with the gleabe up-turne:
> Of those, some in their very time of birth;
> Some lame; and others halfe alive, halfe earth.
> For, Heat and Moysture, when they temperate grow,
> Forth-with conceive; and life on things bestow.
> From striving Fire and Water all proceede;
> Discording Concord everapt to breede.
> So, Earth by that late Deluge muddy growne,
> When on her lap reflecting *Titan* shone,
> Produc't a World of formes; restor'd the late:
> And other unknowne Monsters did create.
>
> (Sandys' Metamorphosis, 37)

Ovid likens the regular and monstrous animals repopulating the earth to those creatures found--half lame, half live, half earth--in the mud of the Nile, of which the annual flooding resulted in a proverbial fertility. Spenser's

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citation of the simile changes Ovid's aberrations to mutations of male and female, though it retains Ovid's sense of a un-immaculate conception. It is from this sodden mess in the Metamorphosis that the Python, a monstrous serpent, will emerge and which Apollo will slay. And as Apollo vanquishes the Python, so Redcrosse conquers the dragon, although the infant toads among her vomit creep away.

Nohrnberg's analysis of The Faerie Queene examines Christological readings of the legends of Saint George and Apollo. For the former, he includes Raleigh's History, Drayton's commentary on his Poly-Olbion, and the etymological dictionary of Stephanus, in which the name of George is traced to "a fiction, under which the elders set forth the image of Christ delivering the Church from Satan" (qtd. in Nohrnberg, 139). For the legend of Apollo, Nohrnberg uses Lavinius's reading of Ovid, which explains that "the Sun of wisdom is God: because he illuminates by means of his living light and even represents it for the wise. In an allegorical sense Apollo signifies Christ the Sun of justice" (142). Nohrnberg adduces these precedents linking St. George and Apollo, for it is an alignment Spenser seeks to extend to his own characters. Spenser's license for appropriating the Nile simile is indebted to interpretations of Ovid canonizing the Metamorphoses with books of scripture. Though Spenser, when he quotes Ovid, implies that his Error is the Python in disguise, Spenser

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also represents the spontaneous quality of generation as a necessary evil.

Sandys's extensive commentary summarizes much of the allegoresis on the Metamorphosis, with which Spenser was familiar through Conti and Boccaccio. Sandys discusses the etymological associations between Deucalion and Noah, and Parnassus and Mount Ararat (69). But, like all good allegorists, he is interested in the content rather than the style, so the epic simile goes virtually ignored. The supplication of Deucalion and Pyrrha to Themis involves the right reading of a riddle, the solution to which Sandys notes as having a parallel in Roman and British history, as well as in Hesiodic myth: "As Prometheus before made men of Clay; so now Deucalion his son, and Pyrrha his neece, by casting of stones behind the: both including one morall; that of saluage men they made civill, and imbewed their minds with caelestiall knowlege: & that by the advice of Themis, which is the inbred law and instinct of nature" (70). More significantly, when Ovid's first parents cast stones, they recall scripture to Sandys:

> God is said in the Gospell to be able of stones to raise vp children vnto Abraham: the sence not unlike, though diviner; meaning the ingrafting of the Gentiles into his faith, hardned in sinne through ignorance and custome. So the giving us hearts of flesh insteed of those of stone, is

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> meant by our conversion: Themis gaue Oracles at the foote of Pernassus, long before Apollo gaue any at Delphos . . . . (70)

Themis represents "what was just and lawfull," but Sandys adopts a different tactic in dealing with the abiogenesis of the earth:

> There was neede of divine advice for the restoring of man: Heat and Moisture, the parents of Generation, are feigned here to have produced the rest: among which Python, a prodigious serpent, whose bulke tooke up so much of the mountaine. Although this be allegoricall, yet read we of so huge a Serpent by Bograda in Africa. . . . But the sence of this fable is meerely Physicall: for Python, borne after the Deluge of the humide Earth, is that great exhalation which arose from the late drowned World, untill it was dissipated by the fervor of the Sunne or Apollo. . . . The word signifies putrefaction: and because the Sunne consumes the putrefaction of the Earth, his beams darting from his orbe like arrowes; with his arrowes he is said to have killed Python. (71)

Sandys allegorizes the serpent by adducing historical and pseudo-scientific pretexts, rather than scripture. He mitigates Ovid's insight into the divine, by regarding the spontaneous generation of the earth to be an instance of

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feigning, rendered vivid, we must suppose, by the simile of the Nile.

Sandys concludes his exegesis of the episode by adding that, "So serpentine Error by the light of truth is confounded" (71). The analogy, worthy of something Una might have said to Redcrosse, stops short of making an explicit identification between Apollo and Christ, though the implication remains. Indeed, Sandys is willing to grant every kind of philosophical insight to Ovid because he described a god or nature as having ordered the elements. The seeming monotheism of the opening of the Metamorphoses is "so consonant to the truth, as doubtelesse he had either seene the Books of Moses, or received that doctrine by tradition. He confesseth God, not disguizing his name (as obserued by Lactantius) to be the Creator of the World & maker of all things: and by that word Commanded, so often reiterated, that hee made them by his Word only" (49).

Ovid's readers attributed divine inspiration to the Metamorphoses with waning vigor during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, just as Virgil became divested of his robe as a magus. All of Ovid's philosophical insight does not amount to direct revelation for Sandys, who generally refrains from the explicit Christianizing of earlier commentaries. Though he dallies with the idea that the Python is type of Satan, he dare not claim that Ovid's Apollo is Christ. Spenser, as a reader of Ovid, must have

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partially welcomed the widening gap between holy and pagan texts. The space between scripture and epic poetry allowed room for long Renaissance narratives to flourish, though not, I think, without a sense of loss and nostalgia. Spenser quotes Ovid as if he afforded a partial insight into the divine, yet Spenser seems to be protesting his own lack of inspiration when "blacke as inke" temporarily renders vain the difference between the monster's womb and its mouth, as if the only necessary error were Spenser's own.

Milton, on the other hand, gives a recognizable shape to Satan for most of Paradise Lost. Recognizable, that is, though ever changing, for the successive diminution of Satan from one guise to another throughout the poem has been often observed. During his final disfiguration, his peers are transformed into serpents, while

> still greatest hee the midst,
> Now Dragon grown, larger than whom the Sun
> Ingender'd in the *Pythian* Vale on slime,
> Huge *Python*, and his Power no less he seem'd
> Above the rest still to retain . . .
>
> (10.528-32)

Satan, we duly note, is larger or "more X" than Ovid's Python. Satan's function thereafter becomes sheerly mechanical, if not allegorical, when the demonic contingent ritualistically partake of dust and ashes once a year. Milton goes on to stigmatize their annual convention with

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skepticism: "some say" (10.575). And a full-fledged disavowal of the pagan myth follows thereupon: "However some tradition they dispers'd / Among the Heathen of thir purchase got" (10.578-9). Satan is not finally likened to a snake but turns into one. But a snake larger than Ovid's, which had been mistakenly associated with the Judeo-Christian fall anyway. Satan keeps changing shapes in Paradise Lost before he is fixed as a metaphor, and always at the expense of the ancients.

It is quite the opposite case with Error in The Faerie Queene. The monster ceases to have a distinguishable shape, which possibility the narrator hopes that "elsewhere may no man reed." Choking the serpent only results in her multiplication, when blind frogs creep out of her "filthy parbreake": if we are to suspect that they mature into larger reptiles, they undermine the victory enjoyed by Redcrosse. His triumph would not anticipate the final battle with the Beast of Revelation, so much as figure the recurrence of the sins that had been washed away in the flood. The spontaneous generation represented by the Nile simile would be less the beneficence of providence, Spenser implies, than a hopeless fall, cyclical rather than historical, into the multiplicity of error. Insofar as the first canto of Book One illustrates its own monstrosity, Spenser momentarily recognizes the absence of authority in The Faerie Queene. It is an irony at his own expense.

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The other mentions of the Nile in The Faerie Queene do not supplement one another with any kind of consistency, such that we could say that the river symbolizes anything overall. The river is peripheral in the epic simile likening Duessa's insincerity to that of a crocodile; the Egyptian river bed is merely the proverbial habitat of the creature. The river comes back again in reference to fertility and abundance, when Spenser accounts the birth of the twins, Belphoebe and Amoret, from Chrysogene in the Garden of Adonis, to be a kind of abiogenesis:

> Miraculous may seeme to him, that reades
> So straunge ensample of conception;
> But reason teacheth that the fruitfull seades
> Of all things liuing, through impression
> Of the sunbeames in moyst complexion,
> Doe life conceiue and quickned are by kynd:
> So after *Nilus* invndation,
> Infinite shapes of creatures men do fynd,
> Informed in the mud, on which the Sunne hath shynd.
>
> (3.6.8)

The new simile represents the same generative power resultant from the combination of heat and moisture, but as purified of its negative connotations in Book One. The immaculate conception of Amoret and Belphoebe's virgin birth is the very inverse picture of the Nile, when it was

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qualified to be the source of Error, or as happening to be the place where crocodiles live.

The Nile figures in three similes, but the river also occupies a literal place--literal in relation to the text--in its final deployment. Ocean and Tethys partake in the pageantry celebrating the wedding the Thames and Medway, as does Nereus,

> And after him the famous riuers came,
> Which doe the earth enrich and beautifie:
> The fertile Nile, which creatures new doth frame... (4.11.20)

The final reference to the Egyptian river is stripped bare of overtones, either positive or negative, in reiterating its legendary fertility. The river is merely associated with creation in the marriage ceremony, whereas in the preceding epic similes, its abundance had alternately good and bad connotations. One would be hard-pressed to formulate a meaning that unifies the four mentions of the Nile in The Faerie Queene, which are too different within their respective contexts to add up to some kind of statement, save that which we know from proverb. In sum, the apparent lack of cross-referencing among Spenser's epic similes, witnessing Warton's "careless exuberance," is an absence difficult for us to appreciate.

One wants Spenser to figure forth an over-arching plan in his extended comparisons, such as one to which Miltonists

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constantly submit the similes of Paradise Lost with a better measure of success. It is worth a momentary detour to mention one such attempt, The Kindly Flame, Thomas Roche's wonderful study of Books Three and Four, which makes just such a claim for Spenser. Roche studies the images surrounding Britomart--as if imagery included similes--and asserts that they share a common motif of "light breaking through an obscuring veil" (57) in order to illustrate the "force of her chastity" (58). Nevertheless, Roche is frustrate in his search for consistency, in part because "Spenser separates the images from an intimate metaphoric connection with his narrative by isolating them in epic similes" (59n). We have examined the simile likening the heroine to the moon revealing herself from behind clouds (3.1.43). Let us add to it two other examples. First, the simile describing her as brought by Glauce before the omniscient wizard to learn the identity of her lover:

> The doubtfull Mayd, seeing her selfe descryde,
> Was all abasht, and her pure yvory
> Into a cleare Carnation suddeine dyde;
> As faire *Aurora* rising hastily,
> Doth by her blushing tell, that she did lye
> All night in old *Tithonus* frosen bed,
> Whereof she seemes ashamed inwardly.
>
> (3.3.20)

Merlin sees through her disguise and Britomart's blush is

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compared with the dawn rather than the moon. Later, Britomart succumbs to a moment of despair at the hardship of her way. At the onslaught of Marinell, her sorrow gives way to rage and the fluctuation of violent emotion is illustrated thus:

> As when a foggy mist hath ouercast
> The face of heaven, and the cleare aire engrost,
> The world in darkenesse dwels, till that at last
> The watry Southwinde from the seabord cost
> Vpblowing, doth disperse the vapour lo'st,
> And poures it selfe forth in a stormy showre;
> So the faire *Britomart* having disclo'st
> Her clowdy care into a wrathfull stowre,
> The mist of griefe dissolu'd, did into vengeance powre.
>
> (3.4.13)

The fog and mist recall the climatic conditions that had obscured the moon in the previous example. But instead of a celestial body, only changing weather is to Britomart. There is no light.

The first two similes support Roche's thesis better than the last. And a full catalogue of the comparisons for Britomart drawn with 'like,' 'as,' and 'than,' altogether upsets his intention to make a broad generalization:

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Britomart's grace is to her manly terror as the rose is to its thorns (3.1.46). A blush fills her face as lightning illuminates the heavens (3.2.5). She is as happy over the praise given Redcrosse by Artegall as a mother over her new-born babe (3.2.11). His words ease Britomart's hurt as magic charms a snake (3.2.15). She dreams as one who views ghastly fiends (3.2.29). She pants and shakes like an earthquake (3.2.42). She is to the shadowy vision in the ball as Narcissus is to his reflection (3.2.44). She pines for Artegall like a ghost longing to cross the river Styx (3.2.52). Her hair is to its covering visor as sunny beams are to clouds (3.9.20). She undoes her armor in the manner of Minerva returning from battle (3.9.22). She is as true to Artegall as the turtledove is to its mate (3.11.2). Her sword pierces the wall of flame surrounding Busyrane's castle like a thunderbolt (3.11.25).

The comparison with Cynthia used for Britomart does not belong exclusively to her; it has application to most of the heroines of The Faerie Queene. Cynthia, in her manifestations of the moon, Diana, and Phoebe, is associated with many characters: with Elizabeth (3.Pr.4); Belphoebe (2.3.31, 3.6.28); Isis (5.7.4); Radigund (5.5.3); Mutabilitie (7.6.8, 7.7.50); and even the False Florimell (4.5.14). The fullness of the simile likening Britomart to Cynthia precludes formulaic reduction, and the association turns out to have fleeting in the context of the whole poem.

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Though we 'know' that Britomart represents chastity, we cannot say that the concept is reinforced by the simile, because the diversity of the associations coupled with her is so purposefully manifold. If it were certain that epic similes provided an interpretive key, we might entertain the idea that the revelation of Cynthia teaches us about the force of Britomart's chastity. But interpretive keys need to keep opening the same doors the same way; and a symbolic consistency between Britomart and Cynthia is patently lacking. Each endeavor to explain what Spenser's similes do tends toward failure because in a certain sense they don't do anything. They simply are. Yet the attempt is understandable, because it is a way of reading Spenser through Milton, whose similes do seem to achieve something that Spenser's don't. The hard part is agreeing on what that achievement is.

Milton begins by ostensibly describing the enormity of Satan's bulk. The narrator's simile crowds three figures--Briareos, Typhon, and Leviathan--under one roof. For the Leviathan, the most obvious literary analogue is in the whale of the Orlando Furioso. Astolfo, when he is transformed into a myrtle, warns Rogero about the dangers of Alcina. Astolfo relates how he and his companions, Rinaldo and Dudon, were detoured on their adventures and brought before a castle, whose proprietress they saw fishing, using "no net, no baite, no hooke" but only "reading in a little

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book / Or mumbling words" (Harington, 5.35,38). Astolfo remembers how he was fascinated and yielded to the witch's promise to show him "all the kinds of fish in seas that were" (5.39) as well as a mermaid, from the vantage of a "little bank" to which they need "safely passe with ease" (5.40). Whisked away from his companions, Astolfo boards the back of a sea monster at the behest of Alcina: "(The banke which she pretends to shew to me / Was that same fish, the monster of the seas)." He and the enchantress "travell . . . all the night" (5.42), only to disembark at a place suspiciously alike to whence they began: Alcina's island (5.43). The hero's subsequent rigidification into a tree is meant to serve as an exemplum for Rogero, but the episode of the whale serves itself as an exemplum within the exemplum.

Astolfo's little story is entertaining partly because it is told retrospectively within the narrative of Rogero. Inset in the character's recollection of Alcina's skills as an angler comes a catalogue of the catch of the day, among which "We saw the fish that men Balena call" (5.37). Even at the time, Astolfo relates:

> And (for it stood so still) we made account
> It had bene land but were deceived all:
> We were deceav'd, well I may rew the while,
> It was so huge we thought it was an Ile. (5.37)

Well in advance of his enchantment, Astolfo is aware that fish is easily mistaken for an island, which knowledge he

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evidently forgets by the time he boards the back of the self-same monster. The story of the whale is delightful to us, not because we know more than Astolfo did at the time, but because his forgetting is part and parcel with his enchantment. We are delighted rather than terrified, because we can keep the whale's deceptive appearances present in our minds throughout.

Rogero, though impressed with his friend's tale, nevertheless follows his predecessor's error in falling captive to Alcina's charms. His own forgetfulness is made charming because the Ariostoan narrator imbues his fall with a providential quality. The uncontrollable flight of the hippograph whisks the hero away to foreign territory:

> Much like in semblance was it to the place
> Where Arethusa usd her selfe to hide
> And seeks so long her love to have beguild
> Till at the last she found her self with child.
>
> (6.19)

By likening Alcina's island to the spot where Arethusa was seduced by Alpheus, Ariosto employs exactly the kind of simile Spenser was fond of. He defers his story to another myth, which practice Spenser follows, and whose evident delight with Orlando Furioso pervades Book Two of The Faerie Queene, notwithstanding Spenser's ability to darken Ariosto's lucidity. The weight of Ariosto's whale is carried by the bark of Phaedria (2.6.3), the aimless

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meandering of which is also modified by the Fortunate Isles of Tasso's Armida (15.37), so that Spenser finally depicts Phaedria at rest on the misleading solidity of her "wandering Islands" (2.12.11). Ariosto's "sea-shouldring Whales," on the other hand, present themselves in Spenser as only one school among the many fantastic monsters--"Scolopendraes" and "Monoceroses" (2.12.23)--falsely threatening Guyon and the Palmer.

Milton also remembers the pleasures of the Orlando with his Leviathan, though Ariosto was hardly the first to use such a tale. The proverbial beast derived its legendary size from the Old Testament, which Milton and Ariosto tinct with a New Testament stain by placing it within a context of guile and deception. In so doing, Milton seems to be following the tradition of medieval bestiaries, such as The Book of Beasts, which appended to its account of the sea-beasts behavior a moral exemplum:

> Now this is just the way in which unbelievers get paid out, I mean the people who are ignorant of the wiles of the Devil and place their hopes in him and in his works. They anchor themselves to him, and down they go into the fires of Hell.
>
> (198)

By reading a metaphor for evil into the sea monsters of Job and Isaiah, the bestiaries and emblem books iconographically expand the Christian identification of the serpent of Eden

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with Satan.

A gullible mariner, such as the Miltonic simile gives us, was often added for verisimilitude though the same whale appears more innocently during the narrator's account of Creation:

> there Leviathan
> Hugest of living Creatures, on the Deep
> Stretcht like a promontory sleeps or swims,
> And seems a moving Land, and at his Gills
> Draws in, and at his Trunk spouts out a Sea.
>
> (6.411-6)

The creation of the animals before man, according to Raphael, seems to have been contemporaneous with the period during which the fiends lay rowling on the flood (Fowler 26). But if the Leviathan appears innocent of Christianized accretions in Raphael's narration, why does the Miltonic narrator present it in such a different light? Is it sufficient to say the Leviathan simile is proleptic, because the rebel angels are rising up to make their first move against man?

J.M. Evans and Eric Smith, among others, have studied Milton's redaction of the Old Testament by comparing it with that of the Anglo-Saxon Genesis B version. Evans shows how Genesis B pinpoints the deceit of Satan, rather a moral failure, as being responsible for man's fall (163). Smith notes that the chronology of events in B parallels Milton in

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arranging the revolt of the angels in advance of the creation of the world (67). Roland Frye, following their cues, usefully brings to light an illustration of Satan accompanying the B version, depicting Satan as chained to a whale (74). Frye instances the drawing as a possible pretext for Abdiel's accusation of Satan, during the War in Heaven, that he is in bondage to himself: "Thyself not free, but to thyself enthrall'd" (6.181). Yet the drawing also suggests a reason that the Miltonic narrator's simile is so different from Raphael's picture of the Leviathan. Satan is visually linked to the Leviathan in the drawing from Genesis B, so that telling the two apart becomes a problem for the understanding. That is, though Satan signifies deceit, the responsibility for untangling his web of lies ultimately rests with the observer. Satan needs be figured in a figure of speech, or a myth such as the War in Heaven, to be comprehensible from a human perspective. But from a divine perspective, evil must not be taken too seriously; the Father refers to Sin and Death only in the lower case, as if they were mere words, just as they are absent from Raphael's account of the War in Heaven, and as Milton abstains from naming them in his "Argument" to Book Two.

Milton uses the Leviathan as a figure for Satan in an epic simile, while the whale in Orlando Furioso is not part of any extended comparison at all, strictly speaking. It forms part of the narrative about Astolfo within the

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narrative about Rogero, which the Miltonic narrator adapts as a figure of speech addressed to his readers. That is, Milton takes elements of Ariosto's plot structure and turns it to his own advantage, so that it can stand as a metaphor for his own story. The epic simile purports to be about size, but it metamorphoses into an exemplum about deception, in which Milton remembers that which Astolfo forgot. The pilot on the Norwegian flood is taken in by his safe anchor, which looks to him as large an island as it had to Astolfo. The pilot, furthermore, is as oblivious and thoughtless as the Leviathan itself, or as Astolfo the moment he succumbed to his curiosity about how to catch fish without nets. Yet Astolfo acts out the story, which Milton summarizes by giving us a picture in which deception is illusory, or at least a property belonging to the deceived, rather than one dependent upon the existence of a deceiver. Milton turns Ariosto's narrative into metaphor at this moment, just as it had absorbed Hesiod's genealogy of the gods and turned Typhon and Briareos into figures of speech.

The Giant Typhon and Titan Briareos both partake, according to Hesiod, in the battle against the Olympians. But each occupies a different position in relation to Zeus. Briareos, the hundred handed, rescues Zeus from the encroachments of the rebels who would overthrow his throne, preeminent among whom is Typhon, the hundred headed. Typhon in the Theogony is deceitful as well as rebellious, and his

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Ovidian cousin was glossed by the allegorists to be a type of pride:

> Typhon is the type of Ambition; ascending, as all other vices, from hell: and therefore the son of the Earth and Erebus. He is said to have reached Heaven with his hands, in regard of his aspiring thoughts; to have feete unwearied with travaile; as expressing his industry in accommodating all things to his owne designes; to have flaming eyes; as full of wrath and violence: the tongues of serpents; in that insolent in language, apt to detract, founding his owne glory on the infamy of an others: and lastly to have an hundred heads, for that ever troubled with diversity of cares & conceptions. But better this horrid figure of Typhon agrees with rebellion: having a hundred heads in regard of his divided forces; fiery mouthes, of his inflamed intents; a girdle of serpents for his pestilent malice and seiges; iron hands, best suting with slaughter; Eagles talons, with rapin; and a body covered with feathers, in regard of perpetual rumors, secret intelligences, fears and suspitions. (Sandys, 250).

Sandys surrounds Ovid's version of Typhon with a mountain of iconographic details picked up from later redactors of Hesiodic materials, such as Pindar, Apollonius, and

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Apollodorus. He amplifies as many Satanic qualities as he can think of, but Briareos never for a moment enters the fray. His approach to Typhon represents the typical attitude of his age, but why, then, does Milton treat Briareos as if he were synonymous with Typhon? Especially if Milton, whom we would expect to have read the originals as well as the hand-me-down versions, could not have found such a suggestion in Hesiod?

The answer comes, I think, in the middle of the verse paragraph in which the epic simile is situated. At its outset, Satan and Beelzebub had raised themselves up from the burning lake where they lay. The epic simile, we observed, changed focus from a portrayal of magnitude to an evocation of deceitfulness. Yet the allusion to Hesiod and Ariosto gives way to the interjection of the Miltonic narrator that only divine dispensation allows for Satan to seem independent:

> the Arch-fiend lay
> Chain'd on the burning Lake, nor ever thence
> Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
> And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
> Left him at large to his own dark designs
> That with reiterated crimes he might
> Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
> Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
> How all his malice sev'd but to bring forth

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Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.

(1.209-220)

The epic simile conflated a binary opposition between good and evil in Hesiod, but the narrator explicates by dismissing the autonomy of evil to be illusory in the first place. Yet the show must go on, and the verse paragraph continues the narration by relating how Satan appears to direct himself:

Forthwith upright he rears from off the Pool
. . . . . .
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight. . .
. . . . . .
till on dry Land
He lights,
. . . . . .
Him follow'd his next Mate,
Both glorying to have scap't the *Stygian* flood
As Gods, and by thir own recover'd strength . . .

(1.220-40)

The omitted verses qualify the "action" of Satan in a second string of epic similes that we shall examine in the next part. But here we need reiterate that neither the short Miltonic comparisons we have examined nor the epic simile tells us something about the narrative. Instead, Milton is

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telling us about Hesiod.

Milton's epic simile seems to align Satan with Hesiod's Typhon and Briareos, just as Spenser allied his Serpent with Ovid's Python. The contradictions between Typhon and Briareos are held in balance by the Miltonic narrator, who substitutes for the many-sided world of Hesiod, the paradox of the fortunate fall. Malice brings forth infinite goodness here, as later, when Adam exclaims:

> O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
> That all this good of evil shall produce,
> And evil turn to good; more wonderful
> Than that which by creation first brought forth
> Light out of darkness! full of doubt I stand,
> Whether I should repent me now of sin
> By mee done and occasion'd, or rejoice
> Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,
> To God more glory, more good will to Men
> From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.
>
> (12.469-79)

The world seems to suffer decay as a result of sin, the appearance being necessary in order to redeem it for a greater good. The Miltonic narrator reformulates the sentence at the end of the verse paragraph:

> Both glorying to have scap't the *Stygian* flood
> As Gods, and by thir own recover'd strength,

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Not by the sufferance of supernal Power.

(1.239-241)

Satan thinks he is in control, but he is not. He fancies himself a god and manages later to persuade Eve likewise, but for the moment the Miltonic narrator reasserts the omnipotence of "supernal Power." The narrator suggests that the representation of evil in the book of the world is a story in the hands divine author. Though that fiction may not be a problem for God, it did create friction for the secular author, just as the paradox of the fortunate fall was just the other side of the coin minted in gnostic accounts of the creation.

Milton's epic similes superficially share ecphrastic features in common with those of Spenser by sometimes repeating the frame words ("So stretcht out huge in length") to close the comparison off from the narrative. But often the Miltonic narrator vexes those end frames so that it is not clear what is being compared to what, or if, in fact, a metamorphosis has taken place. We have studied how, for example, Raphael, or the Phoenix "lights, and to his proper shape returns" (5.276); how the Vallombrosa demons, or the Egyptian cavalry "lay . . . / Under amazement of thir hideous change" (1.311-3); and how Adam and Eve, or the Indian herdsmen "Those Leaves / They gather'd" (9.1110-1).

The Leviathan simile appears to function a little differently, to be more Spenserian, in its degree of

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closure. Yet its allusion to Hesiod stands in a different relation to the rest of Paradise Lost than does the Nile imagery to The Faerie Queene. No matter how we assemble the various references to the Nile in Spenser's poem, they, like the instances of "coleblack" or the imagery surrounding Britomart, amount only to a heap of fragments. The Hesiodic imagery in Milton, on the other hand, is developed in the fashion of the tears of Satan: it is repeated and modulated in different contexts to create an illusion of narrative unity of time and place.

Isabel MacCaffrey noticed much of the same cross-referencing in discussing how the Miltonic simile was not only proleptic but retrospective:

> Every incident . . . casts light back and ahead to illuminate past and future so that we are made aware of the entire myth at once. The relatively small vocabulary used in the poem means that there is necessarily a high frequency of repeated words and phrases which gather significance as they go along and reinforce, even while they borrow strength from, our familiarity with the story.
>
> (1959:87)

The present chapter concludes with examining how the volcanic imagery derived from Hesiod recurs not only in other Miltonic similes, but originates in the War in Heaven, and ends in the prophetic vision granted Adam by Michael.

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The epic simile following the Leviathan mimics the association of earthquakes and volcanoes with the Typhon (1.232-3), who was supposedly buried under Aetna in Sicily according to Virgil. Yet one volcano seems to have been thought as good as the next, not only by Milton, but by Ovid, who located the battle with the Olympians on Phlegraean plains near Vesuvius. Hence Milton's Satanic legions exceed in number "all the Giant brood / Of *Phlegra*" (1.576-7). Indeed, Pandemonium was mined on such an unstable site: "There stood a Hill not far whose grisly top / Belch'd fire and rolling smoke" (1.670). And among the demons killing time while waiting for Satan's return are those who "with vast *Typhoean* rage more fell / Rend up both Rocks and Hills, and ride the Air / In whirlwind" (2.539). The demons, as tearers-up of hills, are like Typhon rather than Briareos, the adversary rather than a help mate of Zeus. During the Celestial Battle, Satan recoils from the shock of a blow in the simile Ruskin found imaginative on account of its metamorphosis:

> as if on Earth
> Winds under ground or waters forcing way
> Sidelong, had push't a Mountain from his seat
> Half sunk with all his Pines.
>
> (6.195-8)

Ruskin fancied that "the bodily shape of the angel was destroyed" in the image leaving us with only fearful ideas

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of "the thunder, the resistance, the massy prostration." A metamorphosis does seem to be going on, though I wonder if it has instead to do with Satan being made to correspond, on the one hand, to the mountain, and, Abdiel, on the other, with the volcanic winds.

The curious inversion of what we might have expected is fleshed out on the third day of the battle. The faithful are stymied in their attempt to subdue the enemy's craft:

> Thir Arms away they threw, and to the Hills
> (For Earth hath this variety from Heav'n
> Of pleasure situate in Hill and Dale)
> Light as the Lightning glimpse they ran, they flew,
> From thir foundations loos'ning to and from
> They pluckt the seated Hills with all thir load,
> Rocks, Waters, Woods, and by the shaggy tops
> Uplifting bore them in thir hands: Amaze . . .
>
> (6.639-46)

The new twist in the fracas is initiated by the good angels in response to the demons. It is Raphael and Michael who "The bottom of the Mountains upward turn'd" (6.649) and "on thir Head / Main Promontories flung" (6.653-4). Nevertheless, the demons start to retaliate: "The rest in imitation to like Arms / Betook them, and the neighboring Hills uptore; / So Hills amid the Air enounter'd Hills / Hurl'd to and fro with jaculation dire" (6.662-5). In

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giving hill-hurling first to the faithful, Milton seems again to underscore that Briareos and Typhon are indistinguishable, save from a human perspective.

Milton gives us a picture of a war in which there is only one side, suggesting that any adversary is illusory and that illusion is the enemy of truth, because it is the patently unreal condition of the mind rather than of God's creation. Hill hurling, or the piling of Pelian on Ossa, comes out of Hesiod, though Book Six refers to the Theogony's Battle of the Giants not by simile, but in actuality. Milton arrogates authority for the invention of theme to himself in situating it as part of the narrative of The War in Heaven. Even the Father gets in on the action:

> for God had thrown
> That mountain as his garden mould high rais'd
> Upon the rapid current . . . (4.225-7)

The subterranean currents of Eden mingle with one another because God heaped a mountain atop them when the Garden was being contrived. And earlier yet (though not before the War in Heaven), the Word of God silenced the Abyss of Chaos:

> Outrageous as a Sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
> Up from the bottom turn'd by furious winds
> And surging waves, as Mountains to assault
> Heav'n's highth, and with the Centre mix the
> Pole.
>
> (7.212-5)

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The hill hurling of Hesiod's Giants has its origins in the Celestial Battle, where it is not a comparison but part of the narrative.

The allusion to Hesiod figures not only in the narrative of the Creation and the Celestial Battle, but in two visions. On Satan's voyage to Paradise, he passes through the Limbo of Vanities, where he witnesses "all things transitory and vain" (3.446). Among the consequences of "seeking but the praise of men" (3.453), Satan sees the Giants:

> Hither of ill-join'd Sons and Daughters born
> First from the ancient World those Giants came
> With many a vain exploit, though then renown'd:
> The builders next of *Babel* on the Plain . . .
>
> (3.463-6)

The self-same Giants are again put in place, but a different place by Michael, who shows Adam the monsters begotten on the daughters of Cain by the sons of Seth. Even less like those of Hesiod, and more like the warring combatants pictured on the Shield of Achilles, the "Giants of mighty Bone" (11.643) seen by Adam:

> to a City strong
> Lay Siege, encampt; by Battery, Scale, and Mine,
> Assaulting; others from the wall defend
> With Dart and Jav'lin, Stones and sulphurous Fire;
> On each hand slaughter and gigantic deeds.

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(11.655-9)

Hesiod's Giants are no longer the fantastic projections of a lunatic like Satan, but are given a diminished role in the sacred history prophesied to Adam, coming after the vision of Abel's murder, the agonies of death, and before that of the just man, Enoch.

At the root of all the Titanic similes likening Milton's characters, places, and events to Hesiod's Theogony is the version of sacred history recorded in Paradise Lost. Michael glosses the vision:

> Such were these Giants, men of high renown;
> For in those days Might only shall be admir'd,
> And Valor and Heroic Virtue call'd
> To overcome in Battle, and subdue
> Nations, and bring home spoils with infinite
> Man-slaughter, shall be held the highest pitch
> Of human Glory, and for glory done
> Of triumph, to be styl'd great Conquerors,
> Patrons of Mankind, Gods, and Sons of Gods,
> Destroyers rightlier call'd and Plagues of men.
> Thus Fame shall be achiev'd, renown on Earth,
> And what most merits fame in silence hid.
>
> (11.687)

The Giants were notorious men, whose heinous deeds were recorded for posteriority merely on account of their fame. Michael takes a Euhemerist approach not only to the Sons of

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God, noted in Genesis more for their longevity than their prodigious size, but, by extension, to the parallel figures in the myths of Homer of Virgil: all giants were only ever served to relate the ideology of a heroic code of values.

Michael is not far removed from Renaissance literary critics, who--as distinct from the allegorists--sought to define how the heroes of the Iliad and the Aeneid provide us with models of human behavior. Michael rejects allegoresis in favor of mimesis, just as Miltonic narrator professes the trials of "th' upright heart and pure" (1.18) in representing "the better fortitude / Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom / Unsung" (9.31-3). On the level of intentions, Milton the poet scarcely differs, I think, from Milton the theologian. The one thought he was conveying a different set of values from that of the classical epic; the other, that the Word of God was already accommodated to man's capacity for understanding. But intentions aside, Milton is not able to escape allegory altogether, because he could not control the values read into Paradise Lost. The historicization of myth in his poetic fiction seems to have contributed to the demonization of the written word.

I had said that Milton's comparisons seemed roughly to fall into three distinct patters: when Milton's "A" is more "x" than somebody else's "B"; or when "B" is made out to be a lie or a fable; or when "A" metamorphoses into "B." I have tried to put together in this chapter a few examples of

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the third pattern, which trifle with the end frame so that it is unclear whether a comparison rather than an identification or a substitution is intended. Of the first type, Schork counts only eleven, which he calls "negative similes," for he includes only those with a finite verb and an explict negation (52). Among his specimens is the example claiming the flood of barbarian hordes did not match the multitude of Satan's troops (1.351-5); and simile claiming the height of the hill on which Christ was tempted was "no higher . . . nor wider" than the height of Adam's vista on Paradise (11.381-4). I am assuming, perhaps mistakenly, that Milton means his number in the first case to exceed that recorded in the chronicles, Adam's vista in the second example having already been discussed as "nobler," which would make Schork's "negative similes" a subset of the "more than" variety. Schork, at any rate, by focusing on the words "not" and "never," misses several highly elaborate images, such as when the passage from heaven to earth is described as "Wider by far than that of aftertimes" (3.529). Furthermore, Schork's self-imposed restriction to finite verbs causes him to omit other important examples from his count, such as the narrator's description of his "Sad task, yet argument / Not less but more Heroic" (7.12-4), or that likening Satan's "better" pleasure with the fragrance of Eden to Asmodeus (4.167).

Of the second kind of Miltonic simile, making "B" out

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to be erroneous, I adduce a few examples to make a final point. The demons who explore the frozen reaches of Hell while Satan is embarked on his mission, stumble upon "A universe of death" (2.622) where things are bred:

> worse
> Than Fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd,
> *Gorgons* and *Hydras*, and *Chimeras* dire.
> Meanwhile the Adversary of God and Man . . .
> (2.626-9)

Adam and Eve take respite after their day's work:

> In shadier Bower
> More sacred and sequester'd, though but feign'd,
> *Pan* or *Silvanus* never slept, nor Nymph,
> Nor *Faunus* haunted. Here in close recess . . .
> (4.705-8)

Raphael is welcomed in all simplicity by the mother of mankind:

> *Eve*
> Undeckt, save with herself more lovely fair
> Than Wood-Nypmh, or the fairest Goddes feign'd
> Of three that in Mount *Ida* naked strove,
> Stood to entertain her guest from Heav'n . . .
> (5.379-83)

Prayers rise from Adam and Eve, who supplicate Heaven in no mean posture:

> nor important less

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> Seem'd thir Petition, than when th' ancient Pair
> In Fables old, less ancient yet than these,
> *Deucalion* and chaste *Pyrrha* to restore
> The race of Mankind drown'd, before the Shrine
> Of *Themis* stood devout. To Heav'n thir prayers
> Flew up . . . (11.10-5)

I have included after the finish of these "fabled" comparisons the beginning of the next line, in order to illustrate that not one example qualifies as an epic simile if we are defining it for Milton as we had for Spenser, i.e., closed off from the narrative by the repetition of the frame word. Like the "metamorphic" similes, the "fabled" comparisons run into the events of the narrative. And like the "negative" comparisons, the "fabled" comparisons often include an intensifier ("worse," "shadier," "more lovely," "less ancient"). The fact that Milton purposefully vexes the moment the comparison ends and the narrative resumes makes for intractable difficulties in discriminating between short and epic similes in Paradise Lost.

The problem with deciding what constitutes an epic simile for Milton is indicative of the problem with deciding what in his poem is allegorical. The epic similes of Paradise Lost cannot be located by the repetition of the frame word, nor by an arbitrary number of verse lines, because Milton blurs the moment that simile returns us to the narrative. I said we could ferret out three different

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patterns of comparison-making in Milton, but they are so frequently combined that it seems safer to say that the most elaborate pseudo-similes invoke one or more patterns. Milton's Figtree, for example, *unlike* the figtree of rumor, yields the leaves that are plucked by Adam and Eve, but which *transform* themselves into the primitive coverings of native Indians. Likewise, in the Leviathan simile, Satan is as large as Typhon, Briareos, and the whale, but all three belong to the realm of *fable*, where they reside as metaphors for the Satanic pride and deceit *materializing* in sacred history.

To conclude, the Leviathan simile alludes to pretexts only to tell us about the difference between them and Paradise Lost, whereas Spenser cites Ovid in order to let us see a parallel between The Faerie Queene and the Metamorphoses. Spenser does not claim that his parbreake is more disgusting than the primordial slime left by Ovid's flood, even though it is, nor does Spenser disparage Ovid by calling him a liar. I have sought to explain in what sense Spenser's use of the simile represents an allegorical frame of mind, in contrast to which the spirit of Milton's method of making comparisons is ironic, to an examination of which we now turn.

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Part Five--Simile and Irony

The attempt to explicate Spenser's allegory in our time has grown out of a renewed interest in the content of poetry rather than its form. This change evinces a problem born in part from the application of the rhetorical definition of allegory to The Faerie Queene. Since Spenser proclaims himself to be writing an allegory in the prefatory letter to Raleigh, we feel compelled to unearth buried meanings, but the urgency with which we start digging is, I fear, not only belated but misdirected. The rhetorical definition of an allegorical genres is a red-herring that necessitates positing an idea of the author's intentions in advance of the poem, and from which the poem literally departs.

I have tried to suggest we think of Spenser's poem as not a puzzle in need of interpretation, but as the fruit of an allegorical way of reading the past that goes on to figure out an older enigma in new images. In that light, his epic similes would be footnotes granting Spenser the authority to use new images. They would anchor the stories about Redcrosse, Guyon, and Britomart, by revealing Spenser's debts to the past. In suggesting that his similes are allegorical because they evince a mode of receiving description in narrative poetry, I mean to relieve Spenserians from the anxiety of not having said enough about his epic similes. The relative silence of Spenser's critics

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has expressed not so much a lapse in attention toward the extended comparisons of The Faerie Queene but, instead, a poetic truth about their ineffability.

The similes of Paradise Lost, on the other hand, have been variously received as apt, sublime, imaginative, and allusive. The noisier reception history attests to their instability and to that of the poem on the whole, but it also suggests that everything ever written about Milton's extended comparisons is true, and that what is lacking is a key to show how one point of view yields logically to the next. How do we get from the apt to the sublime to the imaginative? Most recently, the bravura gesture of Paradise Lost toward its literary past has been dubbed metaleptic or transumptive, but while the coinage is current in its application to Milton, the term has failed to sustain a fixed value on a volatile market. Is the trope in Milton's poem distinct from the way that Spenser invokes his literary past? I am perhaps not alone in wondering, half-annoyed, half-intrigued, whether it is possible for anyone to explain unmistakably what metalepsis has to do with Milton, for though a lot of ink has been spilled on the subject, we still seem to be in the woods. Though rhetoricians agree that the trope denotes a way of referring to something by way of omission, they also treat the figure of speech as if it were quite obscure and insignificant. The function of the metaleptic trope is more to important literary critics,

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but also muddier. Metalepsis has something to do with the poem's allusiveness for Miltonists such as Bloom, Hollander, and Guillory, and maybe it is the case that the connection between a semantic transference and a literary reference is necessarily spelled out in monstrously conflicted ways.

I am without the blueprint to put all the pieces about metalepsis together, but it is the purpose of the final segment of this study to sketch a map positioning Milton's transumptive allusion in relation to irony. I shall expose a few salient conceptions of the trope to the healthful air of particular similes from Milton and Spenser, in order to investigate how an ironic mode provides an alternative to Spenser's allegorical condition. Transumption offers us insight, furthermore, into how the sublime and the imaginative are logically connected in the reception of Milton's similes, although I confess in advance the connection between transumption and allusion is problematic. When I wrote that ink had been spilled, but we were still in the woods, did the reader, half-annoyed and half-intrigued, think of the Spenser's Woods of Error? If so, the allusion worked because I reduced the complexity of an episode from <u>The Faerie Queene</u> to a manageable size by leaving out whatever didn't fit. If the reader chuckled when I referred to the contentions between Bloom, Hollander, and Guillory as "monstruous," it was only because I was able to treat the polysemous serpent in Spenser as if it meant something in

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particular; that is, as if it were not allegorical. Yet, if the allusion didn't work, maybe I left out too much. In other words, irony and allegory may not be the simple opposites. Maybe they are both distortions of the elliptical, the enigmatic itself being a shade off from the perfect circularity of myth.

A study of metalepsis beginning with treatises concerning stylistic devices, such as by Quintilian or Puttenham, would not lead the aspiring orator to regard the trope as much more than a curiosity, nor does it quite prepare us for the moment granted the figure in Harold Bloom's reading of Paradise Lost. Bloom, followed by John Hollander and John Guillory, uses the trope to describe the general way that Milton deals with precursors by positioning his story in advance of its sources. For Bloom, the transumption of the poem evolves out of an Oedipal conflict between the poet and his forebears. The burden of the past weighing on Milton's shoulders results in his casting off or transuming Spenser by concealing his debts to him. Hollander details metalepsis as a variety of allusion initiated by Milton, in whose poem can be heard the echoes of not only The Faerie Queene but Shakespearean drama as well. Guillory inverts Bloom's formula in order to claim that Milton's transumption represents an effort to draw himself closer to, rather than to distance himself from, Spenser, but at the expense of denying his debts to

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Shakespeare. The three tacitly agree that the simile is the crucial site wherein to spot the operation of the trope, which they employ as a hallmark for discussing the larger implications of a transumptive style. But they do not discuss a non-transumptive style for the sake of contrast, nor in what a normative use of the epic simile would consist.

The trope, because it invariably involves something omitted, tends toward fuzziness. How do we agree on what Milton is leaving out as a result of his allusiveness, or how exactly it is being omitted? On the one hand, the collective insights of Bloom, Hollander, and Guillory, for example, allows us to hear beneath the overt reference in Satan's journey to the Homeric wanderings of Odysseus, the uncanny rumbling of Ulysses's speeches in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida. It pleases Ulysses to espouse the great chain of being, so long as his position in relation to the power of command located in Agamemnon is over that of Achilles: "The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre / Observe degree, priority, and place" (1.3.85-6). Likewise, it suits Satan when addressing his inferiors to remind them that "Orders and Degrees / Jar not with liberty" (6.592-3), which point he forgets when he argues with Abdiel that he is "self-begot, self-raised" (5.860). In Satan's plaint that hell is an inward condition that "Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (1.255), we hear not only

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the introspection of Marlowe and Hamlet, but the dual pursuits in A Midsummer's Night Dream of the beloved, Helena ("That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell!" [1.1.207]), and the lover, Hermia ("I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell" (2.1.243). On the other hand, the transumptive critics of Milton are not in agreement on what to do with such echoes; and John Shawcross sober-mindedly wonders if our hearing needs to be inspected, since "a historically critical assessment of Milton's debts to Shakespeare . . . [has] yet to be engaged" (1991:30). Shawcross valuably reminds us that allusions are usually thought to be the result of a conscious effort "to evoke a remembrance from the reader," whereas echoes are "unconscious to the author when the author wrote" (32). But with what certainty, I would ask him, can we tell apart an allusion from echo, and a what point does a direct quotation evanesce into an allusion?

Transumption seems to me to figure an ironic way of seeing the world, which position, just as teleological as those criticized by Shawcross, is the logical complement of the assertion that Spenser's similes are allegorical. I intend both, however, as guidelines for exploration rather than proofs, for I am interested in seeing whether the sense of opposing allegory against irony in the light of particular examples. Thus the concluding segment of the present study seeks to examine how different definitions of

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transumption square with the Miltonic simile. My aim is not to tangle with the validity of Bloom's psychoanalytic model of authorial intention; nor to overthrow Guillory because I intuit that Milton is doing something inherently different from Spenser. To make the general characterization that Milton's poem is transumptive is useful in representing Milton's aspiration to outdo Spenser, since they were both writing long narrative poems, yet the concept need be applied more gingerly to characterize his relation to Shakespeare, who wrote no epic. And general concepts as a rule, I fear, serve only to dull the appreciation of individual similes. If we are to use the word at all, a persuasive case needs be made on the level of individual examples.

A. "Not that fair field": Curtius

To grant historical import to the occasion of Milton's transumption seems untenable, if we are thinking of it as a kind of "outdoing." Curtius affords a clear and simple definition, useful for my purpose, of the ancient topos:

> If a person or thing is to be "eulogized" one points out that he or it surpasses anything of the kind and to this end employs a *special form of comparison*, which I call "outdoing." On the basis of a comparison with famous examples provided by

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> tradition, the superiority, even the uniqueness, of the person or thing to be praised is established. In Latin poetry Statius is the first to make this a manner. . . . A special case of panegyric "outdoing," which deserves particular attention, occurs when a poet or prose writer is praised as having put all the greatest works of the past in the shade. . . . The manner recurs in every century of the Middle Ages. In the panegyric style writers permit themselves the most daring "outdoings"; elsewhere they gratefully admit the pre-eminence of the ancients. . . . Its chief trope is the hyperbole. The hyperbolic style is authorized not only by the pagan writers but also by the entire Bible. Thus, even so late as the age of Crusades, the early Christian Biblical rhetoric and Biblical poetics are revived. (163-4, my emphasis)

Curtius is working his way towards a discussion of Dante, in order to explain the reason that the narrator of the Commedia claims to "outdo" or transume Lucan and Ovid when, in the circle of the thieves, he depicts the double metamorphoses of the serpents. Yet Curtius's point that outdoing is the result of a "special form of comparison" is invaluable for a discussion of transumption not only in Dante, but Milton.

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We examined in the last section how certain similes of Paradise Lost addressed the inventions of the ancients as "errant," "feigning," and "fabling," while the "more than" frame of others reduced classical figures to the status of diminutions of Milton's own persons, places, and events. These examples could also be said to be hyperbolic, just as the Miltonic narrator professes to compare "great things with small" (2.922; 10.306), and Raphael sets "forth / Great things by small" (6.310-1). The abstract claim stems from Virgil, whose Tityrus, in the first of the Eclogues, confesses to having supposed Rome just a larger version of the pastoral loci he was familiar with:

> Fool that I was, I thought Imperial Rome
> Like Mantua, where on Market days we come.
>
> (Dryden 1.29-30)

The pastoralist retrospectively recognizes his error in having measured the great by the small, and the shepherd's humility towards his subject matter is carried over in the Georgics, whose narrator deferentially likens the labor of bees to the industry of the Cyclops: "If little things with great we may compare" (Dryden, 4.256). Are we to understand that the epic genre tacitly takes on the task of doing what the pastoral cannot, i.e., by comparing the great to the small? Does Milton assume epic poetry by nature hyperbolic?

In the light of Curtius, both hyperbole and transumption appear to be of the same ilk, but it seems that

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the first step in outdoing precursors consists in staking the claim that the precursors have been outdone. The rhetorical swagger of the Miltonic simile transumes the past in order to denigrate the very tradition in which his poem is located, but do his charges carry any weight, or is it merely a case of the pot calling the kettle black? Curtius identifies Statius to be the first master of the hyperbolic style, though transumption seems to me less a historical event, than a response to the past, which, like allegory, keeps recycling itself over the course of world literature. Ariosto's opening volley proposes to give us "A tale in prose ne verse yet song or sayd" just as Milton's first verse paragraph anticipates "Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme." Spenser, on the other hand, only expresses his desire to sing the praises of those "hauving slept in silence long." The wish to "emulate" and "overgo" Ariosto--not in The Faerie Queene itself--appears only in a letter to Gabriel Harvey (Selincourt 628). Moreover, we have been entertaining the idea of allegory as being a response to the past; and if it is the habit of pots to call kettles black, how do we keep the allegorical separate from the transumptive? Let us look at an example.

Milton was not the first Renaissance poet to incorporate the myth of Ceres into an epic simile. Ariosto has recourse to a similar device, and the difference between the Orlando Furioso and Paradise Lost in this instance is

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instructive:

Faire *Ceres* when she hastned backe agayne
From great Idea homward to returne
There where *Enceladus* with endles payne
Doth beare mount Aetna that doth ever burne,
When she had sought her daughter long in vayne
Whose losse so strange did make the mother mourne,
She spoiles for spite her brest, cheeks, eyes, and
heare.
At last two boughs from Pyne tree she doth teare.

In *Vulcans* forge she sets on fire the brands
And geves them powre for ever to be light,
And taking one a peece in both her hands
And drawne in coach by yoked serpents might
She searcheth woods and fields and seas and lands
And brooks and streames and dens devoyd of light,
And hearing here on earth no newes to like her
At last she went to hell it selfe to seeke her.

Were good *Orlandos* powre to be compared
As well with *Ceres* as his loving mynde,
He would no paine, no place, nor time have spared
His deare belov'd *Angelyca* to finde.
To go to rockes and caves he would have dared,
And place to saints and place to fends assign'd

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He onely wanted one of *Ceres* waggons
In which she caried was with flying dragons.
(Harington 12.1-3)

The longest simile in the Orlando Furioso starts off sounding like just another digression from the narrative until in the third stanza we understand that a comparison is being made. Orlando's search for Angelica is like that of Ceres for Proserpine. The first two stanzas are virtually a cento of imagery pertaining to the corn-goddess myth in Book Five of the Metamorphosis, and De raptu proserpinae. Ariosto recapitulates in a nutshell points on which Ovid and Claudian agree, while leaving out their differences. But does he make a hyperbolic claim?

Ariosto's simile is, in fact, a negative comparison, but unlike the negative comparisons of Milton. Orlando does not seek his beloved out with greater diligence or constancy than Ceres, but less. Yet Ariosto's reasoning for his hero's failure gives us a laugh, or at least a pause. The champion's search for Angelica is less thorough than that of goddess for her daughter because Orlando is without Ceres's chariot, although the narrator vaunts his champion the equal of the goddess if only he could represent his hero's "loving mynde." Ariosto's epic simile does not outdo Ovid's or Claudian's picture of the pain of Ceres, because he does not, or cannot, directly give us the inwardness of Orlando's ardor or zeal. The simile evinces Curtius's topos of

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"inexpressibility" on the one hand; but the narrator, on the other, boldly equates the magic of the ancients with his own insight into love's enchantments.

Ariosto and Milton both adapt material from the myth of Ceres to furnish their negative comparisons, though that of Milton is more clearly transumptive. The narrator makes Enna conspicuous among the various gardens with which he need not compare his garden on account of Eden's unique superiority:

> Not that fair field
> Of *Enna*, where *Proserpin* gath'ring flow'rs
> Herself a fairer Flow'r by gloomy *Dis*
> Was gather'd, which cost *Ceres* all that pain
> To seek her through the world . . .
>
> (4.268-75)

Ovid's Proserpina cries out for her mother when she is seized by Pluto. But then she cries a second time:

> And as shee tore th'adornment of her haire,
> Down fell the flowr's which in her lap she bare.
> And such was her sweet Youth's simplicity,
> That their losse also made the Virgin crie.
>
> (Sandys 237)

The girl's own distress and her sorrow for the dropped flowers anticipates the doubling in Milton's simile, "Herself a fairer Flow'r," literally reiterated before the fall, "Herself, though fairest unsupported Flow'r" (9.432).

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Milton's Satan also extends to his intended guests an imaginary welcome of "mutual amity so strait" (4.376), whereas in Claudian the king of the underworld comforts his bride-to-be by making a promise about her future abode:

> Soft meads shall fail thee not, and ever-blooming flowers, such as thy Henna ne'er produced . . . (2.288-9).

Maybe Enna always tended towards being over-rated in the first place, but what seems striking in this instance is that in making Eden lovelier than Enna in Paradise Lost, Milton's poem not only appropriates the hyperbolic gesture of De raptu proserpinae, but that the Miltonic narrator arrogates to himself the rhetorical device originally belonging to a character.

Milton does a better job than Ariosto in creating the illusion of an epic narrator, though all his characters seem finally to be subsumed by a single voice. The story of Ceres found in the Metamorphoses is not recounted by the Ovidian narrator, but expounded at length by his character, Calliope, whose contest with the Pierides--the framing device for the inset tale--is conveyed in a much briefer span to Minerva by an unidentified Muse. The speaker of De raptu, by contrast, incorporates only short interchanges between characters in his more highly descriptive and ornamental epyllion. In other words, it is far easier to lose track of who is speaking--whether the narrator or one

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of his character's--in Ovid rather than Claudian. The tales inset within tales often take precedence over the larger frame, and in this regard the episodic structure of Orlando Furioso and The Faerie Queene is clearly indebted to the Metamorphoses.

Claudian's Pluto additionally vows to Proserpine a precious tree growing "with living ore" that will be consecrated to her (2.292). Spenser adapts Claudian in his Garden of Proserpina, to which either the goddess herself or Mamnon's daughter Philotime--it is not clear which--retires "from open heat" (2.7.53). Yet Pluto's figure of speech turns out to be a lie in Spenser, for the prophesied garden yields only a deadly harvest of funereal, poisonous weeds. In Claudian, the punishments of the wicked are intermitted for the nuptial feast, and in Spenser, the resumed torments of Tantalus are enhanced by the addition of the pangs of Pilate. Nevertheless, Claudian's tree remains, though only one simile is given over in Spenser's account to the "glistring" brightness of the its apples:

> On earth like neuer grew, ne liuing wight
> Like euer saw, but they from hence were sold;
>
> (2.7.54)

Spenser does not exactly claim his apples are better or different from those of the Hesperides, Atalanta and Hippomenes, Acontius, or Paris, though he says they all derive from his version of the garden. Spenser's claim is

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very nearly Miltonic, and, in fact, exaggerated in Milton's description of Paradise, where among the variety of trees to be found are those bearing fruit "with Golden Rind . . . *Hesperian* true, / If true, here only" (4.249-51). Spenser, on the other hand, wants us to think of his Mammon and Philotime as types of Pluto and Proserpine, because he thought of Ovid's and Claudian's myths as versions of the fall. As Hamilton notes, "we are aware of Eve's apple by its deliberate omission" (234), for Spenser contents himself, I think, with letting us imagine that his apples, like those of his forebears, are metaphors for the forbidden fruit of Genesis.

Though Spenser says the apples of the Hesperides come from his garden, his garden is the same as Claudian's in being expressly qualified as an evil place. Moreover, Spenser more closely follows his original insofar as his poisonous arbor is part of the narrative--Proserpine does not exist in a simile. The approach of Ariosto and Milton, however, is quite different because they adapt material from the Metamorphoses and De raptu for figures of speech. Ariosto appears to defer to Ovid and Claudian, while what he gives with one hand, he takes away with the other in other in asserting that Orlando only needed a magical car to have bettered them. Milton is specifically hyperbolic in pushing his Eden to the fore, though his exaggeration but copies the promises of Claudian's Pluto. Ariosto's description of the

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travails of Ceres in an epic simile, we realize belatedly, is not part of his story. This is the inverse of the procedure found in the Miltonic narrator, whose epic similes render the pagan myths to be distortions of the true myth of Paradise Lost. For that reason, Milton can later add that "Likest she seem'd . . . to *Ceres* in her Prime, / Yet Virgin of *Proserpina* from *Jove*" (9.395-6), without fear of having contradicted himself. Eve in the same passage is more like Delia than the goddess herself; yet our first mother is most like, or "likest," Pales, Pomona, and Proserpina, only because they all share similarities with Eve, Milton is in effect saying, not the other way round.

The appreciation among critics of Ovid's and Ariosto's subtle use of irony developed only after the lengthy allegorical reception of their poems. The hyperbole of the Enna simile represents as much the effort to cancel out the allegorical accretions attendant on the myth of Ceres and Proserpine, as it essays to forge an explicitly Christian epic by taking up a position of rhetorical excess. Let us look closely at another example in terms of a different definition of metalepsis.

B. "As when the Sun new ris'n": Puttenham

I have already quoted the epic simile beginning, "Stood like a Tow'r," in relation to Dennis and the sublime. The

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description of Satan, we saw, expanded to greater dimensions by encompassing an eclipse and a thunderous scar, before it was capped off at the end of the verse paragraph with a new simile about Jove's fire. But what is metaleptic about the comparison in terms of George Puttenham's analysis of figures, which defines metalepsis to be a "far fetcher," or "as when we had rather fetch a word a great way off than to use one nearer had to express the matter as well and plainer" (183). John Hollander's excellent survey of Renaissance accounts of the trope observes their debts to Quintilian (133ff), who first writes of the usefulness of metalepsis for the way it effects a change of meaning in comedy:

> It is the nature of metalepsis to form a kind of intermediate step between the term transferred and the thing to which it is transferred, having no meaning in itself, but merely providing a transition. (8.6.38)

Puttenham and Quintilian agree that the trope is scarcely worth our attention, though Quintilian's allusion to something remote, which skips over an intermediary step, becomes for Puttenham a figure especially pleasing to ladies on account of its rarity.

But what is metaleptic about Milton's Tower simile in their terms? A portion of it I re-quote:

> Stood like a Tow'r: his form had not yet lost

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All her Original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than Arch-Angel ruin'd, and th' excess
Of Glory obscur'd. As when the Sun new ris'n
Looks through the Horizontal misty Air
Shorn of his Beams . . .

(1.591-6)

What is omitted in the transition from "th' excess / Of Glory obscur'd" to "As when the Sun new ris'n"? The sun, in either its "shorn" or "unshorn" aspect, was a popular image with Milton, as was the story of Ceres. "Shorn" is the inversion of the Homeric epithet for Apollo used by Milton, for example, in "At a Vacation Exercise" (l. 37). Nevertheless, the comparison has an omitted original in Spenser, for it is Milton's customary practice to cover his tracks in his epic similes, and for Spenser to expose himself, to their mutual sources in Ariosto and Tasso.

The Spenserian simile concerning the same imagery is given us in relation to the throne of Lucifera and her retinue:

In liuing Princes court non euer knew
Such endlesse richess, and so sumptuous shew;
Ne *Persia* selfe, the nourse of pompous pride
Like euer saw. And there a noble crew
Of Lordes and Ladies stood on euery side,
Which with their presence faire, the place much beautifide.

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High aboue all a cloth of State was spred,
And a rich throne, as bright as sunny day,
On which there sate most braue embellished
With royall robes and gorgeous array,
A mayden Queene, that shone as *Titans* ray,
In glistring gold, and peerelesse pretious stone:
Yet her bright blazing beautie did assay
To dim the brightnesse of her glorious throne,
As enuying her self, that too exceeding shone.

(1.4.7-8)

Titan is Lucifera's mythological precedent for Spenser to liken her royal seat to a "sunny day." Yet does Lucifera's glory confer splendor on her chair, and, by extension, to her train of followers? Or does she derive her status from her surroundings? What is the subject of "beautifide" in the seventh stanza? The "Place" of the throne, or the "noble crew" or lords and ladies?

In using Ovid's Palace of the Sun as material for an extended comparison, Spenser follows Ariosto, but he amplifies the compression of the sun-imagery devoted to Alcina in the Orlando Furioso:

Nor onely was this pallace for the sight
Most goodly, faire, and stately to behold,
But that the peoples courtsie bred delight

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Which was as great as could with tongue be told.
All were of youth and beautie shining bright,
Yet to confirme this thing I dare be bold:
That faire *Alcyna* past the rest as farre
As doth the Sunne an other little starre.

(Harington, 7.10)

It is a little unclear whether the "peoples courtsie" adds charm to the decor of the palace, or if Ariosto intends Alcina's beauty to be a mere reflection of theirs. Spenser renders Ariosto's ambiguity more forceful, for his palace becomes infected with the courtesy of its inhabitants, as if their flattering grace were personified in the inanimate chair of state. Alcina surpasses her worshippers as the sun eclipses a star, and Spenser apes Ariosto's hyperbolic gesture by making Lucifera exceed the glory of her sun-like throne.

Yet the throne serves as a middle term that, by a process of doubling, drops out of the equation in the succeeding stanza:

As enuying her self, that too exceeding shone.

Exceeding shone, like *Phoebus* fairest childe,
That did presume his fathers firie wayne,
And flaming moutes of steedes vnwonted wilde,
Through highest heauen with weaker hand to rayne;

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Proud of such glory and aduancement vaine,
While flashing beames do daze his feeble eyen,
He leaues the welkin way most beaten plaine,
And rapt with whiling wheels, inflames the skyen,
With fire not made to burne, but fairely for to shyne.

So proud shyned in her Princely state . . .

(1.4.8-10)

Spenser adapts Ariosto's hyperbole by likening the throne to the brightness of the day, but he adds that Lucifera is much brighter. In shining brighter, moreover, she becomes like Phaeton rather than Phoebus, who was related in the Metamorphoses to have set the world afire when he rashly overtook his father's chariot. On the one hand, we can say that the throne is transumed in Spenser's compound simile. But on the other hand, the repetition linking the stanzas figures a pun allowing us to hear a secondary meaning. That is, the synonymous disposition of "exceeding shone" and "Exceeding shone" creates a false homonym equating splendour and pride.

Alcina outdoes her worshippers, whereas Lucifera is downgraded in the second half of Spenser's compound simile to become less like the sun. Yet Spenser's cue for

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downgrading comes from Tasso, whose enchantress Armida arrives amid the faithful troops under the cover of nightfall. Rather than to Phoebus, Tasso likens her to a comet:

> As when a comet doth in skies appear,
> The people stand amazed at the light,
> So wonder'd they, and each at other sought,
> What mister wight she was, and whence ybrought.
>
> (Fairfax 4.28)

Armida starts off in a demonic fashion, but at the end of the poem she is humanized by Tasso, who saves Ariosto's sun-imagery for Satan. When the archfiend summons up all the monsters from Hell in order to expatiate on his plan for revenge, the first words out of his mouth exaggerate what Ariosto had said of Alcina:

> Ye powers infernal, worthier far to sit
> Above the sun, whence you your offspring take,
> . . . . . .
> now, instead of clear and gladsome sky,
> Of Titan's brightness that so glorious is,
> In this deep darkness, lo! we helpless lie . . .
>
> (Fairfax 4.9-11)

Ariosto's hyperbole about the excessiveness of demonic splendor is taken over in Tasso by the overweening ambition of the archfiend. Spenser makes an equation between

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splendour and pride, but the variables of his allegorical formula were already set in place by the Orlando Furioso and Gerusalemme Liberata.

Milton's expression figures an extreme reduction of the self-same imagery in Ariosto and Tasso, the connection between which is spelled out for us by Spenser. Milton's "Sun new ris'n" is, in fact, the same old orb rising at the opening of Paradiso, when Dante tells us that "la gloria" of his un-named God "penetrates through the universe and reglows in one part more, and in another less" (1.1-3). Ariosto shed light on some of the murkier spots left by divine glory when he hyperbolically gave his chief sorceress a demonic splendor. But Tasso transferred the Ariostoan narrator's transumption of Dante to Satan's figure of speech, which the Spenserian narrator employs to darken some of Lucifera's glory. Nothing is left Milton, except the pared down oxymoron "Glory obscur'd," which, like "darkness visible," is a negation crowded with the ghosts of the past, and raised to an ineffable pitch by the intensifying "excess." The Miltonic simile is transumptive because its rhetorical excess omits Spenser, but its transumption is also sublime, as Hollander suggests, because sublimation is an *aufhebung*, a raising up and cancelling out (147). We turn now to a different example to ask what metalepsis has to do with the sublime style.

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C. "As when the force": Burke

We have examined how Milton ostensibly indicated Satan's size by comparing him to Typhon and the Leviathan. The simile ended when a parallel expression, "So stretcht out huge in the length the Archfiend lay," returned us to the narrative. We turn now to a new simile in the same verse paragraph, when, after some running commentary on the action, the narrator interjects a description, but not a simile, of the trail of flames following Satan:

> Forthwith upright he rears from off the Pool,
> His might Stature; on each hand the flames
> Driv'n backward slope thir pointing spires, and
> roll'd
> In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid Vale.

The narrator then continues with a new compound simile:

> Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
> Aloft, incumbent on the dusky Air
> That felt unusual weight, till on dry land
> He lights, if it were Land that ever burn'd
> With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire
> And such appear'd in hue; as when the force
> Of subterranean wind transports a Hill
> Torn from *Pelorus*, or the shatter'd side
> Of thund'ring *Aetna*, whose combustible
> And fuell'd entrails thence conceiving fire,

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> Sublim'd with Mineral fury, aid the Winds,
> And leave a singed bottom all involv'd
> With stench and smoke: Such resting found the sole
> Of unblest feet. Him follow'd his next Mate . . .
> (1.221-238)

Let us examine the second half of the comparison first, for the volcanic imagery seems distinguishable from the shorter comparison because of the repetition of relative adverbs. The expressions, "as when the force" and "such resting found," appear to frame the moment we exit the narrative and the place we enter it again. In this respect, it conforms to the pattern followed by most Spenserian epic similes. Yet the formulaic closure bears only a superficial resemblance to Spenser, for "as when" does not strictly parallel "such resting." The time "when" we were made to depart the narrative does not strictly parallel the place "where" we have been returned to it. The volcanic eruption, furthermore, follows upon the description making the land on which Satan touches down like the burning lake from whence he sets sail, its substance being as unstable as a volcanic eruption. Satan's destination ends up sounding like his launch pad, and when the smoke clears, we are literally right back where we started.

The volcanic imagery between "as when" and "such resting" is, moreover, radically unfixed. Because it keeps changing focus, the simile makes a rough kind of visual

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sense only when it is read quickly enough. Let us wrest a paraphrase of its unfixity while begging indulgence for attempting to pin down that which moves faster than we can chase it. Yet in the process of trying to analyze imagery that sends the mind racing in different directions, I ask the reader whether the number of directions is not after all finite; whether the changing response toward defining what is being compared to what itself follows a pattern. If the Miltonic style "electrifies the mind through conductors," is the circuitry along which electricity flows laid out in a particular path?

Satan is likened to a volcano, but the simile goes on to describe how the explosive power of the volcano builds on itself. The combustible nature of the mountainside hurled through the air lends assistance to the causes impelling it. The change in emphasis forces us to reevaluate what is being compared to it: Satan is no longer like a volcano, but his flight is like that of volcanic debris hurtling through space. The passage, however, mutates a second time when it ends with the leftover residue of upheaved rocks. The terminal image does not recall the subject of verse sentence, Satan, nor its predicate, his movement, but qualifies the end of his movement. In the three part movement of thought, or of the simile, we constantly reassess the exact point of comparison: we go from a description of Satan, to one qualifying the forces involved

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in his motion, to the objective terminus of that motion. Would it be fair to say that the tenor of the comparison changes from a concern with appearances, to one dealing with causes, and returns back to appearances, unlike the first? But even a careful paraphrase is doubtful, because Milton seems to want to give us an image at the threshold of what possibly can be envisioned. Because it does not capture, but rather stimulates the imagination, the simile is not pictorial, but sublime.

The three principal points of comparison--the volcano, the accelerating trajectory, the landing spot--are thematically integrated with the preceding epic simile in the same verse paragraph. Because Satan is like Aetna, the association develops the imagery of the Leviathan simile by introducing the mythological confines attributed to Typhon and Briareos. We examined how the Leviathan simile also changed focus: Satan's size could not be expressed without reference to his deceit, and deceit proved indistinguishable from gullibility or misplaced trust. Because deception was not a function of a deceiver, but of the deceived, Milton's figure, I argued, resolved the binary polarity between Zeus's archenemy and his redeemer. The simile transferred the burden of perception onto an observer, unable to discern appearances correctly without some kind of knowledge in advance of his experience. Yet the kind of knowledge best guaranteeing a right perspective becomes contested during

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Milton's time as a result of advances in the sciences or natural philosophy. We can, I expect, grasp more confidently after a sense of what scientific certainty meant for Bacon or Galileo, than reach for the alternate sense that the extent of certain knowledge coincided with the articles of faith. The Leviathan simile evinces this conflict in part, I think, by setting up an opposition between knowledge and perception enacted by the Aetna simile.

When the power transporting the volcanic debris is characterized as building on itself, we are compelled to rethink the "subterranean force" initiating the explosion. That force is, in terms of the narrator's commentary running through the paragraph, not Satanic in origin, but sanctioned from above. That is, the flying mountainside only appears to generate its own steam; its perverse willfulness is only an illusory appearance of the paradox of the fortunate fall. The second shift of the simile points to the "singed bottom" of the volcano, which, like the rest of Hell, is no place at all. The terminus of Satan's action is described only by negation, a volcanic leftover from what had been shorn away, which is not imaginable, save as a ruin of nature. But what is a ruin of nature? How do we recognize a tree trunk rotting in the woods for what it is, without having had in mind a former concept about the life cycle of the tree? The destructive action of volcanoes is not self-evidently evil

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or misfortunate without an initial sense of purpose or order in our own lives. The violent thunderstorms and alpine chasms once depicted in landscape painting were perhaps only sublime in relation to our own mortality; maybe such images already sublimate an idea about death. In sum, we can simply state, on the one hand, that Milton uses Aetna to make more vivid what he wants to tell us about Satan, by drawing on our experience of natural catastrophes. On the other hand, maybe Milton is not using the sublime in order to describe Satan, but defining the sublime in terms of Satan: to be a ruin of nature is to be an unwilling instrument of God.

The sublime has something to do with the unimaginable, but it also has something to do with our own death, equally unimaginable, and the role it plays in the divine order of things. The word "sublime" takes off for English critics in relation to Milton with the increased popularity of Longinus at the end of the seventeenth century. In The Faerie Queene the word merely denotes an overweening pride or ambition, such as applied to the Souldan's "presumpteous cheare, / And countenance sublime and insolent" (5.8.30). In Paradise Lost, the word is used with greater variation: it signifies a state of being raised up or borne aloft, when applied to demons (2.528, 3.72), the Son (6.771), and birds (7.421); or conveys the transcendent quality of God's conversation with Adam (8.455); a sense of heightened anticipation among the

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demons (10.536); and the uniqueness of Adam's and Michael's mien (4.300, 11.236). Edmund Burke, however, circumnavigates new-found territory in pitting the sublime against the beautiful in "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful" (1757). Burke marks a important point of transition between earlier Miltonists and Samuel Johnson, for whom the sublimity of the Miltonic simile melds with its transumptiveness, according to Angus Fletcher (1964: 241, n33). But how is the sublime style is a product of metalepsis?

For Burke, the sublime has power by virtue of its astonishing and horrific aspects: "the passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment: and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror" (256). The beautiful is linked to the pictorial on account of the pleasure and delight it generates, but the experience of the sublime is based in a fear which "effectually robs the mind of all its powers and acting and reasoning," and "being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain" (256). In advance of Macaulay on Milton's sketchiness, Burke notes that "To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary" (257). He cites the description of Death's shapelessness as exemplary of all that "is dark, uncertain, confused, terrible, and sublime to

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the last degree" (258). And of the simile, "Stood like a Tow'r," Burke finds the imagery sublime because it is not only visually unrealized, but visually unrealizable: "The mind is hurried out of itself, by a crowd of great and confused images; which affect because they are crowded and confused. For separate them, and you lose much of the greatness; and join them, and you infallibly lose the clearness" (260). The function of the sublime depends on the crowdedness of imagery, the result of which he had earlier described as being that "the mind is so entirely filled with its object . . . it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it" (256).

Samuel Johnson, in his "Life of Milton" (1779), is clearly indebted to Burke when he writes on the Shield simile that the author "crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers" (416). He carries over from Burke the emphasis on mental crowdedness, though the sublime for Johnson is less certainly associated with "an apprehension of pain or death," not a popular topic with doctor. Milton's crowdedness, moreover, is unnatural:

> Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to

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> have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw nature, as Dryden expresses it, through the spectacles of books; and on most occasions calls learnedness to his assistance. (416)

For Johnson, the world of nature is already distinct from the world of books. Allusiveness for him depends on learnedness, against which the "the raciness of direct observation" stands opposite in a way that I doubt Spenser would have fully comprehended. The experience of nature Johnson found wanting in Milton's poem testifies that, from one point of view, similes, in order to clarify, need draw upon a common fund of phenomena available through the senses.

Dryden does not, however, suggest that the world of sensory phenomena comprises the natural. In praising Shakespeare in the Essay of Dramatic Poesy, Dryden is at the portals of an older way of dealing with the world:

> He was the man who, of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily. When he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning give him the greater commendation. He was naturally

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> learned. He needed not the spectacles of books to read nature. He looked inwards, and found her there. (110)

The opposition between nature and book-learning in Dryden is not so hard and fast, for nature is inward looking. Likewise in Sidney's first sonnet, Astrophel is told by his Muse that, in order to praise Stella, he must "'look in thy heart and write.'" And Spenser, in telling his patroness the reason that chastity must be shadowed forth, explains that it if because he cannot limn "the pourtraict of her hart" (3.Pr.1). Johnson's view of nature, it seems, like the Miltonic simile, is already a sublimation of an older way of thinking. But how is inspiration, or the inwardness of insight in relation to all the qualities worth writing about, to be distinguished from what we learn about those subjects in books?

Johnson was not in as a good a position as Vida to comment on the reason that the majority of the similes in The Faerie Queene are borrowed from a wide variety of sources. Vida lauded Virgil's inventions by claiming that the Aeneid and Nature were one. We, perhaps like Johnson, are forced to read Vida's extravagant praise as a metaphor, but his thought offers us a backward-looking glance towards an allegorical way of approaching literature. For Spenser, as Lotspeich puts it, "Myth and poetry were, in his mind, one and the same; the ancient poets were the myth-makers,

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and the myth-makers were poets" (5). Spenser's experience of the world around him, was more naturally bookish than the extraordinary learnedness artificially crowding two and three myths at a time into the similes of Paradise Lost. And nostalgia for the past persists in the extended comparisons of The Faerie Queene up until the apocalyptic "Mutabilitie Cantos," in which Nature is given a myth of her own. Spenser copies the same epic similes to which Milton instead alludes, and that difference, I have tried to show, indicates that two differing visions of nature are at stake, but two visions of nature in regard to the past.

D. "The Sole / Of unblest feet": Pope

So far we have considered interlocking definitions of metalepsis as a kind of a hyperbole, an omission, and the original of a sublime style. The Leviathan simile was metaleptic because it was hyperbolic in relegating Hesiod and Ariosto to the realm of fable; it modulated into the Aetna simile, which pointed back to the Leviathan by virtue of its reference to the subterranean volcano where the Titans and Giants were imprisoned. The new comparison was related to metalepsis in its illustration of sublimity, but in going from the Leviathan to Aetna were there missing intermediary steps?

The first major omission echoes the Cacus episode in

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Book Eight of the Aeneid, in which Virgil reformulates Hesiodic myth even more explicitly than in his chaining of Enceladus beneath Aetna (3.752). When Aeneas seeks out King Evander's aid in his battle with the Rutlians, the tribe is in the middle of a religious ceremony commemorating the triumph of Hercules over Cacus, the son of Vulcan. The monster, Evander explains, had ravished their countryside and killed inhabitants without curb, until he made the mistake of absconding with some cattle belonging to another demi-god, Hercules. Cacus secretes four oxen and four kine of Hercules:

> And lest the printed footsteps might be seen,
> He dragged them backwards to his rocky den.
>
> (Dryden 8.275-6)

He drives them backwards into his cave in order to conceal the theft, but their bellowing alerts the hero to the underworld lair, which is split asunder by Hercules to the air. Hercules manages to strangle Cacus, but the inhuman creature belches forth like a volcano:

> Black clouds of smoke amidst his father's fires
> Gathering with each repeated blast the night,
> To make uncertain aim and erring sight.
>
> (8.336-8)

Milton's description of Satan in terms of a volcanic eruption echoes Cacus, just as the billows "Driv'n backward" to expose "a horrid Vale" recaptures the reversed hoof-

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prints left behind and the secret hide-away brought to light. Yet Satan's "unblest feet" simultaneously suggests the unsanctified oxen purloined for the monster's private consumption. That is, Milton conflates Cacus and the oxen in Satan, just as in the previous epic simile identified Typhon with Briareos. The threshold expression "such resting" brings us back, or so we like to think, from figuration into the flux and flow of the narrative. The expression is laden with Virgilian associations, but it is not a quotation or citation of the Aeneid; rather, Milton tropes on Virgil's trope.

The ostensible allusion to the imprisonment of Typhon omits the episode of Cacus, but why should Milton be so secretive about referring to Virgil? Spenser suggests a candid answer in Book Five where, en route to Queen Mercilla, Arthur and Artegall subdue a monstrous thief, Malengin, whose debts to Virgil are detailed by Nohrnberg (422). Malengin not only "robbed all the countrie ther about, / And brought the pillage home, whence none could get it out" (5.9.4), but was a shape-changing "selfe deceiver" (5.9.19) who must be subdued by Talus. Yet in the very next tableau given of the royal apartments, Spenser, after describing Awe and Order, shows the punishment of the poet Malfont, whose slanderous representation of the queen's "forged guyle" (5.9.25) not only images Spenser's own worst nightmare of Burleigh, but suggests the hold of Vida's

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association of poetry with stealing on the Renaissance imagination.

Milton not only dimly alludes to Cacus, but suppresses an echo from Genesis. To the second set of associations, James Sims directs our attention in the course of demonstrating that Milton's epic was thoroughly saturated with scriptural material. The King James version of Genesis narrates how Noah dispatches the raven and the dove from his ark: "But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot" (8:9). It would be easy enough to dismiss further discussion by saying that anything Milton wrote was bound to resonate with the Bible in ways past the exercise of his conscious control; but I am not sure the echo here is any less calculated than the reverberation of Cacus. The Miltonic line so closely follows the syntax of the Englished Bible and contains so many of the same words--the word "unblest" being the notable exception--that we want to say that one line is the source for the other, without quite seeing how that is so. The addition of adjective "unblest" renders the line a misquotation, and it underscores the difficulty of seeing a parallel between Satan's voyage in quest of new worlds, and the dove sent out to search for dry land. What precedent does Milton have for linking Satan and the dove?

Philo's reading of the Old Testament finds "clear evidence that through the symbols of the raven and the dove

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vice and virtue are shown" (117). The raven signifies how "vice, going out to the risen streams of passions and desires, which inundate and destroy both souls and (human) lives, welcomes them and consorts with them as with intimates and relatives with whom it dwells." "Virtue," on the other hand, "does not find a resting-place for its feet." Evil for Philo does not exist in the world because an inherently wicked Yahweh plays Adam and Eve false in Paradise; nor was it the result of their moral failure to resist temptation. Instead, the Edenic myth parabolically shows that evil is misfortune consequent upon man's incorporeal spirit being trapped in a physical body. The fall figures for Philo an atemporal condition that is the cost of the soul's being in the world. It would seem thus difficult for Milton, had he read only Philo, to have found an excuse for correlating the dove and Satan unless he were a gnostic. Yet while Philo is hardly a Manichean dualist, the analogizing of his allegorical interpretation begins to slide a little. He goes on to exclaim, "what greater evil could there be than that virtue should not find any place in the soul, even the smallest, as a place to rest and remain?" Misfortune is displaced from the raven to the dove's restlessness. Philo's ejaculation begins to sound a little Miltonic, insofar as virtue becomes implicated in the cessation of the dove's restlessness: good is implied as the negation of something evil.

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The twist in Philo's argument departs from an otherwise atemporal perspective insofar as it mutates into a concern for the present. Philo's reading of the Septuagint, in its emphasis on etymological meanings of key words, is clearly influenced by Hellenic allegoresis. Yet it also bears the stamp of midrash and rabbinic Judaism. Gerald Bruns identifies different varieties of midrash: Halakhah addresses the Pentateuch as a legal text with present day applications, whereas Aggadah treats scriptural narrative by unfolding the hidden senses beneath the literal level of the word (628). Pesher, on the other hand, "gives the text an intimate application to the historical situation of the interpreter," whence derives Christian readings of Hebrew scripture "eschatologically, as prophecy of the fullness of time" (634). Bruns's point is that "the patristic practice of typology . . . is absolutely continuous with midrash and pesher" (635). And in Philo's allegorical gloss of Genesis, the interpretation of the past is occasionally made relevant in turning to a lament of present-day ills. Philo's allegoresis anticipates the development of typological figuration, which marks Milton's simile on account of the imagery's continuing resonance throughout Paradise Lost, and which Sanford Budick appoints as "the essence of the redeemed imagination toward which the poem as a whole is striving" (197).

But if Milton uses the image of the dove as a "type,"

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where is its fulfillment in the "antitype"? During the poem's narration Satan rebels from God and plies the abyss. He calls for an emissary among his peers, "who shall tempt with wand'ring feet" (2.404); and swims toward the convex outer shell of the universe with "head, hands, wings, or feet" (2.949); where the Father surveys "his willing feet" (3.73). The echo from Noah is fully sounded in the vision given Adam of the Deluge:

> Forthwith from out the Ark a Raven flies,
> And after him, the surer messenger,
> A Dove sent forth once and again to spy
> Green Tree or ground whereon his foot may light;
> The second time returning, in his Bill
> An Olive leaf he brings, pacific sign . . .
>
> (11.855-60)

Just as the dove was instrumental to Noah in finding land after the Deluge, Satan is reduced by Milton to a useful tool of the Father's will. But why is he called "unblest"?

Philo explains, when the dove returns from its voyage a second time bearing an olive branch, that the first report "of a nature altogether corrupt and rebellious" gives way to one that "repents of its beginning" (120). The dryness of the branch is taken by "the wise man . . . as a symbol of repentance, and the bringing of the leaf as preventing the occurrence of great ignorance" (121). Yet the "repentance" is not that of the wise man reading Genesis, nor that of

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Noah, so much as an idea of repentance held out in the abstract. The idea of repentance is fleshed out in the myths of the New Testament, the imagery of which also appears in Paradise Lost in connection with "feet." The Miltonic narrator apostrophizes the haunt of his Muse as Sion, where tributary brooks "wash thy hallow'd feet" (3.31). And the New Testament reference is spelled out, when the judgment on Adam and Eve proleptically coincides with the mercy shown in clothing their nakedness. The Son "disdain'd not to begin / Thenceforth the form of servant to assume, / As when he wash'd his servants' feet as now" (10.213-5). The unblessedness of Satan's inability to find rest is a misquotation of Genesis, but Milton's use of the word "feet" suggests he thought he had a precedent for the change in the Gospel of John.

After the passover feast recorded by John, Christ gives the sop to Judas Iscariot and "Satan entered into him" (13:27). Yet before the betrayal is announced as imminent, Christ volunteers to wash the feet of the disciples and tells Peter that the significance of the act will be known afterwards (13:7). Foot washing is not synonymous with bodily cleanliness, for Christ says that "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (13:8). He refuses Peter's dirty head and hands, saying, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet" (13:10). The presence of Judas on the scene, moreover, seems to freight Christ's accusation--

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that not all the disciples are clean (13:11)--with carrying a connection between foot-washing and a more ambiguous kind of purification. The laving of the feet, He explains, is an exemplum showing not only how the disciples ought regard one another, but also that "the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (13:16). Accepting His ministrations, or recognizing the meaning given His deed, is necessary before the disciples can have a "part" with Him.

The pure white dove in Christian iconography comes to symbolize the comforter or the Holy Spirit in man, meaning, in Philo's terms, that virtue has been given a resting place in the human soul. But did Milton think that the ministry of Christ to his disciples was an imputation, in John's terms, of uncleanliness to the dove before it reached its destination? Peter's first letter to the Hebrews explains the figure of baptism to be a second Noah's flood, signifying "*not* the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 5:21). Thus the dove's uncleanliness was only of a figurative order, not even a spiritual contamination in need of purgation, since the cessation of its restlessness depended only on accepting the master in the capacity of servant.

Milton makes such acceptance impossible for Satan, for the dry land he finds is a burning marl. Satan's

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unblessedness is of a different order than the dove's restlessness, for it leaves evil out in the cold. Satan does not, cannot repent, and he therefore stands in a different relation to God than does Adam and Eve, who together "shall find grace, / the other none" (3.131-2). Satan is an absence best condemned, who manifests himself in a serpent, which, no matter how it is punished, is "unable to transfer / The Guilt on him who made him instrument" (10.164-5). The hyperbole of Miltonic similes dismisses the allegoresis attendant on his precursors by omitting recognition of just those similarities between them. The ancients portrayed evil erringly because they gave it a reality it did not have. If Satan is only an absence whose name in heaven has been blotted out; if he is only a parody of the divine and he exists in the world allegorically; then maybe he can only be punished allegorically. Satan undergoes successive diminutions over the course of the poem until, as a result of the fall of man, the archfiend loses all the human interest gained by Adam and Eve once they have internalized evil. Satan becomes a mechanical figure in an allegorized ritual, hardly differing in the end from the chimera of the devil in the Inferno.

Spenser's less than hyperbolic use of the epic simile, on the other hand, helps to render his evil characters as more than figures of speech from Redcrosse's point of view. Archimago and Duessa are as malign as Ovid's Python or

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Hesiod's Echidna, while they also reside in the same plane of reference or sphere of action as do Redcrosse and Una. As a result, as Wofford puts it, "the characters do not know they are in an allegory" (220). We never meet up with Gloriana, the conductor orchestrating the faery symphony, much less with a God whereby to gauge the actions of the human players. Arthur rushes in and out with the appearance of magnificence or a saving grace, but he seems oblivious to what he does. And Spenser's imaging the deeds of Christ in Redcrosse is not equivalent to Milton's having given name and active role to the Father and the Son. While the source of good in Spenser's poem is always figured offstage, Milton seems constantly to want to remind the reader that evil is ironic in relationship to the divine, but allegorical in relationship to Adam and Eve. Satan, Sin, and Death, only appear before them through a surrogate, or as a concept, or in a vision. Yet despite Milton's reminders that the rebellion of the angels is only a metaphor for the fall of man, the narrator's representation of Satan continues to fascinate readers of Paradise Lost with a magnetic charm. Why?

The War in Heaven is the allegorical original of all the similes of volcanic hill-hurling that are historically fulfilled in the vision of the Giants, just as the Aetna simile echoes the dove of the deluge, which episode from Genesis is also typologically fulfilled in the prophecy of

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the final books. Nevertheless, it is peculiar that the fulfillment of unblessedness by heavenly mercy is already demonstrated when Milton has the Son cloak the inner nakedness of Adam and Eve. They accept his ministrations, but at the price of making the Gospel of John redundant. That is, typological figuration is at work in Milton's poem, but in more ways than one. The simile referring us to Christ's ablution revises the methodology of typological exegesis, which sees the spiritual truths of the New Testament in the Old Testament, by allowing us to find spiritual truths in Paradise Lost. That is, the true fulfillment of the poem's poetic imagery is perhaps not, after all, to be found in sacred history, but in the narrator's genius.

John's passover feast is pre-empted by the comfort received of Adam and Eve, but, oddly enough, their comfort trails the heels of the narrator's tributary invocation to his Muse:

> Yet not the more
> Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt
> Clear Spring, or shady Grove, or Sunny Hill,
> Smit with the love of sacred Song; but Chief
> Thee *Sion* and the flow'ry Brooks beneath
> That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,
> Nightly I visit . . .
>
> (3.26-32)

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The general sense of the passage is that the waters of Siloam bathe the base of the temple's mount, "the Oracle of God" (1.11), whence comes the poet's inspiration. But why "wash"? The intersection of "washing" and "feet" comes up again only after Satan has entered Adam and Eve. Is the image here by happenstance, or is it more calculated?

Origen interpreted the footwashing of the disciples in John to signify a rite of purification enabling them to preach the Word (Brown, 558). And Milton initially invoked his Muse as having "Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss" (1.21). But was it darkly pregnant? Does the clause, "That wash thy hallow'd feet," parallel "Smit with the love of sacred Song"? So that its antecedent subject is "I"? While the Exaltation of the Son in Heaven is the primary event organizing the action of poem, the narrator insinuates that his own activity as the first and foremost embodiment of all foot-washing. But if he means that his inspiration typologically fulfills the promise made by the Exaltation of the Son, wouldn't such a claim be over the top? A hyperbole that omits Milton's similarity to Satan?

I had asked earlier how it was for Dryden that inspiration is distinguishable from book learning, because the representation of inspiration in Paradise Lost is a problem worrying the narrator, who fears dismounting from his steed and falling, "Erroneous there to wander and forlorn" (7.20). Nor is it a private obsession, because new

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ideas about the role of wit in the making of poetry, accompanied the shift in Milton's time to the investigation of God's creation as the fit object for man's intellectual energies. The faculty of the fancy, as the inward picture-making faculty described in Spenser's House of Alma, had been duly credited as a go-between the world of the senses and the domain of reason, but it was devoid of any special value in the creation of poetry. But in the seventeenth century, "creation" was still subservient to artifice, and the onus of making a composition resting on the wit or the poetic genius. And in advance of Coleridge on the imagination, or Burke on the sublime, Sprat's 1667 "History of the Royal Society" makes a few useful observations about an unobservable faculty.

Literary critics enjoy reading Sprat for the Hobbesian delight he takes in the progress made by scientists to extirpate figuration from their discourse. "Amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style" work against the delivery of "so many things, almost in an equal number of words" (113), though Sprat confesses the importance of the ornaments of rhetoric in early society:

> They were at first, not doubt an admirable Instrument in the hands of *Wise Men*: when they were onely employ'd to describe *Goodness, Honesty, Obedience*; in larger, faire, and more moving Images: to represent *Truth*, cloth'd with Bodies;

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> and to bring *Knowledge* back again to our very sense, from whence it was at first deriv'd to our understandings. (111-2)

Sprat thinks "the luxury and redundance in speech" valuable still only in the realm of poetry, and to those given over to the study of wit, Sprat is pleased to announce that the resources of poetry have been enlarged by experimentation and observation:

> There is in the Works of Nature an inexhaustible Treasure of *Fancy*, and *Invention*, which will be reveal'd proportionably by the increase of their *Knowledge*.
>
> To this purpose I must premise, that it is requir'd in the best, and most delightful Wit, that is be founded on such images which are generally known, and are able to bring a strong, and sensible impression on the *mind*. The several subjects from which is has been rais'd are the *Fables* and *Religions* of the *Ancients*, the *Civil Histories* of all *Countries*, the *Customs* of *Nations*, the *Bible*, the *Sciences*, the *Manners* of *Men*, the several *Arts* of their hand, and the works of *Nature*. In all these, where there may be a resemblance of one thing to another, as there may be in all, there is a sufficient Foundation for Wit. (413)

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Poetic genius or wit, Sprat seems to suggest, consists in the ability to see "resemblances" or to make analogies on the basis of ready-made materials. But there are at least two ways to make an analogy or comparison: one, I have suggested, is allegorical in the sheer conventionality of its poetic borrowing; the other, I am presently exploring, is metaleptic.

Pope, in the preface to the 1717 edition of his works, writes of wit in a manner quite the reverse from the more famous definition in the Essay on Criticism, in which "True wit," like Reason in the Parliament of Fowls, consists in following Nature, but also improving on it. But how does the poet better the gifts given him? Because his respect for public esteem exceeded his self-love and vanity, Pope explains seven years later, he excluded several poems he might have published in his collection, and adds: "I believe no one qualification is so likely to make a good writer, as the power of rejecting his own thoughts. . . . For what I have publish'd, I can only hope to be pardon'd; but for what I have burn'd, I deserve to be praised" (xxviii). Beyond the poet's utilization of diction suitable to a Ciceronian division of high, middle, and low styles, and beyond a poem's tasteful compliance with the guidelines set down for the lyric, drama, and epic genres, the material omitted by poet is stressed to be the most important factor in the success of his poem, a microcosm of a good collection of

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poetry. Certainly, we can think of Augustan dictates about style to be a reaction against the more copious, overflowing eloquence of Elizabethan verse. Or more subtly, we can intuit that the Ramist consignment of invention and arrangement to the realm of logic did not leave much for critics to ponder, except for style and diction. Nevertheless, Pope's credo that brevity is the soul of wit evokes the sensibility underlying the Miltonic simile's omission of the fullness of Spenser's epic similes.

Milton's rejection of his own thoughts in his metaleptic similes raises--a forerunner to the negative capability of Keats?--also raises a serious question about the lofty elevation of language deemed appropriate to the epic genre. Metalepsis, as an omission, is not merely the operative trope behind the sublime style, perhaps, but also that which we recognize when we identify any distinctive style or the semblance of originality. Why else did Jonson cavil in his posthumously published Timber (1641), when he said that Spenser, "in affecting the Ancients, writ no language" (8:618)? Was he objecting to Spenser's predilection for inkhorn language and phraseology? Or did he mean that Spenser had no voice because he was too all-inclusive? Maybe Jonson would have agreed with Hazlitt that Spenser was the poet's poet, but not in the sense of Hazlitt, who, in the heyday of Romanticism nearly makes the case that The Faerie Queene was poetry written for its own

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sake, before the concept of the aesthetic was fully articulated. Anti-romantic Jonson more likely thought Spenser to be not the most influential poet, but the poet most influenced by others. Jonson's barb suggests he thought so much of the ore of Ariosto and Tasso, Virgil and Ovid, was crammed into every rift of The Faerie Queene, that the erected edifice was without an identifiable style. Jonson could have accused Spenser as having failed to outdo the inventions of predecessors because his love of myth was able to brook no restraint. But if metalepsis is primarily an omission, Spenser certainly neglects the common parlance of Shakespeare's day when he resurrects Chaucerian verse. In having intentionally adopted the English equivalent of neo-Latin, Spenser's translation of his contemporary world into an archaic past is perhaps his most sublime achievement. And Spenser's originality, though even more irretrievably lost upon us than on Hazlitt or Jonson, has continued to be prized by a few ardent admirers:

> [Spenser] gives weight, value, and resonance to poetic diction and thus guarantees the survival of an art of poetry.
>
> (Fletcher 1971:304)

E. "Sole partner and sole part": Nietzsche

In his notes for a 1872 lecture course on rhetoric,

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Nietzsche provides an overview of all the figures of speech, simile and metalepsis among them. The treatment, though largely derivative, is important for readers of Milton's contemporary critics because it antedates the seminal essay, "On Truth and Lying in the Extra-Moral Sense," underlying many of the assumptions made by post-structuralists. On the subject of simile, Nietzsche reiterates the old chestnut that "metaphor is a shortened simile, as the simile is designated as . . . metaphor being exaggerated" (55). He quotes Quintilian about metalepsis forming an "intermediate step between the term transferred and the thing to which it is transferred" (61), and, most interestingly, adds that metalepsis is "a word that reveals a homonym from synonyms." To illustrate this verbal feat, he takes Quintilian's example from Cicero dealing with Verres, whose proper name in Latin allows for a pun on the word meaning "pig." The definition in this light is useful in relation to Milton's use of puns, in which we can read a semantic transference that creates a synonym by way of a suppressing a homonym. In "the sole / Of unblest feet," for example, we have two homonyms: "sole" as well as "feet" mark the intersections of words having different meanings that are pronounced and, in the second case, spelled alike.

To illustrate how Milton's usage fits Nietzsche's definition of metalepsis, we might try updating the example from Cicero by inventing a case involving a play on words

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with a proper name. Imagine a context, say, in which an author, writing an editorial during the last presidential last election, contrasts the differing platforms on the issue of tax benefits for same-sex domestic partners in Hawaii. The author, lamenting the general antipathy of democrats and republicans for the concerns of homosexuals, might have written: "Though the indifference of Clinton to the political rights of gays hardly comes as a surprise, we might have expected Dole, more than any other candidate, to have been sympathetic to fruits." Notwithstanding the success or failure of my attempt at humor, the sentence puns on a name by omitting the association between Dole and pineapple in the manner of Cicero. The example illustrates a figurative process--from Dole to pineapple to fruit to homosexual--that leaves out an intermediary step. Thus an apparent synonym between Dole and fruit exists by virtue of the suppressed homonym between Dole and pineapple.

Let us turn from the ridiculous to the sublime and examine how "such resting found the sole / Of unblest feet" conjures up a metaleptic train of associations. Instead of Dole-pineapple-homosexual, the path of figuration goes from the physical bottom of Satan's legs--to a metrical pattern--to the poet. The word resounds with the secondary sense of prosody, which generates, by means of a metonymic association, an identification between the materials of poetry and the poet himself. The homonyms in both "feet"

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and "sole" conspire to create a false synonym between the architect of a poetic narrative and unsanctified demonic activity by skipping over intermediate steps. The line is self-consciously metaleptic in associating unblessed verse with Satan, though it is harder to answer, "First, which unsanctified verse?" In the last chapter we examined some of the darker implications of Milton's inspiration, partly to justify the Romantic assessment of the conflict in the poem between the representation of artistic and religious impulses. But it is not wholly certain that the author's presence in every line necessitates his initiation into the devil's party, as if a Judeo-Christian secular narrative were a contradiction in terms. It seems more likely to me that Milton was simply aware that his inspiration was doomed to be taken the wrong way.

If the pun in "feet" is clearly metaleptic, if not ironic, in effect, we need ask whether or not there are other kinds of puns in Paradise Lost as well, and if there is not such a thing as an allegorical pun. Milton's verse puns on the demonic soul of prosody, whereas Sidney and Spenser use "feet" to a different effect. For example, in the first sonnet of Astrophel and Stella the speaker writes that "others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way"; and the narrator of The Faerie Queene pays homage to Chaucer in following "the footing of thy feete" (4.2.34). Nor when Adam first addresses Eve as "Sole partner and sole part of

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all these joys" (4.411), is the repetition of "sole" exactly synonymous with its first usage, because the doubling allows us to hear two different meanings. The perfect internal rhyme within the line gives us two homonyms, one indicating the "singular," and the other, the "spiritual." The narrator represents Adam and Eve as two individual characters, but maybe only as a result of his own benightedness. Adam's point of view, by contrast, might have been intended to suggest that the two of them together constitute a single psychic entity, in the soul has been thought to be composed of several faculties. Though the fall eventually sunders what from Adam's point of view is indivisible, and forces them to betake their solitary, individual ways, would we not characterize Adam's prelapsarian perspective as allegorical? Adam's words are like those of the Spenserian narrator, whose "exceeding farre" and "Exceeding farre" figure allegorical puns.

The semantic play of synonyms and homonyms in Paradise Lost helps us to think about the function of allegory as well as metalepsis. Homonyms in literature, which are maybe only perfect rhymes, belong to a class of expressions which illustrate how arbitrary ambiguity creeps more generally into usage. We like to think of poets in control of their meanings, but let us consider allegory outside literature to be a figure of speech with more than one possible meaning. In that case, a homonym might serve as a basic unit of

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language whereby to discuss the operation of allegorical signification. Indeed, allegory conceived as a genre is only possible because a word can mean more than one thing. Yet our sense of whether ambiguity is present in a given sentence also depends on context, because the stronger the context, the less likely we are to hear an ambiguous sense. (The homonym, for example, between "sense" and "cents" in the last line can only be heard by isolating it from its context or repeating it.) The absence of a background specifying how a word, or sentence, or paragraph is to be received, in addition to the need to know the meaning or use of that expression, entails an act of interpretation.

For example, when the world is destroyed by flood in the first book of Ovid's Metamorphoses, the oracle of Themis cryptically pronounces to Deucalion and Pyrrha that they need cast behind them the bones of their mother in order to re-people the planet. The two, after some debate, decide to try throwing stones over their shoulder, because they guess the oracle to mean that rocks and pebbles are the skeletal remains of mother earth. The expression, "bones of their mother," is without obvious referent for the two survivors of the flood, but is not allegorical on that count alone. It is allegorical because Deucalion and Pyrrha invest the power of truth in oracular expressions, and because dire circumstances constrain them to interpretation. What Themis says makes no obvious sense, but must mean something because

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she is an oracle, and necessity compels us to figure out that meaning, just as Cymoent was forced to "approue the vnknowen purpose of eternall fate" (3.4.28).

In saying that any word has more than one meaning, I am not proposing that during some golden age words were used with exact signification, nor, on the other hand, that every attempt at communication collapses in an inevitable failure. Sometimes we struggle with ambiguity; sometimes we understand something. The contrast between our common experiences of confusion and clarity is a challenge to find a way to characterize the more extreme cases, of which one, the allegorical, has been traditionally understood in terms of the utterance that stands in need of interpretation. But how do we qualify the opposite end of the allegorical pole? We saw that the role of allegory in literature, and especially in epic narratives, was much more broadly conceived during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance than it has been since. Boccaccio would not have recognized an alternative to the allegorical epic in the form of secular writing such as the lyric or drama, I think, by granting it status as literature. The concept of a literal, normative function for language was a post-Renaissance development, as was the idea of symbol in order to set apart the allegorical. For the moment, however, let us only ask whether we can define an alternative to allegory in terms of the way that synonyms function in language.

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We normally think of homonyms and synonyms as a feature of language allowing us to classify the relationship between words: some sound alike; others mean alike. But not every word appears to be classifiable as having a homonym or synonym. Indeed, certain words--proper nouns come to mind--seem to present themselves as having neither a homonym or a synonym. The specificity of *Mt. Rushmore*, for example, seems to want to refer to something directly outside the bounds of language. The very argument we could produce to assert that *Mt. Rushmore* is a non-metaphoric reference is, moreover, remarkably similar to those claiming the opposite of allegory to be realism, or a fiction without abstract personifications such as "Wrath" and "Discord." Just as a rhetorician presupposes the existence of a plain-speaking from which allegory and irony are departures, we can apply the adjectives *naturalistic* or *mimetic* to a story as evidence that it is not allegorical. But the nature and mimesis are themselves as chimerical as allegory. Nature, as Lovejoy's seminal essay has shown, refers us to the world of phenomena as easily as it does to an underlying or transcendent principle governing the operations of the phenomena. Mimesis, likewise, can be used to invoke historical and verisimilar, as well as fabulous and mythic, precedents. In brief, the distinction between the mimetic and allegorical may not be "real" but only an appearance, if proper nouns are, in fact, no less self-referential than

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other words. But if *Mt. Rushmore* exists only because we already have in place the words for "mountain" and for "statue," we need not in sadness conclude that all language is allegorical, because the difference between homonyms and synonyms suggests that all language is not self-referential in the same way.

If the polysemous meanings generated by a homonym remind us the allegorical genre, into what different way of signification do synonyms in language give us insight? When I wrote a page or two ago that sometimes we think we understand something, I meant that we were able to express that something into other words that mean the same. The ability to translate something into a synonymous expression shows that we understand it after a fashion; or to be more exact, the perspective from which we recognize two words to have roughly the same meaning is called one of understanding. Of course, no two words have ever exactly the same meaning, but roughly speaking, the recognition of synonyms in language seems bound up either with our notion of clarity, or with clarity itself. The obscurity generated by homonyms in language can be thought to be represented in literature by allegory, but what is the literary analogue for the clarity underlying the recognition of synonyms? When, in the play by Sophocles, the word for mother and the word for wife are revealed to have the same meaning in the name of Jocasta, we experience not allegory, but irony. If

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allegory depends on a word being able to mean many things for lack of a context, irony, supplies the context from which many words might be said to mean the same thing.

An ironic perspective in this light can be said to be one from which we can reconcile the appearance of difference. Yet because difference, when it is most acutely perceived, expresses itself in antithesis, we also sometimes say that utterances bearing antithetical meanings are ironic statements. But Oedipus is not a Restoration comedy: its irony does not depend on sarcastic barbs bandied back and forth between speakers whose intended meanings are diametrically opposed to what they say. Rather, we say that the drama invents an ironic perspective from which spectators understand more than the dramatic personae. In thinking about irony, we need remember that the two--an ironic perspective and an ironic statement--are no more identical than allegory when it is considered as a mode of reception, and allegory when it is thought to be a genre of composition. An ironic mode or perspective invents the ability to understand difference in terms of sameness; but an ironic statement already presupposes such an understanding in the utterance of difference. An allegorical perspective, on the other hand, relinquishes an understanding of sameness for the terms of a difference. That is, it assumes the key to understanding its own difference resides elsewhere. An allegorical statement,

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conversely, presupposes the reader or auditor to be in possession of that key which unlocks clarity, so that its utterance of sameness will be understood as a difference.

Whether we are thinking of irony as a mode or a genre is crucial to keep in mind, not because the one is a right and the other wrong way to think about the subject, but because how we think about it affects the relationship we find between irony and allegory. If we regard irony as a speech figure ("It's really hot today!", when its cold) that signifies an opposite, then the trope seems remarkably akin to the allegorical perspective, in which meaning is deferred. If irony, on the other hand, is seen rather as a mode of understanding difference, it becomes instead an all-inclusive way of discussing a corpus of allegorical statements with multiple meanings ("Yes, it's hot as Hell!", when it is hot), in which omens and portents dark with meaning are assumed to be comprehensible to a superior being. That is, allegory and irony are both modes and genres, but the relationship between the four is shaped like a chiasmas. The allegorical mode stands opposite of the ironic mode, but it shares much in common with ironic statements, just as allegorical statements share much in common with the ironic mode. But what would it mean to utter "It's hot as Hell!", when it's cold? There also seems to be a class of enigmatic statements in literature--what else is "a green thought in a green shade"?--which are

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designed as intractable puzzles, but which are more poetic than sheer nonsense insofar as they are memorable.

Since I have been contrasting different ways of making comparisons, let me quote a simile from the Clerk's Tale in order to illustrate the difference I perceive between elliptical comparisons, the parabolic or allegorical comparisons such as we find in Spenser, and the hyperbolic or ironic comparisons of Milton. Chaucer's Clerk tells us the story of Griselda, who calmly suffers the wantonly cruel tortures contrived by her husband and never curses him. From the point of view of her husband, Walter, the wife demonstrates a Job-like patience in enduring the trials of constancy he sets. Yet the story, when read from the point of view of Griselda, appears less a fable about steadfastness enduring adversity, or about the faith in the face of the vicissitudes of fortune, so much as a description of gratuitous evil, all the more overwhelming as its cause is human rather than natural. After her two children have been taken away, Griselda, thinking them killed, tells Walter: "Deth may noght make no comparisoun / Unto youre love" (666-7). How are we to read that simile? As allegorically reinforcing the parallel with Job? Or as expressing that death is trivial in comparison with that which Walter is calling his love for her? If we have troubling envisioning the Walter as God, then the life he creates for Griselda can only be taken as a living death.

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The breath-taking power of Chaucer's elliptical comparison resides precisely, I think, in our inability to confirm either a reading of allegory or irony. That is, in addition to allegory and irony, there are also elliptical utterances and an enigmatic mode of seeing the world, a state of despairing doubt, in which we cannot decide between parable or hyperbole.

In sum, we stated that the relationship of homonyms and synonyms in language bears a parallel relationship to that between allegory and irony in literature. More than that is difficult to claim. Though metalepsis is related to irony, it is unclear which of the two comes first. The speculation that language might consist only of homonyms and synonyms is admittedly peculiar, though no more so than entertaining the idea that allegory and irony are binary opposites. In my analogizing, moreover, there exists a circularity of definition hard to ignore, if it is the case that we can only recognize homonyms because they are not synonyms and vice versa. The word "feet" in reference to Satan was metaleptic on behalf of Milton because it concealed a homonym in order to create a synonym, but the word "sole" in Adam's speech conceals a synonym in order to create a homonym. That is, we read a secondary, allegorical meaning into the lines, "Sole partner and sole part" in despite of the word's exact repetition. In other words, there is no way of deciding whether allegory and irony are primarily

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figures of speech or modes of reception. We have ended up by defining irony to be the concealment of an allegorical sense, and have defined allegory as a missed irony. Locating metalepsis in terms of homonyms and synonyms affords a fresh vantage on how Milton's use of similes is connected to irony, though it is no less problematic in the end than the approaches from which Bloom and de Man bring their difficulties to bear on the subject.

F. "As Bees / In spring time": Bloom

Harold Bloom studies Milton's transumption in a context seemingly apart from rhetoric in considering the trope as a psychic defense against the anxiety of influence. Transumption as hyperbole is more clearly rhetorical, though the study of rhetoric, according to Aristotle, is divisible into a tripartite field, of which only one part addresses finding out the most effective means whereby to praise and to blame. As a figure of speech, hyperbole is available for an orator in framing epideictic speeches, but the transumptive trope is also described under the heading of inventions for use in forensic oratory, or as a kind of argument to be brought forth when deliberating a course of action. That is, the study of rhetorical tropes concerns past and future, as well as present, events.

Bloom's interest in Milton's transumption deals less

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with epideixis, than it is oriented towards the past or the forensic branch of oratory, concerned with the determination of guilt or innocence. The different tactics a defendant can take in the courtroom were outlined by Nietzsche as consisting of four defenses: 1) he may deny having done the deed; 2) he may deny that the deed ever occurred; 3) he may accept responsibility for the deed but extenuate the consequences by showing that the action a) brought greater good than evil, b) or that others have done the same, c) or that in the circumstances he had no choice. The fourth kind of defense, called metalepsis or translation, is a strategy in which the orator "can . . . resort to saying that the charge has not been made correctly, [and] he can attack the competency of the plaintiff or the court: hence the intention of postponing the decision" (99).

This new definition of metalepsis, different but not incompatible with the earlier one, invites us to think of Milton's position as that of one "accused [who] has the recourse of saying that the suit was not filed properly" (105). As a revisionary ratio whereby Milton takes arms against the poems that mattered most to him, Milton's metalepsis, according to Bloom, acts out the Freudian paradigm of the Oedipal complex. But Freud's mythic paradigm shares much in common with the legal defense, so that Bloom can be seen as claiming that Milton's experience of great poetry was tantamount to having been accused of a

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crime. What sort of original sin did Milton inherit from his first literary parents, such that it necessitated the evasion of charges? Is Milton's labelling of familiar stories as lies a way of rectifying a ruinous inheritance, a way of turning the tables on his accusers in order to transume the past? Miltonists testifying to the prophetic style of Paradise Lost seem to be in secret collusion with Bloom, because in the Latinate roots of "Prevenient," or *prevenir*, we can hear the meaning *to foretell*, in addition to that of *to come before* and *to be positioned in advance as an obstacle*.

I have drawn from Nietzsche's lecture notes in order to fathom better how he paves the way not only to Bloom, but to Paul de Man, who makes Nietzsche's subsequent essay, "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense," subservient to his own radical ends. By taking up Nietzsche's philosophy in the essay about the inherently figurative nature of language, de Man would make explicit the position that philosophical discourse is itself a subset of rhetoric. He thereby inverts the sense we get from Aristotle that the study of rhetoric, and by extension literary criticism, falls out of a study of dialectic. For de Man, metalepsis is the trope of trope or, Wallace Stevens notwithstanding, a metaphor for a metaphor that illustrates the figurative operation of all words. I hesitate to call de Man's remarkable insight practical, or any more practical than

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saying that all language is allegorical. His position is uncritical precisely because it conflates all distinctions and ends discussion. The differences between the epic similes of Spenser and Milton are not a concern of his, but the rigorous logic governing his critical apocalypse is worth sketching in brief. De Man omits a thing or two from Nietzsche, which would otherwise link his abstract discussion of metalepsis with writers such as Bloom, who specifically address Milton.

In the essay, "On Truth and Lying," Nietzsche wrests from his researches in philology, anthropology, and neurology, a new myth about the origin of language: man's first use of language served to deceive rather than to express the truth. The state of man in nature, as he sees it, is a precarious balance between two opposing drives--a warring and a herding instinct--of which the impulse to safety spawns the need to communicate. "The intellect, as a means of preserving the individual, develops its main powers in dissimulation" (246), which consists of "arbitrary substitutions and even reversals of names" (248). More importantly, the formation of words in aboriginal man is a two-part process of figuration, born of the translation of nervous stimuli into mental images and their subsequent representation by sounds. Of the first part of the process, the image formation is a substitutive reversal or metonymy, because "to conclude from a nerve stimulus to a cause

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outside ourselves is already the result of a false and unjustified application of the law of causality." The second step of the process, whereby the mental image is represented by a sound, is synecdochic because the totality of the image in the mind can only be referred to by a part. Word formation thus consists in a synecdoche performed on a metonymy. Is it the doubling of tropes which makes de Man seize upon the inherently metaphoric nature of language as metaleptic?

No, according to De Man, whose reading of Nietzsche in the "Rhetoric of Tropes" goes as fast as the Aetna simile. On the one hand, de Man reiterates Nietzsche's stance that the "medium, or property of language, is therefore the possibility of substituting binary polarities such as before for after, early for late, outside for inside, cause for effect, without regard for the truth-value of these structures" (1979:108). But de Man seems to regard Nietzsche as having said that, among the substitutive reversals belonging to language, the part-whole relationship of synecdoche is of the same ilk as associative substitution of metonymy, and that either trope differs negligibly from the doubling effect of metalepsis. Nietzsche, on the other hand, is cut and dry in his lecture about distinguishing notes between metonymy, synecdoche, and metalepsis. That is, De Man misrepresents Nietzsche when he reports him having characterized metonymy "as what rhetoricians also

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call metalepsis" (1979:108) and having claimed metonymy to be "the prototype of all figural language" (1979:109). Nietzsche says no such thing, and nowhere does he assert that all language is metaleptic or that metalepsis and metonymy are one. Yet Nietzsche's use of the phrase "substitutive reversals" is loose enough to have inspired de Man's interpretation. Though de Man quite logically develops Nietzsche's sense that language can only ever express opinion rather than truth, and that every human perspective is relative (notwithstanding the paradox in seeing relativity to be absolute), some intermediate step seems missing between Nietzsche's essay and de Man's representation of it.

Literature for de Man and Nietzsche seems to be paradoxically true in a manner reminiscent of Sidney, because a poem does not affirm itself as true. All other uses of language for Nietzsche and de Man can serve but to express opinion, of which the relative value is determined by Nietzsche's essay to be a function of the subjectivity of the perceiver. Yet de Man points out that the subjectivity of the perceiver in Nietzsche's later writings seems itself to be a byproduct of a certain way that language is used. The inversion of Nietzsche's earlier idea in his later philosophy as pointed out by de Man, has, I think, its seeds in a important sentence in "On Truth and Lying," which de Man does not quote: "For between two absolutely different

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spheres as subject and object there can be no expression but at most an aesthetic stance, I mean an allusive transference, a stammering translation into a completely foreign medium" (253). Thus, individual man's way of viewing the cosmos has no more ultimate validity than the perspective of a gnat, and the illusion of a claim to truth can be made by "an allusive transference." Nietzsche's statement underlies, I think, de Man's refusal in "The Rhetoric of Temporality" to grant language as having either a symbolic or literal operation. For the moment, however, let us focus on the key word in Nietzsche's statement: allusion.

The idea that allusion is the ground for the invention of subjectivity and the illusion of a right perception, is particularly resonant in relation to metalepsis, which we began by thinking about a kind of allusion. Metalepsis for de Man here is not just a rhetorical trick covertly hidden behind every use of language by a subject, but the trope that yields a sense of self, as if subjectivity itself were only irony personified. Yet not only is subjectivity under attack, but its *raison d'etre* for the Romantics, the imagination, which de Man contents himself with pigeon-holing as an invention of literature. Whether or not all fits of passion, be they of grief or anger or joy, are illusory, or whether they were prophesied us by literature, is an issue beyond the pale of our immediate interest with

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similes. But de Man's claims set an outer bound for Bloom's way of articulating what the metaleptic trope has to do with a novel representation of poetic authority in Paradise Lost. Every writer on Milton has granted a dramatic verisimilitude to the poem's representation of Satan's subjectivity, in despite of what the narrator tells us to think--but readings of Satan inevitably lapse into silence or stalemate with an enigma, for it is crucially unclear whether we are to regard the narrator as Satanic, or Satan as Miltonic. That is, if the illusion of a self is a transumption, who is it that stands before himself in every line of the poem?

Theoretical speculations about allegory and irony, though beguiling, are fruitless if we cannot first agree, on the level of a particular allusive simile, what is being left out. For that reason, we return to the locus classicus for transumptive critics, the extended comparison ending Book One of Paradise Lost. The simile points ostensibly to classical precedents, though it rings with the nearer echoes of Shakespeare and Spenser as well. Bloom's description of the simile seems roughly right to me, but the definition of the trope and its application to literature are not without serious problems: these we shall see most clearly by traversing some familiar territory and retracing the simile's genealogy.

The simile takes off when the hellish fiends "Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air, / Brusht with

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the hiss of rustling wings" (I.767-8), and are next likened to bees:

As Bees

In spring time, when the Sun with *Taurus* rides,
Pour forth thir populous youth about the Hive
In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed Plank,
The suburb of thir Straw-built Citadel,
New rubb'd with Balm, expatiate and confer
Thir State affairs. So thick the aery crowd
Swarm'd and were strait'n'd; till the Signal giv'n
(1.768-776)

Milton describes the feverish congregation of demonic builders in the manner that the busy Carthaginians were described in the Aeneid:

Such is their toil and such their busy pains,
As exercise the bees in flowery plains,
When winter past and summer scarce begun
Invites them forth to labor in the sun:
Some lead their youth abroad, while some condense
Their liquid store, and some in cells dispense:
Some at the gate stand ready to receive
The golden burden and their friends relieve.
All with united force combine to drive
The lazy drones from the laborious hive.
With envy stung, they view each other's deeds;

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The fragrant work with diligence proceeds.

(Dryden's Aeneid 1.598-609)

The metaphoric construction of the end frame of Virgil's simile, "fragrant work," ambiguates the description preceding Aeneas's interjection: "Thrice happy you whose walls already rise" (1.610). Whose "fragrant work" is being talked about in the last line? Because it can be attributed to the figurative bees as easily as it can be read as qualifying the literal city dwellers, the words of Aeneas and those of the Virgilian narrator momentarily blur. The former praises the Carthaginians, while the latter is praising the bees, and the blurring of distinctions Milton adapts in the end frame of his simile, "So thick the aery crowd." Does the congregation, on the verge of shrinking, refer to the demons or the bees? Milton mimics the Virgilian trick by making it hard to keep separate in the mind's eye the already winged, rustling demons and what they were being compared to. Bloom says that "we, Milton's readers, see the giant demons shrink in size" (1975:141), but as the demons metamorphose into bees, they also start, in a second comparison, to fuse with new, extraneous figures outside the poem.

Before we can look at the peasant et al, we need see how the changes Milton makes to the Virgilian simile are largely derived from the authority whereby Virgil alters the Homeric model. Virgil gives us the comparison from the

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point of view of Aeneas, who, situated high above the city, remarks the smallness of its inhabitants. In the first epic simile of the Iliad, a shepherd regards a swarming horde in juxtaposition to the Achaians assembling to hear the council of Agamemnon:

> As from some Rocky Clift the Shepherd sees
> Clust'ring in Heaps on Heaps the driving Bees,
> Rolling, and black'ning, Swarms succeeding Swarms,
> With deeper Murmurs and more hoarse Alarms;
> Dusky they spread a close-embody'd Crowd
> And o'er the Vale descends the living Cloud.
> So, from the Tents and ships, a length'ning Train
>
> (Pope's Iliad, 2. 111-17)

Pope, like Macrobius, observes that the insects which had issued "helter-skelter" from Homer's rocky cleft are organized by Virgil to take the semblance of human activity (110). Because "tumultuous dispersion" is given the shape of constructive labor, Virgil's simile appears to be more apt. And because the potential fusion of the insect with the human world implicit in the Aeneid is given formal habitation in the bees's "Straw-built Citadel" in Paradise Lost, Milton's simile appears apter yet.

The criterion of aptness, however, was an emergent struggle in Pope's mind that affected his translation of the epic simile. On the one hand, he quibbles, as Chapman did, with Scaliger over the superiority of Virgil's similes:

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"when he succeeds best in them he is to be commended but as an improver" (109). But on the other, Pope cannot resist editing, for he refuses to admit the time of year--spring--into his version of the simile. Is it because he thinks the additional, digressive information sheds no light on the narrative proceedings? The shift to very early summer in Virgil's redaction of Homer's simile--or, as Dryden puts it, just past the midpoint between winter and summer--goes beyond a paraphrase of Homer, but how do we characterize that excess? Virgil's simile seems to me already a transumption of Homer's, for the very first epic simile in the Iliad trails not even in second place in the Aeneid. Virgil's shift from spring to early summer emphasizes the earliness of his bees over those of Homer, as at the same time as it recognizes its own belatedness. Milton's bees, however, take flight in the zodiacal sign midway between spring at the start of Aries, and summer at the beginning of Cancer, and he gives the epic simile prominence at the conclusion of the poem's book richest in comparisons.

In the Aeneid, we see Carthage initially through the eyes of Aeneas and Achates, who, clouded in mist when Venus ascends to the heavens, climb a hill overlooking the city to observe the work in progress. The end of Virgil's Bee simile momentarily obscures distinctions between Aeneas and the narrator, either of whom bespeaks his admiration of the work in progress:

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> The fragrant work with diligence proceeds.
> "Thrice happy you whose walls already rise,"
> Aeneas said, and viewed with lifted eyes
> Their lofty towers; then entering at the gate,
> Concealed in clouds (prodigious to relate),
> He mixed unmarked among the busy throng . . .
>
> (1.611-4)

Homer's Paris had been wafted away in a mist from the battle by Aphrodite. Homer's Odysseus returned to his homeland disguised by the goddess, just as Athena had first concealed Ithaca from the hero's vision. The Iliad and Odyssey represent man sometimes as being invisible on account of a god, whose agency other times screens the world from man's sight. The Bee simile of the Aeneid represents the invisibility of the narrator in the invisibility of his character, the disguise of Aeneas in Carthage acting out the absence of Virgil from the scenes at Troy. That is, the invisible entry of Aeneas among the Tyrians figures in the momentary transparency of his narrator a substitution for divine agency in Homer, which is "prodigious to relate."

Virgil's relation, however, is no more prodigious than the "wonder" we "Behold" in Paradise Lost:

> till the Signal giv'n,
> Behold a wonder! they but now who seem'd
> In bigness to surpass Earth's Giant Sons
> Now less than smallest Dwarfs, in narrow room

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Throng numberless, like that Pigmean Race
Beyond the *Indian* Mount, or Faery Elves,
Whose midnight Revels, by a Forest side
Or Fountain some belated Peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while over-head the Moon
Sits Arbitress, and nearer to the Earth
Wheels her pale course; they on thir mirth and dance
Intent, with jocund Music charm his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.

(1.776-788)

Yet the narration of Paradise Lost is not momentarily confounded with the speech of one of its characters, as it was in the Aeneid. The Virgilian narrator metamorphosed into Aeneas, but in Paradise Lost, Milton's demons become indistinguishable from the bees to which they were compared in the end frame of the simile, "So thick the aery crowd / Swarm'd and were strait'n'd." Why? Milton imitates Virgil's surprise, but is the antecedent of "they but now who seem'd / In bigness to surpass Earth's Giant Sons" Homer and Virgil?

Milton's new comparison builds on the Bee simile, in drawing on motley assortment of Dwarfs, Pigmies, and Elves, a belated Peasant and a divine Arbitress, and it has generated profound wonder on the behalf of readers trying to second-guess Milton's purposes. Bloom notes that Milton's

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shift away from the Virgilian Bee simile to new imagery is followed by the return to Virgil's simile of Dido in the expression "sees, / or dreams he sees . . . the Moon." Bloom suggests that the turn from the faeries to the moon brings Dido to us from afar by skipping over associations with Shakespeare's A Midsummer's Night Dream (1975:142). Yet the elfin race appears in Shakespeare's play only as personae, not in its similes, nor is Bottom the weaver, nor any of the other mechanics, ever called a "peasant" or "belated." That the expression "belated Peasant" is not one of Shakespeare's, I suppose, is not Bloom's point. Or rather, it is his point precisely, if he means that Milton captures the feel or the style of the play, Shakespeare's meaning and not his names, instead of making a direct reference or citation. Guillory goes on to suggest that the "Peasant" signifies the narrator of Paradise Lost, who distances himself from the romantic comedy by echoing over Oberon's aloofness from the midnight revels of Titania (141). Hollander more prudently worries the distinction between different kinds of echoes; for it is not clear whether the transumption of the Miltonic simile allows us to hear dim echoes, or if every allusion, in contradistinction to a direct quotation, is necessarily transumptive.

That Milton's adaptation of Virgil is intended to echo Shakespeare seems plausible, though hardly provable. But I also think the transumption of the Bee simile can be defined

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more simply according to the rhetorical definition we have examined. What seems of signal importance to recognize that Faery simile builds on the Bee simile, or that Milton tropes upon a trope. The first trope very nearly falls into the category of metamorphic similes, in which "A" is not like B," but turns into "B." Such a change as Raphael suffered in mutating into a phoenix is not asserted, but it is no accident that bees happen to figure a convenient image for smallness. The possibility of a transformation resides in the purposeful ambiguity of "aery crowd." Rather more like the Leviathan simile in which magnitude gave way to deception, the Bee simile purports to describe one aspect of a narrative moment--how the demons congregated--but gives way to the Faery simile describing a different quality--size--which draws on a wider, more disparate body of imagery. The new simile very nearly falls in the category of "errant," "feigned," and "fabulous" comparisons, if Dwarfs, Pigmies, and Elves are more obviously mythical than, for example, Deucalion and Pyrrha or the Libyan Jove, whom the narrator explicitly labelled as imaginary. The Faery simile, furthermore, illustrates the "A more than B" type of comparison-making: the demons (or the bees) are smaller than other imaginary precedents. In sum, one trope succeeds another, according to the epideictic definition of metalepsis, so that the intermediary step falls from importance. The description of activity gives way to a

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description of size so that the busyness of Homer's and Virgil's bees ceases to have significance. But what was so important about them in the first place, that we should care when the demons are reduced? Especially when not all of them shrink?

G. "Like themselves"

I have asserted that Milton purposefully conflates his characters with the bees of Homer and Virgil in order finally to diminish his epic precedents. But Milton is not through, for it appears he has shrunk the vulgar spirits for the sole purpose of keeping unchanged the mob's kingpins:

> Thus incorporeal Spirits to smallest forms
> Reduced their shapes immense, and were at large,
> Though without number still amidst the Hall
> Of that infernal Court. But far with
> And in thir own dimensions like themselves
> The great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim
> In close recess and secret conclave sat
> A thousand Demi-Gods on golden seats,
> Frequent and full.
>
> (1.789-92)

Some fiends dwindle in order to crowd themselves into their newly built council hall, but Satan and his peers--the ones who do the talking in Book Two?--remain fixed in stature.

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It is ironic that the reduced ones wander about "at large," but downright exasperating that others stay the same.

Addison regarded the demonic size-changing as sublime because the simile assimilated the marvelous to the verisimilar. The same passage, however, struck Voltaire as mock-epic because of the gratuitous nature of the shape-changing. But if the reduction in stature of some demons was as unnecessary as it was poetic, surely it is doubly gratuitous--and doubly poetic?--to let the satanic chieftains remain stable in their dimensions. But what the hell it is to be in one's own dimension like oneself? Or when does the reflexive pronoun popularly become used as a noun? Antony and Cleopatra brims over with such expressions, which are used to describe whether or not the play's principals are acting in accord with their characters (1.1.57; 2.2.4; 2.2.78; 2.7.42; 3.3.186; 4.14.14) The expression, as it turns up in An Essay on Criticism feels less earnest than facetious, for the author of Peri Bathous writes that Longinus "strenthtens all his Laws, / And Is himself that great Sublime he draws" (3.679-80). But does Milton intend a tautological joke? Or something more meaningful? I think that the conclusion to the Bee simile in the final turn, "in thir own dimensions like themselves," represents an omission of Tasso hitherto unnoticed.

Tasso describes the evils of the underworld mustering their forces to bear upon the Christian knights:

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The Peers of Pluto's realm assembled been
Amid the palace of their angry king,
In hideous forms and shapes 'tofore unseen,
That fear, death, terror, and amazement bring;
With ugly paws some trample on the green,
Some gnaw the snakes that on their shoulders hing,
And some their forked tails stretch forth on high,
And tear the twinkling stars from trembling sky.

There were Sileno's foul and loathsome rout,
There Sphinxes, Centaurs, there were Gorgons fell,
There howling Scyllas yawling round about,
There serpents hiss, there seven-mouuthed Hydras yell,
Chimera there spews fire and brimstone out,
And Polyphemus blind supporteth hell;
Besides *ten thousand* monsters therein dwells,
Mishap'd, *unlike themselves*, and like naught else.
(Fairfax 4.4-5, my emphasis)

The lines with which I am principally concerned, those beginning the fourth and ending the fifth stanza, are more literally rendered in a modern prose translation:

Straightway the deities of the Abyss in various troops come running from all sides to the

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> lofty portals. Oh how *strange*, oh how *horrible* the shapes! how much of terror and death is in their eyes! Some print the earth with beastly tracks, and on a human head have twining snakes for hair; and behind them writhes an immense tail that like a whip coils na uncoils itself
>
> *Here might you see a thousand* filthy Harpies and a thousand Centaurs and Sphinxes and pale Gorgons; a myriad ravneous Scyllas howling and Hydras hooting and Pythons hissing and Chimaeras belching forth black flames; and horrible Polyphemuses and Geryons; and *in strange monstrosities, no elsewhere known or seen, diverse appearances confused and blended into one.*
>
> (Nash 70, my emphasis)

The answer to the puzzle about the fixity of some demons in Milton lies in the inversion of Tasso's expression, such as we have it through Fairfax. "Unlike themselves" in is the source, I venture, for "like themselves." Before explaining the meaning of Milton's inversion, I am obliged to answer how accurate a translator Fairfax was, to which must be replied: "not very." A "thousand" is increased to "ten thousand"; and the wording of the key expression, "unlike themselves" is more an interpretation than a literal translation. But a word-by-word examination of the original indicates, I think, that Fairfax's reading is not

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misleading. Nash's version more faithfully reproduces how in Tasso the manifold of the demonic throng ceases to appear manifold. But in this case, wouldn't we agree that when diversity is no longer seen as difference and it is "blended into one," it ceases to be like itself?

Milton's line, if it means anything more than a jest, must mean something in relation to Tasso. Milton is an expert, we have seen, in covering his tracks, but Tasso is on the sly side himself. The Gerusalemme's description of hellfiends does not happen ex nihilo, but comes out of Ovid. The line "In hideous forms and shapes 'tofore unseen" should remind us of the Nile simile in the Metamorphoses. In Sandys's translation, "unknowne Monsters" were left behind by the retreating flood waters, which were likened to the annual abiogenesis of the river, where were found among the "various creatures," "some in their very time of Birth; / Some lame; and others halfe alive, halfe earth." Spenser, we saw, followed Ovid in rendering the grotesque vomitus of Error akin to the wriggling shapes in the riverbed: "Ten thousand kindes of creatures, partly male / And partly female of his fruitfull seed; / Such vgly monstrous shapes elsewhere may no man reed." Fairfax obviously had Spenser in mind when he multiplied Tasso's "thousand" into "ten thousand," and the Spenserian conceit that the Ovidian-styled shapes can be seen nowhere else has been directly imported from Tasso. But where did Tasso get the idea?

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Ovid's Nile simile is at the root of Tasso's and Milton's seeming tautologies, as Spenser begins to make clear. Spenser picks up on Tasso's novelty in showing something "tofore unseen," though Tasso's description of the assembled forces of hell is not formally an epic simile. And even though Milton's single line employs the frame word "like," it is scarcely a simile, for by comparing something to itself, it beggars the very notion of making similes. Indeed, a simple juxtaposition of the lines in Tasso and Ovid does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the Renaissance Italian got his material from the Augustan Roman, until Spenser's amplification pumps back into Ovid's image that which Tasso had removed. Spenser supplies a number in excess of Tasso's, but he makes a further change. We had noticed earlier that the epic simile in The Faerie Queene genders what is neuter in the Metamorphoses. And the source of Spenser's hermaphroditization of the Nile monsters unlocks, I think, the mystery behind the transmission between Ovid and Tasso. Spenser reveals the precedent behind Tasso's omission of an epic simile to situate his claim to originality in the narrative account of the assembly of hellish creatures: Dante.

Dante has Ovid in mind when he beholds wonders in the circle of thieves in the Inferno. Virgil and the narrator come upon three shades, one of whom calls out for a missing companion who has already been transformed into a six-legged

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serpent. Thence ensues the first wonder: the blending of the human shade of Agnello de' Brunelleschi with that of the serpentine spirit of Cianfa de Donatis. Of the mutant result, the narrator exclaims that "neither the one nor the other now seemed what it was at first." Agnello's companions reiterate that "the perverse image seemed both and neither" before snake-shade crawls away (Singleton, 25.63-69). Singleton comments that the language the Dante employs to remark the difficulty of distinguishing Cianfa from Agnello is modelled on Ovid (438), which recounts the merging of the youth Hermaphroditus in the pool of the nymph Salmacis (4.373-9).

Yet the marvelous transformation is succeeded by another, concerning the second of the three human shapes encountered by Virgil and Dante. Now the departed spirit of Buoso and the snakey figure of Francesco Guercio de' Cavalcanti exchange appearances rather than blending into one: the figure of the man becomes a snake as the snake becomes a man. This even more marvelous mutation provokes the narrator's vaunt:

> Let Lucan now be silent, where he tells of the wretched Sabellus and of Nasidius, and let him wait to hear what now comes forth. Concerning Cadmus and Arethusa, let Ovid be silent, for if he, poetizing, converts the one into a serpent and the other into a fountain, I envy him not; for two

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> natures front to front *he never so transmuted that* both forms were prompt to exchange their substance. (Singleton, 25.94-102, my emphasis)

The second metamorphosis explicitly names two episodes from Lucan's Pharsalia and two other Ovidian episodes from the Metamorphoses, in which Cadmus was punished by being changed into a serpent (4.476-89), and Arethusa merged with the river god Alpheus (5.572-641).

Dante explicitly links only the episodes of Cadmus and Arethusa in his circle of thieves, from which Tasso adapts his shapes "'tofore unseen." Yet Spenser also picks up on the fact that Dante makes use of the episode of Salmacis and the Hermaphrodite, which appears in his Nile simile in the half-gendered creatures of the flood. That is, Dante only names Cadmus and Arethusa from Ovid, but he echoes Hermaphrodite by conjuring up the language used in the transformation of male into female. It is a silent debt in Dante, but all three Ovidian episodes appear to be linked in Spenser's mind with the regeneration of the world with forms after the flood. Why?

Curtius, we saw, cited the second transformation of the thieves in Dante as an instance of the "outdoing" topos, in which the experiences of the narrator purportedly surpassed those recounted by Lucan and Ovid. By professing to "outdo" Ovid and Lucan, the Dantean narrator employs a special kind of a comparison, similar to Milton's dismissal of his pagan

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antecedents in Paradise Lost. From Dante, Tasso, too, derives the novelty of his never-before-seen hellfiends, unlike themselves. But Curtius does not mention that the "outdoing" topos in the canto of thieves is followed by the "inexpressibility" topos, in which Dante acknowledges his originality as a kind of error:

> Here let the novelty be my excuse, if my pen goes aught astray. (25.143-4)

Dante's self-proclaimed superiority in relating the transformation of two of the three human souls he meets, crumbles into an apology. But the third soul also gets a final mention in his recantation, which provides the missing link in the line of transmission between Ovid, Tasso, and Milton:

> And though my eyes were somewhat confused and my mind bewildered, these could not flee so covertly but that I clearly distinguished Puccio Sciancato, and it was he alone, of the three companions that came first, *who was not changed* . . . (25.145-50)

Dante uses figures from Ovid as material on which to build his own poetic authority, which involves, in Vida's terms, a judicious balance between acknowledged and unacknowledged theft. Dante's thieves overgo all previous metamorphoses because the narrator claims to give us what can nowhere else be seen, though the vaunt starts evaporate into an inexpressibility, or allegorical, topos insofar as

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the narrator doubts if his originality is erroneous. Milton turns Dante's inexpressibility topos back into an overgoing topos--"Behold a wonder"--which points in one direction like Cacus (also among the thieves in Dante), but the wrong direction. For the expression "like themselves" capitulating the metamorphosis of the demons is an unacknowledged theft of an unacknowledged theft. The verse is an inversion of what we find in Tasso, who had already inverted Dante, and it is only Spenser who innocently announces the theft.

The gendering of the Nile creatures in Spenser's epic simile fingers Tasso as an accomplice with Dante in the line of poets who steal from Ovid without giving credit where credit is due. Spenser seems skeptical whether claims to authority are not, after all, a form of necessary error in the world, and he makes no scruples about plagiarizing material openhandedly. If Spenser's simile is a key to Tasso's debts, it is in this sense, I am suggesting, that we ought consider allegory not necessarily a puzzle in need of explication, but the figuring out--the putting into to new images--of the fragments of a much older puzzle. Spenser's Nile simile, as a summa syncretically assembling characteristics from Ovid, Dante, and Tasso, is associated even in its absence with the Bee simile of Milton, who, as I have said before, is obsessed with the idea of his own inspiration.

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The activity of bees was an image of the well-ordered state (Henry V, 1.1.187-204) and also symbolized the act of writing poetry from Petrarch (Familiares 1.8) to Sidney (Astrophel 90) in the Renaissance. Unlike the lazy drone, the good poet was thought to go from flower to flower, as Harold White shows us, eclectically gathering material to be magically transmuted into wax and honey (55). The poetaster, on the other hand, was often figured in the image of the crow with its purloined plumage, or the spider manufacturing cobwebs out of its own filth. Plagiarism was coined in reference to literary theft only at the end of the sixteenth century (White 120), though even into the seventeenth century, Richard Burton combats melancholy by patching together a cento out of "a vast chaos and confusion of books":

> As a good housewife out of divers fleeces weaves one piece of cloth, a bee gathers wax and hony out of many flowes and makes a new bundle of all, *As bees in flowery glades sip every plant* [Lucretius] . . . . I cite and quote mine authors (which howsoever some illiterate scribblers account pedantical, as a cloak of ignorance, and opposite to their affected fine style, I must and will use); I have borrowed, not stolen; and what Varro speaks of bees, *they are by no means malicious, because they injure nothing they take honey from,*

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> I can say of myself, whom have I injured? The matter is theirs most part, and yet mine. . . . (19-20).

Yet more than a thousand years before Milton, bees were already rife with implications for the poet in the Moral Epistles of Seneca (2:84.3-6). Seneca, in fact, quotes the bee simile of the Aeneid to illustrate his point about how writers go from flower to flower, though Virgil had already pollinated Lucretius in his Georgics. But the image as a commonplace for the poetic act, like so much else belonging to Western civilization, seems ultimately to have evolved out of Homer. Virgil's simile turned, I suggested, upon a comparison of Carthaginians in order to make Aeneas figure the Virgilian narrator by leaving out divine agency in Homer. But what of its originals in Homer? How does the idea of poetry come to be associated with the bee simile?

The bee simile in the Iliad interrupts more violently interrupts the flow of the narrative by clearly distinguishing the repetition of the end frame that Virgil and Milton play with:

> As from some rocky cleft the shepherd sees
> Clust'ring on heaps and heaps the driving bees,
> . . . . . .
> So, from the tents and ships, a length'ning train
> Spreads all the beach, and wide o'ershades the plain:

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> Along the region runs a deaf'ning sound;
> Beneath their footseps groans the trembling ground.
> *Fame* flies before, the messenger of *Jove* . . .
>
> (Pope 2.111-21)

The Achaians in Homer do not, strictly speaking, become Fame in the way that Aeneas becomes invisible, or that Milton's demons shrink in an Ovidian-styled metamorphosis. Yet Homer's image of Fame heralds the sound of the troops by passing through the intermediate step of the simile, in which the murmuring of innumerable bees presages Virgil's Rumor.

Virgil's bee simile, we said, was already a transumption of Homer because it troped on a trope, its omitted echoes being of Apollonius of Rhodes. In The Voyage of Argo Heracles rebukes the Argonauts for loitering on the island of Lemnos where Hypsipyle has distracted Jason from his quest for the golden fleece. The crew prepares for a speedy to departure:

> But when the women got wind of their intention, they came running down and swarmed round them, moaning for grief, as bees come pouring out from their rocky hive when the meadows are gay with dew, and buzz about the lillies, flitting to and from to take their sweet toil from the flowers. (60)

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Homer's fame, though unnamed by Apollonius, now precedes rather than follows upon the image of the swarming bees. The placement of the image by Apollonius recalls Odysseus and Calypso more than the Achaian elders. And the Aeneid, by combining elements from the Iliad and the Odyssey, uses the bees in relation to the Carthaginians, whose queen serves double-time for both a Circe-Medea and a Calypso-Hypsisple figure.

Unlike Homer's Fame, Virgil's Rumor is a personification of central importance in the action of the Aeneid. Homeric personifications appear to be more specifically human inventions that are distinguishable from divine agency. Agamemnon retrospectively invents the fable of Ate to account for his reckless behavior toward Achilles in the Iliad, which action, when it was first related by the narrator, seemed to have been self-determined. And Virgil plays with the same indeterminacy when Palinurus explains his ineptitude for having fallen overboard to Aeneas in the underworld, while the narrator had in the previous book pictured him as having been pushed by the god of Sleep. Personifications such as Sleep and Rumor become increasingly like gods in Latin poetry, as Lewis observed, though their agency seems to me to be more of the order of an efficient or formal, rather than a final, cause. Allecto, when she inflames Turnus, does not have nearly the same presence and power for a reader because she does not speak, as does a

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Juno or Venus. Gordon Teskey observes that "the personified abstractions of medieval allegory secretly absorbed, from the psychological power of a decaying polytheism, the narrative power of agency" (33), though Milton's creations of Sin and Death, because they converse only with Satan, seem less like Spenser's Furor and Orgoglio and more closely aligned with Allecto and Rumor of Virgil, who inadvertently interweave a streak of skepticism into the fabric of the Aeneid. They prompt us to ask: what is the difference between a god and a personification, or a personification and a concept?

Virgil makes Rumor a god, but with an unHomeric degree of self-consciousness, redolent of a cynicism towards the Olympians in its implication that a personification is more than a rationale for human behavior because it partakes in the action. Yet the personification of Rumor also suggests a literary device signifying the fictional nature of Aeneid. Rumor bears, moreover, a wonderful parallel with the misshapen and deformed creatures generated by the abiogenesis of Ovid's flood. After Dido's reclusive liaison with Aeneas, the word of their "marriage" is spread abroad:

> The loud report through Libyan cities goes.
> Fame, the great ill, from small beginnings grows:
> Swift from the first, and every moment brings
> New vigor to her flight, new pinions to her wings.
> Soon grows the pigmy to gigantic size,

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Her feet on earth, her forehead in the skies.
Enraged against the gods, revengeful Earth
Produced her, last of the Titanian birth.
Swift is her walk, more swift her winged haste,
A monstrous phantom, horrible and vast.
As many plumes as raise her lofty flight,
So many piercing eyes enlarge her sight.
Millions of opening mouths to Fame belong,
And every mouth is furnished with a tongue,
And round with listening ears the flying plague is hung.
She fills the peaceful universe with cries;
No slumbers ever close her wakeful eyes.
By day from lofty towers her head she shews,
And spreads through trembling crowds disastrous new;
With court informers haunts, and royal spies;
Things done relates, not done she feigns, and mingles truth with lies.

(Dryden 4.251-271)

Skepticism about the Olympic pantheon is thus present not only in the Aeneid, but has its counterpart in the Metamorphoses--which, like The Faerie Queene, is without an extended comparison to bees--in the Nile simile. Just as Virgil's double-edged Rumor mixes lies with the truth, the unheard-of creatures left by the retreating waters of the

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earth are monstrously biform.

Charles Lemmi suggested that Spenser's deployment of Ovid might have been influenced by Diodurus Siculus's account of the proverbial fertility of the Nile (234). Diodorus was a Euhemerist by nature, meaning that he was inclined to read the gods and demi-gods of pagan myth as men famous for their actions. But proverbial lore is itself one aspect of Fame, introduced to Western literature by Homer's bee simile, where it bruited abroad the footsteps of the gathering troops and prophesied Virgil's Rumor and Ovid's Nile. The twin images of Rumor and the Nile in Virgil and Ovid together illustrate how a provisional kind of immortality is granted upon human experience through the words of men, but also contain within themselves the seeds of the idea that only poetry confers immortality.

The praise of poetry, however, ultimately works against praise of the divine. In Virgil, skepticism is made blatant in the mouth of Nisus when he shares with Euryalus his doubts as to whether "the gods inspire / This warmth, or make we gods of our desire?" (Dryden 9.235-6). The poem's narrator, however, refrains elsewhere from answering if it is possible that "heavenly minds such high resentment show" (1.17), and the piety of his self-control is translated by Spenser's "And is there care in heauen?" (2.8.1), and parodied in Milton's, "In heav'nly Spirits could such perverseness dwell?" (6.788).

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Though Virgilian skepticism towards the gods is given free rein in Milton's Satan, its literary source lies again in Homer. On the one hand, Sarpedon espouses a heroic code of values in exhorting Glaucus to a noble action that would confer immortality in the face of inevitable death:

> Why on those shores are we with joy survey'd,
> Admir'd as heroes, and as Gods obey'd?
> Unless great acts superiour merit prove,
> And vindicate the bount'ous pow'rs above.
>
> (Pope 12.377-80)

But on the other hand, Helen casts a shadow on the value of heroism when she suggests to her brother-in-law that the immortality of the poet's song comes just as much a result of heinous deeds:

> The Gods have link'd our miserable doom,
> Our present woe, and infamy to come:
> Wide shall it spread, and last thro' ages long,
> Examples sad! and theme of future song.
>
> (6.446-49)

Yet the Iliad's most stunning reversal of man's claims to fame comes in the leaf simile given of Glaucus to Diomede, son of Tydeus:

> What, or from whence I am, or who my sire,
> (Reply'd the chief) can *Tydeus'* son enquire?
> Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
> Now green in youth, now with'ring on the ground,

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Another race the following spring supplies,
They fall successive, and successive rise;
So generations in their course decay,
So flourish these, when those are past away.

(6.179-86)

In the underworld of the Odyssey, the ghost of Achilles also revokes the ideological cliches of epic poetry, cherished by Renaissance critics, by telling Odysseus:

I rather wish to live in earth a Swaine
Or serve a Swaine for hire, that scarce can gaine
Bread to sustaine him, than (that life once gone)
Of all the dead sway the Imperiall throne.

(Chapman 11.643-46)

And Milton takes the idea of an immortalizing fame perpetuated through memory to its logical and, at the same time, absurd conclusion in Satan's rebuttal of Abdiel:

We know no time when we were not as now;
Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd
By our own quick'ning power, when fatal course
Had circl'd his full Orb, the birth mature
Of this our native Heav'n, Ethereal Sons.
Our puissance is our own . . .

(5.859-64)

Renaissance critics, as opposed to allegorists, resurrected a modified version of Diodurus's Euhemerism in seeking to educe the heroic code of values from the epic

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tradition; but they explicitly transferred the powers of generating lasting fame on earth to the poet. Vomit, as White points out (127), was a commonplace figure for the wretched verse of poetasters, such as whom were castigated by Donne's Satyre (2.25-30). Both Spenser's vomiting Serpent and Milton's diminished demons are, I think, recognitions that they were living during a time when the divine was being dismantled in poetry, and that the laurel crown being awarded the secular poet was being won at too great an cost. Spenser's narrator seems even more worried than Dante that his efforts will be misconstrued as erroneous; and he seems uncomfortable with the task of justifying how a poet improves upon the servile imitation of his betters. The notoriety of fame is, on the other hand, a reward the Miltonic narrator seeks to avoid. He rejects the continuing good reports among men in order to espouse a vocation that is heavenly inspired, while yet fearing dismemberment by "*Bacchus* and his Revellers" (7.33).

We have in the Bee and the Nile similes images for poetic authority that were passed down from Homer to Milton in a series of successive dilations and contractions, in which each generation alternately expands and shrinks that which they receive. I have by no means exhausted the lines of transmission, though I am suggesting that we think of Milton's reduction of size in the Bee simile as an ironic, and Spenser's expansion of the Nile simile as an

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allegorical, response to prior poems. The fertility of error in Spenser's episode, at once memorably grotesque and portentous, is a multiplicity we cannot get our grips on, though the episode becomes momentarily ironic when the expression "blacke as inke" undermines the gravity of the situation. Drawing our attention to his own recycling of the past, Spenser invokes a rare sense of dead-pan humor in an irony proffered at his own expense. Milton's crystalline distillation, on the other hand, of previous representations of poetic authority in the tautology of "like themselves" is loaded with a set of connotations complementary to those with which the Bee simile began.

The Miltonic narrator posits for himself throughout Paradise Lost an inspiration transcending the Renaissance parameters of different methods of stealing. He begins by alluding to the bee similes of the Iliad and the Aeneid in order to shrink Homer and Virgil, who "who seem'd / In bigness to surpass Earth's Giant Sons." But as the bee simile winds to a close, the extreme reduction of Tasso's image also echoes Ovid, Dante, and Spenser, in order to make a point about imitation. By severely reducing Tasso's image, which had been expanded by Spenser to figure the erroneous and overly imitative side of poetic borrowing, the Miltonic narrator concludes as if to say that being a good poet consists in not so much either inspiration or amplification, but, like the unacknowledged theft of an

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unacknowledged theft, involves not showing how one is a bad poet. Like Pope's rejection of his own thoughts, Milton's negative capability is tied to an idea about wit and poetic genius, illustrated in a tour de force if the triumph of Milton's epic simile lies in the concealment of its debts. His version of Homer's and Virgil's trope would best be described as sublimely parodic, if the final cause for the bee simile's intricate word play were an attempt to interrogate the way a poet invokes sources, in which case, our disagreements about what constitutes these sources would be paradoxically insignificant.

The marvel of the expression "Like themselves" is that it seems to refer to nothing, as, at the same time, it puts a cap on the fountains feeding the tributaries of Renaissance poetry. Under the assumption that Bloom's general intuition was right, I tried to show how an apparent tautology bore a hitherto unnoticed affinity with Tasso. But the success of my argument is as shaky as Bloom's when he posits Shakespeare as a the skipped-over step for the same Miltonic simile. Milton, we both agree, is hell-bent on overgoing his literary past; he consistently denies that the characters, persons, and events of his own story have any precedents, even though he can not help but bring those mythological associations to our mind. Yet the idea of transumption always works better in the abstract than in practice, for the forbidden glimpse of dancing sprites is

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reminiscent not only of A Midsummer's Night Dream, but of the Colin Clout's interrupted vision of the merry-making Graces near the end of The Faerie Queene. No doubt, other instances can, and will, be discovered from out the Pandora's box of poetry to witness similar dispositions of imagery. But even if we agreed that at the bottom of Milton's peasant lies a reference to Shakespeare, we would then need to restate under what terms this source relationship differs from the one characterizing his use of Virgil's bee simile. An echo of Shakespeare suppresses or omits a direct quotation, but the greater certainty with which we all hear the same echo perversely undercuts the amount of suppression or omission going on. That is, if it were obvious that Milton were copying Shakespeare or Tasso, the simile would cease being transumptive.

Bloom deplores previous source-catalogers for Paradise Lost as carrion hunters, the better to distinguish them from his own inspired brand of necromancy. Source-hunting, however, is still source-hunting, if of a more oblique order when it is called "intertextuality." Yet the notion that poems exist primarily to refer to other poems cannot account for how the telescope creeps into the Miltonic simile, or explain how Paradise Lost manages to avoid rewriting the same poems that The Faerie Queene seems condemned to write over and over again, except by calling that difference transumptive, thereby displacing the problem onto a new

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terminology. Intertextual strategies insufficiently account for how poems appear to change over time, and bypass their own origins in the biographical criticism for which the topical allusions in Paradise Lost seem to cry out. Johnson's reading of Milton's life into his poems was only one development of literary criticism, which closer to our own time subsumed the same problems the allegorists had--explaining whether poetry afforded insight into the divine or was a distortion of it--by reconfiguring the same issues in terms of the author's unconscious mind. The problem in this guise is no less intractable. Was Milton oblivious to the fact he was echoing Shakespeare and Tasso? Or, conversely, how can we put a limit on the number of possible connections he purposed us to make? The ghostly presence of the past in the Miltonic simile forces the reader into a awkward position by asking him to choose between impossible alternatives: between fathoming the machinations of Milton's unconscious, or ascribing to him a diabolical complexity of intent.

I cannot answer the objections of Shawcross to the intertextualists, for I am one: I can only apologize for having brought forward, for passages in Paradise Lost, those moments in The Faerie Queene of which I was reminded, however remotely, and on which I tried to build a logical scaffolding to explain the roundabout methods of Milton. Yet the logical scaffolding of the intertextualist must of

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necessity appeal to a myth of orality, as if the word heard and spoken face-to-face had a presence that was lost the moment it was recorded. Only the possibility of an echo-free use of language allows for de Man's two varieties of hermeneutic responses to texts. For de Man, the reading of all literature is either an allegorical or ironic reaction to the perfect circularity of oral myth. Indeed, the similes of Spenser suggest an allegorical or parabolic mode, whereas those of Milton seem to me more ironic in their hyperboles. But as I suggested earlier, there are not only parabolas and hyperbolas, but ellipses which shade off from the circle. The ellipse, parabola, and hyperbola are all declensions of the circular intersection of a plane surface with a conic section. For in addition to those expressions which mean what they say and are in no need of interpretation, there exist not only allegorical utterances with meanings in excess of the literal, and ironic utterances draining meaning away from the letter, but there are also elliptical remarks in which too much has been removed or too much added for us to decide on a reading. It was hardly my goal to initiate a taxonomy of hermeneutic responses based on the conic sections, though the seemingly accidental similarity of the word <u>elusive</u> with the words <u>allusion</u> and <u>illusion</u> is a configuration, the magic of which I cannot dispel.

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H. Unlike Themselves: Exceptions to the Rule

As I wearily steer the weather-beaten reader into port, he undoubtedly clings to the life-jacket of numerous examples which do not fit my thesis. I, too, would like to credit a few metaleptic similes in Spenser and allegorical ones in Milton. I cannot explain a special reason that Milton likens Raphael to Homer's heavenly messenger when "Like *Maia's* son he stood" (5.285), for the simile is perfectly Spenserian. And when "The Sun, as from *Thyestean* banquet, turn'd / His course intended" (10.689), Milton gives us neither a "more than," "fabled," nor "metamorphic" simile in referring us to Seneca's drama, though Milton's short comparison is arguably still a variant of likening great things to small.

Examples of metalepsis in Spenser, however, are more intriguing. Guyon and the Palmer pass underneath a grape arbor in the Bower of Bliss:

> So fashioned a Porch with rare deuice,
> Archt ouer head with an embracing vine,
> Whose bounches hanging downe, seemed to entice
> All passers by, to tast their lushious wine,
> And did themselues into their hands incline,
> As freely offering to be gathered:
> Some deepe empurpled as the *Hyacint*,

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Some as the Rubine, laughing sweetly red,
Some like faire Emeraudes, not yet well ripened.

And them amongst, some were of burnisht gold,
So made by art, to beautifie the rest,
Which did theselues emongst the leaues enfold,
As lurking from the vew of couetous guest,
That the weake bowes, with so rich load oppprest,
Did bow adowne, as ouer-burdened.

(2.12.54-55)

Spenser's description of the enchanted vineyard is clearly indebted to the Gerusalemme, where at the center of Armida's labyrinthine palace Rinaldo is rapt by the sorceress's charms. Trees growing in her beautiful garden entertain all seasons simultaneously:

The leaves upon the self-same bough did hide,
Beside the young, the old and ripened fig;
Here fruit was green, there ripe with vermeil side,
The apples new and old grew on one twig;
The fruitful vine her arms spread high and wide,
That bended underneath their clusters big;
The grapes were tender here, hard, young and sour,
There purple, ripe, and nectar sweet forth pour.

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(Fairfax 16.11)

The wonder of the foliage in Tasso's garden exemplifies the *sprezzatura* of Castiglione's courtier, the "art that appeereth not to be art," or the nonchalance of a spontaneity concealing its artifice (53). Tasso uses the color of ripened and unripened grapes, while Spenser gives us additionally an intermediate, "sweetly red" color. Spenser, moreover, goes a step beyond Tasso in likening the grapes to precious stones--jacinth, ruby, emerald--before effecting a Miltonic-styled metamorphosis with the last variety, which is not like gold, but golden. He uses three short similes first ("as the *Hyacinth*," "as the Rubine," "like faire Emeraudes") in order to make the metallic grapes, like golden the thread in the tapestry of Busirane, all the more marvelous.

The metamorphosis seems part of an plan to make the snares of Acrasia outdo Armida's. Indeed, Spenser's pleasure garden is introduced with one of Milton's "more than" similes:

> More sweet and holesome, then the pleasaunt hill
> Of *Rhodope*, on which the Nimphe, that bore
> A gyaunt babe, her selfe for griefe did kill;
> Or the Thessalian *Tempe*, where of yore
> Faire *Daphne Phoebus* hart with loue did gore;
> Or *Ida*, where the Gods lou'd to repaire,
> When euer they their heauenly bowres forlore;

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Or sweet *Parnasse*, the haunt of muses faire;
Or *Eden* selfe, if ought with *Eden* mote compaire.
(2.12.52)

Spenser backs off from making his Bower more "sweet and holesome" than Eden, just as he had previously depicted Redcrosse's Hill of Contemplation not to be higher than Sinai or the Mount of Olives (1.10.54-53). Yet these holy places in Book One were also associated with Parnassus, which is now momentarily subordinated to the Bower of Bliss in sweetness and wholesomeness.

But what has Parnassus to do with the Ovidian loci amoenus, rich in desirable qualities, which are gained only at a steep price? Rhodope and Tempe were the settings for metamorphoses resulting from an offense or resistance to the gods. Spenser describes his garden so as to outdo Tasso, but the aim of the Miltonic-styled simile is calculated to make Acrasia's pleasure garden not better, but worse, than Armida's. Spenser's Bower, too, is the product of art imitating nature (2.12.42); but *sprezzatura* turns rotten in his version, art more ominously striving (2.5.29) and then scorning to be compared with nature (2.12.50). The two are in competition with one another:

Each did the other worke more beautifie;
So diff'ring both in wiles, agreed in fine:
So all agreed through sweete diuersitie,
This Gardin to adorne with all varietie.

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The resultant variety is "pretty, but bad" (Lewis 325), and suggests that Spenser suspected the haunt of the muses to be spirited with good as well as evil demons.

My perception is that the foregoing epic simile is an exception to the rule of thumb governing comparisons in The Faerie Queene, an instance when Spenser is unlike himself. Another example, especially provocative in terms of Milton, occurs in Book Three, when Nurse Glauce attempts to relieve the suffering of her love-sick ward. She contrasts Britomart's innocence against vivid precedents:

> Daughter (said she) what need ye be dismayd,
> Or why make ye souch Monster of your mind?
> Of much more vncouth thing I was affrayd;
> Of filthy lust, contrarie vnto kind:
> But this affection nothing straunge I find;
> For who with reason can you aye reproue,
> To loue the semblant pleasing most your mind,
> And yield your heart, whence ye cannot remoue?
> No guilt in you, but in the tyranny of loue.
>
> Not so th' *Arabian Myrrhe* did set her mind;
> Nor so did *Biblis* spend her pining heart,
> But lou'd their natiue flesh agains all kind,
> And to their purpose vsed wicked art:

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Yet playd *Pasiphae* a more monstrous part,
That lou'd a Bull, and learnd a beast to bee;
Such shamefull lusts who loaths not, which depart
From course of nature and of modestie?
Sweet loue such lewdnes bands from his faire companie.

(3.2.40-41)

By heaping three negative similes on top one another, Glauce treats the myths of Biblis, Myrrhe, and Pasiphae as if they were figures of speech with a particular moral point. Her conspicuous allusion reduces complex episodes from the Metamorphoses to a manageable size in order to distance Britomart from her Ovidian precedents. And just as the Miltonic narrator denies the similarity of Adam, Eve, and Paradise with any precedent, so Spenser's Glauce omits or leaves out the very similarity between Britomart's frame of mind and the fatal passion of the Ovidian heroines.

In spite of Glauce's best intentions, however, her argument produces the opposite effect. The triple negative simile elicits Britomart's compassion for those whom Glauce would blame. Britomart envies her forebears all the more for having satisfied their base desires:

Beldame, your words doe worke me litle ease;
For though my loue be not so lewdly bent,
As those ye blame, yet may it nought appease

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My raging smart, ne ought my flame relent,
But rather doth my helpless griefe augment.
For they, how euer shamefull and vnkind,
Yet did possesse their horrible intent:
Short end of sorrowes they thereby did find;
So was their fortune good, though wicked were
their mind.

(3.2.43)

Glauce metaleptically makes a mole-hill out of a classical mountain but ironically generates sympathy for the mole. Britomart continues by describing the torment of having seen her love in a looking-glass, likening herself to:

. . . *Cephisus* foolish child,
Who hauing vewed in a fountaine shere
His face, was with the loue thereof beguild;
I fonder loue a shade, the bodie farre exild.

(3.2.44)

Glauce's argument is not founded on any kind of fore-knowledge when it is made, though she is vindicated by Merlin's predictions of distinguished house arising from the marriage of Britomart and Artegall. But Britomart's misapprehensions about love fulfilling an Ovidian metamorphosis are also vindicated in the 1590 ending to Book Three. When the heroine helps reunite Amoret and Scudamour, the lovers join together "like two senceles stocks":

Had ye them seene, ye would hauve surely thought,

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That they had beene that faire *Hermaphrodite*,
Which that rich *Romane* of white marble wrought,
And in his costly Bath caus'd to bee site:
So seemd those two, as growne together quite,
That *Britomart* halfe enuying their blesse,
Was much empassiond in her gentle sprite,
And to her selfe oft wist like happinesse,
In vaine she wist, that fate n'ould let her yet possesse.

(3.12.46)

Britomart is envious again, not of Biblis and Pasiphae, but of the "blesse" of Amoret and Scudamour, which renders them statue-like in perfection, and also as cold as the proverbial tomb. One could argue that Spenser changes the ending in 1596 to defer closure and incorporate the episodes beginning Book Four. It is plausible, however, that Spenser sensed his material had gotten away from him and that Britomart was gazing on something ghastly. Wofford argues for the similarity between the Spenserian narrator and Busyrane (310), yet I suspect Spenser, on reflection, changes the ending to distance the idealized love of Artegall and Britomart from the Masque of Cupid.

Glauce's argument was an attempt to persuade Britomart to "represse / The growing euill, ere it strength haue got" (3.2.46), which plan failing, she proposes that Britomart

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"compasse thy desire, and find that loued knight," by seeking Merlin's guidance. Her triple negative simile was transumptive because it omitted exactly what Biblis, Myrrhe, and Pasiphae share in common with Britomart: an irrational, mythic passion. The extended comparisons made by the Spenserian narrator, on the other hand, generally have no such rhetorical end in mind; they engender delight by imitating imagery found in the epic similes of Spenser's sources, which they very seldom transume or overgo.

William Porter makes an incisive comment on the nature of Milton's allusiveness, which shed light on Glauce's argument, by tying allusion to the rhetorical form of persuasion identified by Aristotle and Quintilian as the enthymeme. The enthymeme in the study of rhetoric, which in the Middle ages subsumed the study of poetry, was held in contrast to the syllogistic reasoning of scholastic philosophy, because rhetoric addressed the skills concerning probable, rather than true, arguments. The enthymeme, as the name for a train of specious reasoning, was calculated to persuade in its concealment of the conditional nature of one of its premises. We have thus far considered transumption in the light of epideixis (how to bestow praise and blame) and in regard to forensic oratory (how to determine guilt and innocence), but the trope also has an important role in deliberative oratory. It is under this heading that Glauce's transumption falls. Yet even though

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the nurse fails to deter Britomart from indulging her love-sickness, Glauce's argument was delivered with the intent of persuading towards future course of action. Her transumption was a false syllogism because it omitted the obvious similarities between Britomart and the doomed Ovidian heroines.

Porter quite rightly recognizes that the lines separating a theft, an echo, a borrowing, and an allusion were never clearly put forth by the first geometricians of literary criticism. A theft is an "appropriation" of an original "without regard for its context there" (21); it is inconsequential because it is not meant to be recognized, whereas the second is a more deliberate form of reminiscence. The echo refers us to an original, though its "evocation of a specific source is significant, albeit in an indefinable or imprecise way" (23). A borrowing, thirdly, is an "analogous" relationship between a text and pretext, which is "an aspect of the poet's compositional technique" (26). Allusion lastly, Porter names "critical allusion," so as to separate himself from other dabblers in intertextuality: he defines it to be an oblique reference or "retrograde motion originating in the later text and directing the reader back to the former text, the target. . . . [I]t designates . . . a relationship that is an intended aspect of the poem as an *interpretandum*, a 'thing to be interpreted'" (32). In other words, Milton meant us

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to realize he was interpreting Horace, Hesiod, and Virgil in the three critical allusions explained in practical detail by Porter's book. Practice, however, does not absolve Porter from the theoretical objections raised by Shawcross in regard to Guillory, Hollander, and Bloom on Milton's echoes of Shakespeare, even though Porter defines his terms differently. By dismissing the "welter" of Paradise Lost's allusions to the classics as unworthy of the name (39), Porter effectually claims that if we venture to disagree with him, we have misunderstood the nature of allusion.

Nevertheless, I do not think Porter realizes that, when he discusses Milton's allusion in terms of the enthymeme, his enterprise is closely related to Bloom's: for the rhetorical form of argumentation discussed by Porter is but an application of transumption to a means of persuading towards a future action. Porter paraphrases Aristotle's Rhetoric (1.2) in defining enthymeme to be "a syllogism with one or more of its premises implied rather than stated" (36). An enthymeme is often more effective among the unlearned than a syllogism because the "ordinary man . . . leaves his general premises unstated" and the enthymeme "tacitly prompts the auditor to cooperate with the orator by referring to an understanding or belief that the orator expects the auditor to share" (37). Most strikingly, Porter observes that "allusion is *enthymemic*: the poet tacitly prompts the reader to supply a term that is left unstated"

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(38). Allusion is "not a matter of stylistic elegance . . . but an indispensable mechanism of it [the poem's] argumentation" (39). Thus, when the Miltonic narrator chronologically positions his story ahead of the fables narrated by Homer and Virgil, we complicity agree for the immediate pleasure in reading, with one of the omitted major premises of the text: Paradise Lost was published in 1667.

Glauce's enthymeme was transumptive, we said, because it omitted the similarity between Britomart and Ovidian characters, which similarity the Spenserian narrator vindicates in the Hermaphroditic vision of fulfilled love. Yet the majority of the epic similes used by the narrator throughout The Faerie Queene are neither transumptive nor enthymemic. Their very conventionality links them instead with the paradigm or example, the other major form of rhetorical argumentation. Puttenham elucidated three distinct aspects of simile or similitude in discussing icon, parable, and paradigm. The first two we have studied, but his remarks on paradigm are worth giving, because as the enthymeme is the rhetorical variant of a deductive syllogism, so is a paradigm the rhetorical version of an inference, or inductive argument:

> [I]f in matter of counsell or perswasion we will seem to liken one case to another, such as passe ordinarily in mans affaires, and doe compare the past with the present, gathering probabilitie of

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> like success to come in the things we have presently in hand: or if ye will draw the judgements precedent and authorized by antiquitie as veritable, and peradventure fayned and imagined for some purpose, into similitude or dissimilitude with our present actions and afaire, it is called resemblance by example: as if one should say thus, Alexander the great in his expedition to Asia did thus, so did Hanniball comming into Spaine, so did Caesar in Egypt, therfore all great Captains & Generals ought to doe it. (245)

Glauce's transumptive enthymeme fails, perhaps, because she should have used a paradigm or an example, such as the Spenserian narrator uses in his extended comparisons. If instead of saying, "You're nothing like Biblis," Glauce had instead told the young girl, "Don't worry, your situation is like that of Ariosto's Bradamante," the old nurse might have achieved better success in calming Britomart.

The arguments used by Despaire in his dialogue with Redcrosse to persuade him to suicide are also, as in an Aristotelian enthymeme, based on probabilities as opposed to certainties. In order to make the knight envy Terwin's state, the fiend employs analogies between things familiar to Redcrosse and the one experience he has not yet had:

> He there does now enioy eternall rest
> And happie ease, which thou doest want and

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craue,
And further from it daily wanderest:
What if some litle paine the passage haue,
That makes fraile flesh to feare the bitter
waue?
Is not short paine well borne, that brings
long ease,
And layes the soule to sleep in quiet graue?
Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life does greatly
please. (1.9.40)

The images of safe harbor, rest, and peace are effective insofar as they suppress the distinction between similitude and simile. Had the fiend merely said, "Death is similar to the destinations all of us have ever sought after," the prosaic argument would have been a paradigm or example, and it would also have been less convincing for its induction. Because he conceals the fact that he is only making an analogy, the logical structure of Despaire's argument is an enthymeme.

Transumptive similes in Spenser's poem usually constitute a portion of the speeches of specific characters in the form of enthymemes contrived to instruct or persuade their auditors. The Spenserian characters who employ transumption, however, tend to be not wholly reputable in their motives. Despaire's sophistry all but succeeds in its

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demonic ends, save for the intervention of Una. And Phaedria's argument to seize the day is likewise enthymemic, because it makes pleasure out to be a good worth seeking after, rather than a gift or a sign of grace. That is, pleasure is no longer represented to be a subset of received goods, which were habitually defined in the Renaissance as bestowed on man by the divine. Pleasure in Phaedria's, as in all *carpe diem* arguments, becomes an end that is recognizable and worth seeking after in and of itself. It is for this reason, I think, that Tasso, once he began to be haunted by the echoes of his own poem, allegorizes the dancing nymphs of the Gerusalemme as enthymemic: "The flowers, the fountains, the brooks, the musical instruments, the nymphs are false syllogisms that place before us the ease and pleasures of the senses under the good" (158).

And it is on the model of Despaire's and Glauce's arguments that Eve is seduced by Satan's simile, "ye shall be as Gods." Satan's rhetoric is an enthymeme or false syllogism inspiring Eve to imagine a plurality of deities among whom she shall have a place--rather than a place beside a "kind" of deity--as a result of eating the forbidden fruit. The core of Satan's argument is a double ratio or proportion:

> . . . he knows that in the day
> Ye Eat therof, your eyes that seem so clear,
> Yet are but dim, shall perfetly be then

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> Op'n'd and clear'd, and ye shall be as Gods,
> Knowing both Good and Evil as they know.
> That ye should be as Gods, since I as Man,
> Internal Man, is but proportion meet,
> I of brute human, yee of human Gods.
>
> (9.705-12)

What persuades Eve to entertain the possibility that more than one deity can exist? Satan had named the Divinity in the plural throughout the nightmare in which he disturbs Eve. And Raphael had hypothesized something similar, but he used the subjunctive, "Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit" (5.499), in conjunction with a conditional, "If ye be found obedient" (5.501), which, he leads Adam and Eve to believe, derives authority from the Father. The Miltonic narrator, too, had projected a plurality of Gods in a simile describing the combatants in the War of Heaven: "likest Gods they seem'd" (6.301). But throughout the dialogue preceding the final simile "Ye shall be as gods," Satan only refers to a singular Being, excepting when, in his initial address to Eve, he hypothetically projects the advantage Eve would enjoy if she "shouldst be seen / A Goddess among Gods" (9.546-7).

Stanley Fish is partly right, I think, to have demanded Eve give more weight to her own surprise in the initial encounter with a speaking serpent. Satan goes on to claim the gift of speech as one of the powers granted by the fruit

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in his argument for the even greater gifts Eve can expect to receive from breaking the interdict. But even in the initial encounter, Eve is not completely like Redcrosse, who already has experience of sleep, port, and ease, so as to enable to him to recognize a probable from a true syllogism. Eve has had no experience of probable knowledge or opinion, nor a means to avoid confusing an analogy from instruction, save to hold to the hard course. Eve is simply "not unamaz'd" (9.552), meaning, I think, not only that she is bewildered at the originary impertinence of a talking snake, but also a little disconcerted with the hypothetical, i.e. imaginative, address of the "as if" simile in Satan's praise. It is her first encounter with the distinction between fictional and literal truth, and she is perhaps offended that a polytheistic cosmos is presented her for the sake of gratifying a vanity she abandoned on the day she was created.

As the temptation scene unfolds, Eve, like Redcrosse, goes on to mistake a faulty argument for a syllogism. Satan's logic is imperfect because the "Internal Man" that he has asserted he has become, lacks correspondence with an equivalent, "Internal Gods," in the previous line. "That ye should be as Gods, *Internal Gods*," would have been harder to resist, though an "internal god" would have been nothing other, perhaps, than what Raphael held out as a promise all along. An "internal god" would have been the syllogistic

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conclusion to have drawn, the major premise omitted from the enthymeme being the serpent's questionable assertion that he is an "Internal Man" in the unfallen world. Assuming Milton's belief that the serpent was inhabited by Satan, it is creditable to Eve only because it reconciles the split between what she sees and what she hears.

While the disjunct between "Man / Internal Man" offers a less disruptive fallacy than the more obvious fiction a perfect syllogism would have entailed, the consummate stroke of Satan's artistry is in causing Eve to entertain a patent absurdity: the idea of a plurality of gods in what she knows is monotheistic cosmos. To this end, he words his argument from God's point of view:

> . . . he knows that in the day
> Ye Eat thereof, your Eyes that seem so clear
> Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then
> Op'n'd and clear'd . . .

The downward movement from "he knows" to "ye shall be as Gods" creates the illusion of a perspective in which one God is pictured giving birth to many, an arrogant presumption for Satan, but one which engenders Eve's sympathy. Satan contrives his rhetoric so that Eve must put herself in the place of a creator, just as Glauce inadvertently enables Britomart to imagine Byblis from the author's point of view. Britomart's reaction is no different from the commiseration engendered in Dante for Dido by his reading of Virgil, yet

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Glauce was ignorant that Britomart would pity the characters she invoked, and Satan fully intends that Eve empathize with the new gods he prompts her to envision.

Spenser's normative use of similes is paradigmatic or allegorical, and Milton's is enthymemic or transumptive. The focus of critics on Milton's transumption has eclipsed an understanding of how Spenser makes use of the trope in The Faerie Queene, and though Wofford begins to rectify the neglect, her conclusions are quite the opposite of my own (268-72). As I understand the trope, transumption is a rhetorical device belonging to Spenserian characters, whereas the transumptive figure of speech--in forensic, deliberative, and epideictic oratory--becomes the defining gesture of Miltonic narrator and the Satanic deceiver, both of whom situate the stories they tell in advance of those past. Though Glauce, too, sees nature through the spectacles of books, her glasses are neither so thick nor assured as those of Milton, for whom the transumptive figure of speech becomes compact with the ironic mode, and who attempts to confine allegory, on the other hand, within the circuits of a delimited genre. Whereas the narrator of The Faerie Queene had regarded all of his sources as if they had an equal claim to truth, Milton's separation of true from false myth, I think, unexpectedly puts us a little in Britomart's position. We feel sorrier, perhaps, for Ovid and Homer, or Ceres and Mulciber, at the end of Paradise

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Lost, than we do for Adam and Eve.

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Afterword

In the last half of my study, I attempted to make a plausible case for reading the similes of The Faerie Queene as allegorical and those of Paradise Lost as ironic, for which interpretation I would like now to make a formal recantation. I shall briefly consider one dazzlingly enigmatic simile from the "Mutabilitie Cantos" of Spenser, whose Nature, like Milton's Sin and Death, shows us what an allegory is without being itself allegorical, before I offer a final prayer of sorts.

The sole stanza-length comparison of "Mutabilitie" surprises us at the moment of Diana's apprehension of Faunus. It concerns a dairymaid's fury at having discovered the violation of her farm:

> Thence, forth they drew him by the hornes,
> and shooke
> Nigh all to peeces, that they left him
> nought;
> And then into the open light they forth him
> brought.
>
> Like as an huswife, that with busie care
> Thinks of her Dairie to make wondrous gaine,
> Finding where-as some wicked beast vnware
> That breakes into her Dayr'house, there doth

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draine
Her creaming pannes, and frustrate all her
paine;
Hath in some snare or gin set close behind,
Entrapped him, and caught into her traine,
Then thinkes what punishment were best
assign'd,
And thousand deaths deuiseth in her vengefull
mind:

So did *Diana* and her maydens all
Vse silly *Faunus*, now within their baile:
Thy mocke and scorne him, and him foule
miscall . . .

(7.6.48-9)

In the tale about Faunus inset within the larger story, Spenser chronicles the devastation of Arlo Hill by giving us an Ovidian-styled myth, in which the satyr, having brazenly looked on the nude goddess, is caught and punished. Spenser gratifies us with the inset tale--while wondering aloud if the details were not already overly-familiar to his audience--by turning away from his epyllion's primary concern with the revolt of the Titaness against the Olympians. The two cantos and a sliver relate the vicious assault on the throne of the Moon by Mutabilitie, whose rashness is judged by an even greater goddess, Nature. But

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the turn from one narration to another suggests, in the manner that one veil is lifted to reveal another, that the inset history of Arlo Hill contains a mythic paradigm for the universal ravages of Mutabilitie. Spenser's mytheme of Faunus and Diana comically inverts the outcome of the tragedies of Actaeon and Pentheus, because Faunus cannot be destroyed any more than Mutabilitie. The chaste goddess of the hunt vents her frustration with Faunus's breach of decorum on his accomplice, Molanna, and, by extension, her local habitation, Arlo Hill. But before the locus amoenus falls from grace, the epic simile interrupts the climax of the story to describe Diana's wrath. In the epic simile, the parodic treatment of classical myth is counterbalanced by a more serious affirmation of Chaucer.

The epic simile of the dairymaid is not like other similes in Faerie Queene because Spenser appropriates it from a pretext, but because the material dealt with by the simile could best be described as a fragment of the "Nonne's Preestes Tale," as told from the perspective of the widow. Chaucer's mock-epic delights us with Chauntecleer and Pertelote, a rooster and his hen, the rooster falling prey to the wiles of a demonic fox as a result of speaking when he should have been quiet. The "moralite" or lesson culled by the Nun's Priest (4630), that silence is sometimes the best policy, would seem negligible to readers other than Wittgenstein, were it not the case that the narrator is at

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pains to defend his trivial story by intimating deeper meanings. Are there such hidden meanings? Certainly, the import of the catastrophe, which stemmed from the dismissal of a prophetic dream on account of the uxoriousness of the dreamer, was not lost upon Milton, whose Eve enacts the role of Chauntecleer in Paradise Lost when she ignores her nightmare. Indeed, by comparing his chickens to Adam and Eve (3188), Chaucer suggests that his bauble can, from one point of view, be seen as another version of the fall. Such a viewpoint, I venture to claim, was Spenser's: for if Spenser saw in the guise of the fox a reiteration of the temptation of the devil, it would explain the reason that Diana is likened to a housewife frustrated by "wicked beast," Chaucer's widow also having presided as a deity over her cosmic farmhouse. Spenser's mindset, I have endeavored to show, was allegorical in its susceptibility towards finding deeper meanings in his predecessors.

Yet my impression of the dairymaid simile depends on hearing echoes of Chaucer, and proving the existence of an echo is rather like proving the existence of a ghost. Otherwise, the epic simile is merely the most charming digression imaginable. But if the reader is also disposed to hearing Chaucerian echoes, he must also concur that the climax of the "Mutabilitie Cantos" yields to a curious blend. It makes fun of Ovid and Euripides, yet takes Chaucer seriously, so that we can call "Mutabilitie" neither

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ironic nor allegorical, but, lapsing ourselves into silence, only enigmatic. Indeed, the rapine of stolen sights in Spenser's aetiological myth is perhaps only excelled by the rapture we are made to experience every time we re-read the epic simile.

Allegory, irony, and enigma are hermeneutic responses, I have tried to argue, though they are also tropes or figures of speech. They present an intractable problem on the level of the epic simile, as witnessed again in the conclusion of the present study, because similes are both visionary and rhetorical. That is, the extended comparisons of Milton and Spenser have always struck me as quite different, but I also recognize that there are two basic ways of regarding the function of an epic simile: as either to reveal or to conceal. In other words, I cannot know whether the difference I perceive between the epic similes of The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost is the result of bringing different assumptions to each poem.

The value of allegory as a genre has been problematic for past critics, who once used the term to denigrate works of art they did not like, or to label the creations of worlds alien to their own. But unless we had an sieve for separating literary personifications from the concepts we believe in, it would seem unwarranted to call the Psychomachia allegorical because Pride battles Humility, and call War and Peace non-allegorical when Tolstoy tells us

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that the players in the campaign of 1812 were "involuntary tools of history" (761). Pride is no more invisible than history, or, for that matter, electricity; it just so happens that everyone still believes in the agency of the latter. Allegory has something to do with a process of conceptualization, to which Spenser's use of ornamental similes is linked. Maybe it is easiest to call allegory the idea of an idea, though unkind to call it such, when we have no means to ponder its meaning without slipping into images like that of the sun in Plato's Cave, Nature in Spenser's "Mutabilitie," or Milton's Shapes, "If shape it might be call'd that shape had none" (2.667)?

Yet to make the allegory wholly relative to the mental pictures of a perceiver--using the word as a license to say what we please about a poem--is as dangerous as imagining that comedy and tragedy are merely the conditioned responses of an audience. Though allegory as a mode of interpretation has begun to fascinate readers willing to doubt the concept of literature, the value of hermeneutics always used to be negligible for the critic. Criticism, as we used to know it, concerned itself with what could be said about a poem that was true, rather than its interpretation. The idea of truth in literary studies is an embattled conceit, though it is worth pointing out that, historically, allegorical interpretation always gravitated towards the reading of long narrative poems, the breeding ground of epic similes, as if

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to suggest that the experience of drama in the theatre buried the question of interpretation within the conventions of social ritual. Indeed, plot may be the soul of the drama, but maybe description is the soul of narration.

In other words, perhaps mimesis, as it evolved from Aristotle to Sidney to Shelley was only ever suited to peculiar forms of writing. Aristotle's imitation of an ideal action is peculiarly well-adapted to dramatic poetry, just as Sidney's concept of the autonomous creation works well with narratives. Yet Shelley's praise for the inward response to reading and the concomitant exercise of the imagination, it seems to me, derives from our experience of lyric poems. If plot is the soul of the drama, and description the soul of the narrative, then the soul of the lyric would reside in the poet himself, or, as Novalis says, "the lyric poem is the chorus in the drama of life" (58). But what does it mean, since Shelley's time, to have had access to aesthetic experiences not requiring the same use of the imagination? Are poststructuralist interpretations the by-product of a new artistic medium, which, because it is neither drama, nor narrative, nor lyric, has resulted in treating literature as if it were a form of advertizing? As if it were at a remove from the integrity of film?

The second half of my study explored the poststructuralist hypothesis that even ordinary comparisons are allegorical use of language, though the first portion

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maintained a difference between interpretation and criticism, that difference being the subtext of my outward concern with the history of reception. That interpretation is not criticism is a position that will have annoyed those who are disposed, because little else can be truly said about the Iliad than it was once written down, towards using subsequent literature as a commodity. Both criticism and interpretation are responses to poetry that are affected by the marketplace, to be sure, and poetry itself, neither a piece of criticism nor exactly the work of interpretation, is similarly a response to other poems. But a poem is not a commodity in the way that a toaster is a commodity. If anything, a poem is more like a broken toaster, which exposes the mercenary cast of its brethren. But who would buy such an appliance? To the unbeliever in literature and the fabulous, I would like to sell an analogy likening a poem to an acorn, which fable was inspired by Harold Bloom's suggestion that we think of poetry as a form of real estate or property (1973:78), which belongs, I think, to no one.

Let the reader imagine himself to be a traveller making his way through a thick forest and stumbling across an acorn, which he takes up in his hand and holds to the light. He might suppose himself to possess the acorn as a result of his labor, while yet granting that the acorn was dropped on the forest floor by an oak tree somewhere. On the one hand, the acorn belongs to the oak; but, on the other, it is owned

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by the traveller, at least in relation to other travellers also wandering about. In order to prove his ownership, he might consider crushing the nut underfoot. Or he might eat it, or he might throw it at a passer-by, to which ends the acorn passively submits itself. But what if the traveller, still undecided about what to do, should glance down and see on the forest floor also a chestnut? In the grasp of his free hand, he might hold up the chestnut as well, and notice how the acorn and the chestnut differ. One is a dark reddish-brown hue; the other, green in color. Imagine, then, that the traveller shares his crude observations with a fellow, who might, in turn, point out that the acorn has a funny little hat. This process of discrimination by dialogue might lead eventually to a taxonomy of acorns, chestnuts, hazelnuts, whereby the seeds cast by all the trees of the forest are organized. The dialectic of description, as opposed to the assertion of ownership, stands as an analogy, or so I intended it, for the difference between criticism and interpretation. It is a difference harder to maintain in practice than in a naive allegory, perhaps, but a difference worth remembering.

My naive allegory also enables us to ask a final question about the third respondent to reading besides the critic and the interpreter: the poet. For what if the traveller should decide against eating the acorn nor bother to examine it closely? Imagine him continuing on his

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journeys and transplanting the seed far away from its native soil, with the end result that a future generation of travellers could discover and enjoy new acorns in a new forest. If the oak tree ceases to be a symbol of the poet in my analogy, maybe it reveals the poet as a medium for someone else, a Transplanter.

I am not defending a return to acorns while everyone else is enjoying bread, but I am defending the continued respect for an unmediated aesthetic response, rather than its systematic dismantling. The reading of literature affords something akin to a spiritual experience, which, though it is less available to critics, interpreters, and those condemned to putting the ineffable into words, belongs still to a reader, who, so strongly moved by what he reads to love or anger or doubt, is compelled to create anew. It is to him the acorn properly belongs.

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