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JOHN MILTON

National Portrait Gallery

from a plaster cast at Kings College Cambridge

E. H. VISIAK

THE PORTENT OF
MILTON

SOME ASPECTS OF
HIS GENIUS

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To my great friend
A. VESSELO

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Still rule those minds on earth
At whom sage Milton's wormwood words were hurled.

THOMAS HARDY

MILTON

What could a man require more from a Nation so pliant and so prone to seek after knowledge. What wants there to such a towardly and pregnant soile . . . (1643)

I should have spoken only to Trees and Stones. (1660)

In this inconstant isle, with instant zeal
To sow eternal seeds, and from the high,
Bright apogaeum, raptured to discern
The harvest-home of love and liberty,
And men as gods and angel labourers,
Was heavenly blindness, doomed to mortal sight
In darkness, thwarted, racked between the poles
Of hell and heaven. O mighty Muse that bore
Such burden, yet all the higher soared,
Though changed, to terror changed; with eagle wings,
Fierce with compassion dipped in agony,
O'er the reft eery circling, hovering hung,
Heavy with thunder, shedding bolts of fire.

E. H. V.

Hence too, the intense repugnance that Milton is bound to create in some natures. But you cannot ignore him, any more than you can ignore Alexander the Great, or Cromwell, or Napoleon. He is too extraordinary a person to shut out from our notice; and he is perhaps the only man of this type who has translated his mental urge into literature and not into action.

E. M. W. TILLYARD

PREFACE

MOST OF THE STUDIES embodied in this book are revised reprints of the writer's earlier publications on Miltonic subjects not before collected together. The title-essay has been written especially for the occasion. The work, taken as a whole, is impressionist and speculative rather than biographical or critical in any formal sense.

This is natural, since the essays were written, for the most part, spontaneously on the impulse of intense interest in the subject. The writer, in his young days having derived extraordinary pleasure from reading Milton's poetry, conceived a great curiosity about his prose; which in those days was far to seek.¹ This curiosity, satisfied, aroused a further, deeper curiosity—*What could be the secret of the astonishing power?*

The best way to investigate a subject is to write about it; the best way to write about it is to do so for publication. Such, at any rate, was the course followed, however effectually.

* * *

Kind permission has been given for the reprinting of the following items:

'Milton's Prose' and 'Milton's Magic Shadow' from the *Twentieth Century*.

¹ Now represented, not inconsiderably, in the Nonesuch MILTON, and contained in the Yale University Press, THE COMPLETE PROSE WORKS OF JOHN MILTON, the *ne plus ultra* of the whole matter.

'The Mask of Comus' from the Nonesuch Press edition of THE MASK OF COMUS.

'The Animus against Milton,' here re-entitled 'Victorian Veneration,' published in pamphlet form in Mr. Kenneth Hopkins' Grasshopper Press.

The author would express his thanks also to Mrs. Adrienne Marshall for her valuable secretarial help, to Mr. John Gawsworth for reading the proofs, and to Mr. F. C. Owlett and Mr. A. Vesselo for their continued assistance.

THE ARGUMENT

(According to Blake)

THEN MILTON rose up from the Heavens of Albion ardent . . .
He took off the robe of the promise and ungirded himself from the
oath of God.

And Milton said: 'I go to Eternal Death! The nations still
Follow after the detestable Gods of Priam; in pomp
Of warlike Selfhood, contradicting and blaspheming . . .
I will go down to self-annihilation and Eternal Death!

*I in my Selfhood am that Satan; I am that Evil One!
He is my Spectre! In my obedience to loose him from my Hells,
To claim the Hells, my Furnaces, I go to Eternal Death.'

INTERPRETATION

THE '*Heavens of Albion*' are Milton's 'patriotic piety', the ideal of his God and his country of 'Gods Englishmen', a potential 'Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies' building the 'goodly Tower of a Commonwealth' to be an example to other nations. The '*robe of the promise*' is his inspired assurance of the above. The '*oath of God*' is his self-dedication to his mission of writing a great patriotic poem. '*Eternal Death*' is the annihilation of his 'Selfhood', or 'Spectre' of spiritual pride engendered during his polemical campaign against the prelates and Royalists in defence of his ideal, which had become his very life. This false self is embodied and sublimated in the Satan of *Paradise Lost*. 'The

detestable Gods of Priam are the nationalistic Devils (idealized abstractions) who 'contradict' by 'warlike Selfhood' the kinship of man and thus blaspheme against its Divine nature. The '*Hells, my Furnaces*' are his insurgent passions raging at the fall of the Commonwealth and the disillusion of his patriotic-pious ideal.

I

THE PORTENT OF MILTON—THE POWER

I

'MILTON WAS NOT a writer among writers, not a poet among poets, but a Power among Powers.' These words of Thomas de Quincey are impressionist. They seem at first to be exotic and bizarre. Yet they strike the imagination and, as with a confirmatory echo, convey their message. The sonorous, capitalized phrase, 'Power among Powers', suggests not only the peculiar quality, but also the special uniqueness of Milton's genius; if it were applied to any other poet it would seem incongruous. This brings out their significance imaginatively: we see Milton in a way in which we could see no other author—in the form and image of his own creative genius. He subjectively projected himself. Thus he was seen by De Quincey, the most impressionable of writers; so, too, he appeared, although from a different angle, to Blake, who identified him with his own *Satan* or 'Spectre'.

De Quincey's imaginative feeling about Milton was influenced by the verses in *Paradise Lost* that principally impressed him; namely, those describing Adam and Eve's last sight of Paradise:

... the Gate

With dreadful Faces thron'd and fierie Armes.

His grand romantic conception of the 'Power among Powers',

however, conjures up the tremendous form in the poem of the Power among the assembled Powers and Dominations:

... he above the rest
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent
 Stood like a Towr; his form had yet not lost
 All her Original brightness, nor appeared
 Less then Arch Angel ruind, and th' excess
 Of Glory obscur'd . . . Dark'n'd so, yet shon
 Above them all th' Arch Angel: but his face
 Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht, and care
 Sat on his faded cheek, but under Browes
 Of dauntless courage, and considerate Pride
 Waiting revenge . . .

Satan prepares to speak:

Thrice he assayed, and thrice in spite of scorn,
 Tears such as Angels weep, burst forth . . .

Satan is the doyen of romantic rebels, whether Byronic or Stevensonian, with his thunder-scars, his 'dauntless courage', and his remorse, the indispensable attribute of romantic rebels, who must invariably betray signs of original virtue. Such were those 'romantic villains' of the 'nineties, which was a reaction against the conventional earlier-Victorian era, as the Romantic Revival had been a reaction against the formal Queen Anne period, and the Renaissance against the static Monastical age.¹

The most *Satanic* of these romantic villains, Stevenson's Master of Ballantrae, however, betrays only signs of sentimentality; yet he is benevolent, like Satan, to his subservient followers and, like Satan, he shows signs of strain:

¹ Curious readers may observe that the Renaissance was inspired from Italy, the Romantic Revival from Germany, and what may be styled the 'Adolescent Movement' of the 'nineties from France.

. . . the Master still bore himself erect, although perhaps with effort; his brow barred about the centre with imperious lines, his mouth set as for command. He had all the gravity and something of the splendour of Satan in the *Paradise Lost*.

The rogue fascinated his period readers as Milton's Satan fascinated, against their consciences, readers of the earlier Victorian age.

Thus, though Milton's poetic ambition originally was to 'lay the pattern of a Christian *heroë*', he produced, in the event, the prototype of a 'romantic villain'.

It was the aspect of his genius in this romantic potential that inspired De Quincey's 'Power'.

II

Coleridge associates Milton with Shakespeare by describing them as the 'twin glory-smitten summits of English literature', but even in such a metaphor, Milton individualizes and distinguishes himself; a mountain, he assumes the aspect of a volcano.

He was indeed different from Shakespeare. His genius was egocentric, while Shakespeare's was ego-altruistic: thus the characters in Shakespeare's plays express, not singly Shakespeare, but themselves. Milton's (those that are not merely types and abstractions) express only Milton.

Coleridge describes Milton's egotism, the efficient agent of his genius, as a 'manifestation of spirit';¹ Shakespeare he describes as the 'myriad-mindef man. He contrasts their

¹Tantamount to altruism since Milton was concerned more for the public good than for his own well-being. Again, in subjecting his will, as he did, to the will of God, he virtually identified himself with the Universal Being.

creative tendencies in terms of the centrifugal and the centripetal forces:

While Shakespeare darts himself forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and flood; the other (Milton) attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own *ideal*. All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of *Milton*: while *Shakespeare* becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself.

There are only two of Milton's characters that are vitalized; Satan in *Paradise Lost* and Samson in *Samson Agonistes*. A semi-exception perhaps is Raphael, the 'affable Arch Angel' in *Paradise Lost*, but only to the extent that he is 'affable' as was Milton himself; according to his anonymous first biographer,¹ 'sweet and affable', according to his daughter, Deborah, the 'Very soul of the conversation'.

Both Satan and Samson are autobiographical: Satan obliquely, Samson directly so. Satan is a psychological metamorphosis of Milton in the aspect of insurgent pride; a purgative dramatization and scapegoat objectified on lines and principles explored in the following pages: he might be called, not unfitly, *Johannes Furens*.

In *Samson Agonises* Milton expresses his patriotic-pious disillusion and personal woes. Samson is Milton blind among enemies. The giant, Herapha, insulting or humbled, is Milton's polemical antagonist, Salmasius.² Dalila, Samson's traitorous wife, is Milton's defaulting first wife. Samson and

¹ Claimed by Miss Helen Darbyshire to be John Phillips.

² Judge Jeffreys' visit to Milton at Chalfont St. Giles may have been recollected in the motives Samson ascribes to Herapha in visiting him at the prison at Gaza—motives of curiosity and sadistic triumph. Jeffreys asked Milton, 'Do you not consider the loss of your sight a judgement from Heaven for your treatment of the King?' Milton responded, 'Is not the loss of his head a still greater judgement on the King?'

Milton were alike the victims of their own infatuation, and this enables Milton to ventilate his own sense of past weakness by causing Samson to agonize, as he does, for having yielded to Dalila. Manoa, Samson's aged father, is Milton's own father, to whom he wrote *Ad Patrem*, and whom he cared for in his own house until his death.

Furthermore, Milton's poems, in general, were directed and adapted to his own emotional and intellectual requirements. They were to perform for himself the effect they were conditioned to produce upon their readers; in his own words, to 'allay the perturbations of the mind and set the affections in right tune'.

Thus (his *Mask* (of Comus), which was written for a social celebration, enabled him to try out the philosophy he had elected for himself, of celestial love.)

This philosophy was derived from the Pythagorean-Platonic, and relatively Christian, doctrine that the discipline of 'chastity' would promote psychical development.¹ Milton believed that it would enable his poetic 'wings' to grow and, judging by the intense erotic sensibility betrayed in his youthful Latin Elegies I and VII, the maintenance of his thoughts on the steep Platonic height might well have needed the aid of poetic exaltation.

In *Lycidas* he sublimates his desire for fame and his fear

¹In the Pythagorean-Platonic doctrine, the development of prophetic power and the ability to hear the 'music of the spheres'; in the Christian doctrine, entrance into the 'kingdom of heaven*' and the ability to hear, in Milton's paraphrase from the Book of Revelation, 'those celesttall songs to others inapprehensible'. In his *Epitaphium Damonis*, which was written five years later than the *Mask*, he praises absolute chastity, or celibacy, in ecstatic terms. At what time he modified his philosophy is unknown; but in his *Apology against a Pamphlet*, written some eight years after the *Mask*, he writes, after idealistic passages on 'chastity', 'marriage must not be call'd a defilement*.

that he may be cut off before attaining it, the 'blinde Fury' referring, no doubt, to the Plague then raging with great mortality.

Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil. ... It is the Celestial effulgence, the bloom of the Amarant on the gold with which the 'Spirits elect'.

Bind thir resplendent locks inwreath'd with beams . . . Amarant had once grown in Paradise 'fast by the Tree of Life'.¹ but Tor mans offence' had been

To Heav'n remov'd where first it grew, there grows,
And flours aloft shading the Fount of Life.

In his Latin poem to Manso, Milton imagines himself in Heaven irradiated in the reflection of his fame on earth. Deprecating Vain-glory', and caring not at all if his readers were 'few', so they were 'fit', he aspired to that 'lasting fame and perpetuity of praise which God and good men have concented shall be the reward of those whose publish't labours advance the good of mankind'. *Lycidas*, however, was written before such published labours of Milton had been produced; death at that period, therefore, would have deprived him of 'lasting fame', etc. Dr. Tillyard suggests that he 'subordinated the disturbing ambition to have done a thing to the serene intention of doing it as well as possible'.² So it well may be, on the principle, that is to say, that in the eternal world of Being, the synthesis of time—present, past, and future—the potential is as actual achievement.

¹ Representing, no doubt, the egocentric principle, as distinguished from the ego-altruistic Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the fruit of which (according to the Talmud) signifies sex. Thus, intellect develops at the crisis of adolescence.

¹*Milton*, 1930.

Milton desired, moreover, to leave something 'so written to after times as that they would not willingly let it die', or as he says in *Areopagitica*, the 'pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life'—a mere static conservancy that notwithstanding was immortal and eternal because irradiating virtue. Thus he considered he would live in his works. Yet this egotistic feeling seems as a mote in his Celestial eye, a dazzling confusion of planes in his idealistic mind. It is as if he effected a compromise on the mundane side of pure mysticism, on the matter-of-fact side of abstract idealism; we seem to see the grand Miltonic imagination, humanistic and sublime, as a psychological expanse in which clouds lie banked about a glittering, because partly occulted, light; in another aspect, an egoistic Sphinx to stand together with the 'Star-ypointing *Pyramid*' of Shakespeare, whose egotism is far to seek.

In *Epitaphium Damonis* Milton expresses his great grief at the death of his beloved friend, Charles Diodati.

In *Paradise Lost* he expels by means of dramatic sublimation the waste products (Shakespeare's 'perilous stuff') of passions engendered during his polemical career and exploded by the collapse of the Commonwealth and the disillusion of his ideals.

In *Samson Agonistes* he ventilates personal grievances, as already related.

In *Paradise Regain'd* he tranquillizes his spirit after the orgasm of *Paradise Lost* by a philosophy of "renunciation. The poem is absolutely calm, and is therefore lacking in the third element of a true poem, according to Milton's own definition, that it should be 'simple, sensuous, and passionate*.

It is, nevertheless, a true poem; while Milton's definition holds good: its very lack of passion has the effect of passion as of a spent sea mirrored in calm. Its Satan has dwindled to a conventional spectre: 'Grim shadow of a shade gone by'.¹

III

Desire, will, character, genius—all were integrated in the life of Milton; though his idealism, his egotism's subjective sight, was eventually withdrawn and changed into an element of internal illumination. The scope of this integrity extended, it would seem, even into extra-terrestrial and extra-psychological dimensions. It was as if he directed and adapted not only the subject-matter of his poems, but events and circumstances also, to the advancement of his genius. They all proved efficacious in this way, especially those apparently the most unfavourable, though he suffered personally in consequence, and was his own martyr.

The track of destiny is plainly indicated, whatever may have been the cause; whether, in Milton's own language, an 'allotted *Genius* or proper *Starre* , or the 'supernall influence of Schemes and angular aspects or this elemental! *Crasis* here below'.

These mysterious concurrences were probably united and indivisible, although one would naturally allocate Milton's earlier advantages—his excellent parentage, home influences, and education—to the 'Schemes and angular aspects', and what ensued in his post-University days to the 'elementall *Crasi*s'.

Even in his childhood there was an instance of apparent harm, when his father allowed him to sit up studying

¹ 'Prince Lucifer' in *The Sonnets of Samuel Waddington*.

until midnight. This produced—at any rate, conduced to—his ultimate blindness; yet if he had not gone blind, as he did, before composing *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, the epic would have lacked its most beautiful verses and the drama its most tragical passages.

Again, such trivial experiences as those of falling foul of his tutor at Cambridge, and factional contact with the period 'hearties', served to develop his satirical vein in preparation for his controversial career.

Thus, in his sixth Academic oration he derides them for calling him the 'Lady'; at the same time, he apologizes for not taking part in the University games. He eventually became popular at the University despite his temperament, which, though social and affable, was haughty and quick to scorn. He recalls, in this connection, in *An Apology against a Pamphlet*, a collegial reminiscence: a dramatic performance in which he saw some young divines

writhing and unboning their Clergie limmes to all the antick and dishonest gestures of Trinculo's, Buffons, and Bawds; prostituting the shame of that ministry which either they had, or were nigh having to the eyes of Courtiers, and Court-ladies, with their Groomes and Madamoisellaes. There while they acted, and over-acted, among other young scholars, I was a spectator; they thought themselves gallant men, and I thought them fools; they made sport and I laught, they mispronounc't and I mislik't, and to make up the *Attidsme*,¹ they were out, and I hist.

The most apparently adverse event in Milton's experience that yet proved fortunate was the interruption of his poetical studies and exercises and the diversion, and absorption of his energies in, the writing of polemical prose. If he had proceeded on his fair-weather course, he would doubtless

¹The Atticisme refers to a similar passage in Demosthenes' *De Corona*.

have written further beautiful poems such as *Comus* and *Lycidas*, but would never have attained the emotional power of writing *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*.

We do not know what happened to Shakespeare to break up the 'fountains of the great deep' before he wrote his great tragedies; the cause of the dynamic release in Milton's case, however, is not thus obscure.

Paradise Lost, as I already observed, is in essence a tragedy having only a single character, and that character Milton himself; but, what is exceedingly strange, the poem—or drama, in this sense—is based on an ontological myth expressive of Milton's own destiny.

In the myth, Satan disturbed the ethereal equilibrium or harmony of the angels, to form a separate ego, the origin of dynamic action; while the hiatus produced in Heaven by the secession of the rebel angels caused the Creation (of living creatures which after their development would make up the discrepancy).

Blake, in the allegorical passages prefixed to this work, has described the destiny of Milton: how he left the 'heavens of Albion'—his 'patriotic piety', as he himself called it—and gave up his patriotic ambition: an idealistic paradise in which was ensconced a demon of pride. The 'loosing' of this demon from his 'Hells', or passions—the major theme of the present work—brought about the creation of *Paradise Lost*.

t

IV

The egocentric genius of Milton was sublime on the principle of the Old Testament theology, by which it was inspired.

It was centred in his conception of the Hebraic Deity, the apotheosis of the egocentric idea as expressed in the sublime nominative symbol, *I am that I am*; this as distinguished from the ego-altruistic humanism of the New Testament conception that 'God is love'.

The affirmative principle inspired a consciousness of power, a self-reliant intuition of faith, the conviction that an individual-will in tune with the Divine-will would be the recipient of universal power. (The altruistic, selfless love of the New Testament transcends faith, in this sense.) Thus, nothing could be more expressive of such conviction than Blake's apophthegm:

If the Sun and Moon should doubt,
They'd immediately go out.

Both *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* are dominated by the idea of the Ajmighty power. The role of Christ in *Paradise Lost* is very sparsely treated. He appears but once in the action, and then—after his redemptive offer on Man's behalf has been duly extolled—is deputed to drive the rebel angels down to hell. Again, in the archangel Michael's recital of Christ's birth, his 'Sire' is referred to as the 'Power of the most High'.

Milton was deeply imbued with the religious feeling of the Old Testament, which he preferred to read in the original Hebrew as being more sublime. He was therefore in sympathy with the Puritans, who inherited spiritually from the Patriarchal Israelites and were as antagonistic to Roman Catholicism as the Israelites had been to the phallic cult of Astoreth.¹ The Israelites abominated idols; the Puritans,

²Astarte Queen of Heav'n (P. L.).

eikons; Milton, in his concept of deific power and glory, could not but regard prelatical power and pomp with detestation. His strong masculine nature revolted against the matriarchal element in Roman Catholicism, and he described its ritual in terms of sensuality and its whole sacerdotal system as materialistic, tending, in his own words, towards the 'outer skin'.

It is particularly observable, in this place, that Milton was not a Puritan in the narrow, crude sense, either in religion or politics. In religion, except that he regarded the Old Testament as a sound basis, he might almost be called a 'free thinker'; in politics, an aristocratic republican, one who thinks 'nothing more agreeable to the order of nature or more for the interest of mankind, than that the less should yield to the greater, not in numbers, but in wisdom and in virtue'. His chief objection to episcopacy was that of the Reformers: that it was a spiritual tyranny, denying the right of the soul, redeemed by Christ's self-sacrifice, to worship God according to its own individual lights.

This religious imperialism was involved with its civil counterpart. Milton had no foreknowledge that religious liberty would conduce eventually to civil licence; that the liberty to worship God according to conscience would drift professing Christians into the freedom, as Matthew Arnold called it, of 'doing as you like'.

In one of his Latin poems Milton discusses the question, *Is Nature impaired by Time?* He was uncognizant that spiritual light, revealed by spiritual nature, becomes impaired by time; perverted into materialization. The vitalizing light of primitive Christianity had 'thickened' (in Shakespeare's phrase) under the static influence of its association with

the Holy Roman Empire; the enfranchising light of the Reformation was to produce the dynamic industrial era, with its wage-slaves, free competition, free nationalism, free imperialism. Blake's 'detestable Gods of Priam* in 'warlike Selfhood' were given a free hand, presided over by Kipling's 'Lord of our far-flung battle-line', the blatant materialization of Milton's 'Almighty'.

It was Milton, indeed, who, by dint of emphasis and iteration, stamped the fateful symbol of the Almighty on the English imagination (Shakespeare preferred the 'Everlasting'). Coined from the mint of early tribal Israel, it became vernacular; while, presenting crudely, as it did, the paradox of Divine compassion and human suffering unrelieved, it became a cause of atheism. Furthermore, it made possible the recent crudity of victorious services of thanksgiving even in the vanquished enemy's own churches.

Milton was no mystic and the theology of *Paradise Lost* is basically conventional; but for the Presbyterian tenet of salvation by 'grace' he substituted that of individual responsibility. Milton's 'Almighty' separates off from himself a part of himself, the potential of the Creation, to which—or, rather, to the 'creatures rational' that it produces—he gives free will. He is presented as declaring:

Boundless the Deep, because I am who fill
 Infinitude, nor vacuous the space.
 Though I uncircumscrib'd my self retire,
 And put not forth my goodness, which is free
 To act or not, Necessitie and Chance
 Approach not mee, and what I will is Fate.

Thus the Divine will is identified with destiny. To save the

appearance of autocracy, however, Milton equates will—free will as given to man—with reason:

But God left free the Will, for what obeyes
Reason, is free, and Reason he made right.

Thus absolute power and absolute reason (which involves absolute justice) are the Divine attributes, and man is given free will in order that he may attain salvation and thence power (which involves liberty) by conforming his will by reason to the will of God. To square the circle of Man's free choice and God's foreknowledge of his 'fall', Milton's 'Almighty' states:

... if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault
Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.¹

There is the corollary that, without God's foreknowledge, the Creation would have been an experiment for which, if it failed, man would have to pay; while, with his foreknowledge, it follows logically that the Fall was inconsistent with Divine benevolence since individual men—the non-elect, and these the majority—no doubt, would not benefit. On the contrary, they were predestined to suffer interminable torments in Hell; for the Calvinists admitted the diabolical conception as realistically as the prelate, Bishop Hall, who dwelt upon the subject with the insistence of a demented sadist. Perhaps, in order to make up the discrepancy, they introduced 'grace', though 'grace', in the sense of mercy or benignity, is inconsistent with predestination. Milton, who in his divorce work mentions a 'local hell' rather sceptically,

¹ p. L., Book in.

interposed 'charity' in the original meaning of that much debased word.

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce closes with the utterance of charity as with a sublime sound:

Last of all to those whose mind still is to maintain textuall restriction, whereof the bare sound cannot consist sometimes with humanity, much lesse with charity, I would ever answer by putting them in remembrance of a command above all commands, which they seem to have forgot, and who spake it; in comparison whereof this which they so exalt, is but a petty and subordinate precept. *Let them got* therefore with whom I am loath to couple them, yet they will needs run into the same blindnes with the Pharisees, *let them goe therefore* and consider well what this lesson means, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*; for on that *saying all the Law and Prophets depend*, much more the Gospel whose end and excellence is mercy and peace: Or if they cannot learn that, how will they heare this, which yet I shall not doubt to leave with them as a conclusion: That God the Sonne hath put all other things under his own feet; but his Commandements he hath left all under the feet of Charity.

'Charity', however, is but an analogue of 'grace', and is therefore similarly inconsistent with omnipotence and omniscience, whose 'will' is 'fate'.

Such theological disquisitions¹ were topical in days when theology rendered ontology into a more or less simple philosophy. In fact, among Milton's own devils:

Others apart sat on a Hill retir'd,
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,
Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandring mazes lost.

¹ Ridiculed in *Hudibras*.

V

Milton was so subjective in his outlook on his fellows that he saw them as in his own image, modified and magnified like abstractions in his poems. He was so bemused by this illusionary equation of the subjective with the objective that he went so far as to attribute to the average Englishman a power of eloquence peculiarly his own; he ascribed to the ordinary church-goer the capability of compensating for the liturgy, if it were dispensed with, by substituting extempore prayers. For the English schoolboy he provided a curriculum such as none possessing less than Miltonic capacity could sustain. His nation—'Gods Englishmen', as he called them—was a potential 'Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies'. All that was wanted to make it actually so and perfect the Commonwealth was what he himself could provide.

This was a great patriotic poem, and in probation for writing it he had disciplined his life, pursuing studies, 'letting his wings grow', as he expressed it, regarding his earlier poems as trial flights. It was to be about some 'K. or Knight before the conquest' who would 'lay the pattern of a Christian *heroe*'.¹

From these preparations he was summarily diverted, leaving a 'calme and pleasing solitarynes fed with cherful and confident thoughts, to imbark in a troubl'd sea of noises and hoars disputes'.

The 'troubl'd sea' was the contemporary religious con-

¹ *The Reason of Church Government*. The projected poem is also referred to in two other pamphlets.

trousery, into which (as another stroke of his destiny) he was drawn adventitiously. It was the year 1641, when the Root and Branch Bill was before the Long Parliament, and Milton's old home-tutor, Thomas Young, had organized the Puritan Manifesto, *An Answer to a Booke Entituled, An Humble Remonstrance: in which, the Originall of Episcopacy, Liturgy is discussed. And Queres propounded concerning both.* It was signed 'Smectymnuus', a compound of the various initials of the authors, Young and his fellow divines. (Masson assumes that Milton himself assisted in the work, but if it was so the style has wretchedly little to show for it.)

The author of the *Humble Remonstrance* was Joseph Hall, the satirist Bishop of Norwich, and he replied to the Smectymnuans derisively. The learned James Ussher, Bishop of Armagh, followed suit, but without derision. Milton took over the controversy, treating Hall according to his levity and Ussher according to his erudition, evincing therein an exceptional knowledge of Church history.

In his first pamphlet Milton vents against Hall and his fellow prelates an intensity of feeling that may well have been due, in part, to his exasperation at having had to forestall his engrossing ambition; to which in his pamphlets, which came out in quick succession, he refers repeatedly and extensively as if it haunted him. He is extremely vehement in disclaiming any, the faintest, motive of vain-glory in the abhorrent work. In engaging in it, he declares, he had purely and naturally responded to the voice of conscience, which had come to him as a deadly summons. This he confirms with an invocation to the Deity.

Nothing could have been more sincere. Nor was Milton

ever even capable of insincerity :¹ his very egotism constrained him. Yet apparently it beguiled him.

There was also as an incitement to engaging in the controversy his fierce anger against the prelates, which had flared up in his early poem, *In Quintum Novembris*, and in *Lycidas*, and had now become chronic. In some passages in these pamphlets it is incensed indeed. For instance:

As for the fogging proctorage of money, with such an eye as strooke *Gehezi* with Leprosy, and *Simon Magus* with a curse, so does she looke, and so threaten her fiery whip against that banking den of theeves that dare thus baffle, and buy and sell the awfull, and majestick wrinkles of her brow.

In his rectitude and zeal he was liable to self-deception; a tendency related to the illusioning effect of his idealism. Such was the cause of his unfortunate marriage to Mary Powell, who left him; he saw her in the lustre of his marital ideal at a stage when he could probably have married any one of a score of attractive young women. This was another important case of good in evil guise, or the uses of adversity, in the development of his genius; for he would never have written, if the marriage had been a happy one, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, or the passionate Dalila verses in *Samson Agonistes*.

This, along with the disillusion of his patriotic ideal, proved the leavening factor of his genius.

His patriotic ideal was a compound. It comprehended his God, his country, and himself. It implied that his

¹At the same time, he was not 'overrighteous*. On the political path, broad or crooked, he availed himself of a 'fair or [occasionally, perhaps, unfair] allowance of Way'.

fellow-countrymen were the modern 'chosen people' and himself their prophet.

VI

Would Milton have written his patriotic poem if all had gone as he had expected? To pose such a question is to suggest a doubt as to whether, without the impact of circumstance to dispel his illusions, the genius of Milton would have developed; whether he would have remained in his paradise of idealism or whether his eyes, like Adam's, would have been opened. The answer seems to be that even in attempting to create such a complex as a 'Christian *heroe*', he would have been intellectually frustrated.

He had come under the influence, as he shows in *An Apology against a Pamphlet*, of the Italian poets, especially Dante and Petrarch, and thence had betaken himself among those 'lofty Fables and Romances, which recount in solemn canto's the deeds of Knighthood founded by our Victorious Kings'.

This relates to chivalry,¹ that peculiarly Renascent product of Roman Catholic sentiment which joined together Christian altruism and knightly spirit in the bond of 'honour'; an extremely incompatible union, for Christianity 'commands its disciples', in Coleridge's words, 'to be perfectly non-resistant; never to use the arm of flesh', while chivalry demands that 'honour' should always be vindicated; hence knightly combats (eventually gentlemanly

¹A striking illustration of chivalry was afforded by a *padre* in a sermon during the second World War: he simply represented a sword, with its cross-piece, as a symbol of the Holy Rood.

duels); hence the crusades; hence, when knightly 'honour' became national 'honour', patriotic wars; hence the red cross on the banner of St. George: dichotomies criticized by Bernard de Mandeville in his *Fable of Bees* (1714):

Modern 'honour' [said he] is directly opposed to religion. The one bids you bear injuries with patience; the other tells you, if you do not resist them, you are not fit to live. Religion bids you not to shed blood upon any account whatever. 'Honour' bids you fight for the least trifle. Religion is built on humanity, 'honour' on pride.

A comparable protest against the development of chivalry as represented in the fighting Services was made by Herman Melville, author of *Moby Dick*, in his posthumous masterpiece, *Billy Budd*:

Bluntly put, a chaplain is the minister of the Prince of Peace serving in the host of the God of War—Mars. As such, he is as incongruous as a musket would be on the altar at Christmas. Why, then, is he there? Because he indirectly subserves the purpose attested by the cannon; because, too, he lends the sanction of the religion of the meek to that which practically is the abrogation of everything but force. [Melville has written in the margin of his MS: 'an eruption of heretic thought hard to suppress'.]

The occasion was that of the reverend man's ministrations to the 'essentially innocent' young sailor before he was hanged at the main-yard.

Another is a softer voice; 'Chivalry', says Augustus William von Schlegel:

Came into existence through the admixture of the rough but honest heroism of the northern conquerors with the sentiments of Christianity; its object was by vows which should be looked upon as sacred, to guard the practice of arms from every rude and ungenerous abuse of force.

There is no evidence that Milton's patriotic poem was

even begun; there are no drafts among the other drafts of projected poems, etc., among his extant MSS., preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge; yet the following verses in *Paradise Lost* would seem to be a reminiscence:

... and what resounds
 In Fable or *Romance* of Uthers Son
 Begirt with *British* and *Armoric* Knights;
 And all who since, Baptiz'd or Infidel
 Jousted in *Aspramont* or *Montalban*,
Damasco, or *Marocco*, or *Trebisond*.

Also in *Paradise Regain' d*:

. . . Of Fairy Damsels met in Forest wide
 By Knights of *Logres*, or of *Lyones*,
Lancelot or *Pelleas*, or *Pellinore*.

In the stately passage about the marching devils in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's romanticism takes classical form:

. . . Anon they move
 In perfect *Phalanx* to the *Dorian* mood
 Of Flutes and soft Recorders; such as rais'd
 To high of noblest temper Hero's old
 Arming to Battel, and in stead of rage
 Deliberate valour breath'd, firm and unmov'd
 With dread of death to flight or foul retreat,
 Not wanting power to mitigate and swage
 With solemn touches, troubl'd thoughts, and chase
 Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
 From mortal or immortal minds.

In another place he discounts the whole romantic infatuation:

Not sedulous by Nature to indite
 Warrs, hitherto the onely Argument
 Heroic deem'd, chief maistrie to dissect

With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights
 In Battels feign'd; the better fortitude
 Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom
 Unsung; or to describe Races and Games,
 Or tilting Furniture, emblazon'd Shields,¹
 Impreses quaint, Caparisons and Steeds;
 Bases and tinsel Trappings, gorgeous Knights
 At Joust and Tourneament; then marshal'd Feast
 Serv'd up in Hall with Sewers, and Seneshals;
 The skill of Artifice or Office mean,
 Not that which justly gives Heroic name
 To Person or to Poem. . .

Precisely at what time in his life Milton fell out of illusion about heroic kings, etc., is obscure; but he grew to regard kings in general as either tyrants or ciphers; and by the time he began his *History of Britain* (whenever that may have been), he described pagan barbarians before the Conquest rather than 'Christian *hero's*'; for instance:

. . . reported men factious and ambitious, contending sometimes about the archpnethood not without civil Warr and slaughter; nor restrain'd they the people under them from a lew'd adulterous and incestuous life . . . Progenitors not to be glori'd in.

Perhaps some sense of his past romantic glamour braced him in writing his official propagandist work, *Eikonoklastes*, which may well have needed some such stimulant, for the style flags. The apparent lack of gusto in the work is due more probably, however, to his distaste for the subject itself. As Dr. Tillyard¹ has remarked,² Milton's nature

¹Cf. Wordsworth's

... in our halls is hung
 Armoury of the invincible knights of old.

¹ *Milton* (Chatto and Windus), 1930. A work of major importance.

rebelled against the thought of physical violence,¹ and he never wrote anything of the King's execution until it was *afaitaccompli*.

As for his romantic ideal of women, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* is as devoid of goddesses as *Paradise Lost* is destitute of patriotic heroes. Its only hero is Satan.

Milton developed naturally out of his romantic piety; out of his 'patriotic piety', however, he passed through increasing disillusion which became total. It set in with the retrogressive behaviour of the Presbyterians, the 'old Priests writ large,' who imposed the censorship of the Press. Eventually the old Republicans, to a great extent, became Royalists 'writ large'.

Although unable to attend Church services because he could not endure the sermons, he gives a graphic description of a Presbyterian divine in his pulpit as 'your neat sermon actor'. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, however, he conceives them as well-trained soldiers:

For Divines, if ye observe them, have thir postures, and thir motions no less expertly, and with no less variety then they that practice feats in the Artillery-ground. Sometimes they seem furiously to march on, and presently march counter; by and by they stand, and then retreat; or if need be can face about, or wheele in a whole body, with that cunning and dexterity as is almost unperceavable; to winde themselves by shifting ground into places of more advantage.

He was confounding Church and army in a single cinematographic metaphor. For his own part, he kept out of them

¹ He had a kindred aversion for legal action, declined his father's offer to put ham in train for the law when his Church project failed, and rejected also the suggestion to prosecute a polemical adversary when he could have done so, preferring, as he said, to inflict the 'brand of the pen'. A barnster he styled 'a fee'd gamester*.

both. It had been intended by his father, with his own acquiescence, that he should take orders, but it proved impossible to 'subscribe himself slave' to an archbishop or bishop, whether Laud or Ussher. In fact, he gave it as one of his justifications for joining issue against prelacy in the controversy, that he was 'Church-outed' by the prelates.

'Church-outed' he was indeed. He had come by that time to regard bishops and archbishops much as a Christian missionary may be conceived to regard savage witch-doctors in their ceremonial robes and head-dresses, with their rites and fetishes. The only difference would be in the emotions excited in the respective observers. The Christian missionary would regard the witch-doctors as venial creatures of low development; he would not feel that they, or their dupes, were letting down the dignity of his own human nature; he would understand that they were behaving normally on their anthropological level. Milton, with his idealism, beheld his fellow-countrymen as on his own level; therefore that they should be cheated in their religion into accepting a superstitious masquerade, the side-show of the Great Sham, as he considered Roman Catholicism, was for him a national, and thence a personal degradation. It offended his pride, his egotism; it roused his whole nature.¹ Hence, although he protested that he wrote prose as with his 'left hand', the power of his pamphlets. He was thus 'Church-outed' to some purpose!

As for joining the Army and 'shouldering his pike', as they called it, he protested he could better serve his country

¹ Added to this was his abhorrence expressed with passionate eloquence in his *Of Reformation* (see p. 127) in the passage about the Spanish Armada—at that time of comparatively recent date.

with his pen. This was unquestionably true; but in any case he was simply, in that matter as in all others, following his course, and fighting was not in it. His proper weapon was the pen, and therefore he would use no other. As I have already observed, he avoided even the related domain of law, with its 'sword of justice'.

He could have excelled in either capacity, being in eloquence and personal charm, by all accounts, incomparable; in courage, his whole character 'deliberate valour breath'd', a fact patent in his bearing when he was endangered by the Inquisition in Italy¹ and the Royalist Government in England.

He was far from contemning the soldier² as he did the barrister; far, indeed, from the attitude which provoked Thackeray's ejaculation, 'I hate him [the soldier] and his butcher's trade' or, on the other hand, from Kant's contemptuous 'War is beneath the notice of a philosopher'. He regarded war more in sorrow than in anger or contempt:

O shame to men! Devil with Devil damn'd
 Firm concord holds, men onely disagree
 Of Creatures rational, though under hope
 Of heavenly Grace; and, God proclaiming peace,
 Yet live in hatred, enmitie, and strife
 Among themselves, and levie cruel warres.

If Milton himself, however, did not condemn hostilities, his muse did so apparently by making them ridiculous. With reluctance, and at disadvantage, he introduced war into

¹He was warned, during his Italian tour, against expressing his religious views, but did not conceal them if asked for. He escaped seizure by the Inquisition, it is related, through chancing to change his route on his return journey.

²The more by token, he had joined the Hon. Royal Artillery Company.

Paradise Lost, following the example of Homer, but lacking the saga spirit of the Homeric age with unfortunate consequences, including the Devil's invention of cannon (which bishops eventually blessed).

The moral of the war in *Paradise Lost* is portentous. Milton, as Professor Hanford points out,¹

intends to suggest that the last end of war is like its beginning—bestial, anarchic, inconclusive. The utmost refinements of scientific slaughter are but a mask of chaos and can only end in a disruption of the orderly civilization of which they are the products. The significance of the account is definitely indicated . . . when the Almighty, beholding the confusion, declares that

'War, wearied, hath performed what war can do,
And to disordered rage let loose the reins.'

The Almighty's 'blasting volli'd thunder' made further hostilities impracticable.

There is analogous philosophy in *Samson Agonistes*, but in an illusive, paradoxical form, as in the great passage:

Oh how comely it is and how reviving
To the Spirits of just men long opprest!
When God into the hands of thir deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the Earth, th'oppressour,
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honour Truth;
He all thir Ammunition
And feats of War defeats
With plain Heroic magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd,

¹A *Milton Handbook*, 1927.

Thir Armories and Magazins contemns,
 Renders them useless, while
 With winged expedition
 Swift as the lightning glance he executes
 His errand on the wicked, who surprised
 Lose thir defence distracted and amaz'd.

Here 'plain Heroic magnitude of mind', enforced with 'celestial vigour' or spiritual power, is conceived to act, apparently, as physical force in excess. Perhaps it was in virtue of such transcendent vigour that the prophet in the Old Testament was enabled to outrun the elements.

In Milton's philosophy, spiritual power is alone effective in the ultimate sense, and Samson pulled down the theatre in Gaza by evoking it when, standing between the pillars,

. . . with head a while enchn'd,
 And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who pray'd.

The poem, or poetic drama—with its Hebraic content and Athenian form—is implicitly allegorical, as *Paradise Lost* is mythical. However, before the denouement the Chorus comments:

But patience is more oft the exercise
 Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,
 Making them each his own Deliverer,
 And Victor over all *
 That tyrannic or fortune can inflict,
 Either of these is in thy lot,
Samson, with might erfdu'd
 Above the Sons of men....

Such choice, between the 'hero' and the 'martyr', was not only Samson's, but that indeed of man himself; although it

was impossible that he should have preferred the latter alternative.

Samson proved in the event a martyr in one respect. Like the Chinese potter who could only achieve his masterpiece by entering the furnace with it, his own death was involved in his exploit. The analogy with Milton himself was that the release of his epic genius was dependent upon the perishing of his political hopes, the collapse of his patriotic ideal. The passion of despair thus occasioned caused a psychological effect comparable with a nuclear fission, releasing energies of poetic sublimation, dramatizing and expurgating in his Satan his insurgent pride. He pulled down the edifice of his pride by envisaging it in the creation of Satan. Like the Chinese potter, he entered his Inferno. *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, its commentary, are feats of power performed on the other side of despair without inhibition.¹

Samson Agonistes, unsurpassed in technique and in sincerity, is perfect. *Paradise Lost* has long lapses, as in the case of the war scenes already noticed. *Samson Agonistes* has been described as a 'cry of revenge'. From that aspect, it is also a paean of triumph. Milton in the character of Samson conceived that he, too, would be victorious in his Gaza.

Just as his real philosophy of the Almighty is revealed



¹ Technically this involved the unlocking of the caesura, by which he obtained at once freedom, speed and variety; eg., in the verses:

No sooner had th' Almighty ceas't, but all
 The multitude of Angels with a shout
 Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
 As from blest voices, uttering joy, Heav'n rung
 With Jubilee, and loud Hosanna's fill'd
 Th'eternal Regions.

allegorically in *Samson Agonistes*, so, too, his real reason for not engaging himself in the Church or Army is therein autobiographically disclosed; he was, like his Samson, a 'Person separate to God':

... elected
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd
To some great work.

Profoundly conscious of possessing abnormal powers, he required an absolutely free field. This his destiny had provided, and his cognition of that need and of its provision imbued him with a passionate value for liberty itself, liberty as the field of power. This really connected itself with his religious feeling. The 'service' of God was 'perfect freedom'. Conversely, perfect freedom was the service of God, and only in the spirit of perfect freedom could God be properly worshipped. Consequently God Himself represented not only infinite power, but also infinite freedom. He was also, however, the God of love, and through this intuition Milton's conception of Divine power was modified; his 'patriotic piety' became *humanistic piety*.

The free field he wanted could only be appropriated to himself on condition that he sought liberty also for his fellow-countrymen; hence his indefinite deferment of his poetic ambition, and his entry into the controversies.

I perceived, he writes in *Defensio Secunda* (in Latin), that there were three species of liberty which are essential to the happiness of social life, religious, domestic and civil.

*

In the religious field he sought to free the Church, not only from prelacy, but also from its union with the State. In this he was as unpractical as in his advocacy of divorce by

consent. In fact, he was more unpractical. The Church and the State were not even incompatible. They had been joined together by an Emperor, and, although their union had been a chequered one, they had never completely been put asunder.

Milton's *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* had indeed highly offended.¹ Its principle of 'charity' threatened one of the twin-pillars of the State, the one that stood for domestic morality as distinguished from martial and legal matters (figuratively, they would be represented respectively by the insignia of Venus and Mars, with the sword of justice in between). The Church, having taken over divorce from the arbitrament of the husband (according to Milton, for the sake of fees), was efficient in its business. Also, it profited the law, while Milton's 'fee'd gamester' was as necessary to the State as 'your neat sermon-actor'. The Puritan divines, moreover, had introduced into morality a new spirit, a tough, conscientious stamina. 'Damn braces, Bless relaxes', as Blake says, and also, 'Look at the faces of great Christians; they are the faces of great haters'. Those Puritan divines were bracing; while they 'laid the pattern', in Milton's phrase, of the pious Victorians, the invincible characters of old.

Not only in morality, however, but also in martial quality, the Church was a staunch helpmate to the State; a kind of inexorable Lady Macbeth. Milton was not able, like Samson, to dislocate the 'two massie Pillars' in Gaza. They were fixed in the future as well as in the past. He could not see this; yet he portended it. In *Paradise Lost* he had apprised

¹ The Stationers' Company made two petitions, one addressed to the Commons, the other to the Lords, that Milton should be arrested. In addition to his book's corrupting influence (as they considered it), they could have accused him of ignoring the Press censorship.

Adam by the mouth of the Archangel about future ages. Adam and Eve between them had tampered with the Great Phenomenon, and the 'fall' had taken place. The equilibrium of things had been disturbed and, as happens with a fall in 'potential' in electro-magnetism, action began; the world was to have a history.

So much Milton, and thence the Archangel, understood. They did not understand, however, that a 'fall' of this kind is followed by a succession of falls; that the old traditional static system, broken up by its separation from the Papacy, would be succeeded, through the Commonwealth, by the dynamic Industrial Age, and the scientific Power Age. If Milton had understood this, he would have known how necessary to the State the Church, which he had wished to disestablish, would be, how valuable, in view of the stern times to come, were archbishops and bishops, rural deans and 'padres', with their idealism, their patriotic piety', their martial firebrands, no less indispensable than their moral Hymen's torches.

The Priest loves war and the Soldier peace.

Blake's epigrammatic testimony to the episcopal spirit is well illustrated by Coleridge; 'At a time', he writes, 'when not only the soldier but all Europe, sated with carnage and ruin, wanted peace, every Bishop except one voted for the continuation of the war.'

This would seem an excess of zeal in the bishops, and the same view is obvious of their behaviour in 1810 on behalf of civil discipline, when six of them and an Archbishop voted against the Bill to abolish hanging for stealing 55. They went too far; but Milton did not go in patriotism far

enough. He left the track of his ideal; abandoned—while they would have celebrated—his 'Christian *heroe*. Patriotic piety, which failed him, the clergy have effected. Where he left it, they have taken it up, adapted it, strengthened it as with an alloy. His fellow-countrymen wanted the Restoration because, as he stated, it would advance trade. It has also advanced the patriotic ambition, the nationalistic apostasy.

The portent of Milton has been consummated; the Power Age has come full circle, its final stage brought about through the influence of a miscreant possessed of energies so demoniacal that he might have been one of Blake's 'detestable Gods of Priam' in manifestation.

With the emergence of the atom bomb at the end of Hitler's war, the whirligig of international belligerency has been arrested as by a deadly ultimatum, and today the 'detestable Gods in pomp of warlike Selfhood, still contradicting and blaspheming', are held up from more than contradicting and blaspheming. For, to adapt verses from *Lyddas*, that

... two-handed engine at the door,
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.

II

VICTORIAN VENERATION

I

THE PASSIONATE ANIMOSITY excited by Milton in his own times was exacerbated by Restoration writers, and embittered by Dr. Johnson's prejudiced criticism. After this it passed into a state of chronic chill, in which Lord Macaulay's great eulogy lit a temporary fire. The representative view of Milton became that of a 'soul that dwelt apart' in remote, austere sublimity; a kind of Moses of poetry in a repellent Puritanical atmosphere; a frigid, exalted personality; an inflexible hater of kings, and of women; the father of religious orthodoxy; and a mighty progenitor of a long line of dismal nineteenth-century Nonconformists—just, in fact, as he appears in his ectypes, sanctimoniously grim.¹

This Arctic conception was tempered in the Victorian era, especially among the Low Church and Congregational societies, by a sentiment of solemn veneration.

The Victorians were great readers. They read integrally—

¹ Under the absurd portrait in the 1645 edition of his earlier poems, Milton caused a Greek inscription to be printed:

A Clownish hand this likeness grav'd thou'lt cry,
If thou the true original espy.
Friends, much in doubt whose image doth appear,
The boorish limner mock that set it here.

(A. Vesselo's translation.)

(The engraver did not understand Greek.)

that is to say, with actively imaginative impressionability—and this developed their capacity for illusion. (Illusion, in this sense, is a form of vision, a vitally intensive appreciation, as distinguished from the relatively passive effects of present-day television.) The devout Victorian Protestants read the Bible with assiduity. They also read *Paradise Lost*.

This is no wonder. Its author had been a greater, more impressionable reader of the Bible than any of them and, together with a superior capacity for illusion, or imaginative receptivity, he possessed the genius of creative expression. His genius, in fact, was entirely metabolic, a condensing and reproducing organism, a poetic electro-magnetic field. *Paradise Lost* was therefore particularly attractive to readers conversant with the Bible, the fount and oracle alike of its author's religion and their own.

The effect was that the feeling which vitalized *Paradise Lost* modified their own devotional atmosphere and, in the illusive light—the religious 'light of other days'—the poem assumed an aspect of prestige and authority akin to that of the Bible itself.

And religion was *in the house* in those days; so, too, was Milton. His portrait was to be seen on the walls, and *Paradise Lost* arranged beside the Bible on the drawing-room table. Lurid-dark engravings by Dore illustrated both volumes, which became theologically confused. An example is the 'fruit of the tree' in the Paradise story in Genesis and the 'apple'¹ in *Paradise Lost*.

Paradise Lost is chiefly esteemed today on account of its

¹ Milton was not the originator of this specification (which, of course, is not in Genesis). It is also in *Piers Plowman*. (It is odd, in this connection, that Nemesis is associated in Greek myth with an apple tree.)

tremendous *Satan*; but Satan was the very character that the Victorians rejected.

They did not say as much; they rejected him by not accepting him; he never displaced in their theological gallery the Goethian Mephistopheles, who had himself displaced the old medieval monster. The reason for this is not obscure; as a dramatic, spectacular figure, he was excellent; as the Devil, he did not signify.

That he was courageous, temerarious, might have passed muster, since some of the greatest scoundrels on earth were so; on the other hand, a great military or naval hero could be a 'dare-devil'.

Again, tyrants had been brave, just as bullies, *pace* the adage, were not necessarily cowards. Milton detested tyrants, but his Satan was not a tyrant; on the contrary, he was considerate, even compassionate. He had shed tears; he had braved on behalf of his unhappy followers that appalling flight into inter-planetary space. He was adventurous, romantic—everything, in fact, that repressed susceptibilities most admired; our parents or grandparents have told us how he exercised the consciences of those who could not help admiring him, any more than some people today cannot help admiring Napoleon.

He was rejected on principle, and this in the most effectual manner: by being ignored.

Nevertheless, Milton's Devil performed his function. His tremendous gravity served to intensify the realism of his environment and thence, by contrast, that of the Miltonic Heaven.

That Heaven was very influential in the Victorian religious imagination. To impressionable, unhappy souls, it was, in

effect, as if the 'charming symphonic' of its angels' song translated to their humble capacities the 'music of the spheres'; while they responded from the deep of their repressed lives to the shout of the

. . . numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices, uttering joy.

To the imaginations of underpaid and browbeaten employees Heaven's 'trod'n Gold' and 'crowns of Gold' shimmered in the jewel light of everlasting possessions.

Herein was Milton a boon also to their employers; he had formulated their religious consolation of 'other-worldliness'; he had poured oil, or unction, upon the troubled waters of their discontent. Just so had Pauline Christianity proved mollifying to disaffected slaves in old Rome: the reason why the Emperor made it the official religion.

Although these Victorians would have been deeply shocked by certain passages in Milton's pamphlets, they would have had to admit that they followed Biblical precedents. That the Patriarchs practised polygamy and that Milton therefore justified it in his *De Doctrina Christiana*¹ they would probably have passed over in silence; but that in his divorce writings he advocated divorce by consent would have seemed reprehensible. So, too, his anti-Royalist writings.

They would have heartily approved, on the other hand, his ridicule of the prelates, 'under saylin all their Lawn, and Sarcenet, their shrouds,' and tackle, with a *geometrical! rhomboides* upon their heads'.

¹A document in Latin, embodying Milton's religious views, discovered in 1823 in the old State Paper Office in Whitehall.

However, the offensive works did not obtrude. The original copies (as yet unsought by Americans) were laid up in old libraries, as also were the massive collected editions. The old Bohn five-volume edition was accessible, but unattractive, with its cloistral-looking binding; the Victorians liked plenty of gilt on their mental gingerbread.

In any case, Milton's prose would have been very little read. People in those days were fond of declaring that they liked 'solid literature', but these condensed writings—condensed in the sublime sense—were not the kind of solid literature that they liked. Even scholars, for the most part, had read no more than *Areopagitica* and *Of Education*, annotated editions of which had begun to appear.

At length, among the Low Church and Chapel societies, *Paradise Lost* passed out of fashion. Among the more intelligent Nonconformists, however, Milton himself retained his prestige, although not specifically on account of *Paradise Lost*. He was esteemed by them as the great champion of liberty, and valued, in view of their own enfranchisement from superstitious observances, with the pride of possession.

The main promoters, the really effectual propagandists of Milton's fame in recent times, however, have been those religious enthusiasts whom he himself, with his realistic sense of humour, might have dubbed 'old Romanists writ large'. I refer, of course, to the High Anglicans.

The phenomenon is a remarkable one, and the way in which the movement was started recalls the verses (as rendered by Walter Skeat) of Milton's *In Quintum Novembris*:

. . . with glassy wave
Of clear translucence shocked Asopus trembles;
Loud-bellowing Cithaeron, hollow rock, responds.

G. K. Chesterton, in the old *English Review*, reacted lucidly from some verses in *Paradise Lost*; Hilaire Belloc, in his furious *Milton*, responded.

The 'intense repugnance that Milton is bound to create in some natures', as Dr. Tillyard remarks, is due essentially to the Miltonic element of sublimity. Sublimity of the Semitic kind can be irritant, as the unhappy Hebrew prophet discovered. It is a ray of direct impact, profoundly disconcerting to natures whose religious tendencies are temperamentally oblique, who affect veils, cowls, symbolical and ceremonial media, and pageantry. Along with this cause of hostility to Milton, implicit in it and maintaining it in a state of ferment, is the incitement of fear. The Roman Catholic Church, the object of his invective, is as vital and active today as it was in the seventeenth century and, as Milton's genius is becoming more widely known, there may be some cause in that quarter for apprehension. The old Lion is in the way; or, to quote an acute observer, 'Milton is an impregnable Alp. They cannot away with him'; or, as in *Areopagitica* (for who can question that Milton was thinking of his own books?):

.. . Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men.

Fear brings about, hate precipitates, what is feared. To sneer at Milton, as did Chesterton, to vilify him, as did Belloc, to diminish him, as did Eliot, to revile him as did Pound, was not wise. There exists as intense a liking and profound

admiration for Milton as the Intense repugnance' described by Dr. Tillyard, as he himself implies.

However, these detractors of Milton have rushed in; they have let in the sunlight for the 'Dragons' seed, and it is too late. How much better had it been to have followed the example of those priests whom Isaac Disraeli mentions, who 'used to meet once a year, and, after they were well warmed with strong beer, they sacrificed to the flames the author's *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano*, as also his treatise against the *Eikon*.'

II

You that love Christ, and know this miscreant wretch, stone him to death, lest you smart for his impunity.

These words, so expressive of the animosity excited by Milton in his own times, are taken from the *Modest Confutation* of 1641, in which he was attacked for the first time. This was at the religious stage of the period controversies. At their political stage, it was demanded—by Salmasius—that he should be 'tortured with burning pitch or scalding oil till he expired'.

These period controversies became a veritable 'burning fiery furnace', heated by Milton himself at least seven times more than such a furnace is wont to be heated. The time came when his very name was unmentionable except by his initials. When it appeared on a monument in the epitaph of his nephew, John Phillips, it was, by the order of the Bishop of Rochester, razed out.

At the present day, the animus against Milton, so extraordinarily persistent as it has been, has developed new

methods of expression: which may be compared with the old ones as the Satan of *Paradise Regain'd* compares with the crude, fire-breathing Satan of *In Quintum Novembris*. They are subtle, insinuating methods, rather attenuated and oblique than broadly condemnatory; except, indeed, when such a thoroughgoing critic as Hilaire Belloc advances his animadversions against the vexed object. They are directed against his style—the only thing about which he himself really cared, according to G. K. Chesterton, who deeply disapproved of literary aesthetes.

Chesterton quoted some verses from *Paradise Lost* about 'Embryos and Idiots, Eremites and Friers'. He quoted them over and over again as if they had cast a spell. No doubt he had been reading Milton aesthetically, whether or not with subsequent contrition as the great ecclesiastical Father was wont to reproach himself after reading Cicero for the style. Belloc, who criticizes Milton down even to the suggestion that he 'took pleasure in contemplating suffering', seems to have been affected in the same way, since he quotes repeatedly the opening verses of *On the Late Massacher in Piemont*, fascinated, as he confesses, by the heavy undulating rhymes. The 'Confuter' himself (that original calumniator), who asserted that Milton wrote eloquently in order to impress a rich, if ugly, widow, was attracted by the style—in this case, the prose style—and 'such a volley of expressions he hath met withall', says Milton, quoting him, 'as he would never desire to have them better cloth' d'.

A reviewer in a contemporary journal shows a notable lack of insight into the character of Milton's Satan. He has, apparently, read neither *Epitaphium Damonis* nor *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; but he may well have read

Chesterton and Belloc, for he gives it as his opinion that *Paradise Lost* convicts its author of having been wanting in 'tenderness' and also in 'impassioned humanity'.

However, Milton himself remarks upon the Modest Confuter's praise of his style as verbal apparel:

For me, Readers, although I cannot say that I am utterly untrain'd in those rules which best Rhetoricians have giv'n, or unacquainted with those examples which the prime authors of eloquence have written in any learn'd tongu, yet true eloquence I find to be none, but the serious and hearty love of truth: And that whose mind so ever is fully possest with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others, when such a man would speak, his words (by what I can expresse) like so many nimble and airy servitors trip about him at command, and in well order'd files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.

Now, the Modest Confuter, it appears, was a Cambridge graduate, and also the son of a Bishop, who assisted him in the work. Milton, in fact, is closely associated with Cambridge graduates, and also with bishops, to their discomfiture; although in recent times but little has been heard from them. Moreover, Cambridge, the mother of Miltonian criticism, was the foster-mother of the very mischief that gave that 'worm of criticism' such continuing vitality—that is, in developing Milton's capacity for sarcasm in contact with *raucæ murmur Scholæ, Magister durus*, and period 'hearties'. The actual germination of the 'Dragons' seed probably occurred earlier at St. Paul's School, where 'hearties' of the more infantile kind would be in force.

Wordsworth's comparison of the soul of Milton to a 'star' that 'dwelt apart' is valid; only, this 'star', in some kind

of parallax phenomenon, approached too near the earth. It is now appropriately remote; yet it still, as we have seen, engenders hate—or cold, sneering acrimony; it has become a 'star of wormwood'.

Mr. T. S. Eliot deplors the density of Milton's style; Mr. F. L. Lucas describes it as 'marmoreal'.

Whereas Shakespeare likened his own literary medium to a 'sea of wax', these critics regard Milton's as a coagulated ocean, or dead sea, worse than any Eliotian 'Waste Land'. Perhaps they feel that some acrid odour of the old furnace hangs about it, and smell polemical fire. This Gorgonian rigour was suggested, very likely, by 'Sin and Death' labouring out that 'aggregated Soyle' on Hell's beach when they constructed in *Paradise Lost* their bridge o'er the 'foaming deep'.

Mr. Eliot imagines it is more like a 'Chinese Wall'. Dr. Leavis disagrees with Mr. Lucas that it is 'marmoreal' and holds that it resembles 'bricklaying'.¹

It is true, as Coleridge remarks, that the 'collocation of words is so artificial in Shakespeare and Milton, that you may as well think of pushing a brick out of a wall with your forefinger, as attempt to remove a word out of any of their finished passages'. This ordered word-formation, however, is in no sense static. In *Paradise Lost*, the words in 'well-order'd files', in which they have fallen 'nimble' and 'aptly', proceed with a kind of clear-cut motion:

¹Boswell relates that Lord Hopeten found one of his shepherds reading *Paradise Lost* and asked him about it. 'An't please your Lordship,' said the shepherd, 'this is a very odd sort of an author; he -would fain rhyme, but cannot come at it.' 'A natural effect of blank verse', comments Boswell. Dr. Johnson writes that blank verse 'seems to be verse only to the eye'. Hence, perhaps, Mr. Eliot's and Dr. Leavis' impression of Milton's blank verse as too solid.

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
 Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
 Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
 With loss of *Eden*, till one greater Man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
 Sing Heav'nly Muse....

Such organic structure is the vital rhythmic substance of Milton's verse, which is 'of sublimity all compact* and, like his egotism in Coleridge's description, a 'manifestation of spirit*. For rhythm is as substance in the poetic world, no less than—as physicists assert—it is the principle of the material universe. Milton's rhythmic style, instinct with his egotism—so complex and unique as that was—has proved to be indeed the 'pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life'.

It was the product of energies such as conditioned his whole character and endued him with an aversion to everything that was spiritually static. Forms and ceremonies in religion he deprecated, as in his remarks in his second Smectymnuan pamphlet on the liturgy:

... all over in conception leane and dry, of affections empty and un-moving, of passion, or any height whereto the soule might soar upon the wings of zeale, destitute and barren.

Therein he was prejudiced and unjust, but to him a rite was a rote. Besides, in his estimation, Church ritual was such a tawdry materialization of supernal sublimities, such a mechanical cheap substitute for those 'thousand vagancies of glory and delight' which he describes in the wonderful passage on discipline in *The Reason of Church Governement*.

This renders him, as I have already observed, peculiarly obnoxious to readers having ritualistic tendencies, and is

presumably one of the 'hindrances' to his due appreciation which Mr. C. S. Lewis has written *A Preface to Paradise Lost* to 'hinder'.

Mr. Lewis cites the discipline passage to show that Milton was really ritualistic. Also, by dint of writing off *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and the *De Doctrina Christiana*, he delivers Milton from the 'hindrance' of heterodoxy. He exonerates him from the suspicion of admiring his own Satan, whom he exhibits as a creature of low mentality and base instincts; a 'thing that peers into bedroom and bathroom windows'.

It seems as if, in the brilliant and confident way in which he writes, he trusted to kill—at least, to scotch—the 'worm of criticism*' attaching to Milton, and, at the same time, disqualify his Satan from being so enigmatic a figure as to attract the interest of philosophical and speculative thinkers; so dynamic a figure as to raise continual wonder such as casts strange lights upon the genius of its creator.

Professor Waldock has joined the Miltonian 'demolition squad'. In his *Paradise Lost and Its Critics*, he reduces the epic to a confusion of inconsistencies—inconsistencies between subject and treatment, between idea and presentation, between intention and performance.

He makes great play about Milton's 'Almighty'; calls the scene of the transformation of Satan and his fellows in the second book a 'comic cartoon'; and calls the Archangel Raphael's symbolical disclosures 'absurdities'. He never refers to the *Zohar*, which, as a gloss to the Garden of Eden story, inspired Milton, as Professor Denis Saurat discloses.¹ He speaks of the 'reasonless taboo' of the forbidden fruit, and

¹ In *Milton; Man and Thinker*, a work of special note.

cannot understand 'how the change from love to lust came about'.

Nor can anyone understand how the change at adolescence comes about. All we know is that, just as Adam had intimations of passion in Paradise, so his descendants, even in the paradise of early childhood, have glimpses of the gleaming serpent. As for the 'reasonless taboo', the *Talmud* informs us about the 'interdicted tree' *in the centre of the Garden*.

According to the Professor, Adam was incapable of being actuated by love at one moment and by infatuation at another; and that, drawn to Eve by the bond-of-nature (the *Zohar* renders them as one indivisible being), he resolved to perish with her because he could not live without her, selflessly and therefore rightly, although by doing so he disobeyed the Almighty's command. It is the old paradox of good and evil, spirit and flesh, God and the Devil.

'There is in the Fall much that is good', the *Zohar* says simply.

III

MILTON IN HIS OWN TIMES: HARSH AND URBANE

'MONSTRUM HORRENDUM, *informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum!* Such was the motto inscribed in the *Regii Sanguinis Clamor*, which was written against Milton after his defeat of Salmasius; and Virgil's description of the eyeless Cyclops vividly suggests the dread that he inspired among his adversaries. As a result of writing his reply to the onslaught and confuting the defamer of the English people, he lost his eyesight; but Salmasius lost his good name, his peace of mind, his zest in life, and eventually life itself.

Salmasius had possessed international reputation as a scholar and controversialist. Different Powers, it is said, had contended for the honour of his residence in their states, and the Pope, the Venetians, Mazarin, and Richelieu had striven in vain to secure his services by munificent offers; while the daughter of the great Adolphus—the eccentric, generous, and erudite Christina, Queen of Sweden—had entertained him at her court, had 'almost compelled his visits', writes Symmons, 'by the importunity of her invitations, and her attentions to him had been of so marked and peculiar a nature as to awaken, according to common report, the jealousies of Madame de Saumaise'.

Symmons informs us that the great man, indisposed, or

confined to his room by the cold of the climate, would be visited by the Queen, who, locking the door, would light his fire, make his breakfast, and stay with him for some hours'.

His reputation was not undeserved. The Renaissance is indebted to him for the discovery of the Palatine Anthology, and the Reformation for his energetic attacks upon the Papacy. Why, after resisting such dazzling temptations to desert his principles as these, he should yield, at last, to the appeal 'by letters and presents' of the exiled Stuart is a puzzling question. Perhaps he had become enervated by the enjoyment, in literary ease and with a 'substantial pension', of his international reputation. Be this as it may, he 'undertook the defence of prelacy, royalty, and Charles', and wrote *Defensio Regia*, calling upon the governments of Europe to 'extirpate the fanatic and the parricide English'.

Milton, who had been appointed Latin Secretary, was ordered to answer it, which he did with a vengeance. Salmasius, utterly humiliated in the event, a Continental laughing-stock, abandoned by Queen Christina—who turned her capricious eyes towards Milton—began to write a rejoinder. But he was too enfeebled by bitterness and dejection, and nearly two years went by, so that it was no longer opportune; and he died just after its completion.

But Milton's book was received with thunders of applause; and the scholars and sovereigns of Europe hastened to congratulate a genius.

In 1651, the year in which Milton's *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio* was published, Salmasius had persuaded Alexander Moore, the principal of a French Protestant college, to edit, and write a dedication to, a reply to Milton by Pierre du

Moulin (whose name did not appear). Of Scots parentage, but settled in France, Moore, or Morus, was a scholar and a renowned preacher whose personal character and talents seem to have combined elements in the genius of each nation. His emotional power in preaching was worthy of a Scots pulpit, while his 'quarrelsome and overbearing temper', writes Symmons, occasioned him to be 'represented as the cause of war, like another Helen, wherever he came'. *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* slandered Milton with atrocious invective; and scarcely had Moore undertaken to see it through the press when, upon hearing that Milton was preparing a rejoinder, he made desperate efforts to avert, or diminish, its force, inducing the Dutch Ambassador to plead for him to Cromwell, and afterwards, when that failed, to Milton himself. Milton responded merely that nothing indecorous should escape from him, and, to the plea that the book was really written by Du Moulin, and not by Moore, he said grimly that no doubt one was as bad as the other, and his reply should go forth as it was. This was *Defensio Secunda*, which, like Du Moulin's attack, consisted mainly of abuse.

Anger can be a pure passion, discharged through a pure conductor; but the spirit of political controversy is not pure. At any rate, it tends to deliver itself at low elevations. Milton, no more than Swift, could sustain it; and in manner and temper, if not in motive, he descends to the level of his adversary, playing to the gallery like a war politician and stirring up the lees of laughter by expatiating with remorseless iteration upon a sordid intrigue in the life of Moore. Yet, in the excitement of conflict, he attained the greatest mastery over language, and it is at the point when his expression grows most scurrilous that a sublime reaction is likely to

occur: the extraordinary phenomenon described by Lord Macaulay; sudden exalted transformations, glorious passages, 'bursts of devotional and lyric rapture'.

In Milton's times espionage was as necessary in controversial propaganda as it is in certain Governmental affairs today; disreputable means were as necessary as scurrilous language. Milton did not scruple, therefore, to adopt them. Espionage grubbed out suitable material in the life of the Scots minister who had had an intrigue with Salmasius' maidservant. Milton comments with withering satire. *Defensio Secunda*, a masterpiece in Latin, is ruthless, *pro patria*.

As I have observed already, Milton was not a Puritan in the rigorous sense. In fact, he possessed a most delicate, and—in a word of his own coining—*sensuous* appreciation of natural, as of moral, beauty. Yet, apart from his consummate sense of music and poetry, he seems to have been strangely insensitive to plastic beauty. His '*Pandemonceum* in *Paradise Lost*, though preferable to the London railway station that gave a Russian visitor his conception of the infernal regions, is a barbarous structure; and the architect, who had erected towers in Heaven, was not unjustly 'sent to build in hell'. The villainous taste of Mulciber is also accountable, no doubt, for the barbaric facade of Milton's Heaven.

Again, Milton's Italian tour might have been expected to have provided some architectural background for the classical allusions in *Paradise Lost*. The deficiency is the more marked in view of the formal, even architectural, character of the poem itself. Nor does Milton mention either sculpture or painting.

Upon another and fundamental aspect of his personality

the following passage from the *Tetrachordon* throws sufficient light:

We cannot therefore alwayes be contemplative, or pragmaticall abroad, but have need of som delightfull Intermissions, wherin the enlarg'd soul may leav off a while her severe schooling; and like a glad youth in wandring vacancy, may keep her hollidaies to joy and harmles pastime: which as she cannot well doe without company, so in no company so well as where the different sexe in most resembling unhnkenes, and most unlike resemblance cannot but please best and be pleas'd in the aptitude of that variety.

By the discipline of his life, without asceticism, he maintained the fine equipoise that Aubrey notices. Certainly no puritanical kill-joy, he drank wine on occasion—at any rate, until gout plagued him—and smoked his evening pipe. In regard to wine, he asserts in his sixth Elegy that, although wine's 'massick glow' may warm the lyric and elegiac muse, it must be renounced for the 'beechen cup' and 'harmless herbs' by the poet who would 'tame the savage beast', or incite a wanderer past 'False Circe's halls', sirens, and the wastes of death. 'Jove, not *Bacchus*, must swell his breast. And elsewhere he mentions the patriotic poem which he intended to write, as being a 'work not to be rays'd from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine'.

To Milton's qualities of heart, his writings on divorce and his *Epitaphium Damonis*—the one in the universal, the other in the personal sense—bear poignant witness, as also, of course, his devoted care of his father. Dr. Johnson, with a gust of that robust common sense which, although it may be in itself a useful quality, is apt to coarsen judgement, held that the copious imagery of *Lycidas* was not compatible with sincere sorrow.

In his lament for his beloved Diodati, whose death desolated his return from Italy, Milton even describes the imagery on 'two spacious goblets, rough with laboured gold', which he had brought home to give him. The adherent to the Johnsonian and public school tradition would pull his hat upon his brows; but *Epitaphium Damonis* gushes forth after Milton apparently (according to Masson) had wandered about for days in aimless desolation. 'Whoever will read it', Masson says, 'will perceive in it a passionateness of personal grief, an evidence of bursts of tears and sobbings interrupting the act of writing.' Walter Skeat described the poem as 'punctuated with tears'.

A kindred trait of Milton's profoundly sensitive and impressionable temperament was his impulsiveness. 'Such is the impetuosity of my temper', he wrote to Diodati, 'that no delay, no quiet, no different care and thought of almost anything else, can stop me until I come to my journey's end, and finish the present study to the utmost I am able.' And this impetuosity was in action the trenchant cause of his domestic calamity, as in thought it occasioned his political disillusion. He was as precipitate in marrying Mary Powell as he was in writing his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* after she deserted him, and (in testimony that his courage equalled his convictions) in proffering his addresses to another lady, or, for that matter, in receiving the run: way back into his house, and harbouring the whole Powell family. The true idealist never becomes embittered by worldly disasters; they are not of his world, and in the calamities of his closing years Milton seems to have lost nothing of his genial charm. 'He was delightful company', says his daughter, Deborah, 'the life of the conversation, and that on account of a flow of subject,

and an unaffected cheerfulness and civility'; and Aubrey notes that he was 'extreme pleasant in his conversation . . . but satyricall. He pronounced the letter R very hard (*Litera canina*. A certaine signe of a satyricall wit. From Jo. Dreyden).' He 'would be chearfull even in his goute fitts: and sing'.

In his intercourse with the Italian *literati* during his Continental tour, Milton's peculiar quality of personality—at once austere and affable, satirical and suave—had expanded into flower; so that they could not sufficiently express, even in lyric encomiums, their admiration; while the prestige that he subsequently obtained in the field of controversy added, as it were, an iron crown to a golden circlet in their esteem. Yet he had a reputation in Europe rather for scholarship and eloquence than for poetry. 'He was visited much by learned', says Aubrey, 'more than he did desire. He was mightily importuned to goe into Fr. and Italic; foreigners came much to see him, and much admired him, and offered to him great preferments to come over to them, and the only inducement of severall foreigners that came over into England, was chiefly to see O. Protector, and Mr. J. Milton; and would see the *house and chamber* where *he* was borne. He was much more admired abroad than at home.'

IV

CREATIVE GENIUS

I

'UNLESS YOUR MIND be full of chaos', said Nietzsche, 'you cannot produce a dancing star.' To the same effect, comparatively, the mind of Michelangelo has been described as a region of storm and night. Psychology—that halfway house between purely literary and psychoanalytical literary criticism—has appreciated the violent elements in genius.

If Shakespeare and Milton had not been able to discharge their souls by means of perfect poetic expression, a psychologist told his audience at a lecture, they would have been in danger of becoming either great criminals or violent madmen.

Shakespeare, who, according to Coleridge, created his characters in action without engaging in their feelings or passions, is supposed to have written with facility,¹ the content spontaneously taking form, as described in Milton's verses:

For whilst to th'shame of slow-endeavouring art,
Thy easie numbers flow, . . .

Yet the compression in certain verses in his tragedies is stupendous; they seem congested as if his 'sea of wax' had coagulated; in *Macbeth*, for example:

¹ Ben Jonson's evidence to this effect is dubious, since the 'papers' that he says Shakespeare delivered without a 'blot' may well have been 'fair copies'.

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.

Milton implied that the words in his own compositions fell 'aptly into their own places'. Yet he refers in *Areopagitica* to the necessary expenditure of waste paper; and, in two drafts of a letter included among the MSS. of his earlier poems, the words wander in mazes in a passage that, in both cases, loses its construction; while the MSS. of his earlier poems themselves are heavily scored, extensively amended. Many verses of *Paradise Lost*, however, were produced without effort, since they came to him in his nightly slumbers and were dictated in the morning; a process that he called being 'milked'.

On the other hand, there were periods, and these of long duration, when his Muse entirely failed him. Edward Phillips, his nephew, relates the extraordinary circumstance that 'his vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equinoctial to the vernal, and that whatever he attempted otherwise was never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much. . . .'¹

In general, creative genius is the product of energies produced by transmutation, even as water is converted into steam, or as the chemical forces of a volcano are engendered by the leaking in of the sea. The feminine element—the element of Venus, who arose out of the waters—is thus represented.

II

The tendency of the present day to establish a scientific connection between creative genius and abnormal or even

¹ Probably due to excessive atmospheric electrical charges during this period.

pathological states of mind is not new. There has always been an association between the prophet or the seer, and the poet; indeed, in unadulterated Latin the same words describe both characters. Although the obvious inference would be resisted by those who regard poetry as being in essence an attempt to rationalize experience, the connection between inspiration, as popularly understood, and the unknown or partially explored regions of psychology seems to be finally established.

From the point of view of such theories, one might almost reverse Prospero's adage, 'We are such stuffas dreams are made on', and say that dreams are such stuffas life is made of. To the synthetic imagination of the highest criticism, however, they together constitute the truth.

Life, itself a state of dream, in the transcendental sense, becomes real only when it achieves abstraction in essential dream, the state of ecstasy, or sublimation of life beyond normal consciousness. Everyone, indeed, is instinctively in quest of this ecstatic abstraction; some darkly and ignorantly seek to attain it through the physical senses, taking the shadow for the substance (on Blake's principle, 'the vices in this world are the highest sublimities in the New Jerusalem'). Others aspire to it through the spiritual faculties; which also is erroneous if the motive be selfish; a mode of 'faith without works' or 'art for art's sake'; for, as the dream state is, paradoxically, reality, it is efficient, creative, productive; it causes action, and the resultant experiences—joys, sorrows, passions, sufferings—constitute the body of which it itself is the spirit. For this reason, Milton truly held that to write nobly an author must live nobly. In the last analysis, essential reality—transcending the ecstatic dream state itself—may logically have been the 'first cause' of the Creation.

The state of essential dream may be effected by a self-effacing union with an ideal, or object of love, which may be either an abstraction—such as, commonly, the Church, the Country, the Class—or an individual personality. In the former case, the self may be involved and eventually identified with the conception, producing ruthless ambition, as it did in Napoleon,¹ or even demoniac possession, as in Hitler.

The latter case, that of the idealized personality, is represented by Dante and Beatrice.

The condition of the dream state is the homogeneous working together, the veritable fusion of heart and mind, intellect and emotion. As an expression of this, the Paradise story in Genesis is, in Milton's words, a 'deep and serious verity'. Man was originally androgynous. According to the *Zohar*, Adam and Eve were virtually one indivisible being. (In the Maori myth, the union and division go back even further, to the moment when the dual Deity was sundered and the male heaven was divided from the female earth). In Genesis itself Eve was formed from Adam, and afterwards, at the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the spiritual poise of those mythically happy creatures was jarred, and with it the universal frame; an historic truth of the dream world which is reproduced in the microcosm of the individual soul, banished from childhood's Paradise at the change of adolescence into the rough, external world; there, by stress of experience and suffering, to transmute the past Eden of instinct into the future Heaven of intuition. A woeful *diaphragm*, dividing intellect and

¹ The last words of the dying are significant: Napoleon's were 'France* and, directly afterwards, 'Tete d'armée.'

emotion, has formed in the soul, that by action and reaction it may develop into a higher unity. (I am not using the word 'diaphragm' in the physiological sense, but in that attached to it by electricians. They use the word to denote the porous substance that separates the two liquids the co-presence of which in some cells is essential to complete electro-chemical action.) The harmony of instinct must give place to the Nietzschean discord of experience as a means to intuition.

But action involves reaction, repression expression, condensation diffusion; the failure of the one being as incapacitating as that of the other. Thus, Coleridge, outcast from his poetical Paradise, wandered in passive desolation; Milton, on the other hand, reacted from his lost ideals with dynamic expression. Sufferings, deliberate acts of abstinence, and involuntary repressions, are reproduced, according to psychologists, in the fantastic disguises of dreams.

But there are major repressions. There are frustrated ideals as well as repressed desires; and these constitute the motive of epic or tragic genius, manifested by a modified operation of a similar metabolical power enforced by the correspondingly greater force of repression, subconscious organization, and volcanic upheaval. There is produced a vent, an insurgent reaction in the imaginative field. In this there is involved, not the repression of a merely personal wish, as in the case of ordinary dreams, but the frustration of an ideal; not the desire or whim of a day, but the aspiration of a life. Such was the genesis of *Paradise Lost*: the sublimation in an imaginary sphere of an ideal that had been frustrated in the actual world.

And, as happens in ordinary dreams, the expression of the

thing repressed is disguised. But it is disguised, not merely in *form*, but also in *substance*.

Thus, Joseph's dream in the Bible was disguised in the fantasy of sheaves; his brothers' sheaves bowing down to his sheaf, and effecting in the ideal world an ambition which, being a virtuous youth, he presumably had repressed. The *form*, not the *substance*, was disguised. In *Paradise Lost*, however, the *substance*, the very *motive*, was disguised, and this from the apprehension of Milton himself. It was also *inverted*. Indeed, the process of art, whose function is to give pleasure, is an inversion of the process of nature, which chastens and invigorates by the instruments of pain; for art transmutes suffering, as when a personal anguish is sublimated in poetry into a universal symbol; the pain of nature is transmuted in imagination and art by a *paradise lost* in things.

III

Now, the intuition in men of genius that the diaphragm which divides intellectual from emotional elements and thence inhibits subconscious expression is wearing thin, acts as an incitement. Carlyle's assertion, 'Genius means a transcendent capacity of taking trouble', is elucidated by Sir Oliver Lodge's theory that it is produced by a sustained connection with the subconscious mind, contact with which in ordinary people is rare and momentary; for the persistent exercise of this transcendent capacity of taking trouble is the means by which the osmotic power to sustain such connection is at last effected. The incitement peculiar to men of genius, especially of epic genius, is the proximate effect of their ideals. In Milton's case his genius was produced by his

ideals in the first place, and given full effect by their frustration.

There is, however, another *modus operandi* of poetic genius; one such as is observable in Coleridge, as also in the later poets of the lyrical and transcendental imagination, including nearly all the important poets of the 'nineties and the Edwardian period.

When the original founts of sublimity failed and became disintegrated and diffused, poetry found its principal motif in sensuous and romantic imagery. As Coleridge's case is complementary to Milton's, I shall interpolate some remarks upon his poetry and the chemistry of his imagination.

IV

'The style of Coleridge, in its ardent and luminous simplicity', writes Arthur Symons, 'helps him in the idiomatic translation of dreams.'

This is true, but Coleridge's poetry, an imaginative blend of the animistic and the romantic, is not—in conformity with the principle I have enunciated—the product of frustrated ideals any more than the dreams of childhood are produced by repressed desires.

It embodies the dreams of a transcendent or super-childhood, and, usually representing a remote subject, reproduces its original enchantment by refraction: by a paradoxical synthesis of nearness and distance, the spirit of the present takes permanent form by crystallizing in the sublimated atmosphere of the past. Thus, from the past, Coleridge distilled the atmosphere of his poetry, that twin-quality of poignancy in difference, and sympathy in nearness and like-

ness, that he ascribed to the superior novels of Scott. This quality, as he pointed out, consists in eliminating the childish inessential from childlike recollections. 'Let each of us', he writes, 'relate that which has left the deepest impression on his mind, at whatever period of his life he may have seen, heard, or read it; but let him tell it in accordance with the *present state* of his intellect and feelings, even as he has, perhaps (Alnaschar-like), acted it over again by the parlour fireside of a rustic inn, with the fire and the candles for his only companions'.

And, having planned a collection of 'Histories, Lays, Legends' and the like, he had 'intended to have done the work out of hand, dedicating the most genial hours to the completion of *Christabel*, in the belief that in the former' he would be 'rekindling the feeling and recalling the state of mind, suitable to the latter'.

This kind of poetry, indeed, comes only by a state of genial mood in a delectable experience, yet an experience as different from the afflatus of tragedy belonging to epic genius, as the natural emotions of children are different from Milton's Victorious agonies of Martyrs and Saints'.

In *Christabel* Coleridge attains to essential beauty that, orb'd in tender and sensuous loveliness, becomes symbol; but this is not that mystery which lies beyond the confines of dreams, and is *vision*, or transcendental awakening, the state of the blessed.

The atmospheric power of such poetry as Coleridge's is due to the exact tuning of the verse to the timbre of the imagination, and is dependent upon the uniting of the feelings and the intellect by the quality of the pleasure received from the contemplation of the object; which

ecstatic contemplation creates an ideal image, the sublimated synthesis of object and subject embodied in essential verse, or *simplest, adequate words in the fit order*.

The atmosphere of *The Ancient Mariner* is intense and magical, intimate and dear with the quality of childhood. It is quiet, as the child spirit; and, indeed, the word 'quiet', so frequent in the essential poetry of Coleridge, is his key-word and charm. Thus, in the spirit of childhood he delights in appearances of winter

When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
as much as in the burgeoning approach and 'meadow gale'
of spring, and the intimate charm of that

. . . hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

The close of *Frost at Midnight* is surely the most vivid expression of the child vision in English:

Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

The atmosphere of the poem is *quiet*, with a 'strange and extreme silentness'. The opening of *Christabel* is intense, with a note of silent harmony as the sounding of a supernatural chime, having we know not what transcendental meanings in the symbology of the 'rock' and 'clock' in the remote and intense-strung air. As little can we tell, although in lucent moments we seem to divine, the significance of the precise enumeration of the strokes of the clock and the responses of

the barking dog, curiously comparable, as they are, to the specific measurements in *Kubla Khan*. In fact, Coleridge himself in vain attempted to analyse the technique of his charm.

The quality of childhood which he expressed in poetry normally declines at the approach of adolescence, the sexual change and division of thought and feeling. In *Christabel* it became merged with the romantic and the horrific.

I have already, in the word *diaphragm*, employed an electrical term; and genius, the state of psychical unity (or division in union and union in division), like the operation of an electric battery, seems to be dependent upon the maintenance of a 'potential difference' of polarity; a polarity that corresponds to the differentiation of sex in 'most resembling unlikeness, and most unlike resemblance' in the human species; a difference of potentials continually tending towards equilibrium and neutralization. And this paradoxical state of genius is not only the cause, but the very quality of poetic creation; as, indeed, is indicated in the contradictory elements of the forms it assumes, and very clearly indicated in the best passages of *Paradise Lost*; for the freedom in virtue of which these passages attain a speed far greater than is possible in prose, is due to obedience to the canons of poetic art, being radically different from the hybrid licence of *vers libre* or of present-day colloquial versification.

The disharmony of freedom and discipline reappears in the free will which is self-determinism, and the variety which presupposes a unity. And, in the wider sense, as the synthesis of emotion and intellect is the condition of poetic inspiration, so the essential function of poetry, as of all art, is to reproduce that synthesis in effect, if only for a moment, as by an

incantation. The change at adolescence, away from integrity and harmony, is intermediately towards death.

At last in Coleridge the change was effected, or partially effected—precipitated, no doubt, by opium; and, in his dismay at the suspension of his 'shaping spirit of imagination', he resorted to his mental drug of abstruse research, concentrating on intellect; which, bearing further apart from emotion, on the other side, left a numbly-aching, querulous mind, a continual yearning for affection like a child's, and a broken will.

Yet as late as December, 1796, he could write:

I seldom feel without thinking, or think without feeling. . . . My philosophical opinions are blended with and deduced from my feelings.

In his last days the magical spirit returned, after an absence, except in glimpses, of desolate years:

I am dying (said Coleridge), but without expectation of a speedy release. Is it not strange that very recently, bygone images and scenes of early life have stolen into my mind like breezes blown from the spice-islands of Youth and Hope—those twin-realities of the phantom world!

V

INVERTED POWER

I

'THE WRITER WHO possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master—something that, at times, strangely wills and works for itself. He may lay down rules and devise principles, and to rules and principles it will, perhaps for years, lie in subjection; and then, haply without any warning of revolt, there comes a time when it will no longer consent to "harrow the valleys, or be bound with a band in the furrow", when it "laughs at the multitude of the city and regards not the crying of the driver"' (Charlotte Bronte).

Milton was not cognizant in writing *Paradise Lost* that his subconscious mind said by the voice of his *Satan*, 'Evil be thou my Good', and that he was, in fact, following Moloch's counsel and turning his 'Tortures into horrid Arms against the Torturer'. He did not understand that he was justifying the 'wayes of God' by demonstrating how the imagination 'out of our evil seeks to bring forth good', rekindling our spirits, as it were, by the fires of hell. Yet in composing the poem he must sometimes have been aware of contradictory tendencies, in those passages especially wherein his *Satan*, with his sympathetic eloquence, is expressing his own insurgent will.

Milton's studies were prosecuted from his early childhood

with what Robert Louis Stevenson would have called 'delighted industry', and his classic authors were as elder playmates in the Ambrosial Fields, or as old men beside the hearth relating winter's tales of the Fortunate Islands. His youth was bright with the radiance of a glorious ambition; his empyrean was serene, genius was immanent in the intense air. The charm of his personality at the time when he wrote his *Mask* was extraordinary. A single experience of it on the eve of his Continental tour left Sir Henry Wootton—himself a courtier—'with an extreme thirst'. To this 'planet of brightness and efficacy' the darker, therefore, fell its eclipse, the greater the disturbance of its change.

Some say he bid his Angels turne ascense
The Poles of Earth twice ten degrees and more
From the Suns Axle.

It was, indeed, as if the poles of his mind had been displaced, the 'Angels' being lost illusions, frustrated ideals; first, his lofty ideal and 'deluded thoughts without cure' in his marriage; next the disillusion of his patriotic ideal.

Edward Phillips relates in his life of Milton, that in the year 1655 the 'Heighth of his Noble Fancy and Invention began now to be seriously and mainly imployed in a ... Heroick Poem,¹ Entituled *Paradise Lost*. . . . This Subject was first designed a Tragedy, and in the Fourth Book of the Poem there are Ten Verses, which several Years [according to Aubrey, 'about 15 or 16 yeares'] before the Poem was begun, were shewn to me, and some others, as designed for the very beginning of the said Tragedy. The Verses are these:

¹In *Epitaphium Damonis* (autumn, 1639, or winter, 1639-40) Milton refers to a new 'fistula', or shepherd's pipe, that he had tried to manage, which evidently means blank verse with freedom of the caesura, intended for the metrical medium

O Thou that with surpassing Glory Crown'd!
 Look'st from thy sole Dominion, like the God
 Of this New World; at whose sight all the Stars
 Hide their diminish'd Heads; to thee I call,
 But with no friendly Voice; and add thy Name,
 O Sun! to tell thee how I hate thy Beams
 That bring to my remembrance, from what State
 I fell; how Glorious once above thy Sphere;
 Till Pride and worse Ambition threw me down,
 Warring in Heaven, against Heaven's Glorious King.'

Concurrently with this 'tragedy' of *Paradise Lost*, Milton had also projected, with *persons* and *chorus*, *The Deluge, Sodom, Baptistes* and, in a fragment entered on a page of British history notes, *Christus Patiens*—a remarkable anticipation of *Paradise Regain'd*.

In these confused improvisations his mind was working more deeply than he knew.

In his 'prophetic soul', in the deep tract of his mind, gravid with disappointments, the shades of disillusionment were deepening into the approaching night. The period when he drafted the 'tragedies' could not have been many years before the establishment of the Protectorate in 1654 and the virtual dictatorship of Cromwell; while, according to Aubrey, he began *Paradise Lost* 'about 20 yeares before the K. came in'. He was to learn the fallacy of putting trust in a Governor—a 'strong man' of politics' for Cromwell was no exception to the truth of Plato's dictum that noble minds do not desire to rule.

In 1642, in his Smectymnuan pamphlet, he had exceeded all bounds in praising the Parliament whose 'excellence' met 'in one globe of brightnesse and efficacy', so that they were as 'some divine commission from heav'n'; in 1654, in the

course of his long panegyric on the Protector in *Defensio Secunda*, he exclaims:

We are deserted, Cromwell; you alone remain; the sum-total of our affairs has come back to you, and hangs on you alone.

Of the panegyric itself, Symmons remarks:

He could not be insensible to those egregious mockeries which had been practised on the people; but it was natural for him not to abandon without reluctance the hopes ... of the Protector's rectitude of intention; and he seems desirous of urging this extraordinary man to a just and generous use of power. . . .

He must have been the more disappointed, then, by Marvell's letter, gently breaking the apparent indifference with which the copy of his work, with a compliment from himself, was received by the Hero.

Whether [says Symmons unhappily] any further notice was taken by Cromwell of Milton's present, we are not informed: but we may be assured that he was not on the list of the Protector's peculiar friends, and that the Secretary [Milton] would be reconciled to the consequence of exclusion from his employer's favour by the consciousness of commanding his respect.

But the political situation fatally deteriorated, and even Milton's optimism failed.

On the very eve of the Restoration he wrote—or dictated, being blind and ill—*The Readie and Easie Way to establish a Free Commonwealth*, a copy of which he despatched to General Monck, the provisional chief factor.

It was a perilous adventure, dead against kingship, and his friends warned him that, added to his anti-Royalist record, it would infallibly bring him to the scaffold; but he was as ready to face death as, in disregarding the warnings of his

physician in writing *Defensio Secunda*, he had faced total blindness, and 'thus much I should perhaps have said', he exclaims, 'though I were sure *I* should have spoken only to Trees and Stones; and had none to cry to, but with the Prophet, O *Earth, Earth, Earth!* to tell the very Soil it self, what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to.'

In the event, he was included among the regicides—the 'war criminals' of the time—and arrested, but released after the payment of his fees. It is a wonder he escaped—through Andrew Marvell, in all probability; because Marvell, his admiring fellow-poet and former assistant at Whitehall, was Member for Hull, and lobbied on his behalf in Parliament.

Some think, however, that it was through Charles himself. This also is possible, considering the peculiarly droll character of that monarch's magnanimity. Adversity, in some cases, makes charitable bedfellows, and this was apparently so with the King, who had seen hard times. Indeed, it was told of him that, during a court revel, he noticed a pickpocket in the act—and winked at him. He might well be supposed, therefore, to have forgiven his enemy.

This Christian monarch, at any rate, returned good for evil; for he offered to reinstate the old Republican in his official capacity. Had his wisdom been equal to his generosity, he would have known that the offer would be unacceptable.

Jonathan Richardson somewhat modifies (not abrogates) the clemency of the act by representing it as a reward to Milton for his having saved Sir William d'Avenant from execution. Sir William had arrived on a mission from Queen Henrietta Maria in the inopportune year 1650, and was

arrested by the Parliamentarians. He was in jeopardy of his life, but Milton exerted his influence, which at that time was great, and got him off. Richardson's evidence was Pope, who had learnt it from the comedian, Betterton, who was a protege of d'Avenant. Perhaps all these circumstances worked together for Milton's escape. In any case, it was inevitable; *Fate*, the will of his 'Almighty'.

Milton refused Charles's offer of reinstatement, but complained to the Parliament that the charges claimed for the pay of the sergeant who had guarded him in prison, were exorbitant.

II

Chateaubriand told the French Academy that Satan and the other fiends in *Paradise Lost* represent Milton and his political associates. One would not be so specific as that, but be content with what has been observed in the earlier part of these studies—that it is in substance a tragedy in the classical sense, and that its protagonist, Satan, acts as a subconscious dramatization, and thence purgation, of Milton's disillusioned ideal. Thus, Satan does not really represent Satan. The 'knowing reader', as Milton calls him, will understand that the epic is a kind of psychological *camera obscura*.

And, on the principle that suffering is the outcome of repression, and perfect eloquence is perfect expression, Milton's Satan is too eloquent to be in Hell, the original meaning of which is a *closed place*. He is an open crater emitting sublime flames that are modified on occasion into natural beauty.

It is a striking coincidence that Milton's eyesight began to

fail at about the time when he wrote the verses of Satan's apostrophe to the sun.¹

'No man knows hell', he had written in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, 'like him who converses most in heav'n', and the interior light that had produced his ideal began soon to illumine his Hell, the shadow of its inverted projection. In the reflection of his own image he had seen his countrymen as a 'knowing people';² in the distorted blur of its withdrawing flash he saw them as 'Trees and Stones'.⁸ He who had seen the real, or actual, in terms of the ideal, in subconscious projection on the screen of night imagined the ideal in disguises and inversions of the real; the radiant hope that had produced such external glow was withdrawn, casting upon a stage of darkness its inverted and dilated projection. This was the genesis of *Paradise Lost*.

And the eclipse of Milton's bright planet synchronized with worldly disaster. Save for the comfort of a devoted wife, he became as desolate as Defoe when he resorted to an imaginary island. Blind, in ill-health, and in comparative poverty, victimized by his daughters, who conspired with his servants to 'cheat him in their marketings, and sell his books to the dunghill-women', calumniated, in danger of physical violence, he was indeed 'fall'n on evil dayes'. Yet the social cheerfulness of his nature remained like the unblemished brightness of his eyes.

And the fires of his genius burst into rekindled flames, so that he is at once an inspiring embodiment of his transfigured

¹ He had his first attack of glaucoma in 1644, and became totally blind in 1652 as a consequence of writing *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, as his physicians had predicted.

² *Arcopagitica*.

⁹ *The Rcadie and Easie Way to establish a free Commonwealth*.

Prometheus and a superb vindication of his belief that the author of a noble poem must needs be noble in his life.

But in what respect was this mighty genius noble? At the disillusioning of his political ideals he was both enlarged and straitened: emancipated in poetic power, restricted spiritually in the access of his pride. He came into his genius, as Coleridge lost his, by a psychological transformation. It was as though the 'diaphragm', which I have described, had been shattered. But that genius was volcanic and expressed itself in infernal angers:

. . . Highly they rag'd,
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped Arms,
Clash'd on thir sounding shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance toward the Vault of Heav'n.

This is the very ecstasy of passion, the sublimation of an almost animal fury, We hear the frenzied clash, the insane yell! It is the poetic translation of 'all those wild words which men in misery think to ease themselves by uttering'. *Milton Agonistes* impersonates Johannes Furens and we feel that, if he had not expressed himself through his devils, he would have lost his reason; at any rate, he would have been deadened, and his genius atrophied.

I have compared genius with love; it is also comparable with the lover—the lover who has broken his heart; whence there ensues that state of *abandon*, or freedom from the inhibiting personal factor, and the vent of expression. The inspiration in *Paradise Lost* is equalled by none but Shakespeare's; nevertheless, it was not completely effective. Although Milton knew not, as did Coleridge, the dull, leaden misery of atrophy, he did not escape unscathed.

'Give not thyself up, then, to fire', cries Herman Melville,

'lest it invert thee, deaden thee.' Milton was far from being deadened; but in operation his genius was inverted, so that what objectively appears as evil in his epic is subjectively good.

And it is no wonder that the epic scene grew dark; no wonder, considering the forces involved, that it became infernal with the reversed action of the enchanting influence which, like the glimmering of those nightmare flames, made 'darkness visible'.

The subconscious reservoir of the past is naturally barbaric, or evil; epic genius 'uses it for a well'. It is a dark ocean; Milton, native to its storms, soars to the empyrean, while

Birds of Calm sit brooding on the Charmed wave.

But above the subconscious there lies the exalted region, veiled by ineffable brightness, of the transcendental, or supra-conscious: and into its awful sanctities the mind of Milton aspired to enter, while his imagination, beating with its iron wings the nether atmosphere, imagined an unreal heaven of realistic abstractions.

The supraconscious works in the subconscious as energy, or joy; and exultation in tragedy is Heaven triumphant in Hell. The darkness of the lower region is the shadow of the higher, and its terrific creations are aspects and disguises of real things. It would require a greater even than the epic genius to portray Heaven otherwise than in terms of Hell. The soul of epic genius is in Hell, *is* Hell in the imaginative sense. Yet the flame of its torment is holy; it torments and ravagingly creates because its fire is of celestial derivation. It is the *Son of the Sun*.

VI

SUBLIMITY AND HUMANISM

I

THE MAN OF HUMANE insight is spiritually free. His enfranchisement, however, may be one of two kinds: he may have attained to the intense serenity of selflessness and benevolence (which teleologically is self-realization), or be zealously absorbed in the struggle of social causes. He may contemplate the action of the world with intuitive faith, or see it through clouds and await the issue of events with hope and fear. The former state corresponds to the centre of a cyclone, the latter to its skirt. The sublimity of the mystic is apparent only to the seer; the passage of the great soul in contact with the friction of the world is evident to all men. It is obvious in which of these states was Milton, who was so deeply perturbed by public calamities.

He was free, religiously, without panic scruples such as reduced some fellow-Puritans, as he calls them, to a 'razors edge to walk on'. He regarded the Bible as infallible, yet if any text ran counter to his thesis he either discovered a contradictory text, or else put it summarily 'under the feet of Charity'. 'Charity', indeed, and the efficacy of prayer, were his lantern and his mighty engine. He never came under the rigours of his Hebraic theology, but, running before the wind of emotion, he was capable of such *naïveté* as imploring the

Deity to perfect His acts of deliverance in England lest His 'great name would suffer', reminding Him, almost in the style of a friend, that 'men may leave their works unfinished', but that He was a 'God'.

So free an attitude ought to have produced in Milton a corresponding temper of toleration. He held, indeed, that all religions and sects and schisms were to be tolerated—except Roman Catholicism. In his tractate, *Of True Religion, Heresie, Schism, Toleration*, he bans the Papist much as the Papal decretals delivered on Rabelais' 'Island of Papefigues' exempt the heretic from the 'furnace of love and charity towards one's neighbour*' and expose none but him to 'war, murder, and assassination!'

Milton does not, however, advocate penal severity for Papists. 'Are we', he says, 'to punish them by corporal punishment, or fines in their estates, upon account of their religion? I suppose, it stands not with the clemency of the Gospel, more than what appertains to the security of the State.'

With his tendency to personify abstractions,¹ which was akin to his idealizing propensity, he represents his diatribes against the prelates—his 'vehement vein throwing out indignation and scorn'—as Zeal:

. . . Zeale whose substance is ethereal, arming in compleat diamond ascends his fiery Chariot drawn with two blazing Meteors figur'd like beasts, but of a higher breed then any the Zodiack yields, resembling two of those four which *Ezechiel* and *S. John* saw, the one visag'd like a Lion to expresse power, high authority and indignation, the other of countenance like a man to cast derision and scorne upon perverse and

In regard to actual persons, Milton had great friends who were Roman Catholics.

fraudulent seducers; with these the invincible warrior Zeale shaking loosely the slack reins drives over the heads of Scarlet Prelats, and such as are insolent to maintaine traditions, brusing their stiffe necks under his flaming wheels.¹

His anger was directed against personifications, rather than actual persons; against intensely, intensively imagined types of ecclesiastical and regal tyranny. Whether he was aware in composing *In Quintum Novembris* that Pius V, whom he therein represents as a licentious miscreant, was, in fact, a man of unexceptionable life and exemplary morals is doubtful, but would not have signified from his point of view, which was passionately propagandist. For him this particular Pope was *any* Pope.

He goes on after his 'Zeale' personification to justify his vehemence in controversy by the catastrophic outbursts of Christ against the Scribes and Pharisees. Eventually his imagination of Zeal's fiery chariot is represented in the chariot-drive of Christ in *Paradise Lost*, Book VI.

From the other aspect, the toleration of such a humanist as Montaigne is everywhere maintained; while Sir Thomas Browne could not 'laugh at, but rather pity, the fruitless journeys of Pilgrims, or contemn the miserable condition of Fryars'. For him 'Silence and dumb contempt' at the tolling of the 'Ave-Mary Bell', or 'scorn and Laughter' at a 'solemn Procession' denoted moral crudity. Nor, indeed, had Coleridge ridiculed the uncouth statue of Christ, as Dr. Carlyon says that he did, before the German peasant, even with 'good-humoured effrontery', if he had bethought him of the beauty of Roman Catholic symbology which in his

¹ *The Apology against a Pamphlet.*

poems he expresses, but had rather 'cast an eye upon the soul'. He was no iconoclast of imperfect images in religion, any more than he was a contemner of ugly bodies in life; understanding that the function of genius is to reveal the essential beauty of real things.

On the subject of martyrdom, Sir Thomas Browne writes:

I think my conscience will not give me the lye, if I say there are not many extant that in a noble way fear the face of death less than myself; yet, from the mortal duty I owe to the Commandment of God ... I would not perish upon a Ceremony, Politick points, or indifferency; nor is my belief of that untractible temper, as not to bow at their obstacles, or connive at matters wherein there are not manifest impieties: the leaven therefore and ferment of all, not only Civil, but Religious action, is Wisdom... .

Anatole France, in his pleasant disquisitions on life and letters, runs to the furthest limit of toleration—and beyond it. Sir Thomas Browne praises Socrates, 'that suffered on a fundamental point of Religion, the Unity of God'; Anatole France praises Rabelais because he

. . . maintained his opinions, but not up to the burning-point, reckoning with and in advance of Montaigne, that to die for an idea is to put a very high value on one's opinions. Martyrdom must be left to those who, not knowing how to doubt, have in their very simplicity the excuse for their pig-headedness. It seems presumptuous to get burnt for an opinion. Martyrs are lacking in irony. . . .

But irony, which refuses to receive anything seriously and laughs away sublime verities, is not commendable, nor is it distinctively French.

'Charity* was Milton's, 'Wisdom' Sir Thomas Browne's criterion, and here sublime and humane feeling meet in Matthew Arnold's sublimate of 'sweet reasonableness'.

II

In this respect Milton was a precursor of modernism—at any rate, in comparison with such a mediaeval realist as Dante. It must be remembered, however, that in his case the revolution in intellect and feeling called Renaissance and Reformation had intervened. Also, in modernist tendency, his treatment of his theme in *Paradise Lost* is impressionist. His Hell, as Lord Macaulay has observed, contains immeasurable extensions, whilst Dante's Inferno is precisely measured. Even his sublimity, although it was conceived by saturation in Hebraic theology,¹ was potentially modernist, since it engendered Byronic and Stevensonian romanticism, as set forth in my opening essay.

Shakespeare distinctively possessed the genius of humanism, Milton that of sublimity. I would propose as a tenable theory, that these two manifestations of poetic faculty are exhaustive of its nature; not, indeed, in the sense of being contradictory aspects but, rather, subsisting modes capable of fusion—as they are fused, for example, in Macbeth's presentation of pity as a 'naked new-born babe, striding the blast'. (Such fusion is a higher synthesis of the operation whereby poetry becomes symbol and truth paradox.)

That a babe should be positively terrible to Macbeth in the prospect of his crime, just as after its commission he was unable to pronounce 'Amen', or that in actual life a criminal should shrink in the consciousness of his guilt from

¹He fell short of his original, as he was bound to do. 'I affirm', writes Coleridge, 'that after reading Isaiah, or St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, Homer and Virgil are disgustingly tame to me, and Milton himself barely tolerable.'

the eyes of a little child, were foolishness to the logical judgement.

A similar idea is conveyed—whether intentionally or not—in *Paradise Lost*, where the image of a cornfield symbolizes terror. After surprising Satan in the Garden of Eden:

. . . th' Angelic Squadron bright
 Turned fierie red, sharpening in mooned homes
 Thir Phalanx, and began to hemm him round
 With ported Spears, as thick as when a field
 Of *Ceres* ripe for harvest waving bends
 Her bearded Grove of ears, which way the wind
 Swayes them; the careful Plowman doubting stands
 Least on the threshing floore his hopeful sheaves
 Prove chaff. On th' other side *Satan* allarm'd
 Collecting all his might dilated stood,
 Like *Teneriff* *T Atlas* unremov'd:
 His stature reacht the Skie, and on his Crest
 Sat horror Plum'd.

How kinetic is the idea of the harmless, goodly corn as a symbol of terror, with its hint of the awful quality of peace!—a hint that momentarily suspends the spell of the presentation of Satan as the Promethean protagonist of Fate. But soon this feeling returns and we imagine, not the surprised and alarmed felon, but that terrific figure, ringed like a solitary rebel with the mechanical and multitudinous spears of Law and Might, towering dilated, at bay, with his hair upstanding as the plume of a volcano.

It was strange after quoting this passage with its imagery of spears and a cornfield, followed, as it is, by the apparition of the golden scales, to read in a twentieth-century poet:¹

¹ Henry Bryan Binns, *A Schoolmaster in Picardy*.

Justice, the Virgin, rules here: in her lap
 Sits the world's hope: and shine in either hand
 The Scales of Judgement and the Spear that is
 A golden spear of corn, a Spike of Peace.

These twin-modes of poetic genius, sublimity and humanism, provide the two main means of escape from egotism (in the bad sense) which so easily besets men of genius and is most deadly to them. 'Genius', writes Coleridge, 'may co-exist with wildness, idleness, folly, even with crime, but not long, believe me, with selfishness, and the indulgence of an envious disposition.' With this one may compare W. B. Yeats' comment upon Blake's conception of 'forgiveness': that it is the forgiveness of one who has discovered that without a perfect sympathy there is no perfect imagination. Selfishness is vanity in the sense of emptiness as well as of flatulent self-conceit: to be centred exclusively in the personal self is to set up a wasteful 'local circuit' in the electric battery of life.

While sublimity and humanism are capable of fusion, they are also liable to be broken up and diffused into new forms. They collapsed in England in the sensuality of the Restoration period whose lyrists, with their sugared conceits, might be regarded as offering artificial flowers at their obsequies. The subconscious mould was jarred and distempered, and the division between intellect and emotion was increased, after they had attained virtual union in the age which produced Shakespeare.

This approximate union, however, was already tending towards change; and the scientific energy of Bacon provided the *élan*. In Milton intellect appeared in the form of abstruse speculation; it was Milton's intellectual tendency that

provoked Blake to include him in the same condemnation as that of Bacon and Newton.

After the debacle of the Restoration, the quiescence of the formal Queen Anne period, and the elegant conventionality of later years, sublimity reappeared in a modified form. This was the Romantic Revival inspired by German writers, notably Goethe, Heine, and the strange school of Hardenberg and Tieck; by whom, as Coleridge observed, Scott was inspired, as also was Coleridge himself. At about the same time humanism also reappeared, modified in the form of the sentimental and psychological novel.

Eighteenth-century romanticism betrays regret for ruined beauty, a consciousness of faded glory, eventually concentrated in the nostalgia of Poe. Thus, *The Ancient Mariner* is suffused with sultry colours and phosphorescent tints, and *Christabel* is eerie with witch-light; while *Kubla Khan* contains such a morbid oxymoron as 'holy and enchanted*' to describe the savage trysting-place of the woman wailing for her demon lover. Later on, in Poe's *The Haunted Palace*, the feeling is directly expressed:

And round about his home the glory
That blushed and bloomed,
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

It was, perhaps, with some such consciousness of sublimity in ruin, and sense of irremediable loss, that Poe, asseverating, on an occasion, the eternal subsistence of his personal identity, expressed himself in accents, and with an aspect, of demoniac pride. Moreover, in Poe the decline of sublimity had reached a further stage; the Romantic elements of the weird and the terrific had changed into macabre and horrible imaginations;

and, as the nature of a thing is most apparent in its extension, in Poe there reappeared Miltonic sublimity's three main characteristics: his characters are abstract; he was almost devoid of a sense of humour; he had a predilection for material mass, as in the prodigious swollen ship of his *MS. Found in a Bottle* and the giant Antarctic figure in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, which concludes:

But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow.

How strikingly we are reminded here of Melville's chapter on the *Horror of Whiteness'!

Horror, like sublimity (and nonsense), depends upon paradox, or incongruity. The skull smiles; leprosy is white: 'Her skin was white as leprosy', says the Ancient Mariner of the 'Night-mare Life-in-Death'.

Nathaniel Hawthorne is a writer whom the lonely and gloomy would do well to avoid. He is depressing, being the very antithesis of Milton, whose Satan is a child of powerful indignation, an insurgent reaction in the world of imagination—even in Hell. In Hawthorne the quality of the sublime is under a cloud. His imagination casts a shadow instead of a glow, and he sees all things, like his Veiled minister', through a veil of crape; the subtle blight he diffuses infects the very sunshine with a spectral gloom which, in his Saturnalia of the Black Sabbath, is materialized in horror.

In all works of genius manifesting sublimity, the background is dark; thus, the figure of Satan in *Paradise Lost* appears in tragic splendour against 'darkness visible'. In Hawthorne, however, the darkness has entered the foreground; so that *The Scarlet Letter* produced what Milton

attempted in vain, a real Hell and a real Devil. Hell, like the 'Kingdom of Heaven', is internal, and Hawthorne's peculiar introspective faculty was probably derived from the witch-burning Puritans of New England—with whom the American addiction to retribution by burning may also be associated. It is significant that Hawthorne's conception of mass or immensity is of something inanimate, as in his *Great Stone Face*. Poe's stupendous ship that grew in the waters is the symbol of an intermediate state. His conception is neither dynamic nor static, but is interposed, as the lyric is interposed between the epic and the dramatic.

Herman Melville, for all his exuberant style, might be entitled the 'Hawthorne of the Sea'. Although *Typee* and his other Pacific romances are free from the New England gloom, it certainly tinges *Moby Dick*, which is inscribed to Hawthorne; while the really devilish Claggart in *Billy Budd* is a character of Infernal darkness.¹ However, the Great White Whale—'one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air'—is sublime. Melville, indeed, combines sublimity with romantic wildness and mysticism, the 'glamour', he calls it, 'of the monstrous, the portentous, and the mysterious'. 'Not ignoring what is good,' he was 'quick to perceive a horror', and could 'still be social with it'; yet his philosophy is strangely out of keeping with his 'social' style, which may be compared with the sun that 'hides not the ocean, which is the dark side of this earth, and which is two-thirds of this earth'. Therefore, he argues, a man who has 'more of joy than sorrow in him', is either not true, or else undeveloped. His monomaniac sea-captain, Ahab,

¹ Captain Vere, absurdly misrepresented in the opera, is no less evil, in a different way.

vaunts in the spirit of Milton's Satan, in quasi-Shakespearean language. He is fantastic, but also tragic, and he established a myth of the ocean which is as impressive as Marryat's Flying Dutchman. Melville utters chaotically in *Moby Dick* what Milton expresses in *Samson Agonistes*, a radical disappointment.

VII

THE MASK OF COMUS

THE WORD 'MASK', used in the title to *Comus*, has an agreeable connotation, suggesting—in accordance with the main characteristics of the seventeenth-century masque, which were elegance and delicacy—(the pleasing artificiality of those 'stately and dainty candlelights' which Bacon held to be preferable, in certain aspects, to the natural light of the sun.)

In Milton's original title the name, 'Comus', does not appear at all: the form of words being simply, 'A Maske Presented At Ludlow Castle', etc. The title, *Comus*, which was invented posthumously, is in fact inappropriate and incongruous; for Milton, characteristically, entitled a poem only after a good and never an evil personification. He could not possibly, for example, have entitled *Paradise Lost, Satan*. He himself left his masque without a concrete title because for him it was simply a masque written for a particular occasion, just as his Academic Exercise, which he also left with no specific title, was simply an academic exercise. In fact, the formal inchoateness of the title may have been intended to suggest that the author considered the poem itself to be comparatively immature, in the same sense as that of the protest that he uttered on the title-page at its first appearance in print in Henry Lawes' edition of 1637: '*Eheu quid volui*

misero mihi! floribus austrum perditus....' ('What can I have been about, miserable man that I am! Do I want to expose my flowers to the withering wind?—to ruin myself?')

The typical English masque was introduced from Italy in a simple form about the beginning of the sixteenth century, and was developed by Ben Jonson in the reign of James I. It was a private or semi-private form of entertainment in which the members of a family, or social circle, or of the Court, took part. Thus, on the title-page of the Bridgewater MS. of Milton's masque, Henry Lawes wrote: 'The chief persons in the representation were'; and the copyist subjoined:

The Lord Brackley	
The Lady Alice	}
Mr. Thomas	
	Egerton

(The Lady Alice Egerton took the part of the Lady, and her two younger brothers were the First and Second Brothers. Lawes himself was the Attendant Spirit and afterwards Thyrsis.)

These entertainments were exceedingly popular among the aristocratic and wealthy classes, although in 1634 their vogue was ending. The subject-matter was usually some form of mythological allegory such as might be appropriate to the occasion, presented in scenes set off with music, pageantry, and dances—principally a courtly dance, which was contrasted with an 'anti-masque' or burlesque dance, the latter performed by comic characters who were generally professional actors. It was a characteristically formal, gay, and lively product of Renascent and Elizabethan culture, more decorous and abstract than comedy and less symbolical than the old morality plays.

From the decorous aspect, Bacon writes in his essay, *Of Masques and Triumphs*:

Let antimasques not be long; they have been commonly of fools, satyrs, baboons, wild men, antiques, beasts, sprites, witches, Ethiopcs, pigmies, turquets, nymphs, rustics, Cupids, statues moving, and the like. As for angels, it is not comical enough to put them in antimasques; and anything that is hideous, as devils, giants, is, on the other side, as unfit.

The antimasque, according to Professor Hanford in *A Milton Handbook*, is 'represented in *Comus* by the crew of man-monsters who have been transformed by the enchanter and again by the countrymen who do a rural turn at the close'. But the enchantment-degraded company with animals' heads is, rather, an integral part of the fable, or allegorical subject-matter. If indeed they did thus represent the antimasque, with the uncouth dance of rustic lads and lasses (set off by a dance of the elegant, noble characters) as a mere repeat or reflection, they would offend against Bacon's sense of fitness, for they are certainly 'hideous'.

The masque was conventionally expected to exhibit in the fable some spectacle of good triumphant over evil. This worthy convention Milton was not reluctant to observe; but for him, with his 'excellent seriousness', the arguments of his 'Lady' in justification of virtue were much more important than *Comus*'s precipitate downfall, while the 'oughly headed monsters' were their object-lessons and foils—in this sense, though not in the technical signification, their *antimasque*. To the philosophy expressed in the arguments the beauty of the verse and the interest of the action were merely equipage.

Here most obviously the zeal, and also the pride, of Milton had betrayed him. At the same time they embarrassed,

as one may conjecture, his friend, Henry Lawes, 'Gentleman of the Chapel Royal' and a member of the King's "private musicke". Lawes was music master, on friendly, devoted terms, to the Bridgewater family; and for a previous celebration in that family, in honour of the aged Countess-Dowager of Derby, he had produced Milton's *Arcades*—itself part of a masque—including verses philosophical in their mystical beauty, but not containing long-drawn-out, didactic speeches, as those in the masque which Milton in the present instance had written for him. Lawes, with his experience of masques and audiences at Whitehall and the Inner Temple, could not but apprehend that these dissertations might prove burdensome to the prospective audience of easy-going, pleasure-loving cavaliers. Perhaps, very tactfully, but not (if one may judge from his handsome portrait) without vehemence, he expostulated with his admired friend and suggested abbreviation—to be answered in such charming ratiocinative style as that in which Milton disposed of objections in *Ad Patrem*.

Milton's own sentiments in undertaking the masque can be clearly deduced from the whole tenor of his writings: with all willingness to oblige his friend, Lawes, and with best wishes for success at Ludlow, he felt at the same time that his muse ought not to be employed to entertain the Philistines without reading them a lesson. His views upon the function of poetry, developed in the *Reason of Church-Government* are, briefly, that poetry, no mere end in itself, should recover for truth and virtue their due attractiveness which had been refracted by false enchantment into the illusions of vice. Especially was this desirable, he added—perhaps recollecting his audience at Ludlow—to 'those of soft and delicious

temper, who will not so much as look upon Truth herselfe, unless they see her elegantly drest'. ('How charming', exclaims the Second Brother in his masque, 'is divine Philosophy! Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose'.)

Milton's animistic tendency is denoted originally by his intense liking for Ovid at the period in which he wrote his Latin poems; when he may be described as being in his pagan phase—as it were, in the sign of Aries, with the Scriptural culture, the other horn of the renascent constellation, emergent. The Hebraic and Christian idealism with which this pagan sentiment eventually commerged had begun to dawn, but its illumination seems alien and unreal. Thus, *Elegia quinta* is entirely pagan. *Elegia sexta* is half and half; almost strophe and antistrophe. So, too, is

Elegia tertia: while in *Epitaphium Damonis* the word 'Zion' comes in after the claus-

sound.

This animistic, erotic tendency was already in abeyance, no doubt, at the date of the Mask, for the mental 'moly' of Spenser's idealistic chivalry had been, or was in process of being, supplemented by a solvent cure: 'cool streams of the Socratick wave', when, as Milton himself wrote in his Epilogue to *Elegia Septima*:

At once, for aye, the flames of passion died
 Arm'd as with solid ice, my breast congeals.
 Fear lest his shafts should freeze, young Cupid feels;
 And lovely Venus dreads to find indeed
 In me the vehemence of Diomede.

However, this Epilogue was not appended until eighteen years later (in 1645), and in the meantime, in 1642, Milton

had been infatuated; had too eagerly sought that 'fallacious bride'.

Milton could not, accordingly, holding such views as these, have consented to any excisions being made in the masque's philosophical content; and none, in fact, was made, although whole passages of poetical value were excised since the thing was, in any case, too long. The last nineteen lines of Comus's speech—i.e. from the line beginning, 'List, Lady; be not coy'—were omitted, but these hedonistic verses do not materially affect the philosophy. Lawes may have urged that they might be considered unsuitable, as the 'Lady' to whom they were addressed was only about fourteen years old. He may have added that they would be in danger of provoking unseasonable levity.

As regards the essential motif, purity of heart, it was in Milton's conviction an active ideal. It is potential in his Prolusions at Cambridge; it emerges in his first Elegy; and, crystallizing in his mind with elements from the Book of Revelation and from the Pythagorean-Platonic doctrine of chastity, it successively inspired *Arcades*, *At a Solemn Musick*, and the ecstatic flight at the close of *Epitaphium Damonis*. It was to form the main theme of the superb autobiographical passage in *An Apology against a Pamphlet*; in which 'Chastity and Love . . . whose charming cup is only vertue' are distinguished from the 'thick intoxicating potion which a certaine Sorceresse, the abuser of loves name, carries about'.

In 'false Circe's halls', he himself, he tells us in *Elegia Prima*, had had recourse to the 'divine herb Moly'; this discloses a striking connection between the Elegy (dated 1626, when Milton was in his eighteenth year) and his masque; for 'Moly' in the Elegy is identical with the magical root

'Haemony' in the masque. In the Odyssean narrative, which was the masque's basic source, Moly was given by Hermes to Ulysses for a protection against Circe's drugs.

There are no films of false enchantment upon the eyes of the Lady, Comus's argumentative prisoner. She herself, delivering her elevated philosophy from the sorcerer's chair, is apt to fall into her author's polemical style, and is altogether a severe abstraction. On the other hand, she expresses in beauty his own idealism in regard to women, the idealism that maintained him at a height from which 'those low descents of minde', as he expresses it in *An Apology against a Pamphlet*, were in the nature of blasphemy, as if, indeed, a man should think 'undecent things of the Gods'.

The plot and action of the Mask are derived almost entirely from other authors.¹ The only important innovation is the parenthood of Comus. With no classical authority as far as can be determined, Milton presents him as the son of Circe and not merely of the wine-god, Bacchus; he does so in order to bring out the false enchanter's depravity in regard to 'sex'. This special emphasis is subtly appropriate; for 'sex' is itself a kind of masque; the masque of some sublime drama reflected in and deflected by illusory 'candle-lights'.

The impulse and motif of the poem were provided mainly by Milton's own conflict with the Circe of illusion, the antagonist of his youthful age, just as the 'grand enemy' of his later years was the Satan of pride; which, after he had by conscious self-control attained the power of being sub-consciously controlled, he dramatized in *Paradise Lost*. In that

¹ For an interesting compendious treatment of this technical subject, see Hanford's *A Milton Handbook*. (But, p. 121, Flonmel in *The Faerie Queene* does not 'sit like the Lady in *Comus*, robbed of her power of motion on a throne'. She is chained, standing, to a brazen pillar.)

poem the erotic motif is subordinate; although it is there evident, especially in Book IV, that Milton's thoughts had been much exercised upon the sexual aspect of love.

He was perhaps encouraged in his asceticism by ecstatic experience resulting from it. The praises that he gives to chastity in the ecstatic flight at the close of *Epitaphium Damonis* may well have been the reason for Dr. Tillyard's conviction that at one time he regarded it as a positive virtue possessing magical properties, and that he even devoted himself to its observance, like his Samson, with a Vow of strictest purity'. If he did, indeed, take such a vow, the mental disturbance which must inevitably have resulted perhaps prompted him when he justified the breaking of a vow in certain circumstances in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*.

The belief in the ancient idealism obtains among primitive peoples. Thus, the Maoris forbade their *tohungas*, or seers, to touch women's clothes, lest they should consequently suffer dimness of sight.

VIII

MILTON'S MARRIAGES

MILTON WAS INTERESTED in the subject of divorce before the ordeal of his unhappy marriage. According to the Anonymous Biographer, who is regarded as authoritative:

The lawfulness and expedience of this, duly regulate in order to all those purposes for which marriage was at first instituted, had upon full consideration and reading good authors been formally before his first marriage his opinion.

Thus it happened, when he was married and the need arose for divorce, he was well qualified to write, as he did, a masterly dissertation on the subject. This was *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*.

He contends that 'indisposition, unfitnes or contrariety of mind' is the greatest, most cogent reason for divorce. He remarks with fine sensibility that 'to retain and not to love is the greatest injury that can be done to a sensitive spirit'.

What applies most to his own predicament, however, is his rejoinder to those moralists who say that, if people who have married discover too late that they are incompatible, it is their own fault in not having discovered this before:

For all the warinesse can be us'd, it may yet befall a discreet man to be mistak'n in his choice. . . . The sobrest and best govern'd men are least practiz'd in these affairs . . . it is not strange though many who have spent their youth chastly, are in some things not so quick-sighted, while they hast so eagerly to light the nuptiall torch. . . . Since they who have liv'd most loosely by reason of their bold accustoming, prove most

successful in their matches, because their wild affections unsettling at will, have been as so many divorces to teach them experience.

Milton himself was one of those who had 'spent their youth chastly'. He had also hasted 'so eagerly to light the nuptiall torch'; for, one day early in the summer of 1641, he went a journey into the country, without telling anyone the reason, and returned after a month a married man. (The Anonymous Biographer attributes this celerity to Milton's practice of 'not wasting that precious talent'.)

He was then thirty-five years of age, his wife seventeen. Along with her, he brought to the London house that he had taken in Aldersgate Street some of her near relations. For two or three days there was feasting and jollity such as she and they had been accustomed to; for she was the daughter of a hearty, convivial country gentleman, one Mr. Richard Powell, an Oxfordshire Justice of the Peace, and had lived in a great house. In these festivities, Milton himself, no doubt, was the heart and soul.

Mary, his wife, was an irresponsible young woman, the frivolous creature of her social upbringing. But she was doubtless very pretty, and perhaps she reminded Milton, as he saw her in her father's country garden, of those

. . . breathing Roses of the Wood,
Fair silver-buskin'd Nymphs as great and good.

To her, the house with its city environment looked grim, no doubt, as the polemical pamphlet—had she been able to understand it—on which Milton was then engaged. It was the year 1641, when the Puritans and the Bishops were at loggerheads.

There was even a schoolroom in the house; for Milton

was going to board and educate his young nephews. Mary had never known such a place and, when in due time her people departed, the scholastic atmosphere closed in upon her like a prison.

She was not in love with her husband, and she was homesick.

For a week or so she remained, disconsolate. Then she wrote to her people. They sympathetically responded, and they wrote to Milton, who was doubtless no less wretched in his different way at seeing his happy anticipation chilled by the girl who wanted to leave him—for that was the purport of the letters—to return for the rest of the summer to her father's house.

He did not love her (as I surmise), any more than she loved him, and now he knew it. It was the accursed thing which from his youth up he had avoided that, grown rampant at last, had beguiled and entrapped him—what is now called 'infatuation'.

By nature he was not sensual, but (a word of his own coining) *sensuous*, as all poets are and must be and (what is related to such sensitive impressionability) he was compassionate. He acceded to his wife's request, and she promised to return—it was then July—in September.

But she did not do so, and he sent a letter of reminder. It was unanswered, as also were several further letters, and when, at length, he dispatched a foot-messenger the man was sent contemptuously away.

The reason for this churlish behaviour of the Powells is not obscure. It was the Civil War. If the Cavaliers, to which party they belonged, were eventually victorious, it would be embarrassing to be associated with a prominent radical like Milton.

The event, however, proved contrary. Two or three years after Milton's wife had left him, the King's forces were routed and the Powell estate was in danger of confiscation. The family, therefore, reversed their policy, since association with, and the influence of, a distinguished Parliamentarian would be advantageous.

The restoration of the marital link might have seemed the more difficult because, during the period of separation, Milton had written *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; he was also paying suit to a Very handsome and witty gentlewoman'. However, the trick was duly effected; this by means of an ingenious expedient. The Powells, as it happened, had a friend who was a relation of Milton, to whom he—Milton—paid periodic visits; when the next visit was due, Mary was in the house, present, but in hiding—off-stage, so to speak.

Milton arrives, is welcomed. The conversation ensuing is steered into the most congenial topic. It might be poetry, its ennobling and harmonizing power. At length, the time has come, the very minute. Enter Mary. She advances towards Milton, drops to her knees, and in plaintive tones (well coached) confesses how wrongly she has behaved. But, she pleads, her mother egged her on. She beseeches forgiveness.

Drooping thus, and all in tears, she appears crushed.

Milton forgives her. 'He might probably at first', writes Edward Phillips, 'make some show of aversion and rejection; but partly his own generous nature... and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion, and a firm league of peace for the future.'

Milton was reconciled, not only with his truant wife, but also with her family—even with his meddling mother-in-

law—and, when their estate was taken over by the military, he received them all into his own home.

His married life continued for some seven years, until his wife's death soon after the birth of their third daughter.

Whether they lived happily together after the reconciliation is unknown, but certainly he was not discouraged from marrying again. He married, four years later, Katherine Woodcock, the daughter of an Army captain, and their married life was happy indeed, but brief. It lasted fifteen months, and Katherine died when her baby daughter was six months old. The child also died. She is commemorated in Milton's sonnet beginning

Methought I saw my late espoused Saint
Brought to me like *Alcestis* from the grave.

For the third time Milton married; but in this case it was what might be pleasantly called a marriage of convenience. It was assuredly convenient. Seven more years had passed, and Milton had long been totally blind. He suffered also from gout and other ills.

He was then fifty-five years old; his wife—Elizabeth Minshull was her maiden name—was only twenty-four, which enabled her to be the more serviceable.

She was a very helpmate and, what was particularly agreeable to him with his musical ear, she could sing beautifully. (No doubt they sang together.) What was most satisfactory is recorded in a fragment of direct speech of Milton that has come down to us:

God have mercy, Betty, I see thou wilt perform according to thy promise in providing me such dishes as I think fit whilst I live, and when I die thou knowest that I have left thee all.

IX

PHILOSOPHY OF DIVORCE

MILTON'S *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* is a marvel of eloquence and humanistic feeling. He entreats his auditory to be 'still, and heare all out... remembring this, that many truths now of reverend esteem and credit, had their birth and beginning once from singular and private thoughts . . . and had the fate at first to be generally exploded and exclaim'd on by many violent opposers'. He 'undertakes the cure of an inveterate disease crept into the best part of humane societie: and to doe this with no smarting corrosive, but with a smooth and pleasing lesson, which received hath the vertue to soften and dispell rooted and knotty sorrowes'. He pleads that '*Indisposition, unfitness, or contrariety of mind, arising from a cause in nature unchangeable, hindring and ever likely to hinder the main benefits of conjugall society, which are solace and peace* , is an imperative reason for divorce; and he implies that those who think otherwise are lacking in imagination:

As no man apprehends what vice is so well as he who is truly vertuous, no man knows hell like him who converses most in heav'n, so there is none that can estimate the evil and the affliction of a natural hatred in matrimony, unlesse he have a soul gentle anough and spacious anough to contemplate what is true love. (And the) pure and more inbred desire of joyning to it selfe in conjugall fellowship a fit conversing soul (which desire is properly call'd love) is *stronger then death* ... an intelligible flame (which becomes) more ardent by being fail'd of what in reason

it lookt for. . . . Certainly such a one (who is frustrate of this desire) forbidden to divorce, is in effect forbidd'n to marry.

When therefore this originall and sinles *Penury* or *Lonelines* of the soul cannot lay it selfe downe by the side of such a meet and acceptable union as God ordam'd in marriage, at least in some proportion, it cannot conceive and bring forth *Love*. . . . Then enters *Hate*, not that Hate that sins, but that which onely is naturall dissatisfaction and the turning aside from a mistaken object. . . . He therefore who lacking of his due in the most native and humane end of marriage, thinks it better to part then to live sadly and injuriously to that cheerfull covnant (for not to be below'd and yet retain'd is the greatest injury to a gentle spirit) . . . is one who highly honours the maned life and would not stain it.

It is no lesse then crueltie, to force a man to remain in that state as the solace of his life, which he and his friends know will be either the undoing or the disheartning of his life. And what is life without the vigor and spiritfull exercise of life? How can it be usefull either to private or publick employment?

I pass by the element of theological authority in this work, and the Vindication' of 'God and Moses' against the 'mis-attended words of Christ,' noticing only the point that God can truly be said to join together in holy matrimony' only those the 'fit Union' of whose souls 'may even incorporate them to love and amity'. 'Shall we say', cries Milton, 'that God hath joined error, fraud, unfitness, wrath, contention, perpetual loneliness, perpetual discord?' and calls the offspring of such alliances the '*Children of wrath* and anguish'.

The law, which can restrain 'licence and levity and uncontented breach of faith,' is too clumsy an instrument to deal with the 'inward and irremediable Disposition of Man,' and, 'in forbidding divorce, rather multiplies Evil. For if natures resistlesse sway in love or hate be once compell'd, it grows carelesse of it self, vicious, uselesse to friends, unserviceable and spiritlesse to the Commonwealth'.

After attributing the 'unjust Austerity upon Divorce' to the 'letter-bound servility of the Canon Doctors' and the superstition of the sacramental view of marriage, exalting it 'above the end and person for whom it was instituted', and asserting that the 'Papists who are the strictest forbidders of divorce, are the easiest libertines to admit of grossest uncleanness', he writes:

Another act of papall encroachment it was, to pluck the power and arbitrament of divorce from the master of the family [and entrust it to a judicial Court.] . . . But the Popes of *Rome* perceiving the great revenue and high authority it would give them ev'n over Princes, to have the judging and deciding of such a main consequence in the life of man as was divorce, wrought so upon the superstition of those ages, as to divest them of that right which God from the beginning had entrusted to the husband.

He admits, however, that difficulties about 'Dowries, Jointures', and the moral conduct of the parties should be under the jurisdiction of a magistrate, but that public authority should not prevail against either an agreement between the parties for dissolution or the will of the husband only.

Concerning the noisome divorce court, he writes that the woman whose honour is not appeach't, is lesse injur'd by a silent dismissal, being otherwise not illiberally dealt with, then to endure a clamouring debate of utterlesse things, in a busines of that civil secrecy and difficult discerning, as not to be over-much question'd by nearest friends. Which drew that answer from the greatest and worthiest *Roman* of his time *Paulus Emilius*, being demanded why he would put away his wife for no visible reason, *This Shoo*, said he, and held it out on his foot, is a neat shoo, a new shoo, and yet none of you know where it wrings me: much lesse by the unfamiliar cognisance of a fee'd gamester can such a private difference be examin'd, neither ought it.

He enumerates certain cranks and fanatics of his day, whose

opinions ... do end in satisfaction of the flesh, it may be come with reason into the thoughts of a wise man, whether all this proceed not partly, if not chiefly, from the restraint of some lawfull liberty . . . As-
hy Physick we learn in menstruous bodies, where natures current hath been stopt, that the suffocation and upward forcing of some lower part, affects the head and inward sense with dotage and idle fancies.

I give, in concluding these few quotations, Milton's lovely myth of *Anteros*:

Love, if he be not twin-born, yet hath a brother wondrous like him, call'd *Anteros*: whom while he seeks all about, his chance is to meet with many fals and faining Desires that wander singly up and down in her likenes. By them in their borrow'd garb, Love, though not wholly blind, as Poets wrong him, yet having but one eye, as being born an Archer aiming, and that eye not the quickest in this dark region here below, which is not Loves proper sphere, partly out of the simplicity, and credulity which is native to him, often deceived, imbraces and consorts him with these obvious and suborned striplings, as if they were his Mothers own Sons, for so he thinks them, while they suttly keepe themselves most on his blind side. But after a while, as his manner is, when soaring up into the high Tower of his *Apogaeum*, above the shadow of the earth, he darts out the direct rayes of his then most piercing eye-sight upon the impostures, and trim disguises that were us'd with him, and discerns that this is not his genuin brother, as he imagin'd, he has no longer the power to hold fellowship with such a personall mate. For strait his arrows loose their golden heads, and shed their purple feathers, his silk'n breades untwine, and slip their knots, and that originall and fine vertue giv'n him by Fate, all on a sudden goes out and leaves him undeifi'd and despoil'd of all his force; till finding *Anteros* at last, he kindles and repairs the almost faded ammunition of his Deity by the reflection of a co-equal and *homogeneal* fire. Thus mine author sung it to me; and by the leave of those who would be counted the only grave ones; this is no meer amatonous novel (though to be wise and skilful

in these matters, men heretofore of greatest name in vertue, have esteemed it one of the highest arks that human contemplation circling upwards, can make from the globy sea whereon she stands) but this is a deep and serious verity, shewing us that Love in manage cannot live nor subsist unlesse it be mutual; and where love cannot be, there can be left of wedlock nothing, but the empty husk of an outside matrimony: as undelightfull and displeasing to God, as any other kind of hyprocisie.

X

MILTON'S PROSE

IT IS RELATED of Edmund Burke that he used to vitalize his Parliamentary speeches by reading, before delivering them, the debate in Pandemonium reported in the second book of *Paradise Lost*.

It was an effectual practice, for there is the fit spirit of oratory in the counsels of the Infernal peers—especially in that of Belial, the advocate of 'expediency', who 'could make the worse appear the better reason'. He is indeed eminently prudential, and not merely plausible.

He 'pleas'd the eare', we are told; yet there is but little in his address of the charming quality that informs *Areopagitica*, Milton's 'Speech to the Parliament of England'. In it there may be heard the very voice that enchanted such men as Sir Henry Wootton and Manso. In reading the following passage, for example, one feels that Milton was a courtier no less than the most urbane cavalier:

If it be desir'd to know the immediat cause of all this free writing and free speaking, there cannot be assigned a truer than your own mild and free and human government; it is the liberty, Lords and Commons, which your own valorous and happy counsels have purchase us, liberty which is the nurse of all great wits; this is that which hath rarity'd and enlighten'd our spirits like the influence of heav'n; this is that which hath enfranchis'd, enlarged and lifted up our apprehensions degrees above themselves. Ye cannot make us now lesse capable, lesse knowing, lesse

eagerly pursuing of the truth, unlesse ye first make your selves, that made us so, lesse the lovers, lesse the founders of our true liberty. We can grow ignorant again, brutish, formall, and slavish, as ye found us; but you then must first become that which ye cannot be, oppressive, arbitrary, and tyrannous, as they were from whom ye have free'd us.

The prose style of Milton has various modes; a different one, almost, for each of his prose pamphlets. The mode of *An Apology against a Pamphlet*, for example, is very different from that of *Areopagitica*. Its manner of plangent, exuberant raillery will justify an extended quotation. The style, like that of *Areopagitica*, is consistent:

His next venome he utters against a prayer which he found in the animadversions,¹ angry it seems to finde any prayers but in the Service Book. He dislikes it, and I therefore like it the better. *It was theatrical!*, he sayes. And yet it consisted most of Scripture language: it had no *Rubrick* to be sung in an antick Coape upon the Stage of a High Altar. *It was big-mouthed* he sayes; no marvell; if it were fram'd as the voice of three Kingdomes: neither was it a prayer so much as a hymne in prose frequent both in the Prophets, and in humane authors; therefore the stile was greater then for an ordinary prayer: *It was an astounding prayer*. I thank him for that confession, so it was intended to astound and to astonish the guilty Prelats; and this Confuter confesses that with him it wrought that effect. But in that which followes, he does not play the Soothsayer but the diabolick slanderer of prayers. *It was made*, he sayes, *not so much to please God, or to benefite the wealepublick* (how dares the viperjudge that) *but to intimate*, saith he, *your good abilities, to her that is your rich hopes, your Maronilla*. How hard it is when a man meets with a Foole to keepe his tongue from folly. That were miserable indeed to be a Courter of *Maronilla*, and withall of such a haplesse "invention, as that no way should be left me to present my meaning but to make my selfe a canting Probationer of orisons. The Remonstrant when he was as young as I could

¹ Milton's *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence against Smectynnims*.

*Teach each hollow Grove to sound his love,
Wearying eccho with one changelesse word.*

And so he well might, and all his auditory besides with his *teach each*.

*Whether so me list my lovely thoughts to sing
Come dance ye nimble dryads by my side,
Whiles I report my fortunes or my loves.¹*

Delicious! he had that whole bevie at command whether in morrice or at May pole. Whilst I, by this figure-caster must be imagin'd in such distresse as to sue to *Maronilla*, and yet left so impoverish! of what to say, as to turne my Liturgy into my Ladies Psalter.

In these various sallies—as, in fact, throughout the pamphlet—the personality of Milton is distinct as if he were expressing it in his actual voice. His mood is exuberant, without inhibition. This is no less true, obviously, also of *Areopagitica*.

The best writing is as the best speaking, as Coleridge has observed. The object and condition of art are conjointly the practice of the freedom of nature; an ability easier of attainment in music, in which the Professor trains his pupils to relax the inhibited vocal nerves. In this aspect, one would be inclined to reverse Milton's dictum, 'First learn art, then follow nature'.

But he goes deeper. In his doctrine, the power of eloquence is dependent upon the state of goodness; goodness is the condition of spiritual health and thence vigour—in verbal expressions, copiousness, mobility, and control without constriction.

For doubtlesse that indeed according to art is most eloquent (he writes) which returnes and approaches nearest to nature from whence it came; and they expresse nature best, who in their lives least wander from her

¹ From Bishop Hall's *Toothlesse Satyrs*.

safe leading, which may be call'd regenerate reason. So that how he should be truly eloquent who is not withall a good man, I see not.¹

In *Defensio Secunda* he disclaims the possession of eloquence except insofar as it consists in the force of truth; which, on his principle, of course, is not disclaiming it at all.

In a passage which I have already quoted from the *Apology*, he connotes eloquence with the 'serious and hearty love of truth' and an altruistic passion to preach its gospel.

This association of eloquence, and thence literary genius, with altruism is pleasantly illustrated by a 'modern instance'. It is the description, as reprinted from the old *Daily News*, of Anatoli France's response to an Australian Professor who had come to him to discover the secret source of genius:

Nothing that he has trusted in survives—not style, and not imagination; not arrangement, no! nor skill in composition. To the slaughter all great writers flock: Rabelais, Molière, Balzac, Shakespeare, Swift, Cervantes, Dante. . . . The Master looks at him ironically. Then he relents. He will disclose the secret: 'The great writers have no pettiness of soul. That is their secret. They deeply love their fellow-creatures. They are generous. They keep their hearts wide open. They compassionate all suffering. They labour to appease it. They have pity on the helpless actors who are playing in the comic tragedy, or tragic comedy, of Destiny. Pity, then, my dear Professor, is the very fount of genius.'²

Bacon and Goethe, with their insistence on compassion as the criterion and measure of real greatness, would doubtless

¹As in so many other instances in Milton, the thought is derived: 'If men will impartially and not asquint look toward the offices and function of a poet, they will easily conclude to themselves the impossibility of any man's being a great poet without being first a good man' (Ben Jonson's Dedication to *Volpone*).

²Translated from *Les Matinées de la Villa Said*: propos d'Anatole France. Recueils par Paul Gsell. (Grasset.)

have concurred, and Coleridge has observed how inevitably selfish egotism will gradually constrict genius.¹

Anatoli France, in the lesson he read to the inquiring Professor, was referring in particular, apparently, to the genius of prose, of which eloquence is the organic voice. Poetry, however, is of similar derivation, due to principles in the organic sense, though ineffable. The essential voice of Shakespeare sounds occasionally, in commentary verses, in pure tones like the voice of a god. Thus in *Othello*:

It is the very error of the Moon;
She comes more near the Earth than she was wont,
And makes men mad.

In Milton's case, however, the voice, in this sense, is modified by its own means, the verbal and idiomatic channels he has formed by assimilation and transubstantiation from other poets. He possessed an extraordinarily effective subconscious organism, a marvellous mnemonic metabolism. This involved, moreover, substance or content no less than form.

In *The Reason of Church-Government* he treats of poetical genius:

These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God rarely bestow'd, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every Nation: and are of power beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of vertu, and publick civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty Hymns the throne and equipage of Gods Almighty-nesse, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his Church, to sing the victorious agonies of Martyrs and Saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious Nations doing

¹ Cf. the Chinese apophthegm, 'On those whom the gods would preserve they bestow the gift of compassion'.

valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general relapses of Kingdoms and States from justice and Gods true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in vertu amiable, or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is call'd fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and refluxes of mans thoughts from within, all these things with a solid and treatable smoothnesse to paint out and describe.

And the epic poem that he would compose, could only be achieved by 'devout prayer to that externall Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallow'd fire of his Altar to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases'.

To this, however, must be added 'industrious and select reading, steddy observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs'.

Both in prose and verse, Milton abounds in metaphors and similes; but his images, for the most part, are integral and not empty gauds, necessary to 'convey the meaning', in the sense of Confucius, who adds: 'Ornament is as substance, substance as ornament. The hide of a tiger, or leopard, stripped of its hair, is like the hide of a dog, or goat, stripped of its hair.' With which crucial observation I may couple A. R. Orage's

It is not the meaning of the *words* that counts for immortality, but the meaning of the *style*. Style ... is a kind of supermeaning. In great writing there is always a temporal and an eternal value. That Milton's pamphlets are unreadable to his present posterity is no slight upon them, but upon us.

In proceeding with the following quotation from the satirical *Apology*, I must, in my author's words, 'be wary, unlesse I can provide against offending the eare, as some

Musicians are wont skilfully to fall out of one key into another without breach of harmony'.¹

In this passage Milton touches upon the common practice of the period among didactic and controversial writers of resorting to marginal glosses, which, in another place in the pamphlet, he calls cutting out 'docks and creeks into the text' to 'unlade' a 'foolish frigate'.

For what with putting his fancy to the tiptoe in this description of himself, and what with adventuring presently to stand upon his own legs without the crutches of his margent, which is the since most commonly, that feeds the drouth of his text, he comes so lazily on in a Simile, with his *arme full of weeds*, and demeanes himself in the dull expression so like a dough kneaded thing, that he has not spirit enough left him so farre to look to his *syntaxis*, as to avoide nonsense.

Under the spur of excitement in some passages, Milton hits out phrases that afterwards became cliches; examples are: 'a chip of the old block', 'mincing the matter', 'taking the face'.

Two more quotations, one containing the second cliché, as it became, are obligatory:

And so he goes on mincing the matter, till he meets with something in Sir *Francis Bacon*, then he takes heart againe, and holds his *Major* at large. But by and by as soon as the shadow of Sir *Francis* hath left him, he fals off again warping and warping till he come to contradict himselfe in diameter.

And so I leave you and your fellow *starres*, as you terme them, *of either horizon*, meaning I suppose either *hemisphere*, unlesse you will be ridiculous

¹ Fielding seems to have had this passage in mind in *Tom Jones*, Ch. IV: 'Reader, take care: I have unadvisedly led thee to the top of as high a hill as Mr. Allworthy's, and how to get thee down without breaking thy neck, I do not well know: however, let us e'en venture to slide down together.' Also, in Milton's *Of Education*: 'I shall conduct ye to a hill side, where I will point ye out the right path. . . .'

in your astronomy. For the rationally horizon in heav'n is but one, and the sensible horizons in earth are innumerable; so that your allusion was as erroneous as your starres. But that you did well to prognosticate them all at lowest in the horizon, that is either seeming bigger then they are through the mist and vapour which they raise, or else sinking, and wasted to the snuffe in their westerne socket.

Milton's narrative style, as in *The History of Britain* and *A Brief History of Moscovia*, is terse and compressed, with Latinisms, on his own principle of 'saying much in a few words'. It is represented in the preface of *Samson Agonistes*, and, with metrical modification, in *Paradise Lost*. I quote a characteristic passage:

Thus representing the state of things in this Island, *Beda* surceas'd to write. Out of whom chiefly hath bin gatherd, since the *Saxons* arrival, such as hath bin delivered, a scattered story pickt out heer and there, with some trouble and tedious work from among his many Legends of Visions and Miracles; toward the latter end so bare of civill matters, as what can be thence collected may seem a Calendar rather then a History, tak'n up for the most part with succession of Kings, and computation of years, yet those hard to be reconcil'd with the *Saxon Annals*. Thir actions we read of, were most commonly Wars, but for what cause wag'd, or by what Councells carried on, no care was had to let us know: wherby thir strength and violence we understand, of thir wisdom, reason, or justice, little or nothing . . .

Milton's sentences in his pamphlets are occasionally very long, and in the *Apology* he ridicules 'one who makes sentences by the Statute, as if all above three inches long were confiscate', who, he says in another place, 'will bestow on us a pretty modell of himselfe; and sobs me out halfe a dozen tizicall mottoes where ever he had them, hopping short in the measure of convulsion fits; in which labour the agony of his wit, having scapt narrowly, instead of well siz'd

periods, he greets us with a quantity of thum-ring posies'.

A stricture that has been made upon his ample style in general is, however, unjust, and appears to be due to a professorial defect of ear; for he can fill his great sails, running superbly before the wind; although some pages are laboured when the nerve of zest failed him in the hurry of the work to which his conscience drove him.

XI

MILTON'S DIGRESSIONS

A REMARKABLE FEATURE of Milton's polemical pamphlets is the opportunity he generally takes in them to write about himself and his life's course and aims; this to such an extent, in fact, that when these various passages are assembled as has been done,¹ they amount to a veritable autobiography.

Thus, in *The Reason of Church-Government*, he avails himself of an imputation that he has engaged in the controversies from a desire for vain-glory, to digress and expatiate in this way, proceeding—after a suitable preamble—with a decorous assumption of diffidence addressed to the 'intelligent and equal auditor':

I must say therefore that after I had from my first yeares by the ceaselesse diligence and care of my father, whom God recompense, bin exercis'd to the tongues, and some sciences, as my age would suffer, by sundry masters and teachers both at home and at the schools, it was found, that whether ought was impos'd me by them that had the overlooking or betak'n to of mine own chaise in English, or other tongue, prosing or versing, but chiefly this latter, the stile by certain vital signes it had, was likely to live. But much latelier in the privat Academies of *Italy*, whither I was favor'd to resort, perceiving that some trifles which I had in memory, composed at under twenty or therabout (for the manner is that every one must give some proof of his wit and reading there,) met with acceptance above what was look for, and other things which I had shifted in scarcity of books and conveniences to patch up amongst

¹ Notably in *Autobiography of John Milton*, James J. G. Graham (1872). *Introduction to the Works of John Milton*, Hiram Corson (1899).

them, were receiv'd with written Encomiums, which the Italian is not forward to bestow on men of this side the *Alps*, I began thus farre to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not lesse to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labour and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life) joyn'd with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die.

This introduces extensive disquisitions on the nature, inspiration, influences, etc., of the grand poem which he declares he will write to the glory of his country.

In *An Apology against a Pamphlet*, where, in a passage of comparable amplitude, he seizes the occasion of some aspersions cast upon his moral character to express in prose what in his *Mask* he had expressed in poetry—his idealism on the subject of sex; in the latter case modified by Renaissance romanticism.

However pleasing or interesting or plausibly pertinent these digressions may be, they are certainly egotistic in character. A psychologist of the present day would doubtless diagnose them as 'exhibitionism'; such a man would psycho-analytically demolish the displayed quality of a flower or the 'heavens and earth' that 'declare the glory of God'. But the egotism of Milton was such as Coleridge described it, a 'manifestation of spirit'. It enabled him to justify himself as in *Paradise Lost* he justified the 'waves of God'.

This was in the nature of justification by faith'. His egotism was one with his consciousness of possessing what Sir Thomas Browne calls a 'piece of Divinity in us'. It produced his idealism shining outwards. When he had gone blind, it shone inwards; an 'interior light', as he tells in *Defensio Secunda*.

This consciousness of light, of direct connection with Deity, involving a sense of investiture with power and Divine commission, aroused his polemical zeal. When that zeal became excessive, the means to divagate on to personal ground enabled him to regain *terra firma*; otherwise such effects occurred as Lord Macaulay described: exalted transports, flights of incomparable eloquence. One such phenomenon was patently so produced. After rising wrath against prelatical tyranny and arrogance:

O Sir (Milton exclaims), I doe now feele myselfe in wrapt on the sodaine into those mazes and *Labyrinths* of dreadfull and hideous thoughts, that which way to get out, or which way to end I know not, unlesse I turne mine eyes, and with your help lift up my hands to that Eternall and Propitious *Throne*, where nothing is readier than *grace* and *refuge* to the distresses of mortall Suppliants. ...

The passage is too long to quote entire; but a further extract will suffice to show its quality:

And now wee knowe, O thou our most certain hope and defence, that thine enemies have been consulting all the Sorceries of the *great whore*, and have joynd their Plots with that sad Intelligencing Tyrant that mischiefes the World with his Mines of *Ophir*, and lies thirsting to revenge his Navall ruines that have larded our Seas; but let them all take Counsell together, and let it come to nought, let them Decree, and doe thou Cancell it, let them gather themselves, and bee scatter'd, let them embattell themselves and be broken, let them imbattell, and be broken, for thou art with us.

I conclude with the latter part of another such 'burst', in Macaulay's description, 'of devotional and lyric rapture'. The 'Armado' passage is too dynamic to be called 'lyric', but this one may be truly so called. It occurs after the series of jeering, grim 'animadversions' Milton had made upon

selected statements in defence of episcopacy by Bishop Hall:

O if we freeze at noone after their earely thaw, let us feare lest the sunne for ever hide himselfe, and turne his orient steps from our ingratefull Horizon justly condemn'd to be eternally benighted. Which dreadful judgement O thou the ever-begotten light, and perfect Image of the Father intercede may never come upon us, as we trust thou hast; for thou hast open'd our difficult and sad times, and given us an unexpected breathing after our long oppressions; thou hast done justice upon those that tyrannized over us, while some men waver'd, and admir'd a vaine shadow of wisdom in a tongue nothing slow to utter guile, though thou hast taught us to admire onely that which is good, and to count that onely praise-worthy which is grounded upon thy divine Precepts. Thou hast discover'd the plots, and frustrated the hopes of all the wicked in the Land; and put to shame the persecutors of thy Church; thou hast made our false *Prophets* to be found a he in the sight of all the people, and chac'd them with sudden confusion and amazement before the redoubled bnghtnesse of thy descending cloud that now covers thy Tabernacle. Who is there that cannot trace thee now in thy beamy walke through the midst of thy Sanctuary, amidst those golden *candlesticks*, which have long suffcr'd a dimnesse amongst us through the violence of those that had seiz'd them, and were more taken with the mention of their gold then of their starry light; teaching the doctrine of *Balaam* to cast a stumbling-block before thy servants, commanding them to eat things sacrific'd to Idols, and forcing them to fornication. Come therefore O thou that hast the seven starres in thy right hand, appoint thy chosen *Priests* according to their Orders, and courses of old, to minister before thee, and duely to dresse and powre out the consecrated oyle into thy holy and ever-burning lamps; thou hast sent out the spirit of prayer upon thy servants over all the Land to this effect, and stirr'd up their vowes as the sound of many waters about thy Throne. Every one can say that now certainly thou hast visited this land, and hast not fogotten the utmost corners of the earth, in a time when men had thought that thou wast gone up from us to the farthest end of the Heavens, and hadst left to doe marvellously among the sons of these last Ages. O

Perfect, and accomplish thy glorious acts; for men may leave their works unfinisht, but thou art a God, thy nature is perfection; shouldst thou bring us thus far onward from *Egypt* to destroy us in this Wildernesse though wee deserve; yet thy great name would suffer in the rejoycing of thine enemies, and the deluded hope of all thy servants. When thou hast settl'd peace in the Church, and righteous judgement in the Kingdome, then shall all thy Saints addresse their voyces of joy, and triumph to thee, standing on the shoare of that red Sea into which our enemies had almost driven us. And he that now for haste snatches up a plain ungarnish't present as a thanke-offering to thee, which could not bee deferred in regard of thy so many late deliverances wrought for us one upon another, may then perhaps take up a Harp, and sing thee an elaborate Song to Generations. In that day it shall no more bee said as in scorne, this or that was never held so till this present Age, when men have better learnt that the times and seasons passe along under thy feet, to goe and come at thy bidding, and as thou didst dignifie our fathers dayes with many revelations above all the fore-going ages, since thou tookst the flesh; so thou canst vouchsafe to us (though unworthy) as large a portion of thy spirit as thou pleasest; for who shall prejudice thy all-governing will? seeing the power of thy grace is not past away with the primitive times, as fond and faithlesse men imagine, but thy Kingdome is now at hand, and thou standing at the dore. Come forth out of thy Royall Chambers, O Prince of all the Kings of the earth, put on the visible robes of thy imperiall Majesty, take up that unlimited Scepter which thy Almighty Father hath bequeath'd thee; for now the voice of thy Bride calls thee, and all creatures sigh to bee renew'd.

XII

MILTON'S MAGIC SHADOW

ACCORDING TO FITZGERALD'S *Rubâiyât of Omar Khayydm*, Heaven is the 'Vision of fulfill'd Desire' and Hell is the 'Shadow of a Soul on fire'. This, in the times when the book was first published, was regarded by orthodox people as scepticism; today, it would be called in the conventional lingo 'escapism'. Omar's conception, however, is complemented. We who project the 'Vision' and the 'Shadow' are ourselves projected:

We are no other than a moving row
Of magic Shadow-shapes that come and go.

Our life itself is in the nature of an escape. At least, the 'Vision' and the 'Shadow' aspects are manifest in works of poetical and imaginative genius.

In *Paradise Lost* and *Robinson Crusoe* they are respectively illustrated.

The Hell of *Paradise Lost* is manifestly the 'Shadow of a Soul on Fire'. Its flames, according to its paradoxically inverting principle, cast 'n) light, but rather darkness visible'; while its Satan, who has been driven down from Heaven against his 'proper motion' which is upwards towards his 'native seat', inversely counteracts that motion. As with his creator, Milton, character, destiny, and will are all compact; so with himself, willing and enacting are identical. He

reverses his natural heaven-born tendency with the fiat, 'Evil be thou my Good'.

Robinson Crusoe represents the 'Vision of fulfill'd Desire'. Defoe, when he wrote the book, was actually an outcast in hiding in a mean lodging, and he imagined an ideal outcast in an ideal situation. He conceived as an idea what eventually we have come to know as the 'island feeling', so fascinatingly exploited by Jules Verne, by R. L. Stevenson, and, in his *Desert Islands*, by Walter de la Mare. This 'island feeling' has varied atmospheres, tones, and qualities of imaginative appetite, whether it be towards adventure, or romance, or solitude, or security. Security was Defoe's chief desideratum; the lack of security was the 'Shadow' of his 'Soul on fire'; of security, and also—what lends security tone—the sense of home.

Crusoe's home on his desert island was also his castle. He contrived for himself a refuge within a refuge, an island within an island. An island is a piece of land surrounded by water. What Crusoe called his 'castle' consisted of a piece of land surrounded and concealed by natural walls which, since they were planted and growing walls, were of more than ordinary impenetrableness. Defoe in his ideal castaway proceeded to construct and improve this snug arboreal fortification, taking an absorbing pleasure in the means and method. Thus, every single article salvaged from the wreck had a value, the intrinsic, magical value of heart's desire. Thus provided, thus ensconced so securely with his dog and parrot and, later on, that other natural creature, his 'man Friday', we feel that no man, no outlaw or outcast in this world, could wish for a more effectual 'Vision'.

Nevertheless, the 'Shadow' also is there. It is implicit in

the 'Vision'. As the ocean encompasses the island, so does solitariness encompass Crusoe. It is the ideal solitariness of the ideal castaway. The castaway communes with the Infinite. There is in the ingenuousness of his piety, in the simplicity of his gratitude for benefits received, in the positive spirit he shows of resignation raised into contentment, and sense of fatality identified with faith, an ideal transmutation. The 'Shadow' of Defoe's actual loneliness projected into the solitariness of Crusoe is the effective condition of his 'fulfill'd Desire'. It is related to Crusoe's consciousness of security; he is secure through isolation; through his solitariness on the island he is directly under the eye of Providence. This ingenious, ingenuous, God-trusting castaway is a figure of universal value.

* * *

The symbolic significance of *Robinson Crusoe* in its universalism is patent. That of *Paradise Lost*, on the other hand, is obscure; it is masked and cloaked, as I have attempted to show, in a subconscious disguise.

However, the nature of a thing appears most clearly in its development or extreme extension; the significance of Milton's epic, as that of his tragedy, appears in the development of its close. The conclusion of *Paradise Lost*,

They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow,
Through *Eden* took thir solitarie Way,

is as significant in its feeling of peace after tragic storm as the close of *Samson Agonizes*,

His servants he with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event
With peace and consolation hath dismiss,
And calm of mind, all passion spent.

Milton himself attained peace at the time when the Commonwealth collapsed and was succeeded by the sovereignty of a single *Person* who had 'little els to do, but to ... pageant himself up and down in Progress among the perpetual bowing and cringings of an abject People'.¹

Milton accepted the situation in the spirit of his Satan, deriving 'resolution from despair'. 'The time had come', he said, 'for a man to avert his eyes from external events.' He had realized that he had been living in an idealist's paradise, in a country which had beguiled him by the 'sweet sound';² he abstracted it into Utopia—nowhere or anywhere; any country where a man could live tolerably.³ The scene of his projected great poem, originally his country, became everywhere, the entire universe; his idealistic system—his God, himself, and his country—became the theological geocentric system, the 'central earth, with Heaven above and Hell beneath.

He transformed, in *Paradise Lost*, evil into good by representing good in the guise of evil; he threw off the Satan of his offended pride by giving it, by means of subconscious dramatisation, free will; free will that involved predestination, in a free field, to destroy itself.

Thus *Paradise Lost* was the 'Shadow' of his 'Soul on fire'; the projection of a psychological holocaust. At the same time, it was the 'Vision' of his 'fulfill'd Desire'; the phoenix risen out of the ashes; a prodigious instance of repression producing

¹ *The Readif and Easic Way to establish a Free Commonwealth.*

² '... what you term policy, and which I wish that you had rather called patriotic piety, has, if I may so say, almost left me, who was charmed with so sweet a sound, without a country.... Our country is wherever we are well off.'¹ (Letter, in Latin, to Peter Heinbach.)

•Ibid.

expression; of energy releasing energy; for Milton's controversial and official activities had lasted for twenty years; they had been carried on under pressure of haste and the strain of failing eyesight and intermittent attacks of dizziness; in his polemical work there had been the additional and major stress, the nervous friction of passion expressed through an imperfect conductor, violently. All this, ending in the frustration of his nationalistic ideal, would surely in any other man have proved exhausting. Milton, as aforesaid, dynamically reacted, condensing and converting the waste-products of his 'furnaces' (in Blake's term) into controlled power, on the principle as expressed in *Paradise Lost* of 'turning' his 'Tortures into horrid Arms against the Torturer', or, as in *Samson Agonistes*:

... he though blind of sight,
 Despisd and thought extinguish! quite,
 With inward eyes illuminated
 His fierie vertue rouz'd
 From under ashes into sudden flame.

Blake renders the phenomenon the more impressive by suggesting a startling analogy. He implies, as Denis Saurat points out, that God created man in order to expel evil from himself. In Blake's philosophy, however, energy itself is evil, and, as energy at the disturbance of the Celestial equilibrium (mythically speaking) originated all motion and therefore all action, evil may be regarded as a condition of potential good.

The region of psychological enfranchisement lies beyond hope and fear in uninhibited abandonment, and Milton's mighty daemon carried him over. In attaining this freedom

he effected his own motto, *In weakness I am made strong*. He writes (in Latin) in *Defensio Secunda*:

There is, after the example of the Apostle, a way to strength through weakness. Let me, then, be the most feeble creature alive, as long as that feebleness serves to invigorate the energies of my rational and immortal spirit; as long as in that obscurity in which I am enveloped, the light of the Divine presence more clearly shines; then, in proportion as I am weak, I shall be invincibly strong; and in proportion as I am blind, I shall more clearly see. O! that I may thus be perfected by feebleness, and irradiated by obscurity. And indeed, in my blindness, I enjoy in no inconsiderable degree the favour of the Deity, who regards me with more tenderness and compassion in proportion as I am able to behold nothing but himself.

Thus *Paradise Lost* represented Milton's 'Vision of fulfill'd Desire' in two diverse but related aspects. He had accomplished his great—though not patriotic—poem, with its inherent assurance of an 'immortality of fame'; while as a result of this achievement he had attained peace such as is patent in *Paradise Regain'd*, the aftermath of *Paradise Lost*.

* * *

'The good, great man', says Coleridge, 'has three friends—himself, his Maker, and the Angel Death.' On himself, Milton was well able to depend, although his bodily ills—gout, neuritis, etc.—were somewhat excessive. (He could have borne his blindness, he told a visitor, if it were not for the pain.) He continued to work when he could, with groping endeavour, on the compilation of a Latin-English dictionary; which was left at his death in such a state of disorder, and confused, illegible notes, that very little could be done with it.

In his Maker he trusted implicitly. He was as impression-

able to the Divine influence—the 'light of the Divine presence'—as when, seated in the sun (the blind man's comforter), he felt the 'sovrán vital Lamp'. As his blindness intensified his sense of the solar rays he could not see, even so it rendered the 'interior light more precious and more pure'. I have denied in the earlier part of these studies that Milton was a mystic; in respect of this intuitive and, as it were, super-sensuous faculty, the judgment needs some modification.

Milton's religion was the vital, sovereign principle of his extraordinarily integrated nature. It had saved him in the time of success when, in the absence of such Celestial ballast, the heady exultation of his triumph over the Royalist Goliath might well have carried him over into megalomania. Now, amid the shipwreck of his hopes, it kept him from being drawn down by the eddies of despair.

As regards the Angel Death, the last 'friend' (not only of the 'good, great man'), the peculiar applicability to Milton of Coleridge's saying is impressive; he died, in Johnson's phrase, by a 'quiet and silent expiration'.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

- 1608 (9 December) John Milton born at the *Spread Eagle', his father's house and place of business as a scrivener (attorney and law stationer), Bread Street, Cheapside, the second of five children — only Anne (the first) and Christopher (the fifth), besides himself, surviving.
- 1620 (circa) Sent to St. Paul's School, after being tutored at home by Thomas Young. Beginning of his great friendship with his schoolfellow, Charles Diodati.
- 1625 (12 February) Admitted as a pensioner of Christ's College, Cambridge: matriculates 9 April.
- 1629 (26 March) Takes B.A. degree.
- 1632 (3 July) Takes M.A. degree. After leaving Cambridge settles at Horton, Buckinghamshire, where his father has retired from business.
- 1637 (3 April) Death of his mother.
- 1638 (April) Begins Italian tour.
- 1638 (27 August) Death of Charles Diodati.
- 1639** (July) Ends Italian tour.
- 1639 (July) Takes rooms in St. Bride's Churchyard, and soon afterwards a house in Aldersgate Street.
- 1640 Receives his nephews, John and Edward Phillips, as resident pupils.
- 1642 (May or June) Marries Mary Powell, daughter of a Cavalier J.P. of Forest Hill, Oxfordshire. After a month or so, she goes on a visit to her old home, and refuses to return at the time appointed. Milton's father comes to live with him.

- 1644 First signs of glaucoma.
- 1645 Reconciliation with his truant wife. Moves to a larger house in the Barbican.
- 1646 Harbours his wife's family, who have been disinherited at the surrender of Oxford, until their estates are restored. His daughter, Anne, born.
- 1647 (15 March) Death of his father. He gives up pupils, and moves to a smaller house in High Holborn.
- 1648 His daughter, Mary, born.
- 1649 (15 March) Appointed Latin Secretary to the Council of State, with chambers in Whitehall; salary £289 14s. 4½d. per annum.
- 1649 (March) His son, John, born: dies in the same month.
- 1652 Deprived of his Whitehall chambers; moves to a house in Petty France, Westminster. Becomes totally blind and is given an assistant in his official work. His daughter, Deborah, born. Death of his wife.
- 1655 (17 April) His salary reduced to £150 per annum.
- 1656 (12 November) Marries Katherine Woodcock.
- 1657 (19 October) A daughter born.
- 1658 (February) Death of his second wife and her daughter.
- 1660 Dismissed from office (at Restoration). Is concealed for a time in a friend's house in Bartholomew Close. Arrested during summer, but released, being ordered to pay fees.
- 1663 (24 February) Marries Eliabeth Minshull (thirty years his junior). Moves to Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields.
- 1665 Moves to cottage at Chalfont St. Giles to escape the plague.
- 1674 (8 November) Dies after an attack of gout.

POEMS: PUBLICATION

A Maske Presented At Ludlow Castle, 1634: On Michaelmasse night, before the Right Honourable, Iohn Earle of Bridgewater, Vicount Brackly, Lord Praesident of Wales, and one of his Maiesties most honourable Privie Counsell. 1637.

Lycidas included in *Obsequies to the Memorie of Mr. Edward King* (generally bound up with *Iusta Edovardo King Naufrago, ab amicis moerentibus, amoris, et μνείας χάρις*, 1638).

Epitaphium Damonis (apparendy for presentation purposes). Undated.

Poems of Mr. John Milton, both English and Latin, Compos'd at several times. Printed by his true copies. 1645.

Poems, etc., upon Several Occasions. By Mr. John Milton: Both English and Latin, etc. Composed at several times. With a small Tractate of Education to Mr. Hartlib. 1673.

Paradise Lost. A Poem Written in Ten Books by John Milton. 1667.

Paradise Regain'd. A Poem. In IV Books. To which is added *Samson Agonistes*. The Author John Milton. 1671.

Samson Agonistes. A Dramatic Poem. The Author, John Milton. 1671.

Paradise Lost. A Poem in Twelve Books. The Author John Milton (Second Edition: revised and augmer ced). 1674.

Four Sonnets included in Edward Phillips' *Letters of State*. 1694.

PROSE: PUBLICATION

Of Reformation touching Church-Discipline in England, and the Causes that hitherto have hindred it: Two Bookes, written to a Freind. 1641.

Of Prelaticall Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduc'd from the Apostolical times by vertue of those Testimonies which are alledg'd to that purpose in some late Treatises: one whereof goes under the Name of James, Archbishop of Armagh. 1641.

Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence, against Smectymnuus. In two Books. 1641.

The Reason of Church-Governement Urg'd against Prelaty. 1641.

An Apology against a Pamphlet call'd a Modest Confutation of the Animadversions upon the Remonstrant against Smectymnuus. March or April 1642.

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce: Restored to the good of both Sexes, From the bondage of Canon Law, and other mistakes, to Christian Freedom, guided by the Rule of Charity. Wherein also many places of Scripture have recovered their long-lost meaning. Seasonable to be now thought on in the Reformation intended, i August 1643.

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce: Restor'd to the good of both Sexes, From the bondage of Canon Law, and other mistakes, to the true meaning of Scripture in the Law and Gospel compar'd. Wherein also are set down the bad consequences of abolishing or condemning of Sin, that which the Law of God allowes, and Christ abolish not. Now the second time revis'd and much augmented. In Two Books: To the Parliament of England with the Assembly. The Author J.M. (Second Edition). 2 February 1643-4.

Of Education. To Master Samuel Hartlib. 5 June 1644.

*The Judgement of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce: Writt'n to Edward the Sixth, in his Second Book of the Kingdom of Christ: And now Englisht. Wherein a late Book, restoring the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*,*

is here confirm'd and justify'd by the Authority of Martin Bucer. To the Parliament of England. 15 July 1644.

Areopagitica: A Speech of Mr. *John Milton* for the Liberty of Unlicens*d Printing, to the Parliament of England. 24 November 1644.

Tetrachordon: Expositions upon The foure chief places in Scripture, which treat of Manage, or nullities in Mariage. (Here follow references.) Wherein *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, as was lately published, is confirm'd by explanation of Scripture, by testimony of ancient Fathers, of civill lawes in the Primitive Church, of famousest Reformed Divines, And lastly, by an intended Act of the Parliament and Church of England in the last yeare of Edward the sixth by the former Author J.M. 4 March 1644-5.

Colasterion: A Reply to a Nameless Answer against *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. Wherein the trivial Author of that Answer is discover'd, the Licencer conferr'd with, and the Opinion which they traduce defended. By the former author, J.M. 4 March 1644-5.

The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates: Proving that it is Lawfull, and hath been held so through all Ages, for any, who have the Power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked King, and after due conviction, to depose, and put him to death; if the ordinary Magistrate have neglected, or deny'd to doe it. And that they, who of late so much blame Depositing, are the Men that did it themselves. The Author, J.M. 13 February 1649.

Articles of Peace made and concluded with the Irish Rebels, and Papists, by James Earle of Ormond, For and in behalfe of the late King, and by vertue of his Autoritie. Also a Letter sent by Ormond to Col. Jones, Governour of Dublin, with his Answer thereunto. And a Representation of the Scotch Presbytery at Belfast in Ireland. Upon all which are added Observations. Publisht by Authority. ('Observations' alone by Milton). 16 May 1649.

Εἰκονοκλάστης. In Answer to a Book IntitTd **Εἰκὼν Βασιλική** The Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and sufferings. The Author I.M. 6 October 1649.

Εἰκονοκλάστης. Second Edition (much enlarged). 1650.

The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, etc. Published now the second time.

With some additions, and many Testimonies also added out of the best and learnedest among Protestant Divines asserting the position of this book (Second Edition). 1650.

Joannis Miltoni Angli pro Populo Anglicano Defensio, contra Clatidii Anonymi, alias Salmasii, Defensionem Regiam. [A folio *Editio Emendatior* the same year.] 16501.

Joannis Miltoni Angli pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda, contra infamem libellum anonymum cui titulus, Regii sanguinis clamor ad coelum adversus parricidas Anglicanos. 30 May 1654.

Joannis Miltoni Angli pro se Defensio contra Alexandrum Morum, Ecclesiasten, Libelli famosi, cui titulus, Regii sanguinis clamor ad coelum adversus Parricidas Anglicanos, authorem recte dictum. (With appendix, *Joannis Miltoni ad Alexandri Mori Supplementum Responsio.*) 1655.

Scriptum Dom. Protectoris Reipublicae Angliae, Scotiae, Hiberniae, etc. Ex Consensu atque Sentential Concilii sui editum; in quo hujus Reipublicae Causa contra Hispanos justa esse demonstrata. 1655.

Literae ab Oliverio Protectore Angliae etc. ad Sacram Regiam Majestatem Sueciae. Data 7. Februarii Anno M. DC. LVI. 1656.

Apographum Literarum Serenissimi Protectoris Oliverii Cromwelli quas scripsit ad Excelsos et Praepontes d.d. Ordines Generales Foederati Belgii Die 21/31 Augusti, 1656. Unacum Response Eorundem Ordinum ad d. Protectorem Dato 22 Septembris 1656. 1656.

Joannis Miltoni, Angli, Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio contra Claudii Anonymi, etc. (Editio Correctior, with postscript.) October 1658.

A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes: Shewing that it is not lawfull for any power on Earth to compell in matters of Religion. The author J.M. 1659.

Considerations touching the likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church. Wherin is also discoursed of Tithes, Church-fees, and Church-Revenues; And whether any maintenance of ministers can be settl'd by law. The author J.M. 1659.

The Readie and Easie Way to establish a Free Commonwealth, and the excellence therof, compared with the Inconveniencies and Dangers of readmitting Kingship in this Nation. The author J.M. 3 March 1659-60.

Brief Notes Upon a late Sermon, titl'd The Fear of God and the King. Preach'd and since publish'd by Matthew Griffith, D.D., and Chaplain to the late King. Wherin many notorious wrestlings of Scripture, and other falsities are observ'd. 1660.

The Readie and Easie Way to establish a Free Commonwealth, etc. (Second Edition: much augmented and modified.) 1660.

Accedence Commenc't Grammar. Supply'd with sufficient Rules for the use of such as Younger or Elder are desirous, without more trouble then needs, to attain the Latin Tongue; the elder sort especially, with little teaching, and thir own industry. By John Milton. 1669.

The History of Britain. That part especially now call'd England. From the first Traditional Beginning, continu'd to the Norman Conquest. Collected out of the Antientest and best Authours therof by John Milton. 1670.

Johannis Miltoni Angli, Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio, ad Petri Rami Methodum Concinnata. Adjecta est Praxis Analytica et Petri Rami Vita. 1672.

Of True Religion, Haeresie, Schism, Toleration, And what best means may be used against the growth of Popery. The author J.M. 1673.

Joannis Miltoni Angli, Epistolamm Familiarium Liber Unus: Quibus accesserunt, ejusdem, jam olim in Collegio Adolescentis, Prolusiones quaedam Oratoriae. I July 1674.

A Declaration, Or, Letters Patents for the Election of this present King of Poland, John the Third, Elected on the 22d of May last past, Anno Dom. 1674. Containing The Reasons of this Election the great Vertues and Merits of the said Serene Elect, his eminent Services in War, especially in his last great Victory against the Turks and Tartars, wherof many Particulars are here related, not published before. Now faithfully translated from the Latin Copy. 1674.

Literae Pseudo-Senatus Anglican!, Cromwellii, Reliquorumque Perduellium nomine acjussu conscriptae a Joanne Miltono. 1676.

Character of the Long Parliament and Assembly of Divines. In MDCXLI. (Not accredited by all bibliographers.) 1681.

A Brief History of Moscovia, and of other less known Countries lying Eastward of Russia as far as Cathay. Gathered from the writings of several Eye-witnesses. By John Milton. 1682.

The Present Means, and brief Delineation of a Free Commonwealth, Easy to be put in Practice, and without Delay. In a Letter to General Monk. (Belongs to 1660; first published in Toland's edition of Milton's Prose Works.) 1697.

A Letter to a Friend, Concerning the Ruptures of the Commonwealth. (Dated 20 October 1659; first published in the 'Amsterdam' Edition of Milton's Works.) 1698.

Joannis Miltoni Angli De Doctrina Christiana. Libri Duo Posthumi. (Edited by C. R. Sumner, M.A.) 1825.

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