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MILTON'S
COMUS & LYCIDAS
• WITH
NOTES & INTRODUCTION

By

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“I don’t know,” said the young man, “as to whether my work will be appreciated. The world is peopled with worthies, clever and learned.”¹

“It doesn’t matter,” answered the lady, “in the world’s audience-hall, the simple blade of grass sits on the same carpet, with the sun-beam and the stars of mid-night.”²

1 & 2. RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

P R E F A C E

I do not want to say anything about my **Comus** and **Lycidas**. I leave it to the learned who have acquired the golden key, 'that opes the palace of knowledge and literature.' I am writing this Preface, to thank all those who helped me in preparing this edition.

I am under special obligations of my teachers—**Prof. R. K. Lagu**, **Prof. H. V. Tulpule** and **Prof. B. D. Sattigiri**—who went through the manuscript of the introduction and notes, offering priceless suggestions at every step. In fact, they played the part of the Attendant Spirit, favouring me always with their able guidance, though I am not one of those, 'favoured of High Jove.'

I cannot but express my feeling of gratitude to my friend, **Prof. B. N. Joshi**, (H. P. T. College, Nasik), who helped me immensely in preparing the notes and reading the proofs. Surely, a help from a poet and a scholar like **Prof. Joshi** can never be overpraised.

And my students—**Mr. S. S. Ayangar**, **Mr. V. D. Sathaye** and **Miss Anusuya Bhagwat**, came to my assistance with an enthusiasm peculiar to all true students of literature. For this, they deserve special mention.

I also thank **Mr. Sardesai** for the fine printing **Mr. Sahasrabuddhe** for the beautiful block of Milton's portrait, and above all, **Prof. B. V. Bhide** and **Prof. V. P. Patwardhan**, 'but for whom the book would not have seen the light of the day.'

Lastly, I acknowledge my indebtedness to all the critics of Milton's **Comus** and **Lycidas**, whose names are frequently mentioned in the following pages.

R. R. College, }
Bombay, 19. }

Y. D. Bhawe

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COMUS

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUNDS AND HORIZONS

I. General Characteristics

Behind lay the green-clad earth; the green forest with a beautiful fountain. Near the fountain, on a green sward, blithe youths sang songs, now of war, now of love; and fair maidens with their Queen¹ watched and listened. In the midst of them sat two boys: one painted pictures² as fine as a rainbow; and the other created a new world³ as varied as God's with its own horizons and 'a pageant of the lives of men with their loves and passions and struggles and failures.'

It was with this brilliant background, that John Milton, one of the brightest stars of English Poetry, was born.

But, however brilliant the background was, the age in which he lived and wrote was one of transition—an *era of curious paradoxes*. If there moved in that period Puritanism characterized by austerity, there walked side by side, Renaissance—the Lady beautiful and essentially pagan. If there were some who exhausted the language of eulogy in praising 'Kings and their Divine Rights' there were others who were ever ready to hurl them to Hades. Some chanted songs to their love-deities 'so buxom, blithe and debonair'; 'Rise and put on your foliage and be seen to come forth like the spring-time fresh and green, and sweet as Flora'; while others found 'elixir' in God alone. Some were masque-mad and loved

1. i. e. Queen Elizabeth. 2. Spenser. 3. Shakespeare.

theatres as their lady-love, while others wrote 'Histriomastixes'—treatises against drama and actors and such like caterpillars of the commonwealth. Some men studied science and wrote books to drive away superstitions and false popular conceptions about the nature of the Universe ; whereas others continued to glory in their gross ignorance. Renaissance thirst for knowledge, love of art and beauty and poetry, austere puritanism ever ready to pull down the palace of art, moral seriousness and gay frivolousness—all these and many other contradictory things jostled with one another in this period. Rightly has Rose Macaulay observed that "England in 1608 was an assembly of unresolved conflicts—Renaissance ambition and arrogance of learning,.....lyric loveliness and classical tradition, medieval puritanism with the new puritanism, a growing and grumbling sense of personal rights and national liberties, a swelling of that pet vanity of the English Political consciousness, furious convictions expressed in mannerless controversies."

II. Milton in Relation to his Age

Such was the age in which Milton lived and wrote. It was an era of transition and everything was in the melting pot. *It made Milton's poetic career a curious blend of apparent paradoxes.* Therefore to understand Milton's poetry, we should study in detail the characteristics of this period of unprecedented change. For, however surrounded with celestial dreams a poet may be, he is ever the product of his own age. Wordsworth's famous line on Milton—"Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart"—is variously understood and generally misunderstood. We are prone to forget the last line of the same sonnet—

'And yet thy heart

The lowliest duties on herself did lay.'

It is not for nothing that he wrote later when he was threatened with blindness : 'I decided to employ my little remaining eyesight in doing this greatest service to commonwealth.' He sacrificed his eye-sight to defend his dear commonwealth. He left the crystal palace of poetry and for about a decade entered into the revolutionary struggle of his day. He is 'the greatest, and most representative figure,' says Phillip Henderson, 'of the creative forces of the age.'

And as a matter of fact, the times were one of swift-footed change and matters of grave concern. As Mastermann has pointed out: 'Opinion and belief, theory and practice alike in politics, science, theology (and religion) passed through a series of mutations'; and it is foolish to expect a soul so sensitive as Milton's keeping itself aloof from them.

III. Political and Religious Background '

The moment is a serious one. Five Tudors including 'Gloriana'—England's greatest Queen—have disappeared. Their place is taken by James—'the comic off-spring of the tragic union of Mary Queen of Scots and Darnley.' Never was a king so grotesquely unkingly. He had not sense enough to appreciate the change that had come over the English people. There were definite signs of growing consciousness in the masses for preserving English constitutional principles. Already in the reign of Elizabeth the first murmurs against absolute monarchy were distinctly heard. But James grew no whit wiser. He went on singing pæans over the Divine Rights of Kings to rule.

He opened his wise rule (!) with a refusal to grant toleration either inside or outside the Establishment. 'The Church of England was then the principal arena of puritan

activity and to deny any legalised activity, either without or within the establishment to the movement on the laity and particularly on Parliament, was to sow the seeds of civil war.¹

But James was fortunate : for, he died before the smouldering fire burst into conflagration. His son Charles I, the best gentleman and the worst ruler, succeeded him. Injected with the virus of 'Divine Right to rule' and backed by such fatal counsellors as Buckingham and Henrietta Maria, he ruled with a policy that cost him his life. Buckingham and Henrietta Maria were equally hateful to Puritans. Buckingham they disliked because he incited Charles to rule like a despot. Henrietta Maria they loved not, because she brought with her luxury, gaiety, extravagance and overfastidious fashionableness from France. The profligacy and licentiousness of the life at the court of Charles I is too well-known. Milton's account of 'Comus's Company of revellers' represents sloth, drunkenness and extravagance of the court of Charles.

But Charles never forsook either and ruled like a Sultan, not caring a rap for public opinion; and made himself an enemy of the people.

Also he made himself 'the enemy of God' by appointing Laud to look after religion. Laud's motto was 'worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness.' He wanted to make church and church service as beautiful as possible. He was very keen on bringing uniformity in external rites and ceremonies. The rituals and elaborate ceremonies were thought by him to be the very essentials of worship. But Puritans as a rule were strongly opposed to any sort of paraphernalia. They wished to make worship

1. G. M. Trevelyan : History of England.

as simple as possible. They 'distrusted human ceremonies because these stood between the creature and the God. All worship which had no scriptural sanction, especially the use of any rite sanctioned by the Roman Catholic church, was a sin.'¹ Laud was very strict on rituals, rites and ceremonies. It meant for Puritans a copy of Roman Catholicism. Laud, therefore, must be put down. Milton, in his *Lycidas*, expresses his passionate indignation against Laud and his followers. In 'Comus' too, critics find 'an allegory of Laud and his party as the sorcerer commending the cup of Rome by wile and threat to the lips of the church.'²

But Laud did not care for such criticism. He did his best to stamp out Puritanism and Charles supported him. Thus he dug his own grave; for the new Parliament which was later called the Long Parliament contained an overwhelming majority of Puritans. It sent Laud to the Tower and deprived Charles of his monopoly to levy taxes both just and unjust. The King was angry. War was declared and fought with enthusiasm on both sides. Charles was defeated and put to death. Cromwell became the dictator of England and Milton his Latin Secretary. He did his job with a zeal that was characteristically Puritan. But even on the eve of war when the Long Parliament was hotly debating the subject of the abolition of Episcopal rule.....a rain of pamphlets began to descend on the land like the plague of Frogs in Egypt. Milton did not keep silent. He was fully conscious of what was passing around him; for he was convinced that, from these beginnings would proceed the delivery of all human life from slavery. And from that time for about a

1. Dowden : Puritan and Anglican.

2. Stopford Brooke : Milton.

period of twenty years he plunged deeper than ever into angry political controversy, striking fiercely right and left. His vision of England as 'an eagle mewing her mighty youth,' and as 'a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep and shaking her invincible locks,' is too well-known to need any repetition. Thus a poet becomes a pamphleteer and a servant of Puritan State forgetting for the time being his vocation of Poetry.

But Puritanism was bound to fall. For 'its cardinal error,' to quote Prof. Dowden, 'lay in a narrow conception of God of righteousness alone and not also as the God of joy and beauty and intellectual light.' It did not recognise beauty in poetry and drama and art. Drama it denounced as essentially sinful, and theatres, a home for breeding maggots. Even Milton who wrote a masque himself could not help speaking scornfully of 'the mixed dance and wanton masque' in his *Paradise Lost*.

Never had the wheel of fortune turned so fast. Before the blood is scarcely dry, people go masking and appear in feasts—the things which Puritans hated. Charles II becomes the king of England and licentiousness is pursued with double vigour. Puritanism dies sinking into one of the many influences which formed the British character. All this—the strife, war, revolution, peace, the throne restored and the order of things reversed, Milton lived to see. *The times had a great effect on Milton.* Especially the movement of Puritanism revolutionized his attitude towards life and influenced his poetry to a great extent. His early poems are marked by an enjoyment of the innocent delights of the senses, but his later productions are conspicuous by a dominating sense of Puritan austerity. Even his 'Comus' which is essentially a work of Renaissance Beauty is not without the trace of this influence.

But this we will reserve for chapter III. Let us view the horizons and backgrounds still, to feel more keenly than ever the transitional nature of the period as an important factor influencing Milton's poetry.

IV. The Conceptions about the Nature and Creation of Universe

Francis Bacon published his 'Novum Organum' in 1620 to correct the errors that were then rampant in the province of science. 'He criticized,' remarks Basil-Wiley in his 'the Seventeenth Century Background,' 'pseudo-science, magic, alchemy, astrology and the like'; and adds, 'Browne was as eager as Bacon to rescue nature and natural science from their traditional association with witchcraft and sorcery.' Besides these two, other attempts were made to liberate science from the shackles of Medievalism long before: Copernicus, for instance, put forth his theory to throw Ptolemy overboard. But Ptolemy was too strong an opponent; for, the people, even though conscious of the truth of this new theory, persisted in upholding their dear old Ptolemy. And wonder of wonders; it may seem to us, is that Milton, who pays a glowing tribute to that Tuscan Artist Galilio, shared the same superstitious views about the nature and creation of the Universe. The law of gravitation was yet unknown to science. 'Matter was conceived as atomic in structure, and the atoms of Matter' says Walker, 'were thought to be subject to four primary forces as principles—Hot, cold, moist and dry.' And corresponding to these were found by those pseudo-scientists four elements—Fire, air, water, and earth. Thus Fire was hot, air cold, water moist and earth dry. Besides these four, there was the fifth substance called ether. Of these, Fire was believed to be the most pure substance, ever moving upwards. Hence, the

upper regions, the heavens, were assumed by Milton to be composed of 'Fiery Essence.'

It was the same theory of the atomic structure of things that brought in the vogue of 'Alchemy' and many scientists were mad for the philosopher's stone. For, all metals were thought to be composed of mercury and sulphur in some definite proportion. Correct the proportion of mercury and sulphur in any metal, make it as it is in gold and you will get gold. How simple ! And it was the same theory with which Milton explained the creation of the world. To quote Mr. Walker again : "Milton conceived of the creation of the world as the work of a Great Alchemist, and assumed that 'creation' consisted in bringing the atoms of matter contained in that portion of space which the world occupies, under the sway of four primary forces; and that the orderly and harmonious interaction of these forces is maintained throughout by the direct control of the Creator."

Equally strange was their conception of the Universe. Milton lived in a diminutive Universe designed by Ptolemy about fifteen hundred years before his day—a miracle of ordered harmony. The earth was in the centre of the Universe with Hell beneath and Heavens above it. Round the earth, as a fixed star, moved the then known seven planets, including the Sun. The order of the Planets was as follows—Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Beyond these were 'the region of the fixed stars' and 'Primum Mobile'. And as these planets moved round the earth they produced a wonderful music known as 'the music of the Spheres' (cf. 'Starry Quire,' in *Comus*, l. 112). And above all, they "rained influence" making or marring the destinies of men and women. Today we laugh at this musical box; but almost all the people of

the period believed in these things with a faith that was firm.

If the theory about the Universe was pre-Copernican, pre-Newtonian and pre-Einsteinian, the science of medicine had not gone much beyond Galen and Hippocrates. Mr. Wingfield-Stratford very brilliantly remarks, in his 'History of British Civilisation' that, in medicine the common assumption was that, Galen and Hippocrates had spoken the last word, and all that remained to do was to interpret them.

V. Superstitions and Legends and Milton's use of them in *Comus*

But that was not all. Browne gives us a list of various superstitions that existed then: 'crystal is nothing but ice strongly congealed'. 'Diamond is softened or broken by the blood of a goat'. 'An elephant hath no joints'. 'A wolf first seeing a man begets a dumbness in him'. 'The flesh of peacocks corrupteth not'. And he adds many, much too many, to mention here. We are told that there were many women, then, who imagined themselves cats and cried 'mew' and many men who supposed themselves 'wolves' and fled to mountains. They seem to be believing in that 'orient Liquor' of *Comus*, which changed the human countenance into some brutish form of wolf or bear.

Innumerable were the superstitions that existed then. The world was an abode of spirits, fairies, angels, witches and ghosts codified meticulously by demonologists. Practically everyone believed in witchcraft. On moonlit nights fairies and angels visited the earth; while ghosts and witches being terrible creatures wandered and did their secret business on dark nights. Milton talks about the 'meddling elf' (*Comus* 846); about

goblin or swart fairy of the mine' (Comus 436); about 'Sabrina' that 'oft at eve visits the herds along the twilight meadows' (Comus 844); about 'the unlaïd ghost that breaks his magic chains at curfew time' (Comus 434); watches 'the pert fairies and the dapper elves tripping on tawny sands' (Comus 117-118); marks the wood-nymphs decked with daisies trim, keeping their merry wakes and pastimes by dimpled brook (119-120); and makes the Attendant Spirit 'soil these pure ambrosial weeds with the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould,' to defend the ensnared chastity. That is how Milton accepted the superstitions of his times but expressed them with a new value. He accepts the Ptolemaic System of the Universe only because it was thoroughly poetic, more capable of dramatic treatment; and above all because it was a musical box. Music and Milton are almost synonyms; Milton could not write a poem that was not musical. And he accepted the superstitions only because they added a sense of mystery and romance to his poetry.

And there were legends, countless and numerous, about Memnon and Helen, Diana and Medea, about the tree bearing golden apples guarded by a dragon of hundred heads (Comus 393); about Charybdis and Scylla (Comus 257); and about Sabrina and Circe (Comus 824 onwards and 51 onwards respectively). Milton used them all. He was perpetually taking in and perpetually giving out, but whenever he presented a thing it was surrounded with an ever-to-be-admired freshness and majesty. To read Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' and to contrast it with Milton's version of the same in ll. 1000-1005 of Comus, is to feel with Raleigh that Milton cannot draw ugliness; it turns into beauty or majesty on his hands.

CHAPTER II
ENTER MILTON

—1—

'What? Still reading, John?' said a lady to a boy of twelve. The boy seemed not to hear. He read on—.

The air quivered like the gauzy wings of a dragon-fly; and church-roofs brooded birdlike over the drowsy houses and silent schools. It was past mid-night. But the boy read on.

His cheeks were rosy, eyes bright and hair soft as silk and auburn coloured. 'Stop your reading; you will spoil your eye-sight,' shouted the lady. John seemed to wake up, as if from a trance, and very reluctantly put his books away.

It was John Milton, who was to be one of the greatest poets of England, even as great as 'Blind Homer'.

—2—

He was born in Bread Street, London, the birth-place of Chaucer and Spenser, on the 9th of December 1608. His father was a scrivener, a man of culture, a composer and a lover of organ-music in special. Milton inherited the love of music from his father, and it formed an important element in his culture. "To write a poem, that was not musical," writes Downes, "was for Milton impossible;" and Bailey supports him when he remarks: "no poet speaks of music so often and none in his poetry so often suggests that art." To read his 'Comus' is to take a bath in a stream, whose ripples produce divine harmony and to peruse his 'Paradise Lost' is to realise the beauty of Tennyson's remark that, 'Milton was the God-gifted organ-voice of England.'

It seems as though his father was dimly conscious that one of the immortals was born in his house. He spared no pains for his son's education. He appointed that 'excellent Thomas Young' as John's tutor. At twelve or so he entered St. Paul's school; and in 1625, that is, when he was 17, he joined Christ's College, Cambridge. It was in his school days, that he formed friendship with Diodati and Lawes. The tie of friendship between them was so strong that it never broke. He pays a glowing compliment to both of them in his 'Comus' (see notes). About Diodati he says: "he loved me well, and oft would bid me sing." And of Lawes that he was one who, "with smooth air could humour best our tongue." It was this friendship with Lawes that resulted in the production of 'Comus'.

—3—

From the beginning he had the passion of a student. He says of himself: "From twelve years of age I hardly left my studies and went to bed before mid-night." His reading was wide. Spenser, Sylvester's *Du Bartas*, Fletcher, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, the Old Testament and the New Testament, Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers, and books in Greek, Latin, French and Italian—all was grist that came to his mill. *Musæces*, *Hermes*, *Thebes*, *Philomel*, *Cambuscan*, *Bacchus*, *Circe*, allusions to the Biblical stories and Roman History ever fill his work. No poet is more learned than Milton. He had, to the end of his life a scholar's respect for learning.

But 'the Cambridge' where Milton acquired the title of 'Lady of Christ's' because of his beautiful face, elegance in manner and stern purity of character, was essentially medieval. There was nothing 'Modern' about the 'Cambridge Curriculum'. Milton, who was a

born crusader, severely criticised it ; and for this he, 'the Lady of Christ's', so gentle, (I) was, for a while, rusticated.¹

He seems to have enjoyed his exile. He saw daily in the streets of London, girls as beautiful as Venus and Psyche. But he was saved from the shafts of Cupid, for his period of exile was over before he fell a victim to Venus trap.² He went back to the University and took his B. A. and M. A. respectively in 1629 and 1632. With the exception of his earliest poems in which he played the sedulous ape, the goddess of Love never makes her appearance. He was now twenty three. Twenty Three ! and yet his spring without a bud or blossom ! How strange ! so thought Milton. But we are to note that, it was not so barren. He had produced so far six Latin poems, mostly Ovidian ; 'On The Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough,'—a charming blend of pagan and Christian Mythology ; and the famous 'Nativity Ode' decorated with Shepherds, Cherubs, Tyrian Maids and Christian Philosophy. But to a man like Milton it meant nothing. He wanted to achieve something unachieved so far in English Poetry. And so "like the merchant-man of the parable, he sold all he had to buy that one pearl of poetry."³ And it was with the ambition of being a great poet that he left Cambridge and went to Horton.

—4—

"Milton's life", observes Mark Pattison, "is a drama in three acts." The first act covers the period (1608-39), and we see him 'in the calm and peaceful retirement at Horton.' The second discovers him a pamphleteer 'breathing the foul and heated atmosphere of religious

1. This theory is not yet accepted by all.

2. For this account see Rose Macaulay.

3. Mackail : 'Springs of Helicon.'

hate.' The third reveals him as the author of 'Paradise Lost', 'Paradise Regained' and 'Samson Agonistes'; when 'blind, destitute, friendless, he testified of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come alone before a fallen world.'

Our concern now is with the 'Horton period'. Far from the dust and din of the town, in peaceful retirement, Milton abandoned himself to study and reflection. 'He waited for the Seraphim of the Eternal spirit to touch his lips with unhallowed fire of inspiration, and he was neither restless, idle, nor indifferent,' says Edmund Gosse. He read on as if the whole of eternity lay before him. And the fruit of his studious retirement were five eternally beautiful poems: 'L'Allegro', 'Il Penseroso', 'Arcades', 'Comus', and 'Lycidas'. An ineffable charm, refinement and dignity characterize these poems and make them sweet as rainbow.

Of these, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso are conspicuous by the absence of Puritanism, which was to sound louder in his later works. In the first he remembered with a child-like love 'Merrie England,' whereas the second reveals his love of pagan learning. Though serious at times the two poems are Hellenic. These poems are without any taint of Puritanism.

'But the moral problem is posed in the subsequent poems, which express, in allegorical or veiled form the conflict in the poet's heart. Externally Milton observed the fashions of the renaissance. But every emanation of Milton's thought was inwardly austere and grave.'¹

However, of the three remaining poems, Arcades is too fragmentary to give adequate expressions of 'the con-

1. History of English Lit.: Legouis and Cazamian.

flict in the poet's heart.' It is a fine compliment to the Dowager Countess of Derby—a fragment in the form of a dramatic pastoral. It opens with a song in praise of the Countess, after which the Genius of the wood—corresponding to the Attendant Spirit in 'Comus'—appears and in a speech of some sixty lines extols her virtues and splendours.¹ Then follow the two songs and the mask ends. Arcades is interesting so far as it forms a prelude to Comus, which we will study in detail in the next chapter.

Lastly comes 'Lycidas', where Milton laments the death of his friend Edward King. It is a priceless gem of English Poetry. Here we find definite signs of growing puritanism of Milton. Even if the poet likes

'To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,

Or with tangles of Næra's hair',

he remembers with disdain 'the wolf with privy-paw ... and 'the two-handed engine.' Milton the Puritan is dimly foreshadowed in Comus and more clearly in Lycidas.

We are ever ready to remember Milton as the author of Paradise Lost and that too rightly. But let us not belittle the importance of these youthful productions. These alone would have given him immortality, even if he had written nothing else. Bailey puts this point very brilliantly: 'Yet if Milton had been hanged at Tyburn in 1660, he would still unquestionably rank with the half-dozen greatest of English Poets.'

It is with Lycidas that the first act of Milton's life closes. Then he goes to Italy, to return to England and enter in quarrels, that heated and inflamed the minds and produced the troubled sea of pamphlets. But before we go to that let us study Comus first and enjoy the fragrance of that flower from 'the Hesperian gardens'.

¹ Macræ, *Milton: The Age of Milton*.

CHAPTER III

COMUS

I. The Occasion

Very interesting, indeed, are the circumstances of the production and composition of *Comus*, which drapes the crumbling towers of Ludlow Castle with fadeless ivy and lends a fine music to the murmur of the Severn, as he glides along its walls.

In the two poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Milton speaks of 'Jonson's learned sock', of 'sweetest Shakespeare—fancy's child' and of 'gorgeous tragedy presenting Thebes', which clearly proves that, he was deeply interested in dramatic literature. That his interest in drama was great is further attested by the fact that, his next production was in dramatic form—*Arcades*, a mask in honour of Alice, Countess-Dowager of Derby.

But it was fragmentary and Milton naturally desired to perform more experiments in dramatic style as a preparation for the great tragedy or morality.¹ He waited for an opportunity and as luck would have it, it came.

'The musical tastes, which Milton had inherited from his father brought him into association with others, who loved and practised the art. Among these was a young man named Henry Lawes, at that time already well-known as an accomplished musician, and later the most famous composer of his time.' The friendship between the two lasted for the whole of their lives. Milton paid a glowing compliment to him by writing: 'Harry.....'

1. For this theory see A. H. Gilbert and Tillyard.

first taught our English Music how to scan words with just note and accent.' Now it was Lawes, the friend of Milton, who was 'teaching music to the children of the Earl of Bridgewater, at the time of that nobleman's appointment,' says Hudson, 'to the Lord Presidency of Wales and the Marches.' Even though his appointment was made in 1631 and powers defined afresh in 1633, he seems to have taken official charge some time later. The date when he actually entered Ludlow Castle—the official seat of the Lord President—is not actually known; but when he did come, the ceremonial of his inauguration was unusually splendid. 'At this particular time,' says Masson, 'the English Court and Aristocracy may be said to have been mask-mad.' In February of 1633, the lawyers of the Inns of Court in London got up a magnificent pageant at the cost of £ 21,000 as an expression of their love and duty to Charles I and Henrietta Maria. This was followed by Carew's equally splendid '*Coelum Britannicum*.' Thus, 'mask' had reached the height of popularity; and therefore, there could not be anything else more splendid and grand to celebrate the occasion, but a mask—a complete mask—rich, grand, splendid and majestic.

29th September, 1634. Michaelmas night. All the Ludlow Castle was astir with an unusual thing in those parts—a complete mask—performed in the great hall of the Ludlow Castle. The preparations must have been begun months before the mask actually came off. Inigo Jones, an architect and mechanic of international repute, was engaged 'to create the scenery and mechanical devices' for the stage effect. Lawes, the master-musician, the music teacher of Bridgewater family and the man, who composed music for '*The Triumph of Peace*' and '*Coelum Britannicum*' was requested to 'supply' music to the new mask, and to

be its general manager. But who should write poetry ? Who but Lawes' friend, Milton, who had already in the 'Arcades' given such satisfactory proof of his fitness for the kind of composition that was wanted ? Lawes requested Milton to write the poetical parts. Milton accepted the request ; and wrote the mask later known as *Comus*, to oblige Lawes and the Earl of Bridgewater and above all, to satisfy his desire for dramatic experiment. But 'Lawes was the arranger of mask,' remarks Belloc, 'and naturally, therefore, Milton had to obey limitations laid down by him : it must be of a certain length, to fit a certain space of time ; the actors must be few, and therefore, the speeches long ; and of these few actors, two must be children and one a quiet young lad—all taking their parts for no better reason than that, they were the young people of the house ; local features must be brought in, such as the river Severn, in the shape of a Goddess ; possibly a sort of a vague plot had to be worked to'. Milton obeyed the restrictions. But because they deprived Milton of his freedom the reader feels them weighing on him as he reads.

However, the mask was composed. But who were the actors ? Mr. Lawes played the part of the Attendant Spirit ; Lady Alice, of the chaste Lady ; her two brothers, of 'the two brothers in *Comus*.'

We are not certain who played the part of *Comus*. But we may assume that some handsome gentleman among their relatives did not object to act as the disreputable riot-god, for the opportunity of luring away the sweet Lady Alice even for a little while ; and among Lady Alice's sisters, there were more than one fit for the part of the river-nymph. With such actors, sweet music, charming poetry, and fine scenery, the success of the mask was inevitable.

Milton paid compliments to almost all concerned—to crown that success with glory. The earl, the Lady Alice, her two brothers, the composer Lawes, the audience, all these received flattering compliments from the poet.¹ Milton followed the conventions of the mask down to every little detail.

The fact that Milton consented to compose a mask is of primary importance. It speaks volumes of Milton's complete freedom from the narrowness of Puritan-fanaticism. Mask was a product of the Renaissance, a thing brought down from Italy. Puritans hated it. William Prynne wrote his 'Histrio-Mastix' in 1633 and in the following year Milton wrote 'Comus.' Milton uses the form criticised by the Puritans; but he uses it as a vehicle to prove the glory of chastity. Surely enough Milton took up the torch laid down by Spenser, the torch of beauty and morality.

II. Imaginative Reconstruction and Summary of Comus

That is how the mask was composed for the Bridge-water family and it is not difficult to reconstruct the whole scene. In the great hall of the Castle is a stage, fitted with scenery for representing a wild wood. On one side may be seated the Earl and his family, 'so placed,' says Walker, 'that, without their moving, a little dexterous manipulation of the scenery may bring them for the final scene, within the circle of actors, instead of spectators.' The hall is filled with guests.

The lights are put out. The curtain is drawn apart. A dim wood is revealed and sweet music is heard. The Attendant Spirit descends (with the help of the invisible

1. In this connection read the following passages from *Comus* : 1. 30-33, 2. 86-88, 3. 244-248, 4. 296-301, 5. 494.

wires) singing a part of the epilogue transposed for the occasion, the words 'to the ocean' being altered to 'from the heavens' and ending with the line 'where a cherub soft reposes' changed from 'where young Adonais'oft reposes'; thus making it a song of arrival. Then he explains the reasons of soiling his garments, made out of Iris' wof and departs.

In sharp contrast comes the next scene. Flickering torches, a wild rout! Comus, with his revellers enters. He has a charming-rod in one hand and a glass in the other. A blasphemous invocation, a mad orgic dance, a sudden alarm, a wild stampede; and then, silence and darkness again hold sway as the heroine enters. She sings her divine song;

"Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen."

Comus meets her in the guise of a shepherd, and lures her to his place of residence. Then enter two brothers, weary, tired and anxious about their sister's whereabouts. But, lo! there enters the Attendant Spirit (now Thyrsis) and tells them of the danger with which their sister is threatened.

Then the scene changes before the eyes of the audience, representing a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness, soft music, a table spread with dainties, the lady in an enchanted chair, with Comus pressing her to drink out of a glass, while his rabble stand around. There is a matchless dialogue between the lady and Comus—an argument of purity or abstinence against sensuality—in which purity overcomes and defies its enemy. He is awed; and yet he presses her with his request to taste that orient drink.

At this critical juncture, the two brothers and Thyrsis rush in. Comus and his crew are put to rout. The lady

is saved. But alas ! She can't be free ; Comus is gone away with his magic wand. What can be done ?

The Attendant Spirit proposes a new device and it is to invoke Sabrina, ever ready to succour distressed maidenhood. The spirit invokes the goddess with the exquisite song ' Sabrina, fair.' Look ! She comes and sings the song, ' By the rushy-fringed bank.' She sprinkles drops of water upon the lady, touching thrice her lips and fingertips. The lady is free. Sabrina retires.

But though the lady is now free from the spell of Comus in his enchanted wood, it remains to convey her and her brothers safely to their father's residence, where their arrival is eagerly awaited. Accordingly after an ode of thanks to Sabrina, the Attendant Spirit continues—' Come, Lady... Let us fly this cursed place.' Thyrasis (the Attendant Spirit), the lady and the two brothers, here leave the stage.

But now the scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's Castle. Then come in country-dancers, after them the Attendant Spirit, the lady and the two brothers. ' Back, shepherds, back !' says the Attendant Spirit. They go away. The Attendant Spirit presents to the Earl and the Countess his charges, and retires preaching a great moral to the audience :

' Mortals, that would follow me,

Love virtue ; she alone is free.'

With these words the curtain rings down. The Earl and the Countess praise Lawes. Lawes praises Milton. The guests also talk about the Earl, Lawes, and Milton and the actors ; and Milton receives his first introduction in the world.

Lawes is pleased. He presses the poet to publish his mask. The poet declines. But Lawes still persists

with his suit. At last, Milton yields. But instead of putting his own name on the title page he wrote two lines, which is a sharp cry of annoyance and pain :

'Eheu, quid volui misero mihi ! flosibus austrum
Perditues—'

These lines mean : 'Alas, what have I meant to do to my hapless self. Lost as I am I have let in the South wind on my flowers.'

The reason of this hesitation, this reluctance on the part of Milton to publish his 'Comus', is, as has been pointed out by Prof. Mackail, the search for perfection. Milton thought that his 'Comus' was not yet ripe for publication. The blossom of his early spring 'must be guarded jealously till it matured into fruitage.'

III. Sources of 'Comus'

'I will tell you what never yet was heard in Tale or Song from old or modern bard, in hall or bower', says the Attendant Spirit. But we know that his claim to originality was merely a convention of the classical poets and that Milton in writing his 'Comus' did not invent a story 'de novo' but used many which came down to him through diverse hands changing their colours chameleon-like. This is not to suggest, however, that Milton is merely a borrower. He is a lender too. He is an alchemist who invests his borrowings with 'a light that was never on sea or land.' To compare those works from which Milton received hints and suggestions to his own production, is to feel with Courthope that his 'Comus is a miracle of memory, invention and judgment.'

As regards the main story—the lady losing her way, falling into the snare of Comus and finally rescued by her two brothers—it is now generally admitted that Milton owes it to Peele's 'Old Wive's Tale.'

In 'The Old Wive's Tale', Sacrapant, a vile magician, who has learned from his mother 'to change and alter shapes of mortal men,' carries away a lady from Thessaly. 'Her brothers seek her and in their search for their sister are answered by Echo'. (Comus 230-43). But unfortunately they are imprisoned by Sacrapant who makes them do menial work.

At last the lover of the lady, guided by the ghost of a poor man, comes to Sacrapant's. The wreath from the head of the sorcerer is removed. He dies.

But the victims cannot be freed till a glass-pot is broken by one 'who is neither maid, wife, nor widow.' However, a person of this type is found; and all are happy. Thus here in 'The Old Wive's Tale,' we meet the enchanter but not Comus, and the old man's ghost but not Thyrasis, the Attendant Spirit. And above all there is nothing corresponding to Sabrina.

Milton is more indebted to *Fletcher's Faithful Shepherdess*, a work of refined beauty. The lady in 'Comus', the representative of purity in distress, has her prototype in Fletcher's persecuted Amoret, who is closely modelled on Spenser's heroine of the same name. The Attendant Spirit in Comus performs the same benevolent service of mortals, as does Satyr in 'The Faithful Shepherdess.' The episode of Sabrina, the river-nymph, who frees the lady in 'Comus' from her enchantment, is suggested by the rescue of Fletcher's Amoret with the help of the river God; while the use of the herb Haemony by the Attendant Spirit has its parallel in the purifying use of herbs by Chaste Clorin. It is at the same time reminiscent of the use of 'moly' in 'Odyssey.' Finally there are passages in 'Comus' which clearly reveal that Milton was influenced by Fletcher's delicate lyricism.

Further, a great student of Milton's poetry, Mr. Hole, tells us that a more probable source of 'Comus' is a *Latin Play of the same title by Hendrick Vag-De Putten*. He had written the play in 1608 and was reissued in Oxford in 1634. There are several incidents and phrases in addition to the delineation of the character of Comus in this work 'which incline us to believe,' says Rev. E. A. Phillips, 'that their counterparts in Milton's Comus are due to the fact that he read and studied Comus of Putten. Milton's Comus himself offers 'the orient liquor' to every weary traveller. But the Dutch Comus appoints a servant, however, to do that job for him. Milton's Comus carries a glass of magic rod in his hand while Putten's carries a torch and an intoxicating cup. But there are similarities too. The passages 'Come, knit hands,' 'What hath night to do with sleep?', have their parallel in the Dutch Comus, 'Limen Suavioris' and 'Nil turpe.'

But Milton was a student of classics. 'The literature of antiquity was to Milton's genius what soil and light are to a plant;' and naturally therefore before he wrote 'Comus', he looked into the classics; in describing the supernatural powers of Comus, Milton transfers to the wizard, the classical attributes of his mother Circe. He therefore lays 'The Odyssey' under large contribution. Probably he owed something also to *Ovid's 'Metamorphoses'*, *Virgil's 'Aenid'* and above all to *Phaedo of Plato*. The thought contained in 'Till oft converse with heavenly habitants' (Ll. 459-63) is an echo of Plato's assertion: 'We do not think it possible for any one to dwell on his impassioned admiration and sublime and glowing delineations of the morally fair and beautiful, without being in some degree infected with his ennobling enthusiasm, in accordance with that law by which we

become more or less assimilated to the image of whatever is the habitual object of our delighted contemplation.'

But this is not all. He must have derived the account of Sabrina from *Geoffrey of Monmouth* though Fletcher supplied him with many hints. Further Mr. Headley directs the student of Comus to the 'Christ's Victories' of Giles Fletcher, in which the story of Circe is introduced, and Warton has noticed the obligation of Milton to the twelfth canto in the second book of *Spenser's Fairie Queene*; and many critics find in Comus echoes of Shakespeare ('To the ocean I fly'; 'List Lady, be not coy'; and 'Love-darting eyes and tresses like the moon'.) and of other Elizabethan Dramatists like Ford.

Lastly, there was a doubtful anecdote that the children of the Earl were actually lost in the wood; and it is believed by many critics that on this event Milton based the plot. But it seems likely that the anecdote itself must have been due to the masque.

Such are 'the Sources' of Comus; and many of us would like to call Milton 'a crow beautified with other's feathers.' But before we do that, let us only study the character of Comus to feel the truth of the assertion that Milton's 'Comus' is, to all intents and purposes, an original production. "Comus, the god of sensual pleasure, is not with Milton mere Gluttony, as he is in Jonson's masque, nor is he mere modification of Feast and the wine-God pictured by Philostratus and adopted by Putten. He is a son of the wine-God, certainly; but it is by the Sorceress Circe; and though he has much of his father's nature, he has more of the thrilling mercilessness and magical subtlety of his mother's."

Lastly, Milton's style is his own. He is not a servile imitator. 'The fervour of his imagination,' says Hazlitt,

'melts down and renders malleable as in a furnace, the most contradictory materials. In reading his works we are ourselves, under the influence of a mighty intellect that the nearer it approaches to others, becomes more distinct from them.....Milton's learning has all the effect of intuition'.

IV. 'A Note on the Masque : Its Nature and its History and *Comus* as a masque

Comus has been variously judged as a lyrical drama, a drama in the epic style, a lyric poem in the form of a play, a phantasy, an allegory, a philosophical poem, a series of speeches or majestic soliloquies ; but Milton describes it simply as 'a masque.' And therefore we should first judge it as a 'masque', even though '*Comus*' contains few flashes of dramatic element here and there and though Milton at that time was deeply interested in drama and intended to write one.

Now, the 'masque' of the sixteenth century has been traced by the antiquaries as far back as the time of Edward III. 'But in its perfected shape it was,' says Pattison, 'a genuine offspring of the English renaissance, a cross between the vernacular mummary, or mystery play and the Greek drama.' As to its origin, we are to note that it was from Italy that the masque came. In Hall's chronicle we get a description of an English masque performed in 1512, where he tells us that 'on the day of Epiphany, at night, the king with eleven others was disguised '*after the manner of Italy*', called a mask, a thing not seen before in England; they were apparelled in garments long and broad, wrought all with gold, with visors and caps of gold, and after the banquet these maskers came in with the six gentlemen disguised in silk-bearing staff-torches, and desired the ladies to dance. some were

content and some that knew not the fashion of it refused because it was not a thing commonly seen.' Similarly Marlowe in *Edward II* speaks of 'Italian Masks by night,' and finally, Mr. Fleay in his '*Chronicle History of the Stage*' comes to the conclusion 'that masque is a thing that came from Italy.

Whatever its origin, its 'introduction into England is mainly due to 'Court Revelry.' Let us read once more the passage from Hall quoted above and note especially the words 'the King,' 'apparalled in garments wrought with gold', 'staff-torches' and 'desired the ladies to dance.' These in fact contain many of the characteristics of 'the masque'—extravagance in dress, gorgeous and striking display and dancing. But there is no mention here of the spoken word. But the disguisings of the early days, when the king and the nobles, accompanied by the queen and the ladies strove to make nights bright with rich and fanciful pageantry, easily developed into the *spoken masque*; and from this it developed into the typically Elizabethan and Stuart masques. Herein fanciful *poetry of a eulogistic* kind met with rich costuming and the *spirit of adventurous intrigue*. Masquers came from their places, and mingling with the spectators danced with them. For a time the care was thrown to the winds, and knights and ladies laughed away the time or danced over the rush-strewn floors.

From being merely a series of dances performed by the masked characters, the masque came to be a kind of play which was accompanied by a good deal of music and resembled an opera. Elaborate scenery was then required and wealthy patrons of the masque vied with one another in the splendour of their representation. And to make it more striking, an element of the supernatural was

also added to it. Thus the masque contained (1) Scenic effect, (2) Musical numbers, (3) Dancing, (4) Representation of the supernatural, (5) Poetry of the eulogistic kind. But Ben Jonson, one of the most successful writers of the masque, introduced a new feature which came to be technically known as 'anti-masque' which contributed something of a comic, satirical note to the work and assured it full popularity. Sometimes the anti-masque is merely a grotesque interlude. One moment, personifications of Delight, and Harmony, and Love move across the scene, chanting some rhythmic choral strain to a slow recitative; the next, all is confusion: the anti-masquers rush forward, grotesque in dress and movement, execute fantastic dances and movements and retire.

Lastly, Ben Jonson confirmed the three characteristics of the masque mentioned above—music, representation of the supernatural and eulogy. In Ben Jonson, the characters generally are deities of classical mythology and personified qualities such as Love and Delight. The scenes are laid in ideal regions and they are written in various metres of rhymed verse, which is sometimes spoken, sometimes declaimed in recitative, and contain *solos* for the chief characters and part-songs and choruses. The subject and allegory of the masque were suited to the occasion for which it was composed, and there is often an element of personal compliment and local allusion, says Verity.

Besides Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Middleton, Dekker, Shirley and Carew contributed in their own way to gratify this taste for decorative representation.

The mask reached its zenith in the reign of James I. It declined somewhat on the death of James in 1625.

Because at this time all its novelty was gone and it had become too costly. Hymen's 'Triumph' cost about £3000 while Shirley's 'Triumph of Peace' £21,000. 'But it often happens that when a taste or a fashion', remarks Mark Pattison, 'is at the point of death, it undergoes a forced and temporary revival.' In 1633 Prynne published his 'Histrio-mastix' and denounced 'Masques and wanton dance and theatres and plays and actors' and 'as a natural consequence', says Pattison, 'the loyal and cavalier portion of the society threw itself into dramatic amusements of every kind. It was an unreal revival of the mask. ... These last representations of the expiring Mask were the occasions of an extravagant outlay'. And to a superficial observer it may seem an irony of events that Milton who denounced in his 'Paradise Lost' 'masques and wanton dance' wrote in his youth two masques—'Arcades' and 'Comus'—the occasions of which we know already. But when we remember that 'Milton alone of Englishmen combined the strength of Reformation and the breadth of Renaissance', there is no inconsistency at all in his denunciation of 'masques' and his being the author of 'Comus' and 'Arcades'.

V. Comus as a Masque

Such are the characteristics of that form of drama called a masque, and even if Milton intended, as proved by Tillyard and Gilbert, to write a drama, he describes his production as a Masque. And it behoves us first to judge it as a masque—above all by the fact of its being a complete masque to all outward appearance.

In the first place *there is music*—songs from which rises a steam of rich-distilled perfumes (Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph); songs with the elfin and delicate charm of Shakespeare's Ariel (To the ocean I fly); songs as soft

and gentle and cool as the translucent waves of a river (Sabrina Fair); and songs with the velvet touch of a cow-slip's head (By the rushy-fringed banks).

And there are *opportunities for dancing*. Comus enters followed by a rout of monsters with their 'apparels glittering'. He welcomes 'Topsy dance and jollity' and all of them

" Knit hands and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round."

Then at line 957 country dances come in; and finally the graceful dances executed by the Lady and her brothers doubling the mirth and cheer of the rosy-bosomed Hours.

Nor is *scenery* lacking: The Attendant Spirit in his 'Iris's woof' descends and then flies to the 'gardens fair of Hesperus', while in the background is the scenery representing a wild wood and the Ludlow Castle. And then we have the castle of Comus and lastly Sabrina with river-nymphs dressed as beautifully and as blithe as is a meadow in spring-time, all full of fresh flowers white and red.

Nor is the *supernatural element* wanting. Comus the son of Circe and Bacchus with a magic wand and glass, the Attendant Spirit spoiling his ambrosial weeds to help ensnared chastity, and Sabrina with her nymphs—add a supernatural touch and set the hearts of spectators a-thrill.

The *story* also is suitable for a masque. The plot is improbable. Everything depends upon the help from Heaven.

But that is not all. The *motive of eulogy* is ever present; the Earl of Bridgewater is 'a noble peer of mickle trust and power, and the Welshmen, haughty and proud in arms'; Lawes is a shepherd who with his soft pipe and

smooth-dittied song well knows to still the wild winds when they roar ; Lady Alice breathes 'divine enchanting ravishment', and the two brothers are gay creatures who are clad in 'the colours of rainbow.'

• And lastly we have the '*anti-masques*' even. Comus enters with his rout, monsters moving helter-skelter with torches in their hands and shepherds dance, a rustic dance. And Milton, thus, carries on the Jonsonian tradition.

With all this however it must be admitted that Comus soars beyond the occasion. Milton was a puritan among poets, a poet among puritans. 'He overweighed the masque with the moralising element. Magnificent in itself, the lofty strain of moralizing is out of place in a masque. It fits neither the occasion nor the speakers ; and strikes a note alien to the genius of the fanciful masque and all its festive associations.'

But this element though alien on that occasion, adds charm and interest to the poem, ever afterwards. The interest of Comus did not end with the occasion ; it is a piece of literature and with its splendid poetry and its impassioned teaching it charms us even to-day.

VI. Comus as a Drama

Dr. Johnson in his criticism on Milton's 'Comus' points out that 'as a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A masque in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted must indeed be given up to all freaks of imagination, but so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers, who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness wander both away together in search of berries too

far to find their way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude.....The discourse of the spirit is too long, an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches; they have not the sprightliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed and formally repeated, on a moral question.

Thus the great Doctor after having applied all the tests—probability of plot and action and characterization and dialogue as a means of revealing character and plot, by which a drama should be judged—comes to the conclusion that as a drama *Comus* is a stark failure. But another great Doctor remarks: 'We must not read *Comus* with an eye to the stage, or with the expectation of dramatic propriety. *Comus* is a suite of speeches not interesting by discrimination of character; not conveying a variety of incidents, nor gradually exciting curiosity but perpetually attracting attention by sublime sentiment, by fanciful imagery of the richest vein, by an exuberance of picturesque description, poetical allusion and ornamental expression.' Thus Dr. Warton reprimands Dr. Johnson because he looked in '*Comus*' for 'a thing that was not there. What he is concerned to point out is that *Comus* is not a drama. Milton never intended to be dramatic – what he desired was to write dialogues full of fine imagery and sweet poetry. Therefore to judge '*Comus*' as a drama is to misunderstand Milton and to misrepresent his motives.

Such is Warton's reply to Johnson's strictures and many critics coming after him echo his sentiments and coolly throw Dr. Johnson overboard.

But the truth seems to be that Milton did desire to write a drama, at least, to experiment in styles. In his two

poems 'L'Allegro' and 'l'l Penseroso' we read respectively the following passages :

' Then to the well-trod stage anon
 on's learned sock be on,
 etest Shakespeare, Fancy's child
 his native wood-notes wild
 and
 mes let gorgeous tragedy
 tred pall come sweeping by
 ting Thebes, or Pelop's line
 Or the Tale of Troy divine
 Or what (though rare) of later age
 Ennobled hath the buskined stage.

This is clear evidence of the fact, that Milton, the later he denounced 'dramas and masques', was at this time deeply interested in dramatic literature. Further, the fact that his next production was 'Arcades', a masque, is a clear proof that Milton's thoughts were turned at this time towards drama.

That he intended to write a drama is also clear from the mixture of styles of different dramatists in Comus.

In the passage—

' Why should you be so cruel to yourself
 And to those dainty limbs which Nature lent
 For gentle usage and soft delicacy ?'
 we clearly hear an echo of Massinger. Whereas in such lines as

' List, List ! I hear,
 "Some far-off hallow break the silent air",
 we are reminded of Hamlet; and in the speech of 'Comus,' 'I know each lane' (310-320), in the song 'To the ocean, now I fly', we feel that we are reading Shakespeare's 'Tempest.' Let us not multiply instances ; on a

closer analysis we will find 'Comus' full of the echoes of many Elizabethan dramatists.

Further we should note that in 'Comus' there are some parts that are undoubtedly dramatic. Even Dr. Johnson admits that 'the dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies.' Such lines as 'Break off ! Break off ! I feel the different pace' and 'I cannot hallow to my brother' are unmistakably dramatic.

Lastly, it may be noted in passing that even if the characterization in 'Comus' is slight, Comus is the most living character in 'Comus.' This means that not only in the matter of style but also in the art of characterization, Comus expresses Milton's desire to write a drama.

But Milton could not make his 'Comus' a complete drama. The reason is not far to seek. In the first place, Milton lacked humour—that subtle and divine quality which enabled Shakespeare to twine the two hemispheres of sunshine and shadow between his fingers and which contributed in its turn to his presenting the mirror of life. Secondly, no poet is as egoistical as Milton. Whatever he writes is ever an expression of his personality. He is subjective to the last degree. He cannot get away from himself. He cannot forget his self—the quality very essential to a dramatist, because, it is the escape from self which involves the intuitive penetration of the lives of others, that enables a writer by attaching himself to them, to attain without effort to the objectivity of the drama. That is indeed the secret of Shakespeare's success as a dramatist. And it is the absence of this faculty which is mainly responsible for Milton's failure as a dramatist.

VII. Characterization in Comus

Hazlitt in his lecture on Shakespeare, remarks that he was the least of an egotist, but that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself but he was all that others were, or could become.' Together with this flowing ease of forgetting his 'self' and merging his personality into others, there were present in Shakespeare two more faculties : one was humour and the other was 'deep human interest.' In the fusion of these three lies Shakespeare's secret of creating characters—characters as real as those whom we meet with in life.

But Milton could never forget his 'self.' He has not the same interest in humanity as Shakespeare, and above all, he has 'the solemn insensibility to the humorous'. That is why Milton could not create characters as real as Hamlet or Othello or Falstaff. Naturally the characterization in 'Comus' is slight.

With the exception of Comus, in the play, no other character shows any inclination to come to life. The lady for instance, never feels like a real woman. She remains a symbol of the sun-clad power of chastity ; and to contrast Dante's heroine with Milton's, is to feel the difference between the being, whose spirit is richer and more human, and a type of virtue which repels and repudiates humanity. The Brothers too have nothing human about them. They talk like priests and taking into consideration their ages, this is unnatural. There is nothing that can differentiate one brother from the other. The Attendant Spirit is after all a spirit ; while Sabrina is merely a stage figure. And even 'Comus, God of drunkenness and lust,' to quote Legouis, 'has nothing of the true voluptuary. Milton goes back to the simplicity of the

early Morality and his characters remain abstractions of vice and virtue.'

But in all fairness to Milton it must be admitted that 'Comus' is a live figure.' 'There is a fulness and an opulence in *Comus*', says Tillyard, 'not found in any of the others.' He speaks with a certain nobility of conception, and his evil schemes are not petty, but carried out on a generous and whole-hearted scale. He has an excellent artistic taste, and an admiration for the beautiful both in sound and form. He feels an excessive love for Mother Earth and is alive to the luxuriance of Nature. He like Milton, is a poet and words his speeches with sugared loveliness :

The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move.

And

'I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle or bushy dell of this wild wood.'

VIII. Lyrical Songs in *Comus*

Dr. Johnson considered the songs in 'Comus' 'harsh' and not 'very musical.' But, unfortunately for the great Doctor, 'the superlative excellence of Milton's lyrics has never been a matter of dispute'. 'I should much commend' wrote Sir Henry Wotton to Milton, 'the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain *Doric delicacy* in your songs and odes whereunto I must plainly confess to you I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language.'—And Lord Macaulay spares no words in praising the lyrics in 'Comus.' 'The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit', writes Macaulay and adds : 'it is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labour of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to

indulge his choral raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then like his own good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty. Hallam too pays a glowing tribute to the brightest hues of fancy, and the sweetest melody of song; and all other critics of Milton including Belloc have nothing but praise to offer. To read a song like :

'Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that livst unseen,
Within thy airy shell

By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale,

or for the matter of that any of the four lyrical songs, is to feel the truth of Bailey's assertion that even though 'Lyrics were the chief beauty of the old masks, the best of them sink into insignificance before such a masterpiece of art.'

The songs in 'Comus' indeed, are of quintessential beauty. They are unbroken streams of exquisite imagery, either imaginative or descriptive, with a dance of numbers which sounds like aerial music. The song just quoted above rises like a steam of rich-distilled perfumes and steals upon the air at which Scylla and Charybdis may weep and even the angels of heaven murmur soft praise; 'Sabrina fair' is as soft as cool and translucent wave, containing sweets at which the sense faints; 'By the rushy-fringed bank,' as gentle as the touch of a cowslip's velvet head, is full of words of enchantment which no sooner are pronounced than the past is present and the distant near; while 'To the ocean I fly' is as divine as are the Hesperian gardens having in their midst groves, whose rich trees, loaded with golden kernelled and golden-cored fruits, drop odorous gum and balm, and where the cool-shadow of the leafy woods, the dewy morning, the

fragrant evening, all the smiling scenery of nature, are ever hallowed with the enchanting song of Hesperus's daughters three 'that sing about the golden tree;' surely enough in these lyrics Milton achieves a style of divine liquid beauty 'reminding us with Wordsworth that poetry is primarily a matter of inspiration and proving like Gray that it must also be a matter of art.' One listens with delight to the musician working his intricately beautiful theme which at the same time is a spontaneous outburst of inspiration. 'Richness of imagery, epithets that supply a text for a canto, (love-lorn nightingale, Queen of Parley, Daughter of the Spheres), single phrases that for curious felicity, are, as Trench has said, poems in miniature, evanescent touches that recall to the reader old happy far-off things of Athens and Rome, those qualities, that belong mainly to art, are held together and heightened by a perfect genuineness of emotion which is the outcome of sheer inspiration.' Surely enough, these perennially fresh songs carrying in their pervading perfume love legends of golden antiquity, contain such a magic that when muttered or read would change the dusty disorder of this earth into an eternal Elysian spring.

IX. Milton's Idealism and Allegorical Significance of Comus*

Milton's poetical works, the outcome of his inner life, his life of artistic contemplation, are the various renderings of one dominant idea—that the struggle for mastery between good and evil is the prime fact of life; and that a final victory of the righteous cause is assured by the existence of a divine order of the universe, which Milton knew by the name of 'Providence'.

* See Dowden : *Transcripts and Studies*. Stopford Brooke : *Milton*. Dowden : *Anglican & Puritan*.

Comus is the work of a youthful spirit, enamoured of its ideals of beauty and of virtue, zealous to exhibit the identity of moral loveliness with moral severity. The scene is the earth, a wild wood; but the earth (as in all poems of Milton,) with the heavens arching over it, a dim spot, in which men strive to keep a frail and feverish being, set below the "starry threshold of Jove's court."

From its first scene to the last, it is a representation of the trials, difficulties and dangers to which moral purity is exposed in this world, and of the victory of the better principle in the soul, gained by strenuous human endeavour aided by the grace of God.

In this spiritual warfare, the powers of good and evil are arrayed against one another; upon this side, the Lady, her brothers (types of human power, weak in itself and liable to go astray), and upon the other—the supernatural powers auxiliary to virtue in heaven and on earth—the Attendant Spirit and the nymph Sabrina.

The enchanter Comus is the son of Bacchus and Circe, and the inheritor of twofold vice. If Milton had pictured the life of innocent mirth in *L'Allegro*, here was a picture of the genius of sensual indulgence. Yet, Comus is inwardly, not outwardly, foul; no grim monster like that which medieval imagination conjured up to terrify the spirit and repel the senses. The attempt of sin upon the soul as conceived by Milton is not the open and violent obsession of a brute power, but involves a deception and an imposture. The soul is put upon its trial through the seduction of senses and the lower parts of our nature. Flattering lies entice the ears of Eve; Christ is tried by false visions of power and glory, and beneficent rule; Samson is defrauded of his strength by deceitful blandishment. And, in like manner, Comus must needs possess a beauty of his own, such beauty as

ensnares the eye untrained in the severe school of moral perfection. He is sensitive to rich forms and sweet sounds, graceful in oratory, possessed, like Satan, of high intellect devoted to the service of the senses. He surrounds himself with a world of art which lulls the soul into forgetfulness of its higher instincts and duty. His palace is stately, and "set out with all manner of deliciousness."

Against the enchanter stands the virgin figure of the Lady. Being a woman, she is accustomed to the protection of others; and is tenderly nurtured and possesses a fair and delicate form. But when the hour of trial comes, she shows herself strong in powers of judgment and of reasoning, in her spiritual nature, in her tenacity of moral truth and in her indignation against sin. Although alone, she is thoroughly fearless, and is so clear-sighted that the juggling practice of her antagonist is wholly ineffectual against her. There is much in the Lady which resembles the youthful Milton himself, he, the Lady of his college—and we may believe that the great debate concerning temperance was not altogether dramatic but was in part a record of some passage in the poet's own spiritual history. Milton admired the Lady as he admired the ideal which he placed before himself.

The Lady is unsubdued, and indeed unconquerable, because her will remains her own, a citadel without a break. But "her corporal rind" is manacled, she is set in the enchanted chair and cannot leave it. Meanwhile, the brothers are in the wood; they are alike in being aimless and helpless. If they are distinguished from each other, it is only as the First Brother and the Second Brother; and by one of the simple devices: The first brother is a philosopher and is full of hope and faith; the second brother is more apprehensive; and less

thoroughly grounded in ethics and metaphysics. The deliverance of the sister would be impossible but for supernatural help, the aid afforded by the Attendant Spirit. In other words, Divine Providence is asserted. 'Not without higher than human aid is the Lady rescued, and through the weakness of the mortal instrument of divine grace, only half the intended work is accomplished. Comus escapes bearing his magic wand, to deceive other strangers in the wood, to work new enchantments, and swell his rout of ugly headed followers.

This is the allegorical significance of Comus; and the obvious moral is "virtue may be assailed, but never hurt," "Love Virtue, she alone is free.....if Virtue feeble were, Heaven itself would stoop to her."

Stopford Brooke observes that 'in Comus, the wild license of the court society is set over against the grace and temperate virtue of a Puritan life. The unchastity, the glozing lies, the glistening apparel, that hide moral deformity, the sloth and drunkenness, the light fantastic round of the enchanter's character and court are (it seems likely) Milton's allegory of the court society of his time. 'The stately philosophy of the brothers' which had its root in subduing passion and its top in the love of God; the virginal chastity of the Lady; and at the end, the releasing power of Sabrina's purity symbolise that noble Puritanism which loved learning and beauty only when they were pure, but holiness far more than either'.

'It may be that there is a second allegory, of Laud and his party representing the Sorcerer commending the cup of Rome by wile and threat to the lips of the church and enforcing it by fine and imprisonment, paralysing in stony fetters the Lady of the Church. It may be that Milton refers in this poem to the few who, having resisted like the Brothers, failed to set the church free, ought now

to employ a new force, the force of Purity. But this aspect of the struggle is at least not so clear in *Comus* as in *Lycidas*.'

Such is the idealism of Milton, and such is the allegorical significance of '*Comus*'. But we should never forget the fact that '*Comus*' is also raised above an ethical poem by its imaginative form and power. 'The truth is', remarks Bailey, 'that from the very beginning to the very end of his life Milton had all the intensity of Puritanism, more than all its angry contempt of vice, but nothing whatever of its uncivilized narrow-mindedness.'

X. *Comus* as an Expression of Milton's Personality

John Milton himself is in every line of '*Paradise Lost*,' says Coleridge in his '*Biographia Literaria*.' And without reserve the same can be said about his '*Comus*'. As Dr. Garnett observes: '*Comus*, the richest fruit of Milton's early genius, is the epitome of the man at the age at which he wrote it.'

The first thing that '*Comus*,' displays is 'an extremely varied sensibility.' This is important because many critics like to picture Milton as a narrow-minded Puritan and as one tainted with pedantry. That he is a scholar and an idealist can be admitted readily. But to depict him as a narrow-minded being is to misunderstand Milton. Now, ll. 706 to 736 in '*Comus*' clearly reveal as Saurat tells us: 'a love internal, so to speak, that describes but little, but consists in a sort of sympathy for the very growth of all beings, as though Milton recognized in himself the same generous forces as in vegetation and the luxuriance of animal life'. And above all, these lines contain the philosophy which was to flower later in his *Paradise Lost*, that all things including nature come from

God. 'Natural instincts are good and to follow them is to fulfil God's will.'

Further 'Comus' reveals a dominant sense of the mastery of self in the form of 'chastity':

'So dear to heaven is saintly chastity
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her
And no goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power over virginity.'

This was to remain with him to the end. There are passages which contain the ideas that *the body* can become 'spirit' through chastity; the soul materialises through lust.' Therefore let us beware of too much prepossession with material things of the earth. If we want to hear the music of the spheres we should cultivate chastity and chastity is nothing but self-mastery.

'Comus' is equally an expression of a cultured mind. It reveals Milton's scholarship, his love of music, his mastery of form, his control over words, his sense of sound and of colour. In discussing the sources of 'Comus' we have already noted Milton's wide reading—Plato, Shakespeare, Spenser, Elizabethan dramatists like Fletcher and Ford and Greek classics, and also have admired the alchemy of his genius which transforms everything into pure gold. His love of music and his happy sense of sound is exemplified endlessly in his Comus. To read any of the songs sung either by the lady (Sweet echo ! Sweetest nymph) or the invocation to Sabrina (Sabrina fair) or the spirit's song (To the ocean now I fly) or such lines as 'I know each lane and every alley green', is to take a walk through a garden where angels sing divinely. To read such lines as 'In regions of mild and calm and serene air' is to understand his mastery of words.

At the same time his 'Comus' reveals what Dr. Garnett called 'the same solemn insensibility to the humorous, which characterizes the kindred genius of Wordsworth and which would have provoked a kindly smile from Shakespeare'. There is no humour in 'Comus'. However deep you dive into 'Comus' you will never find humour. And this to a certain extent is responsible for his weakness as a creator of character. In 'Comus', as we have noted elsewhere, it is Comus the enchanter who shows any desire to come to life pre-figuring Satan in *Paradise Lost*. The two brothers and the lady remain merely abstract figures without anything real about them.

Lastly, it reveals his idealism and Puritanism which are neither crude nor narrow-minded. He was not like that legendary Chinaman who burned down his house in order to provide himself with roast pork. The very fact that he wrote a masque clearly shows that Milton did not share the views of extreme Puritanism that a drama is an evil thing in itself. Not the use of the dramatic form but its misuse was the evil. Milton was deeply read in the Attic tragedians and the Jacobean playwrights and he would not throw Euripides and Jonson to the winds, nor could his contempt for the coarser side of Shakespeare make him deaf to 'the native wood-notes wild' of the author of 'The Tempest'. His complaint was that the form had been misused; therefore for 'the sweet poison of misused wine' he substituted the wholesomeness of a modest draught; hence 'Comus', a masque, becomes a hymn to chastity and an eulogy of virtue. Surely enough of all the poets, it was Milton 'who managed to unite the strength of the Reformation with the breadth of the Renaissance.'

John Milton, therefore, is in every line of 'Comus.'

XI. Popular Beliefs and Superstitions and Milton's Use of them in Comus.

See the last section of chapter I under the same heading.

XII. Puritanism in Comus¹

To a superficial observer, it may appear strange that Milton, a Puritan, should have written the masque as he did. For only in the previous year (1633) the famous Puritan William Prynne had denounced in his 'Histrio mastix, all stage-plays' including the masque; Milton himself was later on to denounce —

"Court amours, mix'd dance and wanton masque."

The typical Puritan was God-fearing, high-principled, courageous and earnest; but was at the same time, austere, exacting and uncharitable. His one absorbing concern was the salvation of his soul, and to him all earthly things were vain and fleeting shows, and all art the snares and traps of the evil one, intent upon his spiritual ruin.

But Milton was not an extreme Puritan. On the contrary, he was a child of both the Renaissance and the Reformation. In one of his letters to his friend Diodatti he writes:—"Whatever the deity may have bestowed upon me in other respects, he has certainly inspired me with a passion for the good and the beautiful. Nor did Ceres seek her daughter with such unceasing solicitude as I have sought this idea of the beautiful in all forms and appearances of things." In short, we may say that he was a Puritan among artists, and an artist among Puritans. Both the strains—the Hellenic and the Hebraic are present in his work from first to the last, though their relative proportions vary as the poet advances.

¹ See Sampson, Mackail, Dowden, Steppford Brooke, Bailey Legouis, and Hudson.

From this point of view, it is interesting to note what light Comus throws on the personality of Milton. Its literary affiliations are entirely with the Renaissance. As a piece of art, it belongs to the dramatic traditions of Peele, Fletcher and Jonson, whom Milton had carefully and lovingly studied, and to whom he was more or less indebted for suggestions. *Yet, though the old form is maintained, the spirit which it embodies is new.* A note is struck which is nearer the Puritan note we have as yet anywhere in his work. A strenuous moral purpose lies at the core of the action. Conception and details are alike filled with a splendid passion for righteousness. *The story is a patent allegory of virtue*, unharmed amid all dangers, invincible amid all trials, overcoming all temptations through its inherent might and support of never-failing divine aid. Faith in the ultimate triumph of good pervades the poem, and finds full utterance in the magnificent outburst in which the Elder Brother declares that virtue is *eternal*, and evil self-consuming, and that the very foundations of the universe are bound up with this supreme fact. In the contrast of principles and ideals which the movement of the action involves, it must be remembered that Milton was writing with his thoughts upon the conditions of his time. For, while Comus and his crew of revellers represent the growing license of the profligate court and fashionable society, the Lady and her brothers are set forward as the types of sobriety and temperance of true religious life. In the brothers, in particular, we may see Milton's ideal of Puritanism as it was then conceived by him—an ideal, large, generous, humane, combining love of divine philosophy and knowledge with zeal for holiness.

Thus while the vehicle adopted shows the persistence of his Hellenism, the matter and purpose exhibi

he growth of his Hebraism. Thus there is no inconsistency between his denunciation of wanton masques and his being the author of *Comus*, which was so different in spirit from the masques of the common sort. Milton, alone of Englishmen, combined the beauty of Hellenism and the moral austerity of Hebraism. We have both of these in the lovely verses which are the Epilogue of *Comus*. If it begins with

‘The gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree ;

and the

Beds of hyacinth and roses
Where young Adonais oft reposes,
~~it ends with the stoic Puritan motto,~~
‘Love virtue, she alone is free,
If virtue feeble were
Heaven itself would stoop to her.’

XIII. Doctrine of Chastity in ‘*Comus*’

‘Susceptible as he was to feminine beauty he now praised as the noblest of virtues, chastity, as if he meant to dedicate himself anew to celibacy’, says S. P. B. Mais in his ‘*A Chronicle of English Literature*.’ On the other hand R. D. Jameson informs us that Milton’s ‘*Comus*’ is conspicuous by ‘Sexual magic and chastity for its own sake.’ Besides these two, there are Saurat and Hanfred, who have their own say about the matter. Saurat thinks that Milton was deliberately chaste from his early years ‘like the great ascetics of primitive magic in order to acquire supernatural powers.’ That means, according to Saurat, Milton believed that chastity had some superna

1. See Saurat, Hanfred, S. P. B. Mais, R. D. Jameson, Grierson and Herford.

tural powers. But Hanfred thinks otherwise and asserts that Milton never attributed magical powers to chastity.

Such is the confusion. It is like standing in a road with too many finger-posts. Let us forget for the time being all that these scholars and experts have to say.

One thing is certain, that Milton at this time was obsessed with the idea of chastity; and on this, all the critics are unanimous. In his 'Apology for Smectymnus', Milton writes: 'That he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy.' No poet except Milton had such an exalted conception of the vocation of poetry. In order to be a great poet one must lead pure life and must keep oneself aloof from all the temptations of this world; for, Milton believed in the doctrine that even 'though oft converse with heavenly habitants makes one's mind by slow degrees immortal,' there is something like 'lust' which 'lets in defilement to the inward parts. And in the end the soul grows clotted by contagion.' And once the soul is 'clotted by contagion' the possessor of that soul must lose all his hope of becoming a great poet. Therefore 'purity' must be preserved at any cost. All other objects must be discarded, or must go for fuel into the furnace. That Milton himself led a life of austere purity during his college-days is clear from the title 'the Lady of Christ's.' But after all he was a young man and during his stay in London (when he was rusticated for a while from the University) where he found daily in the streets beautiful damsels, he seems to have felt a romantic

fascination for something like love. But according to his own conception of an ideal poet, such thoughts he regarded, with the fervour and enthusiasm of a sensitive youth, very dangerous. And therefore with a great gusto he controlled them; but this romantic heightening of the fear of losing his chastity remained with him for a long time. Naturally, therefore, the feeling of admiration for chastity and the fear of losing it found expression in his 'Arcades' and 'Comus.' The genius in the Arcades points out that 'the heavenly tune' cannot be heard with 'gross unpurged ear.' Also in 'Comus,' we have a reference to this heavenly music.

Chastity has other powers too. The elder brother says to his junior

'My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength.'

The younger brother asks:

'What hidden strength,

'Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?'

The elder brother replies:

I mean that too... 'Tis chastity, my brother,
chastity...

No Goblin or swart fairy of the mine
Hath hurtful power over true virginity.'

Yes, that is it. Chastity has supernatural powers and Milton sings pæns over them again and again in his 'Revelation' and the 'Apology.'

But it is not easy to preserve your chastity. The world is full of temptations of all kinds. And 'lust' is ever ready 'to let in defilement to the inward parts, and soul becomes clotted by contagion.' But once chastity is preserved then Gods and Angels protect you and you can hear the music of the Spheres.

'Morbid!' an expression of sexual unrest—so says Tillyard; while another critic cries out 'noble'! Both these views are essentially one-sided. To apply the theory of sex-repression and sex-expression in all details to a poet, and to find in him at every step 'sexual unrest,' is to be unfair both to the poet and the theory alike. That Milton was busy at this time thinking about chastity and its supernatural powers and that he was haunted by the fear of losing it may be admitted at once. But we should not forget the fact that 'here is in it a great element of romantic admiration and that a sort of romantic fear colours the poet's view. Sexual unrest will not account for everything. These are after all bees that buzz rather busily in the bonnets of critics. One must not take them very seriously.

Finally, however noble, exalted, and sublime, the conception of chastity may be, it is at bottom a self-regarding virtue. To quote Prof. Herford: 'His warrior maiden is concerned to disable her foes, not to ennoble them.' And he further contrasts Dante's conception with Milton's: 'Great and noble as both are, Dante's spirit is the richer and more human for it knows not only purity but love, a purity that is rooted in love, a love that is rooted in purity: whereas, Milton describes a virtue, which with all its dazzling and soaring splendour, only repels and repudiates the humanity below it.' Surely enough, the lady in *Comus* is, anyhow, the very type of 'the sun-clad power' too super-human!

XIV. Politics and Religion in 'Comus'

See the last two sections of 'Milton's Idealism and Allegorical Significance of *Comus*.'

XV. Mingling of the Christian and Pagan Elements in Comus

In 'Comus' we come across two currents—one pagan and the other Christian.¹ The element of Christianity can be marked in such lines as

'Lay their just hands on that golden key

That opes the palace of eternity.'

where Milton 'expresses his belief in the Christian ideal of survival of the soul after death in a divine state of immortal life.' But curiously enough we are informed that the virtuous persons will come

'Amongst the enthroned Gods on Sainted seats.'

This conception is rather strange and non-Christian; for Christianity insists that God is one. Similarly in the grand passage which describes the origin of the world and the sea, Milton once more seems to believe in pagan-Gods like Neptune and his satellites. Does this mean, that his Christianity is not of a pure kind?

The answer to such queries is the following passage from Edmund Gosse:

"His brain was not an empty conventicle, stored with none but the necessities of devotion: it was hung round with spoils of paganism and garlanded with Dionysaic ivy. Within the walls of his protesting contemporaries, no music had been permitted but that of the staidest psalmody. In the chapel of Milton's brain, entirely devoted though it was to a Biblical form of worship, there were flutes and trumpets to accompany one vast commanding organ."

XVI. Metre and Versification of Comus¹

Blank verse, after Shakespeare and Jonson, became mechanical. But Milton came in and by his magical powers brought about the rejuvenation of blank verse.

1. See Hammer: *Metres of English Poetry*. Saintsbury: *History of English Prosody*. Bridges: *Milton's Prosody*.

Before perfecting this instrument and immortalising it in an epic, Milton practised it early in his 'Comus' and 'Arcades.' The versification of Comus is Milton's early attempt at blank verse. Here we do not observe the same sense of freedom which dominates his matured blank verse. In 'Comus' the Miltonic blank verse was in an experimental stage—and a successful experiment it was.

He tried various devices to avoid monotony and enliven the verse. He has recourse to 'modulations' but he is not like those post-Shakespearean dramatists, 'all modulations and no base.' He retains the original ten syllabic iambic line.

And all | this tract | that fronts | the fall | ing
sun |

But if he had written his 'Comus' only in the basic five-foot, ten syllabled, iambic verse, the result would be monotony. And therefore to get rid of monotony he makes use of the following modifications :

- (a) Use of two extra syllables at the end, or between the line after a pause or at both places.
- (b) Inversion of rhymes : Weak for strong : a trochee in place of an 'iamb.'
- (c) Use of weak stresses. (less than five accents.)
- (d) 'Enjambment' i.e. overflow or the sense-running from line to line. This modification gives an effect of abundance and excess in the line possessing great expressive power.

Examples of (a) :

- (i) the sea | her fraught | would swell | and th' un- |
sought diamonds |

(ii) There are many instances where the extra syllable occurs in between the line after a pause.

'As you imagine, shê has a hidden strength.'

Similarly lines 302, 599, 602, 842.

(iii) But in line 407 there is an extra syllable in both the places.

Examples of (b) :

'But to my task | Néptune | besides the sway |

Also see lines 8, 152, 597. This modulation 'trochee' for an 'iamb' is very common.

Examples of (c) :

In the line

'With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould,' there are less than five accents. Other examples are ll. 1, 317, 185.

Examples of (d) :

Many examples can be given. In line 145, the sense runs from one line to the other, being complete at the end of the second line; while from L. 171 the sense goes on to the end of L. 177.

There are many lines in which one finds a mixture of *a*, *b*, and *c*. See for instance line 49; while the mixture of *b* and *d* is found in line 185.

Other peculiarities

(1) *The Double ending is common :*

'But O that helpless virgin our | lóst síatêr

Where may she wander now whither | bêtâke hêr.

(2) *Anapaests are common.*

If you | let slip | time like | à négléct | ed rose |

(3) Another practice of Milton, which he afterwards forsook is to give the *disyllabic value* to derivative Latin words, which end in 'ion'; 'ience.'

How bit | ter is | such self | delus | iôn
 By a | strong sid | ing cham | pion con | sciéncé.

(4) Many times the *monosyllabic value* is also found.

And chid | her bark | ing waves | intô | âtténtion.

Here the 'ion' in 'attention' is mono-syllabic.

(5) We find the '*Amphibrac*' before the pause when a line is divided between two speakers.

Spirit : And crúm | blé àll | thý sinéws |

E. Bro : Why prîth | êe Shèphêrd.

and ; Ll. 663.

(6) There are *contractions*. They are of two types :

(a) From every-day speech. 't' for the ending 'ed'.

(b) Slurrings with a poet's license.

'fall'n' for 'fallen' ; or 'think'st' for 'thinkest'.

Refer to L. 730.

(7) There is also *slurring or elation*. Unstressed vowel preceding 'r', 'n', 'l' is slurred over e.g. 'fev'rish' (L.8) ; L. 25 ; 'om'itous' (L. 61) 'Count'nance' (L. 68.) and L. 79.

(8) And there is the *omission of the initial 'a'* e.g. 'gainst (L. 354 and 640) dropping of initial 'i' (this is common in language e. g. 'tis' (L. 385) 'twould' (L. 348) etc.

(9) Lastly, with a poet's special liberty he omits the 'n' in 'in' (L. 301 ; 382) ; drops the 'k' from 'taken' (L. 541).

Often the first two letters from the word 'betwixt' are dropped, cf. LL. 607 ; 620 and etc.

Now to the lyrics in 'Comus'

They are written in the simple Octosyllabic (eight syllables) metre with four feet, in rising rhythm.

Thé stâr | thât bids | thé shèp | hêrd fôld | "

Herein also there are variations.

I. There is *one extra syllable*, sometimes at the end.

"Whêre yôung Âdônîs ôft rêpôsêd."

- II. Sometimes there *are only seven syllables*. e.g.
 Tô the òcean | nòw I' | fl'y."
 (Note the variation Pyrrhic at the beginning and the spondee.)
- III. There are decasyllabic rhymed couplets.
 "The sounds and seas ; with all their finny drove
 Now to the moon in wavering Morrice move".
 Also see Ll. 129-32.
- IV. The Echo song has 14 lines. "The final couplet, by the way, and particularly the great Alexandrine, is a curious anticipation of Dryden's manner." (Bailey).

Whatever be the rhythm or modulation, one thing is certain. Milton's verses flow out as naturally and gracefully as a wide and winding river on a plain. There is no rush and gush of a fountain, even less sudden exhaustion. And though the verse of Comus is much lighter than his later manner, the slow grandeur, which came to be associated with his name can be smelt in such expressive lines, with an 'antibacchius' in the first place :

"Th'arth cùmb | ered ând | the wing'd | àir dârk't |
 with plumes."

XVI. Milton's Diction¹

"They made our poetry civilized : he (i. e. Milton) made it classic'. That is how Prof. Mackail in his 'Springs of Helicon' pays a glowing tribute to Milton's poetry and other lovers of literature have been lavish in the praise of the author of 'Paradise Lost'. Almost everyone sings the same song.

The reason of such praise is not far to seek. Milton aimed at something, hitherto unsought and undreamt of

¹ See all the critics referred to so far and Lowell, Raleigh, Belloc, Downes and Pattison.

by English poetry. 'He sacrificed everything for it and achieved it. The object was perfection'. He set before himself a high standard with which he was always comparing himself, nothing short of which could satisfy his ambition. 'He had', says Hazlitt, 'the mighty models of antiquity always present to his thoughts, and determined to raise a monument of equal height and glory, piling up every stone of lustre from the brook for the delight and wonder of posterity'. He had girded up himself, and as it were, sanctified his genius to this service from his youth. From the first, or almost from the first, he is as rigorous in judging his own poetry as his conduct in life. The most striking instance is to be found as has been pointed out by Mackail in the autograph manuscript of *Comus*. In the autograph copy of *Comus* between lines 4 and 5 of the text, there occurs the following passage of about 16 lines :

'Amidst the Hesperian gardens, on whose banks
 Bedew'd with nectar and celestial songs
 Eternal roses grow and hyacinth
 And fruits of golden rind, on whose fair tree
 The scaly-harnessed dragon ever keeps
 His unenchanted eye; around the verge
 And sacred limits of this blissful isle
 The jealous ocean, that old river winds
 His far extended arms, till with steep fall:

Yet thence I come and oft from thence behold.'

This passage is splendid, majestic and beautiful. But taking into consideration the occasion, the nature of '*Comus*', this sounded rather 'overloaded'. And hence Milton dropped it.

It is this search for perfection that is in the main responsible for the care which Milton takes in choosing his words. He packs his meaning in the fewest possible words and studies economy observing the classic reserve of Virgilian diction. To read the passage,

"The gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay,
In the steep Atlantic stream
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky Pole.

is to appreciate "how 'steep' gives the whole landscape, the God dropping down the very wall of heaven into the waters, and the shaft of his last glory striking upwards to the roof of the skies—as such beams from under a cloud used to do in one English air at sunset." (Belloc) He uses words which in their burning silence carry the scent of antiquity, the fragrance of music and the tantalizingly sweet touch of the Romantic, which as a sudden wonder of the sunset is charming and enchanting.

Not that *Nepenthes* which the wife of Thone
In *Egypt* gave to *Jove-born Helena*
Is of such power to stir joy as this. (675-77 *Comus*.)

To a classical scholar these lines will bring the enchanting story of the magic drink of Helen while to one who knows no mythology they will give the sense of mystery and the glamour of the unknown.

It is the same quest for 'perfection' that makes Milton use Latin words. Rightly has it been observed that "his characteristic use of Latin words is the outcome of his habit to wring the last drop of value from each word": 'The perplexed path' and 'serene' reveal his delicate care for the original meaning of Latin words.

which to the ordinary reader convey one meaning and to a scholar's memory they suggest another.

But he often kept both senses and loaded the word with two meanings at once e. g. 'light' is called 'the prime work of God.' Milton carried this practice over into the Saxon part of English vocabulary e. g. 'uncouth' and 'baleful.'

And there are other ways which Milton follows to secure brevity. He uses at times an abstract noun for a phrase or a clause, 'The nodding horror of whose shady brows' (line 38) for 'the nodding of whose shady brows fills with horror and threats'; adjective phrase for adjective clause, 'To quench the drouth of Phoebus' for 'to quench the drouth that has been caused by Phoebus' (line 66); and participial phrase for a clause (line 34); and lastly compounds: Sin-worn (17), Sea-girt (21) and night-foundered (483).

'There are two main methods of attaining excellence in writing, two ways of attempting to reach the peaks of 'Parnassus,' says Logan Pearsall Smith and adds, 'the poet may fly thither on the wings of meaning, hoping that his thoughts will float him aloft; or he may step by step, cut his way thither; with toil and labour, carving, chiselling, and adorning the cup of his work with jewels till at last the wine of imaginative meaning begins to fill the cup.' Milton's was the second method. He gathered words from floating debris of popular legends, sayings, scraps, words that came from Latin, Greek, Italian, the classical literature and words from the Bible. "Milton's diction" says Mark Pattison, "is the elaborate outcome of all the best, of all the best words of antecedent poetry, not by the process of recollected reading and storage, but by the same mental habit, by which we learn to speak." "His

poetical diction," he continues, "is the noblest monument of art, achieved by the combination of Saxon and Latin elements in the language." He borrows and then presents them with a hallow of eternal beauty; the power of his mind is stamped on every line. The fervour of his imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace, the most contradictory materials. His imagination has the force of Nature. He makes words tell as pictures.

- (1) But Beauty like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold hath need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye
To save her blossoms and defend her fruits

or

- (2) In regions mild of calm and serene air

or

- (3) Rushy-fringed bank
Where grows the willow and the osier dank
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green

or

Note such expressions as (4) Nard and Cassia's balmy smells, (5) Dropping odours, dropping wine. These phrases and lines, as Hazlitt points out, are glossy and impurpled, tinged with golden light and musical as the strings of Memnon's harp; or the line,

'Under the glossy, cool, translucent wave' is, as Belloc says, 'itself clear water. It could not be surpassed.'

And there is music—flutes and lyres, soft and gentle, accompanying, one vast commanding organ and the wheeling of planetary spheres :

A thousand fantasies

Begin to throng into my memory

Of calling shapes, and beckoning dire
 And airy tongues that syllable men's names
 On sands and shores and desert wilderness

or

The nodding horror of whose shady brows
 Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger

or

Downward fell in a grovelling swine

or

Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields.

'It is impossible' says Saintsbury, 'to single out passages, for the whole is golden. The entering address of Comus, the song—sweet echo—the descriptive speech of the spirit, and the magnificent eulogy of the sun-clad power of chastity would be the most beautiful things where all is beautiful, if the unapproachable 'Sabrina Fair' did not come later and were not sustained for nearly two hundred lines of pure nectar. This last part is a kind of cadenza.'

"His diction is called poetic because it was absolutely fitted to his purpose, which could have been conceived only by the loftiest poetic genius. The diction of his imitators is called poetic because for the most part they believed that dull nonsense and trading platitudes could be turned into poetry by a borrowed system of diction. Wordsworth proposed to do away with the Miltonic vocabulary altogether, not because it was in itself vicious, but because it could now only be employed at secondhand.

XVII. Beauties of Comus

Who but Milton, unless perhaps Shakespeare, could have made 'chastity' the subject of a thousand lines, in which not only every verse, but literally every word is

pure and exquisite poetry ? Never was there such a copiousness of picturesque rural images brought together : every epithet is racy, glowing, beautiful, and appropriate. But this is not all—the sentiments are tender or lofty, refined, philosophical, virtuous, and wise. The chaste and graceful eloquence of the Lady is enchanting ; the language flowing, harmonious, elegant and almost ethereal. As Cowper said of his feelings when he first perused Milton, we in reading these dialogues, ‘ dance for joy.’ But almost even more than this part, the contrasted descriptions given by the good Spirit and Comus, of their respective offices and occupations by carrying us into a visionary world, have a surprising sort of poetical magic.

This was the undoubted forerunner of that sort of spiritual invention, which more than thirty years afterwards produced, ‘ Paradise Lost ’ and ‘ Paradise Regained ; ’ but with this characteristic and essential difference : that ‘ Comus ’ was written in youth, in joy and hope, and buoyancy, and playfulness : and those majestic and sublime epics, in the shadowed experience of age, in sorrow, and disappointment,

‘ With darkness and with dangers compass’d round,’

‘ Comus ’ is almost all description ; a large portion of the epics is argumentative grandeur ; the sentiments of the mask have a Platonic fancifulness ; those of the epics have an awful religious and scriptural solemnity ; the rebellion of angles, the fall of man, and the wily temptations of Satan in the wilderness, fill us with grave and sorrowful imaginative picture ; but ‘ Comus ’ is all pleasure. It glitters like a bright landscape under the glowing beams of the morning sun, and they first disperse the vapours of night : the scenery is such as youthful bards

dream in their slumbers on the banks of some enchanted river ; everything of pastoral imagery is brought together with a profusion, a freshness, a distinctness, a picturesque radiance, which enchants like a magic ; every epithet is chosen with the most inimitable felicity, and is a picture in itself. Perhaps every word may be found in Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Spenser, Jonson, Drayton or other predecessors ; but the array of all these words is nowhere else to be found in such close and happy combination. In all other poets these descriptions are patches ; there is no continued web. And they do not reveal the distinctness and fairyism of Milton. Add to this the magic inventiveness of the spiritual beings, by which all this landscape is inhabited and animated. The mind is thus kept in a sort of delicious dream.

This mask has every quality of genuine poetry. Here is a beautiful fable of pure invention ; here is sentiment, and rich and harmonious language. The author carries us out of the world of mere matter, and places us in Elysium.

The more we study this poem, the more pleasure we shall find in it : it illuminates and refines our fancy ; and enables us to discover in rural scenery new delights, and distinguish the features of each object with a clearness which our own sight would not have given us ; it presents us those associations which improve our intellect, and spiritualize the material joys of our senses. The effect of poetical language is to convey a sort of internal lustre, which puts the mind in a blaze : it is a bright lamp in to a dark chamber.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER COMUS AND LYCIDAS

After writing 'Comus' and 'Lycidas,' Milton 'became anxious to visit foreign parts, and particularly Italy.' Accordingly, he left London in May 1638, well provided with letters of introduction which assured his admission to the best literary circles of the continent. And designing to spend at least three years abroad, he went to Paris and thence to Italy, particularly to Rome and plunged in the antiquities of the Eternal City. He now desired to visit Athens, the Eye of Greece, Mother of Arts and Eloquence, but was recalled to England by the outbreak of the civil war. He came back, started a sort of small school, planned to write a great epic but political events caused him to lay aside poetry and take to pamphlet writing. In 1641 appeared three pamphlets in defence of Smetcymnus against the English Bishops: 'Of reformation touching church adversions upon the Remonstrance Defence.' They were followed by 'The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy.' In 1643 he married Mary Powell. The marriage proved unhappy. In the same year was published Milton's first pamphlets upon freedom of divorce. These were unlicensed and the House of Commons directed search to be made for the authors and printers, with a view to punishing them. The only result, however, was the publication of the 'Areopagitica' (1644), which vindicated the liberty of unlicensed printing. Milton now devoted himself to writing History of Britain. The death of Charles I called forth 'The Tenure of Kings and Majistrates,' and in the same year (1645-49) the council of state invited him to become

their Latin Secretary. In October 1649, he wrote 'Eikonoklastes', a formal defence of the execution of Charles. In 1650 came the 'Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio' which cost Milton his eye-sight. In the meantime he had been reconciled to his wife. She died in 1652 leaving him with three daughters. In 1654 he wrote the 'Defensio Secunda' and in 1655 'Prose Defensio,' with which he ended his controversy. In 1656 he married Catharine Woodcock, who died within a year. A few short pamphlets appeared during the next four years. In 1660 it was ordered that 'Defensio' should be burned by the Common hangman and Milton himself was arrested. Thus the years from 1641-1660, were, as far as the production of poetry is concerned the years of silence.

"The silence after the burst of spring flowerage, of the long brooding heats of summer, during which the year comes slowly to its maturity. But for a few casual scraps of translation, Milton's only poetical product throughout them was a few sonnets, solemn and rare, indeed, but only giving the faintest hint of the immense power in reserve behind them, like the flickers that run across the darkness of massed clouds behind which is gathered the whole armoury of heaven. No parallel to his silence between the prelude and performance, dead silence but for those few low trumpet notes, is to be found in the history of poetry.

That long silence was unaffected by what went on in the outworks of his life; by all the angry controversies and wasted energies and household unhappinesses which make up the apparent substance of those years. All the while, drop by drop, continually, the reservoir of poetry was filling up in him, till it stood abrim."

The last period: in 1660, the Restoration forced Milton to return to private life. Both his life and property were at first in some danger, but he finally enjoyed security in his retreat. Here he was able to return to the poetic projects of his youth. They resulted in his three capital works—'Paradise Lost' (1667), the epic of human race and the book of God and God of books; "*Paradise Regained*, (1671), where the Paradise, lost by Eve because of her yielding to Satan's temptation, is regained by Christ when he got the better of the same tempter, and thereby ended the reign of Satan upon earth; and *Samson Agonistes*, (1671) where Milton, the old blind Puritan, instinctively identified himself with the Hebrew Champion who was Delilah's victim, and who suffered the yoke of the Philistines." ¹

The Milton they reveal is new. His private misfortunes and the anguish of the nation had darkened his thought; and his long and vehement participation in controversy had implanted in him an ineradicable dialectical habit. He felt something like contempt for the exquisite productions of his youth, almost regretted that he had so loved rhyme. He felt the need of severer harmony based only on rhythm and articulate only as was his thought. Henceforward he wrote nothing but blank verse. He had done with pastorals, lyrics of determined form, and songs, and also with slight subjects and with fine analysis of subtle spiritual states. The blind poet rejected the themes of the Renaissance and found inspiration and matter only in the Bible. He sang the Creation, the Fall of the Angels, the Fall of Man, and Christ's reconquest of Paradise, and he told of the sacrifice of Samson, who

1. Prof. Legouis.

died willingly because his death entailed that of the enemies of his country.

Milton wrote after this a few prose works of minor importance, and then the mighty brain ceased to think, the mighty heart to throb, the golden pen dropped from his nerveless grasp. Amid the hush of the Sabbath day, on the 8th of November 1674, the blind poet fell asleep and so calm was his passage into eternity that the watchers thought him dead when sleeping and sleeping when dead.

CHAPTER V ON MILTON

'Below and behind lay the warm earth, the green woodland full of singing voices, the pleasant villages and farms, the cleared spaces where his predecessors had found full scope for English poetry among the fields and turreted cities.' Milton passed beyond and above these.

No airy and light passion stirs abroad
To ruffle or to soothe him : all are quelled,
Beneath a mightier sterner stress of mind.

'With one magnificent movement of ascension and concentration he lifted English poetry to the heights so far unknown.' 'Good poets', says Ion, 'are the inspired interpreters of the Gods ;' while Socrates proclaimed, 'lovers of wisdom' is their befitting title ;' and that is John Milton—a Puritan among artists and an Artist among Puritans, a philosopher and a lover of beauty, the sire of an immortal strain and the third among the sons of Light.

* * * *

Socrates to Phædrus :

' But he who thinks that in the written word there is necessarily much which is not serious, and that neither poetry nor prose, spoken or written, are of any great value if, like the compositions of the rhapsodes, they are recited merely to persuade, and not with any view to criticism or instruction; and who thinks that even the best of them are but reminders to knowledge, and that only in principles of justice and goodness and nobility taught and communicated orally and written in the soul (which is the true way of writing), is there clearness and perfection and seriousness—this is the right sort of man'.

DEDICATION

(Of the *Anonymous Edition of 1637*).

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN, LORD VISCOUNT BRACKLEY,

Son and Heir-Apparent to the Earl of Bridgewater, etc.

MY LORD,

This Poem, which received its first occasion of birth from yourself and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person in the performance, now returns again to make a final Dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the Author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view; and now to offer it up in all rightful devotion to those fair hopes, and rare endowments of your much promising youth, which give a full assurance to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live, sweet Lord, to be the honour of your name; and receive this as your own from the hands of him who hath by many favours been long obliged to your most honoured parents, and, as in this representation your attendant *Thyrsis*, so now in all real expression,

Your faithful and most humble servant,
H. LAWES.

(In the Edition of 1645, but omitted in that of 1673.)

THE COPY OF A LETTER WRITTEN BY SIR HENRY WOTTON TO THE
AUTHOR UPON THE FOLLOWING POEM.

“ *From the College, this 13 of April, 1638.*

SIR,

“ It was a special favour, when you lately bestowed upon me here the first taste of your acquaintance, though no longer than to make me know that I wanted more time to value it, and to enjoy it rightly ; and in truth, if I then could have imagined your farther stay in these parts, which I understood afterwards by Mr. H., I would have been bold, in our vulgar phrase, to mend my draught (for you left me with an extreme thirst), and to have begged your conversation again jointly with your said learned friend, at a poor meal or two, that we might have banded together some good authors of the ancient time : among which I observed you to have been familiar.

“ Since your going, you have charged me with new obligations, both for a very kind letter from you dated the sixth of this month, and for a dainty piece of entertainment which came therewith ; wherein I should much commend the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain *Doric delicacy* in your songs and odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language : *Ipsa mollities*. But I must not omit to tell you, that I now only owe you thanks for intimating unto me (how modestly soever) the true artificer. For the work itself I had viewed some good while before, with singular delight ; having received it from our common friend Mr. R., in the very close of the late R.’s poems, printed at Oxford ; whereunto it is added (as I now suppose) that the accessory might help out the principal, according to the art of stationers, and leave the reader *con la bocca dolce*.

“ Now, sir, concerning your travels, wherein I may challenge a little more privilege of discourse with you ; I suppose you will not blanch Paris in your way ; therefore I have been bold to trouble you with a few lines to Mr. M. B., whom you shall easily find attending the young Lord S. as his

governor; and you may surely receive from him good directions for the shaping of your farther journey into Italy where he did reside, by my choice some time for the king, after mine own recess from Venice.

"I should think that your best 'line will be through the whole length of France to Marseilles, and thence by sea to Genoa; whence the passage into Tuscany is as diurnal as a Gravesend barge. I hasten, as you do, to Florence, or Siena, the rather to tell you a short story, from the interest you have given me in your safety.

"At Siena I was tabled in the house of one Alberto Scipioni, an old Roman courtier in dangerous times, having been steward to the Duca di Pagliano, who with all his family were strangled, save this only man that escaped by foresight of the tempest. With him I had often much chat of those affairs; into which he took pleasure to look back from his native harbour; and at my departure towards Rome (which had been the centre of his experience), I had won confidence enough to beg his advice, how I might carry myself securely there, without offence of others, or of mine own conscience. *Signor Arrigo mio* (says he) *I pensieri stretti ed il viso sciolto*, will go safely over the whole world. Of which Delphian oracle (for so I have found it) your judgment doth need no commentary; and therefore, Sir, I will commit you with it, to the best of all securities, God's dear love, remaining

"Your friend, as much to command as any of longer date,

"H. WOTTON.

Postscript.

"Sir, I have expressly sent this my footboy to prevent your departure without some acknowledgment from me of the receipt of your obliging letter, having myself through some business, I know not how, neglected the ordinary conveyance. In any part where I shall understand you fixed, I shall be glad and diligent to entertain you with home novelties, even for some fomentation of our friendship, too soon interrupted in the cradle."

COMUS

THE PERSONS.

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *afterwards in the habit of* THYRSIS.
COMUS, *with his Crew.*

THE LADY.

FIRST BROTHER.

SECOND BROTHER.

SABRINA, *the Nymph.*

THE CHIEF PERSONS WHICH PRESENTED WERE—

The Lord BRACKLEY.

Mr. THOMAS EGERTON, his brother.

The Lady ALICE EGERTON.

The first Scene discovers a wild wood.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT descends or enters.

Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright ærial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air ;
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot, 5
Which men call Earth, and with low-thoughted care,
Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants 10
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity.
To such my errand is ; and, but for such, 15

I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot, 'twixt high and nether Jove, 20
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadornèd bosom of the deep ;
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government, 25
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns
And wield their little tridents. But this Isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-haired deities ;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun 30
A noble Peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms :
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state, 35
And new-entrusted sceptre. But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger ;
And here their tender age might suffer peril, 40
But that by quick command from sovran Jove,
I was despatched for their defence and guard !
And listen why ; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower. 45
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine ;
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,

Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
 On Circe's island fell. (Who knows not Circe, 50
 The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
 Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
 And downward fell into a grovelling swine ?)
 This Nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks,
 With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth, 55
 Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
 Much like his father, but his mother more,
 Whom therefore she brought up and Comus named :
 Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
 Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields, 60
 At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
 And, in thick shelter of black shades embowered,
 Excels his mother at her mighty art;
 Offering to every weary traveller
 His orient liquor in a crystal glass, 65
 To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they taste:
 (For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst),
 Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
 The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
 Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear, 70
 Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
 All other parts remaining as they were.
 And they, so perfect is their misery,
 Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
 But boast themselves more comely than before, 75
 And all their friends and native home forget,
 To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
 Therefore, when any favoured of high Jove
 Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
 Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star 80
 I shoot from Heaven, to give him safe convoy,
 As now I do. But first I must put off

These my sky-robcs spun out of Iris' woof,
 And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
 That to the service of this house belongs, 82
 Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,
 Well knows to still the wild winas when they roar,
 And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
 And in this office of his mountain watch
 Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid 90
 Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
 Of hateful steps; I must be veiwless now.

*COMUS enters, with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in
 the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry
 sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women,
 their apparel glistening : they come in, making a riotous
 and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold
 Now the top of heaven doth hold;
 And the gilded car of day 95
 His glowing axle doth allay
 In the steep Atlantic stream;
 And the slope sun his upward beam
 Shoots against the dusky pole,
 Pacing toward the other goal 100
 Of his chamber in the east.
 Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
 Midnight shout and revelry,
 Tipsy dance and jollity.
 Braid your locks with rosy twine, 105
 Dropping odours, dropping wine.
 Rigour now is gone to bed;
 And Advice with scrupulous head,
 Strict Age, and sour Severity,
 With their grave saws, in slumber lie. 110

We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry Quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove, 115
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim, 120
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep :
What hath night to do with sleep ?
Night hath better sweets to prove ;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin ; 125
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, Goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns ! mysterious dame, 130
That ne'er art called, but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air !
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou ridest with Hecate, and befriend 135
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out ;
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice Morn, on the Indian steep
From her cabined loophole peep, 140
And to the tell-tale Sun descry
Our concealed solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground

In a light fantastic round. [*The Measure.*

Break off, break off ! I feel the different pace 145

Of some chaste footing near about this ground.

Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees ;

Our number may affright. Some virgin sure

(For so I can distinguish by mine art)

Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms, 150

And to my wily trains : I shall ere long

Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed

About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl

My dazzling spells into the spongy air,

Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion, 155

And give it false presentments, lest the place

And my quaint habits breed astonishment,

And put the damsel to suspicious flight ;

Which must not be, for that's against my course :

I, under fair pretence of friendly ends, 160

And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,

Baited with reasons not unplausible,

Wind me into the easy-hearted man,

And hug him into snares. When once her eye

Hath met the virtue of this magic dust, 165

I shall appear some harmless villager,

Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.

But here she comes ; I fairly step aside,

And hearken, if I may her business hear.

The LADY enters.

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true, 170

My best guide now. Methought it was the sound

Of riot and ill-managed merriment,

Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe

Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,

When, for their teeming flocks and granges full, 175

In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
 And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
 To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
 Of such late wassailers ; yet, oh, where else
 Shall I inform my unacquainted feet 180
 In the blind mazes of this tangled wood ?
 My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
 With this long way, resolving here to lodge
 Under the spreading favour of these pines,
 Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side 185
 To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
 As the kind hospitable woods provide.
 They left me then, when the gray-hooded Even,
 Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
 Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain. 190
 But where they are, and why they came not back,
 Is now the labour of my thoughts. 'Tis likeliest
 They had engaged their wandering steps too far,
 And envious darkness, ere they could return,
 Had stole them from me : else, O thievish Night, 195
 Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
 In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars,
 That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
 With everlasting oil, to give due light
 To the misled and lonely traveller ? 200
 This is the place, as well as I may guess,
 Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
 Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear ;
 Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
 What might this be ? A thousand fantasies 205
 Begin to throng into my memory,
 Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
 And airy tongues that syllable men's names :

On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.
 These thoughts may startle well, but not astound 210
 The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
 By a strong siding champion, Conscience.
 Oh, welcome pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
 Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
 And thou unblemished form of Chastity ! 215
 I see ye visibly, and now believe
 That he, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
 Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
 Would send a glistening guardian, if need were,
 To keep my life and honour unassailed. 220
 Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night ?
 I did not err, there does a sable cloud
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
 And casts a gleam over this tufted grove. 225
 I cannot holloa to my brothers, but
 Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
 I'll venture ; for my new-enlivened spirits
 Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

Song.

Sweet Echo, sweetest Nymph, that liv'st unseen
 Within thy airy shell
 By slow Meander's margent green,
 And in the violet-embroidered vale,
 Where the love-lorn nightingale
 Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well : 235
 Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
 That likest thy Narcissus are ?
 Oh, if thou have
 Hid them in some flowery cave,
 Tell me but where, 240

Sweet Queen of Parley, Daughter of the Sphere !
So mayst thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies !

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment ? 245
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night, 250
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled ! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs, and baleful drugs ; 255
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul;
And lap it in Elysium : Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention ;
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense, 260
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself ;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen. Hail, foreign wonder ! 265
Whom, certain, these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood. 270

Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise
That is addressed to unattending ears ;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift

How to regain my severed company,
 Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo 275
 To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Comus. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you
 thus ?

Lady. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering
 guides ?

Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf. 280

Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why ?

Lady. 'To seek i' the valley some cool friendly
 spring.

Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady ?

Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick
 return.

Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them. .
 285

Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit !

Comus. Imports their loss, beside the present need ?

Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful
 bloom ?

Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips. 290

Comus. Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox
 In his loose traces from the furrow came,
 And the swinked hedger at his supper sat.
 I saw them under a green mantling vine
 That crawls along the side of yon small hill, 295
 Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots ;
 Their port was more than human, as they stood ;
 I took it for a faery vision
 Of some gay creatures of the element,
 That in the colours of the rainbow live. . 300

And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awestruck,
 And, as I passed, I worshipped. If those you seek,
 It were a journey like the path to Heaven,
 To help you find them.

Lady. Gentle villager,
 What readiest way would bring me to that place? 305

Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

Lady. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
 In such a scant allowance of starlight,
 Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
 Without the sure guess of well-practised feet. 310

Comus. I know each lane, and every alley green,
 Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
 And every bosky bourn from side to side,
 My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
 And, if your stray attendance be yet lodged, 315
 Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
 Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
 From her thatched pallet rouse: if otherwise,
 I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
 But loyal cottage, where you may be safe 320
 Till further quest.

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
 And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
 Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
 With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
 And courts of princes, where it first was named, 325
 And yet is most pretended. In a place
 Less warranted than this, or less secure,
 I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
 Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
 To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on. 330

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter the Two BROTHERS.

Elder Brother. Unmuffle, ye faint stars ; and thou, fair Moon,

That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
 stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
 And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
 In double night of darkness and of shades ; 335

Or, if your influence be quite dammed up
 With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
 Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
 Of some clay habitation, visit us
 With thy long levelled rule of streaming light, 340

And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
 Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Second Brother. Or, if our eyes
 Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
 The folded flocks, penned in their wattled cotes,
 Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops, 345
 Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
 Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
 'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering
 In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.

But, oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister ! 350
 Where may she wander now, whither betake her
 From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles ?
 Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
 Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
 Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears. 355
 What if in wild amazement and affright,
 Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
 Of savage hunger, or of savage heat ?

Eld. Bro. Peace, brother : be not over-exquisite
 To gast the fashion of uncertain evils ; 360

For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
 What need a man forestall his date of grief,
 And run to meet what he would most avoid ?
 Or, if they be but false alarms of fear,
 How bitter is such self-delusion ! 365

do not think my sister so to seek,
 Or so unprincipled, in virtue's book,
 And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
 As that the single want of light and noise
 Not being in danger, as I trust she is not) 370
 Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
 And put them into misbecoming plight.

Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
 By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
 Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self 375

Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,
 Where, with her best nurse Contemplation,
 She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
 That, in the various bustle of resort,
 Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired. 380

He that has light within his own clear breast
 May sit in the centre, and enjoy bright day :
 But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
 Benighted walks under the mid-day sun ;
 Himself is his own dungeon. 385

Sec. Bro. 'Tis most true
 That musing Meditation most affects
 The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
 Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
 And sits as safe as in a senate-house ;
 For who would rob a hermit of his weeds, 390
 His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
 Or do his gray hairs any violence ?

But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
 Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard.
 Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye, 395
 To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
 From the rash hands of bold Incontinence.
 You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
 Of misers' treasure by an outlaw's den, 400
 And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
 Danger will wink on Opportunity,
 And let a single helpless maiden pass
 Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
 Of night or loneliness it recks me not ;
 I fear the dread events that dog them both, 405
 Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
 Of our unowned sister.

Eld. Bro. I do not, brother,
 Infer, as if I thought my sister's state
 Secure without all doubt or controversy ;
 Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear 410
 Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
 That I incline to hope rather than fear,
 And gladly banish squint suspicion.
 My sister is not so defenceless left
 As you imagine ; she has a hidden strength 415
 Which you remember not.

Sec. Bro. What hidden strength
 Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that ?

Eld. Bro. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
 Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own.
 'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity : 420
 She that has that is clad in complete steel,
 And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,
 May trace huge forests and unharboured heaths,

Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds ;
 Where, through the sacred rays of chastity, 425
 No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer
 Will dare to soil her virgin purity.
 Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
 By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
 She may pass on with unblenched majesty, 430
 Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
 Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,
 In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
 Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
 That breaks his magic chains at curfew time, 435
 No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
 Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
 Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
 Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
 To testify the arms of chastity ? 440
 Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
 Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste,
 Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
 And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought
 The frivolous bolt of Cupid ; gods and men 445
 Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
 What was that shaky-headed Gorgon shield
 That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
 Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
 But rigid looks of chaste austerity, 450
 And noble grace that dashed brute violence
 With sudden adoration and blank awe ?
 So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,
 That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
 A thousand liveried angles lackey her, 455
 Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
 And in clear dream and solemn vision

Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear :
 Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
 Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape, 461
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,
 And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
 Till all be made immortal. But when lust,
 By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
 But most by lewd and lavish act of sin, 465
 Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
 The soul grows clotted by contagion,
 Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
 The divine property of her first being.
 Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp 470
 Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres,
 Lingered and sitting by a new-made grave,
 As loth to leave the body that it loved,
 And linked itself by carnal sensuality
 To a degenerate and degraded state. 475

Sec. Bro. How charming is divine philosophy !
 Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
 But musical as is Apollo's lute,
 And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
 Where no crude surfeit reigns. 480

Eld. Bro. List ! list ! I hear
 Some far-off halloa break the silent air.

Sec. Bro. Methought so too ; what should it be ?

Eld. Bro. For certain,
 Either some one, like us, night-founded here,
 Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,
 Some roving robber calling to his fellows. 485

Sec. Bro. Heaven keep my sister ! Again, again, and
 near !

Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

Eld. Bro. I'll hallo.

If he be friendly, he comes well : if not,
 Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us !
*The ATTENDANT SPIRIT halloos and enters, habited like a
 shepherd.*

'That halloa I should know. What are you ? speak. 490
 Come not too near ; you fall on iron stakes else.

Spirit. What voice is that , my young lord ? speak
 again.

Sec. Bro. O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis ? Whose artful strains have oft
 delayed

'The huddling brook to hear his madrigal, 495
 And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale.

How camest thou here, good swain ? Hath any ram
 Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
 Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook ?

How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook ? 500

Spirit. O my loved master's heir, and his next joy,
 I came not here on such a trivial toy

As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth
 Of pilfering wolf ; not all the fleecy wealth

That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought 505
 To this my errand, and the care it brought.

But oh ! my virgin Lady, where is she ?

How chance she is not in your company ?

Eld. Bro. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without
 blame

Or our neglect, we lost her as we came. 510

Spirit. Ay me unhappy ! then my fears are true.

Eld. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis ? Prithee briefly
 shew.

Spirit. I'll tell ye ; 'tis not vain or fabulous,
 (Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)

What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse, 515

Storied of old in high immortal verse
 Of dire Chimeras and enchanted isles,
 And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell ;
 For such there be, but unbelief is 'blind.

Within the navel of this hideous wood, 520

Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
 Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
 Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries ;
 And here to every thirsty wanderer,
 By sly enticement gives his baneful cup, 525

With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
 The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
 And the inglorious likeness of a beast
 Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
 Charactered in the face. This have I learnt 530

Tending my flock hard by i' the hilly crofts
 That brow this bottom glade ; whence night by night
 He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
 Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
 Doing abhorréd rites to Hecate 535

In their obscuréd haunts of inmost bowers.
 Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells
 To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
 Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
 This evening late, by then the chewing flocks 540

Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
 Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
 I sat me down to watch upon a bank
 With ivy canopied, and interwove
 With flaunting honeysuckle, and began, 545

Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
 To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
 Till fancy had her fill ; but ere a close

The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
 And filled the air with barbarous dissonance; 550
 At which I ceased, and listened them a while,
 Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
 Gave respite to the drowsy-frighted steeds
 That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.
 At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound 555
 Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
 And stole upon the air, that even Silence
 Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
 Deny her nature, and be never more,
 Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
 And took in strains that might create a soul
 Under the ribs of Death. But, oh! ere long
 'Too well I did perceive it was the voice
 Of my most honoured Lady, your dear sister.
 Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear; 565
 And 'O, poor hapless nightingale,' thought I,
 'How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!'
 Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
 Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
 Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place 570
 Where that damned wizzard, hid in sly disguise
 (For so by certain signs I know), had met
 Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
 The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey;
 Who gently asked if he had seen such two, 575
 Supposing him some neighbour villager.
 Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
 Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
 Into swift flight, till I had found you here,
 But further know I not. 580

Sec. Bro. O night and shades,
 How are ye joined with hell in triple knot

Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
 Alone and helpless ! Is this the confidence
 You gave me, brother ?

Eld. Bro. Yes, and keep it still ;
 Lean on it safely ; not a period 585
 Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
 Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
 Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm ;
 Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
 Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled ; 590
 Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm
 Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.
 But evil on itself shall back recoil,
 And mix no more with goodness, when at last,
 Gathered like scum, and settled to itself, 595
 It shall be in eternal restless change
 Self-made and self-consumed. If this fail,
 The pillared firmament is rottenness,
 And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on!
 Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven 600
 May never this just sword be lifted up ;
 But, for that damned magician, let him be girt
 With all the grisly legions that troop
 Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
 Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms 605
 'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
 And force him to return his purchase back,
 Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
 Cursed as his life.

Spirit. Alas ! good venturous youth,
 I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise ; 610
 But here thy sword can do thee little stead :
 Far other arms and other weapons must
 Be those that quell the might of hellish charms ;

He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

Eld. Bro. Why, prithee, shepherd, 615
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
Us to make this relation?

Spirit. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad, 620
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled
In every virtuous plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing,
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy : 625
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out ; 630
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil ;
Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon ; 635
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.
He called it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovran use
Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp, 640
Or ghastly Furies' apparition.

I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compelled.
But now I find it true ; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised, 645

Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
 And yet came off. If you have this about you
 (As I will give you when we go), you may
 Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
 Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood 650
 And brandished blade rush on him: break his glass
 And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,
 But seize his wand; though he and his cursed crew
 Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
 Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke, 655
 Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis, lead on apace; I'll follow thee;
 And some good Angel bear a shield before us!
*The Scence changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner
 of deliciousness: soft music, tables spread with all
 dainties. COMUS appears with his rabble, and the LADY
 set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass,
 which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

Comus. Nay, Lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
 Your neves are all chained up in alabaster, 660
 And you a statue; or as Daphne was,
 Root-bound, that fled Appollo.

Lady. Fool, do not boast;
 Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
 With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
 Thou hast immanacled, while Heaven sees good. 665

Comus. Why are you vexed, Lady? Why do you frown?
 Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
 Sorrow flies afar. See, here be all the pleasures
 That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
 When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns 670
 Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.
 And first behold this cordial julep here,
 That flames and dancés in his crystal bounds,

With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.
Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone 675

In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
'To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs which Nature lent 680

For gentle usage, and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms,
Scorning the unexempt condition 685

By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
'That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted ; but, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon. 690

Lady. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
'That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage and the safe abode
Thou told'st me of ? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters ? Mercy guard me! 695

Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver !
Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
With vizored falsehood and base forgery !
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
With liquorish baits, fit to ensnare a brute ? 700

Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer. None
But such as are good men can give good things ;
And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well governed and wise appetite. 705

Comus. O foolishness of men ! that lend their ears
 To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
 And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub
 Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence !
 Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth 710
 With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
 Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
 Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
 But all to please, and sate the curious taste ?
 And set to work millions of spinning worms, 715
 That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk;
 To deck her sons, and, that no corner might
 Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
 She hatched the all-worshipped ore and precious gems,
 To store her children with. If all the world 720
 Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,
 Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
 The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
 Not half his riches known, and yet despised ;
 And we would serve him as a grudging master, 725
 As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
 And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
 Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
 And strangled with her waste fertility :
 The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked
 with plumes, 730
 The herds would over-multiply their lords ;
 The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought
 diamonds
 Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
 And so bestud with stars, that they below
 Would grow inured to light, and come at last 735
 To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
 List, Lady, be not coy, and be not cowed

With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
 Beauty is Nature's coin ; must not be hoarded,
 But must be current ; and the good thereof 740
 Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
 'Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself :
 If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
 It withers on the stalk with languished head, '
 Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown 745
 In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
 Where most may wonder at the workmanship.
 It is for homely features to keep home,
 'They had their name thence ; coarse complexions
 And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply 750
 The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.
 What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
 Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn ?
 There was another meaning in these gifts ;
 'Think what, and be advised ; you are but young yet. 755
Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
 In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
 Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
 Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.
 I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments, 760
 And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
 Impostor ! do not charge most innocent Nature,
 As if she would her children should be riotous
 With her abundance ; she, good cateress,
 Means her provision only to the good, 765
 'That live according to her sober laws,
 And holy dictate of spare Temperance.
 If every just man that now pines with want
 Had but a moderate and beseeching share
 Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury 770

Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
 Nature's full blessings would be well-dispensed
 In unsuperfluous even proportion,
 And she no whit encumbered with her store ;
 And then the Giver would be better thanked, 775
 His praise due paid ; for swinish Gluttony
 Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
 But with besotted base ingratitude
 Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on ?
 Or have I said enough ? To him that dares 780
 Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
 Against the sun-clad power of Chastity,
 Fain would I something say ;—yet to what end ?
 Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend
 The sublime notion and high mystery, 785
 That must be uttered to unfold the sage
 And serious doctrine of Virginity ;
 And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
 More happiness than this thy present lot.
 Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric, 790
 That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence ;
 Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.
 Yet, should I try, the uncontrollèd worth
 Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits.
 To such a flame of sacred vehemence, 795
 That dumb things would be moved to sympathise,
 And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
 Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
 Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.
 Comus. She fables not. I feel that I do fear 800
 Her words set off by some superior power ;
 And, though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
 Dips me all o'er ; as when the wrath of Jove

Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
 To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble, 805
 And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more !
 This is mere moral babble, and direct
 Against the canon laws of our foundation ;
 I must not suffer this ; yet 'tis but the lees
 And settlings of a melancholy blood. 810
 But this will cure all straight ; one sip of this
 Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
 Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be-wise, and taste.
*The BROTHERS rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass
 out of his hand, and break it against the ground ; his
 rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The
 ATTENDANT SPIRIT comes in.*

Spirit. What ! have you let the false enchanter scape ?
 O ye mistook ; ye should have snatched his wand 815
 And bound him fast ; without his rod reversed,
 And backward mutters of dissevering power,
 We cannot free the lady, that sits here
 In stony fetters fixed, and motionless.
 Yet stay, be not disturbed ; now I bethink me, 820
 Some other means I have which may be used,
 Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
 The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.

There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
 That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn
 stream : 825

Sabrina is her name : a virgin pure ;
 Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
 That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
 She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
 Of her enraged stepdame, Guendolen, 830
 Commended her fair innocence to the flood
 That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.

The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
 Held up their pearly wrists and took her in,
 Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall ; 835

Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,
 And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
 In nectared lavers strewed with asphodil,
 And through the porch and inlet of each sense
 Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived, 840

And underwent a quick immortal change,
 Made Goddess of the river. Still she retains
 Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
 Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
 Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs 845
 That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
 Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals :
 For which the shepherds at their festivals
 Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
 And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream 850

Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
 And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
 The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
 If she be right invoked in warbled song ;
 For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift 855
 To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
 In hard-besetting need. 'This will I try,
 And add the power of some adjuring verse.

Song.

Sabrina fair,

Listen where thou art sitting 860

Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
 In twisted braids of lilies knitting
 The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair ;

Listen for dear honour's sake,
 Goddess of the silver lake, 865
 Listen and save !
 Listen and appear to us,•
 In name of great Oceanus,•
 By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
 And Tethy's grave majestic pace ; 870
 By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
 And the Carpathian wizard's hook ;
 By scaly Triton's winding shell,
 And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell ;
 By Leucothea's lovely hands, 875
 And her son that rules the strands ;
 By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,
 And the songs of Sirens sweet ;
 By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
 And fair Ligea's golden comb, 880
 Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
 Sleeking her soft alluring locks ;
 By all the nymphs that nightly dance
 Upon thy streams with wily glance ;
 Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head 885
 From thy coral-paven bed,
 And bridle in thy headlong wave,
 Till thou our summons answered have.

Listen and save !

SABRINA *rises, attended by Water-Nymphs, and sings.*
 By the rushy-fringed bank, 890
 Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
 My sliding chariot stays,
 Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
 Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
 That in the channel strays ; 895
 Whilst from off the waters fleet

Thus I set my printless feet
 O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
 That bends not as I tread.
 Gentle swain, at thy request 900
 I am here.

Spirit. Goddess dear,
 We implore thy powerful hand
 To undo the charmed band
 Of true virgin here distressed, 905
 Through the force and through the wile
 Of unblest enchanter vile.

Sabrina. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
 To help ensnared chastity.
 Brightest Lady, look on me. 910

Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
 Drops that from my fountain pure,
 I have kept of precious cure ;
 Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
 Thrice upon thy rubied lip ; 915

Next this marble venom'd seat,
 Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
 I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.
 Now the spell hath lost his hold ;
 And I must haste ere morning hour 920
 To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

SABRINA descends, and the LADY rises out of her seat.

Spirit. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
 Sprung of old Anchises' line,
 May thy brimmed waves for this
 Their full tribute never miss 925
 From a thousand petty rills,
 That tumble down the snowy hills ;
 Summer drouth or singèd air

Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood 930

Thy molten crystal fill with mud ;
May thy billows roll ashore .
The beryl and the golden ore ;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round, 935
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come, Lady, while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice 940

With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound
Till we come to holier ground.
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide ; 945

And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wished presence, and, beside, 950

All the swains that there abide
With jigs and rural dance resort ;
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer. 955

Come, let us haste ; the stars grow high,
But Night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow town, and the President's castle : then come in country Dancers ; after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, with the Two BROTHERS, and the LADY.

Song.

Spirit. Back, shepherds, back! Enough your play,
Till next sunshine holiday.

Here be, without duck or nod, 960

Other trippings to be trod

Of lighter toes, and such court guise

As Mercury did first devise

With the mincing Dryades

On the lawns and on the leas. 965

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,

I have brought ye new delight ;

Here behold so goodly grown

Three fair branches of your own !

Heaven hath timely tried their youth, 970

Their faith, their patience, and their truth ;

And sent them here through hard assays

With a crown of deathless praise,

To triumph in victorious dance

O'er sensual folly and intemperance. 975

The dances ended, the SPIRIT epiloguizes.

Spirit. To the ocean now I fly,

And those happy climes that lie

Where day never shuts his eye,

Up in the broad fields of the sky ;

There I suck the liquid air, 980

All amidst the gardens fair

Of Hesperus, and his daughters three

That sing about the golden tree.

Along the crisped shades and bowers

Revels the spruce and jocund Spring ; 985

The Graces, and the rosy-bosomed Hours,

Thither all their bounties bring ;

There eternal Summer dwells,

And west winds with musky wing
 About the cedarn alleys fling 990
 Nard and Cassia's balmy smells.
 Iris there with humid bow
 Waters the odorous banks, that blow
 Flowers of more mingled hue
 Than her purpled scarf can shew ; 995
 And drenches with Elysian dew
 (List, mortals, if your ears be true)
 Beds of hyacinth and roses,
 Where young Adonis oft reposes,
 Waxing well of his deep wound, 1000
 In slumber soft, and on the ground
 Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.
 But far above in spangled sheen
 Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
 Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced, . 1005
 After her wandering labours long,
 Till free consent the gods among
 Make her his eternal bride,
 And from her fair unspotted side
 Two blissful twins are to be born, 1010
 Youth and Joy ; so Jove hath sworn.
 But now my task is smoothly done :
 I can fly, or I can run,
 Quickly to the green earth's end,
 Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend, 1015
 And from thence can soar as soon
 To the corners of the moon.
 Mortals that would follow me,
 Love Virtue : she alone is free ;
 She can teach ye how to climb 1020
 Higher than the sphery chime ;
 Or, if Virtue feeble were,
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.

· NOTES

The masque begins before the starry threshold of Jove's court. 'It strikes a high note at once in what an old lover of literature boldly called the finest opening of any heatrical pieces ancient or modern.' (Bailey's Milton, 113). But even if the beginning is striking, the speech of the Attendant Spirit is too long. Dr. Johnson could not help remarking: 'the auditor...listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety'. Nevertheless it is beautiful because of sweet music and fine imagery.

The arrangement of the scenes for Comus is simple. For the most part there is the wood. Then comes the scene before the castle and lastly in the Hall, where the Spirit hands over 'the two brothers and the lady' to their father.

Now the scene is that of a wood and the Attendant Spirit presents himself on the stage.

It is a grand scene: In a great hall of the castle is erected the stage with the curtain hung at the back on which is painted 'a wild wood.' Inigo Jones makes a sign with his hands and the Attendant Spirit is lowered down with the help of invisible wires. And as he comes down there is sweet music and a flash of light. He comes down, and makes his speech and retires.

The Attendant Spirit soils his 'ambrosial weeds, because he is afraid that the young people who were travelling through the wood might meet Comus and be persuaded to drink of his cup. Then they would be lost and their parents would never see them. To prevent this, the Attendant Spirit puts on the dress of a shepherd, and in this guise watches over the young people.

Discovers : Displays or exhibits. The prefix 'Dis' in Milton means 'un.' Therefore Discover (Uncover or exhibit.)

Descends or enters : If he enters, it is easy. If he is to descend then he will be lowered down by the help of invisible wires, or it may be that in the background was represented a hill, and down this the spirit came. Anyway the idea was to create a feeling of surprise and rouse the curiosity of the audience.

1. **Starry threshold :**

Jove's court was in heaven, amidst the stars and naturally, therefore, 'star-strewn sky' would form the threshold or entrance to his court. **Jove**—Jupiter the father and King of all Gods, like the Hindu Indra or Mohammedan Kāsim. The fact that the spirit was living opposite to Jove's court indicates that he held a pretty important post at the court.

2. **Those immortal shapes :** Other divine shapes like the Attendant Spirit himself, about whose existence there is no doubt; 'the immortal shapes about which you know'. **Mansion :** Resting-place.

3. **Aerial :** 'Living in air' and hence heavenly. **Inspired :** (Sphere—dwelling places allotted to each spirit) Living in their respective spheres. The word sphere is always connected with the Ptolemaic theory of the arrangement of the Universe (see Int.). "Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton succeeded best." (Macaulay).

4. **Serene :** Bright with a celestial splendour; Milton accents the word on the first syllable. 'Serene.' About such lines it may be remarked that these words are glossy and impurpled, tinged with golden light and musical as the strings of Memnon's harp (Hazlitt). 'It means 'in the still cloudless ether of the heaven-housed Gods.'

5. **Dim :** Indistinct. The spirit sees the earth but dimly from his sphere, or it may be that the earth being

made of 'Heavy element,' it did not shine as brightly as other spheres.

6. **Low-thoughted care** : Anxious interest in trifling matters of this world. This phrase was used by many followers of Milton. But they spoilt what they borrowed. Milton's style was 'admired but misunderstood.'

7. **Pestered** —Hampered ; crowded. **Pinfold**—Pin or pen or pound is an enclosure for confining cattle (especially sheep) at night, hence a narrow place.

8. **Strive** : Put forth their utmost energy. **Frail** : Weak. **Feverish Being** : Restless human life weighed down by anxiety and misery. Ll. 6-8. These two lines very finely bring out the extreme love of life in human beings though they know that life is an unhappy strife.

9. **Unmindful of** : Ignorant of. **Crown that virtue gives** : An allusion to scriptures where saints are described as 'sitting with crowns of gold' The phrase simply means, the reward of immortality secured after leading a virtuous life on earth. Note the moral fervour of Milton.

10. **This Mortal Change** : This phrase is variously interpreted as 'Change from mortality;' 'Change from life to death;' 'Change through death;' 'the variation of our condition'; and 'Change from the state of mortality as distinguished from a future state of immortality.' (Masson). Masson's seems to be the best explanation for the phrase 'mortal change' refers to the conception that after death there is some period known as 'practising period' before the virtuous souls are granted 'immortality.'

Ll. 9-11. Here we feel the significance of Hallam's remark about 'the majestic simplicity and holy calm, that ennobles many of these short compositions—Milton's sonnets. **Enthroned**, sitting on the throne. **Sainted**

Seats.—Note the happy fusion of the classical and scriptural notions. He refers not only to the 'quiet seats of Gods' but also to the scriptural account of four and twenty seats of the elders with crowns of gold.

Cf. "And ye *glad spirits*, that now *sainted sit*.

On your *celestial thrones in glory drest*—Fletcher

12. **Yet some there be**—Though men are generally occupied with 'the low-thoughted care' there are some even from among 'the pin-fold' etc.; or, although men are generally busy with 'low-thoughted care,' nevertheless there are some who 'aspire etc.' **Due steps** : i.e. the steps that are appointed.

13. **Just hands** : When men go by due steps they can justly claim the 'crown that virtue gives.' **Golden key** : Probably Milton's own invention. Ben Jonson also speaks of 'a curious bunch of golden keys with which heaven's gate she locketh or displays, and it may be that Milton read Ben Jonson. Whatever it is, no key of baser metal can be used 'to open the palace of eternity' in heaven.

15. **To such** :—i. e. To those who by 'due steps aspire to lay their hand on the golden key.' **But for Such** : If it were not for such. **Errand** : An allusion to Scriptures. It is believed that God sends spirits and angels to this earth to save and protect those virtuous souls.

16. **Ambrosial Weeds** : Heavenly garments conferring immortality. 'Ambrosia' was the food of Gods. Cf. 'Amrita,' the nectar of Hindu mythology.

17. **With rank vapour** etc. Generally explained as the noisome exhalations of this sin corrupted earth. But Verity thinks that 'mould' has the general meaning of 'substance' in Milton and suggests flesh which is probably the truth, the spirit having assumed the mortal form.

18. **But to my task :** He had begun to stray, away from the point in hand, and remembers suddenly that he was appointed to guard 'those two brothers' and not to deliver a discourse on virtue; and says 'let me hasten to my work first.' **Neptune**—Poseidon—the God of seas, rivers and many sea-girt islands. **Besides the sway :** Apart from the dominion of.

20. **Took in :** Received. **Took in... Jove :** When Saturn was dethroned, his empire was divided in three parts, to be distributed between Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto (Jove). In order to ascertain who would rule which part, they drew lots; and accordingly Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto became rulers of Heaven, the Seas and Hell. Therefore, High Jove and Nether Jove mean Jupiter and Pluto respectively. But the earth, with its seas, is situated between Heaven and Hades or Hell and hence, the Kingdom of Neptune is 'twixt High and Nether Jove. **Nether :** Lower. High refers to Heaven.

22. **Inlay :** Cf. 'Inlaid with patines of bright gold' and 'this precious stone set in silver sea.'

23. **Unadorned :** Not adorned as the earth is with plants and flowers.

23, 24. **Isles...Deep :** Highlands, that beautify the bare and even-coloured surface of the sea just like the precious and various gems that beautify the plane metallic surface.

24. **To grace :** To honour, to show favour to.

25. **By course commits to etc. :** Commits in regular distribution each his distinct Government. He entrusted to the Gods under him, those sea-girt isles, in due order to be governed separately.

27. **Little tridents. :** Messrs Goggin and Watt remark 'the Trident, a three-pronged sceptre, was the characteristic symbol of Neptune's rule, and has been

taken over by Britannia. The Tridents of the lesser deities denote the small extent of their powers.' This isle England.

29. **Quarters** : Assigns. (Literally, to divide into four parts). England, then, was actually divided into four parts—London, Edinburgh, the North and Wales). **Blue-haired deities**. : Neptune is described as possessing green hair. Spenser speaks of 'the long green hair of Nymphs.' But the stage-directions in various masks say 'azure-coloured nymphs.' Beaumont and Fletcher's Naiads have bluish tresses on their heads. And so it seems to be a convention of masques, to grant blue-haired-tresses to nymphs and Gods. Prof. Masson remarks : "There seems to be some emphasis on the phrase 'blue-haired deities,' as if these were a special section of the 'tributary gods' of line 24. Can there be a recollection of 'blue' as the British colour, inherited from the old times of the blue-stained Britons who fought with Cæsar?"

L. 30. **All this tract...sun** : Wales, of which the Earl of Bridgewater was the president. **Mickle** : Great. **Noble peer** : The Earl of Bridgewater. **Tempere awe** : **Awe** : Fear which an august ruler inspires. But in the case of Bridgewater it is tempered by kindness. The whole phrase means : Dignity and firmness mingled with conciliation, sympathetic understanding and kindness. Evidently a compliment to the Earl—a convention of the masque and something more.

L. 32. **Old ...in arms** : The Welsh are Celts—an Aryan race, which, probably, first entered Britain. They were martial in spirit and loved independence. In the reign of Edward I, attempts were made to bring them to terms. But the barons answered : "We do not submit to Edward ; we have only waged war in defence of our lands and rights." Milton wrote this line with an eye

on the audience and hence this tribute. **Nursed** : Brought up.

34. Princely lore :—Brought up and educated as befits a prince. "In this phrase," says Masson, "some find an allusion to a link with royalty at a remote point in the pedigree of the Egerton family; others find a reference to the fact that, the young people had been a good deal at court. The more natural meaning, however, is *highly educated*."

Ll. 35-36...State : Ceremony of installation or dignity and high station. **New entrusted sceptre** : The power which has been newly entrusted to him. The Earl was appointed the president in 1631, but, did not take up his duties formally till 1634.

37. Perplexed : Entangled. Milton uses this word in its original Latin meaning.

38. Nodding horrors : The word 'horror' comes from Latin 'horrere' and means, to bristle, to stand on end or 'to dread.' Milton combines the two meanings here. The sense of the phrase is : awe-inspiring shagginess. **Shady brows** : Trees with plenty of foliage at the top.

39. Forlorn : i.e. those who have utterly lost their way.

41. Sovran : Supreme. **Quick commands** : Commands to be carried out quickly.

Ll. 44-45. What...bower : A claim to novelty is one of the conventions of poetry influenced by the classics. **Hall or bower** : In ancient times, people used to gather in, something like a town-hall to listen to the songs of a bard or a minstrel. **Bower** is lady's private room. Thus the contrast is between the public and the private rooms.

46. Bacchus : Son of Jupiter. The God of mirth and wine. It was he who first taught how to make wine.

48. Tuscan...transformed : ' After the transformation of the Tuscan Mariners.' See below *Ll. 49-50*

Ll. 49-50 : Milton cannot help inventing an ancestry for Comus, which is not without significance. He wants to depict, the victory of reason and virtue and purity, over, desire, enchantment, and licentiousness. The story referred to in these lines is from Ovid. Bacchus hired a vessel belonging to some Tyrrhenian the whole of that part of the sea, southwest of Italy was called Tyrrene.) pirates. Instead of launching him at Naxos they waylaid him with a view to carry him to Asia and sell him as a slave there. The Gods, however, came to his rescue ; turned the sails to snakes and Bacchus to a lion. The pirates jumped into the sea and were changed into Dolphins. (That is how the Tuscan mariners were transformed.) " On his way, Bacchus," says Milton, " touched the island ' Aeæa ' of Circe." But in the original, Bacchus never does that. But Milton alters the story to suit his purpose. That is how Milton makes his own mythology.

Circe : The daughter of the Sun and Perse. By her magical power she could transform men into beasts. She transformed all the mariners of Odysseus into pigs. But Hermes came to his help; protected him and changed his companions once more into men. **Fell :** Happened to come (because he was at the mercy of the winds.)

50. Who knows not Circe ? : This is a figure of speech known as ' anadiplosis or doubling back.' It consists of the repetition of a name or word in the form of a question. Spenser is very fond of this figure of speech.

51. Charmed cup : A cup containing the wine

which had the magical power of changing human beings into animals. See below 'upright shape'.

52. Whoever tasted etc ; Any person tasting the wine lost his upright shape. **Lost his upright shape :** An allusion to Homer's *Odyssey*, where we read that "Circe set before the followers of Ulysses a mess of cheese and barley and yellow honey with wine and mixed 'harmful drugs with the food, to make them utterly forget their own country." After giving them the cup and when they had quaffed it off, "she smote them with a wand and penned them in the styes of the swine." In spite of the change of form, their minds, however, remained even as of old. Milton, however, wishes to indicate that physical uprightness symbolises moral grandeur. Mr. Aubrey remarks about Milton's upright shape that, 'his harmonical and ingenious soul dwelt in a beautiful and well-proportioned body.'

53. Grovelling : From M. E. Grovelling—an adverb signifying flat on the ground.

54. Nymph i.e. Circe. **Gazed :** Because of the deep passionate love and beauty and youth of Bacchus. **Clustering locks :** we have a similar description of Bacchus in *L'Allegro* : 'Ivy crowned Bacchus'. To have fine locks of hair was considered as a sign of beauty. Milton himself had fine hair. Adam in P. L. Bk IV had 'hyacinthian locks'.

55. With ivy....wreathed : with clusters of grapes or ivy berries in his hair. **Blithe youth :** Gay and glad-some youth.

56. Ere : Before. **Parted :** Departed. **Thence :** From Circe's Island.

57. Much like his father...more : 'Comus', we are to note, is an offspring of Bacchus, the God of wine and mirth and of Circe, the sorceress and witch. He inherits

his father's passion for the sensual pleasures of the world. But more than that he was a born master of sorcery and witchcraft, in which he took after his mother and thus was more like his mother. For additional details see below and also Int. (characterization of Comus).

58. **Comus**: the God, who is a concrete embodiment of sensuality and magical powers. The puritan Milton, in his own way, and with an unusual poetic daring invents the figure of Comus, to suit the purposes of his masque. The primitive myth mentions only Euphrosene, the Goddess of innocent mirth, the daughter of gay Bacchus and light-hearted Venus. Comus however is the son of Bacchus and Circe, the witch, and is 'much like his father, and like his mother more'. He is the representative of the disturbing and ruinous factors of life, of restive passions and pleasures and of the misuse of human potentialities. By making Comus a step-brother to Euphrosene, Milton has shown the moral severity of his mind and his disgust for licentiousness and for too much prepossession with pleasure. The mask is only an artistic medium for exhibiting the triumph of purity and reason over desire and enchantment (see Int., Idealism of Milton).

59. **Who ripe...age**: who, having grown mature and frolicsome with the approach of manhood. The word frolic denotes Milton's romantic passion for strange words, which sound like English, but have different grammatical value. Here the word is used as an adjective; for, the English equivalent is frolicsome. It is a bold copy of the original German adjective 'frolich'.

60. **Roving...fields**: An example of the power of Milton to make the familiar appear unfamiliar. In using 'Celtic and Iberian' respectively for France and Spain, Milton has added a touch of strangeness and romance to

these words. Also note the sweet vowel music of these words.

61. **Betakes** : By using the present tense Milton has added dramatic 'vividness. **Betakes** means settles himself. **Ominous** : Full of frightening presences, awe-inspiring. The wood, 'the nodding horror of whose shady brows' *threats*, 'the forlorn and wandering passenger.' Milton from the beginning creates the romantic atmosphere of half-lights wherein the imagination can create unearthly shapes.

Line 61. **Wood** : The story has the realistic background of Wales. The 'magic wood' represents a real forest in Shropshire on the border of Wales.

62-63. **And...imbowered...mighty art** : Deep in the centre of the dark forest, and in the frightening clusters of sable branches, Comus practises witchcraft and sorcery and even excels in that respect his own mother Circe, the very personification of witchcraft. Note how the words 'thick shelter of black shades imbowered' very vividly create the atmosphere of witchery and terror.

65. **Orient Liquor** : 'Comus' brought the liquor from the East' says Trotter. The word 'East' and 'Magic' are inextricably wedded in western legends. Yet I find no propriety in paraphrasing 'orient as Eastern'. The word simply means 'shining' or 'Bright.' Cf. 'Transparently glittering glass'.

66. **Drouth of Phœbus** : The draught or thirst caused by the heat of the sun. Phœbus is the classical name for the sun-god. **Which** : The antecedent is separated from the relative, a frequent construction in Milton. 'Which' refers to liquor.

67. **Fond** : Foolish ; Cf. 'so fond are mortal men' Samson Ago. **Intemperate** : Immoderate. **Through** : On account of.

68-78. These lines tell us at once that Milton is not a plagiarist. He is an inventor, investing his borrowings with a lustre essentially his own. Circe's magic liquor had the power of changing human beings completely into animals, part for part, being conscious, however, of the contrast between the past and the present. But Comus's 'orient liquor' transforms the human faces into those of beasts and had also the power of completely obliterating human-consciousness. Comus's victims do not know that the change is something horrible or ugly. On the other hand, they pride themselves that 'their newly-acquired forms' (i.e. faces of beasts) are the most beautiful and the most handsome possessions that one can have. Homer's account of Circe's magic drink may be more pathetic, but Milton's is more striking. Milton's 'Comus' thus excels his mother in that 'mighty art.'

Some critics find in this an expression of Milton's moral indignation at the licentiousness and the pleasure-seeking cult of the Cavaliers. **Potion** : 'Orient liquor' **Express resemblance of God** : Reference to 'Genesis' 27 "So God creates man's own image. In the image of God created He him." **Express** : Exact.

70. **Brutish**. Belonging to beasts. •

71. **Ounce**. : A kind of Lynx.

72. **All other parts ... were** : Only the faces were transformed into those of beasts while all other parts remained like those of human-beings. Newton notes that this partial metamorphosis suited better the purposes of the stage. Each character would wear a mask representing some animal's head. The stage direction is very

significant : 'Headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women.'

73-75. And they disfigurement : Such is the great effect of Comus's 'orient Liquor.' His victims are entirely unaware of the fact that their human faces were changed into those of beasts. Moreover they boast that they have the most beautiful faces, and forgetting their own homes, kith and kin, they stay in that 'sensual sty'. To lose the human-consciousness is the last step of human degradation. **Perfect :** Complete. **Misery :** Degradation.

77. To roll ... sty : A vehement cry against the licentious cult. Such intemperate pleasure-seeking fools, ignorant of the contrast between the past and the present, cannot be better decried. They, leading a life of bestial debauchery, are like pigs wallowing in their dirty sty (a pen or enclosure).

78. Favoured of High Jove : i.e. virtuous persons. It is said wisely that God loves the virtuous and wards off evil from them.

79. Adventurous glade : The forest where travellers meet with adventures or perils. **Glade :** An open space in the wood ; here, the whole wood. An instance of Synecdoche.

80. Swift star : The line in its rapidity of movement and subtlety pictures in a flash the beautiful and quick flight of angels. Note the sweetness of alliteration ; The succession of 'S' sounds. **Glancing star :** a shooting star. **Safe convoy :** Safe conduct or escort.

83. Sky robes.....iris' woof. : Cf. 'ambrosial weeds' The robes of the Attendant Spirit are 'dyed in the tints of the rainbow.' 'Iris : The Goddess of the Rainbow and' many coloured messenger of Juno.' **Woof :** Threads woven across the warp. **Swain :** Shepherd, or peasant.

84-91. : This passage is a glorious tribute to Lawes, the musician. In its poetic flight, it expresses the power of music. The angel proposes to cast off the ethereal robes and adopt the rustic apparel of a shepherd. It shows the romantic desire for the bucolic life, which, as the poets imagine, is mingled with the music and beauty of the green, blossoming earth. The sweet pipings of that gentle swain, Henry Lawes, have the magic power to lull the boisterous winds into sleep and to tone down the war of stormed forests. The liquid notes pour out a harmony so sweet that stormy atmosphere is transformed into that of beauty and music. Prof. Sampson observes :—'The poet's tribute to the musician is most courteous, having in mind to bestow praise, he gives it with a generous hand. The circumstance that one was a Puritan and the other a Loyalist and courtier does not detract him from the cordiality of friendly relation.' **This house** : The Earl of Bridgewater's. **Smooth-Dittied** : Melodious, easy-flowing. **Knows to still** : Knows how to calm. **Waving Woods** : Woods agitated by winds.

Ll. 88-91. : 'Who is not less faithful than skilful, and most likely to be out of doors at this time, engaged in his duty of watching his flock upon the hills, and so near at hand to give the immediate aid now required' (Trotter) **Nor of less faith** : i. e. 'Not less trustworthy than he is skilled in music.' (Masson). **Likeliest** : Most fitting.

92. Hateful steps i.e. those of Comus and his company of revellers. **Viewless** : invisible.

Ll. 93-169 : Comus now enters in 'qaint habits'. He carries in one hand his magic wand and a cup of drugged wine in the other. With him comes, a crowd of men and women in 'glistening apparel' headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women. They come, those beast-like human-beings

carrying torches in their hands, and behave in a noisy and unruly manner.

Comus makes a speech, and tells them that, night is come and therefore, their revelry may begin. He bids them dance round him in a ring and they do so. Suddenly he commands them 'to break off.' By his magic he knows that, some pure and good person is drawing nigh. Instantly he determines to persuade the stranger join his hideous band. He bids his followers hide themselves in the thickest part of the wood; and then puts on the dress of a villager so that, he may the better deceive the way-farer.

Note the changes in metre. Milton employs rhymed couplets. The length of the lines is shortened, indicating lighter vein and dancing rhythm. Thus, in the passage (Ll. 93-144.) the riotous music of the rhythmical lines creates the most vivid picture of the dancers engaged in their 'light fantastic round'. The scene is bathed in the perfume of the mysterious night, wine and the flavour of enjoyment, with all its picturesque pageantry of faeries and elves pictured with a vivacity befitting the riotous and care-free temperament of Comus. The whole passage is exquisite in its description of night. But at *L. 144*, *there is once more a change in metre*. The lines are lengthened and the rhyme disappears, indicating that, Comus is now busy weaving a net to catch the 'virgin benighted in the woods.'

As regards the character of Comus, Prof. Legouis observes: 'He has nothing of the true voluptuary! He shows the bones of anacreonticism too nakedly'; while, Sir Walter Raleigh remarks: 'Comus, we are told, stands for a whole array of ugly vices—riot, intemperance, gluttony and luxury. But what a delicate monster is he, and what a ravishing Lyric strain he is master of!'

Enter Comus etc. : This seems rather like an anti-masque, or comic interlude after the manner of Ben Jonson. (For additional information, see introduction.) **His glass :** Containing his magic potion, which had the power of changing human-beings into beasts. **Glistening :** Shining brightly, because of the fact that, 'their apparel' was made of the cloth of silver and tinsel. **Rout :** Band of riotous men or disorderly crowd.

93. **The star :** The evening star, Hesperus. Collins, in his 'Ode to Evening', calls this the 'Folding Star'. Poetically, a star, scientifically, a planet. Shakespeare, in 'Measure for Measure' speaks of the 'Morning Star' as the 'Unfolding Star.' Keightley notes that, Milton adapted Shakespeare's converse description of the morning-star. The whole line means : 'the evening star, that bids the shepherd confine his flock in the fold.'

94. **The top of Heaven doth hold :** Is far above the horizon.

95. **Gilded car :** Apollo, as the God of the Sun, was supposed to drive his golden chariot through the heavens. Cf. 'Phoebus' golden cart'.

96. **His glowing axle doth allay :** "Here is an allusion", says Todd, "to the opinion of the ancients that, the setting of the sun in the Atlantic ocean was accompanied with a noise as of the sea hissing". **Allay :** Cool the heat of.

97. **The steep Atlantic stream : steep : deep.** **Atlantic stream :** cf. the Homeric conception of the ocean as a great river surrounding the earth.

LL. 95-97 : The sun god, Apollo, travels his 'daily round' in a golden chariot with a great speed. The wheels of the chariot and also the axle grow hot because of the great motion, and so towards evening, when he reaches the Atlantic ocean, he cools the heat of the wheels

by plunging them into the ocean, which produces a great hissing sound. To quote Verity, 'the waves of the Atlantic hissed, as the fiery wheels of the setting sun's chariot touched them.'

• **LL. 98-99. And the slope sun etc. :** The sun going down beneath the horizon, shoots a last beam towards the zenith, which is already almost dark. **Slope :** Sinking in the horizon. **Dusky Pole :** Milton first wrote, 'northern'. The 'Pole' is dusky as opposed to the bright region of the south, says Keightley. But, as the word 'northern' is dropped, and 'dusky' substituted, the phrase 'dusky pole' simply means, 'the zenith, which is already dark.'

100-101. Pacing towards etc. : A happy mixture of the classical and the Biblical notions. In L. 100, Milton follows the classical conception that the world is flat and that the sun passes underneath it from west to east ; while, in L. 101, we have traces of Milton's Biblical studies : 'In them (the heavens) He hath set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race'. In simple prose, these lines mean, the sun is passing underneath the flat earth and is moving towards the east, where stands his chamber. Compare ll. 102-144, with ll. 25-40, of L' Allegro to feel the contrast in spirit.

104. Topsy dance : A maddening and sensual dance under the influence of liquor. **Jollity :** Boisterous mirth.

105-106. : These two lines carry in their sweet rhythm, sounds of dancing foot steps, fragrance of perfumed wine and the smothering sweetness of roses. They defy analysis and need no explanation : their beauty is like the twinkling of light on the dancing ripples on the surface of a lake. **Braid :** Entwine. **Rosy twine :** Garlands of roses. "An allusion to the classical custom", says Verity, "of

wearing chaplets of flowers, especially roses, at entertainments and perfuming the hair with unguents."

Dropping odours etc. : cf. 'Amber-dropping hair' in L. 862 ; and also 'that dropped with odorous oil down his fair eyes' from 'Ode on the Passion'. **The whole line means** : Scattering fragrance in all directions and moist with wine. Note that, it is the roses, not the dancers who are wet with wine.

107-110 : It is a common poetic practice to represent abstract qualities as human-beings ; and personified abstractions are a characteristic of Milton's early style. It was the influence of the morality plays that brought in personifications into English lit. Nevertheless Milton knows how to use this weapon and avoids its overuse so annoying to the reader. **Rigour.....bed** : Exacti^g austerity is now asleep. Austerity for austere people. Abstract for concrete. **Scrupulous** : conscientious. **Strict age** : Old age, that demands implicit obedience. Old age for old men. **Sour severity** : The harsh and unsparing self-restraint, which makes the person peevish and morose. **Grave saws** : Solemn and serious sayings. Cf. 'full of wise saws' (As You Like it.)

111. **We.....purer fire** : It was the medieval conception that man was composed of four elements ; Earth, Water, Fire and Air—the last two being the lighter and nobler elements. Hence, **Of purer fire** means, divine or god-like. Comus is the son of Bacchus and Circe that means, he is something more than 'human' and hence, in him there would be a predominance of Fire and Air. Cf. Cleopatra's words : 'I am fire and air' says she, about to die. After her death she will be free of the heavy elements that clogged her soul, on earth. A friend of mine suggests the following interpretation : 'Comus says that, 'in them (in himself and his train) the element of fire

(a lighter element) is predominant, conveying thereby that, they are a jolly troupe of lighter disposition'. **Starry quire** : Here is a reference to the music of the spheres. Milton is very fond of alluding to the Pythagorean theory of the spheres and to the old Ptolemaic system of the cosmos. Pythagoras supposed that, the planets emitted sounds proportioned to their distances from the earth and formed a celestial concert, too melodious to affect the Gross unpurged ear of the common people. Cf. 'Heavenly tune' in 'Arcades'; L. 1172 and Shakespeare, in the 'Merchant of Venice' :

"There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
But in his motion like an angel sings".

Quire : Same as choir.

113. **Nightly watchful Spheres** : An allusion to the notion that, stars keep watch and guard the earth. Cf. 'And all the spangled host keep watch in order bright' (Hymn to Nativity). **Nightly** : During the night.

114. **Lead in.....years** : The spheres and stars keep watch and guard the earth one by one. And it is their movements which cause changes in months, seasons and years. Now, according to the medieval theory, the Universe was divided into nine spheres (for details see ch. I, Int.) which moved round the earth, with the earth as the fixed centre. In their movements they had to pass through 'those twelve signs of Zodiac'. These twelve signs had their own individual qualities and so also the planets. 'Ram' for instance, was supposed to be a hot sign and 'Mars' a hot planet. So, when Mars would pass through Ram the result would be a hot day.

Ll. 115-118. A picturesque description of the sea and the sea-beach under the shower of moon-beams. The rising of the tide and clustering of the waves are attributed to the magnetic attraction of the moon. As the

surface of the sea gets ruffled, the fish jerkily jump in and out as if engaged in a Morris Dance. **115 sounds** : Straits. **Finný-Drove** : Shoals of fish. **Wavering Morrice** : The Moorish dance introduced into England from Spain by John of Gaunt. 'A fine description' says Trotter, 'of the gentle vibration of the waters on the surface of the Moon-lit sea.' **To the Moon** : Obeying the influence of the Moon.

Ll. 117-21 About these lines it may be remarked that the keen spiritual light that is over all Milton's meditation does not debar him from the world of fairy lore—'a world to which not only Shakespeare, but also laborious and arrogant poets—scholars like Jonson and Drayton had free right of entry.' And it may seem very strange that it is Comus who speaks these lovely lines. But once we remember that he is not an aged *Silenus* but a young God, the companion of love and youth, one ceases to wonder. **Tawny** : of orange-brown colour. A fine and accurate epithet. **Shelves** : Sand-banks. **Pert** : Lively or nimble. Cf, 'A nimble spirit of youth, awake the pert.' Shakespeare. **Dapper elves** : Lively and well dressed elves, the mischievous supernatural beings. **Dimpled Brook** : On account of breeze, lovely ripples are formed on the surface of a brook, which appear like dimples. To have a dimple in the face is a sign of beauty. Paris, the lover of Helen had a beautiful dimple in his face. **Wood-nymphs** : Semi-divine maidens who spend their time in dancing in forests. This is a pagan idea, but Milton in his search of beauty does not hesitate to accept it. **Decked with...trim** : Adorned with neatly arranged daisies.

121. Their merry wakes etc. : 'Wakes were all night watchers kept up at the feast of dedication in a church, or country wakes, which were celebrated with

nightly dance' says Todd. It was supposed that during night-time, wood-nymphs came out of their secret abodes and kept the wood all awake by their dancing. Let us remember Shakespeare's 'Midsummer night's dream.' On the brown sands, bathed in the silvery liquid of moon-light, dance the fairies and elves, while by the side of a brook in a forest, under bewitching moonlight, dance wood-nymphs, pretty and fair.

122. This question reveals the light-hearted gaiety of Comus.

Ll. 123-24. If love were all, then Comus would have been the Lord of life. But the love indulged in by Comus has little purity about it. It is the ebullition of sensual desire for the creamy and fairer skins.' **Venus** Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty and love. Goddesses from Greek mythology are not models of virtue. Venus's love-affairs with Mars and Adonis are too well-known to need repetition. She stands for love that is fleshly, gross and impure. It is no wonder then that Comus remembers Venus.

125. **Rites** : Religious ceremonies. From Comus's view point, 'merry-making' was as important as 'religious rites.' Merry-making was his religion.

126-127. **This only daylight etc.**: There are actions which would be censured as sin, if perpetrated in day-time, but the pitch darkness in its dusky womb will preserve our secret. Bowle point out similar lines from Ben Jonson's Fox.:

'It is no sin loves fruit to steal
But the sweet thefts to reveal
To be taken, to be seen.
These have crimes accounted be'

128. **Dun** : Dark. **Nocturnal sports** : Sensual diversions practised during night-time.

129. **Cotytto**: Goddess of licentious revelry. This passionate Goddess is believed to be always wearing a dark and thick veil. Her worship was celebrated with great licentiousness during night-time, in secret parts of forests.

129-30. **To whom...burns.**: The licentious rites to propitiate Cotytto were performed very secretly. Juvenal speaks of their being celebrated with 'secret torch'. **Mysterious Dame**: An allusion to Cotytto's wearing a dark and thick veil. A beauty veiled is ever a mysterious thing.

131. **Ne'er...but when** Only when. **Invoked**: Called. **Dragon Womb**: Newton points out that this is an allusion to the idea that the chariot of night was drawn by dragons, those huge serpents famous for their sharpness of sight. Shakespeare in his *Cymbeline* speaks of the 'Dragon Car' of night. 'Densest Night,' says Phillips, 'prevails when Darkness, an inhabitant of the nether world, sends forth her thickest gloom--and then only Cotytto holds her Sway.'

132. **Stygian Darkness**: Belonging to Styx, a celebrated river of hell, round which it flows nine times. In 'Paradise Lost' Milton speaks of Styx as 'the flood of deadly hate.' 'Styx' is itself a synonym of hell. Hence, the whole phrase means: 'Darkness as of the nether world.' **Spets**: spits.

133. **One blot**: One universal blot 'says Bell. **Lines 130-133. Mysterious...air**: This mysterious, passionate, licentious and dark-veiled goddess of night is invoked at no other time but only when Darkness a resident of hell sends forth the darkest gloom changing the whole atmosphere into one mass of black. This mighty image is essentially Miltonic. It foreshadows 'Paradise Lost.'

134. Stay : Check. **Cloudy :** Wrapt in clouds. **Ebon :** Black as ebony. The whole line means : Chariot wrapt in clouds and black as ebony. There is no relief of light. Not only is she shrouded in dark veil but also the cloud that enwraps her ebony chariot is black.

135-37. Till utmost...out : Comus wants the favour of the company of Cotytto and Hecate till all the rites to propitiate them are completely performed. This reveals Comus's desire 'to celebrate the night time in his two-fold character of magician and patron of license.' **Vowed Priests :** Priests consecrated by solemn declaration. Comus and his troupe of revellers are priests who have dedicated themselves to the service of Cotytto.

138-41.: 'A mosaic of Shakespearean touches' says Verity. Here is a splendid image. The morning is conceived as a 'blabbing scout' who peeps through a narrow aperture and informs the Sun of all the deeds done under the cover of darkness. **Blabbing :** Tale-telling. **Scout :** Spy. **Nice :** Fastidious or prudish. **Indian :** Eastern. **Indian Steep :** I believe the reference is to 'the Indian Mount,' the Himalayas which were then regarded as the eastern boundary of the world. The East was a land of magic, charm and romance to the Englishmen in the age of Milton. **Cabined :** Narrow. **Loophole :** 'Hole or an aperture shaped like a loop in a String. Loop is a 'Celtic word' (Trotter). Morning is supposed to be confined in a cabin. She first peeps through 'the loop-hole', 'to report conditions' to the Sun, who as 'a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber.'

141. Tell-tale Sun : Alluding to the Sun's disclosing to Vulcan, the adultery of Venus, who was Vulcan's wife, with Mars the God of battles. Cf. 'The thick locked boughs shut out the tell-tale Sun. For, Venus hated his all blabbing light'. **Descry.:** Reveal by narrating.

142. **Our Concealed Solemnity** : Our secret religious rite. Comus again refers to the worship of Cotytto performed with 'secret torches.' Let us remember once more that 'night-revelry' is a religion of Cotytto's worshippers.

143. **Knit hands** : Cf. 'Arm in Arm, tread we softly in a round'. **Beat the ground** : it means simply 'dance'.

144. **Light fantastic round**. : **Fantastic** : Unrestrained. **Round** : A country dance, in which the dancers form a ring by knitting their hands, and go round and round. At this point Comus and his rout knit hands and dance a measure. **Measure** denotes any kind of dance, remarkable for its well-defined rhythm. It is here applied to the 'rude wild and wanton antic', into which Comus and his rout break forth. In Grove's Dictionary of Music we get the following account : 'Measure denoted any dance remarkable for its well-defined rhythm, but in time the name was applied to a solemn and stately dance of the nature of Pavan or a Minuet....It is somewhat remarkable that no trace can be found of any special music to which Measures were danced. The most curious and lively description of the Measure and round is given in Browne's 'Britanica's Pastorals.'

145. **Break off**. : Stop, cease dancing. **Different** : different from that of Comus and his rout.

146. **Chaste footing** : Sound of the virtuous footsteps as contrasted with the 'tipsy dance.'

147. **Shrouds**. : The original meaning is 'winding-sheet.' Warton gives the meaning as 'branches of trees.' But from the context it means nothing but 'hiding places', **Brakes** : Thickets.

148. **Affright** : Terrify, scare. **Our number..... Affright**; Perhaps the 'approaching person' may be scared

away by observing such a crowd in a lonely wood. Evidently this smells of mischief.

149. **For so...art** : By dint of his magic, Comus can recognize that the footsteps are those of a virgin.

150. **Benighted** ; • **Overtaken** by night.

151. **Wily trains** : Artful snares or Alluring artifices.

Ll. 151-53. **I shall...circe** : These lines are dramatic and they throw a flood of light on Comus's character. He has the vanity to enjoy with ecstasy, the wickedness, he perpetrates. He is overjoyed to feel that like his mother circe he will soon have a crowd of human beings transformed into animals—of the fairer sex too—grazing around him. An allusion to Comus's power of transforming human beings into beasts by the help of that 'orient drink.'

154. **Dazzling** : Illusive : Dazing. In the original manuscript it was 'magic dust' instead of 'dazzling spell'. Here the actor was to throw a powder into the air, which soon burst into a blue flame. Milton, in order to conceal the stage trick changed the original. **Spongy air** : The air is supposed to retain the spell for a very long time, just as a sponge holds water for long ; so, the air is called spongy.

155. **Blear** : Deceiving. **Blear illusions** : Deceitful apparitions. Cf. 'While counterfeit supposes blear thine eyes'. Shakespeare.

156-158. **Lest the place.....flight** : so that, this lonely wood and my 'quaint dress' should not create in her mind any shadow of surprise or of fear and put the damsel to flight. **Suspicious flight** : Flight owing to a suspicion of danger. **Quaint habits** : Old, strange and grotesque dress. **Breed astonishment** : Astonish. **Presentments** : Impressions.

159. **Against my course** : Contrary to my usual practice. Comus does not want to frighten the travellers because, then they will be scared away and he will lose all enjoyment which is the main motive of his conduct.

159. **Well-placed** : Spoken at the right time. **Glozing** polished and alluring ; hence, of deceitful and flattering politeness. **Baited** : Made attractive, (the fish is attracted towards the rod because of the bait at the end. Thus, to catch the visitors 'the well-placed words' is the rod, while 'not unpalatable reason,' is the bait.) **Not unpalatable** : This is a device in rhetoric used to emphasise what we want to, by expressing it apparently in the contrary way. Here it means, extremely palatable. This device adds force. **Wind me** : Win his confidence. Shakespeare uses this to mean, 'to get an unfair advantage over'. **Easily won** : Simple. Easily won over. **Hug him into snares** : Drag him into the state, where, he shall see 'illusive apparitions'.

165. **Virtue** : Influence. **Magic dust** (refer to L 154).

164-166. **When once villager** : When my magic powder has acted on her eyes, I shall appear to her as an innocent villager (here the old reading is retained, though elsewhere 'magic dust' is changed to 'dazzling spell').

167. **Thrifty** : Economy. Industry (?) **Keeps up** : I out of bed. **Gear** : Business. **Whom thrifty gear** : Whom the consciousness of economy keeps out of bed, occupied with his country business.

168. **Fairly** : Stealthily, lightly.

Ll. 170-243 : At this moment a lady (Lady Alice Egerton). enters and is greeted with a loud applause. Sh

tells us that, she is travelling through the woods with her brothers, but has rested beneath a tree, while her companions have gone to seek berries and cooling fruit to refresh her wearied body and spirit. They lose their way in darkness. They have been away so long that, she fears they must have missed their way in darkness. And so in the hope that, one of the merry-makers may guide her to a place of safety, she hurries to the spot from where, she thought, issued the noise of the revelry. But, to her surprise she finds there nothing but deep silence. She is not afraid of harm because, she puts her trust in heaven. But how can she find her brothers or make known her whereabouts to them? She cannot halloo, or shout out loudly. But she can sing. And if she sings, she thinks, her brothers may perhaps hear her, and be guided to her by the sound of her voice. So she sings a pretty song: 'Sweet echo, sweetest nymph'

About 'lady Alice Egerton who played the part of the chaste lady in *Comus* Todd remarks that 'she was the eleventh daughter of the Earl, thirteen years old. Her face was very beautiful; for, perhaps, a more pleasing face has rarely exercised the painter's skill. Above all she had the gift of voice.'

The lady's speech contains many beauties 'perpetually attracting attention by sublime sentiment, by fanciful imagery, by an exuberance of picturesque description, poetical allusion, and ornamental expression.' At times however Milton like Homer nods and uses imagery which is unnatural (see LL. 194, 200). But such flaws are rare—perhaps very rare—and they are more than atoned for by the charming song of the lady. **If mine ear be true: If I hear aright. My best guide now:** The lady is walking in the forest on a dark night. It is evident that, her only guide is her ears. She must steer her course accordingly.

172. Riot and ill-managed merriment : "Mid night shout and revelry" An uproarious and disorderly merriment.

173-177. 'Milton is thinking of a shearing feast and harvest-home, such as Herrick describes in the 'Hesperides.' **Jocund :** Merry ; pleasing. **Game-some :** This word is similar to 'long-some' 'Joy-some' 'some' is an adjective termination. (This was used in Elizabethan English widely.) **Lively :** playful.

174. Stirrs up : Bfings about. **Loose :** Disorderly. **Unlettered :** Uneducated ; ignorant. **Hinds :** (from Anglo-Saxon 'Hinda'-domestic.) Rustics.

Ll. 171-174 : I think it is the noise, such as is created, when the uncultured are excited by the melodious flute or pleasant pipe, to disorderly and unrestrained merriment. **Teeming :** Full to the brim. The sheep were so many that the 'pin' was full with them. Thus 'teaming flock' means, 'a flock, consisting of a large number of sheep.' **Grange :** Granary. **Wanton dance :** ill-managed merriment. **Bounteous :** Liberal in granting favours. **Pan :** Greek shepherd god. He is represented as possessing the body of a goat and a human head, blowing a reed pipe. Mrs. E. B. Browning gives a description of Pan in her 'A Musical Instrument'.

"What was he doing the great God Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river ?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and padding with the hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river,"

He is the inventor of the flute, with seven stops. **Amiss :** In a wrong fashion. **Thank the Gods amiss' :** the Puritan Milton wants to suggest that the rustics worship 'the Gods' in a wrong way.

179. **Late wassailers**: Night revellers. **Inform**: Cause to be, get the means of being directed.

180. **Unacquainted feet**: She has lost herself in the wood and so she is, unacquainted with the right path. The epithet is transferred from 'road' to 'feet'. We have a similar expression in 'Samson Agonistes' as pointed out by T. Warton.

"Hither hath informed
Your younger feet"

181. **Maze**: An intricate, and confusing net-work of paths. **Blind**: Obscure.

Ll. 177-81. **I should be loth...tangled wood**: The lady is unwilling to steer towards the place from whence proceeded the noise of ill-managed merriment; because, she is afraid of the 'swilled insolence' of such 'late wassailers'. But whither else can she go, in her ignorance, in the mazes of the wood?

181. For **tangled wood**, Cf. "The nymphs in the shades of thickets mourn" 'Ode on the nativity'.

183. **Lodge**: To pass the night. **Spreading**: Again a case of transferred epithet. The favour is not spreading, but the spreading branches of the pine do a favour to the travellers.

As Todd rightly puts it, the choice of the forest, for laying the scene makes it convenient for Milton to give us beautiful and picturesque descriptions and musical lines like 'In the blind mazes of the tangled wood'. He secures advantage by the introduction of a magician and the darkness of the night.

188. **Gray-hooded Even**: Evening with the gray head-dress. It is the ash-colour of the evening to which the metaphor refers. **Votarist**: A person solemnly vowed to the service of God. **Sad**: Sober, serious, grave. **Palmer's weed**: The dress of a holy pilgrim. Palmer is

a votarist, who has fulfilled his vow and brings back a palm-branch from his pilgrimages to Holy land.

Phœbus' wain : Cf. the 'gilded car' of Phœbus.
Wain : Wagon.

Ll. 189-90. The mythological names, sweet as rainbow, recur again and again in Milton's poetry. Here, in this magnificent simile, Milton compares the serene and serious aspect of the ash-coloured evening with that of the austere pilgrim in his dusky gown. "If the fine image is optically realised, what we see is Evening succeeding day, as the figure of a venerable grey-hooded mendicant, might slowly follow the wheels of some rich man's chariot," observes Prof. Masson. Such passages illustrate the full significance of Mackail's remark: 'others civilised our poetry; Milton made it classic.'

192. **Engaged.....far** : *Engaged* : Committed. To engage is to bind by a gage or a pledge. For, this line. Cf. the beautiful closing lines of 'Paradise Lost':

"They hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow
 Through Eden took their solitary way"

194. **Envious darkness** : In 'Romeo and Juliet', where Juliet cries out,

"Look, look what *envious streaks*

Do lace the severing clouds, you dear east—"

it is the streaks that are jealous. Here the night is envious because, it is she, who hides the two brothers, those two Narcissus, into its dark womb and separates them from her.

Ll. 195-225 are 'omitted in the Bridgewater Ms, perhaps to lighten the part of the lady; perhaps from motives of delicacy' says Masson.

195-197. : The night which is like a thief, is here supposed, to have shut all the stars in his dark lantern in order to perform felony. According to Keightey, this

image is here 'certainly' rather undignified and especially in the mouth of a lady'. 'The allusion,' he thinks, 'is to a robber, with a dark lantern'. Stopford Brooke also severely condemns this passage by asserting that, 'nothing could be worse than this comparison of night to a thief, who shuts up, for the sake of his felony, the stars, whose lamps burn ever-lasting oil in his dark lantern.' **But : Unless.**

198. **That nature etc. :** Here is a very good instance of a change in the construction of sentence due to a change in thought. That '*Nature hung in heaven,*' is a relative clause co-ordinate *in sense* with the next clause; but by a change of thought the phrase, 'and filled their Lamps' is treated as a principal clause and a new object is introduced.' **Their lamps :** A commonplace image and without the glory of a Shelley's sweetness or Shakespearean witchery as in 'the night's candles are burnt out.'

199. **Everlasting oil :**

Cf. By this the *eternal lamps*, wherewith high Jove

Doth light the lower world were half spent. Spenser.
or 'There's husbandry in heaven. Their *candles* are all out.' (Macbeth.)

200. **Misled :** One who has missed the right path and gone astray.

195-200 : The imagery in these lines has been described as unnatural and far-fetched. 'Milton under the tyranny of his imagination, seems to bind fast his readers upon the slow wheel of unnatural events as he urges it onward in its course. Such conceits are quite common in the earlier works of Shakespeare and in the works of the poets, popularly known as the Metaphysicals. Milton's conceits are mere experiments in style, and in his later poems he abandons them altogether.'

L. 200. By the line, '**This is the place, as well as I may guess**, the action is suggested automatically. We can picture the lady struggling through the tangled boughs and maze, **keeping towards the place**, from where, she thinks, proceeded the sound, and at last reaching it as she supposes she has.

202. **Tumult** : Uproar.

203. **Rife** : Prevalent. **Perfect** : Distinctly recognizable.

204. **Single darkness** : Nothing but darkness. No sign of life.

205. Again a line suggestive of action. The charms of Comus have begun to act. T. Warton remembers Sh's lines from 'King John' : "with many legions of strange fantasies, which in the throng and press to the last hold confound themselves."

205-9. **A thousand fantasies** etc. : On this passage Lowell says : "That wonderful passage in Comus of the airy tongues—perhaps the most imaginative in suggestion he ever wrote—was conjured out of a dry sentence in Plutarch's abstracts from 'Marco Polo.' Whereas another wise critic observes : 'such is the vigour of his lofty mind that he gives the old dame fire-side fairy-tales a classical dignity ;' and lastly Sampson : "As we read these lines, they give an instinctive thrill, not exactly of fear, but surprise and apprehension as from contact with the unknown and supernatural.' **Fantasies** : Fancies. **To throng** : To crowd. **Calling shapes** : Warton quotes from Marco Polo a passage, where, in speaking of the Desert of Lop, he points out : 'now at night various illusions of demons occur.' Heywood also mentions those human shapes 'calling and beckoning.' The lady sees, because of the magic of Comus, all around her innumerable illusive shapes, inviting her with mysterious signs. **Beckoning**

shadows dire : 'A favourite word arrangement with Milton. He places the noun between two qualifying words. The phrase means : Dreadful shapes, that beckon with signs, for instance, like the Ghost in Hamlet. **Airy Tongues** : Sounds with their sources invisible. The expression very finely describes the mysterious nature of sounds. Cf. Keats's 'airy voices' in Endymion IV. **Syllable** : Pronounce distinctly.

212. **Siding** : Accompanying. **Conscience** : The faculty which pronounces judgment upon the moral quality of one's motives or actions, approving the right and condemning the wrong. Note the constant use of personification. It is the continuation of the tradition in 'morality plays.'

213. **Pure-eyed faith** : Belief and Trust in God unsoiled, unblemished and clear-sighted. **White-handed** : Unspotted, without even the slightest taint of impurity.

214. **Thou hovering...wings** : A reference to the Angel of Hope who

In sight, *on the wing* and if not approaching
Yet not flying away : still appearing.

The protecting angel hovers over the maiden to protect her. **Girt with golden wings** : Equipped with or having golden wings. 'Ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold' Psalm 18.

215. **And thou...chastity** : The scriptural trio is 'Faith, Hope and Charity.' But Milton inserts 'chastity' so rigorous and strict, that, there is no room for 'charity'. This is very significant. It speaks volumes about Milton's personality and idealism. He is ever anxious, of vices and feels more keenly than anyone else the need to set before his hearers the beauty of Purity and Chastity. Chastity is called '*unblemished*' meaning without

even the slightest jot, taint or blot of impurity. It is very interesting to note that, the word *chastity* occurs seven times in the poem : the adjective *chaste* four times. For further discussion see introduction (Doctrine of Chastity in 'Comus').

216. **Ye.** : MORRIS has the following note : 'This confusion between 'ye' and 'you' did not exist in old English ; 'yè' was always used as a nominative and you as a dative or accusative. In the English Bible the distinction is carefully observed, but in the dramatists of the Elizabethan period there is a very loose use of the two forms.' Milton uses the nominative plural form *ye*, occasionally for the objective *you*. **Visibly etc.** : 'you are not unsubstantial shapes but living presences.' Not things without forms but actual *concrete realities*.

217, 218. **The Supreme Good...vengeance** : God is the supreme Good ; and so if there is any existence of evil it exists for God's purposes. Evil is present in this world for the sake of 'vengeance' or punishment. The chaste Lady in *Comus* believes that evil is created by God to pay evil-doers in the same coin.

219-220. **Would send...unassailed** : God is omniscient and he is also the Supreme Good. He will not therefore brook a chaste maiden being harassed by evil-doers. And if he finds out that the chastity of a pure maiden is in danger of being lost, he will send a 'glistening angel' like the Attendant Spirit clad in ambrosial weeds to help her. Students of Mahabharata will recall how Lord Krishna protected the chastity of Draupadi. It is this belief in God that characterizes Milton's poetry and gives him a place apart on the soil of Parnassus. **Glistening Guardian** : Cp. 'ambrosial weeds. **If need were : If there were need. Unassailed** : Unharmed.

221-22. **Was I deceived...night** ? Verity very brilliantly observes : 'A moment before she had expressed the belief that Providence would, if necessary, interpose to protect her. The rift in the clouds seems an omen ; the moonlight is like a glistening 'angel'. And T. Warton has also something very fine to say : 'The repetition arising from the conviction and confidence of an unaccusing conscience, is inimitably beautiful ; when all succour seems to be lost, Heaven unexpectedly presents the silver of a sable cloud to the virtuous.' **Sable** : Dark. **Her** : Its. Milton uses 'her' because the Latin word for cloud is feminine. **Silver lining** : Too familiar to need any explanation.

223-24, Note how skilfully Milton uses the device of repetition. •

225, **Tufted grove** ; Cf. 'Bosomed high in *tufted trees*' **Casts** : As a matter of fact it must be 'cast' because, in line 223 there is 'does'. An instance of poetic license.

226, **Hallo**: Call out loudly, Ho ! Hey ! Ho. !

227. **Noise** : Sound.

228, **New-enlivened spirits** : Her courage is revived by the appearance of the 'silver lining' in the 'sable cloud,' or to use the words of Trotter, 'her courage is quickened by the thought that she is under divine protection.'

229. **Prompt** : Encourage. **They** : i.e. her brothers,

Ll. 230-243. This song is an invocation to sound. The lady requests Echo to help her, so that, her call may resound through the forest, and the echo may be heard by her brothers.

The reply of this invocation of the sound would be counterfeited behind the scenery, in the performance of the masque. This invocation gave an opportunity for music. It was a pretty fanciful device appropriate to the fanciful character of a masque.

The idea of this song seems to have been suggested by the following lines of Ben Jonson.

"*Echo, fair Echo speak to Mercury that calls thee, sorrowful nymph.*"

This song, proves, at one stroke, Milton's mastery of metre. Though always dignified grand and majestic in expression, he could play on several stops, sweet and gentle and serene as the occasion may be. (For the appreciation of *songs in Comus* see *Introduction*.)

230. **Echo** : A wood-nymph in classical mythology. She was at first the attendant nymph of Juno, the wife of Jupiter. At the same time, she helped the amorous affairs of Jupiter; and owing to her talkative character gave out that secret. Thus, she brought the curses of Jupiter upon herself and was granted only the power of repeating the words said to her. Later on, she fell in love with Narcissus, but as her love was not returned, she pined away in grief ; so that in the end there remained of her nothing but her own voice. Narcissus was punished by being made to fall in love with his own image reflected in a fountain. On his death he was changed into the flower, that bears his name.

231. **Airy Shell** : *Shell* : A term, applied to the hard outer covering, which is an abode of pearls. The meaning, in general is a 'dwelling place.' The dwelling of Echo, according to some, is 'the vault of Heaven' and to some, 'a shell with air in it lying by the river-side.' But I think that the phrase 'airy shell' denotes nothing but what we call 'atmosphere ;' for 'atmosphere' is the only and the best 'shell' of echo. Shakespeare in 'Romeo and Juliet' writes :—

'Else would I tear the *cave where Echo lies*.
And make her airy voice more hoarse than mine.'

In the original, it was 'cell.' But 'shell' gives better sense, as it is used in connection with a nymph.

232. Meander : A river in Asia Minor, known for its slow and circuitous course. This association of Echo with Meander is *without any classical authority*, though, Gray, seems to accept it, in his 'Progress of Poesy' 69-72. Keightley has the following note. 'It is possible that, he (Milton) assigns the bank of the Meander as the abode of the Echo because, its course goes backwards and forwards, returning on itself like the repercussion of an echo. He assigns the vale, of course, because, valleys are often the seats of echoes, 'while Prof. Hales writes : "The real reason is that, Meander was a famous haunt of swans, and the swan was a favourite bird with the Greek and Latin writers,—one to whose sweet singing they perpetually allude.' Meander is also associated with the sorrows of Byblis for her brother Camus, and hence Echo and Meander were in the same boat." Whatever the reason, it was a happy thought which made Milton bring them together. It is at once suggestive of music and misfortune. **Margent Green :** Margent is the margin or border.' The banks of Meander were clothed in green. A beautiful picture.

233. Violet-embroidered vale. : A beautiful compound epithet, and the combination of the two words that compose it, natural and easy. The phrase means, the valley embroidered with violets.

234. Love-lorn : 'One that has lost her loved ones.' **Nightingale :** Bell has the following note : 'Milton makes frequent allusion to the nightingale : in 'Il Penseroso' it is 'Philomel.' In 'Paradise Regained' it is the Attic bird. He calls it the Philomela, the daughter of Pandion, King of Athens. Near the Academy was Colonus, which Sophocles has celebrated as the haunt of nightin-

gales. Philomela was changed at her own prayer into a nightingale, that she might escape the vengeance of her brother-in-law Tereus. The epithet 'love-lorn,' seems to point to legend of Aedon, who, having killed her own son by mistake, was changed into a nightingale, whose mournful song was represented by the Greek poets as the lament of the mother for her child.

235. **Sad song mournth :** sings her plaintive melody.

236. **A gentle pair :** Her two brothers.

237-40. **Canst thou...where :** The lady says to Echo that, her brothers are like Narcissus, Echo's lover—a hint that would enable her to identify them at once. But a new thought enters her mind. Perhaps Echo herself has hidden them. So, she implores Echo, to tell her in which bower she has hid them. **Likest :** that is, in beauty. **Narcissus :** The beautiful youth beloved by Echo. For additional details, see note on Echo.

241. **Queen of Parley :** Queen of conversation. Echo never allows a single sound go unreturned. **Daughter of the sphere :** Daughter of the air or atmosphere. She was the daughter of Aer and Tellus, says Greek mythology.

242. **So mayst...translated :** 'A wish conditional upon Echo's telling the lady where her brothers are,' **Translated :** Conveyed without dying.

243. **Resounding grace** etc. Add the graceful effect of echo to the harmony of the spheres. Note, how the long graceful Alexandrine rounds off this pretty song into perfection. It does not drag, as Pope said, but has 'the Spenserian efficiency about metrical witchery.'

Ll. 244-330. Comus hears the lady's song and hurries towards her. He has never heard such beautiful pure singing before. He is simply charmed with it. "I'll

speak to her," he says, "and she shall be my queen." So he comes forward. The lady thinks that, he is a villain. He learns her story, and offers to lead her to a cottage, where she can rest in safety. The lady agrees to go with him, and they disappear in the darkness. Though Milton has no mastery over the art of characterization, Comus, it must be admitted, is a fairly successful piece of characterization. His speech with the lady finely brings out his romantic sensuousness, his love of music, his lyric vein, his passion for beauty and above all, his cunning strategy, and astute tactics. **Comus** : In the Cambridge MS there is a stage direction : Comus looks in and speaks. Probably, he hid himself behind one of the screens and would not reveal himself to the lady till line 265.

244. Mortal...Mould : An allusion to the belief that, man's body was first made by God out of the wet earth. Cf. 'Dust thou art to dust returnest' Longfellow.

Ll. 244-45 : Here Milton pays a glowing compliment to Lady Alice for her voice and skill in singing. The force of the compliment lies in the antithesis between Divine and mortal. **Ravishment** : Rapture.

246-48. Sure something...residence : It is rather surprising, how very quick, Comus is, to recognise the influence of virtue and purity. This may be an allusion to Pythagorean conception that, the soul is harmony. Hooker also writes : 'Touching musical harmony...so pleasing effects it hath in that...the soul itself by nature is or hath in it harmony.' **Sure** : Surely. **Something holy** : The song of the chaste lady signifies that, her heart is the very dwelling-place of Purity and Virtue. **Raptures** : Trills and evolutions of the voice. **Moves...air** : Vocal is used proleptically. 'Fills the air till it becomes vocal.' **To** : So as to. **His** : Its ; referring to *something holy*.

249-50. How sweetly...night: 'Even silence herself, was content to convey her mortal enemy, sound, on her wings: so greatly was she charmed with its harmony says Warburton. But the truth is that this exquisitely beautiful passage can never be completely interpreted. Its significance must be felt by imagination.

251-253. At every...smiled: These are magnificent lines, containing a highly poetic image in them. Milton heightens the effect by the appropriate use of vowels, that create the effect of the calm, still night, overflown with the flood of divine music. The darkness of the night is compared to a mighty raven spreading its black wings over the earth. But, upon it falls the magic charm of the lady's music. It smooths its plumage by its gentle touch; and the bird of darkness smiles. Thus, the music of the Lady had the power to charm the darkness of the night and make it appear sweet. In *L'Allegro* similarly 'brooding darkness spreads its jealous wings;' while in 'the Progress of Poesy' the bird of night is under the spell of music. **Fall:** Cadence. **Raven:** The darkness is appropriately compared to a raven, which is black as the crow. **Smooth:** Stroke gently. **Down:** Fine and soft hair. **It:** i. e. Darkness.

253. Sirens three: Winged-nymphs, living on a rocky isle near the coast of Sicily and luring the mariners to destruction with their sweet songs. They were three in number—Leucosia, Lysia and Parthenope—all daughters of the river-god Acheleous. According to Homer, the island of the Sirens was situated between Circe's island and the rock of Scylla. Strictly speaking, the Sirens have nothing to do with Circe. Here, Milton deviates from the original. It is possible, he confused the nymphs of Circe with the Sirens.

254. Flowery Kirtled—Flower-decked. Having decorations of flowers over their dress. According to Dr. Bradshaw, 'Dressed with garlands of flowers for skirts.' **Naiades**; Nymphs of fresh water, whether of rivers, lakes, brooks or springs, says the 'classical Dictionary.'

255. Culling. Extracting. **Potent**: Powerful. **Baleful**: Full of malign influence.

256-57. Who as...in Elysian: This passage very beautifully illustrates the effect of music on the soul of man. The sweet music, produced by those nymphs was so enchanting that, for the time-being, it seemed as though, the soul had broken its usual prison, 'this muddy-vesture'; and had gone to the haven of heavenly beauty. **Prisoned soul**: Soul in the body. **Lap**: Wrap or enfold. **Elysium**: The abode of the blessed, after death. The Paradise of the Greeks.

257-59. Scylla...applause: Another classical image to illustrate the power of music. The music touched deeply the heart of love-lorn Scylla, and roused in her the agony of unspoken love. She wept, and weeping scolded the barking waves, bidding them in mute attention and they listened. Similarly, the terrible Charybdis hushed, for the moment, its roaring whirl, and murmured soft applause.

Scylla and Charybdis were two monsters living on two opposite rocks near Sicily. Scylla would always bark like a dog and Charybdis would swallow all the water of the sea thrice every day, and spit it out (Classical Dictionary). Scylla was Circe's rival for the love of the sea-god, Glaucus. By way of revenge, Circe put some poison into Scylla's bath. As a consequence, Scylla's lower half was transformed into that of a dog, that never ceased barking. She threw herself into the sea and be-

came a rock ; but the sound of the splash resembled the barking of a dog.

Charybdis : Daughter of Poseidon, stole the oxen of Hermes ; for which act, she was struck with thunder and was changed into a whirlpool. This is the allusion. Scylla and Charybdis are represented geographically by the rock Scylla, on the Italian Coast and the whirlpool Charybdis on the opposite coast of Sicily.

260. **They**—The singing Sirens.

Pleasant Slumber : The trance, that comes over the senses when we listen to an enchanting strain of music.

261. **Sweet madness** : That intoxicating state of mind, when we are under the influence of maddening music. **Robbed...itself** : 'Made it unconscious'.

262-64. **But...now** : Such is the contrast between the music, that comes from the heart, that is tainted with impurity, and that emerging from the heart, that is chaste and pure : the first produces sweet madness ; while, the second gives a sublime and an elevated pleasure, with all the faculties keenly awake. The first intoxicates ; while the second ennobles. **Home-felt** : Keenly felt or heart-felt. **Waking bliss** : As contrasted with 'sweet madness'.

265. **And she...queen** : It is no wonder to find such play of wanton feelings in the mind of Comus at the sight of such a beautiful feminine form, however pure it may be. Students of Shakespear will remember Angelo in 'Measure for Measure'. **Foreign wonder** : Comus at once recognises that, the lady is not the usual inhabitant of those 'rough shades'. Cf. Ferdinand's speech to Miranda from Shakespear's 'The Tempest.'

Ll. 265-70. **Hail...wood** : Comus addresses the lady in skilled and poetic manner. The words are sugared. He says that, she seems to be some foreign-being, stranger to his ugly wood. And if at all she

belongs to those forest-shades, she must needs be one of the Goddesses dwelling in the bucolic chapel of Pan or Sylvanus, the presiding Gods of forests, and must have come there, in order to protect and assist a healthy growth of trees and bushes, by driving away the destructive fog, with the help of divine music. According to Lord Monboddo, this speech of Comus to the lady, is in a very high style of classical gallantry: "If Jupiter would speak Greek, he would speak as Plato has written" says Cicero. Similarly if Jupiter were to speak English he would speak in like manner (as Comus spoke). The passage is exceedingly beautiful and the style is much raised by the musical expression, though the construction is peculiar only to Greek. Try substituting 'thou' after 'unless' and the music and enchantment of the phrase is lost. **Unless the Goddess**: Unless thou be the Goddess etc. An instance of Latin influence. **Sylvan**: Sylvanus a wood-land deity. **Shrine**: A sacred enclosure. **Forbidding fog**: Here we remember, how the genius in Arcades 'saved the plants...from blasting vapours chill.'

271. **Ill is lost**: Spent unprofitably. Spent in vain.

272. **Unattending ears**: Ears that are not attentive; i.e. the person who is not listening.

As, 'where they are, and why they come not back' is the labour of the lady's thought, she is naturally inattentive to the flattering words of Comus.

277-290. Now commences the classical method of dialogue, called *stichomythia*. The speeches consist of single lines, following in succession. The romantic authors of the Elizabethan era had departed from this tradition and had begun to use prose, for simple dialogues. But Milton, the classical scholar, could not help copying the ancient models.

273-76. **Not any boast...couch.** The lady, with grace and gentility, reveals her modesty. She states that, it was not to exhibit her skill that she sang. On the contrary, dire necessity forced her, to rouse the nymph, Echo. **Extreme shift** ; last resort. **How** : *i.e.* How I might be able. **Severed** : Parted.

277. **Chance** : Accident. **thus** : In this bereaved condition.

278. **Dim darkness** : Pitch Dark. **'Labyrinth** : A net-work of paths.

279. **Near ushering-guides** : Proceeding at a short distance and hence, closely attending. **Cool friendly spring**—Newton points out a slight inconsistency here. Elsewhere (L. 186) the lady says that, her bothers left her 'to bring me berries or some such cooling fruit.' Probably, they had both in view.

284. **They were but twain** : They were only two of them ; that is why both of them went away because it was unsafe to go alone amidst the thicket. **Purposed** : Intended.

285. **Forstalling** : 'Forstall' first meant to prevent ; here it means 'hindering' ; **prevented** : anticipated.

286. **To hit** : To guess.

L. 287. "Does the loss much matter to you, excepting that you have lost a guide ?" (Comus, here, indirectly asks the relation of the lady with the escorts. Probably he wants to suggest that, he is ready to be her guide for, she had only mentioned 'severed company.' (274)

L. 288. The loss, apart from that of losing of attentive escorts, is not a whit less serious than that of losing one's brothers. This is periphrastic. She simply should have said 'I lost my two brothers.'

L. 289. Were they in the prime of manhood or mere youths ?

290. **Hebe** : Daughter of Zeus. Cup-bearer of the Gods. She is the personification of blooming youth. The chins of those brothers are as smooth, as those of Hebe.

Ll. 291-292. A common poetic way of denoting the time of sunset. Cf. Homer's, 'the time for unyoking oxen.' Comus now is in the disguise of a villager ; and hence, he must needs speak of 'Laboured ox,' 'Plough' and 'Swinked hedger.' How very artful he is ! **What time** : At the time when. **Laboured ox** : The ox that has laboured the whole day long. **Traces** : The straps by which it had been tied to the plough. **Furrow** : Narrow trench in the earth made by the plough. Here, it stands for field.

293. **Swinked** : tired. **Hedger** : (lit. one who trims plants) A ploughman.

Warton takes the instance of the 'labouring ox returning', as a device to show evening, and concludes that, Milton, like Gray (Cf. "the ploughman plods his weary way") painted scenes from books and not from actuality ; as, according to him, English farmers finish ploughing *in the noon alone*. Todd, however, contradicts Warton, pointing out that, Warton is mistaken in saying that, the English farmers terminate their work at noon. According to Todd, farmers work upto five in winter and as long as they can see in summer.

294. **Mantling vine** : 'spreading in all directions so as to cover the surface like a mantle.' A fine picture.

295. **Yon** : Comus may at this stage, point his finger to some part of back-ground scenery. **Yon** : yonder.

L. 296. Another fine picture. Tender shoots with ripe clusters delight the eye and is a thing of untold bliss.

297. **Port more than human** : All those concerned with the production of 'Comus' receive divine praise from Milton. "The bearing of the lady's brothers," says

Comus, "appeared to him almost like those of divine-beings." One more trick to please the lady. **As they stood** : This is pleonastic.

298. **Faery vision** : "A vision caused by enchantment. 'Fays' were ⁰enchantresses and their enchanted world was called '*faerie*' " says Goggin.

299. **Gay creatures of element** : Element means, one of the simple substances of which all material things are composed. These simple substances, according to Medieval Science, are four : earth, water, air and fire. Generally, the element air is referred to when it is applied to angels. Gay creatures of the elements, therefore, means angelic beings.

301. **Plighted** : Inter-woven or folded. **Awe-struck** : Struck with horror.

Ll. 303-304 If I were to help you to find them, it would be a journey as pleasant as that to heaven. (Note, how Comus is slowly inducing the lady to request him to be her guide.) Some suggest that, 'the journey would be as *hard* as that to heaven.' But, evidently, Comus wants the lady to accompany him ; and as such, accompanying her, would not be a hard a journey to him.

305. **Readiest way** : Shortest route.

306. **Due west...point** : Cunning and cautious Comus directs the lady in a way, that is absolutely un-enlightening to the lady. **Due** : Directly.

Ll. 307-310. To find out the right path in the scanty star light would beat the best efforts of the best guide ; unless, he knows the place well.

Without...practised feet : Without the unerring discernment of one, very familiar with the wood. **Alley green** : Green shady walks.

312. **Dingle** : Deep and closely wooded hollow. **Bosky bourn** : Bushy valley, with a rivulet at the bottom.

315. **Stray attendance** : Attendants gone astray.
Lodged : Found shelter in some cottage.

316. **Shroud...limits** : ' Take shelter within the limits of wood. '

317-18. **The low-roosted..trouse** : "This shows Milton's ignorance of nature," says Keightley, "The lark never sleeps on perch and its nest has no thatch on it. This description tallies with the habits of hens." But it is manifestly unjust to accuse Milton of carelessness of observation. ' The lark is low-roosted because it builds on the ground its lowly nest; ' while, thatched pallet indicates his ' nest sheltered by overhanging reed or grass. ' **If otherwise** : ' If I fail to ascertain this. '

320. **Low but loyal** : These words are sugared with courtsey. The cottage may be humble but it is a reliable and safe place, where the lady can have safety and peace.

321. **Till further quest** : Until the search is resumed.

323. **Honest offered** : Offered with good intention. The lady does not suspect treachery from such simple (!) shepherd.

322-323. **And trust thy.....pretended** : Here it is not the lady who is hurling the censure on the insincere aristocrats, but Milton, the champion of democracy. He hated the artificial court etiquette, seasoned with doffing of caps and bending of knees. He believes, like all adherents of democracy, that unstained and pure nobility lives only in the unsophisticated cottages of shepherds and rustics. **Lowly shed** : Humble shelter. **With smoky rafters** : Rafter means, an inclined beam, supporting the roof of a house. It is smoky, because, of the smoke constantly coming out of the hearth. **Tapestry halls** : Halls decorated with tapestry. **Where it was first named** : Cf. ' of court it seems men courtsey

do call'-Spenser. **Pretended** : 'And is still most put forward.

326-28. In a place...it : 'I cannot be in a place less protected and secure than that, 'in which I am now ; Therefore I have not the slightest hesitation to leave it.' **Warranted** : protected.

328-30. Eye me.....Strength : Keep guard over me. Oh providence, and 'adjust my difficulties to the amount of strength which I possess to overcome them.' **Eye me** : Keep me within sight. **Square** : Adapt, adjust.

Ll. 331-650 : Here enter the 'two brothers. The stage-direction reads, 'another part of the wood.' But we may be sure that no changes will have to be made on the stage itself. It is the wild wood mentioned in the last scene. The stage lights will be dimmed. There will be almost complete darkness on the stage ; and in such darkness the two brothers enter. They are wandering in the search of their dear sister, in 'the double-night,' caused by the darkness and the dense shade of the trees. There is no moon and not even a rush-light in a cottage window to guide them. The younger brother fears that, some dreadful evil has overtaken their sister ; but the elder brother is quite sure that her own chastity will keep her safe from harm ; and curiously enough, without any thought about their sister, both of them coolly discuss, in 160 lines, the topic of the power of purity, virtue and chastity. Rightly, has it been pointed out by Warton, that the dialogue between the two brothers is an amicable contest between fact and philosophy. This reveals at once Milton's weakness and strength : Characterization is never his strong point ; on the other hand, he ennobles poetry by adding philosophical sublimity to it.

While they are talking thus they hear a shout ; and the Attendant Spirit, dressed like their father's shepherd

appears and tells them that, their sister is in the hands of the foul magician, Comus. The younger brother is in despair. The elder brother comforts him with philosophy; while, the spirit suggests the use of Hæmony to ensure success. They, then, hasten to her rescue.

331. **Unmuffle** : Take off the cover of darkness.

332. **Wont'st...benison** : 'Whose custom it is to light the grateful traveller on his way.' **Wont'st** : Art wont. **Benison** : Blessings. Travellers are grateful to the moon for her light.

333. **Stoop** : Bend down. **Pale visage** : Referring to the gentle, white appearance of the moon. **Amber cloud** : A cloud of a clear yellowish brown-colour. When the Moon peeps through a cloud, it would certainly appear yellowish-brown and so, some praise this phrase, as a piece of accurate observation. Others, however, point out that "there is no propriety whatsoever in requesting the moon to peep through 'amber cloud'. This is merely a poetic ornament. Young Milton feels he must "load every rift with ore."

334. **And disinherit chaos** : This is a superb phrase. Chaos, the deity of darkness and confusion, will be deprived of its right to rule the earth, the moment the rays of the moon take charge of the situation.

335. **Double night of darkness** : The black shades of the leafy forest and the empty-vaulted night, make the place doubly dark.

336. **Dammed up** : is eclipsed. **Influence** : Power.

337-40. **Usurping mists** : Mists that have usurped, without right, the domain of your rule. **Taper** : It is vocative. Supply 'thou' after 'visit'. Note that the brothers now address, the lines (340-43) to 'the gentle taper' and not to the moon. **Though a rush-candle** : Even though thou be only a taper, made by dipping rush in tallow. It

signifies poverty. **Wicker hole** : An opening, through the covering of plaited twigs. **Clay habitation** : Some lowly hut. **with thy long levelled...light** : The linked sweetness long drawn out of this line can never be overpraised. The effect of the horizontal drift of light waves is thoroughly brought out with long sounds, linked up with sweet alliteration.

341-42. **And...cynosure** : A comparison between the ordinary Taper and the star of Arcady or Cynosure, reveals at once, the immense range of Milton's art and his romantic classicism. **The star of Arcady or Tyrian cynosure** : Be to us the Great Bear or the Lesser Bear. Callisto, the daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia, being transformed by Jupiter into a she-bear, was hunted by her son Arcas. When Arcas was on the point of killing her, Jupiter translated them to the skies, making Callisto the Great Bear, and Arcas the Little Bear or Bootes, which was called 'Cynosura' from its resemblance to a dog's tail. The Great Bear or the Ursa Major, was called also Charles's Wain or Helice ; its own foremost stars are the pointers to the polar star, or last star of the Cynosure. The mariners of Tyre and Sidon directed their course by the Ursa Minor or Lesser Bear; the Greeks by Ursa Major. *Cynosure* signifies an object, on which attention is specially fixed. The candle or the taper is to these brothers a guiding star—a thing on which they concentrate their attention.

343. **Be barred that happiness** : If your eyes are denied etc.

344. **Wattled cotes** : A shed for sheltering sheep, made of plaited twigs.

345. **Or sound...stops** : Pastoral reed The traditional pipe of a shepherd. **Oaten stops** : Stops of an Oaten flute. The desire of the two brothers is for gui-

dance. Whether it be the candle-light, or the sound of the sheep, folded in wattled cotes, or the sweet musical notes of a pastoral-reed, or those emerging from an oaten pipe—all these are welcome.

346. **The lodge**: 'The keeper of the wood.'

346-47. May we hear the whistling of the keeper of the wood, as he whiles his watch or the crowing of a cock enumerating, as it were the divisions of night to his hens !

349. **Innumerable etc**: Innumerable. A precise description of the forest. It is like a dungeon where no ray of light is ever allowed to enter.

350. **Hapless**: Helpless.

351. **Whither betake her**: In what direction may she carry herself? **Her**: Herself.

352. **Rude burs**: Plants, producing burs.

353. **Bolster**: Pillow; cushion.

354. **Rugged bark...elm**: Some rough bark made out of a strong and broad elm-tree.

355. **Fraught**: Full of. **Leans**: Supply *she*.

356. **Amazement**: Complete bewilderment. **Affright**. Terror.

357. **Savage hunger**: Hunger of savage beasts. The brothers are afraid that, their sister may have been the prey of wild animals. But 'Hunger' also suggests, 'passions of men or animals' **Savage Heat**: Unchecked lust of the savage, or simply cruel and terrible heat.

359. **Over-exquisite**: Excessively careful, or too careful. Too inquisitive.

360. **To cast the fashion...evils**: i.e. Pre-conjecture the nature of, or conjure up the forms of danger, which may have no real existence. **To cast the fashion of**: To pre-judge the form of'. Warburton says that, the phrase

comes from the founder's art, while according to Warton, it is from astrology.

361. Grant they be so : Granting the evils, to be really such as you imagine. "Warburton would have this line omitted, as, it obscures the thought and loads the expression".

362-363. What need...avoid ? : What need is there that a man should anticipate, bringing thus nearer the time of sorrow, hastening, as it were, to meet the thing, which he desires sincerely, to avoid ? **What :** Why. 'What' here is used as the Latin 'Quid', and is objective to 'For'-understood; it is adverbial to *need*. **Forstall :** To anticipate.

366. So to seek : So much at a loss! Cf. 'The merchant will be to seek for money'. Bacon. The phrase implies want of knowledge, experience and capacity.

367. So unprincipled : So ignorant of or unversed in the very teachings of the principles or of elements of virtue.

368. That goodness bosoms o'er : Which is always carried by goodness within her breast.

L69. As that etc. : An adverbial clause to 'unprincipled' in L. 367. In Elizabethan English such a clause would be introduced by 'as that' meaning simply 'that'. **Single :** See L. 204.

Ll. 370. : "The whole passage is exceedingly beautiful; but what I praise in parenthesis, is the pathos and concern for his sister that it expresses," says Lord Monboddo, and adds, "it offers opportunities to vary the tone ('As I trust she is not' is to be pronounced pathetically.)" But the touch appears to Warton, 'quite accidental and undesigned'. **Not being :** She being not. Nominative absolute.

371. **Constant** : Steadfast ; firm. 372. **Misbecoming plight** : Unseemly disorder or disturbed state.

373-375. **Virtue could...sea sunk** : A profound expression of the faith that, virtue is uncoquerable and invulnerable. **Virtue** will find out the course of action, which it ought to take, with the help of its own illuminating light, even if, the sun and the moon, those light-radiating powers, were to be silent, being drowned in the sea. "The virtuous," says Hardy, "carry, around and within, a hallow of golden light." And so for their guidance, they need no external help. It is pointed out that, these lines are inspired by Spenser's ; "Virtue gives herself light through darkness for to wade." **Flat sea sunk** : Warton feels that, Milton might have written : 'were in the sea *flat sunk*'. But I agree with Dyer and retain the original reading. In 'flat sea' the reference is to the flat even surface of the sea. Moreover, 'sink flat' or 'lay flat' is a *modern* colloquial term. Cf "The *flat sea* shines like yellow gold". Dyer, in his 'Fleece'

375-380 : Mark pattison observes that, lines 375-380 'posses, a personal interest. They are, as it were, fragment of the poet's autobiography, descriptive of the year he spent at Horton.' These lines are a fine illustration of how Milton could graft, with exquisite appropriateness, his observation of the material, on his abstract reasonings, which were the staple of his philosophic mind. The analogy in this passage is that of a bird, who in solitude and all alone, trims its feathers which grow disordered by constant use. Wisdom, which means experience, knowledge, and sagacious judgment, does, always, achieve its clarity, point and definiteness with the help of contemplation alone, which implies quiet, steady and unbiassed thinking. **Wisdom's self** : 'Wisdom herself,

Seeks to : Betakes herself to : repairs or goes voluntarily to. **Plumes** : Trims. Warton suggests that, it ought to be 'prunes' 'preens,' meaning, oily and shining plumage.

380. **All to ruffled** : "There are no less than four different ways." says Dr. Bradshaw, "in which this expression is printed : (a) In the editions printed in Milton's lifetime, stands 'All to ruffl'd' (b) Tickell (1720) and Newton (1752) read 'All too ruffled.' All *too* ruffled is either, 'all of them too much ruffled, or entirely ruffled,—' too too ruffled,' as Sylvester would say. (c) Warton and Todd retain Milton's spelling, but hyphen *all*, and *to* ; and read 'all-to ruffled.' It is not, 'they say too *nimis*, 'too much,' but all-to *entirely*.' (d) Keightley, Masson and other modern editors print 'all-to-ruffled.

The modern conclusion, accordingly is that, the 'to' belongs to the verb, and is an intensifying prefix or augment. In A. S. the prefix 'to' like the German 'zer' and the Latin 'dis', has the meaning of 'asunder ; so, 'all is to broken' is 'it is altogether broken to pieces.' But, from 'to' and 'too' being written indifferently for one another, and the frequent connection of 'all' with 'too', there sprang a use of 'all-to' which was treated as an adverbial formation, meaning 'altogether'. 'To print '*all to ruffled*' is to make the mess of the idiom. It is better therefore, to accept all to-ruffled meaning very much ruffled.

Ll. 381-385. These lines are almost Biblical in their firm imperative doctrine. "I do not know any place in the whole circle of his poetical performances, where dignity of sentiment and sublimity of expression are so happily united."—(Thyer.) These lines mean ; He who has realized himself, and possesses the divine light of virtue in his breast, enjoys the presence of bright light, even though he be kept in such utter darkness as in the

centre of the earth. On the other hand, he, who possesses a stinking assemblance of vicious thoughts has darkness, though he may walk in broad daylight. **Light within his breast**: 'The celestial light shining inward' about which Milton sings so often. **In the centre**: In the centre of the earth, implying, in utter darkness. **Benighted walks**: Walks in the night. **Himself...dungeon**: Cf. 'Thou art become a dungeon to thyself.'

386-387. **Affects**: Prefers; likes; has affection for. **Musing meditation**: Deep and continual cotemplation. **Pensive secrecy**: Retirement or solitude, conducive or favourable to reflection. In L. 388, Milton anticipates Gray's line "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife."

389. **As safe as in a senate house**: "Not many years after this was written, Milton's friend showed that the safety of a senate house was not inviolable."—Warton. Possibly Milton might now be thinking of the senate of his own university. Cleveland, his contemporary, has called the members of the senate, 'the Muse's privy council.' (Todd). It seems to me however, that, Milton is thinking here of the Roman senate house for the assembling of the representatives of the people. Oliver Cromwell, however, showed that even this is not safe always.

390-392: Who would ever think of robbing an ascetic or of doing violence to him? **Weeds**: Garments. **Beads**: A rosary. **Maple dish**: His begging bowl made of maple wood.

Ll. 393-397. **But Beauty—bold incontinence**: Just as the Hesperian tree requires a watchful demon to guard its fruit, Beauty, (i.e. the beautiful, damsels) necessarily requires an escort or a guide for protection from the

'lawless lust' of unruly passionate persons. Fletcher well asks in his 'Faithful Shepherdess,'

"Can such beauty be safe in its own, not draw the eye of him that passeth on, to greedy gaze?" The second brother retorts that, though their sister possesses that divine power of purity, the cold fact, is that, a beautiful lady is always in danger because of the inexorable and undisciplined licentious lust, and as such necessarily requires protection. **The fair Hesperian tree**: In the gardens of the Hesperides (daughters of the west or evening star) grew an apple tree, with golden fruit, guarded by a 'watchful dragon with hundred eyes.' To kill the dragon and bring away the apples, was one of the labours of Hercules. It was a marriage present from Ge (the earth) to Hera. **Laden with blooming gold**: Alluding to the golden apples. **Had need**: Would require. **Unenchanted eye**: The eye on which no enchantment can have any effect or which cannot be hoodwinked or deceived by enchantment. **Blossoms**: Freshness, innocence and charm of beauty. **Her fruit**: The treasure of virgin purity. **Bold incontinence**: Lawless lust.

Ll. 398-403 **You may...surrounding waste**: To hope that a young unprotected damsel will be allowed to pass unmolested in such a wood, and that sex-fiends will forgo such an opportunity, is to cherish an impossible hope that a treasure scattered on the highway will not be looted by tramps and thieves. Roasind in, 'As You Like it' also expresses the same sentiment: "Beauty provoketh thieves more than gold." **Unsunned heaps**: The heaps of a miser's gold, which have never been exposed to the sun. Todd says that this is directly from Spenser's miser in 'Faerie Queene' **Wink on**: Overlook or disregard.

404. **It recks me not** : I do not much care for ; I am not anxious about : I make no account of.

405. **Dog** : To follow like a dog (close on the heels of someone).

405. Events that are sure to take place as a result of loneliness and night.

Ll. 406. **Greeting** : Saluting or accosting with an evil motive. **Unowned** : Lonely, apart from her friends.

408. **Infer** : Argue. Frequently used by Sh. in this sense.

409. **Without all doubt or controversy** : Beyond doubt. Absolutely certain.

Ll. 410. When there are equal chances for entertaining hope or fear.

410-412: **Yet...fear** : When the result is uncertain—depending upon the circumstances, which, creating a sort of equilibrium between hope and fear, admit of equal chances for both—I incline to hope. **Arbitrate the event** : Judge the issue or the result.

413. **Squint** : Looking askance or not looking at things in a fair manner. **Squint suspicion** : Is it *pleonastic* ? This dialogue shows, how Milton's dialogues are artificial. When the brothers have lost all trace of their sister they argue—as though unconcerned—in 160 lines, whether her virtue is in danger and has the means of her defence. Surely nobody in these circumstances is likely to remain cool and collected enough to explain at length the minuter shades of the meaning of one's speech and work out the conclusion as the elder brother does. The dialogue does not strike one as carried on between two brothers anxious for the safety of their lost sister—high-strung and on the point of despair ; but a conversation as between two scholars who are discussing the possibility or otherwise of the existence of 'hidden strength,' in the

virtuous. Milton's characters are not real characters; but mouth-pieces through which he churns the philosophical premises and tries to establish his contentions.

Ll. 415-75. As Masson observes, we have in these lines 'a concentrated expression of the moral of the whole mask and exposition also of a cardinal idea of Milton's philosophy.' "The speech of the elder brother," says Ross, "is a kind of hymn in praise of chastity and is the crowning glory of the poem. Criticism must needs cease when everything is faultless—feeling, fancy and phrase. To know it by heart is a perpetual purification of the heart. A youth can learn in all literature nothing nobler than this." (For a discussion of Milton's doctrine of chastity see introduction.)

415. **Hidden strength** : i.e. the strength of chastity.

417. **Unless etc.** : Unless it be the strength of heaven.

Ll. 418-27. **I mean that...virgin purity** : The younger brother supposes *the hidden strength* 'to be the help from the omniscient and omnipotent God, who is ever ready to succour the virtuous. The elder brother replies; "yes, it is so, no doubt. But I mean something more." By strength, he means strength acquired by chastity which is like an armour of steel, ever protecting the possessor from the onslaughts of 'the rash hand of bold incontinence;' and so a woman who has in her this hidden strength may like a nymph, armed with bow and quiver, cross huge forests, visit unfrequented places, go up perilous mountains in utter safety; for, the pure and sacred rays of chastity would ever protect her from a robber or a savage.

L. 420. Note the skilful use of repetition. **In complete steel** ; completely armed. **Quivered nymph** : i.e. Diana. Probably a reminiscence of Spenser's description

of Belpheobe : 'At her back a bow and quiver gay, where-with she quelled the savage beasts.' **Trace** : Track, cross or traverse. **Unharboured heaths** : i. e. Bare heaths that offer no shelter. **Infamous** : Having an evil name. A latinism. **Perilous** : i. e. where travellers meet with perils. **Bandite** : 'So spelt in Milton's editions, and probably rather a new word about Milton's time'—Masson. The word means 'an outlaw.'

L. 428. **Very**, utter.

L. 429. Refer to lines 38, 39, **Grots** : Grotto. **Caverns** : Caves. **Shagged with horrid shades** : Rugged on account of horrible darkness.

Ll. 430-31. **She may...presumption** : She may cross the wild places full of utter desolation safely with the help of that hidden power of chastity, provided that she is not doing so out of mere presumption and with a desire to show off her power. That is it. If you are over proud of your powers you will come down from the pedestal of high virtue in no time 'Pride, pride, it is pride, that brings thy fall closer.' **Unblenched majesty** : with an undaunted and unconfounded and exalted dignity. **Be it not** : A conditional clause meaning provided that it be not.

Ll. 432-437. Here Milton, according to Newton, borrowed the sentiment from Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess.'

—"I have heard—my mother told it me
 And now I do believe it—if I keep
 My Virgin flower uncropt, pure, chaste and fair
 No goblin, woodcote, fairies, elf or fiend
 Satyr or other power, that haunts the groves
 Shall hurt my body or by vain illusion
 Draw me to wandering after idle fires
 Or voices calling me—"

Some say : 'A convenient phrase,' says Verity 'by which he can mention a popular superstition or theory without committing himself to belief in it.' **In fog or fire ...fen** ; An allusion to 'Ignis-fatus,' the light that is at times seen in marshy places. **Blue 'meagre hag** : Lean and livid or leaden-coloured witch. A witch who is bloodlessly blue. **Stubborn** : Refusing to be pacified. **Unlaid ghost** : Perturbed spirit. Cf. 'Ghost unlaid forbear thee.' Cymbeline. **That breaks his magic chains** : Escapes from confinement. It was a belief of the middle ages, that ghosts were permitted to roam over the earth from curfew to cockcrow that is from dusk to dawn. Cf. 'This is the foul-fiend Flibbertigibet ; he begins at curfew and walks till the first cock (King Lear, III, 4) Also compare.

'I am thy father's spirit

Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night

And for the day confined to fast in fires,'

(Hamlet, I. 3)

Curfew : The evening-bell. Even at present called 'Curfew,' though the law of the conqueror which gave it the name is no more. It was in William the Conqueror's reign that a law was passed that at eight o'clock every evening a bell should be rung upon which all fires were to be put out. This word comes from French 'Couvre-feu'—Cover-fire ; so curfew time means evening, usually 8 o'clock. Cf. 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.' Gray. **Swart fairy**—Black fairy. In the Gothic system of pneumatology (theory of spiritual beings) mines were supposed to be inhabited by various kinds of spirits. The word fairy is rarely used in the sense of 'spirit'. As for example in the 'Comedy of Errors.'

"A fiend, a fairy, pitiless and rough."

Ll. 438-440. : As if not satisfied with medieval legends and contemporary superstitions, the elder brother passes on to Greek mythology and schools of Greek philosophy, to prove that, chastity, in itself, is a defensive armour ; and so he asks : " Shall I bring out instances from the ancient Greek philosophy and mythology to illustrate the power of purity ? **Antiquity from the schools** : Ancient testimonies from the mythologies and philosophies of Greece. **Hence** : i e . From chastity.

L. 441. **Dian** : Diana, the maiden goddess of the moon and the chase ; in the words of Ben Jonson, "Queen and huntress, chaste and fair." According to Thyer, "Milton took the hint of this beautiful mythological incident from a dialogue of Lucian, between Venus and Cupid ; when the mother asking her son, how, after having attacked all other deities, he came to spare Minerva and Diana ; Cupid replies that, the former looked so fiercely at him, and frightened him so with the Gorgon head, which she wore upon her breast, that, he durst not meddle with her ; and as to Diana, she was always so employed in hunting that, he could not catch her." Like Minerva Diana is a virgin divinity, whose heart is inaccessible to the passion of love : (Trotter.) **Dread** : which strikes fear in the heart of the beholder.

442. **Silver-shafted** : Carrying silver arrows.

443. **Brinded** : Streaked, or brindled.

444. **Moutain pard** : Leopard ; cat-o'-the mountain.
Set at naught : See note on the L. 441.

445. **Frivolous** : Idle or silly. **Bolt of Cupid** : Cupid, the God of love, the son of Venus, aims, his shafts of love alike at Gods and men. He is represented as a blind boy, with bow and arrows. Whomsoever his arrow

strikes, falls a victim to the passion of love. Todd brings forth a similar line from Shakespeare :

" Yet mark't I where the bolt of Cupid fell. "

, (A Midsummer Night's time).

446. And she was a queen etc. : Alluding to the mythological conception that, Diana was a huntress.

Ll. 447-52. Milton gives a romantic interpretation of the story of Medusa for the purpose of forceful argument. " What is the shield, " says the brother, " but rigid looks of pure chastity, which not only confounds and makes the brute speechless with fear, but fills his heart with awe and adoration towards the chaste ?

447. Shakey headed Gorgon-shield-The Gorgonion head or the head of Medusa, whom Perseus' slew, was fixed upon the shield of Athene, (Minerva). Here is Homer's description of Athene's shield : " About her shoulders cast she (Athene) the tasselled aegis terrible -and therein to the dreadful monster's gorgon head, dreadful and grim, portent of aegis bearing Zeus." There are three *Gorgon monsters*, but Medusa is the one frequently mentioned. The hair of Medusa had been changed into serpents by Minerva. That is why she is called 'shaky-headed.' All, who looked at this terrible head were turned to stone.

448. Minerva : The Latin name for Athene, the virgin daughter of Zeus and the goddess of wisdom.

449. Freezed her foe-Apt use of alliteration. Note how it suggests a sense of 'petrifying shudder and horror.' **Congeaed :** Frozen.

450. Rigid chastity. : Gaze of chaste moral purity
But : Except.

451. Dashed-Confounded. Put to shame.

452. Blank awe : Veneration mixed with fright.

Ll. 451—52. **And noble awe** : And exalted dignity which puts to shame impetuosity by infusing into it constant reverence and terror-stricken veneration.

L. 453ff : 'the language of mythological allusion now ceases and the speaker passes, in his own name, into a strain of platonic philosophy mingled with an element of Christianity.

454. **Sincerely** : Honestly, so i.e. chaste.

L. 455. **A thousand...lackey her** : Milton is very fond of this idea. It occurs again in 'Paradise Lost' and is repeated almost everywhere in his works. God sends his succour to the virtuous and especially to chaste virgins. Chastity is dear and beautiful and saintly ; a thousand angels wait upon it and 'holy powers' bear shields to defend it. **Liveried angels** : Livery is a servant's uniform. Hence angels in their celestial dresses, or 'ambrosial weeds.' **Lackey** : Wait upon; attend

Ll. 457-58 : **And in clear.....hear** : The angels through the medium of solemn vision acquaint the saintly and chaste persons with things, that no unworthy person can understand. Dr. Lumby notes. "In visions, a higher degree of revelation was supposed to be imparted than in dreams. Probably because, the former is experienced while one is awake and conscious of what he feels." Chastity is heavenly. It grants supernatural powers to the possessor of it clear dream and solemn vision are open to the possessors of chastity alone, and they hear, on account of the power of chastity, those ethereal things entirely unknown to persons, whose power of spiritual perception is deadened by sin. Compare the speech of the Genius in Arcades where he mentions 'Divine tune, which cannot be heard by gross ears.' **Gross ear** : see the note on L. 112.

Ll. 459-75 : The whole of the passage is taken from the 'Phaedo' of Plato :—"The soul which has been polluted, and is impure at the time of her departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always, and is in love with and fascinated by the body until she is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form, which a man may touch and see and taste and use for the purposes of his lust—the soul, I mean, accustomed to hate and fear and avoid the intellectual principle, which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, and can be attained only by philosophy—do you suppose that such a soul as this will depart pure and unalloyed ?.....She is engrossed by the corporeal, which the continual association and constant care of the body have made natural to her...And this, my friend, may be conceived to be that heavy, weighty, earthy element of sight by which such a soul is depressed and dragged down again into the visible world below—prowling about tombs and sepulchres, in the neighbourhood of which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghastly apparitions of souls which have not departed pure, but are cloyed with sight, and therefore visible." Jowett's Translation.

Ll. 459-63 : **Till oft...immortal** : The soul is an ethereal entity, having no material or perceptible form. It is an 'essence', a spark that issues from the supernatural being. This ethereal essence on earth remains confined in the material and perishable form called the body. Yet, even this perishable body, this 'muddy vesture' can become soul that 'divine spark'—the thing imperishable and heavenly by a constant communion with such angelic beings. And the only way, to acquire this 'oft converse with heavenly inhabitants', is, to remain pure, stainless and chaste. Chastity is the royal road to immortality. To quote Dowden : 'It illuminates

with a sacred ray the outward shape of loveliness, it turns by some divine process the very temple of the mind to the soul's essence, till all be made immortal !' It will be very interesting to compare this conception with those of the Puritans. To them the body was a sanctuary holding the divinest thing, the soul. "We are not to corrupt the soul", they said, "but raise this flesh and blood and body to that purity, wherein both, the soul, and the body shall become one part of the divine self." And this is precisely why they censured all kinds of pleasure. They saw no difference in Euphronese and Comus. A fine conception of self-perfectibility. **Often** : Frequent. **Converse** : Communion or intercourse. **Cast a beam** : Make glorious by illuminating. **Outward Shape** : This body. **Unpolluted** : Stainless. **Temple of the mind** : The body. Cf. 'He spake of the temple of his body'. **Soul's essence** : Spiritual substance.

Ll. 463-69. **But when ... first being** : This is the converse of 459-63. 'If our body can become soul by contact with heavenly habitants', our soul can become body by constant communion with lustful beings. In other words, 'The soul becoming impregnated with lust, grows carnal and brutish and finally loses its original spirituality. **Loose gestures** : Unbridled gestures. **Lewd** : Licentious, unchaste. **Lavish** : Reckless. **Lets in defilement ... parts** : Corrupts the whole mind by admitting impurity. **Clotted** : Curdled and materialised. **Contagion** : Corrupting contact. **Embodies** : Becomes corporeal or material in character. **Imbrutes** : Becomes fleshly and brutish. **Property** : Essential character.

Ll. 470-75 **Such are ... degraded state** : He has explained in Ll. 459-63, how chaste body slowly influences the mind and the inner soul and how the whole human being becomes immortal. Then in Ll. 463-69 he tells us

how the mind, if it gets debased, degrades the soul. He proceeds further to explain how the soul thus 'imbruted' by sensual indulgence cannot leave the body, which was its sole companion in many an exploit, even after death i.e. destruction of the body; and thus the soul lingers on among the tombs in the form of shadowy phantoms instead of going up to the 'Elysian valley.' **Such:** of such a nature. **Gloomy Shadows:** see note to L. 207.

470. **Damp:** Referring to the dampness of the 'charnel vaults.' **Charnel-Vaults.**—Burial place.

471. **Sepulchre**—Burial ground.

473. **As loth etc.:** The construction is: As being loth to leave the body that it loved and (as having) linked itself to a degenerate and degraded state. 'It' here refers to the soul, reluctant to leave the body, which it has begun to love and by which it is fascinated. 474. **Sensuality:** Sensuality 475. **Degenerate and Degraded:** Cf. Imbodies and Imbrutes.

Ll, 476-80. **How charming...reigns:** The elder brother sings pæns over the glory of chastity. The second brother lauds to the skies 'Divine philosophy.' But both of them seem to forget that they have to ascertain the whereabouts of their sister, and to rescue her. **Charming:** Delightful or lovely. **Divine philosophy:** Here the reference is to the philosophy of Plato. "The divine," says Bradshaw, "was an epithet of Plato, and it is applied to him by Milton, as being the source from which he drew his views on this subject." **Crabbed:** Sour or bitter like a Crab-apple.

Ll. 477-78. The same sentiment runs through Milton's 'Tractate on Education': "I shall not detain you longer in the demonstration of what we should not do, but straight conduct you to a hill-side, where I will point you out the right path of a virtuous and noble

education, laborious, indeed, at first ascent, but also so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects and melodious sounds that, the harp of Orpheus was not more charming "

Ll. 478. It is as musical as the flute of Apollo. Apollo is the Greek God of Song and music, especially famous for his skill in playing on the lyre or, lute. Mr. Bowle finds a parallel in Sh.'s 'Love's Labour Lost' "As Sweet and Musical. As bright Apollo's lute." In this speech of the second brother Milton, himself, is, speaking.

479. Nectared : As sweet as Nectar, the drink of the Gods. **Where :** At which feast,

480. Crude : *i.e.* is 'indigested.' **Surfeit :** Sickness and satiety caused by overfulness.

481. List List etc. : This line has a characteristic Shakespearean ring. **Far Off.** Coming from a distance **Hallo, Halloa,** all meaning shout, call or cry to draw attention.

482. Methought : It seemed to me. See L. 171.

483. For certain etc.. Supply 'it is.' and read 'It is for certain either some' etc. **Night foundered :** Benighted; overtaken by night or lost in darkness.

484. Neighbour : It is an adjective meaning dwelling near. **Woodman :** A peasant.

485. Roving robber : A robber out on his night-mission of plundering. **Calling etc.** Signalling to his compeers.

486. Heaven keep my sister : This is for the first time that we come across the natural human touch. **Again, again, and near :** 'There again we hear the sound and this time it is near'. (Bell).

487. Best draw : It would be best to draw our swords. **Upon our guard :** Let us be very careful.

488. **Comes well** : is welcome.

L. 489. **Defence...us** : Self-defence is ever just and lawful and Heaven will help us. Cf. 'Thrice is he armed that has his quarrel just.' **Habited** : Dressed.

490. **That hallo** : Verity writes : "The elder brother called out, (487), and the Attendant spirit answered. His reply is marked in the stage-direction of Lawe's edition, 1637. In line 490, therefore, 'that' refers to the answer given by Thyrsis before he appears on the stage."

L. 491. **Iron Stakes** : Stakes are pointed stricks. Iron stakes mean swords. **Else** : Otherwise.

Ll. 494-512. **Thyrsis...briefly shew** : (a) The lines. (494-96) are an international compliment to Lawes, and more delicate compliment than the other (86-88), which was placed in Lawes' own mouth—Newton. Hudson observes : Lawes, himself played the part of Attendant Spirit. And when this spirit is pointedly praised for the beauty and power of his music, we may be sure that, the poet intended these words as referring to the musician himself as well as, to the character assumed." (B) In lines 86-88 the compliment is given in alliterative verses, and here (495-512) by the aid of rhymed couplets. Masson feels that, 'the poet, having spoken of the madrigals of Thyrsis, may have introduced this rhymed passage in order to prolong the feeling of Pastoralism by calling up the cadence of known English pastoral poems.' **Thyrsis** : A traditional shepherd name. Theocritus was the first to use it; and Spenser and other innumerable poets repeated its use. **Artful** : Artistic or skilful. **Huddling** : Hurrying, hastening or pressing forward. Verity interprets it as 'Crowd together.'

Ll. 494-95. Such is the magic influence of the skilful strains of Thyrsis (i. e. Lawe's music) that the

brook hurrying on its errand, as Tagore would say, stopped its motion and listen with rapt attention. An allusion to the music of Orpheus, who with his golden lyre enchanted all nature. **Madrigal** : This is a short pastoral song, peculiar to Italy having fewer verses than the sonnets, but admitting of greater liberty in the arrangement of rhyme and verses.

L. 496 : The idea is that, the enchanting music had such an effect that, the fragrance of the flower was intensified. Keightley, contends that, this is true to nature. When the mind is brought into a pleasurable state by music, the objects of the other senses become more agreeable.

497-499. Why do you linger thus ? Has any of your ram (male sheep) ran away from its fold, or has some young sheep lost its mother (dam), or is it because some struggling lamb has forsaken its flock and pen ? Note the language of pastoralism.

500. **Sequestered nook** : Solitary corner.

501. **His next joy** : The second brother. His master had two sons.

Ll. 502-6. "I came not here", answers Thyrsis "for such a thing of common concern (Trivial Toy,) as a female sheep that has wandered away from its flock (strayed ewe) or to pursue a filching wolf, that has stolen my sheep. I would give not a single moment's attention, even if I were offered the whole wealth of pasture land—all those numerous flocks of sheep (Fleecy wealth) that enrich the hilly pasture land (downs),- before the anxiety caused by the purpose that sent me here. To : In comparison with.

L. 507. **How** : Read, 'How does it chance that etc.'

L. 509. **Sadly** : Seriously. **Without blame** : without any fault of ours.'

511. **My fears are true :** My suspicion have come true.

512. **Ye :** Milton often uses 'Ye' in the objective case. (Refer his prose passage from the 'Tractate on Education.' L. 470)

Ll. 513-19. The angel is now going to tell the brothers about Comus and his tricks. They sound fantastic ; he knows. He anticipates the objection and asserts, that whatever he is going to say is hard fact and no fable. The ignorant (L. 514) may not have sufficient imagination to believe in such things. They dismiss it as incredible, even the stories, sung by Homer and Virgil in divine verse, about the Chimæra and Circe.

513-14. **Its no vain or fabulous...Ignorance :** It (*i.e.* what I am going to tell you now) is no boast or a fable without any foundation, though it is thought so by the ignorant, (in the sense of people without imagination)

515. **The Sage poets .** Especially Homer and Virgil, though this may refer to other poets like Tasso, Ariosto and Spenser.

515. **Taught by the Heavenly Muse :** Inspired by the divine Goddess of poetry. This claim to direct inspiration is an outcome of the influence of the classical poetry.

516. **Storied :** Told in story (story used as a verb. To story means to narrate one). **High :** Sublime.

Ll. 516-19. Refers to stories told by Homer and Virgil. Homer sings of fierce. Chimæras (Fire-breathing monsters, with the head of a lion, tail of a dragon and body of a goat) in the adventures of Bellerophontes, and of the enchanted Isle of Circe, (Refer Ll. 50-51). Calypso and others, and Virgil described the descent to Hell of Orpheus through the rifted rock, Verity believes that the

'enchanted isle' (L. 517) is modelled on the 'wandering islands' in the 'Faerie Queene'.

'L. 159. There are such things actually existing; but want of faith does not allow one to believe in them. Cf. *Paradise Lost*. 'Gorgons and Hydras and Chimæras dire.'

520. **Navel**: i.e. the centre. This word is used in its Greek sense.

521. **Immured**: Enclosed. **Cypress Shade**: The Cypress belongs to classical, not to English scenery, and Milton's language does not make it apparent that he had a close acquaintance with the tree; its shade could hardly be spoken of as *immuring* i.e. 'walling in', a sorcerer, for it is a tree with a long stem, usually bare and with a tuft at the top. But I think that Cypress is not so uncommon a tree. Cypress trees are commonly planted in churchyards. Milton uses 'Cypress shade only, because of its association with the gloom, that surrounds a grave-yard. No shade could be more appropriate than that of Cypress trees for the 'Scene of horrid rites, (535) of the magician and his 'monstrous rout.

Ll. 522-30. Compare Ll. 46-47. **Witchery**: Witchcraft. **Sly enticement**: Tempting, achieved with artful dexterity. **Pleasing poison**: The potion that Comus offers to every way-laid traveller is pleasant to taste but its effects are as dreadful as those of poison.

526. **With many murmurs mixed**: Murmurs are spells or incantations. When the ingredients of the charmed cup were mixed spells were spoken half inarticulately over them, cf. Ll. 52-53.

527-529. **The visage.....instead**: The human face is completely transformed into that of an ugly and unseemly beast. **Unmoulding.....visage**: Obliterating or com-

pletely erasing the stamp of reason, the faculty of the human soul, as it reveals itself upon the human face. **Unmoulding** : This is from the language of the mint. When old or dud coins are brought to the mint, some chemical is poured on them. The result is a valueless piece of base metal. **Charactered** : Stamped. According to Milton, there is ever present, on the human face, the light of reason, the one faculty, that distinguishes men from beasts. The drinking of the potion leaves the face blank.

531. **Croft** : A little enclosure, adjoining a dwelling place, used for pasture. **Hard by the hilly croft** : Close to the crofts, situated or lying around the hills.

532. **That brow this bottom glade** : that border the top of the wood (glade) sloping down to the valley. **Bottom glade** : an instance of Latinism, cf. Tenyson's 'middle mere.'

533. **Monstrous rout** : A disorderly crowd of monsters.

534. **Stabled wolves** : Wolves in their dens.

535. **Abhorred** Detestable. **Hecate** : See note on L 135.

536. **Bower** : See line 45.

537-39. **Yet way** : In spite of their general unattractiveness, they (those monsters performing 'abhorred rites' to Hecate.) entice (inveigle) and attract those unconscious and simple passers-by with the help of many allurements and spells. **Inveigle** : Entice. **Unweeting** : Unknowing, unwitting. **Unwary** : One who is not cautious.

540. **This late evening** : Supply 'in' and Read 'late in this evening.' **By then**-By the time when. **Chewing** : Ruminating.

541. **Had ta'en their supper** : Cf. ' His flock do bite their hasty supper best ' Spencer. **Savoury** ; Pleasant to taste.

542. **Knot grass** : A common weed or grass, so styled because of the presence of knots in the stem ; not necessarily marjoram, **Dew-besprent** : Sprinkled over with dew. A fine Anglo-Saxon touch.

Ll. 540-42 : The evening, when the sheep had their last mouthful of the dew-sprinkled grass, and were enclosed in their pen etc.

544-45. **With ivy canopied...honeysuckle** : " The epithet 'canopied' refers to 'bank' and 'interwove' to 'ivy'; "though 'interwove' can only be construed with bank," says Sathianadhan. Keightley observes : " Milton must have conceived ivy and honeysuckle to have grown mingled together over the bank, or rather imagined some kind of arbour ; for the bank could not have been interwoven with honeysuckle ". **Flaunting** : Showy, cf. "well-attired wood-bine." Lycidas 146.

546. **Wrapt...melancholy** : Absorbed in a mood of sweet contemplation. Melancholy is not gloomy dejection, but serious contemplative mood. Cf. Il Penseroso L. 175, " These pleasures melancholy give."

547-48. **To meditate...fill** : I began to muse and practise the pastoral ditties, till my fancy was satisfied. **Meditate** : Muse and and practise. **Rural minstrelsy** : Pastoral songs. **Ere a close** : " Before he had finished the song he had begun on his pipe." (Masson), However 'close' seems to be employed here in the technical sense of ' final musical cadence'. Milton was a musician himself. Naturally, he would employ musical terms, whenever opportunity presented itself to him.

549. **Wonted roar** : Usual roar, referring to Comus, rout of revellers. **Was up** : Had been raised.

550. **Barbarous¹ dissonance** : Rudely discordant notes *i. e.* sounds rudely discordant with the 'rural minstrelsy.'

551. **Listened** : 'Listen with an object' is an Elizabethan usage of fairly frequent occurrence.

552. **An Unusual stop of sudden silence**: An unusual intermission of silence. The revelry came to a sudden and abrupt pause, allowing silence to rule the place. Students will remember L. 145 in Comus's speech; "*Break off*" etc. **Stop** : Break.

Ll. 553-554 **Gave respite.....sleep**, This unanticipated appearance of a classic image clearly reveals how Milton's mind was saturated with the 'ambrosial atmosphere' of classic mythology. Here 'sleep' is admirably compared to a mystic lady borne in a palanquin with curtains closely drawn. The steeds, that draw the palanquin, are the steeds of night and naturally drowsy. They are frightened by the noise of Comus' company of revellers. But 'that unusual sudden stop of silence' grants them a temporary repose, calming for the time-being their terror at the noise. **Gave respite** ; "Gave temporary repose and calm from the trouble, the noise had been causing them." (Masson.) **Drowsy-frighted steeds** : Dr. Newton writes "I read according to Milton's manuscript, '*drowsy-flighted*.' "And this genuine reading Dr. Dalton has also preserved in his *Comus*. 'Drowsie' frightened' is nonsense, and manifestly an error of the press in all the editions. There can be no doubt that in this passage Milton had his eye upon the description of Night, in *King Henry VI* pt. 2... 'The jades that drag the tragic melancholy Night who with their drowsy, slow and flagging wings' etc. The idea and the expression of drowsie-flighted in 'one, are plainly copied from their 'drowsy slow and flagging wings' in the other." Dr.

Warton opposes Dr. Newton by asserting ; " it must be allowed that, drowsy-flighted is a very harsh combination. ' Drowsie, frighted ' without a composition is a more rational and easy reading and it occurs in the editions of 1637, 1645, 1673." Keightley is strongly inclined to have 'Drowsy flighted,' Prof. Masson adopts '*drowsy flighted*' remarking, however, that he is not sure, but he ought to have kept to the '*drowsy frighted*' of the first printed editions. Mr. Bowle suggests '*drowsy-freighted*' i.e. charged or loaded with drowsiness. I prefer '*drowsy frighted*' meaning : the drowsy steeds of Night, frightened, at the 'barbarous dissonance' of Comus's nocturnal revelry. The reasons for this preference are (i) If Lawes had ignorantly introduced '*drowsy-frighted*', into the edition of 1637, the poet would have altered it in his own edition of 1645, or at least in the edition of 1673. John Milton whose object was perfection and who exclaimed at the time of the first publication of Comus—"Alas, what have I meant to do to my hapless self : Lost as I am I have let in the south wind on my flowers"—would never have allowed any error to stand in his own edition. (ii) Secondly '*drowsy-frighted*' is more poetic of the two. The steeds of the night drowsily dragging the palanquin of Sleep and awakened by a shock from their drowsiness on account of 'barbarous dissonance' and again 'gaining respite' is indeed very picturesque and romantically classic. **Litter** : Palanquin. **Close curtained** : with its curtains closely drawn.

Ll. 555-60. **At least.....so displaced** : These lines are superb in their romantic imagery and sweetness of versification. Milton, once more, abandons himself to music, and music comes to him, as to so many noble souls, not through the modern jazz tunes, but through the melody that lifts the soul. Such is the song of the Lady.

It fills the air, so sweetly and so softly, that even silence was taken unawares and she was so charmed, that she would gladly have renounced her nature and existence for ever if her place could have been always filled by such exquisite music. Here is another glowing compliment to Lady Alice. Some critics find fault with these lines as they are not in keeping with a shepherd's culture. But pastoralism, we should ever remember, was from the beginning, an artificial form. Swains and shepherds, were endowed with the gift of polished and poetical speech. The glossy smoothness of the metaphor is indeed heavenly : music rising like a cloud of scented steam gradually fills the whole atmosphere, infusing sweetness everywhere and catching silence unawares, who wishes that it should continue for ever. Todd quotes a passage from Bacon..."the breath of flower goes like sweet warbling of music." **At last** : Indicates the interval between the sudden silence and the songs of the lady. **Steam** : Fragrance. To read '**stream**' is to spoil all the beauty. **Stole** : Slowly pervaded etc. **Deny her nature** : She wished to be no longer silence but to be lost for ever amid such pleasing sounds. **Still to be so displaced** : If she could always be superseded by such sweet sounds. **I was all ear** : I did nothing but listen. I was all attention.

561-562 **And took..Death** : It is a belief that, music infuses life in a drooping and melancholy being. And if the music is still more enchanting, it is supposed to have the power to infuse life into a corpse." In these lines, Milton goes a step further and pays a tribute to music that surpasses imagination. Even Death, he says, who is devoid of soul and is a livid skeleton, a network of bones, will gain the conscious soul, which is an index of life. **Took in** : Drank.

565. **Harrowed with grief** : Tortured with grief. Cf. *Hamlet* i, i, "It harrows me with fear and wonder."

566. **Nightingale** : Refer L. 234. A very appropriate comparison.

567. **Deadly snares** : 'Snares' are traps set to catch birds. Here the trap is Comus's enticements and that 'charmed cup'.

568. **Lawn** : Glades. Note the swift movement of the lines.

569. **Wizard** : Lit. A person who can work miracles in his art. But here it means 'a sorcerer' Cf. 'the vile magician.'

Ll. 570-79 After recognising the singing voice as that of the lady, and fearing for her safety, the spirit rushed to the spot, from which the sound seemed to proceed. But before he could reach the spot, the lady had met Comus in the guise of the innocent-looking rustic. Entirely unsuspecting of the devil, she asked Comus, if he had by chance seen two youths. "I guessed" says the shepherd, "She meant you two and I dared not listen anymore. I rushed on as swiftly as I could, to find you out. But I do not know what happened afterwards when she asked Comus about you two." **I ran.....haste.** cf.

rushed with *breathless haste*. **Wizard** : Conjuror. Elsewhere used to mean a wise man.

Ll. 572 : Though Comus was in the guise of a villager, the Attendant Spirit could recognise him, on account of his supernatural powers. **Ere...prevent** : Before I could hasten there with all speed to prevent the mischief. **Aidless** : without any help. **Wished prey** : His victim, for whom he was eagerly waiting.

Ll. 580-84. **O Night...brother?** : These lines are an unmistakable echo of Shakespeare. "Oh darkness and forest" exclaims the second brother, 'how are you

associated with devils in a triple alliance against a single, weak and unprotected virgin ?' and asks, 'Brother, is this the confidence you encouraged me to feel ?' The younger brother is more impatient and excited and thinks the plighted state of his sister—as described by the shepherd—a sufficient proof to disarm his elder brother in argument. **O night** : The three foes that are associated together are; darkness, the dense forest, and Comus with his accursed enticing powers. **Joined** : Leagued. **Hell** : i.e. One using the arts of Hell. Magic was the Devil's art. Magicians were supposed to be in league with the devils. An instance of metonymy. **Triple knot** : i.e. union of *Night*, *shade* and *Hell*. **Unarmed weakness** : Cf. Alone and helpless. "**Is this.....brother**" Referring to the elder brother's speech (L. 418 onwards) wherein he emphasises that, the virtuous are guarded, though apparently helpless.

Ll. 585-599. But the elder brother has an immovable and imperishable faith in virtue and chastity. He is sure that, virtue may be assailed but never hurt, and that 'evil on itself shall back recoil'. "This confidence of the elder brother in the final efficacy of virtue," says Warton, "holds forth a very high strain of virtue and philosophy, delivered in high strains of eloquence and poetry," while Todd observes : 'It exhibits the sublimer sentiments of the Christian Religion here, which gave energy to the poet's strains'.

Here we come across the staunch, steadfast and true Christian in Milton. Masson advises 'aspirants to literary celebrity to commit this eloquent passage to memory.'

585. **Lean** : 'As on a supporting friend ; or on a staff'. **Period** : Sentence, statement.

586. **For me** : As far as I am concerned. **Unsaid** : Retracted.

588. **Erring** : May be taken to mean, 'erroneously'.

589-90. **Virtue inthralled** : Virtue is, in its essence, indestructible. Virtue may be the object of an attack, but it cannot be injured ; it may be taken at a disadvantage by lawless power, but it cannot be enslaved or overthrown. Virtue is eternal. It cannot be killed. It cannot be hurt. ' Give me virtue, for it is the only godly gift, like knowledge, that cannot be taken away from the possessor of it. A virtuous person stands unconquered even against petty tricks of evil-doers.' **Virtue** : Virtuous persons. Abstract for the concrete. **Surprized** : Taken unawares. **Unjust force** : Lawless power. **Enthralled** : Captured. Cf. ' Love virtue ; she alone is free. '

590-91. **Yea even ... glory** ; ' And even the devices, which mischievous men designed to work most harm shall, in the end, prove the occasion of greatest glory'. Such is the glory of virtue. Whatever evils men may devise against the virtuous, they cannot hurt them ; on the other hand they exalt their character and add to their greatness.

591. *Which* is the object and *most harm* the objective complement of *meant*. **Happy trial** i. e. when put to proof. **Prove most glory** : Shine out most gloriously.

Ll. 593-97. **But evil...self-consumed** : The poet is certain that, evil, in the end, will destroy itself. Virtue is, in its essence, changeless and indestructible. Though good and evil are at times intermingled, and evil is permitted to perplex the ways of the virtuous, it will not always be so. A time will come when evil, like the scum gathering on the surface of boiling liquids, be confined to itself, and so it being without any other support will be destroyed by itself. The speech of the elder brother glows with ' a seraphic faith in the permanence of virtue. ' (Ross). **Scum** : Refuse on the surface of liquids. **Self-fed** :

i. e. not having any other support. **Self-consumed** : Destroyed. **If this fail** : If this be not so.

598-99. The pillared.. stubble : 'The great hyperbole strains of Elizabethans, which so often broke into rant, are caught and nobly echoed in praise of virtue.' The sense of the sentence is this : If my assertion that evil will destroy itself and that virtue will triumph in the end is proved otherwise, then there is nothing true or firm in Heaven or Earth ; but all is false and shaky. **Pillared Firmament** : The firmament in the sky is here conceived as having pillars, which support it. Cf. 'the pillars of heaven tremble.' **Rottenness** : Putrid mass. **Earth's base** : The foundation upon which earth stands. Cf. 'The earth is the Lord's for He hath founded it in the seas.' **Built on stubble** : Stubble, here, denotes something that is shaky and unstable, though its usual meaning is, the roof of the stalk or corn left in the ground when the corn is cut. **But come let's on** : But enough of this discussion. Let us move forward in search of our sister.

600-601. Against...up ! Against the will and the strength of the Almighty may this sword—which only in the cause of justic shall I wield—never once be raised. **Opposing will** : thee epithet 'opposing' is pleonastic.

602. For : As for. **603. Let him be girt** : Though he be surrounded. **Grisly** : Terrible. **603. Sooty flag** : Black ensign. **Acheron** : One of the four rivers of hell. Came to be used as a synonym for hell itself.

605. Harpies : The 'robbers' or 'spoilers,' from a Greek word meaning 'seize.' They are hideous, winged female monsters with hooked claws, who swooped upon Aeneas and his followers, as they were feasting in one of the Ionian islands and carried off their food (see Aenid)

III 225-228). **Hydra** : A water-serpent with many heads which when cut off were succeeded by others.

606. **Africa and Ind** : i.e. from one end of the earth to the other. Africa and India were thought to be 'the lands of Giants, riches and fairies' by the people of the age of the Milton.

607. **Purchase** : Booty or spoil, the word being connected with *chasser* 'to hunt.'

608. **Foul...life** : Death, as accursed as his life is.

609-14. **Venturous** : Adventurous. **Yet** : Nevertheless i.e. though he has just said 'alas!', he admires his bravery. **Do thee little stead** : will be of little avail to you. **Far other arms etc.** : i.e. Instruments *entirely different* from ordinary swords. Comus can 'unthread the joints' with his magic wand; and so our ordinary swords will not be useful. We must use something that is equally magical. **Bare** : mere. **Unthread the joints** : Dislocate all the joints in your body.

617. **As to make the relation** : To be able to convey the report. The brother asks, 'If Comus can destroy one by his magic wand, how can you go near him and come back safely with the report of the happening?'

617. **Utmost shifts** : Refer to L. 273. 618. **Surprisal** : The state of being taken unawares.

Ll. 619-30. A graphic and affectionate memorial to the poet's friend Diodati, whose premature death inspired him to write. **Epitaphium Damonis**. Diodati not only encouraged Milton to write poetry and read out his poems, but was ever ready to help him with his knowledge of Botany, a subject which he had thoroughly mastered.

620. **Of small regard to see** : Of a diminutive stature and so insignificant looking. **To see to** : An obsolete expression = to behold.

621. **Virtuous** : Having some magical powers.

622. **Verdent** : Green. A fine picture, exemplifying Milton's power of fancy and imagination and accurate observation.

625. **Hearken...to ecstasy** : Till he would be transported to the state of rapture **Even** : Till. Cf. '*Il Penseroso*, 161-6.

L. 626-30. The shepherd-lad would open his 'scrip' and acquaint his friend with the power of various roots and herbs. **Requital** : Return. **Ope** : Open. **Leathern scrip** : A leather bound note-book or pouch. The word first meant, a pilgrim's wallet and was called scrip because of its association with the scarf, to which it was hung. **Simples** : A simple originally meant, a single ingredient in a medicinal compound. Its long association with medicine gave it the meaning of herb—a plant having medicinal properties. **Vigorous** : Potent or powerful. **Unsightly** : Ugly to look at. **Divine effect** : Having supernatural power.

L. 630-33. Verity considers this passage, the most awkward in the whole mask, because of the repeated occurrence of 'but'. **Prickles** : Thorns.

Ll. 632-37. Omitted in Bridgewater MSS.

634. **Like** : Correspondingly ; 'as unknown, so unesteemed' i.e. as unesteemed as it was unknown. **Dull** : Unintelligent.

635. **Clouted shoon** : Patched or mended shoes. **Clout** : Patch from M. E. *Clout* meaning patch. Dr. Warton understands this phrase to mean : shod with clouts or plates of iron, which are fastened with hob-nails

to the soles of the shoes of the rustics. Both meanings are possible.

636. That : The well-known. **Moly :** The mysterious plant, which Hermes gave Odysseus as a safeguard against the charms of Circe. In poetry it is the flower of 'golden lands'.

637. Hermes : Mercury. **Ulysses :** A Grecian prince. He was the king of the islands of Ithaca. He was one of the Grecian heroes in the Trojan war and his wanderings are the subject of Homer's 'Odyssey'.

638. Hæmony : That is how Milton *creates*. Milton here remembers not only Homer's description of the root Moly, 'that Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave', but also Ascham's remarks thereupon in *the Schoolmaster* : 'The true medicine against the enchantments of Circe, the vanity of licentious pleasure ... is the herb Moly, sour at first but sweet in the end.' Thus, Milton fuses together the descriptions of the plant from Homer and Ascham, giving it a Thessalian name. It is an appropriate name because Thessaly was then known as the land of magic. Thus, in Milton's hands, mere borrowings become invested with an aerial hue. Coleridge supposed that by the prikles and gold flower of the plant Milton signified the sorrows and triumph of the Christian life.

639. Sovran : Supremely efficacious.

640. Mildew blast : A kind of blast, which produced a sort of white appearance on the leaves of plants supposed to be caused by the prevalence of dry east winds.

641. Furies' apparition : Illusive sights caused by evil fairies.

L. 641. I placed it in my purse, but thought little about it.

642. This extremity : Cf. Utmost shifts Cf. L. 617.

644. It : Refers to all that the shepherd told about the herb.

Ll. 644-47 : Warton points out that it was a recognized expedient in medicinal tales, for a warrior, of the type of the Red Cross Knight, to carry a charm, often a herb, on his person as protective against evil influences. This enables the Attendant Spirit to enter 'the very lime-twigs of' Comus and yet return in safety. **Lime-Twigs :** This refers to the medieval way of catching birds : lime, a sticky substance, was spread over the branch of a tree and the feet of the birds that alighted on it, were stuck into it. Here it means. 'trap'. The whole line means 'Ventured within the circle of his influence'.

Ll. 648-51 : Probably an echo of the words addressed by Hermes to Odysseus : 'When it shall be that Circe smites thee with her long wand, then draw thou thy sharp sword and spring on her etc.' **Glass:** containing that 'orient liquor'.

652. Luscious : Delicious.

L. 653. The word '*but*' here is emphatic. The Attendant Spirit says : 'Do whatever you like. Spill the glass or assault him, but first seize his wand'. The wand was the one thing which was the source of Comus's power. This instruction is very important and we shall find that, because the brothers ignored this, they could not free the lady (ll. 815-19).

Crew : The word is generally used with reference to the hands on a ship. Here it is applied to the followers of Comus.

654. Menace high : Threaten loudly.

655. Vulcan : Is the Roman God of fire and master of the arts, such as, working in metals which need the aid

of fire. Hence his 'sons' might be expected to 'vomit smoke,' as did the giant Cacus.

L. 658. 'From the divinities of the classics we go to the theology of Aquinas.' The idea of a guardian angel is Christian.

Ll. 659-813. Now the scene changes. Suddenly from the dense dark forest we pass to a stately palace with all its delightful equipment: Soft music, tables spread with all dainties. Comus endeavours to induce the Lady to drink from that enchanted cup containing syrups more exhilarating than the one given by Nepenthes to Helen. The lady refuses. Comus requests her again. "Be wise and taste. Nature pours forth her bounties for enjoyment. To lead the life of an ascetic is a folly and a sin against the law of Nature. 'Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded, but must be current.' Don't lose time. Beauty is Nature's brag. Let it not wither like a neglected rose on its stalk. So don't be gloomy. Here is no place for sorrow. Drink, Lady, drink to bathe your drooping spirits in delight, beyond the bliss of dreams." The Lady is angry. She cannot brook Virtue keeping silent, while Vice bolts her arguments. She reprimands Comus severely; and reveals that, though she is a woman, she is more than a match for Comus's wiles. Comus is shocked. Such is the power of virtue. But still he persists with his request. This is the climax of the masque. The spectators are a-tip-toe with curiosity. **The scene changes:** 'Probably a screen, called a *traverse* or *travers*, was put forward while the alteration of the scene was being made (Varity). But it is more fitting to apply the double stage-theory applied to Shakespeare by the German critics. The brothers and the spirit conversed on the outer stage, which will contain mostly movable scenery; while the inner or back stage will be

used for scenes of immovable apparatus and gorgeous settings. **Soft music** : Not mentioned in the Cambridge M. S. The addition of music was due to Lawes. **Tables spread etc.** : A common trick in medieval romances to lure the virtuous. **Enchanted chair** : Because 'smeared with gums' (917) **puts by** : Says 'no'; refuses.

L. 660 **Your...alabaster** : Comus threatens the lady that the magic spell will deprive her of senses and she will look merely statue of white alabaster, rooted to the spot. Threat and compliment here mingle together in a wonderful manner. **Alabaster** : A sulphate of lime, the white variety of which is used in images and monuments. Compare Othello Act V sc. 2 'that whiter skin of hers...smooth as monumental *alabaster*'. **Daphne** : Daughter of the river-god Peneus. Apollo was smitten by her charms and pursued the maiden. She prayed for aid and was changed by Jove into a laurel-tree, sacred to Apollo. Comus warns the lady that, she will become as immovable as Daphne. 'It is surprising' says a critic, 'how Comus remembers Greek mythology'. But he is the son of Circe and above all he is Milton's own creation ; and so, naturally he reveals his deep knowledge of the Greek mythology. **Root-bound** : Fixed to the earth by roots.

Ll. 662-65. **Fool...sees good** : The rejoinder of the lady brings out her unshakable confidence in the power of virtue. She firmly believes that, so long as Heaven is there to allow only the righteous acts, no evil power on earth can taint the soul, though it may imprison the perishable corporeal form. **Corporeal rind** : The outward covering—the body. **Immanacle** : To put fetters on. **While Heaven sees good** : As long as Heaven allows only good to conquer.

Ll. 667-68. **Why...dwell no frowns** : The palace of Comus is full of so many sweet dainties and objects of luxury that, there is no room in it for gloom and dissatisfaction. Cf. 'Sorrow and sighing shall flee away' *Isaiah XXXV*, 10.

668-71. **See...primrose season** : Here are all the luxuries or delights, which can be conjured by blossoming youthful minds in their imagination whenever their blood grows warm and quivering and becomes as lively and active with love as 'blooming buds in lovely spring.' The comparison between the quivering blooming buds and warmth of youth is as charming as it is delicate. **Fancy** : Love as in the Merchant of Venice : 'Tell me, where in fancy bred.' **Returns** : Appears again. **Brisk** ; Vigorous. **Primrose-season** : i.e. April and the first half of May.

Ll. 672-674. Comus is a passionate poet of luxurious life and sprinkles wine and rose perfumes on words and phrases. **Cordial julep** : Refreshing and exhilarating drink. *Julep* is from Fr. *Julep*. It is applied to any sweet drink though it means 'Rose-water.' **Flames** : Sparkles : dances like a flame. **Crystal bounds** : The glass of crystal that contains *julep*. **Spirits of balm** : 'Liquid essence derived from balsam tree.' **Syrup** : lit. a flavoured solution of sugar in water. But generally employed in the sense of beverage.

675-78. Even that celebrated *Nepenthes* is not so effective in producing joy as the 'drink in this crystal glass'. These lines breathe the atmosphere of strangeness and romance because of such mythological names as *Nepenthes*, *Thone*, *Helen* and *Jovē*. [See Int. 'Milton's diction'.] **Nepenthes** : Comes from two Greek words *ne* not, and *penthos* grief. This was an Egyptian opiate given by Polydama, wife of *Thone*, to *Helen*, who administered

it to her husband 'to assauge heart's grief and bring complete forgetfulness of her own misconduct'. Odyssey reads : 'Helen, daughter of Zeus, presently cast a drug into the wine whereof they drank, a drug to lull all pain and anger, and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow. Whoso should drink a draught thereof, when it is mingled in the bowl, on that day he would let no tear fall down his cheeks, not though his father and mother died... Medicines of such virtue had the daughter of Zeus, which Polydama, the wife of Thone, had given her, a woman of Egypt'. In spenser's the *Faerie Quecn*, *Nepenthes* is described as 'a drink of sovereign grace' bringing 'eternal happiness'. **The wife of Thone** : See above. **Jove-born Helena** : Helen whom Marlowe praised as 'fairer than evening air' and as one for whom topless towers of Ilium were burnt to ashes by Greeks, was the daughter of Jove. She sprang from the egg of the swan, for Jupiter, her father, approached Leda, her mother, in the form of a swan. She was an apparition of beauty and was mainly responsible for the Trojan war, the topic of Homer's *Iliad*. **To life so friendly** : Friendly or helpful and healthy to life.

679-81. **Why...soft delicacy ?** : The amorous and sensuous Comus lovingly observes the delicate softness and the sweet contours of her charming form and tells her that such a form is created by nature for tender care. **Dainty** : Delicate.

682-84. **But...other terms** : But you reverse the intention of Nature, and in the manner of a dishonest borrower, you use with harshness what you received for a gentle and delicate treatment. Thus, it is a breach of contract between you and Nature. Comus, once more, suggests to her that, she is not properly using her lovely form. She should not spoil it by her asceticism but en-

hance its charm by indulgence in pleasures, timely rest and soothing draughts.

685. **Scorning etc.** : Not heeding the condition, from which no one is exempt. , Note the idea of trusteeship that runs through the whole passage.

686. **By which...subsist** : The conditions to which all human-beings are subject, and if they disregard them they will be inviting their own ruin. Human-beings require rest after labour ; food when they are hungry and drink when thirsty.

689. **This will restore** : Comus, after praising the potentiality and soothing effects of the magic syrup, tries to induce the lady to take a draught, by arguing that, our body is a sacred trust deposited with us by nature, to be used carefully and delicately by timely rest and soothing draughts. He reminds her that she is tired and has been without food for the whole day and does need rest. Refreshment and rest can be got only by one draught of the syrup. The rejection of his request means that she is breaking her contract with nature.

690-705. This speech of the lady reminds us of Shakespear's Isabella in '*Measure for Measure*'

690-92. **'Twill not.....lies** : The indignant ejaculation is a *cutting repartee*. The lady warns Comus that the Syrup can never restore the truth and integrity of speech which he himself has abandoned by uttering a falsehood.

693-94. **Was this.....me of ?** : The cottage and the safe abode referred to in Ll. 319-20. **Grim aspects** : Fierce forms, the ugly crew of Comus.

695. **Mercy guard me** : By such soft touches and womanly sentiments Milton is trying to win her heart. Yet she stoutly refuses to become a real, living, full-blooded woman and remains in her speech a part of Milton's own self.

696. **Hence with** : Begone with. **Brewed enchantments** : Potions distilled from herbs and having magical powers.

697. **Credulous innocence** : Trustful and innocent nature.

698. **Vizored falsehood** : Masked deception, or deception hidden behind a mask. **Base forgery** : Low deceitful device.

700. **Lickerish** : Tempting to the appetite, lit. what makes one to lick one's lips. **Baits** : Enticements.

Ll. 701-2. Even if it were a drink for Juno when she holds a high feast, I would scorn the gift from traitorous hands like thine. **Juno** : The wife of Jupiter, queen of Olympus.

Ll. 702-5. **None.....wise appetite** : 'Only good men' continues the chaste lady, 'can make their gifts good; and what is not good cannot give delight to a controlled judicious appetite.' This sentiment occurs in Euripides (Medea 618) "For the gift of a bad man brings no advantage." Lord Monboddo writes, 'that is, an appetite in subjection to the rational part, and which is pleased with nothing but what reason approves of. It is a noble sentiment, but expressed in a manner which will appear flat and insipid to those who admire the present fashionable style, far removed from the simplicity of the ancients. Milton was not only the greatest scholar and finest writer of his age, but a good philosopher.'

Ll. 706-709. **O foolishness.....Abstinence** : Comus is a disciple of the philosophers of good living like Omār Khayyam, who taught people to indulge without restraint, in the delight of the sense. Naturally, he scorns the Stoic doctors who dwell in the regions of the abstract mind and repudiate all the pleasures of this world. 'Oh

foolish people,' he cries out, 'that listen to the stiff Stoic teachers, and draw rules of life from Diogenes, the Cynic, praising abstinence, that lean, haggard, sickly complexioned thing!' **Budge.....fur** : Robes trimmed with budge fur as a distinguished characteristic of a certain faith known as Stoicism. **The Stoics** were a school of philosophers, followers of Zeno. They turned their back on the pleasures of world and led a life of strict abstinence. They were thorough Cynics. Milton uses the word 'budge' probaly in the sense of *stiff or surly*. **Cynic tub** : Referring to the Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher of Athens, famous for his life of extreme austerity and simplicity. 'He wore coarse clothing, lived on the plainest food, slept in porticoes or streets and finally according the common story took up his residence in a tub'.

Ll. 710-736 : " In this feeling for nature is the ultimate source of Milton's Pantheistic ideas. He will never admit that nature or matter of the flesh are evil. His deepest sympathies go out to all that grows, reproduces itself, spreads out into beautiful rich shapes. He loves nature in a two-fold way : through his senses, for external beauty ; and through his inner feeling of sympathy for life. Comus speaking thus is a *part* of Milton's soul." (Saurat : Milton-Man and thinker.)

Ll. 710-14. **Wherefore...curious taste** : Comus forcibly argues : 'Why did Nature so fully and unreservedly pour forth her bounteous gifts so as to fill the earth with flocks and fruits and flowers and fragrance, and to crowd the seas with fishes and living creatures innumerable, were it not to delight and satisfy the taste of inquisitive and delicate admirers?' **Unwithdrawing** : Unsparing. **Spawn** : Expressive of the abundance of fish though lit. it means the egg of a fish or frog.

715. **Set** i.e. Nature set. **Spinning worm** : 'Silk-worms that spin threads of silk to form their cocoon before leaving the larvæ for the pupa state of their life.'

716. **Green shop** : Shop signifies work-shop. Silk-worms weave silk-threads on green mulberry leaves which constitute their workshop ; hence, 'Green work-shop.'

717. **Deck** : Dress gaudily. **Her sons** : Human-beings.

Ll. 717-18. **No corner...plenty** . And with a wish that no corner of the world should be without tokens of her abundance.

719. **Hutched** : Stored up.

721. **Pet of temperance** : A fit of abstinence. **Feed on pulse**-Carrying the sense, 'go vegetarian.' *Pulses* are beans, peas etc. Cf. 'And let him give us pulse to eat and water to drink.' Daniel.

722. **Clear stream** : Simple and pure water. **Frieze** : Coarsest wollen robes, chiefly made in Wales, named after the country of their origin namely 'Friesland.' just like 'calico' after 'Calicut.'

Ll. 723-24. 'If', says Comus, 'men were to lead their lives with a sort of mad passion for temperance, and were to eat coarsest food, the universal giver would be without thanks or praise ; his valuable gifts would be neither known nor cherished'. Because, in that case 'men would be despising the rich gifts of which they made no use and therefore could form no just opinion'.

Ll. 725-26 : We should be behaving towards him, as though he is a grudging master, ever miserly with his wealth. **Penurious niggard** : A stingy miser. 'Penury' is poverty. But 'Penurious' = disposed to act meanly as if poor.

727. Live like...bastards : This expression is taken from Heb. XII, 8: 'If you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers; then are ye bastards and not sons'. The whole line means: 'If we were to live like Stoics or Cynics, we should have no claim to be called the legitimate children of Nature, but bastards. For then we behave like illegitimate children, ever hesitating to claim Nature's treasure of beauty to the full.

. Ll. 728-29. If we do not avail ourselves of the full bounty of Nature the earth shall be overburdened and she will be choked with the superfluous abundance of her own production. If there is no one to enjoy and appreciate 'the wealth that Nature gives' the world would be overloaded with unused debris. Cf. *Paradise Lost*. Bk. v. 37.

730. The earth...plumes : The image is taken from what the ancients said of the air of the Northern Island: 'it was clogged and darkened with feathers'. The earth would become overburdened with all her fertile plenty running to waste and the sky would become dark owing to the black feathers of innumerable birds shadowing it, because, if men lived on pulse and water, no fowl will be killed.

731. The herds...lords : The sheep would grow so numerous as to outnumber their masters.

732-35. And the unsought...brows : An example of the range of Milton's imagination. The diamonds which have not been taken out will make the surface of the sea radiant. It will blaze with their light. It will be set thickly even like the sky which is thickly studded with stars; and the result will be that, the creatures below the surface of the sea, by growing accustomed to such a blaze will come out and gaze at the sun without blinking.

Warburton calls this extremely childish : "Dimonds, for example belong not to the sea, and even if they did, they would not be brought to the surface by the swelling of the sea." But Warton forgets that poetry is not all logic and is at times deliberately fanciful. Todd's statement that "these lines were designedly fanciful and were meant to harmonise with the speaker (Comus) and to expose the ostentatious sophistry, by which a bad cause is generally supported," is nearer the truth. "In line 881" says Verity, "Milton speaks of 'diamor.d rocks'. These 'rocks' might well 'bestud and emblaze' the surface of the sea. The argument is that, men should quarry and take away these diamonds and not leave them there unsought' **Overfraught** : Overburdened. **Unsought** : Neglected. **Emblaze** : Illumine. **Forhead** : the surface of the sea **Bestud** : like stars in heaven. **Inured** : Accustomed.

Li. 737-35 : were not spoken at the actual performance. The omission was certainly a great advantage from the point of good taste as the audience consisted of *ladies and gentlemen*.

L. 737. **Coy** : Shy. **Cozened** : Cheated. **Vaunted** : Highly and vainly extolled. Cf. 'Virtue itself is an idle name.'

Li. 739-40. **Beauty...current** : The philosophy of sensual materialism is very concisely summed up in these lines. Beauty is like a coin. It should be in current use, and not hoarded in secret. To hoard coins without putting them to any use is as foolish as treasuring dust. The value of a thing does not depend upon its mere laying up; but on the use one puts it to. So coins must be circulated from hand to hand to bring happiness to as many as possible. Comus the lover of flesh believes like all worshippers of 'Fleshly Beauty', that Beauty, must please its lovers. That is the ultimate end and ideal for

which God created beauty in human-beings. Venus well advises young Adonis ; 'Torches are made to light jewels to wear Dainties to taste, *fresh beauty for the use*;' and Comus a servant of Venus naturally echoes her philosophy. Bell and others find in the lines 737-55 an expression of the idea, that those who possess personal beauty should marry and through their children enable that beauty to remain in this world. Masson tells us that the idea that runs through these 17 lines is a favourite one with the old poets—Spenser, Shakespeare, Drayton and Daniel. But from the context this does not seem to be the idea. Comus is keen on the enjoyment of beauty and not on its perpetuation by marriage. He is a voluptuary and not a renaissance philosopher.

740-44. **The good...head :** Beauty has a value that is relative. That object is beautiful which pleases others and this very pleasure-yielding quality is the basic principle of beauty. No woman, if she remains a virgin, will have fulfilled the purpose of her life, as her beauty is wasted away without yielding pleasure to others. So don't waste your time. Beauty is sweet ; but delicate as a flower. If it is unused it dies like an unplucked rose on its stalk. Once more an echo of Venus's words to Adonis.

' Make use of time, let not advantage slip ;
Beauty within itself should not be wasted ;
Fair flowers that are not gathered in their prime
Rot and consume themselves in a little time.'

L. 745. Beauty is the pride and boast of Nature. Keep that in mind. Beauty, therefore, must be shown and exhibited and used to please others. Cf.

" Our daughter
In honour of whose birth these triumphs are
Sits here like beauty's child whom nature got

For men to see and seeing wonder at"

(Pericles act. 2 sc. 2)

"In his 'Epistles of king John to Matilda' Drayton writes "Hoard not thy beauty, when thou hast such store."

Ll. 746-47. 'The Nature's brag' must be displayed in courts and at fairs, which is the place where men have chance to see the workmanship of the Nature and 'seeing wonder at'.

L. 748: This sounds very much like the line in "Two Gentlemen of Verona."

"Home keeping youths have ever homely wit".

Homely features—A polite way of saying 'plain features' or ugly features.

It is best for those with plain features to stay at home. No one likes to admire or wonder at them, even if they were to show themselves in public.

749. **They had their name thence**—Constant association of plain features and home, gave 'plain features,' the name of 'homely features.'

749-51. **Coarse...wood**: Women with coarse complexion and poor cheeks are alone, fit to ply the needle and the comb (Tease) the housewives' wool. (Note, the pronunciation of house wife is, 'Huzzee', colloquialised into 'hussy'). **Sorry grain**: Poor colour or complexion. **Sampler** Pattern work to be filled up. In short, he wants to say that, beauty, of which, nature is justly proud, is meant to be displayed to be seen and admired by all. Knitting, combing wool and other duties of a housewife are reserved for the plain-featured.

752. '**Vermilion tintured lips**'—Lips looking red as though they had been dipped in vermilion.

Vermilion is prepared out of red-lead. It gets its name from a red coloured insect of that name.

753. Love darting eyes : Eyes shooting out love, so to speak inspiring love in those on whom they are directed.

Tresses—Ringlets of hair. 'This line is a tribute to the beauty of the Lady Alice.'

Ll. 752-55. Why were the vermilion lips, bewitching eyes and locks as fresh as morn created ? There must be some purpose behind the creation of such things. They have a special significance. Think over it yourself and find out the purpose.' You are young as this. This last sentence contains a subtle suggestion. Comus says: 'No matter if you have not realized the purpose of these gifts so far. You are still young and you can make up for the lost time.'

Ll. 756-61. are spoken aside by the lady.

Ll. 756-61. 'The lady did not want to speak a single word in that unholy place. Nevertheless, she argues with Comus lest the sorcerer should beguile her thoughts as he had charmed her eyes with a magic spell. **Unlocked** : Opened. **Unhallowed** . Unholy. **Juggler** : Cf. that vile magician. **Charm** : Beguile. **Obtruding** : Thrusting forward. **Pranked** : Decked. **Reason's garb** : Dress or appearance of truth and reason.

Ll. 760-61. Being a woman the lady is accustomed to the protection of others. 'But when the hour of trial comes, she shows herself strong in powers of judgment and of reasoning, strong in her spiritual nature, in her tenacity of moral truth, in her indignation against sin.' She will never brook, Vice, sophistically pleading a false cause, while virtue remains silent and does not rebuke the insolence of Vice. **Hate** : Detest. **Bolt** : Lit. means separating flour from bran. Here it means, argue in a subtle way.

Ll. 762-64. Nature is rich. Her gifts are innumerable. But the aim of Nature is not excess. Her bounties and gifts are for moderate enjoyments. They are not to be pursued with licentiousness. That is how Milton is giving vent to his own thoughts through the lady. **Charge**: Blame. **Ristous**: Though generally the word means 'noisy' here it is used to denote 'prodigal or excessive in the use of luxuries.'

764. **She good Cateress**: Nature is compared to an accomplished Stewardess.

765-67. **Means**.....**Temperance**: Comus has ridiculed sobriety of living as mere madness. But the lady replies that temperance is a holy and beneficent power. She argues thus: 'Nature is bounteous in her gifts. True. But her gifts are meant for those virtuous persons, who lead their lives observing the law of sobriety laid down by Nature herself. They are not meant for the licentious.' **Holy dictate**: Sacred command. **Spare**: Frugal but not miserly.

Ll. 767-76. "Milton has in mind Gloucester's argument for practical socialism. If Nature's blessings were evenly distributed instead of being heaped upon a few, all waste will be avoided and each man will have enough." Throughout the passage Milton, himself, is speaking. Much of it is inappropriate in the mouth of a young girl. **Pines**: Languishes. **Beseeming**: Suitable. **Lewdly pampered**: Wickedly gluttonous, the reverse of 'spare Temperance' **Vast excess**: Superfluous abundance. **Well dispensed**: Properly or well distributed. **Unsuperfluous**: Not superabundant.

Ll. 772-73. **Mean**: 'The whole of Nature's bounties would be properly distributed in just proportion, and no recipient would have too much'. **Not whit**: Not in the least. **Encumbered**: Overloaded, hampered. **Due paid**:

Duly paid. **Swinish gluttony** : *Gluttony* : Greed like that of a swine—a comparison to be commonly met with in English Literature. Cf. "Loathsome gluttony deformed creature on a filthy swine" (Spenser).

Ll. 776-79. **For—Feeder** : For, a glutton with his swinish instincts never thinks of God as he feasts in pomp, but with low and sottish thanklessness, he eats to excess and cramming his stomach abuses the Almighty for His rich fertility. **Besotted** : Foolish. A sot is a foolish fellow. **Crams** : Eats to excess. **Blaspemes** : Talks blasphemously.

780. **Enow** : Enough.

L. 781. The lady deals with Comus's points in turn: first temperance, then Nature's excess, then chastity. **Arm his...words** : the unholy tongue scorning or speaking contemptuously etc.

782. **Sun clad power of chastity** : Chastity is here conceived as clothed and guarded by a divine brightness. Cf. L. 425 and the note.

783. **Fain** : Gladly.

784. **Thou hast etc.** : Comus cannot hear, hearing will not understand her praise of purity, just as in Arcadis the gross unpurged ear, of humanity may not catch the sound of the music from the spheres'.

Apprehend : Capable of grasping the purport of.

Ll. 785-86 : In the 'Apology for Smectymnus', Milton speaks of his study of the 'Divine Volume of Plato', wherein he learned 'of the abstracted sublimities' of chastity and love, also of his study of the Holy Scripture 'unfolding those chaste and high mysteries, with timeless care infused, that is body is for the Lord and thy Lord for body'. To quote Dr. Warton : "By studying the reveries of Platonic writers, Milton contracted a theory concerning the chastity and purity of love. In the con-

temptation of which like all the visionaries, he indulges his imagination with ideal refinement and with pleasing but unmeaning notions of excellence and perfection".

Ll. 788-89: And it is fit that you should know no more happiness than that, in which you are. For you do not deserve it.

790. Dear wit: i.e. Dear to Comus. Dear is here used in contempt. Craik suggests that the notion properly involved in it of love, having first become generalized into that of a strong affection of any kind, had thence passed into that of such an emotion the very reverse of love, as in 'my dearest foe'. **Gay rhetoric:** Showy skill in controversy. Used also in contempt.

791. Dazzling fence: Fence is an abbreviation of defence—here 'argumentation'. The phrase means: 'Arguments fitted to dazzle and lead astray the unwary'.

792. Thou.....convinced: You do not deserve to realise that you are overcome in argument. Even disillusion sometimes ennobles the mind. But the base mind of Comus is incapable of being ennobled. It must needs rot in its own filth 'as evil gathered like scum'.

795-799. Yet should I try.....false head: These are mighty lines full of Puritanic ardour. The sublime tone of the blank verse with its closing crash, actually comes like a solemn declaration of a divine oracle. 'And if I were to attempt,' continues the lady with great vehemence, 'to enumerate the immeasurable and irresistible excellence of this sacred cause, would so bear me aloft and so inflame my spirit, and so inspire my utterance, that the material things and Nature would be forced to sympathise, and the Soul-less Earth would quiver until by the convulsion your enchanted palace would fall in ruins on your guilty head'. **This pure cause—**This sacred duty of revealing the divine power of chastity and pure

virginity. **Rapt:** Enraptured. **Sacred vehemence:** Divine ardour. **The brute Earth:** The earth which has no life or which is as devoid of Reason as are the beasts. **Lend her nerves:** This lit. means: 'grant her sinews'. But it should be taken as: 'The earth will be roused and her dull nerves will quiver with life and animation'. **Shake:** Tremble. **Magic structures:** The palace of enchantment. **Uncontrolled work:** Immeasurable and irresistible value or excellence or importance. **Reared so high:** Built so high and stately.

Ll. 800-806. Are spoken aside by Comus.

Ll. 800-3. 'Here is the noblest panegyric on the power of virtue, adorned with the sublime imagery. It is extorted from the mouth of a magician and a preternatural being, who although actually possessed of his prey, feels, all the terrors of human nature at the bold rebuke of innocence, and shudders with a sudden sweat like a guilty man'. (Warton). **She fables not:** Hers is not mere idle talk. She speaks the truth. **Set off:** Directed or inspired. **Though not mortal:** Though I am not susceptible to changes peculiar to mortals. **Yet:** Though I am not a mortal. **Cold shuddering dew:** Cold perspiration on a shuddering body. An instance of Transferred Epithet. **Dips me:** Drenches me.

803-805. **As when ... crew:** One seems to hear the roll of thunder in these lines. Here is an allusion to 'the ten year's war' between Zeus and the Titans headed by Saturn. The legend was that at one time Cronus i.e. Saturn, the son of Uranus and Ge (earth), and the Titans ruled in Olympus. But Zeus, having obtained thunder and lightning from the Cyclops, attacked them and hurled them into *Erebus* or Tartarus, a region as far below Hell as Heaven is above the earth. **Speaks thunder:** Denounces. **The whole passage means:** A shudder of

horror comes over me and I am drenched with perspiration...such as the party of Saturn felt when Jove in his wrath denounced them and hurled them to Erebus.

805-6. **I must.....strongly:** Comus thinks that he understands thoroughly the ways of women. He believes that the Lady too will yield like other ordinary women, if he bullies her. **Dissemb'ie:** Conceal one's real intention.

807. **Moral babble:** Childish sermonizing.

808. **Canon laws...foundation:** The fixed rules and regulations of our establishment (or institution). An allusion to the technical phrase *Canon law* 'ecclesiastical law as laid down in decrees of the Pope and statutes of councils' (Dr. Murray). Warton smells here a humorous application of the language of universities and other foundations; while Warton detects 'a sneer at the Establishments and Common Law.'

809-10. **Yet 'tis but.....blood:** Ancient physicians recognised four *Humours*—blood, choler, phlegm and melancholy—as factors determining a person's disposition. When melancholy is in excess, in a particular individual, he is bound to be morose and cynical (for details see *Introd. Ch. I*). **Lees and settlings:** Both mean 'remains or residue.' Comus suggests to the Lady that her reluctance to enjoy is due to nothing but the predominance of Melancholy in her. And the best way to overcome this is his 'Orient Liquor'. Cf. 'Melancholy.....corrupteth all the blood and is the cause of lunacies'. (Nashe).

LI. 112-13. Cf. 'one sup thereof.....doth bring to sudden joy' and 'Her heart bathed in a bath of bliss'—Chaucer.

The brothers rush in: The two brothers, to use the words of the Attendant spirit, have "Haemony, of soverain use against all enchantments." about them, when they 'boldly assault the necromancer's hall. They follow

the advice of the Attendant spirit, down to every detail. But they forget to snatch the magic wand from the necromancer's hand.

L. 814. "If the false enchanter," says Verity "had not escaped, there would have been no place for Sabrina, whom Milton introduces, of course, out of compliment to his audience." This sounds rather one-sided. Milton's idea in introducing Sabrina was not merely 'that he wished to pay compliments to the audience. He introduces Sabrina because, it offered opportunities for the introduction of music. Music and Milton are inseparable.'

Ll. 815-16. See note on the line 653. **Scape:** Escape.

811-817. **Without...reversed...power:** 'As old as the belief in magic itself, seems to have been the belief that, the effects of enchantment could be undone by reversing the spell, by pronouncing the words of the charm backwards...Mesmerists now reverse their-passes to restore their patients. (Masson). **Without...reversed:** The notion that, to undo a spell, cast by a magician, by reversing his magic wand and by repeating the charm backwards, also occurs in Ovid's—Metamorphosis. XIV, 300.

Backward Mutters: Incantations spoken backwards. **Disserving:** Disenchanting breaking the spell. Circe restored the companions of Ulysses by means of a counter charm.

819. **Stony fetters:** Probably the chair to which the lady was glued was made of stone (Scott). **Fixed and motionless:** It is not clear when the binding of the lady took place.

820. **Bethink:** Remember.

822. **Meliboeus:** A common pastoral name. Keightley says: 'This perhaps means Spenser, who, in the 'Faerie Queen,' relates the tale of Sabrina.' But it may as well

refer to Drayton, Warner, and Geoffrey of Monmouth; for all them repeat the story of Sabrina in their works.

823. Soothest : Trustworthy (A. S. *Sodth*-*ī*'rue) for this line, cf 'A jolly grōom was he, as ever piped on an oaten pipe' (Spenser). **From Hence :** i. e. hence.

824. Moist Curb : An allusion to the fact that Sabrina, is a river-deity; hence the propriety of the epithet.

826. Sabrina : Here is Milton's version : Brutus ruled the kingdom of Britain for 24 years. After his death, his three sons, Lochrine, Albanct and Camber, divided it into three equal parts with one consent. Humber, the King of Huns, invaded the land. Lochrine put him to rout. Among the spoils of his camp he found Estrilidis, 'a lady passing fair.' Lochrine intended to marry her, even though he was previously engaged to Guendolen, the daughter of Corineus. But he could not marry Estrilidis because he was threatened with invasion by Corineus. He married Guendolen, but secretly loved Estrilidis. Guendolen gave birth to Pladan, and Estrilidis to Sabra. Gwendolen, later on, knows about this affair of her husband. She was angry. Her son Pladan defeated his father in a fierce battle in which he was killed by an arrow; but the fury of Guendolen does not end here. For, 'Estrilidis and her daughter Sarba, she throws into a river, and to have a monument of revenge proclaims that the stream be thenceforth called after the damsel's name, which by length of time is now changed to Sabrina or Severn' (Milton's *History of Britain* 1670). But Milton's version of the same, in *Comus*.

Ll. 833-43. is very delightful. His description of how Sabrina was transformed into a river-nymph is to

quote Mackail : ' Neither romantic nor classic ; it is right. That is all '.

827. **Whilom** : Of old. Cf. L. 1 from the 'Knight's tale' by Chaucer.

827. **Lochrine** : Sabrina's father. See L. 826. and the note.

828. **Sceptre** : (See note to L. 36). **Brute** : Brutus, A mythical King of Britain ; the grandson of Anchises. His conquest of England is the subject of *Monmouth's chronicles*.

829. **Guiltless damsel** : She was really guiltless. See L. 823.

830. **Stepdame** : See note to Sabrina (L. 826) to feel that Guerdolen, was not her step-mother. This word applies properly to a child whose parent has remarried. " But this inaccuracy is artistic, it supplies a motive for the persecution of this guiltless damsel " (Verity) This is too much. Milton like Homer at times nods. **Guendolen** : See 1826 L831 She gave her innocent self into the charge of the flood. In simple prose, she leapt into the river.

832. **Stayed** :—Stopped. **His** : It is a common practice in European Lit. to use masculine for rivers. **Cross flowing course** : The current of the river flowed across that guiltless damsel's path. And so, in order to escape her relentless pursuer, Gwendolen, she had to jump into the river (834). **Pearled wrists** : Wrists adorned with pearl ornaments. Milton is a wizard who changes dirt and dross into pure gold. There was a belief current among the ancient Britons and also the people of 16th century that pearls were found in rivers. Milton accepts the superstition and like a faerie-god adorns his river-nymphs with pearls : Ben Jonson's nymphs also wear ornaments of the most choice and orient pearls. 835. **Nereus** : A sea-

God, father of fifty nymphs called Nereids; popularly known as the old man of the sea. 'Milton, curiously enough, makes this Greek God of sea change his place of residence. The Aegean Sea was his dwelling place; but Milton brings it nearer the west coast of England. 836. **Piteous**: Full of pity for etc. **Reared**: Raised **Lank**: Her lean and drooping head. 837-38. **To imbathe...asphodel**: "charming and fascinating, these are the words, we use to describe these lines." **Imbathe**: Bathe. **In asphodil**: In baths, sweetened with nectar and scented with asphodel flowers. **Lavers**: Vessels for washing. **Asphodel**: A plant of the lily genus. According to Homer, 'a plant which grew in Elysium.' L. 839: The five senses are generally spoken of as the five gateways of knowledge. (Cf. Ll. 63-64 from Hamlet 1, 5. L. 840; An echo of the Iliad. See books XIX 39; XXIII, 186). **Ambrosial Oils**: Oils of heavenly fragrance. See note II. L. 16. 841. **Immortal change**. The phrase means change to immortality. Cf. mortal charge. L. 10 and the note.

842. **Made Goddess of the river**: This is an explanatory clause. Such a participial construction is a Latinism, the idea of a river having a tutelary deity who dwelt in and ruled over; it is essentially classical. Ll. 842-857. See Intr. Ch. I, page 10.

845. **Help**: Remedy, counteract. **Urchin blasts**: 'Mischief done by malicious spirits. The urchin or hedgehog was supposed to poison the udders of cows (Trotter). **Ill-luck signs**: Injuries that are signs of coming danger.

846. **Shrewd**: Wicked and mischievous. **Meddling**: Mischievous (for the mischiefs played by the fairies, see L' Allegro Ll. 101-4; A Midsummer Night's Dream, act II, sc. I, Ll. 32-57; and King Lear, act 3, sc. 4, L. 124). Milton had in mind some particular elf.

847. **Vialed liquor Liquid** : Medicines kept in a vial or phial or small bottles.

848. **The shepherds.....festivals** : Cf. Ll. 171-177.

849. **Carol** : Sing. The original meaning is a dance-round. Cf. L. 1., passage I, from Sisam's Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose. L. 850. A recognised method of showing gratitude in pastoral poetry (Ross).

851. **Daffodils**: A flower of the lily kind. **Pansy and Pink** : All these are English flowers, sweet-smelling and variegated. This line carries with it fragrance of sweet English flowers and suggests colour in a striking manner.

852. **Old Swain**: Melitrocus (L. 822). **Unlock**: Undo. See L. 819.

853. **Clasping charm**: Binding spell. **Thaw**: Dissolve melt, destroy etc. "Oh that this too solid flesh would thaw **Hamlet** **Numbing spell**: The spell that benumbs the limbs.

854. **Right**: Rightly. **Warbled song** : This is a requirement of the right form of invocation. **Warble** generally is applied to the sirging of a bird.

Ll. 855-57. There is some propriety in invoking Sabrina. She herself was a virgin and had suffered at the hands of the cruel world. Naturally she would be compassionate towards 'distressed virgins'. **This** : i.e. invoking Sabrina. **Adjuring**: Having the power to summon.

Ll. 859-89. This song was a solo sung by Lawes himself. "It is a model of pure classical grace. The chaste loveliness of the opening lines, in particular, leaves on the mind an impression like the tranquil fascination of sculpture." (Rose). 'Sir Henry Wotton must have been thinking of lines like these, when he speaks of a 'Doric delicacy' of verse.' (Raleigh).

861. Glassy : Clear and smooth as glass. **Translucent :** Allowing light to pass through, without being transparent.

862. Twisted : Entwined. **Braids :** Plaited tresses of hair. **Lilies :** Water-lilies. Drayton in his *'Polyolbion braids the tresses of his water-nymphs (Warton). Lily-flower is an emblem of purity and so fittingly associated with Sabrina, the chaste goddess. Knit : to knit, is literally to form into a knot. The whole line means 'the beautiful hair of Sabrina, the goddess of silver-lake, are braided with lilies.'*

863. The loose.....hair : Todd has the following note : "We have an amber-cloud above. V. 333. And in *l'Allegro*, the sun is robed in flames and amber light. But liquid amber is a yellow pellucid gum. Sabrina's hair drop amber, because in the poet's idea, her stream was supposed to be transparent.....Amber, when applied to water, means a luminous clearness; when to hair, a bright yellow," But there are critics, who, while explaining this highly poetic image, forget the word 'translucent' and assert confidently that there is no beauty in 'Amber-dropping. Amber suggests that the waters of Sabrina were muddy.' But this is not what Milton means. Rightly has it been observed that to judge and appreciate poetry we must be poets ourselves. Before we turn to this sweet line, let us picture before our mind's eye, a maid with trailing golden tresses, entwined with white-lilies. As she moves, her golden-tresses will trail behind her, ever shining with a gentle and yellowish tinge. With this picture before us, let us read the line... 'The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair.....' very slowly. Sabrina, the river-nymph is sitting beneath the surface of the flowing waters, which are conceived as her flowing tresses. Further, these waters move in a criss-cross

manner through the water-lilies, that float upon the surface of the river. This will naturally appear like the fair hair, of a damsel, entwined with 'white-lilies. The charm is heightened all the more, because of the gentle yellowish or golden sparkle which is seen many a time on the surface of flowing waters. This gentle, golden sparkle is conceived to be the golden tinge, with which the fair tresses of Sabrina shine. That is why amber-dropping. Cf "Their hair they wore loose, unrolled about their shoulders, whose dangling amber trammels, reaching down beneath their knees, seemed to drop balm on their delicious bodies." Nashe. The phrase 'to drop balm' suggests the possibility of another interpretation. "Amber" says Milton. "has sweet fragrance." In this case, the phrase 'amber-dropping' is to be interpreted as 'the hair that scatter fragrance, because of the scent and sweet smell of oil and flowers.'

864. Honour : Chastity.

865. Silver lake : Crystal stream. Note that as Sabrina is a river goddess, the invocation mentions only "deities of waters" and, each is described in terms taken directly from the classics and especially from Homer. Oceanus is 'great'; while 'earth-shaking,' is a constant epithet of Neptune. It may be strange, at first, that a British goddess should be associated so closely with the Greek ones ; but Milton has forestalled the objection in Ll. 18-29, by placing 'this isle' under the charge of the classical God Neptune. "Milton has no rival in English literature for the use of musical proper names. 'He simply intoxicates himself and his readers with the honey of this marvellous name accompaniment'".

863. Oceanus : Son of the Heaven and Earth, and father of all river deities. He was the most ancient God

of the great Ocean-stream, which was believed to surround the whole earth.

869. Earth Shaking Neptune: In Homer, the Greek God of sea, Poseidon, is the 'earth-shaker' either because, he is the lord of earthquakes or, merely because, the waves of the sea are forever beating the lands. Neptune being identified with the Greek deity, by the Roman poets, all the attributes of the latter are transferred to the former (Classical Dictionary). **Mace:** Trident.

870. Tethys: The wife of Oceanus, the mother of all river-Gods. **Majestic pace:** She has a dignified bearing, so she moves with slow and stately step.

871. Nereus: See line 835. **Wrinkled:** Because he is very old.

872. The Carpathian wizard's hook: the reference is to the sea-god Proteus, who was associated with the Aegean island of Carpathos. He was gifted with knowledge of the future, and had also the power to change himself into different shapes; hence, the epithet "Protean" of many forms. "He acted as herdsman for Neptune, and shepherded the seals of sea-calves." For this purpose he would require a hook.

873. Scally Triton's winding shell: Triton was a sea-god who was usually represented in art as a Merman (half man, half fish) playing upon the shell, or to the notes played on it, as in the expression 'to wind a horn.'

874. Soothsaying Glaucus: Glaucus was a Boeotian fisherman, who became a god by eating a herb, which Kronos (Saturn) had sown. He, like Proteus, had the gift of divining the future.

875. Luciothea: Sea-goddess, mother of Metacertes. She is Ino, daughter of Cadmus, wife of Athamus, by

whom she had two sons. Athamus, in a fit or rage, killed one son. She with her other son, Melicertes, plunged into the sea and became a sea-goddess, under the name of Luciothea. 'She being Luciothea, or the white Goddess, may well be supposed to have lovely hands' (Newton). She must have been wonderfully beautiful and hence, she has lovely hands. . . .

876. **Her...strands:** Melicertes, who after his deification, became the God of harbours and was called Palæmon or Portmnus. • **Strands:** Shores.

877. **Thetis:** One of the Nereids; (line 837) wife of Pelus and mother of Achilles. **Tinsel-Slippered:** Wearing bright and shining slippers. Browne had already written, in 'Britannias Pastorals'.

When Triton's trumpet (with a shrill command) Told, silver-footed Thetis was at hand." Some critics interpret it as, 'flashing feet.' There is, no doubt, a flash; but it is not the flash of the actual feet, but of the tinsel slippers.

878. **Sirens etc.:** See L. 253 and the note.

879. • **Parthenope:** One of the Sirens, said to have been buried at Naples; and Naples was then poetically called Parthenope.

880. **Liega:** A shrill voiced Siren. She had soft and alluring golden locks, flowering over her white neck. She is, according to Masson, one of the Mermaids of Northern Mythology, who comb their tresses, 'but here the Mythology and fiction are heightened', says Warton 'With the brilliancy of romance.' Ligea's comb is of gold and she sits on 'diamond rocks'.

881. **Diamond rocks:** See L. 732 and the note **Wherewith:** With which.

882. **Sleeking:** Smoothing, by combing.

884. **Wily glance:** Glances that allure and waylay.

L. 885. The double alliteration brilliantly suggests the action of rising.

886. **Coral paven bed:** The bottom of the river, which is supposed to be paved with coral. It is really the case with the sea, but it is here applied to the river.

887. **Bridle:** Restrain. The river comes to a standstill while, the goddess goes to perform her sacred task (Scott). It is in these lovely, sprightly and pure songs, that the principal fascination of the mask lies. Everything is pure and dignified with Milton. He can please, when he wants to, with songs like these, but even then, there is a 'gigantic loftiness' present. According to Verity, the appearance of the river Goddess on the stage would be effected as on a modern stage. Part of the centre of the stage would be displayed, and through the aperture, the Goddess would rise, seated in a car, surrounded by Nymphs, in picturesque dresses. This device gave full scope to the skill of Inigo Jones, the designer of the scenery.

890. **Rushy fringed banks:** Banks bordered with rushes. This is a specimen, as Earle calls it, of a 'literary compound'. The composite words created purely for the picturesque effect, confined to literature only. Milton, Keats and Tennyson, are noted for their use of this artifice in language. Similar to this, we have: 'flowery kirtled' (L 254). The usual form is 'rush-fringed'.

891. **Osier:** A kind of willow. **Dank:** Moist. Warton points out a sister passage from Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess'.

892. **Sliding chariot:** The Chariot of Sabrina, is unlike the usual one. It glides along its course, with a smooth and soft movement.

893. Agate : A precious stone of bluish green colour. It derives its name from 'Achates' in Sicily.
Turkis : A precious stone of blue colour.

895. Stray : Keightley observes : "Were it not for the time, this word would have been lies; for, inanimate objects cannot stray." I rather think that there is a mistake in the manuscript. The word 'stay' shall serve the purpose well.

896. Fleet : Rapidly flowing.

897. Thus : "The word is indicative of the stage action. The beautiful damsel, dressed as a fairy, is tripping on the stage, bending her lovely knee in a rhythmic manner, with a wave like gentility of motion, "**Printless feet**": So light is the—tread of the fairy that, no impression of her feet is left behind.

898. Cowslip's velvet head : the line is delicious in its velvet touch.

899. Cf. "Her treading would not bend a blade of grass."

L. 907 : see (Ll. 207, 945.)

L. 908 : see (L. 855.)

910. Brightest : because, the lady is virtuous. Cf. Ll. 459-460.

Ll. 911-15. These lines are an echo of Eletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess' (A. 3; Sc. 1) :

'If there be'st a virgin pure,

I can give a present cure.'

Precious cure : Sovereign remedy. **Rubbed** : Red. Cf.

"The melting rubies on a cherry lip."

Thrice : The number three is significant. To enforce the importance of any utterance, we utter it three times. There is that 'trinity' in religious doctrines. In Virgil's 'Aeneid', XI-230 we have, "He thrice moistened his companion with pure water....." In Coleridge's 'Kubla

Khan' we have, we are to circle round him *thrice*....." This method of sprinkling water to undo charms is universal,

916. Cf. 'Enchanted chair', in the stage direction at 658.

L. 917. **Glutinous** : Sticky.

918 **Moist** : because of the 'drops of her fountain pure.' **Cold** : In antithesis to the 'seat smeared with..... heat.'

918. 'As soon as Sabrina's hand~~x~~ touched the 'seat, the gums and all the effects of 'Comus's incantation lost their power and the lady was freed.'

920. **Amphitrite** : Wife of Neptune, the sea-God.

922. **Daughter of Locrine** : See L. 827, and the note.

L. 923. **Old anchis's line** : Anchises was the father of Aeneas ; 'Aeneas begot Ascanius,' Ascanius, Silvius ; Silvius, Brutus ; and Brutus begot Locrine. Sabrina was the daughter of Locrine ; and hence, of Old Anchis's line.

Ll. 924-937. The whole of the poetic blessings contained in these lines on Severn and its neighbourhood involved, what would call solid commercial prosperity, would go to the heart of the assemblage at Ludlow. (Masson)

924. **Brimmed** : Full to the brim; or, enclosed within banks. Dr. Warburton proposes the reading *brined* and thinks that *brimmed*, for waves rising to the brim or margin of the shore is a strange word. But there is no need for such alteration. "Warburton had not remarked the frequent and familiar use of Brim for Bank in our old poets" Warton. **For this** : For this act of kindness. **Miss** : Failed to receive.

L. 926-27. The reference is to the tributaries of the Severn from the Welsh hills.

Ll. 928-29. Let not the heat of the summer sun scorch and evaporate your flowing waters and deprive you of your glory. **Drought:** Heat. **Singed:** Scorched (scorching) **Tresses fais:** i.e. the flowing waters of Sabrina Cf. Ll. 862-863.

930-31. **Nor wet...mud:** The molten crystal refers to the 'coral-paven bed'. The bottom of the river, so to speak, is made, out of the clear glassy crystals, molten and spread out. It is to be noted that, the spirit is expressing his desire. His wish is that the waters of Sabrina should never be evaporated or tainted with mud. She should always enjoy full floods; but her water should be, at the same time, crystal pure. The *October floods*, of course, will bring 'mud' with them. But the prayer of the spirit is that, Sabrina should enjoy 'flooded-opulence' without the least taint of mud.

933. **Beryl:** A precious stone of greenish hue. "The poet draws upon his imagination," says Trotter, "when he associates the Severn with beryl, myrrh, and cinnamon." Groves of beryl and cinamon are "common enough in the land of poetic fancy; but not in the west of England."

Ll. 934-35. **May thy...round:** See below Ll. 936-37.

936-937. **Thy banks upon and etc.:** "The construction of these two lines is a little difficult; to crown her with towers is true imagery; but to crown her head upon her banks will scarcely be allowed to be so. I would, therefore, place a colon, instead of a comma at line 935, and then read- 'And here and there thy banks upon. Be groves of myrrh and cinnamon,' -(Seward) "In this line banks the nominative case as *head* was in the last but one. The sense and syntax of the whole is May thy head be crowned round about with towers and terraces, and here and there (May) thy banks (be crowned) upon with groves. The phrase is Greek."-(Calton) "The true

key seems to be furnished in a scholarly note by Mr. Calton, who suggested that, Milton let his idiom be affected by the recollection, at once, of two allied Greek verbs—one in the sense of 'to put a crown round;' and the other meaning 'to put a crown upon.'—(Masson) "The difficulty is purely imaginary, nor is the idiom un-English. I take the *head* for the river itself, and the lofty *head* will mean, where the banks are lofty; (if the *head* were only the 'source,' it would not be crowned *with many a tower*) and *thy banks upon* parenthetical, *banks* the object of *upon*; many a tower and terrace on your lofty sides and here and there with groves of myrrh on the banks." (Bradshaw). I accept Bradshaw's interpretation. **Myrrh**: A fragrant bush. **Cinnamon**: An Indian spice-tree. 'Myrrh and cinnamon are as much out of place in English scenery as the beryl.' Warton.

938. **Lends us grace**: Shows us favour.

942. **Not-sound**: Let us have no useless or 'unnecessary talk.

L. 945. See note on L. 207.

L. 946. As the play was going on, *within that residence*, the words may have had a whimsical effect, of course, however, what scenery there was on the stage, represented them as still in the 'gloomy cover,' some furlongs from Ludlow." (Masson).

L. 948. **State**; Ceremony.

949. **Gratulate**: Welcome. Cf. 'and gratulate his safe return to Rome.' (Titus and Andronicus).

950. **Wished**. Desired. **Beside**: Besides.

Ll. 951-52. Note how the atmosphere of pastoralism is still kept up. The Welshmen are called swains, who make themselves merry with jigs and rustic dance. 'These two lines recall 'the days of Robin Hood and the

merry England.' **Jigs**: An onomoto poetic word signifying a quick and merry dance. **Resort**: Meet together.

955. **Double Mirth**: Because of the safe and unexpected return of the lady and the two brothers,

956-57. **The stars...mid sky**: Though the stars are high (signifying the advent of morning) still it is night. This fixes the time between midnight and dawn. **The scene changes**: At last, we are out of the grim darkness of the shady wood. It is almost morning and we are near Ludlow castle. The shepherds dance and sing blithe songs. The horrible phantasms of night are no more; the atmosphere is full of joy and happiness. **Come in country dances**: This is technically an antimasque. Here, Milton follows the Johnsonian tradition.

959. **Till next...holiday**: Reserve your dancing for the next joyous occasion.

Cf. Ll. 97-98. From 'L' Allegro.'

L. 960. **Duck or nod**: The allusion, here is to the ungraceful dancing and awkward courtesy of the country dance. **Duck**: A low bow from Dutch 'Duiken.' **Nod**: An awkward way of moving one's head in country dance. Cf. 'Duck with french nods and apish courtesy' Shakespeare.

961-62. **Other.....guise**: The spirit says that, the shepherds should now retire and give place to the lady and the two brothers, who have come 'to triumph in victorious dance' (274), with elegance and grace. This again, is a complement to the lady and the two brothers. **Highter**: Nimbler. **Court guise**: Of such courtly fashion as befits a minuet.

963. **Mercury**: Roman God identified with the Greek God-Hermes; patron of dance and Gymnastic games. He is the embodiment of graceful agility.

964. **Mincing** : Moving with grace. **Dryades** : Wood-nymphs (see note on L. 254.)

965. **Lawns** ; Glades. **Leas** : Meadows. **This second song presents** : Mr. Walker suggests that, here, by some stage-device, the Earl and the Lady Bridgewater, come on the stage without leaving their seats.

L. 967. 'To address some member or members of the audience, was not unusual in masques.' Cf. Shirley's 'Triumph of Peace.' **New delight** : The Lord was already delighted as the honour of being the Lord President of Wales was conferred on him. The unexpected safe return to his children, enhances his joy. Hence, 'new delight.'

968. **Goodly grown** : Grown handsome.

969. **Three fair branches** : A metaphorical way of saying, 'Your three offsprings.'

970. **Timely** : In good time; early. Cf. "Happy were I in my *timely* death." **Tried** : Proved.

972. **Assayes** : Trials.

973. **Everlasting praise** : Praise that is eternal.

Ll 974-75. The dance of the children, about to commence, is emblematic of their triumphant joy. It is victorious because, the tempter was baffled."

Ll. 976-1023 : I cannot help quoting from Dr. Scott : "All the glory of the poem is gathered up in this incomparable epilogue. It is a description of Heaven, the Christian Heaven, veiled in the language of Greek mythology." "Note that, the lines are mainly in quatrains. With slight modifications the whole might have been printed in stanzas. This would have, however, made it a separate poem, which was not desirable." *The spirit epiloquises* : Now the other actors leave the stage and there remains only the Spirit. **Epilogue** : 'Concluding part of any literary work; speech, short poem addressed to

spectators by actor at end of play. 'Oxford Dictionary. Warburton thinks this speech to be a paraphrase of Ariel's song in 'Tempest.' "Where the bee sucks, there suck I." Pindar, in his second 'olympic' and Homer, in his fourth book of *Odyssey*, describes, "a happy island at the extremity of the ocean, where the sun has his abode; the sky is perpetually serene and bright; the west-wind blows always and the flowers are of gold." "The luxuriant imagery of Milton", says Warton, "has dressed anew from the classical gardens of antiquity: from Spenser's garden of Adonis," "Fraught with pleasures manifold; from Marine's *L'Adone*; Aristo's 'garden of Paradise; Tasso's garden of Armida! and Spencer's 'Bower of Bliss.' (T. Warton).

978. **Ocean**: The classical '*okeanos*,' in which the tradition placed 'thrice happy isles' containing the garden of Hesperus.

977. **Happy climes**: The allusion seems to be the Elysian Fields. Milton uses this phrase to suggest the happiness or blessedness of heaven.

978. **Shuts his eye**: Eye of the day or of Heaven is a favourite phrase for the sun among Elizabethan poets. In Milton's 'Ode to the Nightingale' we have the line: "Thy liquid notes that close the eye of the day".

L. 979. To read the line 3 or 4 times is to feel its meaning. A wonderful fancy and an elfin charm characterises the line. Also Cf. "the opening eye-lids of the morn." (*Lycidas*). **Liquid air**: Purer air. (Ambrosia is liquid and is the purest substance. From thence 'liquid' gets this sense of purity attached to it).

982. **Hesperus**: See notes to L. 393. He had three daughters, Aegle, Cynthea and Hesperia famed for their sweet songs.

983. **Golden tree** Refer to L. 395 and the notes.

984. **Crisped shades** : Trees with thick foliage, the leaves of which are swayed gently by the air.

985. **Spruce** : Smart, gaily attired. Supposed to be derived from 'Pruce' (Prussia). According to a passage from Hall's Chronicle, 'a pruce' was "a particular kind of fashionable dress, in which men were dressed after the manner of Prussia". Hence spruce means smart. Formerly it was used in the sense of merely gay or neat. Now-a-days it carries with it a touch of levity. Rightly has Pattisan observed." As time goes on, the range of poetical expression grows, from generation to generation restricted.

986. **Hours** : The Hours were goddesses, who kept watch at the gates of Olympus and controlled the changes in the season. The 'grace' and 'hours' were favourite allegorical 'dramatis personi in the masque'. **Rosy-bosomed** : Cf. "Lo, where the *Rosy-bosomed* hours Fair Venus' train appear" Gray.

988. **Eternal summer** : Eternal sunshine, laughter and happiness.

989. **West wind** : Zephyrus of the classics. Cf. "When Zephyrus eek with his swete breeth" Chaucer. **Musky** : Sweet ; fragrant.

990. **Cedarn alleys** : A path through rows of cedar trees.

991. **Nard** : A fragrant Indian root. See Int. Page 59. **Cassia** : Spice of the nature of cinnamon. **Balmy smell** ; Smell, that acts like a balm (i.e. smooths).

992. **Iris** : Refer L. 83 and the note. **Humid bow** : The rainbow.

993. **That blow** : which cause to bloom.

994. **Mingled hue** : Of mixed colours.

995. **Purfled:** Embroidered with gold : Cf. Chaucer's Prologue to ' Canterbury Tales ' L. 193.

996. **Elysian :** Refer to L. 257 and the note.

L. 997. : Cf. (Ll. 513-14) and also ' gross unpurged ear.'

998. **Hyacinth :** The flower which sprang from the blood of Hyacinthus, loved by Appollo.

999. **Adonis :** A beautiful youth who was loved by Venus. He was killed while hunting by a boar. Venus mourned for him, and at last the gods granted her that he should be allowed for six months to live on earth. These months he spent in a lovely garden, which, though not identified as it is here with the garden of the Hesperides, was famous in classical literature. The cult of Adonis was of Eastern origin, and probably stood for a form of sun-worship. Venus represented the fertility of the earth, and mourned for Adonis when the sun was between the autumn and spring equinoxes.

1000. **Waxing well :** Recovering from. **Deep wound :** see L. 999 and the note.

1002. **Assyrian queen :** Venus, so called because, the Assyrians first worshipped her in the name of Astarte or Ashthorate. Verity believes that Milton has no authority for associating the garden of Adonis and Hesperides. But his purpose here is to bring together all the most beautiful things in the nature of which classical legend tells and thus, from an ideal region, paint a paradise of perfect loveliness. And he exercise the poetic privilege of making the classics serve his poetic purpose."

Ll. 999-1002. Remind us of Tennyson's lines from 'Palace of Art'

"Mythic Luther's *deeply wounded* son
In some fair space of sloping greens

Lay dozing in the vale of Aralon
And watched by *weeping queen*."

1003. **Spangled cheen** : Quivering brightness.

1005. **Psyche** : The legend is as follows:—Venus being envious of the beauty of Psyche, ordered Cupid to inspire her with a love for the most contemptible of men. He, himself however, fell in love with her beauty, and visited her every night in a valley. He commanded her not to make any attempt to see him; but she could not restrain her curiosity. She lit a lamp. But a drop of oil fell on Cupid, awoke him, and he fled. Psyche wandered about in search of him, until at last she came to the palace of Venus, who treated her as a slave, and imposed hard labours on her. At last, with the aid of Cupid, she became immortal, and was united to him for ever. 'In this story, Psyche is the human soul, which is purified by passions and misfortunes, and thus prepared for the enjoyment of true and pure happiness. Milton wished to emphasise the sanctity of love still more by showing that, there is a place for it among the Gods.' (Verity). Masson says, "Comus has misapprehended love, knew nothing of it, except its vile countefeit had been outwitted and defeated but there is true love and it is to be found in Heaven." Here, Milton was, undoubtedly, influenced by Plato's idea of 'Divine love.' The legend of Venus and Adonis is often treated from a sensual point of view. Originally, Venus is base sensuous and immoral; whereas, the spirit, probably, wants to say that, we are to see in such legends an elevated and spiritual significance, hidden from those, whose vision is dimmed by sin; and hence, such lines as L. 996.

L. 1011 : Youth and joy are twin sons of Psyche and Cupid. Robert Bridges, curiously enough, grants only one son to the couple Cf. His 'Eros and Psyche.'

1012. **Now** : Since; an adverbial conjunction.

* L. 1013 : In Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess' the Satyr, (who almost resembles closely the Attendant Spirit) when his work is over, displays his power and activity by promising help for ever. But, unlike Thyrsis, the Satyr is licentious and indulges in warmer fancy. There is nothing of the chaste dignity of Thyrsis about him.

1014. **Green earth's end** : Probably, 'Cape de Verd' islands, or those described in Ll. 976-79.

1015. **Welkin** : Sky ; religion of clouds. **Bowed Welkin** : The vaulted sky (note the redundancy).

1017. **Corners of the moon** : Horns of the crescent moon.

Ll. 1017-23. Sum up the whole teaching of the poem. Virtue, here means, of course, 'saintly Chastity'.

1019. **Love, Virtue she alone is free** : 'The special aspect of virtue, it depicts, in 'saintly Chastity, which is unsoilable.'

1021. **Sphery chime** : 'Music of the Spheres' (L. 112)

Ll. 1022-24. 'If virtue is helpless, Heaven itself shall come to its aid. A triumphant expression of Milton's belief that, virtue is indefeatable when aided by Providence.'

Ll. 1023-24. Masson notes that, as interesting personal anecdote is associated with these lines, viz. that, Milton wrote them and his name in the autograph book (still preserved) of a foreigner, whom he visited in June 1639, at Geneva, on the way home from his Italian tour. "The Attendant Spirit opens the poem with description of rewards, which virtue promises, after this 'mortal change'

to her 'true servants'. The poem, therefore, is more perfect in closing as it commenced with a solemn and impressive sentiment of scriptures.' (Todd). The peaceful close of the poem is characteristic of Milton. All his poems end quietly, just like, Shakespeare's tragedies which usually close on a quiet tone.

LYCIDAS

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

I. The Occasion

After the production and publication of *Comus*, Milton observed a penance of silence :•perpetually taking in both Literature of Power and Literature of Knowledge ; thinking, musing and meditating ; intending, designing and planning something sublime—probably an epic that may bring him immortality ; and yet afraid, at the same time, that there ‘ be not enough of that inward ripeness in him.’ He, therefore needs must work harder, read and study more ; and fill his mind with golden thoughts till it matures and sheds of its own accord a fully-ripened fruit.

But that was not to be. He was forced ‘ to pluck berries harsh and crude’ ; for, Edward King, a fellow-student of Milton, ‘ the youth of golden opinions from all sorts of people, the young hope of Christ’s College Cambridge, was suddenly cut off’. In the long vacation of 1637, he set out from Chester Bay, in a vessel bound for Dublin, with the intention of seeing his relatives in Ireland. The ship had gone but a little way, when on August 10, she struck on a rock and foundered. Some escaped, safe in a boat ; but not Edward King. His body was never recovered.

Whatever the facts of this pathetic and tragic incident,¹ it was a sad shock to King’s associates and friends

1. Mr. Verity has established certain facts about the tragic accident. Milton says (and the statement has become a tradition) that the vessel was wrecked in perfectly calm weather. But Henry King, his brother, clearly implies that the ship foundered during stormy weather. This agrees with the Latin preface : the ship was driven on the rock, during a gale. Further, the lines in *Lycidas* merely suggest that the fatal bark was unseaworthy. We are only

who decided to enshrine their affection and grief in a book of memorial verses. And, it is a fair conjecture,² that some Don remembering how young Milton had written verse when he was up at Cambridge, thought he might be worth approaching and so requested him to add his little (!) *contribution* to that of the more regular University poets. Milton agreed; because he liked and respected Edward King,³ though not as intimate as young Diodati who died almost exactly a year later. But if the death of Diodati aroused the deeper sorrow in Milton, that of King produced unquestionably the greater poem. It is a common mistake to think, that to write a great elegy a man must have suffered a great sorrow. Emotions are of several kinds. That in *Lycidas* is born of the fact that Milton, thinking of King's fate, is brought back to himself;⁴ and it springs alike from the eternal doom of frailty and transience pronounced on Man and his works and from the highest and rarest of all sources of feeling—the beauty of verse.

That is how *Lycidas* was produced, while Milton meditated a sublime flight, nervous at the same time, that his

told that the vessel sank, and the fact is accounted for by a poetic theory of its having rested under a primal curse since the day when it was built in the eclipse. As to the fair weather, it was, very likely, a mere poetic fiction, happy enough artistically, since it heightens the pathos of the scene; perhaps Milton might have assumed it because at the beginning of August the sea (in theory) ought to have been calm, whatever it was in fact.

There was another touching detail about the death of King: while other passengers were trying to save their lives, Edward King knelt on the deck, and was praying as the ship went down. It is strange that Milton should have made no allusion to such a touching episode. But probably Milton had not heard the full details of the accident.

2. Belloc.

3. Bailey.

4. Legouis.

'Pegasus has not yet feathers enough to bear him aloft'. And so his unwillingness and apology (ll.1-10). His contribution 'last and the longest' in '*the memorial volume*' is easily the best. 'In its classic spirit and refinement of taste', remarks Walker, 'it is in marked contrast with the other effusions, many of which are tainted with the querile and affected conceits of the new school of poetry then being developed by Donne and his contemporaries.'

II. What is the poem about? ⁵

Lycidas is not a direct lyric of lamentation by Milton for the death of King; it is a phantasy of one shepherd mourning, in the time of autumn, the death of a fellow-shepherd. The mourning shepherd, however, is Milton himself and the shepherd mourned for is King; and, through the guise of all the pastoral circumstance and imagery of the poem, there is studious representation of the real facts of King's brief life and his accidental death, and of Milton's regard for him and academic intimacy with him.

" Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eye-lids of the morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks."

Here is the recollection, pastorally expressed, of their companionship at Cambridge, their walks and talks together there, and their common exercises. In the same manner it has already been hinted to us that among those common exercises was poetry. One reason why *Lycidas* was now lamented in song was that he himself had known how 'to sing and build the lofty rhyme.' All the more

5. Masson and Walker.

inexplicable was his loss. Where had the Nymphs been when this loved votary of theirs was drowned? Not, certainly, anywhere near the scene of disaster. Not on the steepes known to the old Bards and Lruids (the mountains of North Wales), nor on the shaggy top of Mona (the Isle of Anglessry), nor by the wizard stream of the Deva (the river Dee and Chester Bay). But had the Nymphs been there, what could they have done? Had the Muse herself been able to save her son Orpheus? Dwelling a little on this thought, of the non-immunity of even the finest intellectual promise from the stroke of death, Milton works it into one of the most beautiful and most frequently quoted passages of the poem: "Alas, what boots it," etc., (lines 64-84). That strain, he says, at the end of the passage, had been "of a higher mood," rather beyond the range of the pastoral; but now he will resume his simple oaten pipe and proceed. There pass then across the visionary stage three figures in succession. First comes the Herald of the Sea, Triton, who reports, in mythological terms, which yet veil exact information, that the cause of King's death was not tempestuous weather, for the sea was as calm as glass when the ship went down, but either the unseaworthiness of the ship itself or some inherited curse in her very timbers. Next comes Camus, the local deity of the Cam, footing slowly like his own sluggish stream, and with his bonnet of sedge from its banks, staying not long, but uttering one ejaculation over the loss to Cambridge of one of her darling sons. Lastly, in still more mystic and awful guise, comes St. Peter, the guardian of that Church of Christ for the service of which King had been destined—the apostle to whom the Great Shepherd himself had given it in charge with the words, "Feed my sheep." Not out of place is even his grave figure in this peculiar pastoral. For has he not lost one of his truest under-shepherds, lost him too at a time when he

could ill be spared? But, indeed, this passage too had transcended the ordinary limits of the quiet pastoral. The poet is aware of this. Accordingly, when "the dread voice is past" that had so pealed over the landscape and caused it to shudder, he calls on Alpheus and the Sicilian Muse, as the patrons of the pastoral proper, to return, and be with him through the pensive remainder. Beautifully pensive it is, and yet with a tendency to soar. First, in strange and evidently studied contrast with the stern speech of St. Peter which has just preceded, is the exquisitely worded passage which follows (lines 143-151). For musical sweetness, and dainty richness of floral colour, it beats perhaps anything else in all Milton. It is the call upon all valleys of the landscape, and the banks of all the secret streamlets, to yield up their choicest flowers, and those dearest to shepherds, that they may be strewn over the dead body of Lycidas. Ah! it is but a fond fancy, a momentary forgetfulness. For where, meanwhile, is that dead body? Not anywhere on land at all, to be strewn with flowers and to receive a funeral, but whelmed amid the sounding seas, either sunk deep down near the spot of the shipwreck, or drifted thence northwards perhaps to the Hebrides, or perhaps southwards to Cornwall and St. Michael's Mount. But let the surviving shepherds cease their mourning. Though that body is never again to be seen on earth, Lycidas is not lost. A higher world has received him already; and there, amid other groves and other streams, laving his oozy locks with the nectar of heaven, and listening to the nuptial song, he has joined the society of the Saints, and can look down on the world and the friends he has left, and act as a power promoted for their good. Here the Monody or Pastoral ends. The last eight lines of the poem do not belong to the Monody. They are not a part of the song sung by Milton in his imaginary character

as the shepherd who is bewailing the death of Lycidas, but are distinctly a stanza of Epilogue, in which Milton speaks directly, criticizes what he has just written in his character and intimates that he has stepped out of that character and is about to turn to other occupations. But this *epilogue* is closely connected to the whole of the poem, particularly to the preface. Observe how the epithet '*uncouth*' echoes the note in the second line of the introduction, the epithet '*Doric*' expresses the standard which the poet has set himself, the epithet '*eager*' suggests his apology and his excuse for departing from that standard. Unity is thus the watermark of *Lycidas*. 'Great structures are known by their beginnings and their ends', writes Belloc and adds, 'it is with such music that *Lycidas* enters the world'.

III. Sources of *Lycidas*⁶

Dr. Johnson severely complained of *Lycidas*, that *there is nothing new in this poem*. It is true, that '*Lycidas* is a mosaic of ancient jewels' of which many have shone in some earlier setting. But Dr. Johnson forgets the fact, that originality is independent of invention. It is rather the gift of seeing and seizing the latent possibilities of known things.

Milton's *Lycidas* is a summary as though of the whole history of pastoralism. It embodies a set of conventions which had gradually become fixed in poetic usage from antiquity: the fiction that all nature mourns the dead shepherd's loss; the question, where were ye Nymphs; the procession of appropriate mourners, each uttering his grief; and the pastoral consolation or change of tone from sadness to joy in the thought of the dead shepherd's immortality. Milton makes no effort to avoid these traditions and precedents laid down by Theocritus, Moschus, Bion and Virgil and followed by Spenser, Sidney and others. Such parallel

6. Hanfred, Courthope, S. A. Brooke and Pattison.

phrases as 'who would not weep for Lycidas?' (Virg. Ecl. X. 3.); 'where were ye Nymphs' (Theocritus, Id. i. 66); 'Phœbus replied and touched my trembling ears' (Virg. Ecl. vi, 3); 'Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world' (Virg. Aen. vi 729); 'And when they list...wretched straw' (Virg. Ecl. iii, 26)—show how persistently in composition Milton's memory was haunted by recollections of the ancient poets. Nor did he make less use of his reading among the English poets. The opening of *Lycidas* is suggested by Sidney's 'yet once again my Muse'. 'Under the opening eye-lids of the morn' is taken from Middleton. Drayton is in his mind whenever he makes an allusion to local archæology. Spenser's Eclogue for April furnishes him with hints for the enumeration of the flowers to be strewn on Lycidas's 'laureate hearse'. Phineas Fletcher's, 'Tomorrow shall ye feast in pastures new' inspires the reposeful line with which the elegy concludes.

But in *Lycidas*, as in *Comus*, the grand architectural genius of Milton silences all rash inclination to prefer against him the mean charge of plagiarism. 'The design of the poem is completely original and the perfect order in which the selected thoughts are subordinated to the central idea shows that, in the appropriation of isolated phrases, Milton was merely employing Memory in the service of Invention. The poem opens up a deeper vein of feeling, a patriot passion as vehement as the utterances of Hebrew prophets. The passage, 'Last came and last did go,' raises in us a thrill of awe-struck expectation. Finally, the artistic arrangement of materials, the judicious choice and combination of words and images, the air of life and freshness given by the removal of old thoughts into a new context, all unite to make *Lycidas* perhaps the most beautiful, certainly the most sublime pastoral elegy the world possesses' (Courthope).

IV. A note on the pastoral elegy: Its history till the advent of Milton⁷

The part played by shepherds, a unique phenomenon in the world's literature, cannot be compared with that of any other sort of heroes in fable or history. Neither Ajax, wise Ulysses, Lancelot nor Arthur poured forth so much prose and verse as did Tityrus.⁸

Pastoral poetry had its origin in the glamour which rural life, when viewed in its external aspects, often presents to the city-dweller. The placid life of shepherds lolling under a tree, watching their flocks, playing on their oaten pipes, and making love to shepherdesses, against the background of field, forest and stream—all these appealed to the keen aesthetic sensibilities of Theocritus. He not only praised the idyllic life of shepherds but also *mourned* the dead shepherds, and became 'the father of pastoral elegy.' Bion followed Theocritus with his lament for Bion's death; and Virgil widening its scope still more wept a melodious pastoral tear in the fifth and tenth eclogues of his *Bucolics*. Then this form fell out of currency till the Renaissance had recalled it to life. Sannazaro, in 1504 wrote his *Arcadia* and revived the form. From Italy the pastoral came to England. Spenser gave the signal with his *shepherd's calender* and wept for the death of Sir Philip Sidney in his *Astrophel*. Drayton imitated Spenser; and Phineas Fletcher followed with his *Purple Island*. Tityrus is not ready to cease discoursing and lamenting. And we shall see, one day the oaten flute producing notes of pastoral lament, alternating with Hebrew prophetic tones on the sublime lips of John Milton.

7. Jusserand, Verity, Walker and Percival.

8. 'The name of a pastoral hero'.

V. Lycidas as a pastoral elegy⁹

Like *Comus*, in form and method, *Lycidas* is directly connected with the renaissance and its classicism. It belongs to that *genre* known as the pastoral elegy, that is, it is an elegy in the shape of a song of lamentation sung by a shepherd mourning for a dead companion and is full of conventional bucolic imagery.^{*} Milton chose this form because of his deep appreciation of all that is classical. Soaked in classical literature, he could not think of any other form but the pastoral elegy, to weep the death of King.

The pastoral elegy has its special technical characteristics which have gradually become fixed in poetic usage from antiquity. It opens with invocation; shares the fiction that all nature mourns, the dead shepherd's loss; asks the question 'where were ye Nymphs?'; arranges the procession of appropriate mourners; grants to the poet who writes it, scope for personal digression; then it returns again to lament, and when the climax is reached, it changes its mood and seeks consolation in the thought of the dead shepherd's immortality.

When *Lycidas* is examined in the light of these facts, we must admit that it is a pastoral of the most formal type. It opens with the invocation 'yet once more, o ye laurels'; follows the convention that nature weeps the dead *Lycidas* (cf. 37 ff); puts a query 'where were ye Nymphs?' (49): grants scope for personal digression (cf. the passage 'on fame'); presents the spectacle of Triton, Camus and St. Peter—the three appropriate mourners going in procession; returns again to lament (Return Alphues etc. 132 ff.); and changes its mood (weep no more shepherd), seeking consolation in the great thought that *Lycidas* has become

9. Hudson, Walker, Quiller-Couch, Bailey and Mrs. Browning.

immortal. In the elegy before us, Cambridge becomes a hill ; the labour of study, 'driving a team afield or battenning flocks' ; college sports, rustic merry-makings ; the student, the shepherd Lycidas, dead and gone whose loss is mourned by another shepherd Milton himself ; and finally the old tutor aged Damætas. And that is not all. Nature is peopled with nymphs, satyrs, fauns and genii and common objects given a symbolic significance. The Christian religion wears the guise of antiquity, so that the Deity whom Milton serves is feigned to be Phæbus, god of poetry, and the power that guides his pen is attributed to the '*Sisters of the sacred well*'. A perfect pastoral elegy—that will be the verdict of the reader upon *Lycidas*.

It was this close adherence to form, this sticking on to the traditional machinery, that inspired, 'those mistaken tirades from Dr. Johnson against Milton's *Lycidas*' :

'One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is *Lycidas* ; of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, the numbers displeasing. What beauty there is, we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion ; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius nor tells of rough satyrs and fauns with cloven hoof. Where there is leisure for fiction, there is little grief.'

With due deference to Dr. Johnson, we can safely assert that his criticism only proves the futility of applying to poetry the tests of prose (and the general incapacity of his generation to apply any other). Poetry is a language of passion and imagination. It transcends and transforms. Its concern is not with the world of fact but with the world of imagination. The poet imposes upon the factual experience, 'a new form, invented or accepted by himself and

in any case so heated by his own fire of poetry that it can fuse and reshape the matter submitted to it into that unity of beauty which is a work of art. That is what Milton does in *Lycidas* by the help of the pastoral fiction.'

Further, Milton's choice of the form is entirely natural. His mind was so imbued in classical poetry that it was impossible for him to think or weep or do anything, but in the form and imagery that belonged to the classical world. So if he chooses the pastoral, it is because of his peculiar psychological make-up. When he wept for *Lycidas*, it was his subconscious mind that expressed itself in classical and pastoral imagery. It is the dynamics of the subconscious that inspired his choice of form and not merely blind imitation.

Finally, let us bury once and for all, the misapprehension, that the inarticulate or the inartistic expressions of grief, alone, are genuine. Even under the most conventional machinery is felt the sincerity of passion. Arnold's *Thyrsis*, Shelley's *Adonis*, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, though pastoral elegies, are eternally conspicuous by their sincerity and unerring genuine appeal. The fact is that formless grief may produce outcries but no elegies. Hopeless grief is passionless and so ultimately formless, like Kent's in *King Lear*. Emotion is not poetry. Mere 'ahs' and 'ohs' make no poetry. To exist as poetry emotion should be translated into music and verbal images. 'No one doubts that Milton's friendship with Diodati was a close one, and his grief at his death genuine; yet the *Epitaphium Damonis* is throughout clothed in the conventional pastoral garb, gives expression to an Englishman's grief in a language that is not his native tongue and indeed, is a closer 'imitation' of Virgil's eclogue than *Lycidas* is.' *Lycidas* is no sham expression of grief, but the effusion of real passion. Passion

may, if it so chooses, 'pluck berries from the myrtles and ivy', 'Call upon Arethuse and Mincius' and 'tell of satyrs and fauns with cloven hoof'. As Q has brilliantly pointed out; 'True feeling can transfigure a formal mode of verse; the breast so to speak, can shine through the corselet while the corselet dignifies the breast.'

VI. *Lycidas* and *Adonais*

Lycidas and *Adonais*—two of the greatest elegies—have so many points in common that they invite a detailed comparison. They are, in the first place, pastoral elegies. Milton's choice of this form is quite natural as he was a classical scholar soaked in classical culture, Shelley's choice, however, is much more conscious. It is the suppleness of this form that seems to have guided his choice.

Both the poems keep close to the pattern—the invocation, the sympathy of nature, the procession of mourners, the personal digression and the final consolation. 'Both the poems observe the principle of unity.' Shelley's own description of himself in *Adonis*, his denunciation of the Reviewers, the splendid personifications of Dreams, Desires and Adorations and the procession of the mountain shepherds—everything is in its place. Similarly in *Lycidas*, Milton's account of how 'the two shepherds nursed upon the self-same hill', batted their flocks and played upon their oaten-pipes and the two intensely personal passages—Fame and St. Peter's speech—merge into the rest with an admirable harmony. Both Shelley and Milton are 'as much interested in themselves as in the object of their mourning'.

But here their resemblance ends. As regards the substance of the poem, the consolation of the two poets is different, and yet characteristic :

'The Christian Milton, with a thoroughly devout soul, bases his consolation on the sure hope that 'through the

dear might of Him that walked the waves', Lycidas has arisen and is now living with the 'Saints above in solemn troops and sweet societies.' Shelley, more a Pantheist than a Christian, believes in the permanence of the human soul as a portion of the eternal, and bases his hope on the absorption of the individual soul into the universal spirit of nature; and on the separate individual existence of the soul in separate spheres, swung in the void of heaven. The soul of Keats, too, lives in the sweet society, not of saints, but of 'the inheritors of unfulfilled renown'.

'The Christian readers naturally prefer the sentiment in *Lycidas*, while, we Indians are distinctly impressed by the pantheism, or the Platonism of Shelley.'

Finally, *Lycidas* is written in irregular choric verse; but the pattern is so skilfully varied and managed that it is a marvel of versification. Here, we have to accept the judgment of acknowledged masters like Saintsbury and Legouis. Equally great as a prosodic achievement is *Adonais*. Shelley has managed the Spenserian stanza with supreme skill. Æsthetically considered, the stanza pattern is better than irregular form. As regards style and diction it is futile to compare the two poems. Except to the classical scholar, the Romantic Shelley would appeal to all.

It is not necessary to condemn one to praise the other. Criticism is catholic enough to admit the excellence of both, and has assigned the highest class to both the poems. 'They look on one another like twin columns of beauty on either side of a gulf—a gulf of five generations.'

VII. Digressions

Many critics feel, that the two intensely personal passages in *Lycidas*—On Fame and St. Peter's speech—are bits of gravel in a dish of strawberries and cream. According to this view these two passages are not only 'flagrant

digressions' but also 'entirely out of place and marring the beauty and unity of *Lycidas*.'

Such criticism is beside the mark; because, it ignores the circumstances in which the poem was composed, the fact that 'fundamentally it concerns Milton himself' and that its real subject is the apotheosis of Milton's fears of death—born at King's premature demise—into 'an exalted state of mental calm'.

Mr. Tillyard hits the nail on the head when he points out that when Milton consented 'to drop a melodious tear for *Lycidas*, dead ere his prime', he could not but have felt the analogy between King and himself. To quote from his brilliant criticism on *Lycidas*:

"Both had been at the same college in the same University. Their careers and interests had been similar. Milton was a poet, King had written verses too. King had made a voyage on the sea, Milton was about to make voyages." King died a premature death; and "so at a time when through plagues and what not, life was less secure, Milton having denied so much to his great ambition, must anyhow, as the time of preparation drew to an end, have dwelt on the thought that it might be all for nothing. That he was partly thinking of his own fate is made clear by the reference to his own *destin'd urn and sable shroud*." This thought of untimely death pains his mind most agonisingly when he writes of *poetic fame* and *the blind Fury with th' abhorred sheers*. *Lycidas* is dead. Young *Lycidas*, who knew himself to sing, is dead and gone—before receiving the meed of fame! And if that is the case what worth his own (Milton's) penance, his austere chastity? Fame is going to 'escape him after all anticipated by death'. Earthly fame, he replies himself in the person of *Phœbus*, has nothing to do with heavenly fame. Fame is not a

plant that grows on mortal soil but lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes—of all-judging Jove. "So he argues, but one does not get the impression of emotional conviction yet." The consummate skill with which the subject is worked out from King to Milton himself is admirable.

In the second section ll. 85–131, he does exactly the same thing. According to the elegiac tradition is arranged a procession of mourners. It is perfectly natural that after Camus, St. Peter should come to honour the dead; for, he has lost one of his truest under-shepherds, at a time when he could ill be spared. And thus it is in the fitness of things that his weeping be transformed in a severe denunciation of those shepherds who cared not for their hungry flocks. "This denunciation reveals the second great cause of mental pain in Milton: his quarrel with contemporary England, typified by the rottenness of the clergy. Thus St. Peter's outburst is not an excrescence but strictly parallel with Milton's earlier outburst about the blind Fury. One can even see a close connection of ideas between the two grievances. One grievance is that 'the hungry sheep look up and are not fed'; England has bad or useless teachers; the other is that he, Milton, whose ambition was to teach by writing a great epic, to feed the hungry sheep of England, may easily be cut off before it can be realised. It should be noted too that the second grievance, like the first, is answered at the end of the second movement. Punishment is waiting; the two-handed engine stands ready to smite. The end of the second section marks the climax of the poem. We await the conclusion."

In the third section, (ll 132–164), Milton composes a quiet interlude important as a transition and escapes into a world of romance. 'But these sources of comfort are but minor leading up to the greater solution'.

The fourth and the last section describes the resurrection of Lycidas and his entry into heaven. "More tru'y it solves the whole poem by describing the resurrection into a new kind of life of Milton's hopes. The loss or possible loss of human fame is made good by fame in heaven, the corrupt clergy are balanced by *all the saints above* and the harsh forebodings of Peter are forgotten,

Through the dear might of him that walk'd the waves.
But above all it depicts the renunciation of earthly fame, the abnegation of self by the great egotist, and the spiritual purgation of gaining one's life after losing it.'

Thus in *Lycidas*, there is a unity of purpose and the two intensely personal passages are not mere appendages. They are perfectly in keeping with the dignified tone of the whole.

VIII. Lycidas and Milton's Puritanism¹⁰

Milton, the child of both the Renaissance and Reformation, combines, in his work from first to the last, both the strains—Hellenism and Hebraism—though their relative proportions vary as he advances in age.

In *Lycidas*, a poem of a refined humanism, meet the fanaticism of the Covenanter and the sad grace of Petrarch. Yet, these opposites, instead of neutralizing each other, are blended into one harmonious whole by the presiding but invisible genius of the poet. The conflict—between the old Cavalier world, the years of gaiety and festivity of a splendid and pleasure-loving court, and the new Puritan world into which love and pleasure were not to enter—this conflict, which was commencing in the social life of England is also begun in Milton's own breast and is reflected in *Lycidas*.

10. See Legouis, Stopford Brooke, and Pattison.

For we were nursed upon the selfsame hill—here is the sweet mournfulness of the Spenserian rime, upon whose joys, Death only is the intruder. We pass onward a little and are in the presence of the tremendous,

Two-handed engine at the door,
the terror of which is enhanced by its obscurity. In these thirty lines we have the preluding mutterings of the storm which was to sweep away mask and revel and song, to inhibit the drama, and suppress poetry. In the earlier poems, Milton's muse has sung in the tones of the age that is passing away. In *Lycidas* for a moment, the tones of both ages, the past and the coming are combined, and then Milton leaves behind him forever the golden age, and one half of his poetic genius.

Mr. Hudson says that in *Lycidas*, Milton is at length definitely Puritan. His puritanism is no longer merely implicit as a pervading influence, but has become specific, militant, ecclesiastical. In Stopford Brooke's words, 'the Milton of *Lycidas* is not the Milton of *Comus*. Nothing of the Renaissance is left now but its learning and art'.

IX. Diction and style of *Lycidas*¹¹

The diction of *Lycidas*, in spite of the disparagement of Johnson has received almost universal praise. Pattison observes, that 'it is the high-water mark of English poetry and its full enjoyment, a final fruit of literary culture': while Legouis remarks, that 'the two hundred lines of *Lycidas* are among the most precious treasures of English poetry'.

Let us not multiply quotations. Lyrical perfection cannot be carried further than it is in this plaintive and exquisite poem. The diction, though surcharged with ornament

11. Bailey, Legouis, Hanford and Downs.

and allusion, varies with the mood, rising and falling, as Milton 'somewhat loudly sweeps the string,' in moments of exaltation and denunciation, or bids his Muse return again to the pastoral strain with its subdued note of tender melancholy. These transitions, emotional fluctuations, are like the movements in an autumnal evening-sky. The contrasts of sorrow, hope, consolation and glory keep us in a mingled excitement to the end. 'No symphony was ever composed of more varied emotional elements or blended them more consummately into artistic unity.'

Here too is in evidence that search for perfection, the relentless choice of the appropriate words (Rathe primrose; cowslips wan that hang the pensive head). Economy in every trifle that is Milton's creed. To read,

Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
is to remember the whole history of pastoralism. He arrests our attention at every word; and when the thing is once said, he has done with it:

Where the great vision of the guarded mount
Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold.

The music of the proper nouns and place-names exemplified in Namancos and Bayona is artistically made to harmonise with the monosyllabic 'mount' and disyllabic 'guarded.' These two lines carry with them the superb legend of St. Michael.

And there is that music as varied as it is delightful. Art in this poem rebels against strictness in such wise that the most spiritual poetry constitutes a feast for the most fastidious ear. Milton writes free verse, obeying no law but his own. The heroic line gives place from time to time to a short line; and rhymes variously and flexibly interlaced follow the unrhymed lines with a freedom that bespeaks mastery. Surely enough, *Lycidas* is an example of perfection of diction, imagery and versification.

X. Metre of *Lycidas*¹²

Dr. Johnson's blatant stricture on *Lycidas*, that its 'diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain and the numbers unpleasing—is a clear proof of the fact, that the great doctor had no ear for music that is varied. Brought up on the numbers of Dryden and Pope, extremely regular verse with rhymes even more regular still, is for him, the best kind of verse. Everything else is a falling short, harsh and unmusical. This extreme love of regularity is a blind prejudice; for the bane of all regular verse is monotony.

The music of *Lycidas* is conspicuous by the gift of variety. Its diction and metre are characterized by a fluency, a sweetness, a melody, a youthful freshness and a dewy brightness. In *Lycidas*, the only rule that the verse seems to follow is that of the poet's exquisite ear. Milton and music are mere synonyms. To write a poem that was not musical was for Milton an impossibility. His are

Thoughts, that voluntary move

Harmonious numbers.

The metrical structure partly borrowed from Italian models, is transformed into 'free musical paragraphs', where the rhythm and cadence of the verse wait upon and echo the feelings of the speaker. He uses that 'frequent shortening of the line' which is indispensable to verse that is to have choric effect. But he uses it less frequently than Spenser. His most successful innovation is in regard to rhyme. Milton deliberately avoids a regular rhyme-scheme of any kind. He will suit his rhyme to the exigencies of his individual paragraph and to nothing else.

For example: We have in ll. 1-14, a paragraph of fourteen lines, all of five feet, except line 4, which is of three only, rhymed - o, ab, ba, acd, acd, aoa. Here two lines are

12. See Saintsbury, Lamborn, Masson, and Bridges.

blank, indicated by o. Further, we have only five rhymes altogether, but one of these occurs no less than six times. The second paragraph is much shorter but more varied in line-length, rhymed o aa bb cc, o. The poem ends with the regular structure of a sonnet and the lines (186-193) have that calm, assured beauty which is the distinctive mark of what is called 'classic' craftsmanship. But the act which allows no artifice to be obvious in the pastoral part (ll. 1-185) is no less inimitable and all-pervading. It has the charm of the uncertain return of the theme in a sonata.

The first and the last impression produced by the poem is that of extreme prosodic variety; and it may very well be, that Johnson failed entirely to catch the symphonic effect, which this variety produces. This symphonic effect is mainly produced by the uncertainty of the rhymes themselves. 'Milton also resorts to every minor device of pause and line-weighting and lightening, quickening or slackening off, with all the science of names and words that he can muster.' Of the names themselves, the greatest instance occurs in the famous lines:

Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great vision of the guarded Mount
Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold.

The only rule the verse seems to follow is that of the poet's exquisite ear. The echoing sounds cross each other capriciously, now widely separated, now suppressed, now, in obedience to the poet's melodic sense, repeated as often as six times, like the sound 'ear' in the opening lines. 'The result', says Legouis, 'is a marvel of liquid, blended harmony, whence monotony has been expelled'; while Warton remarks that 'he who wishes to know whether he has a true taste for poetry, should consider whether he is highly delighted or not with the perusal of Milton's *Lycidas*'. And we know, that Dr. Johnson was not at all delighted.

LYCIDAS

In this Monody the author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drown'd in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637. And by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy then in their height.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
 And with forc'd fingers rude
 Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. 5
 Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
 Compels me to disturb your season due ;
 For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
 Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
 Who would not sing for Lycidas ? he knew 10
 Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
 He must not float upon his watery bier
 Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
 Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well 15
 That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring ;
 Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
 Hence with denial vain and coy excuse :
 So may some gentle Muse
 With lucky words favour *my* destin'd urn, 20
 And as he passes turn,
 And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud !
 For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill,
 Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill ;
 Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd 25
 Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
 We drove a-field, and both together heard

What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,
 Battening our flockſ with the fresh dews of night,
 Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
 Toward heaven's descent had ſlop'd his westering wheel.
 Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
 Temper'd to the oaten flute,
 Rough Satýrs danc'd, and Faúns with cloven heel
 From the glad sound would not be abſent long ; 35
 And old Damætás lov'd to hear our song.

But, oh ! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
 Now thou art gone, and never must return !
 Thee Shepherd, thee the woods, and deſert caves,
 With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'er-grown, 40
 And all their echoes, mourn.
 The willows, and the hazel copses green,
 Shall now no more be ſeen,
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy ſoft lays.
 As killing as the canker to the roſe, 45
 Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
 Or froſt to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
 When firſt the white-thorn blows ;
 Such Lycidas, thy loſs to ſhepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseleſs deep 50
 Cloſ'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas ?
 For neither were ye playing on the ſteep,
 Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
 Nor on the ſhaggy top of Mona high,
 Nor yet where Deva ſpreads her wizard ſteam. 55
 Ay me ! I fondly dream !
 Had ye been there,...for what could that have done ?
 What could the Muſe herſelf that Orpheus bore,
 The Muſe herſelf, for her enchanting ſon,
 Whom univerſal Nature did lament, 60

When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore ?

Alas ! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade, 65
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse ?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair ?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise 70
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days ;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears, 75
And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise',
Phœbus repli'd, and touch'd my trembling ears :
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies, 80
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.'

O fountain Arethuse and thou honour'd flood, 85
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea
That came in Neptune's plea. 90
He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain ?
And question'd every gust of rugged wings

That blows from off each beaked promontory.
 They knew not of his story ; 95
 And sage Hippotades their answer brings ;
 That not a blast was from his lungeon stray'd,
 The air was calm, and on the level brine,
 Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd.
 It was that fatal and perfidious bark, 100
 Built in the eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
 That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next, Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
 His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
 Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge 105
 Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
 'Ah ! who hath reft,' quoth he, 'my dearest pledge ?'
 Last came, and last did go,
 The Pilot of the Galilean Lake ;
 Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110
 (The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
 He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake :—
 "How well could I have spar'd for thee, young swain,
 Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,
 Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold ! 115
 Of other care they little reckoning make
 Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
 Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how to hold
 A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least 120
 That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs !
 What recks it them ? What need they ? They are sped ;
 And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
 Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw ;
 The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed, 125
 But, swol'n with wind and the rank mist they draw,

Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread :
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
 Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
 But that two-handed engine at the door
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.” 130

Return, Alpheüs, the dread voice is past
 That shrunk thy streams ; return, Sicilian Muse,
 And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
 Their bells and flowrets of a thousand hues. 135
 Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
 Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
 On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
 Throw hither all your quaint enameil'd eyes,
 That on the green turf suck the honi'd showers, 140
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
 The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
 The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
 The glowing violet, 145
 The musk-rose, and the well-attir'd woodbine,
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears :
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
 And daffadillies fill their cups with tears, 150
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
 For so, to interpose a little ease,
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise,
 Ay me ! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
 Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd ; 155
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
 Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
 Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;
 Or whether thou, to our moist vows deni'd,

Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old, 160
Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos, and Bayona's hold.
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth :
And O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more. 165
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore 170
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walk'd the waves ;
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves, 175
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move, 180
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more ;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood. 185

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals grey :
He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay :
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills, 190
And now was dropt into the western bay ;
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue :
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

NOTES

Lycidas : The name Lycidās occurs frequently in the pastorals of Theocritus and Virgil. Theocritus applies it to 'one most skilful of players on the pipe, among shepherds and reapers'. Here it is used by Milton for Edward King, 'who knew himself to sing' and 'dead ere his prime'. Milton's choice of this name is resonant with the whole history of pastoral elegy. In its traditional dignity and beauty it is unique. **Monody :** A mournful ode or a poem in which a single mourner bewails—Chambers. **A learned Friend :** Edward King, Lycidas of this pastoral elegy, fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, a composer of Latin verses, and distinguished for his piety and proficiency in polite literature. He met death by drowning on August 10, 1637, when in absolutely calm weather, his ill-starred ship struck a rock on the Welsh coast and foundered. **In this monody... in their height:** This explanatory note was added by Milton in the first edition of his collected poems published in 1645.

Lines 1-14 depict the circumstances under which the poem was written. After the production of *Comus*, Milton observed a penance of silence to prepare himself for 'a sublime flight'. But the death of his fellow-student forces him to break through his reserve and here is an apology for doing so.

1. **Yet once more :** Because Milton had been silent since the publication of *Comus* in 1634, preparing himself for some hazardous task. It is a needless narrowing of the meaning to confine it as some do, to Milton's shorter *elegiac* poems only. When we remember Sidney's 'yet once again my Muse,' we feel the significance of the remark, that 'Lycidas is a mosaic of ancient jewels.'

1-3. **Ye laurels...myrtles.....ivy**, plants of Apollo and Bacchus, associated in classic thought as symbols of poetry—the materials of the poet's wreath. In plain prose, these lines mean: 'I once more attempt poetic composition'. Dr. Newton and others find in these lines a different meaning. As laurel was beloved of Apollo, myrtle sacred to Venus and ivy the reward of the learned, these interpreters feel the meaning to be: 'I once more attempt poetry in which will be celebrated my friend's poetic gifts, his youthful beauty and his learning'. 'This is not far-fetched; for, in the poem itself all these are dwelt upon. Let us note in passing that laurels, myrtles, ivy, berries, unerringly suggest 'the pastoral or rural turn of Milton's poem'.

But when we remember that '*Lycidas* concerns Milton himself', another interpretation suggests itself to us as pointed out by Lamborn: 'He (i.e. Milton) will make a wreath of evergreens to crown the dead poet. Evergreens are also the symbol of immortality; and Milton knew that 'his poetry would be immortal'. And when we muse on various interpretations of these lines, we realize the truth of Shelley's remark, that 'a great poem is a fountain for ever overflowing.' **Brown**: Dark or deep-coloured.' Brown and black are classical epithets of myrtle. **Never-sere** i. e. evergreen and eternally fresh, the symbol of immortality. 3. **Berries harsh and crude**: Berries suggest 'poetic fruits'. They are described as harsh and crude i. e. bitter and unripe, not ready to fall naturally because Milton is afraid that his genius is not yet ripe enough. He needs must study more. 4. **Forc'd fingers rude**: 'Forced' because against his real desire and 'rude', because in this way only can these unripe berries be plucked. *Forced* indicates unwillingness not for mourning the death of Lycidas i.e. King but for poetic composition. Milton would fain abstain from further

attempts at poetic composition because his 'Pegasus has not yet feathers enough to bear it aloft'. 5. **Shatter**: Disturb and scatter. **Mellowing year**: Ripening period. **Shatter****year**: Milton is not sure of his powers. He feels the want of 'inward ripeness' in himself and his poetry. Hence his unwillingness. It would have been better if Milton had used in this line, *berries* instead of *leaves*: for as Verity points out supported by Warton that *mellowing* is truer of *berries* than leaves. Milton like Homer sleeps. Richardson's suggestion that this passage refers to King in whose case 'death shattered his leaves before the mellowing year'—is wide of the mark. He has obviously overlooked the context. *Mellowing* refers to Milton's poetic powers.

6. **Constraint**: Because Milton is prevailed upon to compose this elegy by his friends. *Bitter constraint* should be explained as 'constraint on a bitter occasion.' **Dear**: In the English of this period *dear*, denotes simply *whatever touches us deeply*. Here it brings out the intensity and gravity of the 'sad occasion'. 7. **Compels**: Forces. We can justify this singular verb by pointing out that the nominatives *constraint* and *occasion* form one idea. **Season due**: 'Mellowing year' cf. l. 5. 8 and 9. **Lycidas...dead, dead,... young Lycidas**: Note how the repetition of *dead* and *Lycidas*, in these lines, unmistakably interprets the outburst of grief and heightens the pathetic effect. **Ere his prime**: Before reaching his manhood. 'Complete in all things but years'. **Peer** i.e. equal. 10. **Who...Lycidas?** A rhetorical question imitated from Virgil. For meaning and significance of the name **Lycidas**, see P. 1 of the notes.

11. **Build the rhyme**: Compose sublime verse. The expression '*lofty rhyme*' is used to show 'dignity and reverence of Latin'. King had composed Latin verses. This is rather 'dear exaggeration and extravagant praise; for he had done nothing in poetry to deserve this meed of praise.

12. **Watery bier**: Bier is 'a frame whereon they lay the dead body'. In King's case, as his dead body floated upon the waters of Chester Bay, *water* itself is his *bier*. **Bier** may in itself refer to the dead body or the tomb in which it was laid, by extending its meaning and remembering its use in Spenser.

13. **Unwept ... wind**: The fusion of vowels with the semi-vowel 'w' in this line, suggests beautifully the tossing of the dead body to and fro by the drying winds. **Welter**: Rolled to and fro. **Parching**: Drying.

14. **Meed ... melodious tear**: The word *tear* in this line, is the key-word of the first fourteen lines; and the dominant note it sounds is indicated by many words rhyming with it—sear, dear, year, peer, *bier*. The entire poem is thus a melodious tear. This line is an oft-imitated one. Cowper and Coleridge, to mention no others, have used this in their poems. Milton was, like Spenser, a poet's poet. **Meed**: Reward or recompense or deserved gift. **Melodious tear**: Mourning in song, elegy. Spenser has Tears of Muses.

15-22 are addressed to the Muses. Milton requests them to 'somewhat loudly sweep the string'. His reluctance to sing departs with the thought of his own premature death. Lycidas is dead—that is one reason why he should sing; but more so because if nipped in bud he himself should be blessed with some melodious tear.

15-16. **Sisters of the sacred well ... spring**: The *sisters* are the Nine Muses; *sacred well* is the fountain Aganippe on Mount Helicon; *the seat of Jove* is the altar on the hill dedicated to Jove. 'The *sacred well* that doth spring from beneath the seat of Jove,' is Milton's own invention, emphasizing the sanctity of the poet's inspiration.

17. **Somewhat loudly...string**: Because the occasion is death, not of an ordinary personage but of 'one who could build a lofty rhyme—one of the Muse's own sons.' Study the Onomatopœtic effect. 18. **Denial ... excuse**: *Coy* means hesitating or unwilling. At this stage, Milton overcomes his reluctance. There is no reference, here to reluctance on the part of the Muses as some wrongly suppose.

19. **Gentle Muse**: 'Son of the Muse (i. e. poet) kindly disposed towards me.' **So**: 'On condition that I mourn for Lycidas'—Verity.

20. **Lucky words**: Better if interpreted as 'good-omened words bidding me farewell', than 'words happily expressed'. *Urn* is a vessel in which the Romans used to deposit the ashes of the dead. **Destined Urn** literally means the Urn destined to hold my ashes, when I, like Lycidas, am dead. In other words the grave that is destined for me. 21-22. **As he passes** etc. Supply *along the road*. Roman roads were lined many a time with tombs with their inscriptions requesting the passer-by to stop a while and think kindly of the dead. **Sable shroud**—'Dark tomb'. Todd confirms this interpretation of Dunster by quoting from Sylvester. **Bid fair peace**: The reference obviously is to the prayer, that the resting-place of the dead be saved from destruction.

23-36: Express in metaphoric language of pastoralism, an account of Milton's college days. The hill is of course Cambridge; the joint feeling of the flocks companionship in study; the rural deities are academic iambics and elegiacs; the two shepherds Milton and King, and old Dametas is probably Dr. Chapell—their tutor. This passage is an adequate illustration of Milton's own remark that poetry should be sensuous. 'We see,' observes

Lamborn, 'the coming of dawn, hear the drowsy hum that, tells of noontide heat and watch the stars rise and swing westward across the heavens.'

23. **For** : This passage gives the reason why Milton flings reluctance to sing, to winds. **Nursed** : Brought up. **Self-same hill** : i. e. the Cambridge University. The word *hill* aptly indicates the Cambridge University because of its intellectual eminence though physically situated on a level ground.

24. **Fed the same flocks** : Pursued the same courses of studies.

25 to 30—tell us, that the friends began their studies early in the morning and pursued them throughout the day till night-fall. From the regularity of his pursuits, the purity of his pleasures, his temperance, and general simplicity of life, Milton habitually became an early riser. He contemplates beauties of the morning with rare delight ; and this is the subject which he delineates with the lively pencil of a lover. Cf. L'Allegro : 'To hear the lark begin his flight'.

25. **High lawns** : An illustration of Milton's way of idealizing the landscape, for no uplands are to be found about Cambridge.

26. **Opening eye-lids...morn** : A picturesque and vivid image correctly and beautifully rendering 'the dawning of the day'. This golden phrase is used by countless poets before and after Milton. Milton's use of the same, thus, has all the associations with departed greatness and a link with future.

27. **Drove supply our flocks**. We began 'our studies very early in the morning—that is what Milton means in lines 26 and 27.

28. **What time :** A Latinised expression meaning at the time when. **Gray-fly...horn:** The reference most probably is to the trumpet-fly, so called because of the humming noise it produces when the heat is intense at mid-day.

29. **Battening :** Fattening or feeding. Milton had in mind, according to Todd, Drayton's, 'battening flocks,' when he wrote this. **With the fresh dews etc.**—Feeding not on dew-drops but obviously on grass wet with dew falling at evening.'

30. **The Star,**—Hesperus, an appellation of Venus, 'the star that bids the shepherd fold'. Keightley feels that Milton does not mean Hesperus, for it 'appears' and 'never rises'. Keightley forgets that he is in the world of poetry. **Rose :** appeared in the sky.

31. **Towards...wheel :** Was about to set in the West. *Wheeling* is applied in Greek mythology only to Apollo who went round the heavens in his chariot. Here it is extended to the stars by Milton like another Zeus. **Westering :** Travelling or going to West.

32-36. When we remember that Cambridge of those times was a nest of birds attempting to sing, we will understand the significance of this passage in no time,

32. **Rural Deities...mute :** While studying thus, we found time to compose verse.

33. **Tempered...flute :** Tempered : Tuned. **Oaten flutes** are the usual musical accompaniment of Shepherds in pastoral poetry. Probably this may allude to their joint endeavour in composing poetry to the model of ancient poets.

34. **Satyrs and Fauns :** Greek and Latin Gods respectively of the woods, very hairy and having 'the legs and horns of a goat joined to the rest of a human body'. According to Verity, Milton introduces *Satyrs and Fauns*

only because Virgil did so. He does not seem to share the view that *Satyrs and Fauns* refer to undergraduates belonging to the 'sporting set' at the University. Milton was never a blind imitator and 'finding a never meaning is not absurd.' From l. 35, we can gather that these undergraduates though not in a position to compose poems themselves wanted not appreciation of poetry.

36. **Old Damœtas** : The allusion is most probably to their tutor William Chappel. In Virgil, Domœtas is an old shepherd who bequeathes his pipe to one of the younger shepherds, as best fitted to play on it, after him. The application to the tutor, therefore, seems appropriate. *Old* in Milton implies compliment (Masson).

37-44 depict 'the heavy change'. Lycidas is dead. All the happiness of active life is gone for ever. Nature mourns : woods and caves are silent. Willows and the hazel copses green, no more fan their joyous leaves. 'The most direct expression of personal grief which *Lycidas* contains'—that is what Verity thinks about this passage; and adds : 'the paucity of rhyme in ll. 37-41 is noticeable'.

37 and 38 : The mournful effect of repetition is noteworthy. The change of tone and movement is caused by the profusion of long vowels.

39. **Desert** : Uninhabited, empty. **Caves** which were once responsive to the dead shepherd's music deserve to be included among the mourners.

40. **Thyme** : Half-shrubby plants. **Gadding vine** : Vine is a creeper which covers any place it can creep to, that is why it is called 'gadding' (of a luxuriant growth). Warburton supposes that the *vine* is gadding because being married to elm, like other wives, she is fond of gadding abroad.

41. **Echoes** : Once responsive to music but now silent. Milton has in mind the classical story of Echo.

He personifies echoes and makes them inhabitants of woods and caves.

43-44 : As woods and caves no longer ring responsive to the dead shepherd's music, so willows and hazels no more move their leaves like fans in their dance.

45-49 : All these lines convey unmistakably the sense of early, premature decay. **45. Killing** : By construing it with *loss* in 49, some commentators explain it as 'deadly'. But if applied to rose, sheep and flowers it retains its original meaning. **Canker** is a worm that preys on blossoms esp. roses. *As canker...rose* : the simile becomes very striking by the contrast it conveys. Rose dies in its very prime because of canker insensible to its delicacy and beauty.

46. Taint-worm : A small red spider-like worm that causes disease in sheep and cattle. **Weanling** : young ; 'those that have been just weaned away from their mother's milk.' The suggestion, again, is of premature death.

47. Wardrobe : The contents of wardrobe i.e. clothes. The wardrobe of flowers is their petals. It is customary with poets to speak of flowers decked with gay-coloured robes.

48. When...blows : i.e. in early spring. *The white thorn* is the hawthorn. **Blows** : Flowers.

49. Such...shepherd's ear : 'As canker, worm and frost untimely kill rosebud, lamb, early spring flowers, so has the hand of death been laid untimely upon your young budding life, Oh Lycidas !'. In their pathetic sense of premature decay ll. 44-49 are unique. One of the editors of *Lycidas* finds a double meaning in *Shepherd's ears* : (1) The news of your (Lycidas's) death is heavy news for shepherds to hear. (2) Your death deprives shepherds ears of the music they so loved to hear.

50-63: Milton in these lines appeals to the Nymphs, the powers of mountain and river and asks why were they absent from their favourite haunts. Their presence perhaps, might have saved Lycidas. But this is a foolish dream. Witness the fate of Orpheus. Milton has modelled this passage upon both Theocritus and Virgil. But 'local names and colour' are Milton's additions. Milton *assimilates* and *invents*; others merely *imitate*. This passage reveals Milton's careful study of the British legendary history. The topographical exactness is worthy of the highest praise.

50. Nymphs: Milton's Nymphs combine the offices of 'presiding *local* goddesses of woods and streams' and of the Muses haunting hills and fountains sacred to them. Thus, the poet fed on immortal blisses, endows England with her *native Muses*. Ancient Druids and Bards and the youngest among the dead, Lycidas, are their sons. **Remorseless:** Pitiless. **52. Playing:** both in woods and rivers as nymphs and on musical instruments as Muses.

The steep: Perhaps, Penmænawr, overhanging the sea opposite Anglessey in which King was drowned.

53. Where...Druids lie: Druids combined in themselves the functions of priest, prophet and poet. Milton has in mind their last function, that is why he styles them *old-bards*—the term especially applied to Celtic poets. **Lie:** lie buried.

54. Mona: 'The Roman name for the island of Anglessey, in the oak-groves of which the Druids performed their rites. 'This centre of Druidic cult was also a lookout for the Irish seas'. **Shaggy top:** Because of its being well-wooded formerly, though now bare.

55. Deva spreads: The estuary of Dee is meant—another suitable look-out station.

Wizard stream : The river Dee and its neighbourhood were associated with Druidic rites, Arthurian legends and supernatural occurrences. In Spenser, the haunt of magicians, in Drayton, 'the ominous-flood', this river the boundary between Wales and England changed its course often foretelling evil to that country 'towards which it changed its course' and good to the other. The association of the river with magic serves to heighten the sense of a ruthless malignant fate.

56. The silent pause in thought is artistically interpreted. **Fondly :** Foolishly.

57. **Had...have done ? :** Milton probably means, 'I imagine that if you had been there you would have interfered—but what would have been the use?' But he may mean: 'it is idle to ask where you were; for you could have done nothing'.—Lamborn. The broken sentence finely reproduces the conflict in Milton's mind between wish and reason.

58–63 illustrate that none could have averted the calamity—not even the Muses. Witness the powerlessness of Calliope, chief of the Muses to save her own son Orpheus from his terrible death.

58. **The Muse :** Calliope, the sweet-voiced one, mother of Orpheus and the Muse of epic poetry.

59. **Enchanting :** i. e. who worked by magic and enchantment of music. While Orpheus mourned the loss of his wife Eurydice in an elegiac song, upon his lyre, trees and rocks followed him with weeping, while rivers altered their course to keep within hearing of the strains of his lament.

60. **Universal nature :** All Nature both animate and inanimate.

61. 'The rolling *r*'s and the aspirate give an appropriate force to the sound of the line'.

61-63. Refer to the death of Orpheus : Orpheus after the loss of his beloved wife Eurydice, wandering aimlessly and in despair came to Thrace where some Thracian women, 'who were in a drunken rout' requested him to join their Bacchalean sport. Orpheus declined. They were enraged; and so while celebrating the Bacchanalia, attacked and killed him and cast his head and his lyre in Hebrus. The head and the lyre floated down the river singing and 'played upon, and drawing forth the grief from Nature'. Both were carried across the Aegean sea to the island of Lesbos where the former received honourable burial. 61. **Rout...roar** : The 'band' of Thracian women who were enraged when Orpheus declined to join their sport.

62. **The stream** : The Hebrus, the principal river of Thrace.

63. **The Lesbian shore** : to which the head of Orpheus at last floated.

64-84 : The first digression of the poem. Does it pay, the poet asks, to strive after and attain poetic ideals, when the applause of the world is not for such effort but rather for the superficial and the trivial? Why live laborious days and endure a poet's pains, waiting for fame only to be forestalled by an untimely death, rather than live a life of pleasure and celebrate it in frivolous songs of love? The answer to all these questions is that true fame is the result of a judgment pronounced not in this but in the next world. In its high conception of the poet's office the passage is superbly and sublimely Miltonic.

64. **What boots it** : Of what advantage or profit is it? **Unceasing care** : Unceasing study, rigorous self-devotion to learning and self-culture that is part of a poet's preparation. cf. '*Labour and intense study*' mentioned by Milton elsewhere.

65. **Slighted** : A reference to *the winter of English poetry*. **Shepherd's trade** : The profession of being a poet whose real job is justifying the ways of God to men and not merely *pipin utc' them*. • •

66. **Strictly** : Leading a life of chaste austerity and purity unlike the one mentioned in (67-69). **Meditate the Muse** : Compose poetry. **Thankless** : because the Muse neglects her sons, does nothing to ward off untimely death from them and fails to reward them. 67 **use** : accustomed to.

68-69. **To sport...hair ?** : A reflection on the condition of poetry in Milton's early days. The poems of Herrick celebrate 'A sweet Disorder' and love ; while Lovelace gladly lies tangled in his beloved's hair. Amorous, graceful, light and frivolous was the Muse of poetry then. In themselves, be it frankly admitted, these lines only refer to '*the man of love-pleasures*'. The music of these lines more sweetened by Amaryllis and Neæra, and their sensuous appeal—all this is truly Keatsian. **Amaryllis and Neæra** : shepherdesses of the classical pastoral the dalliance with whom typifies a life frivolous, self-indulgent and uninspired by ideals; hence, no fit companions for serious poets.

70. **Fame** : Used in the sense of immortality and not cheap popularity. **Clear** : Chaste and pure, untainted with worldliness.

71. **Last infirmity** : After all other infirmities have been conquered by the noble minds, a love of fame survives. In Massinger's phrase fame is 'the last weakness that wise men put off'.

72. This line accurately gives the picture of Milton's life at this period—studying and loving learning for the service of God of truth and for acquiring immortality.

73. **Guerdon** : Reward. Guerdon is a belt given as a prize to 'champions in tournament in the days of chivalry'.

1. 74. Note the explosive force in the sound. **Sudden blaze** : Flash of Glory.

75-76. **Blind Fury...life** : Milton again makes the classical mythology subserve the purposes of his verse. By *Blind Fury* is meant Atropos, really one of the three fates, but here represented by Milton as acting like a fury. **Blind** : Because Fury does not distinguish between man and man in meting out punishment. Verity believes that *blind* implies that if she had seen, she would have paused ; and adds : ' Milton was thinking of the representation in art of Fortune as a woman whose eyes are covered '. **Slits** : cuts *through* and not lengthwise, **Abhorr'd shears** : The instrument with which Atropos cuts the thin thread of human-life. In Greek mythology Clotho holds the distaff, Lachesis spins the thread of life and Atropos cuts it. *Thin spun* ; Frail and short-lived.

75-76 : This passage means that when after all our penance of hard-work, chaste and virtuous life, we hope to find our reward—glory—Fate, cuts short our life.

76. '*But not the praise*' : Here begins *that higher strain*. Phœbus points out to the poet that he is mistaken. Atropos can cut asunder the thread of life, ' but she cannot intercept, touch or prevent the fame that is man's due '.

77. **Phœbus** : Apollo ; sun-god and patron of music and poetry. **Touched—ears** : the words ' touched my ears ' are taken from Virgil, where Apollo takes the shepherd of pastorals, Virgil himself, by the ear, by way of correction, when the latter wishes to sing of kings and battles (i. e. to compose an epic), and tells him that his proper business is to tend his sheep and pipe to them. **trembling** : *Either* (1) in its ordinary sense, as a votary may well do in the presence of a god ; the Pythoness trembled on the tripod when Apollo delivered his oracles through her

at Delphi. The objection that it is, *grammatically*, the ear, not the poet, that trembles, may be met by making the word 'trembling' qualify, not 'ear', but 'me' understood from 'my'—a common enough Elizabethan construction. Or (2) the sense is 'tingling'; the reference is to the consciousness of Milton that what Apollo says about King's future fame, is really applicable to himself, and that consciousness makes him blush to the ear-tips.—Percival.

78. **Fame...soil**: Fame is compared to a tree. It thrives not in this world. The thought is made more explicit in ll. 81-84. A poet's way of saying that true fame is *immortal*.

79. *Nor.. foil*: Supply *is* and read: nor is fame set in etc. **Glistening foil**: a plate of shining metal placed under a jewel to increase its brightness. This indicates false undeserved fame—mere flashy tinsel and not the pure gem of immortality.

80. **Set off**: Is passed off as real fame. **Broad Rumour**: Wide-spread but cheap popularity.

81-82: Fame is a plant that cannot grow on this earth. It grows and thrives only in 'the next world', under the very eyes of '*Correct Jove*'. **Spreads aloft**: Suggests thriving and luxurious growth. **Pure eyes**: Clear; neither blinded by partiality nor obscured to true merit. **Perfect witness**: Unmistakable, searching and infallible judgment. **Jove**: God of all gods. To quote Mr. Allen: 'Fame does not depend on a display of accomplishments or on being the talk of the town. It consists rather in the approbation of God; to attain fame one must live ever in the great Task-master's eye'.

83. **Pronounces lastly**: Delivers irreversible judgment. **Deed**: Human action including the performances of poets.

84. **So much fame** : Real immortal fame, not mere tinsel. **Meed** : Reward.

85-102. With the line eighty-five Milton returns to the main theme and acknowledges to the spirit of pastoral that in listening to the voice of Phœbus, he has for the moment put aside 'the cat'. The rest of the passage gives an account of an imaginary inquest and the consequent verdict. Neptune sends his herald Triton, to ascertain as to who was responsible for Lycidas's death.

85-86. The address to **Arethuse**, a river of Ortygia, an island off Sicily, suggests the Greek writer of pastoral—*Theocritus* ; while **Mincius** a river in northern Italy calls up the image of *Virgil*, who lived upon its banks. Arethuse and Mincius—sources of inspiration of the pastoral poetry of Theocritus and Virgil—are addressed now as the inspirers of Milton's pastoral song. Thus the remarkable propriety with which these two are mentioned is ever praiseworthy. **Honoured** i. e. by the pastorals of Virgil. **Smooth-sliding** : 'Flowing with gentle music.' **Vocal reeds** : the rustling of the reeds in the wind is fancifully called their singing, because the reeds grow in a poet's river—Warton. Mr. Belloc thinks that '*smooth-sliding Mincius crowned with vocal reeds*' is the topmost of Milton's achievement in Lycidas. The soft sibilants, fused with vowel sounds suggests the picture of a river full to its banks and silent.

87. *That strain* i. e. the voice of Apollo. **Higher mood** : of a higher character than the pastoral can express. Milton admits that in writing of fame etc. he has soared into the regions of sublimity far away from those of the pastoral.

88. **My oar** etc. Oaten-flute of line 33. 'I go on with my pastoral song'.

89. **Herald of the sea**—Triton, son of Neptune acted as his father's herald. He is *supposed* to summon 'the

Waves', 'the felon winds' and 'every gust of rugged wings' to know the cause of mishap.

90. **Neptune's plea** : Two interpretations are possible: (i) In defence of Neptune—'to clear Neptune from the charge of having caused the death of Lycidas. Here 'in plea' is taken to mean in defence of, plead on behalf of. (2) On Neptune's demand for inquiry, suggesting that Neptune had ordered something like a Coroner's inquiry into the drowning incident. Here 'in Neptune's plea' is taken to mean Neptune's inquiry or court. For both the interpretations there can be found sufficient support. Interpretation No. I may be supported by arguing that Neptune being the God and the supreme king, Shepherds naturally held him responsible for the shipwreck. The second one is supported by the argument that Neptune being the sovereign of the sea is more appropriately imagined as ordering an inquest.

91. **Felon winds** : Cruel winds 'if *felon* is given its usual meaning.' Felon also means one who commits felony. In that case the expression means the winds that had often 'from his dungeon strayed' (L. 97) and committed felony on the high seas. In the present case, they are suspects.

93. **Rugged wings** : Having their wings roughened by constant use. The expression means *tempestuous winds*—winds having rode rough and high over the sea got their wings battered. Verity explains it as 'every rugged winged wind'.

94. **Beaked promontory** : *Beaked* i. e. projecting with a point like the beak of a bird. **Promontory** : Head-land. This phrase is an illustration of a metaphor packed with suggestions of form, colour and texture.

96. **Hippotades**: Æolus, king of the winds. He is styled as '*sage*' because he knows how to keep in check, his unruly subjects—winds. **Their answer brings**: i. e. from a cave in an island in the Tyrrhenian sea, where Æolus kept the winds shut up; because it would be dangerous to let them loose to enable them to appear before Triton's court and personally answer the queries.

97. **Dungeon**: See note on *their answer brings*. **Strayd**: Escaped.

98. **Level brine** suggesting that the sea was calm.

99. **Sleek**: Soft and shining, delicate and bright (through immersion in water). **Panope**: One of the fifty Nereids, daughters of Nereus, a god of the sea.

98-99. The corroborative evidence that '*sleek Panope*' played with all her sisters '*on the level brine*', absolves the winds from the suspicion that they were some way connected with the death of Lycidas. The whole of this account throbs with gusto and is characterized by a deep sense of reality. In l. 99, we have another Spenserian picture.

100-102: This can be very well described as '*the verdict of the inquiry*'. The cause of the calamity is the ship herself. Milton a pastmaster in the art of seeing and seizing the latent possibilities of familiar things, puts to a skilful and an artistic use the age-long superstition that anything '*created, done, made*' in the times of eclipse is doomed for all time to come. '*Curiously enough*', writes Verity, '*the poem...by Edward King's brother implies that the vessel struck on a rock during the gale. Probably he was better informed than...Milton. Nowhere is there a hint that the ship was unseaworthy.*'

Perfidious: Treacherous **Built in the eclipse**: that is why ill-omened. **Sacred**: Sanctified.

102. **That sunk thine**: Whose *head*? Triton's or Lycidas's? If we take these lines (100-102) as spoken by

Hippotades to Triton—and that is what the context suggests—this line means: ‘that made you hang down your head ‘n shame.’ ‘**your head**’ refers to Triton’s; because of the disgrace brought to his father on account of *the perfidious bark*.’ If we think that it is Milton who ‘says these three lines’, then ‘*thine*’ means ‘*Lycidas’s*’. **Sacred**: (1) because it was Triton’s, (2) in case of Lycidas, sanctified by friendship or love.

Ll. 103-64 describe the Memorial service—also imaginary—and the chief Mourners at it. First comes Camus, footing slow, stays not long but utters one ejaculation, more appealing because concentrated. Then comes St. Peter, in still more mystic and awful guise, the guardian of that Church of Christ for the service of which King had been preparing. His entry is not out of place. He is also a shepherd in the higher sense of that term and as such it is in the fitness of things that he should mourn the death of Lycidas, one of his truest under-shepherds at a time when the flocks were perishing fast. Then follows digression no. 2—the singularly bold and stern passage of denunciation, prophesying speedy vengeance on those who feed not their flocks. The style of the passage varies, from the concentrated ejaculation of Camus to the fiery trumpet-tones of St. Peter. In its religious fervour, severe sense of duty to God and Man and its prophecy of retribution—the passage is unique.

103. **Camus**: God of the river Cam and the personification of Cambridge University—‘a familiar character in the verses of the period’. **Reverend Sire**: Accurately depicts the antiquity of the Cambridge University. **Footing slow**: ‘Came slowly’ because overburdened with grief. ‘*Footing*’ exactly brings out the idea of a mourner walking slowly being overweighed with grief. Let us note that the current of the river is sluggish.

104-105. Milton cannot draw ugliness. It changes into majesty and beauty on his hands. The sluggish Cambridge river filled with weeds and sedges is transformed into a venerable old man wearing a mantle woven out of thin fibres from river plants and 'a head-covering' of sedge tinted with yellow inwrought with dim and mystic figures. **Hairy mantle** : Refers to the vegetation growing in the water itself covering the god's body like a cloak. **Bonnet** : 'Man's head-wear'. It suggests the vegetation growing on the banks, the cap as it were of the god. **Seage** : A kind of grass that grows by river-side. 105. **Inwrought dim** : Sedge leaves when dry or withering have some faint marks and spots. Here is an allusion to the high antiquity and half mythical character of the foundation and early history of Cambridge University. 'With all our explanation', writes Warton, 'this leaves something to be supplied by reader's imagination.' Verity interprets the phrase as 'symbolical devices...worked in embroidery'; and adds : 'the line heightens the dignity of the representative of the University—to increase the power of those who mourn for Lycidas is to pay him a compliment.'

106. **Sanguine flower—woe** : Hyacinth, the flower which sprang from the blood of Hyacinthus, a Spartan youth loved by Apollo. Its petals bear the marks resembling the Greek letters *ai ai* meaning *woe, woe*. That is why it is described as 'inscribed with woe.' These marks expressing the sorrow of Phœbus or Apollo for Hyacinthus indicate in this case Camus's grief for the death of Lycidas. 107. **Reft** : Taken away. **Pledge** : child.

108. 'The solemnity with which the entrance of St. Peter is heralded has something of dramatic vividness of the stage, raising in the reader a thrill of awestruck expectation' (Mark Pattison). 108. **Last came...go** : In Eliza-

bethan times *go* meant *to step*. Here therefore it means, 'the last man to come on the scene and join the procession'. *Last*: This word implies that other mourners besides Camus preceded. This line, 'being slowed by groups of consonants between the long vowels, moves like a slow, firm tread.'

109. **The Pilot**: St. Peter, as a fisherman on the Galilean sea owned or was master of a fishing boat. He is regarded as the founder of the Catholic Church. Edward King's intention to take orders is the justification of his introduction. In styling St. Peter, 'the pilot of the Galilean lake,' Milton reveals his power of invention. The title is not in the Gospels.

110. **Two...keys**...In Scripture, Christ says to St. Peter: 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' Their number—*two*—was a tradition of the Church.

111. **The golden opes...amain**: Milton very beautifully and effectively has varied the tradition, distinguishing between the metals and attributing to one the power of exclusion. Ruskin compares Dante and Milton and admits Milton's superiority. The right to exclude adds to the dignity and authority of St. Peter. No key of baser metal can be used, 'to open the palace of eternity in heaven,' and none better than iron to close fast its gates. **Amain**: So fast that 'none have power to reopen.'

112. **Shook...locks**: St. Peter in his passionate vehemence shakes his locks and behaves like Jupiter whose nod shook heaven and earth. **Mitre**: Note the appropriateness. This word suggests St. Peter's headship of the Christian Church. He behaves like a true mitred-bishop in denouncing the degenerate clergy and warning Laud that he has shamed the mitre he wears. *Mitre* is a head-dress worn by bishops and archbishops.

113—131: This second digression is a very remarkable passage. The young poet, with intense scorn, denounces the corruption of the Church and 'unfaithful clergy' of his day, and foreshadows the spirit of Milton who, a few years later, was to aid the Puritan rebellion with his stern, controversial prose. To quote from Stopford Brooke: 'When Milton felt strongly, he wrote fiercely. The passage is a splendid and a fierce cry of wrath and a rough trumpet note, warlike and unsparing, which it sounds against the unfaithful herdsmen and the 'grim wolf', was to ring louder and louder through the prose works, and finally to dash in the ears of those very Presbyterians whom he now supported.'

113. **Spared for thee:** St. Peter would have exchanged 'enow of such' for the life of a true shepherd Lycidas. **Enow:** Enough or even now. **Such:** i. e. those mentioned in the following lines.

114. **Bellies' sake:** For the sake of emoluments; to gain preferment, to enjoy well-being. Milton whips those who enter Church not as a divine call but as a means of worldly advancement.

115. **Creep...fold:** Milton, the master of the apt phrase, discriminates between three types of men invading the church, by using three very appropriate expressions. **Creep:** Those who enter the church in a stealthy way and not by the front-door of learning and piety. **Intrude:** Those that thrust themselves in with self-assertion where in fact they are not invited. **Climb:** Those who 'climb in,' for power to become 'lords over the heritage.'

116. **Care:** any 'other calls'.

117. **Than...feast:** Press forward with eagerness to receive the allotment of Church endowments: **Shearer's feast:** The festivals in which shepherds join after

shearing the sheep and gathering in the wool. Here it suggests 'the bestowals of church livings and incomes of deaneries and bishoprics'. Note how the word '*cramble*' accurately depicts a selfile avaricious disorderly crowd, clamouring unceremoniously for preferment..

118. **Shove:** Put aside. **The worthy guest:** The churchmen worth the name, who 'scorn delights and live laborious days' for the spiritual welfare of their flock. The idea is that the worthy priests are not rewarded but those 'who creep, intrude and climb.' This is probably suggested to Milton by the parable of the marriage of 'the King's Son' (St. Matthews, 22).

119-121 : The ignorance of the clergy is very severely lashed in this passage. **Blind-Mouths:** The seeming incongruity disappears when we remember, that the phrase is a combination of two metaphors—'blind leaders of the blind' and 'whose belly is their god'. These preachers are '*blind* (spiritually) and are '*mouths*' (gluttons) open for the feeding whereas they should be spiritual overseers i. e. bishops, and feeders of their flocks i.e. pastors. In his *Sesame and Lilies*, Ruskin observes: 'These two monosyllables express precisely accurate contraries of right character in the two great offices of the Church—those of the bishop and Pastor. A 'bishop' means 'a person who sees.' A 'pastor' means 'a person who feeds.' The most unbishoply character a man can have is, therefore to be blind. The most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed—to be a mouth. Take the two reverses together and 'you have 'blind mouths.' Milton himself writes in his 'Defensio Secunda': 'Our clergy are rather to be called sheep than shepherds; they are fed rather than the pastors; all, in general, is fat about them, when the intellects not excepted.' The objection that here is a mingling of

mythical and metaphorical shepherds can be answered by quoting from Hazlitt : ' the fervour of his imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace the most contradictory materials.'

120. **Sheep-hook** : represents the pastoral-staff of the church in its character of good shepherd. **Sheep-hook** : Shepherd's staff.

121. **Herdsmen's** : Shepherd's and consequently that of a priest.

122. **What recks** : What do they care ? **What need they** : Why should they ? **Are sped** : i. e. have succeeded in gaining their object—emoluments.

123. **When they list** : When it pleases them. **lean** : Devoid of spiritual food. **Flashy** : Insipid, flat, tasteless and yielding no nourishment.

124. No sounds of words can be more expressive of the sense. Note the frequent appearance of the letter ' r ', which gives the ' grating ' sound. ' *Scrannel* does not appear in any author, but it answers the purpose as no other word can do.' No other can bring out the contempt for the shrieking pipes as the word ' *Scrannel* ' does. ' *Scrannel pipes* ' denotes the thin, harsh, hysterical voice of the unfaithful clergyman. (Loose living has spoiled his voice). Todd offers a conjecture, that ' Milton formed this word from the cant language of the time. In ' *cant* ' the word ' *Scran* ' meant ' a reckoning at a boozing-ken (ale-house) '. Milton might have formed a substantive from this to express his contemptuous assimilation of their performance to that of low persons assembled at an ale house.'

125-9 : The effects of such preachings upon the congregations entrusted to their charge ; they are starved spiritually and become diseased spiritually, while some are converted to Roman Catholicism.

125. **Hungry Sheep**: People in need of spiritual food. *Look up* i. e. in eager expectation of spiritual food.

126. **But...draw**. Todd quotes Peck introducing a remark that Dante, in his *Paradiso*, complains, "that the Pope himself of a Shepherd has become a wolf; and that vain fables and fables echo from the pulpit all the year long, and the poor sheep come back fed with wind." The preaching of untrue and 'deceitful doctrines' is compared, in its verbosity, to the wind, and in its blinding effect to mist; the people hear much sound, but little sense from the pulpit, and their eyes are obscured, instead of being enlightened, to 'the divine truth' by what they hear. Puritans attached a great importance to sermons. **Rank**: Noisesome, pestilential. **Draw**: i. e. breathe; inhale.

127. **Rot inwardly**: Refers to sheep-rot. Rotten within they are tempted to lead evil lives themselves. **Contagion spread**: And by their example others are inspired to lead evil lives,

128-29. Refer to the secret conversions to Roman Catholicism. **Grim Wolf**: The Church of Rome which was every day gaining new converts from the 'sheepfold' of the English church with no one to object. Milton combining together the idea that wolf is the enemy of the sheep and the story that it was a she-wolf that suckled Romulus the founder of Rome, 'converts the wolf of the Capitol into the wolf of the Vatican.' **Privy Paw** suggests the secrecy, the stealthiness with which these proselytisers acted. The 'work of converting' was carried on by Jesuit missionaries in England with utmost secrecy.

129. **Devours**: Referring to the proselytising. **Nothing said**: And yet there is raised no cry of alarm by the Protestant clergy. Some editors believe that for these conversions Laud was responsible as he leaned towards Roman

Catholicism. Masson absolves the Archbishop of this charge by pointing out, that he severely objected to these perversions. Mr. Jerram feels that the Court was to be blamed, for the Queen was a Roman Catholic and the king sympathised *strongly* with the action of his partner in favouring Catholics; while others believe that *the Puritan clergies* are meant; because, for them, 'say' has a special meaning 'perform, divine service.'

130-131 : These lires resound with a prophecy that full retribution will fall at a single stroke, upon such clergymen—ministers of religion and the system that promotes their corruption. **Two-handed engine** : Perhaps more discussed than any other expression in Milton's works. *Engine* in Milton's time meant 'engine of death' and was sometimes used to mean *Parliament*. Hence follow various explanations :—(i) Prof. Masson thinks that here is a reference to the two houses of Parliament which brought about a reformation in the church. (ii) Mr. Verity interprets the phrase as the sword of Justice, quoting from *the Tenure of kings*. (iii) The engine according to others is the two-edged sword of the Revelation 1, 16. (iv) It signifies to some the sword of St. Michael. (v) Others feel that it symbolises the prophecy both in the Old and New Testament that evil and punishment will be meted out to all those undutiful ones. (vi) Some cannot but help finding in this engine an allusion to the axe with which Laud was beheaded eight years later. (vii) *Jerram's*, quite appropriate to the context, is the interpretation that the axe is the one mentioned in St. Matthews iii, 10, and St. Luke iii, 9.—the axe that is *laid unto the root of the trees*, denoting, a thorough and sweeping reformation; and (viii)

'Milton cannot be made to mean more than having believed that an efficient instrument of reform was at hand. He speaks with the belief that evil cannot flourish'

for ever ; a day will come when God will, with one sure stroke, root it out.' (Allen)

Without commenting upon these interpretations and of this terrible and mystic prophecy, we can safely assert that *the engine* symbolises both the severe retribution and a thorough sweeping reformation. 'Milton,' as Coleridge informs us, 'on honey-dew is fed and has drunk the milk of Paradise ;' and hence so many interpretations.

At the door : Near at hand. 131. 'The blow when it does fall will be final.'

132-151 : 'As before, when the poet had been carried away by emotion, he now indicates the subsidence of the wave by an appeal to another pastoral influence.' With the appeal to the gentle Sicilian Muse, a tenderer mood succeeds the bitter one, and his affectionate grief seeks its normal expression in an imaginary tribute of flowers to be strewn upon the bier of his friend. Delicate in its sweetness and conspicuous by a tender pathetic beauty, this passage is full of gentle fragrance.

132. **Return :** Because St. Peter's august and terrible tone had frightened away Alpheus, symbolic of the pastoral Muse. **Alpheus :** a river in Arcadia that runs underground part of its course. The myth about this river is that Alpheus loved and pursued Arethusa a nymph. Arethusa sought the aid of Diana, who changed her into a stream in Sicily. Alpheus followed through the sea as a river and rose in Sicily as a fountain and mingled his waters with hers, the two thus becoming *one fountain* (l. 85).

The dread voice : The terrible, dreadful and august voice of St. Peter denouncing the deterioration rampant in the church. **Is passed :** Has ceased.

133. **Shrunk thy streams** : i. e. dried up your waters through fear. Milton puts to a novel and poetically a tistic use, the disappearance underground, of the river *Alpheus*, in Sicily, symbolising the pastoral Muse. 'The dread voice' of St. Peter has silenced the mourning song of the pastoral Muse for the death of *Lycidas*. **Sicilian Muse** : See Note II. 85-86.

134-135 : The pastoral poetic device to honour the hearse. In the lines gone before, Cam lamented the loss caused by the death of *Lycidas* to Learning, and St. Peter, in passionate strain, to the church ; and now 'the scenes of Nature oft visited by *Lycidas*, weep for him dropping the flowers'. **Hither** : On the bier. **Bell** : i. e. the flowers like Cowslip who can claim to have 'bells'. **Hues** : colours.

136. **Use**.—As Dr. Newton observes, *use* is used in the sense of 'frequent', 'inhabit'. *The mild whispers use* : means 'where the mild whispers inhabit.' i. e. the valleys which resounded with sounds of winds and 'gushing brooks'.

137. **Shades** : Shady trees, **Wanton** : 'Unrestrained', blowing where they list. **Gushing brook** : A fine picture in a phrase.

138. **Whose** : The antecedent is 'valleys'. **The Swart star** : 'The dog-star, *Sirius*' says Verity. 'Scorching sun' writes Percival. Verity's is more accurate though Percival's not inapt. The fixed *Sirius* rises and sets with the sun in the month of August causing excessive heat. **Sparely looks** : Shines mildly. The heat of the dog-star would not affect as much the green pastures at the bottom of a valley as the hill-tops.

139. **Quaint** : Fancifully pretty. **Enamelled eyes** : Variegated and glossy as enamel-work. Flowers, the

brightest and most expressive part of the anatomy of plants are finely styled, 'eyes'.

140. **Honeyed showers** : Morning dew. The idea is that flowers distil honey from dew.

141-151. "One of the finest pieces of decorative verse; full of colour yet not plastered with chromatic adjectives. Each flower is characterized : e. g. 'Cowslip wan ...pensive head', 'Some pedantic ass has complained that the flowers mentioned in this passage do not all bloom at the same season.'—Williams. And Masson remarks : "the most exquisite flower and colour passage in all Milton's poetry. His manuscript shows that he brought it to perfection by additions and afterthoughts. For musical sweetness-dainty richness of floral colour, it beats, perhaps, anything else in all Milton. It is the call upon all valleys of the landscape and the banks of all the secret streamlets, to yield up their choicest flowers, and those dearest to shepherds that they may be strewn over the dead body of Lycidas." Readers looking for fidelity in description may find that all the flowers brought together never bloom at the same time. 'But the mourning cannot be so confined.' Not simply the panorama of season, but Nature with all her store of beauty and colour is shedding tears. It matters little from what corner of her bag she chooses her offering. Ruskin says : "In Milton it happens, I think generally, in the case before us most certainly, that the imagination is mixed and broken with fancy, and so the strength of the imagery is part of iron and part of clay." ll 142, 145 and 147, he considers imaginative ; ll. 144 and 146 'fanciful' ; l. 143 nugatory ; and l. 148 'mixed'.

141. **Vernal flowers** : Flowers that bloom in spring.

Purple = Impurple.

142-52: Unsurpassed in their rhythm, these lines mention various flowers with their characteristic features rendering them appropriate for a funeral garland.

142. **Rathe**: Blooming early. **Forsaken**: Because primrose is a flower that 'blushes unseen.' The flower suggests in its silent tenderness and early decay, the premature death of Lycidas.

143. **Crow-toe**: Called 'crow-foot' because of its shape, is a kind of hyacinth. **Pale jessamine**: An oriental flower of an unassuming white colour; hence, pale.

144. **White pink**: White variety of pink typifying purity. **Pansy**: A species of violet. **Freaked with jet**: Freaked i. e. variegated with black spots.

145. Note how the break in rhythm rivets the reader's attention on the colour of the flower—of mourning.

146. **Well attired woodbine**: Woodbine is honeysuckle. It is well-attired, not because it is covered with leaves, but because it has a beautiful head-dress of flowers.

147. **With...head**: The Cowslip droops down its head on its stalk as if heavy with grief.

148. **Sad embroidery**: Suggests the colour of mourning.

149. This line marks a division between the two classes into which Milton divides the flowers he mentions: above this line are flowers whose colour (white, dark-red, violet, etc.) or whose attitude (the cowslip) or whose fate (the Primrose) are associated with *mourning*; below this line are flowers that are emblems of *immortality*.

149. **Bid...beauty shed**: 'Amaranthus, a never-fading flower, a type of immortality. Milton, requests it rightly, to lay aside its bloom for the time being and look sad, fitting the occasion.

150. **Daffadillies**: This flower is also an emblem of immortality. The word comes from the Greek 'asphodel.' **Fill...cup...tears**: Flowers are to fill their calyx with tears instead of honey.

151. **The laureate hearse**: 'Hearse' derived from 'Greek' 'hirpex', a harrow is generally applied to everything connected with funeral. Here probably, it is applied to the wooden framework on which the coffin rests, to which copies of memorial verses were often fastened. 'laureate' alludes to 'Lycidas' and other poems written in King's memory.

152-162: Critics have found a difficulty in interpreting this passage because of its faulty punctuation. In the original, there was a full stop after 'surmise'; and semi-colon after 'hold' (l. 162). To make the sense clear, it is necessary to substitute a semi-colon or a comma after 'surmise' (l. 153) and a full stop after 'hold'. The trend of thought is this: 'let us to ease our grief, play with the false notion (surmise) that the body of Lycidas is here in the Coffin: though in reality, alas, it is being borne in its 'wandering grave', perhaps northwards to Hebrides, perhaps south to the Land's End.

152. **For...ease**: To get relief from the pangs of grief.

153. **Dally**: Trifle, play with. *False Surmise* the false notion that Lycidas is here in the coffin.

154. **Ay me!**: A very common expression used by elegiac poets and ridiculed by Ben Jonson. 'Here, however, the burst of grief is infinitely beautiful when properly connected with what precedes it and to which it refers.'

154-55: 'Shores' when taken closely with *sounding seas*, gives a vivid picture of the body dashed from coast to coast, 'as though land and sea were leagued against it'.

156. **Stormy Hebrides** : Islands off the west coast of Scotland, where the sea surges with storm.

157. **Whelming** : 'Covering completely', overwhelming; the original reading was '*humming*.'

158. **Visit'st** : This word and sleep'st (l. 160) present Lycidas as though visiting a new and fantastic world—the caves of sea—or sleeping in repose near the post of the guardian angel of his native land; thus, they, in their turn prepare the way for a mood of exultation over the thought of the immortal life into which his spirit has entered.

158. **Monstrous world** : A transferred epithet; world of monstrous creatures—the world of ocean.

159. **Moist vows** : 'Vows' means 'funeral rites or prayers'. **Moist** i. e. moist with tears.

160. **Fable of Bellerus** : i. e. Fabled Bellerus. The epithet suggests the land where a Cornish giant, Bellerus, was fabled to have lived. Milton seems to have coined this name from Bellerium the Latin word for Land's End Cornwall.

161. **Great vision of the guarded mount** : Tradition reports, that the archangel Michael was once seen sitting on and guarding a Cornish mountain. *Great vision* means the archangel Michael seen in vision. *Guarded* : Protected.

162. **Namancos and Bayona's hold** : What a roll call of sonorous proper names ! To a scholar these two names will suggest Spain from where danger had come to England thrice; but to a layman they will give the sense of mystery and the glamour of the unknown. **Namancos** : A town in Galicia near Cape Finistree, the Land's End of Spain. **Bayona** : A town also near that Cape, and conspicuously marked in the maps of Milton's days, as a fortified town.

160-63 : Milton, the wizard, 'of imagination connact', uses beautifully the legend of the vision of St. Michael of

the guarded mount, by transforming the passing apparition of the saint, into an eternal watch kept by him, from a Cornish mountain; where, 'lay the fabled Bellerus'—in the direction of *Namancos and Bayona*, the towns suggesting Spain from where had come danger thrice to England: first the Invincible Armada; ten years later, the Spanish descent upon Ireland; and the proposed Spanish match between Infanta of the most bigoted Catholic Country and the heir to the British throne. In Milton's days the danger still remained, only in its altered form—the grim wolf, the Jesuits from Spain devouring with privy paw, Protestant lambs. St. Michael must keep, hence, permanent watch. But even the guardian angel needs must relax, his stern, watchful gaze and turn his eyes homeward 'bedewed with tears' on the coast where lies corpse of the shipwrecked Lycidas. The mention of the Angel as keeping continual watch over *the national safety*, causes 'a sudden outburst of personal grief' in Milton; and he requests St. Michael to weep for a brief space of time at least, for the death of Lycidas.

163. **Angel:** Of course St. Michael and not Lycidas as some editors suppose; because in the first place there is no special point in asking the spirit of Lycidas weep for his own death; secondly, there is an obvious antithesis between *looks towards Namancos and look homeward*, and the point of this will be entirely lost were the clauses made to refer to two different subjects; finally, Milton with his regard for theology cannot make the dead entering heaven the same as angels. Theology ever distinguishes the two. RUTH = Pity. •

164. **Dolphins:** The reference is to a similar act by the Dolphins. Arion, a musician, when thrown overboard by mariners managed to play on the lyre, which attracted the Dolphins and they carried the musician safely to the

shore. *Milton asks the Dolphius to bring back the helpless body of Lycidas ashore.* Dolphins were creatures half-human, half-fish.

165-185 : In this concluding passage of the monody, (vide Prof. Masson), we hear a burst of triumph. The poet realizes, that after all, the grave has no real sting. Like the day-star, or sun, which seems to sink in the ocean, this so-called dying, is only to be followed by resurrection. The note of sincerity with which the music of these lines vibrates, make this passage an unmatched and exalted expression of faith triumphant over the material fact of death. Milton's elegy on Diodati also closes with '*copious immortality and joy*'.

165 : cf. Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more ! 166. *Your sorrow* : The object of your sorrow. 167 **Floor** : Surface 168. **The Day Star** : Mr. Jerram, Dr. Newton and Verity explain it to mean '*Sun*,' '*the diurnal star*,' because the context requires this interpretation. Others think it to be '*the evening star*' and support their interpretation on the mythological and classical grounds. I prefer the first as it brings out better the sense of a new glorious life after death. 169. **Repairs** : Raises anew. . **Drooping** : suggesting the setting of the sun. 170. **Tricks** : Dresses anew. **New spangled ore** ; Golden brightness, restored afresh. **Ore** : Gold, on account of a mistaken belief that *ore*=*aurum*. In, ll. 168-77, description melts into emotion and contemplation bodies itself in imagery. 173. **The dear.....waves** : A singularly appropriate allusion ; for, Lycidas had perished at sea. The reference is to St. Matthews (XIV 24-31) where we read that Christ performed a miracle by walking on the Galilean waters and saving St. Peter from drowning. Similarly, He through His divine power has saved the soul of Lycidas though drowned at sea and endowed him with immortal life in '*His blest Kingdom*.' 174 **Other--along** : Other than

those on earth which he had formerly frequented. 175. **Nectar** : is the drink of the Gods. In Lycidas, the rivers of heaven flow with nectar! **Oozy Locks** : Wet with the slimy waters of the sea where Lycidas was drowned. **Laves** : Bathes or washes bringing about 'immortal change.' See *Comus* l. 841. 176. **The unexpressive** : The mystic and musical sweetness of which can never be (adequately) expressed in human language. **Nuptial song** : Mr. Jerram *cannot but feel* that this refers to 'the marriage of the Lamb.' (Rev XIX 6, 7). cf. : 'Let us be glad and rejoice...for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.' The words also suggest the mystic marriage of Lycidas himself in heaven, and enjoying the Divine Love of which Plato treats in *Phaedrus* and of which Milton writes in ll. 1003-11 of *Comus*.

165-177 : Lycidas is not dead. Like the sun sinking 'beneath the watery floor' and appearing again with renewed glory, Lycidas though sunk and dead revives again—on account of Christ's Divine Power—resplendent in his eternal glory, in the land of the Immortals, where he will enjoy the Divine Love and Happiness—'the perfection of our pining visions dim'. Wonderful in their allusiveness, sweet in their sincere conviction, and beautifully delicate in their music—these lines are in a class apart.

179-181 : The entry of Lycidas is a solemnly happy occasion. The saints in heaven 'entertain him' with song and solemn dance and wipe away his tears *for ever* from his eyes. Freed from 'this mortal coil', 'the muddy vesture' and 'immortalized by lavings of Nectar', Lycidas leads a life of eternal blessedness and happiness, the glimmering and fleeting vision of which we see in our dreams.

179. **Solemn** : Celebrating a festival not with wanton frivolousness, but with 'calm rejoicing'.

180. **Move** : Move with 'musical motion'. In plain prose, *dance*. Milton deliberately avoids using the word '*dance*' in connection with Saints. The music on the spheres, in Milton is at times an echo of the music and 'motion' of Saints in heaven.

181. None needs weep in heaven, the place of eternal bliss ; that is why all Saints wipe the tears from Lycidas's eyes. Milton curiously enough ascribes this act, (viz. wiping of tears) to Saints and not to God Himself. [cf. Rev. vii, 17].

182-85 : Addressed to Lycidas 'pointing out' to him that the Shepherds weep no more. They know that, he is enjoying 'eternal happiness'.

183. **Genius of the Shore** : According to an ancient belief the spirit of any one who was drowned would thereafter guard the place of his death as the protecting 'genius'—the guardian spirit. The freedom with which Milton turns from Christian to pagan imagery is noteworthy.

184. **Thy** : i. e. made to thee. **Good** : namely in preventing shipwreck and loss of life.

185. **To all...flood** : Though supplanted now by the Eddystone Light-house, Lycidas still continues, in poetry at least, to be the guardian spirit.

186-93 : With line 186, 'the Monody or Pastoral ends. The last eight lines of the poem do not belong to the Monody. They are not a part of the song sung by Milton in his imaginary character as the shepherd who is bewailing Lycidas, but are distinctly a stanza of Epilogue, in which Milton speaks directly, criticizes what he has just written in his imaginary character, and intimates that he has stepped out of that character, and is about to turn to other occupations' (Masson). The epithet, '*Uncouth*'

suggests the 'forc'd fingers rude'; '*Doric*,' the ideal, the poet is placed before himself; 'eager,' his apology and his occasional lapses; and 'the pastures new,' the future wider horizons.

186. **Uncouth**: Unknown, obscure and also 'rude and without culture,' suiting the context. An illustration of Milton's scholarly modesty and graceful humility. *Lycidas* is 'neither *rude*, nor *harsh*', but an example of supreme perfection of style, imagery and versification. **Swain** i. e. the shepherd shedding melodious tear for *Lycidas*.

187. **While...gray**: A lovely personification, a dynamic picture matching comparison with Shakespeare's 'the morn...walks o'er the dew' etc. '**Still morn**' because all is silent at day-break. The shepherd sang his sad and *Doric* lay all the day long. **With sandals grey**: Like Mercury the swift-footed messenger of the gods, the morning personified wears swift-winged sandals, moving briskly towards noon.

188. **The tender...quills**: The reference is to a Pandean pipe or mouth-organ, a primitive form of the reed organ. '*Tender*' points out the affection for the dead in evidence all through the elegy; **Stops** are the holes for regulating sound; and **Various Quills** mean the reeds of different lengths making up the Pandean pipe.

189. **Eager Thought**: Passionate grief. Soul-stirring sorrow. **Doric lay**: Theocritus, Bion and Moschus wrote their pastorals in *Doric* dialect. The phrase means song or music in the Dorian mode referring to the Pastoral song. Mr. Percival rightly thinks that *Doric* has a double meaning: (1) in Greek music there were different scales of notes, one of these being Dorian. (2) The *Doric* Dialect.

190. A charming vision—of the evening shadows lengthening and stretching far away—over which we fain may linger.

191. Evening pervaded the sky. „ p

192. **Twitched** : The sharp sound corresponds admirably with the image. As he feels the sudden chill of evening, the shepherd draws his mantle around him. This simple action indicates the shepherd's return to his usual frame of mind. **Mantle blue** : Prof. Hales points out that *blue* is the colour of shepherd's dress: Verity says '*Grey*'. Hazlitt writes : '*both*'.

193. **Fresh—new** : " A return to the ordinary occupation of a shepherd's life ; ... in the life of the poet they (these words) indicate a renewal of his studies '—Percival. Some think that this line refers to Milton's journey to Italy. Others feel that ' it is a covert way of saying that Milton has finally separated himself from the Anglican and Court party and means to identify himself with the Puritans '. Whatever the inner significance of this line, it unmistakably suggests the newer and wider horizons. The elegy closes with a note of classic simplicity and haunting delicacy.
