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## **NOTE TO USERS**

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**THE PROPHETIC FOUNT:  
THE IDEAL OF ABUNDANCE AND MILTON'S RECOVERY  
OF PARADISE**

**Douglas James Barrett**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Washington**

**2000**

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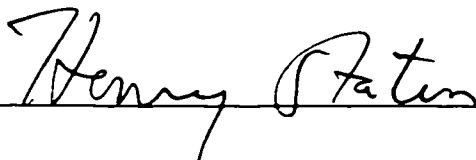
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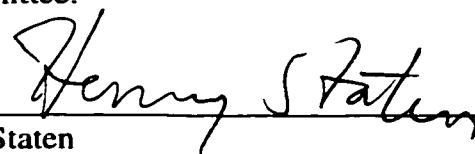
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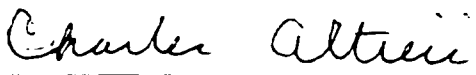
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ABSTRACT

The Prophetic Fount: The Ideal of Abundance and Milton's Recovery of Paradise

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The Prophetic Fount reads Milton as one of four great Anglo-American neo-prophetic writers (the others: Blake, Lawrence, Pound) who try to realize an ideal of abundance. An introductory chapter examines abundance as the prophetic ideal, elucidates the neo-prophetics' grounds for commitment to it, and briefly considers neo-prophecy's relation to Hebrew prophecy and Romanticism, seeking in the process to establish Blake, Lawrence and Pound as privileged commentators on Milton. The reading proper divides Milton's poetic career into an early eudaemonism and three great reversals, each initiated by changing needs and strategies regarding abundance. In the Nativity Ode, Milton's First Reversal overthrows the Fifth Elegy's pagan eudaemonism with an antinatural Protestant will to poetic power. After traversing Bloom's revisionary ratios in his early poetry Milton recognizes, however, that poetic divinity is realized not by willful seeking but by generous bestowal, precipitating his expulsion of poetic will in Satan and the dismantling of his romantic world-animation machine. It also generates an attempt to redeem God—by revealing a generosity behind the jealous deity of satisfaction theology—which restructures the Oedipal superego and culminates the Second Reversal with a recovered vision of the Earthly Paradise, Eden. Yet Paradise proves unsustainable. Why? Milton's complex treatment traces the Fall to Eve's narcissistic identification. But Eve's narcissism is itself constructed by the patriarchal voices whose counteridealistic attempts to retain Paradise only exacerbate the constraining abundance that propels Eve and Adam to fall. Anxiety over female sensuous abundance now emerges as underlying patriarchal subordination and compulsive instrumentalism. Recovery requires realization of unmediated abundance: first through moral disengagement from the body ego; second (in Samson Agonistes) by catharsis of social (especially female) construction; and finally (in Paradise Regained) by deliberate articulation of an identity as immanent divinity. Milton's Jesus affirms, in contrast even to expansive forms of social constructivism, an identity as abundance, demonstrated by anticipating and rejecting the Hegelian drive for identity through cultural mastery. This proto-mystical asceticism, dissolving performance imperatives, raises possibilities for renewed, if still unrealized, eudaemonism and social engagement.

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## Abbreviations

Note: I have chosen to cite by abbreviation works published in separate volumes, most long poems bearing line numbers, and tracts by Blake commonly referred to by their original page numbers. Citations follow the form of work: volume or chapter; line(s), as in: PL V 70-3. Citations divided by colons indicate plate:line numbers of Blake's engraved works, as in J 91:10.

### Milton

CPW	<u>Complete Prose Works</u> (Yale edition)
H	<u>John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose</u> , ed. Merrit Y. Hughes
PL	<u>Paradise Lost</u>
PR	<u>Paradise Regained</u>
SA	<u>Samson Agonistes</u>

### Blake

An.	Annotations to (cited by page number of the book annotated)
ARO	<u>All Religions Are One</u>
BU	<u>The Book of Urizen</u>
DC	<u>A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures</u>
E	<u>Europe</u>
FZ	<u>The Four Zoas</u>
J	<u>Jerusalem</u>
M	<u>Milton</u>
MHH	<u>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</u>
SL	<u>The Song of Los</u>
NNR	<u>There is No Natural Religion</u>
PA	<u>A Public Address</u>
VLJ	<u>A Vision of the Last Judgment</u>

### Lawrence

A	<u>Apocalypse</u>
CP	<u>Collected Poems</u>
FPU	<u>Fantasia of the Unconscious/Psychoanalysis of the Unconscious</u>
P	<u>Phoenix</u>
P II	<u>Phoenix II</u>
SCAL	<u>Studies in Classic American Literature</u>

## Acknowledgements

First, two people without whom this dissertation would not have reached finished form. Readers of the last chapter in particular will observe an intellectual debt to Charles Altieri; yet my debt to him extends far beyond what appears in the text. As my original committee chair, Charlie read the earliest drafts of this work and provided invaluable criticism and encouragement. Upon The Prophetic Fount's completion, Charlie (now at UC Berkeley) took it under his wing and guided it through the bureaucratic minefield confronting seriously overdue dissertations--this despite the fact that I addressed his work largely in order to define my position against it. In the process he put me in contact with Henry Staten, who became the necessary and much-appreciated second advocate--and who, as new committee chair, gave the work a most thorough reading, suggesting and inspiring many improvements. My deepest thanks to both.

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Without the generous and sustained financial assistance of Ed and Beth Barrett, this dissertation would never have been finished. My gratitude to them is beyond words.

To my wife, Laura, and to James, Dan and Rose go deepest thanks for not only tolerating but at times professing to appreciate the years of (ig)noble poverty and (in)voluntary simplicity accompanying this project.

*The Prophetic Fount* is dedicated to:

My parents, Ed and Beth Barrett

*And further, by these, my son, be admonished:  
Of making many books there is no end;  
And much study is a weariness of the flesh.*

Laura, James, Dan and Rose

*They endured.*

And to Charles Altieri

*If he wants it.*

## Chapter One: THE PROPHETIC IDEAL

"Hear it and be grateful"

Are we idealists today or not? It depends; what do we mean by the "ideal"? If it means that which exists mentally, in the universe of language and signification rather than outside it, perhaps no era has ever been more idealistic than ours, with its subjectivist paradigms and doctrines of social construction. Moreover, the linguistic and theoretical turn has made it hard indeed to write about any humanistic field without a cumbersome theoretical apparatus, especially if one would resist the consensus discourse; and the common result is an abstract and cerebral style that even (especially) when practiced brilliantly has trouble fully coming to grips with texts. One-wants nevertheless to resist the standard methodology, the hermeneutics of suspicion that works out to a reduction of an artist's motive to some form of will to power, especially if an appeal is discerned to ideals of virtue, truth or beauty—as if such an appeal is at best self-deceived, at worst (and far more likely) an attempt to put something over on us. While not the sole target of this reductivism, art is a prime one.

Is there any correlation between the abstract, theoretical style of contemporary discourse and its suspicious, reductive, at times just mean-spirited outlook? Between its tendency toward conceptual idealization on one hand, and toward ethical de-idealization on the other?

We shouldn't have to look hard to discover where the imperative to read suspiciously against texts ultimately comes from. It is rooted in the old quarrel between philosophy and poetry, and can be traced back to the original "deconstructive" readings visited on Greek poetry by Plato. The philosopher's, the theorist's, the critic's will to power over works of art is almost as old as Western literary history. Yet today things have advanced to the point where thinking about Plato evokes nostalgia for an old harmony. "Plato's dialogues," observes Lawrence, "are queer little novels. It seems to me it was the greatest pity in the world when philosophy and fiction got split. They used to be one, right from the days of myth. Then they went and parted, like a nagging married couple, with Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and that beastly Kant." (P 520)

Poetry and philosophy, truth and fictive art... why do we yearn to put them together again? Don't we know better than to try to put the egg back in the shell? Some marriages, no matter how happily begun, just can't be saved. What do the pair in question have to say to each other today? If they have anything to say at all, must it not be said in dialogue? Which is why it may be time now to change voices: from that of Philosophy, the calm, rational "male" partner who has dominated the relationship for the past two and a half millennia, to that of Poetry, the passionate and "irrational" female partner who has, let us

fancy, finally decided to really speak up. Some long-standing grievances are about to be vented. Can we imagine Poetry finally getting her back up and telling off her beloved tormentor in the voice of Ursula in Women In Love telling off Birkin when he proposes to leave her behind to keep a farewell dinner engagement with the cultivated Hermione Roddice:

"And I, I'm not spiritual enough, I'm not as spiritual as that Hermione--!" Her brows knitted, her eyes blazed like a tiger's. " Then go to her, that's all I say, go to her, go. Ha, she spiritual--spiritual, she! A dirty materialistic as she is.... She's a fishwife, a fishwife, she is such a materialist. And all so sordid. What does she work out to, in the end, with all her social passion, as you call it. Social passion--what social passion has she? Show it me! Where is it? She wants petty, immediate power, she wants the illusion that she is a great woman, that is all.... And all the rest is pretense--but you love it. You love the sham spirituality; it's your food. And why? Because of the dirt underneath....

"You!" she cried. "You! You truth-lover! You purity-monger! It stinks, your truth and your purity.... Your purity, your candor, your goodness--yes, thank you, we've had some. You, and love! You may well say, you don't want love. No, you want yourself, and dirt and death--that's what you want. You are so perverse, so death-eating.... A pretty picture you make of yourself. But it takes nobody in but yourself.... What I say," her voice sprang into flame, "I say because it is true, do you see, because you are you, a foul and false liar, a whited sepulchre. That's why I say it. And you hear it."

"And be grateful," he added, with a satirical grimace. (388-90)

If truth were a woman... we might hear the moral outrage of the aesthetic against the purity of the conceptual ideal, source since Plato of so much spurious anti-aesthetic "critique." How seriously to take such vituperation? If we may indeed take Ursula's outburst as emblematic of the aesthetic's reply to the philosophical ideal (and Lawrence elsewhere denounces idealism in language not far short of Ursula's, incorporating some of her ideas here) we can extract or extrapolate four substantive charges. The ideal is in fact materialistic; it is narcissistic; it is deceiving, and self-deceiving, in its pretense (even its aspiration?) to purity; and its progressive social effects may prove to be spurious. The ideal, in short, conceals deep de-idealizing impulses; it has a secret affinity for the sordid, for the petty exercise of power. Why?

Ursula intuitively senses, as Blake and Lawrence more consciously believed, that the ideal is the end result of the mind's processing of intuitive energies and sense impressions into instruments usable for meeting human needs—or at least the needs of the mode of consciousness that presides over the processing. All immediate experience undergoes this processing, by which it is abstracted of qualities useless for instrumentation. The longer and more intense the processing, the greater the dessication of experience, leaving one with no apparent recourse but to further intensify the sublimation in hope of rewards offered for performance in the symbolic order, in compensation for what no longer seems available elsewhere. Yet since the symbolic owes its very existence to instrumentalizing sublimation, investment in it seems fated to become de-idealizing—unless ways are found to retain ethical ideals that

exalt pre-instrumental modes of relationship—and which conceptual idealization seems increasingly to jeopardize. As ethical idealizing becomes ever harder to sustain, the odds lengthen on a collapse into sordid sensationalism that affects several of Lawrence's characters, and which Ursula suspects has occurred in Birkin. Thus these two aspects of idealization—abstractive ideation and ethical nobility—seem destined to live each other's death.

Contemporary ideas about language register at least some basis for this way of thinking about it. Language's oft-highlighted rhetorical function is an instrumental function, evoking effects in the listener easily accounted for in terms of will to power, and so foregrounding the mutual suspicion of egos who seem ever more agonistically thrown against each other. The de-emphasized conceptual-representative function of language likewise facilitates or embodies the will to dominate physical nature, which we manipulate by means of abstract (often but not always) mathematical significations, and foregrounds the power of the mental or spiritual ideal over "fallen" nature that Western philosophy has emphasized but which we've now come to suspect. The closer we examine ordinary language, the more it seems, by virtue of its linkage with will to power, to sponsor ethical de-idealization. The instrumental virtuosity offered by conceptual idealization arguably fosters aesthetic as well as ethical impoverishment.

Such observations lead easily to a world-view older than, and diametrically opposed to, modernity's cherished myth of progress. This contrary view posits devolution, not evolution, as the great movement of history: devolution from a Golden Age, an Eden, a Paradise, via "advances" leading to the degrading "regressions," which certain Twentieth Century social disasters might be thought by some to exemplify.

Is it possible to rethink the idea and the ethical ideal so that modernity and postmodernity can realize both? Given ordinary language's instrumental character, it is not immediately clear that even the most responsible and persuasive attempts to do this—for example, Habermas's "ideal speech situation"—will be able fully to ground themselves in this language. Shall we then turn to extraordinary language? In opposition to modern techno-speak and rhetorical chatter Heidegger put forward the notion of a more authentic poetic discourse in which the being of the thing might shine forth; but several questions arise about this. How is this discourse to be recognized and practiced, especially when Heidegger's own complex, abstract and jargon-laden writing hardly exemplifies what he extols. And how shall we assess the political implications of a poetic language evoked in connection with the mystified aesthetic ideology underlying Nazism? Assuming these problems to be solvable, another large set remains. If ordinary language's instrumental nature has a de-idealizing influence, how then may a de-instrumentalized poetic language exert an idealizing effect—and what sort of idealizing would such a discourse tend to sponsor? How can rarefied poetic or aesthetic "truths" have any impact at all on the "real world"? And how, conversely, does poetic concreteness affect an abstracted, conceptually-idealized and instrumentalized

ordinary language? Can we conceive an ethical ideal that can directly address the de-idealizing process, giving rise to a framework of ideas capable of comprehending the situation and re-orienting our instrumental capacity toward effective action—or non-action—against it?

Such a resolution is not likely to come via a monologue performed by either philosophy or poetry. Should we look then to the remarriage of the two, and take Poetry's vituperation of the conceptual ideal as an overture to reconciliation—if Philosophy can but absorb the critique? "He knew she was in the main right.... He knew he was perverse, so spiritual on the one hand, and in some strange way, degraded on the other. But was she herself any better? Was anybody any better?" (WL 389-90)

"Hear it and be grateful!" Whoever can do that? Yet only at such moments, when one submits to criticism amounting virtually to self-erasure, can things ever really change. Ursula's tirade frees something in both Birkin and herself; the altercation becomes the beginning of their new life. As she speaks—and he hears—the unpleasant truth, a pact is formed between them. Further communication will be less violent. For Birkin, the idealist who despises ideals, Ursula comes to embody (as Frieda did for Lawrence) the preconscious, the "true unconscious," which intuitively apprehends without knowing quite how or why—and, precisely by virtue of that, apprehends more keenly and surely.

The sources of man's life are over-full, they receive more than they give out. and why? Because a man is a well-head built over a strong perennial spring and enclosing it in, a well-head whence the water may be drawn at will, and under which the water may be held back indefinitely. Sometimes, and in certain ways, according to certain rules, the source may bubble and spring out, but only at certain times, always under control. (P 422)

The ideal, as concept and precept, constricts and constructs the influx of intuition and percept as it arises into consciousness in art. Is this the "ideal" state of affairs? Or is it better when "[t]his pseudo-philosophy of mine... is deduced from the novels and poems, not the reverse. The novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen [as] pure passionate experience," creating the need "to abstract some definite conclusions from one's experiences as a writer and a man" (FPU 15).<sup>1</sup> Ought such non-rational experiences to be suppressed, subjected to sublimation—or welcomed as is? What happens when art presumes to dictate to philosophy in this way? When philosophy, rather than imposing itself on, art discovers itself in it—as occurred originally, when it emerged from myth?

Here we find a particularly hard pill for philosophy to swallow, for in this light its relation to poetry can never be simply that of two independent equals. Rather, philosophy must acknowledge, along the lines of the oldest myths, its birth, and need for continual rebirth, from the womb of the aesthetic. Its relation to poetry is more than anything else that of son to mother—a relationship Lawrence willingly accepted with regard to his creative work, however much he resisted such things in personal life. For in

the intellectual realm the relationship may alter as the son, or mental ideation, gains strength to take "mother" as "lover"—avoiding, if all goes well, the worst aspects of the rape/ incest cycle detailed in Blake's "The Mental Traveler." Extending our metaphor as far as possible before it collapses, we note that our reborn philosophical boy possess in fact two parents, having been begotten on Poetry by old Philosophy Sr. who, encumbered with accomplished ideation, may have something to teach the youth despite (or by means of) his crusty resistance. The dialogue most crucial in the youth's education will probably be with him, for what he draws directly from his mother is absorbed intuitively.

Platonic dualism and Augustinian Christianity, the prime movers of Western idealization, encourage suppression or sublimation of the "natural" man's original impulses, an imperative that informs Freudian interpretations of them. Against this venerable tradition Lawrence affirms "the true, pristine unconscious, in which all genuine impulse arises." This is "the well-head, the fountain of real motivity" and is "a very different affair from the Freudian unconscious... the cellar in which the mind keeps its own bastard spawn" (FPU 207). The Lawrencian unconscious often resembles more the Freudian preconscious, the interface between cosmos and psyche. Like the unconscious, the preconscious manifests itself, prior to full cognition, in the pre-conceptual language of art; but whereas the Freudian unconscious, itself at least partially the product of socially-mediated conceptuality, may well find adequate expression only when translated back into that language, the preconscious, while always capable of enriching that language, may well suffer a reduction upon entering it. It seems particularly crucial, then, to pay close attention to its primal artistic expression—even more crucial, if possible, than in reading the Freudian and Jungian strata. Whatever the intuitional stratum expressed, to attend to it amounts to learning philosophy—and (as Freud professed to have done) psychology—from literature, or from the arts in general. Such philosophy will perforce be a rather homemade affair, and while able to enter dialogue with extant ways of thinking, must not be overawed into waffling on its first principles.

Lawrence conceived his "true unconscious," pre-existing and irreducible to the Freudian or the Jungian, (those treasuries, respectively, of childhood and racial trauma), as the manifestation of cosmic and psychic abundance, resistant to the dysdaemonism implicit in the other strata. Was he alone in this delusion, or have others succumbed to similar ones? Milton's descriptions of Paradise's originary surcharged plenitude come immediately to mind, as does his attack on concocted scarcity in matters intellectual, and his struggle to regain some sort of internal paradisaal eudaemonism under the most adverse personal circumstances. Blake, who after rebelling against Milton acknowledged him as an empowering precursor in the mapping of internal paradise and hell, offers a doctrine of energetic abundance as the source of reason that is close to Lawrence's. And then there is Pound, who defined literature as "nutrition of impulse" and artists as "the antennae of the race" (Literary Essays 20, 58); perhaps the worst (though not the weakest!) reader of Milton ever, he seems never quite to have recognized that his attempt to "write

Paradise" based on the abundance of nature, cosmic and psychic, had a Puritan precedent. This is not the only thing Pound could have learned about, or from, Milton.

A very strange gang of four these authors make. Do they at all agree among themselves? Blake's attack on Milton in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is well-known and his antipathy to his precursor is still often considered beyond dispute. Lawrence had little to say about Milton directly, contenting himself with a gesture toward Satan's heroism. Pound condemned Milton as the great corrupter of English verse, dismissed Blake as "dippy William" and expressed reluctant admiration for Lawrence, who in turn voiced a somewhat less reluctant admiration for Blake.<sup>2</sup> Whatever makes one think they have anything much in common? Never the images they cast in the undergraduate mind: Milton, dour and aloof; Blake, enraptured and obscure; Lawrence, obsessed with sex and power; Pound, futurist impresario of lost poetic technique, "crackpot" economics, and worse-than-crackpot politics. Reductive as they are, those images are not quite unfounded. Few but Milton, even in his day, would have considered theology so essential to the Earthly Paradise. Few but Blake (at least until quite recently) would have found the key to Paradise in experiences hovering between schizophrenic hallucination and mystical illumination. Who but Lawrence could propose to realize Paradise with the help of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor? And who but Pound would have taken it into his head to write Paradise with the aid of Major Douglas's economic program?

Their commonality, of course, is of underlying concern, and is apparent in the divergences just mentioned. All four sought the recovery of eudaemonism, and the re-generation of "fallen" experience and "fallen" society. All four found Christian orthodoxy an obstacle to this, particularly in its condemnation of ordinary human impulse--and set about revising, if not rejecting, it. And all four gravitated toward the principle of abundance as the key to a sane aesthetics, psychology, theology and politics. For each, "abundance" serves as the highest value--Kenneth Burke's "god-term," the sine qua non of the legitimately sacred.

Of these four, Milton--whether acknowledged, neglected or resisted--is the great precursor, the one who set in motion the project of regaining a Paradise intuited as abundance. Behind them all, however, stands the Bible: the Genesis tale of the original lost paradise and the vision of its recovery. In acknowledgment of this if for no other reason, let us call Milton, Blake, Lawrence and Pound "prophetic" writers--or "neo-prophetic," to distinguish them from their Biblical predecessors who, while loyal to their own vision of plenitude, were above all concerned with the covenant destiny of Israel. There will be more to say eventually on the relation between the Hebrew prophets and the Anglo-American prophetics.

As the "god-term" or ultimate value in neo-prophetic writing, abundance seems worthy to be called "the prophetic ideal"--with the observation that it is not an ascetic ideal, but tends toward anti-ascetic counteridealism. As ultimate value, and as the foundation of all eudaemonist aesthetic critique, abundance generally dwells below the level of explicit consciousness, too deep for full conceptual

articulation by any of the neo-prophetics, becoming visible only when critical attention is focused on their underlying value structures. Emerging "unwatched from the pen," the prophetic ideal is no concept or precept to which experience or action is officially required to conform; thus it avoids much of Lawrence's attack on the ideal. Yet as an intuitive ideal it exerts even in its most inchoate form a definite pressure on experience. For to intuit abundance as supreme value is to implicitly rebuke all experience (not to mention ideology) constructed by ontologized scarcity, and to propose a choice of spiritual life against death very much in the manner of the Hebrew prophets. There is, the prophetic ideal affirms, a life outside constructing concept and constricting precept, outside the idea(l)s of instrumental consciousness altogether, and apart from which these functions, dominant as they are in everyday life, cease to function very well.

Milton, while probably the most philosophically informed of the neo-prophetics, is the most conceptually innocent when it comes to articulating the prophetic ideal and the psychological complexities of losing and regaining paradise. In Milton the fall and recovery are dramatized, forcing us to extract concepts directly from the acts and speeches of his characters. It is not always clear that he himself consciously grasps the implications of the action depicted; yet conceptualization, at worst, lingers not far behind and his growth in conceptual power culminates in the last two great poems, which are in fact debates. In Blake, ideas and psychological processes are allegorized from the start, with the characters given names or conceptual markers as preliminary interpretations: Urizen = Reason, Luvah = Love, Los = the Eternal Prophet, Vala = the Female Will (and probably also, with Kathleen Raine, the Veil of Maya), etc. In Lawrence's novels some of Blake's characters seem to reappear stripped of their allegorical tags, while in his essays philosophical ideas and psychological forces are treated as pure concepts. Pound, who comes closest of all to articulating the prophetic ideal as such, by-passes psychology almost altogether to focus on the ideal's political-economic application. Milton the dramatist, Blake the allegorist, Lawrence the theorist, Pound the technician, of abundance.

The critic engaging prophetic writing non-adversarially confronts two important tasks. First, that of showing just how their ideas are discovered in the course of aesthetic creation. Of the four, Milton is by far the most interesting subject in this regard. To trace the subterranean currents of Miltonic desire, to observe the poet learning psychology from his own pen, and re-learning philosophy when deep impulses realign conceptual polarities--I know no more interesting experience in literature. The aim of the ensuing chapters will be to develop a reading of Milton along these lines: exploring the unfolding of the prophetic ideal in all its dialectical complexity; observing how Milton confronts powerful internal pressures that disrupt his idealization through the three great reversals that mark his career, and how the aesthetic values that shape the West's first systematic poetic critique of dysdaemonism, scarcity and ascetic idealism are themselves shaped and critiqued in turn by the emerging prophetic ideal, itself under strong psychological



So spacious, and his Line stretcht out so far:  
That Man may know he dwells not in his own;  
An Edifice to large for him to fill (PL VIII 100-4)

Why, then, does scarcity persist? "Sane engineers and wise men tell us," observed Pound in 1933, "that the question of production is solved. The world's producing plant can produce everything the world needs. There is not the faintest reason to doubt this."<sup>4</sup> "Nature habitually overproduces," Pound reminded his depression-era readers. "Chestnuts go to waste on the mountain side, and it has never yet caused a world crisis." (SP 233) The crisis was caused by the shortage of purchasing power which, Pound insisted, was in the interests of monopoly capital, and especially financiers, to construct. "The greed for monopoly," Pound wrote, "is a fundamental evil" culminating in usury, the ultimate monopoly, "the artificial scarcity of money" which constitutes "the key to all the other exchanges" (SP 172). For this reason "usury" or monopolistic avarice was for Pound "the great sin contra naturam... the prime sin against natural abundance" in which the "Black Mass of money" substitutes for "the mystery of fecundity" (SP 342, 265, 307, 317). Pound's attempts to link his ideas up with Marxism before finally throwing in his lot exclusively with Mussolini seem to have met with little response from the left, for reasons that were in good part Pound's own fault.<sup>5</sup> If Pound's ideas deserve more consideration from the left than the dismissal they've often received, the anti-Semitism with which were (and continue to be) associated guarantees them little other fate. It was not until Marcuse that the left saw the significance of plenitude as opposed to scarcity economics. From "the brute fact of scarcity" Freud had deduced the inevitability of aggression, hence of repression, castration, and compensatory fantasy to make life bearable under this regime.

However, this argument, which looms large in Freud's metapsychology, is fallacious in so far as it applies to the brute fact of scarcity what actually is the consequence of a specific organization of scarcity, and of a specific existential attitude enforced by this organization. (Marcuse 33)

While it would seem to follow from Freudian premises that those called upon to exercise power do so simply to save society from anarchy, the unlikelihood of this scenario suggests another: that scarcity is constructed and reified in order to rationalize power and, as Blake saw, to enforce resignation.

Shall not the King call for Famine from the heath?  
Nor the Priest, for Pestilence from the fen?  
To restrain! to dismay! to thin!  
The inhabitants of mountain and plain;  
In the day of full-feeding prosperity;  
And the night of delicious songs.

Shall not the Councillor throw his curb  
Of Poverty on the laborious?  
To fix the price of labour;  
To invent allegoric riches...

That the delicate ear in its infancy  
 May be dull'd; and the nostrils clos'd up;  
 To teach mortal worms the path  
 That leads from the gates of the Grave. (SL 6:9-7:8)

"Neomalthusianism needs looking into," observed Pound (SP 341). Both Blake and Pound anticipate Marcuse's differentiation of basic from surplus repression:

Surplus-repression: the restrictions necessitated by social dominion. This is distinguished from (basic) repression: the "modifications" of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization.... Domination differs from rational exercise of authority. The latter, which is inherent in any societal division of labor, is derived from knowledge and confined to the administration of functions and arrangements necessary for the advancement of the whole. In contrast, domination is exercised by a particular group or individual in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged position. Such domination does not exclude technical, material, and intellectual progress, but only as an unavoidable by-product while preserving irrational scarcity, want, and constraint.... [T]he specific interests of domination introduce additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association. These additional controls arising from the specific institutions of domination are what we denote as surplus-repression. (Marcuse 32-34)

Prophetic writing, never denying the existence of local shortages, questions the Ananke of scarcity as a rationale for domination. And if basic repression need hardly exist, all grounds for surplus repression are dissolved. For Milton, Blake, Lawrence and Pound the issue amounts in effect to Marcuse versus Freud--and they line up unequivocally with Marcuse.

As the objective ground for the prophetic ideal, natural abundance issues its imperative to the psyche. To be sure, this imperative is geographically, even culturally conditioned:

In the North, man tend instinctively to imagine, to conceive that the sun is lighted like a candle, in an everlasting darkness, and that one day the candle will go out, the sun will be exhausted, and the everlasting dark will resume uninterrupted sway....

But to the southerner, the sun is so dominant that, if every phenomenal body disappeared out of the universe, nothing would remain but bright luminousness, sunniness....

Who is right? We cannot know, says Lawrence, we can only choose. What kind of relation to the world grows of each?

All that we do know, by actual experience, is that shadow comes into being when some material object intervenes between us and the sun... We can think of death, if we like, as something permanently intervening between us and the sun: and this is at the root of the southern, underworld idea of death. But this doesn't alter the sun at all. Hence, strictly, there is no tragedy. The universe contains no tragedy, and man is only tragical because he is afraid of death. For my part, if the sun always shines, and always will shine, in spite of millions of clouds of words, the death, somehow, does not have many terrors.... "Where are the snows of yesteryear?" Why precisely where they ought to be. Where are the little yellow aconites of eight weeks ago? I neither know nor care. They were sunny

and the sun shines, and sunniness means change, and petals passing and coming. The winter aconites sunnily came, and sunnily went. What more? The sun always shines. It is our fault if we don't think so. (P 57-8)

Belief in natural abundance enables one, even in the face of temporary shortages, to avoid the compulsive instrumentation that eventually creates shortages.

Marcuse shows how abundance allows frequent suspension of the instrumental activity required by the "reality" principle, restoring the pleasure principle and primary process in various forms: sensuous immediacy, perceptual identification, cosmic continuity. Abundance, or belief in it, creates leisure—"spare time free of anxiety" (SP 243) so rare in modern life. The cosmos, neo-prophetic writers universally declare, does not require drudgery. "For not to irksome toil but to delight/ He made us," Milton makes Adam say (PL IX 242-3). Blake's world is one where "every particle of dust breathes forth its joy" (E iii 18). "But still I know that life is for delight," declares the dying Lawrence (CP 709). If the cosmos is open and not closed, delight knows no final limitation.

Natural abundance arises from a productive energy not exhausted in any, or even all, of its manifestations. Lawrence invokes "the Godhead of energy" (CP 481) while Blake holds that "Energy is the only life... Energy is Eternal Delight" (MHH 4). In Milton energy is not a conceptual category; but the effects of "Nectar" (PL IV 240ff.) and "Light" (PL III 1ff.) are those of cosmic energy, vegetable and intellectual respectively. Unacknowledged in the Christian Doctrine's theology, these forces are nonetheless visible counterplayers in the poetry, essential to making Heaven and Paradise what they are (and essential, too, to refuting Blake's audacious--and later tacitly recanted--assertion that all Milton's energy derives from Hell). Internal energy, released by the suspension of instrumentation, transfigures our aesthetic apprehension of the world. In the art-sphere prophetic writing pioneers primary process--imagistic association, rather than narration or discursive reasoning--as the vehicle for large structures of thought. Still more important is the re-opening of experience. Perceptual abundance means the constant possibility of establishing a "vital relationship" with the world, of encountering it not as a means but as it is. As it is--for whom? As Adam awakes to the world, "With fragrance and with joy my heart o'er flow'd... And feel that I am happier than I know" (PL VIII 266, 282). For others the experience is intenser still:

What it will be Questiond When the Sun rises do you not see a round Disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea O no no I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty (VLJ 95).

And lest we think this merely Blake's idiosyncrasy:

Don't let us imagine we see the sun as the old civilizations saw it. All we see is a scientific little luminary, dwindled to a ball of blazing gas. In the centuries before Ezekiel and John, the sun was still a magnificent reality, men drew forth from him

strength and splendour, and gave him back homage and lustre and thanks.... Who says the sun cannot speak to me! The sun has a great blazing consciousness, and I have a little blazing consciousness. When I can strip myself of the trash of personal feelings and ideas, and get down to my naked sun-self, then the sun and I can commune by the hour, the blazing interchange, and he gives me life, sun-life, and I send him a little new brightness from the world of the bright blood. (A 27-8)

"We have lost the cosmos. The sun strengthens us no more, neither does the moon" (A 30)--  
 "Communicating Male and Female Light/ Which two great Sexes animate the World" (PL VIII 150-1).  
 We have lost it, Blake and Lawrence will suggest, in a two part process. Perceptual energy is diluted as subjective attention is diverted from perceiving to manipulating instrumental relations; and perceptual immediacy is filtered as the object is apprehended in terms of its instrumental relations. But fully energized, purged of "the trash of personal feelings and ideas," the network of interests, memories, anticipations and symbols that constitute instrumental consciousness and ordinary language, perception could be the Adamic vision of the world in its "Is-ness" or "Suchness" unconstructed by instrumentation or even (especially for Blake) conventional space/time relations. A vision no easier to express than to achieve, hence the frequent resort to the language of psychosis and animism (as with Blake and Lawrence above) or, maybe more felicitously, that of mystical paradox:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
 And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
 Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
 And Eternity in an hour ("Auguries of Innocence" 1-4)

Yet how does experiential abundance arise? How might one open, or re-open, oneself to the cosmos? How to suspend instrumentation while avoiding the, it sometimes seems, increasingly common performative contradiction of instrumentally attacking it? And how to do so without entirely washing reason away in a flood of schizo-intensities? How else to conceive of the recovery of experiential Paradise, the re-animating, re-aestheticizing, even re-sacralizing of the world? What energizes perception? And what de-energizes it to the point of giving the very idea of it an appearance of implausibility? These problems, so troublesome for romanticism, neo-prophecy is forced to reconsider.

Nothing has done more to make such ecstasies unfashionable than Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence. To be sure the thrust of that critique is in another direction: above all at the Cartesian/Husserl attempt to ground empiricism in perceptual certainty, a project Blake himself satirizes. Yet Urizen's dizzy decenteredness in an "equivocal world" (FZ VI 175ff.) due to signification's abolition of presence is for Blake a contingent condition, while for Derrida it follows from a more ontological incompatibility of perceptual presence with the sign, sufficient to call into question all experiential relation to the cosmos, and even leading to a renunciation of perception altogether. Thus in the discussion (not usually reprinted) following the original presentation of "Structure, Sign and Play":

Perception is precisely a concept, a concept of an intuition or of a given originating from the thing itself, present itself in its meaning, independently from language, from the system of reference. And I believe that perception is interdependent with the concept of origin and of center and consequently whatever strikes at the metaphysics of which I have spoken strikes also at the very concept of perception. I don't believe that there is any perception. (Macksey and Donato 272)

By means of the Saussurian model of language, according to which significations are not simple ostensive reference but arise in relation to other signifiers in a discursive system of differences, language--the concept--has taken over the role of the Kantian categories that deny access to things in themselves. The effect is to put the "transcendental signified" out of play:

From the moment that there is meaning there are nothing but signs. We think only in signs.... One could call play the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say as the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence. (Of Grammatology 50)

Once thought and the world have been bifurcated it is no longer possible to conceive of perceptions's entry into the symbolic. To supplement this dualism, Derrida offers another argument: that perceptual presence--and a fortiori the thought of it--is irrevocably conditioned by the specific contents and categories abiding within thought and language.

One then sees quickly that the presence of the perceived present can appear as such only inasmuch as it is continuously compounded with a nonpresence and nonperception, with primary memory and expectation (retention and protention). These nonperceptions are neither added to, nor do they occasionally accompany, the actually perceived now; they are essentially and indispensably involved in its possibility. (Speech and Phenomena 64)

Even if memory originates in perception (as Husserl asserted and Derrida here seems willing to grant) it is nevertheless, with respect to every subsequent perception, a conditioning nonpresence. Does this constitutive process structure perception prior to all possible experience, in the manner of the Kantian categories of space, time and causality, conditions apart from which no perception seems possible? Derrida supposes it does, and goes so far as to deduce from this perception's chimerical nature.

To this dissolution--in effect--of world's presence in experience, neo-prophetic writing responds quite vigorously. Anyone familiar with Milton, Blake, Lawrence or Pound will sense their antipathy to this sort of thinking--but what alternative have they to offer? For now let's concentrate on Derrida's second argument; the task will be to articulate non-dualism in the form of a psychology of signification. How can perceptual presence enter the symbolic order, preventing its petrification into a Satanic/Urizenic closed system? Or, to put the same question conversely, how do concepts emerge from percepts? And what is the relation between the thinking which occurs only within signs, and other modes of consciousness?

Underlying the neo-prophetic response--and in profound tension with the doctrine of intellectual abundance, which we have yet to consider--is the romantic premise that ideation produces absence. Absence does not ontologically precede all ideation, but rather the reverse. This principle of course is what makes Rafael urge Adam to "Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid/... Think only what concerns thee and thy being" and Adam resolve to live "The easiest way, nor with perplexing thoughts/ To interrupt the sweet of Life, from which/ God hath bid dwell far off all anxious cares" (PL VIII 167-85). Likewise will Lawrence declare that "[t]o those who cannot divest themselves again of mental consciousness and definite idea, mentality and ideas are death, nails through their hands and feet.... The great mass of humanity should never learn to read and write--never" (FPU 77, 87). And Blake: "Angels are happier than Men & Devils because they are not always Prying after Good & Evil in one Another and eating the Tree of Knowledge for Satans Gratification" (VLJ 94).

The first difference between neo-prophecy and romanticism is in the amount of thought the former gives to the problem of thought. For once you've bitten into the fruit of knowledge, there is no remedy but to devour it whole. "We cannot put an end to thinking," writes Lawrence's spiritual cousin Krishnamurti, "but thought comes to an end when the thinker ceases and the thinker ceases only when there is an understanding of the whole process." (231) How exactly does ideation create absence? For Blake and Lawrence it does so through the process of reductive abstraction we've already referred to. Since Blake's treatment of this process is the better known, let's rely on it here. Laying out in his early tractates the principles according to which reason has its being, Blake puts forth his de-idealizing principle that "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (MHH 4). Reason is the conceptual delineation of perceived energy forms. Blake's empiricism dictates that "Man cannot naturally Percieve but through his natural or bodily organs" and that "Man by his reasoning power can only compare & judge of what he has already perciev'd" (NNRa I, II). It follows that "Reason or the ratio of all we have already known is not the same that it shall be when we know more"--or in other words, perceive more. Perception is the source of the energy that reason binds with concepts, and without the continuing influx of which reason must lapse into inertia and ennui. "The bounded is loathed by its possessor. The same dull round even of a univer[s]e would soon become a mill with complicated wheels." (NNRb II, IV) And perception is desiring-perception as Jesus shows when "he prays to the Father to send the comforter or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on," (MHH 6) for "If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic [we may add, perceptual] character, the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again" (NNRb, Conclusion).

Perceptual objects, however, are normally conditioned, appearing to us as finite means to ends via the activity of a kind of virtuous, rational, angelic guardian, the removal of which transforms experience:

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life, and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt....

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern. (MHH 14)

Commenting on this idea, Huxley described this guardian as the "Cerebral Reducing Valve"<sup>6</sup>: the totality of operations designed to protect the psyche from stimulus irrelevant to the instrumental agenda of survival. These operations in Lawrence are called "sublimation"; while in Casteñeda's Tales of Power they are described as the work of the "tonal": a guardian who turns into a guard (123). Instrumental reason emerges via an abstraction from sense data of those qualities most relevant to the manipulation of objects. The progressive stripping away of superfluous qualities from perceptual representations, until even an arbitrary sign can be substituted for them, is visible in the development from glyphs to alphabets.<sup>7</sup> The absence marking signification is the fruit of this process. Signs begin as percepts from which most sensuous qualities--and eventually all data lacking beyond the bare necessities for instrumental manipulation--have been removed. Under this model of reductive abstraction, the symbolic is not bifurcated from perceptual presence but is only the final stage of its processing for instrumental use. And perception under this model is not conditioned by a symbolic order alien to it, but by traces of itself: by patterns of memory and expectation that, while intensified by the symbolic, occur even in pre-symbolic animal consciousness. And accessing the real does not require the symbolic to warp into a dimension alien to itself, but simply to go back and pick up a little more of what it is made of.

Ever creating and destroying those mediating traces of memory and expectation, perception is a simultaneous self-conditioning and self-cleansing. Recognizing how previous perception conditions subsequent perception via structures of memory and anticipation refutes positivism by showing that transmission from object to subject cannot be unproblematic or safe--even for pre-symbolic animal consciousness. Yet however mediated, filtered and processed by traces of prior perception, perception is nevertheless an influx of the real into prior perception, receiving further influx in turn. The more intense the commitment to instrumental manipulation, the more complete the suppression of "extraneous" sense data, and the stronger the barricade against the real. The sublimation process of course is to a degree natural and inevitable. All sensuous immediacies are subject to erosion, to the whittling away of what's useless about them. Left to itself, "[t]he degree of transfer from primary to mental consciousness varies

with every individual. But in most individuals the natural degree is very low." Modern education, felt Lawrence, consists of enforcing this sublimation:

Our poor little plants of children are put into horrible forcing-beds, called schools, and the young idea is there forced to shoot.... The ideas shoot, hard enough, in our sad offspring, but they shoot at the expense of life itself.... The ideal mind, the brain, has become the vampire of modern life, sucking up the blood and the life. (FPU 68-9)

Suspending instrumentation cannot restore the abundance of already-abstracted data, for the sublimation process is a one-way street; but it may let the mind experience subsequent perception more fully. Since knowledge can only sublimate from sensuous intensity, the more intensity the greater the capacity for new knowledge in the long run. Whereas the quicker and more strictly-enforced the sublimation, the quicker the intellectual facility but the less perceptual data available for extracting new knowledge in the long run. Milton's and Lawrence's oft-misunderstood aversion to eating the fruit of knowledge is not a valorization of sensation at the expense of sublimation and autonomy, but a preference for natural sublimation over self-industrialization enforced by "rationality."

Pound brings out the socio-economic aspect of this quintessentially Protestant and capitalist reason.

It might not be too much to say that the whole of protestant morals, intertwined with usury-tolerance, has for centuries tended to obscure perception of degrees, to debase the word moral to a single groove, to degrade all moral perceptions outside the relation of the sexes, and to vulgarize the sex relation itself. (Guide to Kulcher 282; cf. P 559).

For Pound the quality of psychic economics reflects that of political economics, as well as vice versa. Protestant mercantilism seemed associated with the suppression of any critique of usury, one of the last important works on the subject being De Modo Usuratum by Milton's adversary Salmasius (SP 323). Was Milton an ally of usurers? His mercantilist class interest and his Puritanism would seemingly have inclined him that way, and Pound, like Lawrence, misread Milton's "official" theology and poetics as a "morals-for-profit" Protestantism that degrades sexuality and nature. "Usury," or (as the term came to mean at times for Pound) Protestant antinaturalism

is not merely in opposition to nature's increase, it is antithetic to discrimination by the senses. Discrimination by the senses is dangerous to avarice. It is dangerous because any perception or any high development of the perceptive faculties may lead to knowledge.... Any form of "entertainment" that debases perception, anything that profanes the mysteries or tends to obscure discrimination, goes hand in hand with drives toward money profit. (Guide to Kulcher 281-2)

Though Pound would call this state of affairs "Miltonism," Milton's concern, not so very different from Pound's, was with the suppression of abundance by the "great merchants of this world" (H 665; cf. Rev. 18:11): the prelatical authorities who would suppress sensuous immediacy and intellectual fecundity in

order to retain their supposed monopoly on truth. For Milton, Blake and Lawrence, as for Pound "[a] vicious economic system has corrupted every ramification of thought" (LE 59)—primarily by corrupting and impoverishing data from the world, from the senses, and from the arts. Whereas Blake and Lawrence emphasize experiential abundance as perceptual intensity, Milton and Pound stress intellectual abundance,<sup>3</sup> the possibility of which further redeems sublimation from the charge of vampirism. Quite apart from the influx of perceptual presence's aesthetic abundance into the symbolic order, language possesses a kind of abundance unique to it: knowledge, which as an aspect of the Good, "the more/ Communicated, more abundant grows,/ The Author not impair'd" (PL V 71-3). This truth, spoken here by Satan, derives from Plotinus, a mentor to all the prophetics except Lawrence<sup>3</sup>:

[F]or energy runs through the Universe and there is no extremity at which it dwindles out. But, travel as far as it may, it never draws that first part of itself from the place whence the outgoing began: for if it abandoned its prior (the Intellectual-Principle), it would no longer be everywhere (its continuous Being would be broken and) it would be present at the end, only, of its course. (Enneads III, 8, 5)

For Milton, as for Blake and Plotinus, natural and intellectual energy are continuous, but as a more orthodox Platonist (unlike the young Blake, who wedded Platonism to empiricism) he sees the intellectual, not the physical, realm as the source of cosmological energy. From his intellectual emanationism, much of his libertarianism may be derived. Does not every improvement of the human condition arise from the transmission of knowledge, in defiance of simple location and scarcity, making new ways of organizing the world available to all? It follows in Areopagitica that prior licensing of printing, "retards the importation of our richest merchandise, truth" which "is compared in scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition." (H 741, 739). "I want the duty on foreign books removed," demanded Pound who, in attacking "Miltonism," updates Milton's viewpoint. "'Transportation is civilization' was Mr. Kipling's last intelligible remark, and it is doubly true in art and thought." (SP 128) Of the three types of goods--transient, durable and permanent--the latter, consisting of "scientific discoveries, works of art, and classics--are "are always in use and never consumed: or they are, in jargon, 'consumed' but not destroyed by consumption" (SP 215). "As to our 'joining revolutions' etc.," Pound wrote, "It is unlikely. The artist is concerned with producing something that will be enjoyable even after a successful revolution." (SP 214) For Pound these gists of knowledge are infinitely fructive, inexhaustible in time and space. Art attaining this state is "classic," and to produce it requires an economic order reflecting cosmic, and distributing intellectual, fecundity.

The doctrine of intellectual abundance brings us to the most fully epistemological implications of neo-prophetic thinking. Abundance in the form of knowledge's infinite communicability denies the materialist assumption of simple location, thus affecting how we can claim to know the world.

Materialism founded on simple location posits a world of atomistic discontinuities that calls into question all causal-influential relations, including perception, thus undermining all knowledge of the world, and metamorphosing in Hume and Derrida into something quite like Berkeleyan skeptical idealism. Berkeley of course was the first to recognize this as the case against Locke; but his own idealism, retaining the premise of simple location, can uphold "perception" only by reducing all these units to one unit, namely the mind. The world becomes knowable only by tautology, by being contained in the knowing consciousness. After Berkeley the choice seemed to be either to take the world as an immaterial projection or to succumb to Humean skepticism. Kant's effort to save empiricism from skepticism by limiting Berkeleyan subjective projection to the set of subjective-universal categories that constitute our experience--apart from which we would be unable to perceive but which do not inhere in things themselves--perpetuates simple location in a new way: as an unbridgeable gulf between things in themselves and things as we perceive them. We retain the objective world and a working knowledge of it. Yet under this dualistic constructivism we are tempted to wonder: beyond the constraints on our perception, what is the world really like?

The idea of an ultimately unknowable reality has an Augustinian/Calvinist air, and the idea that in the end we can never fully trust our perception has long been associated with the pressure to trust in authority or consensus. The tendency toward group-think in constructivist academia does little to dispel this association, though that tendency of course is no new thing. Still, it has recently proven convenient to recast Kantian constructivism in terms of more malleable cultural and linguistic categories and desires, whose ontological determinacy may be officially asserted or implied, often in association with a (perhaps commendable) political agenda. With the repudiation of referentiality and the denial of reality's knowability apart from linguistic representation or ideological activity, the subjective (and especially the communal-subjective) inherits the projective-constructive powers of the Goddess Maya--heady wine indeed.

The infinite communicability of knowledge--the fact that items of knowledge can be and are accurately and inexhaustibly replicable--stands in its non-dualism quite opposed to dualistic or atomistic constructivisms. Indeed, any recognition of communicability, whether taken as infinite or not, does so. While any communicated idea meets a variety of conditioned receptive structures that determine its application and may affect the degree to which it is comprehended, the possibility of concepts being communicated *in toto* tells against the finality of parochial constructions. If any knowledge at all (e.g., mathematical knowledge) passes between cultures or local interpretive communities, the psyche cannot be thoroughly constructed by them; rather, there must be general natural or human verities that are shared--which must however be distinguished, by rigorous testing in the world, from disinformation that may also

be communicated. (Cultural-atomistic constructivism cannot easily explain how communities absorb each other's errors.)

The communicability of knowledge depends on, and argues, perceptual communicability. Idealism rightly insists that the world exists, for us, only as a representation in our consciousness, and that to infer an external world from this involves an ungrounded assumption. "Accordingly," says Schopenhauer,

true philosophy must at all costs be idealistic; indeed, it must be so merely to be honest. For nothing is more certain than that no one ever came out of himself in order to identify himself immediately with things different from him; but everything of which he has certain, sure, and immediate knowledge, lies within his consciousness. (The World as Will and Representation II, 4)

This statement assumes, with Berkeley, that perception can only occur within a unified substance, defined as mind. Thus matter is dissolved into illusion. But, asks Whitehead, why not consider matter and mind as equally real manifestations of something underlying both?

For Berkeley's mind, I substitute a process of prehensive unification.... In the analogy with Spinoza, his one substance is for me the one underlying activity of realisation individualizing itself in an interlocked plurality of modes. Thus, concrete fact is process. Its primary analysis is into underlying activity of prehension and realized prehensive events. (68)

Any attempt at differentiating a simply-located object and subject involves its own ungrounded assumptions. For even the most primitive forms of perception and communication (e.g., a rock's "prehensive" response to the presence of heat in the warming of its surface, or perhaps the cracking of its interior) involve energetic radiation that present an active source beyond what materialism takes as its boundaries.<sup>10</sup>

The volume is the most concrete element in space. But the separative character of space analyses a volume into sub-volumes, and so on indefinitely. Accordingly, taking the separative character in isolation, we should infer that a volume is a mere multiplicity of non-voluminous elements, of points in fact. But it is the unity of volume which is the ultimate fact of experience, for example, the voluminous space of this hall. This hall as a mere multiplicity of points is a construction of the logical imagination. (63; punctuation slightly amended)

In fact all Gestalts, all "simply-located" objects, may be considered to be constructed out of the primal flux of undifferentiated sense-data by increasingly articulate interests. Thus ultimately:

The volumes of space have no independent existence. They are only entities as within the totality; you cannot extract them from their environment without destroying their very essence. Accordingly, I will say that the aspect of B from A is the mode in which B enters into the composition of A.... Thus the sense-object is present in A with the mode of location in B. Thus if green be the sense-object in question, green is not simply at A

where it is being perceived, nor is it simply a B where it is perceived as located; but it is present at A with the mode of location in B. (64, 69)

And on reaching the intellectual realm we find communication manifestly able to effect not a diminishing radiation but an exact replication in more than one place. Extending this non-dualism, we need not require Kantian categories of space/time/causality to be wholly subjective in order to avoid the error of misplaced concreteness that takes them as things we ought to be able to see. It seems better to take them as modes and conditions, neither exclusively of objects nor exclusively of subjects, but of energetic relations.

We need not assume, then, that subjective reality is not simultaneously elsewhere; and even for Schopenhauer this recognition informs the description of the world as "representation." A world of radiating and prehending entities, constantly transgressing their imputed boundaries, offers an alternative to seeing perception as irremediably constructed by a material or socio-linguistic location. We can consider the world knowable without recourse to either materialism or dualism. Whitehead's doctrine of prehension--affirming sentience without subjectivism and the world without materialism--is implicit in neo-prophetic writing, with which Whitehead was certainly not unacquainted.<sup>11</sup> The germ of it is in Milton, in the infinite communicability of knowledge--a fulcrum sufficient in itself to overturn simple location. Complexly located, the germ also occurs in the idea of energy, central to neo-prophetic notions of abundance; for it is energy that provides a least common denominator for mind and matter, to which both may be reduced, and by virtue of which each permeates the other.

Since simple location conventionally defines matter but not mind, any idealism inattentively assuming simple location, in order to immure mind against its other as "its own place," materializes mind and makes it functionally insentient. The great image of this paradoxically insentient mind is Blake's Urizen, Satan catatonic in a "stoned stupor" upon an "icy bed": reason subjectivized to entropic insentience, a system closed from relation to the world (FZ IV 171-2). Reason materializes itself by becoming the simply-located world it beholds; but the world be-held is itself constituted by instrumental reason's imperatives, which for Blake are constructed in turn by the communal subjectivity of domestic and, beyond that, socio-economic, oppression. The alliance of idealism with influence anxiety in order to preserve a vestige of independence from energies considered oppressive underlies Lawrence's dictum that "[y]our idealist is alone is a perfect materialist" (P 711), a view confirmed in the transformation of Milton's Pensive figure in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained: from benign Platonist averse to daylight, to self-enclosed Satan heroically resisting all Primary energy, to spectrous tempter urging the supremacy of material means over spiritual freedom.

One fruit of sublimation into conceptual-instrumental consciousness is the emergence of an idea of the self or, as Lawrence calls it, "the self-aware-of-itself." This ego, awaking to its separation from the "old Adam" of spontaneous consciousness, experiences influence anxiety: "it knows, moreover, that as

the moon is a luminary because the sun shines, so it, the self-aware-of-itself, the mental consciousness, the spirit, is only a sort of reflection of the great primary consciousness of the old Adam" (P 768). The ego knows it is not what it must be in order to be a psychic whole, and feels itself but a trace, a ghost, of the energetic-intuitive self: what Blake called a "Spectre," as did Lawrence in his essay on Cézanne (P 570). The idea of the self is a socio-linguistic construct, and decades before Lacan, Lawrence called this self "castrated" (P 542, 544). The "social being" or "self-aware-of-itself," while trying its best some-how to ground itself in primary reality, simultaneously resents that reality and fights against it. The conflict appears in Milton as Satan's campaign against Eve and Adam, and in Blake as the struggle between the Spectre or Satan and Albion or Los. Lawrence describes the combat:

This self-aware ego knows it is a derivative, a satellite. So it must assert itself. It knows it has no power over the original body, the old Adam save the secondary power of the idea. So it begins to store up ideas, those little batteries which always have a moral, or good-and-bad implication. (P 769)

If the intuitive preconscious can be led to accept its own inferiority or inadequacy (the ideas of "shame" and "work" with their attendant ethical imperatives<sup>12</sup>), it can be reduced to the service of the ego. So Satan in Paradise Lost will go to work on Eve with the idea of shame (her inferiority as a woman), and Eve will confront Adam with the idea of work in order to precipitate the Fall—after which the idea of shame will bite decisively. "The thinker," observes Krishnamurti, "comes into being through thought; then the thinker exerts himself to shape, to control his thoughts or to put an end to them." (231) "But," responds Lawrence, "we have to know ourselves pretty thoroughly before we can break the automatism of ideals and conventions." (FPU 68)

Might we then discover or recover another identity, an aesthetic identity capable of freeing us from resentment and competition?

To be an aristocrat of the sun  
you don't need one single social inferior to exalt you;  
you draw your nobility direct from the sun  
let other people be what they may. (CP 526)

Another approach to conative abundance occurs when the principle of infinite communicability is applied to the human sense of identity. Milton's first apprehension of this comes in "Lycidas" with the realization that the divine identification he has flirted with in his early poetry is fully exemplified by conferring divinity upon another. Divinity is not realized by claiming or grasping it but by expressing it; and conative abundance parallels vegetational and intellectual abundance in this regard. In this light the fallen angels' endeavor "[t]hir Deities to assert" indicates only their loss of "Vigor Divine" (PL VI 157-8). To understand this is to dissolve the Protestant quest for election by, or to, a wholly transcendent divinity. "Seek not thy heavenly father then beyond the skies," advises Blake, but rather awake to that moment

when "two Eternitys meet together": eternity without and eternity within (M 20:32; 13:11). And Lawrence dismisses the secularized salvation anxiety of the Romantic election quest:

Oh seekers, when you leave off seeking  
you will realize that there was never anything to seek for.

You were only seeking to lose something,  
not to find something

when you went forth so vigorously in search. (CP 661)

With this realization, mimetic desire and competition for Being are set aside. "None are greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven it is so in poetry," says Blake.<sup>13</sup> Whatever divinity one shall ever have either exists within one already or may be arrived at by a natural sublimation of original eudaemonism. Self-industrialization aimed at making a god of oneself only produces a demon, or a machine (CP 640)

Conative abundance is the self-expression of someone who has enough, and is marked by generosity. Since God, as Rafael informs Adam, has provided unlimited opportunity for his creatures' progression, not withholding even angelic status (earlier equated by the Father with godhood) the relation between God and humanity, properly understood, is one of ethical abundance on both sides, with humanity emulating divine generosity as far as possible. For Milton as for Plotinus divine abundance is a fountain overflowing from divinity to humanity. Yet since no one can be deified simply from without, grace must on occasion mask itself as enmity in order to call forth the divinity, the generosity, latent in humanity (as occurred with Abraham and Moses, whose debates with an ironically-masked God echo in Paradise Lost III). Apart from this understanding God's ways are not likely to appear justified.

But to conceive of God, according to Platonic tradition, as Self-Transcending Fecundity rather than as Aristotelian Self-Sufficing Perfection carries a particular risk, for as Lovejoy noted, "[t]he principle of plenitude had latent in it a sort of absolute cosmical determinism... The goodness of God—in the language of religion—is a constraining goodness; he is not, in Milton's phrase, 'free to create or not'" (49, 54). This notion—which if followed through would make God contingent on his creativity and so on his creation, as Adam argues he is (PL IX 938ff.)—is based on a sexual model of divine expression as uncontrollable surcharge, one of the very oldest ways of conceiving divine plenitude. Divinity under this model is ever in danger of inverting itself through identifying with its created emanations, as Adam identifies with Eve, and Eve with her reflection, both "becoming what they behold" (J 30:50) in a process which, if God could be implicated in it, would unravel the very cosmos.

Prophetic writers are attracted to the erotic model of divinity because of its eudaemonic implications; yet behind this eudaemonism lies a great dysdaemonic potential. Milton's thematic of disastrous interpersonal identification masks an internal erotic of expression and resistance. For the erotic itself is where much resistance to the "divine-erotic" is installed, and this resistance surfaces through the

primary process thought that the erotic liberates. And "spontaneous consciousness"—the pre-rational mythological and erotic consciousness, that pensée sauvage that denies negation—demands that resistance to eros, to eudaemonism, be faced. Just as unitary consciousness can neither staunch its creative flow, nor sever the chain of identification with its emanations, it cannot maintain its existence in the face of what is alien to itself. Prophetic writers are compelled on principle, or rather by an eroticized ideal deeper than principle, to confront inner drives that embarrass their idealizations. For Milton and Blake, impulses toward asceticism and gender subordination disrupt identification with the eroticized ideal, and for Lawrence homoerotic drives precipitated a most serious crisis.

Can abundance hurt? In Beyond the Pleasure Principle Freud, working from the Second Law of Thermodynamics, theorized instinct as resistance to stimulus (a notion informing Bloom's antithetical criticism), and pleasure as a discharge of psychic energy aimed at return to the primal equilibrium of insentience. Is this the true meaning of "paradise regained"? Freud's "nirvana principle" identified Eros with Thanatos, life with death, delight with inertia in a brilliant attempt to ward off the Reichian challenge<sup>14</sup>; but which perhaps fails to register the need of a healthy psyche to discharge progressively higher levels of stimulus.<sup>15</sup> Be that as it may, neo-prophetic writing knows something about resistance to abundance. Blake creates his Beulah realm "[t]o protect from the Giant blows in the sports of intellect,/ Thunder in the midst of kindness, & love that kills its beloved" (J 48:14-15); his Emanations tremble in Beulah because the life of Man was too exceedingly unbounded" (M 30:22); and his devouring Spectres display "the cunning of weak and tame minds, which have power to resist energy"—but who might otherwise receive and gratifyingly exhaust the Prolific (MHH 15-16). From the great clinamen of the Nativity Ode to the interrogation of maternal nurturing in Samson, Milton wrestled with his own resistance to the plenitude he sought. As William Flesch observes, Paradise Lost describes the transition from an economy of abundance to a scarcity economy. Milton naturally is not happy about that but, as Flesch also notes, generosity has always been a very ambivalent blessing<sup>16</sup> which is why Milton's God must disguise his. Lawrence in his great essay "The Hopi Snake Dance" contemplates the warrior's need--the human need--to "snatch manhood, little by little, from the strange den of the Cosmos" and to "[s]ubmit to the strange beneficence form the Source, whose ways are past finding out. And conquer the strange malevolence of the Source, which is past comprehension also." For "[i]n the core of the first of suns, whence man draws his vitality, lies poison as bitter as the rattlesnake's. This poison man must overcome, he must be master of its issue." (MM 87)

It is clear in Lawrence, in Blake and in Milton, that at, or very near, the bottom, this poison is the Oedipal cathexis overcoding primal maternal abundance. Projecting the Oedipal scenario onto the cosmos is not (as it may first appear) just a way of naturalizing and reifying it; rather it is vital to objectifying and de-cathecting it, and to connecting with non-maternal abundance. Is such self-transformation possible? Is

cosmic continuity anything more than displaced maternal continuity? That may depend, ultimately, on whether the consciousness that seems to experience continuity is reducible to "maternal" matter, and intelligence a dirty trick that the cosmos somehow played on essential primal insentience. Reich's alternative to this depressing ontology was to show how life under the reality principle's enforced sublimation seeks insentience as a final resignation--a fate characters in Milton, Blake and Lawrence are tempted, but which their authors decline with particular emphasis. Socially-constructed, even biosocially-constructed, cathexes can be interrogated, if one is willing to distress one's narcissism sufficiently to look at them; and Oedipal authority's conditioning can be examined by the more rational authority of the prophetic ideal. So Milton, Blake and Lawrence allow the unconscious to present itself, and in doing so provide plenty of grist for the mill of (usually feminist) deconstruction. The trajectory of this self-reconstruction in Milton can be traced from the Nativity Ode through Paradise Lost III to Paradise Regained--with its great moment of solitary individuality, of immanent divinity as complete independence from all natural gratification, all external means and support, and all anxiety-born action. In Blake's Milton and Jerusalem and in Lawrence the revision of erotic divinity continues in an excruciating purgation of sexual strife, forcing plenitude to discover itself beyond the erotic, and in the process "redeeming" the female "Emanation." no longer to be considered a mere "emanation."

Overcoming resistance to energy--resistance brought about in part by encountering "bad abundance"--does not, however, exhaust the prophetic project with respect to conative divinity. Inquiry into the conditions of loss reveals that divinity in its original form as spontaneous immediacy was unsustainable, subject to the identificatory metamorphoses inherent in perception. The very nature of an identity transcending simple location is to invert itself by identifying with the finitude of the material world. Rather than romantic despair (or gnostic nausea) over the world that is too much with us neo-prophetic writing undertakes a complex task of self-revision and mastery, in which three principles ordinarily opposed to sensuous immediacy are reconstituted as its defenders. Authority, reclaimed as the prophetic superego, enlists the conventional superego's moral force on behalf of eudaemonism rather than asceticism. Instrumentation, directed no longer at dissolving internal energies, pursuing substitute gratifications/significations or vainly trying to seize abundance, is set to the more constructive and suitable task of analyzing and mapping the identificatory obstructions to abundance. And finitude, from which the Ananke of scarcity arises, is recovered as the principle of identity, simply-located as abundance--and nothing besides--thus stabilizing the self-inverting tendency of "spontaneous consciousness," preserving within this capacious limit its capacity to sympathize and identify, and integrating immediacy with freedom. Milton's God, embodying that integration, is the direct contrast to Adam who lacks it--and the model for Samson, and the Jesus of Paradise Regained, who would realize it. The struggle of Blake's prophet Los to subdue his reasoning power, the instrumental Spectre, and integrate him into his creative

psyche (FZ VII 335ff., J 6:1ff.) also follows this pattern, as does Lawrence's account of humanity's fall into narcissistic self-consciousness, from which it can be reclaimed only by a more radical self-consciousness (P 766-9). Returning to the Platonic versus Aristotelian ideas of God, it turns out that immanent divinity must shape itself, by the power of negation directed against all that is not itself, into a self-aware, Self-Sufficing Perfection in order to sustain itself as Self-Transcending Fecundity.

#### Into Action: Prophetic Ethics and Related Matters

If divinity is realized by conferring it on another, and abundance occurs as its fruits are put forth for plucking, instrumentation's hegemony, if not overthrown, is severely qualified, and confined to the realm of "material" affairs. Recognizing that abundance, divinity or Paradise are not to be had by questing for them but by expressing them is the germ of neo-prophetic ethics.

We know, really, that we can't have life for the asking, nor find it by seeking, nor get it by striving. The river flows into us from behind and below. We must turn our backs to it, and go ahead. The faster we go ahead, the stronger the river rushes into us. The moment we turn round to embrace the river of life, it ebbs away, and we see nothing but a stony fiumara....

We can't live by loving life alone. Life is like a capricious mistress: the more you woo her, the more she despises you. You have to get up and go to something more interesting. Then she'll pelt after you. (P II 429-30)

"Something more interesting"--what might that be? If we can't seek the internal, experiential Paradise instrumentally--if the very effort to grasp Paradise destroys it--what shall we seek, and how shall we engage instrumentation in a way worthy of the life we de-cline to seize? The instinctive neo-prophetic answer is to turn instrumental activity to-ward the external Paradise. Thus Lawrence, equating "sex" with Eros in the broader sense as the whole of sympathetic and perceptual experience comprising internal Paradise, refuses simply to revel in intensities:

Assert sex as the predominant fulfillment, and you get the collapse of living purpose in man.... Assert purposiveness as the one supreme and pure activity of life, and you drift into barren sterility.... You have got to base your great purposive activity upon the sexual fulfillment of all your individuals. That was how Egypt endured. But you have got to keep your sexual fulfillment even then subordinate, just subordinate to the great passion of purpose: subordinate by a hair's breadth only: but still, by that hair's breadth, subordinate. (FPU 111)

To wallow in erotic intensities for their own sake is to destroy them, for if the exquisite flower of pure experience is the height of living, of each being's becoming itself, it is also true that the utilitarian fruit is experience's natural, even necessary, expression (P 403). The Western error, say Milton and Lawrence, is

to accelerate perceptual intensity's natural sublimation into instrumentation so as to bypass the erotic flower (FPU 68ff.; cf. PL IX 235-43). But if you romantically resist sublimation, lapsing out of consciousness in regression to the Magna Mater, you wind up in the same place, for in resisting sublimation you stifle the intensity that expresses itself in sublimation. Likewise, if (like Schopenhauer) you hold out for pure aesthetic disinterest you must turn your back on life itself—even on the aesthetic experience in which you have taken such interest. It is important to realize that surcharge born of disinterest always gives rise to a new interest in expressing that abundance.

Expressing abundance demonstrates how much you have. "Ideas are true as they go into action," says Pound, with an eye to the Confucian argument that internal realization reforms the world, eventually organizing empires (GK 188; C 29-33). "Let us teach Buonaparte & whomsoever else it may concern," recommends Blake. "That it is not Arts that follow & attend upon Empire but Empire that attends upon & follows The Arts" (PA 66). As the spiritual governs the material, and the internal the external, it follows that the surcharged artist is rightfully an uncrowned philosopher-king—"a Mental Prince," Blake puts it (PA 18)—charged with infusing abundance into the world. No one took this charge more seriously than Milton, abandoning poetry, the aesthetic paradise, for the better part of two decades to labor for—and, in the matter of free communication of knowledge, to correct—the Commonwealth.

His successors, lacking the opportunity if not the will to do likewise, compensate perhaps by more clearly articulating the theory of transmission. "As we live, we are transmitters of life," writes Lawrence,

That is part of the mystery of sex, it is a flow onwards.  
Sexless people transmit nothing.

And if, as we work, we can transmit life into our work,  
life, still more life, rushes into us to compensate, to  
be ready  
and we ripple with life through our days. (CP 449)

"Power puts something new into the world.... First, power is life rushing in to us. Second, the exercise of power is the setting of life in motion." (P II 438) The "embrace of truth"—"[w]hat the old people call immediate contact with God... But even that is human tainted now, / tainted with the ego and the personality" and is better conceived of as a confrontation with "the Godhead of energy"—leads directly to the "embrace of justice":

And the soul's next passion is to reflect  
and then turn round an embrace the extant body of life  
with the thrusting embrace of new justice, new justice  
between men and men, men and women, and earth and stars,  
and suns. (CP 481-2)

This means reforming class relations and monetary relations—not merely by altering external structures out of resentment, but by removing the fears that uphold instrumentation:

if men were free from the terror of earning a living  
there would be abundance in the world  
and men would work gaily. (CP 488)

Liberation must be both psychological (as Lawrence emphasized) and economic (as Pound insisted). For neo-prophetics, the work of liberating Paradise follows inevitably from the ethical imperative of expressive instrumentalism.

We may compare the neo-prophetic expressive turn toward the world with similar ones in Western spirituality. As Wilber (319-44) notes, the neo-Platonic ascent to unity with God culminates (as do ascents in all mystical schools) with a realization of divine immanence in the world, transforming world-denying asceticism into world-affirmation. But there is a closer parallel. Quite aside from such mystical ascents, the Hebrew prophet, argues Heschel, is opened to a passionate divine concern for the world. For the God of the prophets, is not the apathetic, detached, and impersonal First Principle envisioned by Aristotle and the Stoics, but an energetic Being personally involved in human life.<sup>17</sup> And those to whom this state of mind is communicated become prophets.

The ideal state of the Stoic sage is apathy, the ideal state of the prophet is sympathy.... The unique feature of religious sympathy is not self-conquest, but self-dedication; not the suppression of emotion, but its re-direction; not silent subordination, but active cooperation with God.... In prophetic sympathy, man is open to the presence and emotion of the transcendent Subject.... Prophetic sympathy is no delight; unlike ecstasy, it is not a goal, but a sense of challenge, a commitment, a state of tension, consternation and dismay. (Heschel 38, 89)

"Although divine inspiration must certainly have been sweet to those ancient prophets," says Milton, identifying with Jeremiah in The Reason of Church Government, "yet the irksomeness of that truth which they brought was so unpleasant to them that everywhere they call it a burden." (H 665) And Lawrence, who so often struggled against the burden of sympathy, confesses his inability not to engage himself on behalf of "the working man": "oh, I would like to save him alive, in his living, spontaneous, original being. I can't help it. It is my passionate instinct." (FPU 115) "The prophet," continues Heschel, "is a person who suffers the harms done to others." (64) This is the essence of divine sympathy and is tied directly to the phenomenon of divine wrath, which is not, as under Calvinism, aimed at the life-impulses. Rather "[d]ivine sympathy for the victims of human cruelty is the motive of anger.... His anger is aroused when the cry of the oppressed comes into His ears." (68, 86) Prophetic engagement can't exist without righteous indignation. "I have never known anyone worth a damn who wasn't irascible," snarled Pound (SL viii).

Two key differences between Biblical prophecy and Anglo-American neo-prophecy are, first, that for the neo-prophetics the ethical personality of God is equated with, or subordinated to, the "impersonal" ideal of abundance; and second, that since the aesthetic is where abundance is most immediately expressed, aesthetic offenses become ethical offenses. Sins against art, creation, Eros, life--sins likely to especially affect an artist--are felt as sins against all humanity, even against the Cosmos. For Blake and Pound particularly, artists are a kind of "indicator species"--"the antennae of the race"--whose health forecasts the prospects for society at large. It is not simply socio-economic injustice that neo-prophetics protest, but the attack on the life-impulses--an attack largely orchestrated by Calvinist Puritanism--in the name of Hebraism. Primarily in response to this reading of the Old Testament, neo-prophetic writing after Milton (and even in Milton) becomes an anti-Hebraic Hebraism. There are several ways to do this. Milton will adopt the irascible father-god as an ironic mask for generosity, while Blake will denounce him after amalgamating him with the Aristotelian "self-contemplating shadow" (BU 3:21) to create the demiurge Urizen. Lawrence will Hebraically scourge socialization and industrialization on behalf of a quasi-Taoist and animistic mysticism. Most spectacularly, Pound will vent his moral fervor against Biblical religion as "the root of all evil, or damn near all... My present feeling is that all Biblical influence is merely rotten so far as the thought is concerned. Very probably I exaggerate" (SL 98, 332). This is because the Semitic (i.e., Arnoldian Hebraism?) "is excess... against any scale of values" whereas "[c]ivilization consists in the establishment of a hierarchy of values, it cannot remain as a mere division between the damned and the saved." (SP 86, 90)<sup>18</sup>

From the neo-prophetic viewpoint, the greatest sins are against divine or cosmic nature as abundance. For Milton, Blake, and Lawrence these involve sexual repression and the Satanic machinations of instrumental reason (Pound doesn't attack instrumental reason itself, only certain economical manifestations). Milton, Blake and Lawrence attack compulsive intellectualization; Milton, Blake and Pound also attack the restriction of valuable knowledge. Justifying this manner of engagement, Pound affirmed a prophetic didacticism: "It's all rubbish to pretend that art isn't didactic. A revelation is always didactic. Only the aesthetes since 1880 have pretended the contrary, and they aren't a very sturdy lot... If the reader does not find relation to life defined in the poem, he may conclude that I have been unsuccessful in my endeavor." (SL 180, 231)<sup>19</sup> Milton, Blake and Lawrence would likewise refuse to separate, truth from beauty. Each closes his career with a didactic "last testament"--Paradise Regained, "The Everlasting Gospel," Lady Chatterley's Lover and Pansies--in which art turns didactic to express an aesthetically-charged ethic. This is not "spilt religion"--ethical religion reduced to aesthetic ecstasy--but an expansion of both ethics and aesthetics to include each other in their concern.

Traditionalist and conservative approaches to religion emphasize moral authority and unified truth as opposed to the liberal/romantic predilection for compassion and expressive pluralism. Biblical

prophecy integrates authority and compassion by raising compassion to the supreme moral authority, the key to divine nature and the expression of divine abundance. "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings," (Hosea 6:6); "and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8) Neo-prophecy begins also with a strong predisposition toward sympathy--from which it recoils upon realizing the dangers of unrestrained sympathy. While the privileging of sympathy could liberate humanity from mantic authoritarianism, Milton, Blake and especially Lawrence are adamant against over-privileging it. For Blake and Milton it leads to identification with finitude; it is how Eve "becomes what she beholds," identifying with her empty reflection, her idea of herself; and how Adam, "lured by [her] beauty outside of himself" falls with her--which fall brings about (in Lawrence, and Paradise Regained) the temptation to compensate by uniting with the All--finitude in its aggregate, conceptualization in its completeness--as opposed to turning the light of consciousness around and grasping the unborn conative abundance whose sympathetic expression began all this trouble. In this way "abundance" replaces "sympathy" as the prophetic god-term.

Hebrew prophecy, it will be observed, must be considered a religious belief. May neo-prophecy be so considered? Let us touch on just one exhibit here: Blake's revision of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly to assert that God spake to them; and whether they did not think at the time, that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition.

Isaiah answer'd, I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded & remain confirm'd that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences but wrote....

Then Ezekiel said, The philosophy of the east taught the first principles of human perception some nations held one principle for the origin & some another, we of Israel taught that the Poetic Genius (as you now call it) was the first principle and all the others merely derivative, which was the cause of our despising the Priests & Philosophers of other countries, and prophecying that all Gods would at last be proved to originate in ours & to be the tributaries of the Poetic Genius. (MHH 12-13)

Heschel comments:

Curiously, even the poet Blake, to whom mystical visions were familiar, was inclined to deny to the prophets the claim to the experience of the divine.... The view Blake supposedly heard from Isaiah he must have read first in the popular literature of his time in which the prophets claim was described as an invention. (191-2)

But this is not quite what Blake is saying. Certainly he'd read Voltaire; but for him "finite organical perception" was the perception of the occluded "natural eye" that could yield only the materialistic "single vision" of "Newton's sleep"--or at best, perturbing hallucinations, perhaps even of divine personages. Blake's did not dismiss his own visions of such personages as hallucinations. But for him, realizing the

infinite in all things. far from denying prophetic vision, was its consummation: "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God" (NNRb)--or perhaps still better, sees as God sees.

Does not this aestheticizing and psychologizing of Hebrew prophecy fundamentally contravene its essence which, Heschel (187) reminds us, is transcendence? A genuine prophetic-apostolic calling, Kierkegaard insisted, is a matter not of aesthetics, of brilliance or "genius," but of possessing divine authority. When Blake, for example, identifies Jesus with the Imagination--even if by this he means not the secularized fictivity of Stevens but the "divine vision" of Creation's holiness--his aesthetic appeal violates the injunction laid on anyone claiming authority arising in transcendence:

It is not by evaluating the content of the doctrine aesthetically or intellectually that I should or could reach the result: ergo, the man who proclaimed the doctrine was called by a revelation; ergo, he is an apostle.... I have not got to listen to St. Paul because he is clever, or even brilliantly clever; I am to bow before St. Paul because he has divine authority; and in any case it remains St. Paul's responsibility to see that he produces that impression, whether anybody bows before his authority or not. ("On the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle" 93-4)

And when Lawrence identifies the Holy Ghost with the totality of natural, instinctual and preconscious impulses, including libido, as the "power [that] puts something new into the world" (P II 471-2, 442) he effectually abolishes transcendence. Does not even Milton, in dramatically critiquing and re-imagining satisfaction theology in the Dialogue in Heaven, giving it a form and function that might make it more palatable to our best ideas (necessarily aesthetic in part) of what God ought to be like--indeed, in his whole project of justifying the ways of God to man--circumvent the basic prophetic-apostolic duty simply to bear witness to the truth one is divinely called to teach? It will be objected, were not the Hebrew prophets also great poets? Yes, but that fact is peripheral to their calling. The fact that many were poets does not justify equating prophecy with even with the greatest poetry, if only because their inimitable style and intensity seems to arise from sources inaccessible to others--with a few possible and partial exceptions, notably the four now under discussion. And if, as it appears, poetic expression (in Isaiah 6:9-10, 29:9-10 and elsewhere) arose partly out of frustration with the public's intolerance for plainness and partly out of a desire to entice attention,<sup>20</sup> is not such expression in either case but an adjunct to the prophetic commission? In this light we can but repeat that the particular passion associated in the Hebrew prophets with transcendence does not seem strictly limited to those who see themselves literally charged with a divine calling. While the intensity of surcharge generates the emotions that in Isaiah or Jeremiah come with such a calling, producing in neo-prophetics the aesthetic effect of a divine commission, neither the neo-prophetics nor Kierkegaard would presume from this literally to have received divine authority. For all of them the idea of a divine commission stays in the realm of analogy. They identify with it; it is like what they're doing; but it is not quite the same thing. There remains a certain distance, at times even a

tongue-in-cheek quality, as when Blake speaks of Voltaire's divine commission to expose the literal sense of the Bible (Damon 439).

But how can even this much blurring of boundaries between aesthetic immanence and transcendent authority be acknowledged as legitimate, even desirable, from a religious point of view? Here arise theological questions of the first order. Could it be that the "dialectic of transcendence" may not be so fully divorceable from the "dialectic of immanence" as Kierkegaardian authoritarianism, for all its invaluable astringency, would have it? The disjunction, for Kierkegaard, is based on the presence, between God and humanity, of

an eternal, essential, qualitative difference, which cannot, at the risk of presumption, be allowed to disappear in the blasphemous thought that, though certainly different in the transitory moment of time... nevertheless the difference will, in eternity, vanish in an essential identity, so that in eternity God and man, like king and servant, become equals. (98-9)

Such a disjunction, taken to its extremity (as in Calvinism) denies humanity of any basis for assessing the divinity of a commission, a consequence Kierkegaard himself seems prepared to accept. Without such a responsive capacity, the transcendent can be no more than naked authority, its commands indistinguishable from the internal voices of psychotics<sup>21</sup>--and the more inhuman the commands, the more convincing the pretense to transcendent authority, which now paradoxically becomes available to anyone. Kierkegaard's own dualistic metaphors regarding authority unconsciously presuppose an underlying non-dualism whereby "transcendence" communicates its "commands" intelligibly and convincingly to "immanence." Just as "matter" and "mind," "the real" and "the symbolic" must be taken as fundamentally continuous for there to be perceptual communication between them, so "divinity" and "humanity" must be considered continuous for religious phenomena to amount to more than cosmic projections of all-too-human authoritarianism.

While orthodoxy has developed various ways to ameliorate the transcendent/immanent distinction, to the extent it tacitly retains the Kierkegaardian formula these can amount to no more than an effort to save appearances. A surer way to set the two fully on a continuum is the early Christian doctrine of deification, revived by the Cambridge Platonists among others, and vital to Milton ("God shall be all in all") and Blake ("Thou art a Man God is no more/ Thy own humanity learn to adore")<sup>22</sup>--though Blake's formulation suggests the mystical doctrine that deification has taken place already. The Miltonic version, at least, leaves authority room to operate in its sphere, neither absolutizing it nor aestheticizing it away. In any event the legitimate qualitative distinction, between who has authority and who has not, need not and ultimately cannot be grounded in a corresponding absolute qualitative distinction between God and humanity. Let us retain the qualified adjective "neo-prophetic" to register the first distinction while

appreciating, in the absence of further authority, the power of neo-prophetic genius to help dissolve the second.

It is possible to view Hebrew and Anglo-American prophecy as roads not taken: alternate ways into, and out of, modernity. The Israelite prophets whose works we possess stand near the beginning of the transition from mantic sacrality to sophic rationality. Recently Rene Girard and Julian Jaynes have provocatively stripped away the veil of some 2500 years, enabling us to see more clearly what mantic society was like. Without adopting Jaynes' wilder ideas, we can discern here a society enthralled by gods, who appear to be in large part the projection of alienated personal and social energies onto natural objects. Blake in fact gets the essence of manticism fairly well:

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive....

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar... thus began Priesthood....

Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast. (MHH 11)

Unbound by the yet-to-be-developed techniques of modern "social neurosis," alienated energy--latent violence generated by social stress, particularly the stress of urbanization--projected itself onto the cosmos, populating it with gods and producing a social system that may well be called "communal schizophrenia." As projections of violence, the divine presences had to be appeased and dispelled through the mechanisms of sacrifice which Girard explores at length; as alienated human energies, however, they had to be invoked oracularly, in ways Jaynes documents, after the sacrificial catharsis temporarily expelled their malevolence. The tandem mechanism consisting of sacrifices and oracles adjusted the presence and absence of the gods to the needs of society.

With the breakdown of mantic civilization--due to the globalizing and universalizing influence of trade and conquest, the subjectivizing influence of literacy, and the growth of judicial systems capable of handling contagious violence without relying on the old ritualized mechanisms of sacrificial catharsis and projection--it was possible, and seemed desirable, to replace this ritualism with an ethically-oriented religion, and eventually with a "sophic" system of desacralized rationalism. Hebrew prophets participated in the first of these steps, deriding the oracular-sacrificial cults of their neighbors and even of their countrymen, to the point where Herbert Schneidau finds their demythologizing fervor to anticipate Derridean deconstruction. But Hebrew prophecy's insistence on demythologizing in the name of the sacred, and on seeing God as the unmanifested creative principle in nature: "natura naturans" or "nature naturing," as opposed to the finite manifestations--"natura naturata" represented by the pagan gods--opposes the move into secularism as well as the lapse back into idolatry. This position did not prevail.

The authoritarian Church appropriated the prophets and gave rise to a secularist, rationalist, empiricist reaction that produced its own dysdaemonisms.

The transition from modernity to postmodernity both repudiates and intensifies the earlier move from mantic to sophic. Repudiates, in that it demythologizes the universalistic claims of Western humanist rationalism and scientific materialism to universal validity. Intensifies, in that it encourages an even more thorough desacralization under the auspices of culturalism: the pragmatic and relativistic reduction of truth and value to socio-linguistic constructs, resistant to dialectical or dialogical sublimation and to all perceptual reference. The dismissal of universalism as the spurious imposition of Western humanism has brought with it the disquieting prospect of irresolvable socio-cultural conflict, in response to which arise attempts at a more adequate universalism. The prophetic ideal of abundance is yet another of these--sufficiently universal as to disarm efforts to reduce it to an expression of its cultural provenance?

The prophetic ideal is less a remedy for political Balkanization than a possible way to move beyond modernity's sophic rationalism to a postmodernity that is neither hyper-modernity nor reversion to mantic or tribal premodernity. Rather it is an attempt to think universally outside the bounds of secular humanism. Rather than secularizing Biblical prophecy, neo-prophecy simultaneously rationalizes and cosmologizes it--a maneuver many would not have expected--by referring both humanity and divinity to an abundance inhabiting all things and inherent in the nature of all things. As Hebrew prophecy was a sacral demythologization of the mantic, Anglo-American neo-prophecy is an alternative to the sophic that resists both hypermodernism and Romantic re-manticizing, in favor of what aspires to be a rationalizable sacrality of plenitude: a rationally and aesthetically satisfying articulation of premises that, while not confirmed by everyone's immediate experience, may not be abhorrent either to reason nor to desire.

The ideal of abundance can never quite be secularized; there will always be a challenging odor of transcendence about it--even after that transcendence is set in continuity with immanence. For us transcendence retains the odor of the mantic: of consciousness annihilated before primordial spiritual authority. Every move against the hegemony of reason risks unchaining the alienated energies reason binds. Yet while the humanistic ego is right to resist mantic regressions, and to suspect the mantic revivals in Lawrence and Blake, upwellings from the mantic level are less likely to issue in fascist mystification when confronted with the prophetic ideal, which by defining abundance as ethical generosity as well as aesthetic intensity opposes uncritical submission to atavistic or repression-born intensities. Thus Blake, in Night VII of The Four Zoas, will set his reasoning Spectre to the task of subduing integrating his hallucinatory spectres, and Lawrence will make one of his spokesmen insist:

"I won't give up the flag of our real civilized consciousness... I'm the enemy of this machine civilization and this ideal civilization. But I'm not the enemy of the deep, self-responsible consciousness in man, which is what I mean by civilization. In that sense of

civilization I'd fight forever for the flag, and try to carry it into the deeper, darker places."  
(K 383; cf. SCAL 138-152)

In political contexts we resist transcendence for similar reasons: partly because there is nothing easier than to invoke it in behalf of oppressor hierarchies, and partly because it challenges the instrumental interests that align us with such hierarchies. Genuine prophecy always invokes transcendence against oppressor hierarchies. The distinction it favors is that of divine humanity as opposed to the sub-humanity of instrumental egoism, though even this disjunction is not absolute. To intelligibly invoke a benign transcendence over against the ego prophecy and neo-prophecy alike must develop ideals so as to support a critique of oppressive interests, spurious universals and dysdaemonic spiritualities that the ego may come to feel is in its interest to support.

The politics of a prophetic writer can never be a matter of indifference. The interior paradise can't exist in disrelation to the earthly paradise; all prophetic writing leads toward the question of how to get from the first to the second. Here prophetic writers offer a marvelous diversity of applications. Conventional wisdom would range them from Blake and Milton on the left to Lawrence and Pound on the right; but conventional wisdom often leaves much to be desired. Attempts to erect a "proto-fascist" Lawrence emphasize his anti-democratic sentiments and his gender-role conservatism, while dismissing or ignoring his once-notorious sexual radicalism, his passion for what we now call "deep ecology" (see above), his amused contempt for Mussolini (P II 438-9), his forebodings as early as 1924,<sup>23</sup> of what would become Nazism, and his commitment to "pure relatedness" that refused to be satisfied with even his own political fantasies. Reincarnated today, Lawrence would be a bioregionalist of the Abbey/Snyder school and would contribute much to that school. Pound presents even more difficulties. His economic platform stemmed from a genuine human concern that seems almost entirely absent in the rightists who still quote him and his sources. The loss of center he confesses in the last notes for the Cantos--his attempt to escape aestheticism and "write Paradise" by expressing abundance pre-maturely through fascist social technology--appears even more tragic when the reader has Paradise Regained in mind. Milton had more to teach Pound than Pound thought. Such observations may circumscribe our sympathy for Pound without wholly extinguishing it.

Milton's politics are more controversial today than they have been since the years right after his death, and are the hottest topic of the academic Milton industry, where the long-respected studies by Wolfe and Barker have been pushed into the background by a flood of new investigation stimulated by Christopher Hill's Milton and the English Revolution (1977), surely the most seminal book of Milton criticism in our time. Hill's work, linking Milton to the lower-class radical Protestant tradition, hosed the dust and cobwebs of orthodoxy from the poet of the failed Revolution, making him available to the post-60s leftism represented, for example, by Catherine Belsey.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless a serious obstacle to accepting even Milton's left-wing neo-prophecy lies in the project of recovering Paradise, with its kinship to Romanticism and its (at least potentially) reactionary aesthetic ideology--despite neo-prophetic efforts to distance themselves from Romanticism and to resolve its difficulties. Like neo-prophecy, Romantic re-idealization seeks to recover Paradise by dismantling instrumental imperatives. Modernity has generally taken instrumentation as its irremediable condition, despite sporadic Romantic reactions that repudiate it as the root of all evil. For Milton, Blake and Lawrence too the investigation of the instrumental ego is tantamount to an inquiry into the origin of evil and the Fall of Man. Yet all three realize (as does Pound) that simply to oppose instrumentation is to take up an instrumental relation to it: a performative contradiction especially besetting the form of Romanticism Lawrence calls "sensation." The way out--and logically this is very obvious--is to enlist instrumentation in the expression of abundance. In Blake this moment is depicted in the repentance and redemption of Urizen and in Los's embrace and subjugation of his "reasoning Spectre"--now to be converted from the servicing of the lack to implementing prophetic vision. Abundance, again, is realized not by seeking, but by expressing it. The mandate for expressive instrumentalism challenges other-worldliness of all varieties, Romantic or Christian. Like Pound, Lawrence saw Jesus' flaw as his disregard for material affairs--a tragedy, for only those to whom wealth means nothing can be trusted to distribute it equitably. "[A]nd if, when Jesus told the rich man to take all he had and give it to the poor, the rich man had replied: 'All right, old sport! You are poor, aren't you? Come on, I'll give you a fortune. Come on!'-we might never have produced a Marx or Lenin. If only Jesus had accepted the fortune." (P II 418)

Yet neo-prophecy's turn from aestheticized sensation to socially-engaged expressive instrumentalism does not clear it from the charges brought against Romanticism. In fact it may aggravate the case. For the attempt to bring in Paradise through an aestheticized politics raises further objections. Can an aestheticized politics whose predetermined aim is recovering earthly Paradise avoid totalitarianism? And can a politics so oriented ground itself philosophically? These questions emerge from the (largely) left-wing critique of aesthetic ideology, a consideration of which gives occasion sum up and look ahead.

Aesthetic ideology (a term introduced by Paul De Man and recently revived by Christopher Norris<sup>25</sup>) arises from the Romantic attempt to unify subject and object, phenomenal and linguistic experience, dialectically recovering something of the originary unself-conscious immediacy and natural harmony which instrumental reason alienates us. Organicist notions of art--the capacity of poetic language to return us to continuity with nature--and the valorization of "genius" as the infusion of nature into linguistic art, are important for this ideology, which has allegedly come to pervade virtually every movement of post-Hegelian thought, including that of such "anti-Romantics" as T.S. Eliot, whose ideal of "unified sensibility" reveals aesthetic ideology in classic form (34-6). Indeed, "from the American New

Criticism, to the continental schools of phenomenology, existentialism, and Marxist aesthetics... all of them at some point hold out the prospect of an ultimate reconciliation between language and nature, word and world." (49)

The illegitimacy of aesthetic ideology arises, first, from its misunderstanding of Kant. Beginning with Schiller, Romantic theorists have taken license from the Critique of Judgment to see the aesthetic as the principle under which the dissociations producing modern alienation can be healed. Kant, however, explicitly disavows what Norris considers a central aspect of this romantic project, namely the "phenomenalist aesthetic that would treat art as possessing the power to reconcile concepts with sensuous intuitions" (45); since in Kant the aesthetic is defined precisely by the inability to adequately assign concepts to intuitions. Any aspiration on the part of the aesthetic to do more than provide of a transition by analogy between cognitive and ethical judgment "will overstep the limit of its legitimate domain, with untoward results not only for itself but for the whole enterprise of enlightened critique" (48). The difference between aesthetic experience and phenomenal cognition parallels the difference between perceptual cognition and linguistic experience that de Man emphasized in opposition to "the phenomenalist delusion, the idea that language--especially the language of metaphor and symbol--can become in some way consubstantial with the world of natural objects and processes, and so transcend the ontological gulf between words (or concepts) and sensuous intuitions" (48-9). The seductive prospect reconciling the subject with nature, or of integrating linguistic, historical and aesthetic values, leads ever to premature, rhetorical attempts at closure--figural gestures that are nevertheless, in a writer of Holderlin's or Wordsworth's stature, undermined by a the texts themselves, as appears when these are subjected to close, "deconstructive" reading. Thus while "the resistance to theory" is on one hand the resistance of aesthetic eudaemonism to critique, on the other it is the resistance to all manner of theoretically-imposed readings by a practice, or text, that "has to go against the grain of what one would expect to happen in the name of what has to happen."<sup>26</sup>

When de Man talks of the stubborn "materiality" of language, what he means is precisely this resistance to received or canonical forms of understanding, those which effectively know in advance what the text has to say, and which therefore tend to repress or simply bypass any details that get in their way. (71)

As ideology, aestheticism effaces the Other, naturalizing its difference and so short-circuiting attempts at rational critique aimed at a genuine political liberation. This appears above all in the attempt to dissolve alienation via an essentially poetic language as seen in Heidegger's "national aestheticism": the belief that a national language (in this case, German, with its purported kinship to early Greek) can its authenticity heal alienating dissociations. From a privileged national language it is but a step to privileging a national culture, and from there to political nationalism—including the National Socialism with which Heidegger (and, let us not forget, the young de Man) collaborated. It may be tempting to

explain Pound's yet more flagrant collaboration and Lawrence's alleged "proto-fascism" as variations of a romantic ideology working in them through the prophetic drive to recover the earthly paradise. Such an account would not leave Milton's Edenic poetics and revolutionary politics untouched.

Of course, since by no means every thinker associated with aesthetic ideology was reactionary (Schiller and Marx come to mind) de Man's and Norris's critique seems moved by something more than political rationality. For de Man, this motive might well be penitential asceticism. For Norris, whose leftist credentials are impeccable, it is a matter of the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy which, politically transposed, works out to the conflict between a mantic aestheticized hierarchical society and the sophic attempt to rationally ground the social order. Discussing Lacoue-Labarthe's work on Heidegger and Naziism, Norris confronts the specter of the aesthetic as the perpetual Other for the progressive rationalism to which Plato gave birth, and which at crucial moments arises as a political principle, dissolving all efforts toward a rational society.<sup>27</sup>

With this in mind, let us briefly consider a few points regarding neo-prophecy and aesthetic ideology. To what degree is neo-prophecy an aesthetic ideology? To what degree does it offer an alternative to it?

Aesthetic ideology stands accused of confounding phenomenal with linguistic meaning, and of pretending that poetic meaning can attain perfect coherence with the world of phenomenal objects. A serious charge if true--as often it is. But poetic language's relative intimacy with the world can be interpreted in other ways than this. Rather than merely reflecting language's vain desire for absorption into the world, it reflects also language's emergence from the world through the sublimation of percept into sign and eventually into concept. Accessing the phenomenal world need involve no miraculous transmogrification of language into its Other, but rather the real's expression into language. Poetic metaphor--the mark, for Aristotle, of genius's capacity to grasp new relations--is often a key phase in this process; and by virtue of their capacity to invigorate language with hitherto ungrasped relations poets may become (to quote romantic phrases that may be ripe for revival) "hierophants of unapprehended inspiration," the "antennae of the race," "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." While Romanticism does not always clearly conceptualize the basis for such accolades, neo-prophetics make progress in this direction, conceiving the aesthetic as the first stage of the sublimation process. For the mature Milton sublimation, (like deification) is rooted in the bioenergetic paradise of Eden; to unduly accelerate this sublimation is to destroy Eden, as Lawrence also observes, by setting mind and body, spirit and senses, at war--as Blake ceaselessly observes. Thus arises the apparent conflict between the aesthetic and the philosophical, originating in philosophy's violent rupture with the aesthetic in order to declare its independence. Yet despite this original violence there remains no need to see the aesthetic and the linguistic as mutual negations. They are better seen as early and late phases of the conceptual sublimation

process. From this viewpoint, there can be no more stigma on the metaphors buried in philosophic texts than on the concepts nascent in aesthetic works.

The inadequacy of concepts to aesthetic intuitions reveals the aesthetic as a preliminary stage for cognition. Marking the pre-conceptual and the preconscious, the aesthetic exists at the origin of reason, as the entry point for the data necessary for critique. Abundance transmitted from the world via perceptual-intuitional influx can alone save theory from confinement in arid theoreticism. In repudiating its own sources, philosophy committed an error necessary for its own independent life—at the time. Yet in continuing in this manner, even in styling the aesthetic as reactionary ideology, it is philosophy that oversteps its own bounds. Milton buys into a version of this error beginning in the *Nativity Ode*, only to repent in *Paradise Lost*. We must insist on aesthetic experience as a prerequisite for critique with respect not only to fact but also to value, to which it orients us in an inimitable way. For linguistically-mediated values, rationally-determined as they may be, arrive via the language of the Other, overcoding individual intuitions and perceptions. We need neither resign ourselves to this overcoding, nor rebelliously repudiate it, but we must acknowledge it—and its opposite. By registering experience prior to “adequate” conceptualization and ethical valuation, one discovers that socio-linguistic overcoding indeed exists, and that there are alternatives to its values as well as to its “facts.”

To see the aesthetic as the preliminary phase of experiential abundance's sublimation into conceptual reason recasts the problem of reconciling alienated subjectivity with the world. There is, in the first place, no need for a special reconciliation via authentic or poetic language, since the procedure for transcending subjectivity has always been at work. We've only let it atrophy, having forgotten we're using it. Insofar as the Romantics and their critics have seen the problem as that of alienated subjectivity miraculously uniting itself with phenomenal nature, they have gotten it wrong. Mind does not have to warp into some alien dimension to get at the real, nor seize upon some special language, nor commit suicide. It need but acknowledge its sources, dissolve the imperative to sublimate faster than the experiential influx, and then learn how not to interfere with that influx. Easy to say, hard to do. Nevertheless, by taking this course it may be possible to avoid aesthetic ideology's premature symbolic resolutions without devaluing aesthetic experience. And if we're serious about aesthetic experience, we will do just that. In fact, as Lawrence would suggest, it is always the idealists who opt for symbolic closure, thoroughly contained in language.

The critique of aesthetic ideology offers the choice: submit to the seduction of the aesthetic by reading with the text—or respect ontological difference between language/phenomena, subject/object, nature/culture by deconstructing the rhetorical figures that promise to reconcile these dichotomies. Yet there remain writers who, while rejecting these linguistically-constructed disjunctions, are nevertheless able to read against their own texts—against their own project of reconciliation insofar as it allows itself

symbolic gestures or other premature closures—noting when these fail, and enlisting conceptual-instrumental consciousness in tandem with aesthetic intuition to analyze and rework the situation. Milton is prototypical, and exemplary, in this. So very much of what in others seems inevitable becomes for him subject that he himself would, it sometimes seems, have preferred to leave untouched. Nevertheless his seriousness about realizing the ideal of abundance will not let him be content with idealizing or linguistic gestures. Repeatedly, buried tensions, obstacles and objections are exhumed, many of which manifest themselves in more explicit philosophical or theological tensions. To represent and work through these problems he must write simultaneously on several levels, dwelling at once at just below the surface at the level of allegorized philosophy, and at the same time inhabiting the deeper caverns where psychological restructuring goes on. There is always in Milton a sense of unseen maneuvers taking place behind and below the conceptual and narrative surface, and it shall be our business in subsequent chapters to bring some of the most important of these to light. In order to do this, it is well to attend to the philosophical surfaces and sub-surfaces, for fault-lines that we discern there are good indicators of yet deeper forces. Ontological dualisms and imperatives, we may note, generally arise not from the nature of things, nor even from the nature of language, but from seemingly insoluble problems of desire, consigned to the unconscious--Blake's Beulah realm--until a way can be found, first, to represent them aesthetically, and then to resolve them--not through idealized poetical gestures but through a complex dialectical-dialogical narrative in which each internal voice is allowed to speak. These embarrassing voices give Paradise Lost in particular what Lawrence would call a "novelistic" character.

Somehow, you sweep the ground a bit too clear in the poem or the drama, and you let the human word fly a bit too freely. Now in a novel there's always a tom-cat, a black tom-cat that pounces on the white dove of the word, if the dove doesn't watch it; and there is a banana-skin to trip on; and you know there is a water-closet on the premises. All these things help to keep the balance. (P II 418)

One never knows in advance which of Milton's own "white doves," which passionate beliefs and desires, are going to find themselves undercut.

Milton's career, as I read it, is marked by three great reversals. The first, occurring as the Nativity Ode repudiates the Fifth Elegy's pagan eudaemonism, renounces the aesthetic for the ascetic, the ideal, the philosophical in line with the Puritanism of the day. While the ascetic turn occurs in both Christianity and Platonism, for in Milton it remains formally within the aesthetic and manifests a proto-Nietzschean drive for poetic power by means of simultaneously displaying, seizing and abandoning an unprecedented plenitude. Chapter II treats the basis for this First Reversal, in the course of which the purported ontological inevitability of castration also comes in for examination. Chapter III traces the working out of the reversal in terms of Bloom's revisionary ratios (which Milton seems to have been the first to exploit), culminating, in "Lycidas," with the election quest's dissolution in the realization of

immanent abundance, a realization in which the prophetic doctrines of transmission and of the infinite communicability of knowledge are implicit.

The Second Reversal begins in Paradise Lost with the casting out of antithetical will, now assigned to Satan--son of Il Penseroso and father of Blake's Urizen--and treated as symptomatic of deracination and entropy (Chapter IV). Yet if Satanic will to power via ascetic self-sufficiency produces the appearance of energy while embodying everything that abundance is not, how can the God of Christianity--that strange amalgamation of the "demanding" Old Testament Yahweh with the apathetic God of the philosophers--be justified as abundance's epitome? Chapter V tries to relate a key sub-surface tension in Book III's Dialogue in Heaven--that between orthodox satisfaction theology and the enlightened neo-Platonism of Milton's Cambridge contemporaries--to an even deeper concern underlying the theodicy: the need to restructure the superego so as to admit paradisaal eudaemonism. Having apparently accomplished this, Milton completes the Romantic "circuitous return" and re-enters the verdant and erotic paradise of the Fifth Elegy. Yet immediately things begin to go wrong. Like the ascetic performance that preceded it, Paradise is not sustainable. Why? The problem now before Milton is the origin of evil, and of the Fall. How is it possible for Paradise to undo itself and be lost? How (to pose the question in the terms of the Christian Doctrine) can an energetic "first matter," created ex deo, become corrupt? Milton's working model for this corruption is narcissism: the dynamic psyche's identification with its reflected and reified, static and finite, self-image. But the attempt to dramatize this in Paradise Lost--an attempt centering around the character of Eve--introduces complications. Now emerges a tension between two contrary logics: constraining abundance, latent in neo-Platonist emanationism, and counter-idealism, implicit in prophetic eudaemonism. Emanationist abundance, constrained by its nature, must express itself as fully as possible into the world, shunning cloistered self-preservation and becoming what it beholds, in the manner of surcharged perceptual identification--reliving in Eve the Nativity Ode's mixture of exuberance and anxiety. Counter-idealism, personified in Rafael, seems to embody Milton's rejection of this expressive self-inversion into finitude and asceticism. Yet all the machinations of Adam's spiritual preceptors to prevent the Fall only intensify Eve's narcissism, revealing beneath the poem's deliberative surface, an unconscious and self-frustrating need to control that female abundance, without which no paradise can be.

Once this complex drama has played itself out in the Fall, bearing fruit in another psychic deracination attended by sexual sensationalism and will to insentience (Chapter VII), recovery must begin once more, taking the form of a Third Reversal in which a renewed asceticism aims ultimately at a sustainable eudaemonism. No longer is it sufficient, in Samson Agonistes (Chapter VIII), to restructure the superego; the id must be addressed as well in Dalila, the beautiful, treacherous, seductive, enervating female. To engage her--and to begin to contact his own scene of instruction by maternal abundance and

paternal authority (Harapha)--the hero must renounce his riddling defenses and fuse the outrage of a child-man with an appropriation of language from the Other in the most elementary form of critique: catharsis as the beginning of articulation. In Paradise Regained (Chapter IX) Milton's new asceticism turns from id and superego to the ego ideal, which it reshapes by repudiating not only personal interest and power politics but virtually all of Western culture in favor of the autonomy and conative abundance befitting a "son of God." Along with his youthful ascetic will to truth, Milton repudiates expressive instrumentalism as the last infirmity of prophetic ethics, coming around from the position of Eve and Adam to that of God in Paradise Lost: that abundance can remain itself only as long as it remains free not to express itself. No longer willing to become what he beholds, Jesus anticipates Blake's doctrine that sympathetic identification can be preserved only by rejecting metamorphosis. Narcissism, the idea of oneself, is rehabilitated in the new ego-ideal: a determinate self-identification as abundance that refuses any further determination. Having thus consummated prophecy by working through the error implicit in its expressive premise, Milton attains the threshold of mysticism. Here re-emerge questions of castration and social construction. Can there actually be a "conative abundance"? Can such an identity be demonstrated? Can political liberation occur without the realization of such an identity? These questions are important concerns of Milton's brief epic.

## Notes to Chapter One

<sup>1</sup> It isn't, of course, that one is not allowed to read anything. Lawrence has, at the outset of the *Fantasia*, acknowledged a fairly extensive reading list: "from the Yoga and Plato and St. John the Evangel and the early Greek philosophers like Heracleitos down to Frazer and his 'Golden Bough,' and even Freud and Frobenius" (11-12). But a preconscious intuition—one, however, that is always in the process of crystallizing into concepts—underlies the selectivity in his reading as well as his creative expression.

<sup>2</sup> For Pound on Milton, Blake and Lawrence, see especially *Literary Essays* 72, 216-17, 237-38, 387-88, and *Selected Letters* 17, 122. For Lawrence on Blake, see P 560 and SCAL 79. On influence relations see also Murray McArthur, *Stolen Writings: Blake's Milton, Joyce's Ulysses and the Nature of Influence* (1988), and Robin Jarvis, *Wordsworth, Milton and the Theory of Poetic Relations* (1991).

<sup>3</sup> I take the term "conative" from Charles Altieri's *Subjective Agency*, where it is used to designate that which pertains to personal identity and agency.

<sup>4</sup> Pound, *Selected Prose* (hereafter cited as SP) 234.

<sup>5</sup> Tracing the trajectory of Pound's approaches to Marxism, we find him in 1928 waxing optimistic about Lenin and Russia (SP 217) but in 1933 remarking that upon what he considered the limits of Marxist economics (SP239). In his most extended discussion of Marxism, "The Individual in His Milieu" (1935), he argues that Marx ignored the issue of money and confused property with capital; yet he sees Marxism as a living system of thought capable of outgrowing its limitations (especially the dogmatism of Marx's disciples) and finds it to converge with the enlightened economic ideas of Gesell and Douglas (whose dogmatic adherents are also rebuked) as well as of Aquinas and Erigena (SP 272-82). As late as 1939 he was still trying for a rapprochement of Lenin's economic ideas with Mussolini's and Hitler's (SP 298-300). After the breaching of the Non-aggression Pact Pound could find nothing good to say about Marxism, his wartime essays attacking Marx's alleged participation (with John Stuart Mill) in "the Black Mass of money" by virtue of Marx's description of money as an actual energy rather than a socially-mediated claim (SP 307, 346).

<sup>6</sup> See Huxley, *The Doors of Perception: and Heaven and Hell* (1956).

<sup>7</sup> Reacting against this impetus toward modernity's abstract reason, Pound invoked the Chinese ideogram as an example of poetic concreteness—a move Derrida applauds, though not for just this reason (*Of Grammatology* 92).

<sup>8</sup> No one is more enthusiastic than Blake—"I always thought that the Human Mind was the most Prolific of All Things & Inexhaustible" An. Reynolds p. 157)—about intellectual abundance. Mind's or Imagination's profusion for Blake seems to mean, first, perceptual-experiential abundance; second, a visionary projective-expressive capacity on the borderline of schizophrenic hallucination, a capacity he possessed to a unique degree.

<sup>9</sup> Given Plotinus' emphasis on the principle of plenitude, and neo-Platonism's great influence on Milton, one might ask why a reading of Milton centered around abundance is not simply a neo-Platonic reading. Why invoke Milton's successors as chief commentators, rather than his source? First, because of Blake's and Lawrence's emphasis on energy, implicit everywhere in Milton yet only casually invoked by Plotinus. Even more important (see below) is their emphasis on abundance as the asignified; Milton's opening up of this aspect, ignored by Plotinus, resonates increasingly in Blake and Lawrence. The prophetic attitude toward signification is in fact just the opposite of neo-Platonism—even in Milton, where the doctrine of Ideas has no place. In prophetic writing, the Fall—conceived in neo-Platonism mainly as the soul's association with the impoverished body—is rethought as abundant energy's eating of the tree of knowledge by identifying with a reified or signified self-image—a process Plotinus seems at times to suggest, but which Milton memorably dramatizes, and which Blake and Lawrence respectively allegorize and conceptualize.

<sup>10</sup> This argument from Whitehead (43-4) discovers in Blake's "materialist" adversary, Bacon.

<sup>11</sup> Compare for example the attack on abstraction in *Science and the Modern World* 104 and *Jerusalem* 91:20-29. Whitehead would have known Lawrence through their mutual friend Russell, and probably read him more sympathetically than Lawrence read Whitehead.

<sup>12</sup> See P 770. Here shame enforces the disappearance of the phallus raised to the function of signifier. Compare Lacan's "On the Signification of the Phallus" in *Écrits* 281ff. (especially 287-8) with Lawrence's earlier discussion of the "castrated" social being in his Galsworthy essay (P 539ff., especially 542, 544).

<sup>13</sup> An. Wordsworth p. 43. For Pound's oblique approach to this position see *Guide to Kulchur* 294.

<sup>14</sup> Reich's critique of the Freudian death-drive, including the notions of primary masochism and the will to insentience (the nirvana principle) may be found in *Character Analysis* 331-7. Reich, like Freud, unifies Eros and Thanatos at one level, but Reich's reading of the nirvana principle as arising from displaced orgasmic striving seems simpler and more easily testable (not to mention more optimistic) than the speculations of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Prophetic writers recognize the nirvana principle as the despair of consciousness under enforced sublimation, condemned to

eternal existence without release. For the nirvana principle in Milton, see PL IX and X, and chapter VII of the present work; in Blake, FZ IV 6-34; in Lawrence, the "Death and Love" chapter of *Women in Love*, CP 249 and, a bit ironically, CP 493. The death-drive's prominence in *Women in Love* arises from an Oedipally-derived libido split in Birkin/Lawrence that pits purity and insentience—"love like sleep" against an anal and/or homosexual sensuality. Lawrence's dictum "Man is an alternating consciousness" (CP 474; cf. CP 724) expresses his effort to unify this split, and suggests also that periodically suspending instru-"mental" consciousness is necessary for psychic health and to prevent pathological yearnings for permanent insentience.

<sup>15</sup> Such need may not subside with age. "I have been very near the Gates of Death," writes the old Blake, "& have returned very weak & an Old Man feeble & tottering, but not in Spirit & Life not in The Real Man The Imagination which Liveth for Ever. In that I am stronger & stronger as the Foolish Body decays." (To Cumberland 12 April 1827) For "there is no Limit of Expansion! there is no Limit of Translucence!" (J 42:35)

<sup>16</sup> William Flesch, *Generosity and the Limits of Authority: Shakespeare, Herbert, Milton*, 1992, p. 224.

<sup>17</sup> "In bare logic there is no more reason why a god shdn't be engaged in living and in creating, than that he shd. be supposed to pass all his time gazing at his own umbilicus, works, reflection or some part of himself." (GK 340)

<sup>18</sup> Though Pound would at times attempt Confucian "precise definition" regarding these matters (e.g. SL 278), his anti-Semitism—"All the Jew part of Bible is black evil" (SL 345); "Under stress of emotion, the Jew seems to lose his sense of reality" (SP 65)—exhibits him as profoundly "Hebraic" in every way that he detests.

<sup>19</sup> Earlier Pound had written:

An art is vital only so long as it interpretative, so long, that is, as it manifests something which the artist perceives at greater intensity, and more intimately, than his public. If he be the seeing man among the sightless, they will attend him only so long as his statements seem, or are proven, true....

The interpretive function is the highest honor of the arts, and because it is so we find that a sort of hyper-scientific precision is the touchstone and assay of the artist's power, of his honor, his authenticity. Constantly he must distinguish between the shades and the degrees of the ineffable. (SR 87)

<sup>20</sup> As Blake discerned: "The wisest of the Ancients considered what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction because it rouses the faculties to act." (To Trusler, 23 August 1799)

<sup>21</sup> For a recent attempt to view the Hebrew prophets (especially Jeremiah) as psychotic, in a treatment of "communal schizophrenia" as an widespread ancient phenomenon, see Jaynes 293-313. For a reply to earlier such attempts, emphasizing the prophets' capacity to transcend psychotic tendencies where present, see Heschel 170-89. This issue is vital with respect to Kierkegaard, who in *Fear and Trembling* bases his notion of authoritarian "paradox-religion" on the account of Abraham's abortive sacrifice of Isaac, easily read as a psychotic act. Kierkegaard himself seems to have experienced a paternal apparition of some sort enjoining his attack on Christendom; see de Rougement's fascinating essay "Two Danish Princes: Kierkegaard and Hamlet" in *Love Declared*. Blake's visionary experiences and divine commissions at the hands of terrifying "Angels" not easily distinguishable from his "spectrous fiends" are described in his letters (To Butts 22 November 1802 and 6 July 1803 in particular). The problem everywhere is how to tell genuine manifestations of genuine transcendence (if you grant their existence) from experiences of alienated energy projected as cosmic authority.

<sup>22</sup> PL III 341 (quoting I Corinthians 15:28); EG k:71-2. See chapter V.

<sup>23</sup> See "A Letter From Germany" (P 107-110).

<sup>24</sup> Even those who hardly seem Marxists or counterculturalists are emboldened by Hill's accomplishments. Where Empson once fought a one-man war against the rising tide of "neo-Christian" conservatism, one is now more likely to hear that for Milton "scripture is history and not authority; no interpretation is coercive; no public policy comes with God's fist behind it to overrule freedom" (Radzinowicz, in Patterson 125).

Responses to Hill have generated significant new political perspectives on Milton. Jackie DiSalvo's *War of Titans* is probably the most important corrective to Hill's work, stressing the ways Blake's lower-class experience enables him to critique the limits of Milton's middle-class patriarchalism that prevented Milton from accepting the radical implications of his liberal and prophetic ideals. DiSalvo's work, to which we shall return, is not the harshest criticism of Hill. Herman Rapaport finds in Milton's politics a death-drive or *thanatopraxie* that culminates in Puritan proto-fascism. Though extreme and tiresome, and despite its capacity for aligning with the quietism of a Wittreich, this argument suggests a facet of Milton that we dare not overlook. Finally, Andrew Milner, critiquing Hill's methodology from a Marxist viewpoint, contends that Milton's interest was in rational social change, rather than "the politics of experience"—that he was indeed a progressive Puritan, rather than a proto-hippie.

See Arthur E. Barker, *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma* (1942); Don Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution* (1963); Catherine Belsey, *John Milton: Language, Gender, Power* (1988); Jackie DiSalvo, *War of*

Titans: Blake's Critique of Milton and the Politics of Religion (1983); Herman Rapaport, Milton and the Post-modern (1983); Andrew Milner, John Milton and the Sociology of the English Revolution (1981).

Pursuing a different critical line, Robert Fallon, in two books, Milton In Government (1993) and Divided Empire: Milton's Political Imagery tries to show, contrary to the assertions of S.B. Liljegren and Paul Phelps-Morand, that Milton's political career was not a simple surrender to the expediencies of "public reason," nor should his poetry be considered morally tainted by virtue of its association with his politics. Phelps-Morand, of course, provided Empson with several key arguments in Milton's God.

Other recent studies of Milton's politics include John Martin Evans, Milton's Imperial Epic: "Paradise Lost and the Discourse of Colonialism" (1996); Christopher Kendrick, Milton: a Study in Ideology and Form (1986); Linda M. Lewis, The Promethean Politics of Milton, Blake and Shelley (1992), and Lowenstein and Turner, eds. Politics, Poetics and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose (1990).

<sup>25</sup> Norris, Paul de Man: Deconstruction and the Critique of Aesthetic Ideology (1988). All citations in the text below are from this work unless otherwise noted. See also his "Heidegger, de Man, and the Ends of Philosophy" in What's Wrong With Postmodernism (1990). For a less favorable take on de Man as compared to Empson, see The Truth About Postmodernism (1993), 126-33.

For de Man, see especially The Rhetoric of Romanticism (1984); "The Rhetoric of Temporality" in Blindness and Insight, 187-208; "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's Aesthetics," Critical Inquiry, Vol 8, no. 4 (1982): 761-75; "Hegel on the Sublime," in Mark Krupnik, ed. Displacement: Derrida and After (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); and "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant," in Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica, eds., Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 121-44. For a less polemical exploration of the issue, see Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic (1990).

<sup>26</sup> Paul de Man, Preface to Carol Jacobs, The Dissimulating Harmony (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), xi. Cited in Norris, 111.

<sup>27</sup> "Settling Accounts: Heidegger, de Man and the Ends of Philosophy" in What's Wrong With Postmodernism.

## Chapter Two: THE CONTEXT OF MILTON'S FIRST REVERSAL

### The Problem of the Fifth Elegy

We have known them all already: the orthodox Milton, the humanist Milton, the radical Milton, the chauvinist, the Satanist, the classicist, the cabalist, the ascetic, the libertine Milton—and more. Perhaps no other writer invites such diverse reductions. Not only have we no consensus about what Milton means to us, it is by no means entirely clear what he meant to his own time. Clearly he meant to mean something. Always he exudes a powerful, even overweening, moral authority. And yet his seems often a moral purposiveness without purpose, since every ethical position he takes is qualified by strong countervailing inclinations. Are Milton's ethics hopelessly aestheticized or incoherent? To presume so might only amount to a new reduction: the postmodern one. Or is it that we still haven't grasped Milton's project in its complexity?

When Christopher Hill resurrected Milton's contemporary reputation as a libertine<sup>1</sup>, he thrust the question of Milton's psychic coherence on us in a way difficult to escape. Probably we are accustomed to seeing the germ of the familiar "austere" Milton in the Nativity Ode. How much then of the "real Milton" will we discern in the Fifth Elegy, "On the Coming of Spring," written less than a year before?

Now in the growing warmth of the spring, Time—as it turns in its perpetual cycle—is calling back the Zephyrs afresh. Earth, with her strength renewed, is donning her brief youth and the frost-free soil is putting forth its sweet greenness. Am I deluded? Or are my powers of song returning? By the spring's grace it is with me and—who would guess such a thing?—it is already clamoring for some employment.... My breast is aflame with the excitement of its mysterious impulse and I am driven on by the madness and the divine sounds within me. I am carried through shadows and grottoes, the secret haunts of the poets; and the innermost shrines of the gods are open to me.... What is to be the offspring of this madness and sacred ecstasy?

Let us celebrate the honors of the spring and let the Muse take up the task that she perennially assumes. Now the sun is in full flight from the Ethiopians and the fields of Tithonus, is turning his golden rays toward northern lands. Brief is the journey and brief the tarrying of gloomy night; the frightful night is an exile with its shadows.... Some shepherd, perhaps, as he lies on the top of a crag, says, while the dewy earth reddens under the first rays of the sun:

"Last night, surely, O Phoebus, last night you were unprovided with a fair bed-fellow who would delay your swift coursers."...

The reviving earth throws off her hated old age and craves thy embraces, O Phoebus. She craves them and she is worthy of them; for what is lovelier than she as she voluptuously bares her fertile breast and breathes the perfume of Arabian harvests and

pours sweet spices and the scent of Paphian roses from her lovely lips... The earth is not so bold as to beg for your love without offering a dowry in return and she makes no pauper's appeal for the nuptials that she desires... If a bribe and if glittering gifts have power over you and love is often bought with gifts she spreads before you all the wealth in the vast ocean and under the mass of the mountains....

Thus the wanton earth breathes out her passion, and her thronging children follow hard after her example.... Many a damsel with her virgin breast girdled with gold goes forth to the pleasures of the lovely spring. Each one has her own prayer and prayer of each is the same--that Cytherea will give her the man of her desire.... Maenalian Pan takes his wanton pleasure in the sown fields and the copses.... The gods do not hesitate to prefer our woods to their heaven and every grove possesses its own deities.

And long may every grove possess its deities! And my prayer to you, O gods, is not to desert your forest home. Let the Age of Gold restore you, O Jupiter, to a wretched world. Why go back to live with your thunder-bolts in the clouds? At least, O Phoebus, drive your swift coursers as moderately as you can and let the spring-tide pass slowly. Let the foul winter be long in bringing back its endless nights and let the shadows be later than their wont in attacking our pole.

So much here that "isn't Milton"--yet which is Milton, even if we will never catch so pure a glimpse of it again. The Ovidian sensuality (including female sensuality) whose tokens are glittering gold and gems; the orgiastic inspiration, conjoining love-madness, poetic madness and prophetic madness; nature, surcharged and suffused with erotic abundance, experienced as the realm of unmitigated bliss--60s intoxication, libido as natural high! Anticipations of Blake, Lawrence, Reich, Marcuse. Presaged, too, is a revolution in language, a return to the poetic expression of humanity's youth. Instrumental language, like instrumental action designed to alter the world in order to cope with scarcity, is here being cast off. It's spring, who needs to philosophize? Libido de-instrumentalizes language; and that de-instrumentalization eroticizes all of experience.

And yet the Elegy is not the work of a libertine, but of one still looking forward to an erotic dream come true. Untouched by disappointment, it is the fruit of innocence, not experience. Its intoxication is that of anticipation, of desire as yet dammed up so as to pervade the cosmos through the perceiver's surcharged senses. An anticipation, nevertheless, that understands full well what it anticipates.

This anticipation is nevertheless a present reality, conferring an identity. Erotic surcharge brings a new experience of who one is, an identity discovered, not devised--although one immediately looks around for linguistic currency with which to communicate how one feels. This Milton finds in the Ovidian discourse of pagan myth. To express an energetic identity--the spontaneous upwelling of surcharged internal nature--he becomes beholden to socialized identity: the fruits of classical learning.

And the erupting energetic identity is not so much an identity as an identification, transgressing the reality principle of simply-located identity. That transgression is of course the basis for all poetic metaphor, which at the mythological level is never experienced as mere metaphor. Nor is it in the

experience of love, as Freud admitted. "Against all the evidence of his senses, a man who is in love declares that 'I' and 'you' are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact." Here the poet, feeling himself becoming a god, takes the earth herself for a lover. Such identificatory metamorphoses return us to the mythological consciousness of *la pensée sauvage* with its "intransigent refusal to allow anything human (or even living) to remain alien to it."<sup>2</sup> What happened to all this? Why was it necessary for the vernal surcharge to disappear, and quickly too?

For disappear it did. A few months later, Milton refuted the Elegy point by point in the Nativity Ode:

It was the Winter wild  
While the Heav'n-born child  
All meanly wrapp'd in the rude manger lies  
Nature in awe to him  
Had doff't her gaudy trim....

Thus winter was chosen over spring, and night over day:

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable...  
Forsook the Courts of everlasting Day.  
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal Clay.

Earth's cosmic coition with the Sun is degraded along with all else natural:

It was no season then for her  
To wanton with the Sun, her lusty Paramour.

The rebuttal extends to details. The silence of the oracles heralds the Age of Gold that had once promised Jupiter's restoration "to a wretched world"; and the descending Babe reduces to imbecility the shepherds who once divined deity's course from their own rustic experience:

Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,  
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

Again, why? With this question we step out of traditional Milton criticism, which has always liked to see Milton's development as straightforward and unitary, "Christian humanist" from beginning to end—"Christian humanism" being a category broad enough to contain (and conceal) cataclysmic oscillations between "Christian" and "humanistic" poles and any subsequent syntheses of them, thus reducing Milton's development to his response to current events and his incorporation of literary sources.

If we opt instead for a view of Milton at variance with himself we have several choices. In an appendix to the Seventh Elegy, Milton put forward his own Platonic-Christian interpretation: the elegies were "monuments to my wantonness that with a perverse spirit and a trifling purpose I once erected... until the shady Academy offered its Socratic streams and taught me how to escape from the yoke to which I

had submitted." Of course this self-interpretation can be de-idealized; four ways come immediately to mind.

For Harold Bloom's antithetical poetics, Milton's statement only describes in Renaissance terminology the acceptance, required of every true poet, of a vocation that replaces the pleasure principle of primary life by the reality or performance principle governing the becoming of a significant self: an agon with tradition for the prize of an immortality of fame.

Psychoanalysis in turn would see this as but a special instance of the Oedipal renunciation necessitated by civilization, and which circumscribes all human possibility.

Historicism de-ontologizes the Oedipus complex by inscribing it in temporal contingencies, accounting for Milton's self-reversal in terms of power and economic relations specific to patriarchal (hetero-)sexism or the English Renaissance's emerging bourgeois society.

Finally, contemporary constructivism subsumes Milton's case under a symptomatic of the subject, whose pretensions to eudaemonistic presence now succumb to a more rigorous demythologization, and whose illusory unity here inverts itself under pressure from the prevailing discourse.

The reductiveness of these discourses arises from the limits each places on human possibility. For each, self-variance is imposed by a reality principle constructing the subject, more or less irrevocably, as external to its self-idealization and—at the most fundamental level—its desire. Less reductively, a romantic reading of Milton's First Reversal would see it as the opening movement of a "circuitous return,"<sup>3</sup> in which the questing soul, passing through the experience of alienation, achieves reunification with herself and the cosmos. However the outcome of romantic quests is often sufficiently ambiguous as to evoke doubt about their feasibility. All too often romanticism prematurely retreats from the world's instrumental complexes and structures of authority, opting for a merely symbolic resolution of its quest. These evasions the contemporary de-idealizing schools delight to point out, as is only right. Prophetic writing is a romanticism which, in its intensity, grapples directly with authoritarian and instrumental complexes, enabling it to anticipate or answer certain de-idealizing critiques with its own counter-critiques—often implicit, sometimes explicit.

### The Psychoanalytic Reduction

As psychoanalysis most directly addresses the obvious issues surrounding the First Reversal, its ontology seems best qualified to structure a reading of Milton. And it shows no reluctance to do so. For William Kerrigan "the Oedipus complex is the generative center of [Milton's] character and his art."<sup>4</sup> Can

this claim be upheld? To a considerable degree it can. But when the complex defines Milton's end as well as his beginning, psychoanalysis comes open to question.

Certainly no reading of Milton can ignore psychoanalysis's explication of desire's re-forging via identification with paternal authority in the castration complex: and no English authors except Blake and possibly Lawrence equal Milton in providing material for such a reading. After Kerrigan there can be no doubt that castration underlies the secular complex of compulsive virginity with which Milton began as a poet: and a case can be made that it determines much of what comes later, particularly the blind submission to an unknowable God whom the poet refuses to expose (Kerrigan 159). Thus, having via the primal scene monopolized Mother in all her symbolic manifestations—"only the Father can dispense the presence of the Muse" (181)—the Father controls not only sexual but also poetic generation, though the son will attempt to re-appropriate the latter by voyeuristically exposing the first Creation (168-9) and (as Satan) spying on Eve and Adam in the Garden (161). Such illicit acts will produce in Milton a paralyzing guilt over his blindness which presents itself as punishment for rebellious wishes. Blindness equals feminization equals castration (184-189). Death too, under Christianity, equals guilt. But since, analysis teaches, death's insentience (Freud's "Nirvana principle") equals return to the pre-ego mother of primary narcissism, the Christian hope for immortality translates to "a complete victory over the crimes of the oedipus complex... the hope that we will be guided safely through the moment of our corruption, returned like Christ to the home of a sinless mother" (122-124; cf. PR IV 639). Such a fantasy, whatever its consolations, must appear to analysis as but another regressive castration symptom. Nevertheless, Kerrigan manages to find in Milton's secondary "sacred complex," where religious beliefs restructure the superego by providing compensatory fantasies of gratification, a healthy corrective to Freud's dismissal of religion—as if Freud had been unaware of this compensatory function.

On the social level Kerrigan, enlisting Lacan to supplement Freud, again discovers a Milton suspended between the poles of castration and fantasy compensation. The socio-linguistically constructed "Name-of-the-Father" installs castration, independently of Kinderszenen, in order to counteract the "original aggressivity" (Ecrits 20) generated by mirror-stage narcissism. The Miltonic version of this supplement is the patriarchal milieu of Renaissance Latin scholarship (Kerrigan 75-80), for which Milton's father destined him at an early age, and through which he "discovered a future through an apparently fugitive and cloistered affirmation of an inviolate selfhood" (77). This social setting for the complex, the shady Academy from which God as well as women are absent, will be repudiated in the renunciation of secular culture and power in Paradise Regained as Milton attempts, through the medium of the "sacred complex" to reconstruct the paternal superego and to recover, in compensation for the renunciation imposed upon him, at least a measure of fantasy gratification—an act that, due to its repudiation of the profane world, must still be considered

submission to castration (111). Indeed the whole drive to regain Paradise must be seen as merely deflected maternal longing, and castration as the price of even symbolic gratification.

In finding Milton determined by castration to the end, with no recourse but compensatory fantasy, Kerrigan produces the reading mandated by analytical orthodoxy, which continues, morally, an older orthodoxy. Kerrigan acknowledges his debt to "the brilliant Augustine of Milton studies, Stanley Fish" (99). Fish purported to show Milton structuring Paradise Lost so as to entice readers into thinking the author sympathizes with heterodoxy, in order to pull the rug out from under them by showing just the opposite to be the case--and so revealing their own predilection for depravity. Now the poem does contain what at first seems a jumble of orthodoxy and heresy, and this is one possible way to make sense of it (as is the contrary view of Saurat, Hill, Empson and others). It's striking, though, how closely Milton's imputed strategy resembles Fish's pedagogical method of setting traps for unsuspecting students in order to embarrass them--as if it's not bad enough to be mean-spirited in the classroom without projecting one's defects onto an author. And yet again... Milton and his God certainly do at times deal ironically, even arrogantly, with us.

Let's make our way, then, back to Fish's precursor Augustine, who suggests the implications of pedagogy. In Confessions I, 14, Augustine recounts his resistance to being taught Greek by "violent threats and cruel punishments," contrasting it with the ease of learning of his native tongue.

As a baby, of course. I knew no Latin either, but I learned it without fear and fret, simply by keeping my ears open while my nurses fondled me and everyone laughed and played happily with me. I learned it without being forced by threats of punishment, because it was my own wish to give expression to my thoughts.... This clearly shows that we learn better in a free spirit of curiosity than under fear and compulsion. But your law, O God, permits the free flow of curiosity to be stemmed by force. From the schoolmaster's cane to the ordeals of martyrdom, your law prescribes bitter medicine to retrieve us from the noxious pleasures which cause us to desert you.

A very Rousseauist confession indeed, showing the "natural man" to be a product of unskillful, hence brutal, instruction. Clumsiness and harshness, having created the natural man in his rebelliousness, offer themselves as the remedy, aggravating the situation until someone escapes or rethinks it, as Milton tried to do in "Of Education."<sup>5</sup> To identify yourself as a rebel, as does Augustine, is to project the pedagogue or father onto the cosmos as God while internalizing his image of you. And to identify with this self-image projected by the Other, even in the face of powerful experience to the contrary, is to accept castration, which is easily installed without the creaky mechanism of the domestic Primal Scene.

The physical conditions requisite for the Primal Scene occur in all pre-bourgeois cultures, but the Oedipus or Castration Complex (being a product not of authority but authoritarianism) does not. "There is ample evidence that Western European civilization is specifically the culture of the Oedipus Complex,"<sup>6</sup> Rexroth observes in his introduction to Lawrence's poems.

Before Augustine there was nothing really like it. There were forerunners and prototypes and intimations, but there wasn't the real thing. The Confessions introduce a new sickness of the human mind, the most horrible pandemic and the most lethal ever to afflict man. Augustine did what silly literary boys in our day boast of doing. He invented a new derangement. (5)

And while Augustine is absent from Lawrence's list of "grand orthodox perverts" (Collected Letters 715), his relationship to his mother fits him right in, perhaps too well for comfort. Is there yet worse to tell? "Cruelty is a form of perverted sex.... Priests in their celibacy get their sex lustful, then perverted, then insane, hence Inquisitions--all sexual in origin." (Collected Letters 74; cf. Confessions III, 8) A truism, but no less true for that. Augustine was no inquisitor, would have wanted to oppose an Inquisition, but renounced the intellectual ammunition to do so.<sup>7</sup> And while Lawrence's etiology of inquisition traces only one path of repressed libido, it is a flow that, given the current vacillation about castration on the one hand and resurgent puritanical politics on the other, deserves close attention. Shouldn't it really be a bit alarming, if not downright embarrassing, to write about castration today as if it no longer needed a defense--as if it were the sole alternative to social chaos--as if there are no costs involved in it? At least Freud had the decency to agonize over the subject.

Castration is making a comeback because the cosmos seems to be closing up. We've expanded as far as will be possible for some time; there is no place to go to relieve the population pressure, the environmental pressures. The moon and the planets are still too remote. The last undeveloped territories have already been carved up by the multinationals who will soon suck out their life. There is no longer enough to go around--at least of the stuff we've come to depend on, under the arrangements we've fallen into. So a few of us will have enough, and the rest had better be taught to limit their desires. That's the purpose of castration.

Scarcity produces competition, aggression and violence, all of which must be checked for civilization to endure. If, as Freudianism assumes, only castration can bridle aggression, the complex truly is the fons et origo of culture, and renunciation the essence of maturity. But because scarcity produces these things, thus providing a rationale for authoritarian intervention, it has always been in power's interest to concoct it:

To restrain the child from the womb  
And the privy admonishers of men  
Call for fires in the City  
For heaps of smoking ruins,  
In the night of prosperity & wantonness

To restrain man from his path,  
To cut off the bread from the city,  
That the remnant may learn to obey. (SL 6:19-7:4)

Blake will later describe subtler strategies than this. (Today the preferred approach is to cultivate, through the media, what Girard calls mimetic desire: desire for something mainly because someone else wants it. Power affirms its indispensability by adjudicating between the mimetic desire and reciprocal violence it promotes—over such high-profile issues as abortion, immigration, the spotted owl—encouraging combat for a piece of the shrinking pie in order to keep us from asking where the rest of it went.)

Is it becoming clear just what this has to do with Milton, or with Blake and Lawrence his spiritual successors? Theirs is the struggle to re-open the cosmos, including the human micro-cosmos; to rediscover ways of realizing these as abundance; and, in so doing, to re-found both reason and ethics: reason, on the premise of an open cosmos and ethics on the abolition of castration. That is enough to make them a threat to established and aspiring orthodoxies, perhaps as great a threat as presently inhabits "secular" Western culture. Were the earthly paradise recovered, or significant steps accomplished in that direction, material power would at least for the moment be overthrown. Were even an internal, psychological paradise regained, material power's enticement and intimidation would lose much effectiveness. That is why such projects can't go unchallenged, and why readings must be produced that reduce them to symptoms of castration.

Milton's First Reversal, therefore, shall be read as a simple act of submission, and as a pattern for his every subsequent poetic act. What Kerrigan calls the "prophetic" in Milton turns out to be the intensity of Milton's castration. Since there's no appeal from social construction by castration, his Oedipal symptoms acquire ontological import. He is, we are meant to infer, a poetic Everyman, expressing irrevocable human truths through a genius overriding ego-defenses, unwittingly and unwillingly revealing what we'd all see in ourselves were we humble, brave and honest enough simply to look.

Not everything about this view is false. A more serious reduction comes in reading Milton's revision of the Oedipal superego.

Our happiest strategy for domesticating the archaic voluntarism of the superego, in commonsense as in the mainstream of psychoanalytic thought, is to forge an explicit ethics, absorbing the regulatory function of the superior will by making our duties both concrete and internally consistent: a mature ego that can command itself, manage its own economy of value. (Kerrigan, 7)

Who could quarrel with this? Yet this turns out to be just what Kerrigan denies Milton the ability to do. Milton is supposed to have restructured the Oedipal superego—the "first complex"—by reworking it in the second "sacred complex" of his religious imagination. This sacred superego may either reproduce the prohibitions of the first while allowing repressed impulses to be contacted, facilitating a more mature condemnation, sublimation and fantasy compensation; or it may intensify the first prohibitions—e.g., prohibiting knowledge which the first prohibition commanded (115), perhaps in order to appropriate voluntarism for oneself. Are we really to call this the forging of an explicit ethics by a mature ego? "Once

castration has been acknowledged in the first complex, obedience can also be motivated by the positive expectation of regaining in the future a semblance of the lost wish. This structure holds good, *mutatis mutandis*, in the second complex." (245) If so, how much progress has been made?

There is however a third way of restructuring the superego in the sacred "complex": by rationally determining the nature of divinity and comparing to that the parental superego, which, insofar as it falls short reveals itself as unworthy of mature reverence. For as thinkers from Plato to Nietzsche have affirmed, the divine nature cannot be characterized as other than inexhaustibly abundant and generous, with human nature being at least potentially continuous therewith. And so, instead of daily ministering and offering the same sacrifices, renunciations, sublimations and compensations mediated by analytic priesthood, one offers up once and for all the whole castration complex. (For if divinity exists beyond even such concepts as abundance, concepts which ultimately must be abandoned to experience it directly, nevertheless certain concepts, images and projections deserve to be repudiated sooner rather than later.) But genuinely rethinking moral authority by determining the desires and expectations for humanity that harmonize with a divine, or fully human, nature—thus making God the Father Oedipality's antidote rather than its projected ground, and so genuinely correcting vulgar Freudian dismissals of religion... this is not to be thought of by "mainstream" analysis.

But that, I propose, is exactly what Milton did—couching his revisions in orthodox language partly to enlist the moral authority of the superego against its original content, partly from self-protection, partly from malicious delight in tempting the orthodox to misread. It will be no simple matter to trace the development of the prophetic superego—and the ego-ideal of abundance that it serves—or to show the fruits, some bitter, of this almost quixotic attempt to enlist eudaemonism's destroyers, authority and instrumental reason, in its defense against the surplus repression of dysfunctional "civilization." Today we expect every anti-authoritarianism to announce itself explicitly and hedonistically, not only forgetting that in the Seventeenth Century this would have been suicidal, but ignoring certain possibilities in the (particularly Protestant) tradition of ascetic anti-authoritarianism. For make no mistake, a resolute asceticism—the repudiation of all socially-constructed desire—is necessary in order recover the cosmos and to abolish castration.

#### Protestant Inwardness and Poetic Technology

Just how is castration installed in each individual? Since literal occurrence of the "universal" primal scene is not easily demonstrable (Kerrigan makes no case for this from Milton's imagery—though one can be

made from Blake's) analysis is obliged to produce one or more specific scenarios through which the ontologically inevitable Oedipality is brought to pass. If such scenarios seem determinative, the inevitability of the complex becomes harder to question. Conversely, if castration appears to have been, at some level, accepted only provisionally or tactically, it becomes easier to see the possibility of repudiating the complex, and the conditions that might lead one to do so. For Milton, both domestic and pedagogical scenarios are proposed, scenarios clearly not without effect. But the reservations we must have about them suggest that no more than the fabled primal scene can they account for Milton's internalization of the complex.

Biographical records don't give us a whole lot to go on concerning Milton's upbringing. It was Puritan, and hence far from permissive. By far the most important thing we know concerning pertinent domestic relationships is that John Milton Sr., a respected musician and composer as well as an industrious and successful scrivener, destined his eldest son for literature at an early age. On this psychoanalysis must rely for a domestic castration scene.

How crippling and castrating was Milton's "destination" for literature? As far as we can tell, the agreement John Milton Sr. offered his son seems to have been: "You go into literature and I'll ease your way." Did the son inwardly object? Would he rather have done something else? Did he resent being sponsored on a Continental tour? Or was he too intimidated by his father to try to re-negotiate the deal (or to rebel, as his father had against his own Catholic upbringing)—thus being forced to express his "tremendous oedipal defiance" in safer displacements (Kerrigan 9, 115) such as justifying regicide!

Ad Patrem, "[w]ritten in the tongue to which his father had given him access,... is our sole record of a dispute between them" (113). Can we extrapolate from this a tension symptomatic of castration? Should we read the son's cordiality as a debtor's sycophancy? The disagreement apparently arose from some minor paternal criticism of his son's sequestered studiousness—criticism inconsistent, in John Milton Jr.'s eyes, with the career that had been charted for him:

You may pretend to hate the delicate Muses, but I do not believe in your hatred. For you would not bid me go where the broad way lies wide open, where the field of lucre is easier and the golden hope of amassing money is glittering and sure; neither do you force me into the law and the evil administration of the national statutes. You do not condemn my ears to noisy impertinence. But rather, because you wish to enrich the mind which you have carefully cultivated, you lead me far away from the uproar of cities into these high retreats of delightful leisure beside the Aonian stream, and you permit me to walk there by Phoebus' side, his blessed companion. (H 84)

We see here not the displaced resentment associated with thoroughgoing castration but the straightforward, if diplomatic, negotiation of a consciously-held grievance. Milton speaks as one whose firm possession of the moral high ground obviates resentment, recalling his father to the enlightened principles he had invested in

for his son's sake. It is much the tone the Son will take in Paradise Lost III with the Father (whose personality, it seems to me, is probably that of John Milton Sr. at his grouchiest).

I think this disposes of the psychoanalytic argument offered by Kerrigan. We have not, however, exhausted the domestic influence on Milton's first complex, but will return to it circuitously. Did Renaissance Latin scholarship, then, deal the devastating blow? This seems even less likely. To be sure, it must have been "in the classroom... that Milton conceived... the linguistic consummation of the linguistic ego, the insemination of the mother tongue with the monumentality of the father tongues" which Kerrigan considers "the cultural form of his ambition" (79). But why should this have emasculated him more than it did his fellow Latinists, none of whom felt compelled to such ambitions or renunciations, many of whom remained good humanistic Christians, even neo-pagans and libertines? "As an initiation into the ways of men, Latin rewarded oedipal sacrifice, and no one made more of the reward than Milton." (79) The question remains: what moved Milton alone to claim these rewards, which, had not he seized them, might seem less obvious to us?

If, then, Milton was not destined for castration by any identifiable domestic or pedagogical scenario, what led him into a it? Why and how did he come to see it as not only compatible with but necessary to his life project? It is now time to extend psychoanalysis' inadequate contextualization of Milton so as to grasp a little more concretely the interactions between religious, conative, aesthetic, libidinal and socio-economic forces in relation to the First Reversal.

A better candidate than Renaissance Latin scholarship for the status of Milton's Name-of-the-Father is the Protestant ethic, which John Milton Sr. did not merely impose but personally embodied. It's impossible even to refer to the "repressiveness" of Miltonic Christianity without invoking once more this notorious ethic. Designed to promote upward mobility in the middle class, worldly asceticism—which "Milton, growing up in London, in a street wholly inhabited by rich merchants, must have absorbed... with the air he breathed" (Hill 23)—intensified the old Christian dualism of spirit against flesh, God against "natural man," directing human energies away from the luxurious pursuits of love and art into a compulsive acquisition designed to demonstrate divine election.

The ethic may be partially understood as a re-intensification of the Western movement toward demythologization, individualism and inwardness that marked Judaeo-Christian<sup>8</sup> as well as Greek thought. While the Platonic/Gnostic/Christian dualism of interior spirit against matter could easily have immediately provided a full-blown model for privileging subjective mind over objective nature, under Catholicism's accommodation to paganism—the Goddess religion and "the flesh"—external ritual and splendor muted antinaturalism's voice. Reformation dysdaemonism challenged this accommodation, not so much by its insistence on divine transcendence as by its resolution of the moral dilemma transcendence provoked.

Radical transcendence—and radical contingency on humanity's part—gave rise to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, for "to assume that human merit or guilt play a part in determining [human] destiny would be to think of God's absolutely free decrees, which have been settled from eternity, as subject to human influence, an impossible contradiction" (Weber 103). But evading this problem produced another, for salvation now appeared as a finite commodity which God, having cornered the market, distributes according to miserly whim, leaving little reason for moral action, little reason to seek already-allotted divine favor or union.

Against the antinomianism that here began to threaten, material prosperity emerged as a sign of grace. Election, even if it could not be earned, could still be demonstrated by worldly success. In this way cosmic scarcity came to enforce a new kind of surplus repression and to uphold a new reality principle—the "performance principle" (Marcuse 32, 40ff.)—which Weber thought more austere than any previous asceticism. For election could best be demonstrated against a background as unlike divinity as possible, a background against which grace could shine out while being tried by its contrary. To the traditional Christian injunction to flee temptation was now appended a warning against the fugitive and cloistered virtue found, for example, in Catholicism's ritual continuities.

In its extreme inhumanity this doctrine must above all have had one consequence for the life of a generation which surrendered to its magnificent consistency. That was a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual. In what was for the man of the age of the Reformation the most important thing in life, his eternal salvation, he was forced to follow his path alone to meet a destiny which had been decreed for him from eternity. No one could help him. No priest, for the chosen one can understand the word of God only in his own heart. No sacraments, for... they are not a means to the attainment of grace but only the externa subsidia of faith. No Church, for though it was held that extra ecclesiam nulla salus in the sense that whoever kept away from the true Church could never belong to God's chosen band, nevertheless the membership of the external Church included the doomed. Finally, even no God. For even Christ had died only for the elect, for whose benefit God had decreed his martyrdom from eternity. This, the complete elimination of salvation through the Church and the sacraments (which was in Lutheranism by no means developed to its final conclusions) was what formed the absolutely decisive difference from Catholicism.

That great historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world which had begun with the old Hebrew prophets and, in conjunction with Hellenistic scientific thought, had repudiated all magical means to salvation as superstition and sin, came here to its logical conclusion. (Weber 104-5)

This repudiation of even ecclesiastical magic dismissed the last vestiges of that mythological unitary consciousness characterizing poetic thought through Spenser. That happy consciousness, perceiving divine, human and natural realms as interpermeable, and comprehending neither the finitude of personal identity nor

the deadness of external matter/ritual/form, could only have appeared to Protestant agonism as a most enticing retreat from the "real" world produced by Protestant desacralization.

Money-making's de-aestheticized character made it, of all acts, most suitable as a demonstration of interior grace's mastery over the external sensuous universe of death. The perpetual, rationalized, and unnatural pursuit of commercial activity for its own sake amounted to a redemption from natural man's indolence, fleshly idolatry, spiritual voluptuousness, and spontaneous lusts. Not the once-esteemed monastic or "pagan" virtues of contemplation, study or artistic creation, but only this incessant productive labor possessed genuine value as an indicator of divine grace and vigor, of one's ability to transcend all but the barest necessities of spiritual refreshment in order to subsist, as far as the mortal psyche can, on grace alone. But valorizing production and scorning consumption created unprecedented wealth. "The paradox of rational asceticism, which in an identical manner has made monks of all ages to stumble," observed Weber in "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," "is that rational asceticism itself has created the very wealth it rejected." (Gerth and Mills, 332) By requiring a total rationalization of life around the demand for productivity, by requiring, as Sebastian Franck put it, that every Christian now be a monk for life (Weber 121), and by re-channelling vast wealth and energy away from luxurious consumption into further production, worldly asceticism laid the foundations for bourgeois capitalism, which ultimately outgrew its religious roots. Through the practice of demonstrating election by unaided individual performance, salvation anxiety gives birth to influence anxiety, which now came to prominence as a cultural force. It's hard not to see the Protestant ethic as the decisive factor in replacing the pre-modern sense of tradition's benevolent paternity with the modern compulsion to innovate in defense against the debilitating, humiliating influence of God, tradition, nature, even all primary life. Although the causal lines are not entirely one-directional, Cartesian self-consciousness seems fundamentally a philosophical reification of this isolated instrumental Protestant ego.<sup>9</sup>

Milton's relation to the Protestant ethic may be described as one of "pseudomorphosis." Spengler uses this term to describe the shaping of indigenous cultural upwellings into forms dictated by a conquering alien culture, much as (and this was the original mineralogical meaning of the term) a crystal that solidifies in a rock crevice is forced into an outer form incongruous with its inner structure:

By the term "historical pseudomorphosis" I propose to designate those cases in which an older alien culture lies so massively over the land that a young culture, born in this land, cannot get its breath and fails not only to achieve pure and specific expression forms, but even to develop fully its own self consciousness. All that wells up from the depths of the young soul is cast in the old molds, young feelings stiffen in senile works, and instead of rearing up in its own creative power, it can only hate the distant power with a hate that grows to be monstrous. (Decline of the West II, 189)

If we're not reminded here of Milton's Satan, we should be. Yet Milton's pseudomorphoses are too complex to permit his reduction to any simple ego or superego structure, demonic or orthodox. We have seen how, as sensuous man and poet he identified with the mythological and magical potency of tradition against the new castration threat dominating his social environment. For a passionate and classically educated sensibility like Milton's the ethic of de-aestheticized performance must have appeared as the very negation of desire—and of poetry, especially that born of Spring. He must at times have looked back enviously on the Christian humanists of the previous generation, particularly Spenser and Shakespeare, whose mythological narratives and tragic dramas resisted and muffled the rising antinaturalism. But for him a harder way was marked, as such poetry was now in the Protestant milieu more and more called into question.<sup>10</sup> And while the natural man in Milton chafed under Puritanism, the Puritan in him simultaneously felt the oppressive force of nature, tradition and primary life, against which the castration complex presented itself as a revolutionary power. Without registering the existence of these two simultaneous, and diametrically contrary, internal rebellions (the latter of which alone is embodied in Satan) Milton cannot be understood.

How exactly, then, did Milton in his First Reversal come to accept the castration complex not with ambivalence, still less with resentful resignation, but as his poetic liberation?

First and foremost, we must recall the nature of mythological consciousness which, in its surcharged abundance, is incapable of holding its Other at bay as an instrumental object, but internalizes it as another aspect of oneself. Mytho-logic, the logic of mythological consciousness in its naïveté, is anti-Aristotelian; under the identification that governs it, everything may metamorphose into its opposite. This is the principle not only of erotic love, in which the self feels itself as one with another, but of perception, through which impressions from the world become felt as part of the self and transform it. Self-inversion, then, is the first law of a mythological consciousness incapable by nature of preserving itself. Specific social situations involving love, castration or what not, only bring opportunities to do what it will eventually find a way to do anyway.

For Milton, the Protestant ethic offered mythological unitary consciousness an alienation to lose himself and find himself in. The Protestant milieu, in its anti-authoritarianism, worldly asceticism, individualism and dawning subjectivist dualism, offered powerful, immediately redeemable identity predicates, whereas the poetry of unitary consciousness, with its voluptuous paganism, threatened to divide him not only from his external social inheritance—family, church, class—but also from the athletic ideals he perceived as part of his "inner man"—and in so dividing him contradicted itself. What place remained for unitary consciousness, for erotic and aesthetic immediacy, amidst the industrious chastity and self-conscious moral athleticism that reduced the perilous ecstasies of the mythological erotic paradise to the "school for character" of bourgeois marriage?

Had Milton not taken the mythological sensibility so seriously, he could have indulged in it as a dilettante, maintaining sufficient conformity to the new order to be safe. That was what his contemporaries did, and what the merely talented in every age do. Milton was wholly incapable of generating his poetry out of such comfortable moral compromise. Yet just how does one remain—or become—a poet under such frigid conditions? First, by denying the dilemma for as long as possible. The Fifth Elegy takes up the pagan position as if no real difficulties attend it, refusing to recognize a spiritual, antinatural imperative behind what could be naturalized as "winter." Precisely since the poem foreclosed the castration signification it was an unsustainable model on which to proceed, its defensiveness condemning its organic and erotic vision to sterile repetition, devoid of organic and erotic relation to the lifeworld in its entirety. The Elegy's paganism turns out to be only a will to paganism--what Lawrence might call "paganism in the head"--a position we'll meet again in Milton.

Foreclosing the castration threat castrates by absorbing all available erotic energy into the defense against castration. The only hope of releasing that energy is to face the threat: to submit to its imperative and see if you can survive (and refusal to do this generates the anxious, narcissistic desublimation of contemporary social neurosis.) But to submit to castration for these reasons makes the complex--not sensuous nature--the darksome world against which to test your potency. Or perhaps, the knife by which you prune the true vine of erotic/poetic energy, not just to demonstrate its abundance but to stimulate its growth (PL IV 438-9; 624-9).

Once the antipathy of Milton's early vision had compelled him to meet antinaturalism head on, the latter revealed unsuspected poetic advantages. First, the opportunity to pioneer as a Christian poet. None of Milton's Christian precursors had really grasped the distinctly Christian antinatural vision. Even the austere Dante offered no Calvinist dualism, no war on that half of existence described as "natural," but rather one long continuity extending from Hell up to Paradise. So far removed was Shakespeare from dualism and otherworldly piety that to this day he appears only nominally Christian to many. As for Milton's beloved Spenser, his "endless voluptuousness of sentiment" and "exuberance of fancy" (Hazlitt's phrases) and his idyllic, magically metamorphic chivalric world of "Fierce warres and faithful loves" controverted his effort to moralize his song. The new territory that inner-directed Protestantism opened up for poetic colonization had long been known about but had remained largely unexplored. Here one could pioneer a poetics of warfare against eudaemonism--and, ostensibly, even against agonism. "He that is slow to anger," the Proverb had declared, "is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (16:32); so according to Christian inwardness Spenser--and even more, Spenser's precursors--had glorified the wrong sort of warfare, winning an implicit rebuke from the late Milton who, "long choosing and beginning late," saw himself

Not sedulous by Nature to indite  
 Wars, hitherto the only Argument  
 Heroic deem'd, chief maistry to dissect  
 With long and tedious havoc, fabl'd Knights  
 In battles feign'd; the better fortitude  
 Of patience and heroic Martyrdom  
 Unsung. (PL ix 26ff.)

Thus his repudiation of the Spenserian subject matter, and of his own early plans for an Arthuriad.

In the Apology for Smectymnuus Milton would idealize Christian inwardness as a program for making of "himself to be a true poem... a composition and pattern of the best and noblest 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." (H 694) Here his aim, again, was to be the first poet truly to conform to the requirements of his art. As Plato indicts Ion (and Homer, the real target) as a comical incompetent presuming to speak with poetic authority ("by the voice of a god") about what he knows nothing of, so Milton proposed to replace mere external allegories of virtue with the descriptions born of laborious personal acquaintance. For him the expression of interior life in art was the only truly adequate moral representation. Not that there weren't paradoxes in repudiating agonism in order to trump one's precursors. The contradictions began with paganism, under which unitary consciousness assimilated violence via mythologization.<sup>11</sup> Under Christianity, and again under Protestantism, this agonism was not dissolved, but was intensified by being internalized and suffused with libido. The repudiation of agonism only testifies to agonism's inescapability. "Every talent must unfold itself in fighting: that is the command of Hellenic popular pedagogy," observed Nietzsche.<sup>12</sup> "Meek-ey'd Peace" descended from heaven with a sword for the paganism it revolted against, and so entered into mimetic violence with it. As Nietzsche also saw, Christian suffering amounted to an intensified will to power, and Christian internal warfare--raising pagan agonism to an undreamed-of level--irresistibly enticed those who, intuiting their spiritual abundance, desired to prove it to themselves:

It should be added that the seductive force of the Christian ideal works most strongly perhaps upon such natures as love danger, adventure, and opposition--as love all that involves risking themselves while at the same time engendering a non plus ultra of the feeling of power.... Christianity here appears as a form of orgy of the will, of strength of will, as a heroic quixotism. (The Will to Power [hereafter WP] #216)

The strength of the Übermensch is also an inability to stay cloistered in paradisaic potency. "It is a sign of degeneration when eudaemonistic valuations begin to prevail... Abundant strength wants to create, suffer, go under" (WP #222). True eudaemonism seeks only to discharge itself; it is heedless of its own preservation. Christianity's challenge to the strong psyche was to risk itself, to discharge itself in the fullest possible way:

by taking arms against its natural energies and extirpating them. Potency's unsurpassable triumph would be over potency itself. How could genuine strength resist the challenge of its ultimate adversary?

Christianity offered a double temptation. To the surcharged psyche it offered the consummate opportunity to display and discharge its strength. The less well-endowed could mimic this discharge while intensifying their energies through resisting them. For under chastity's pruning daemonic life proliferates incorrigibly:

Th'earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark't with plumes,  
 The herds would over-multitude their Lords,  
 The Sea o'erfraught would swell, and th'unsought diamonds  
 Would so emblaze the forehead of the Deep,  
 And so bestud with Stars, that they below  
 Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last  
 To gaze upon the Sun with shameless brows. (Comus 730-6)

Chastity here has taken on geological force. The submerged shelf of desire, overridden and thrust down to hell, from whence it presses upward again in molten form, is the force beneath the strange landscapes of Paradise Lost--crumpled surfaces of austerity folded from below by impulses of passion and delight that frequently break through. This, as Comus says, is how jewels are forged and brought to light: by repression and eruption. And moving from plate tectonics back to Spengler's mineralogy (though the concept of pseudomorphosis seems to owe much to Oedipal psychology), we may say that just as Levantine Christianity forced pagan European humanism and forced into stunted, deceptive or grotesque formations, so intensified Protestant antinaturalism produced similar grotesqueries in Milton.

Accepting antinaturalism as demonstration of abundance would have allowed Milton to forget its role in generating power. Yet in justifying his youthful studies in the Apology For Smectymnuus, he does not wholly neglect to register the latter rationale. Would it be possible, he seems to have mused, by means of that "noble virtue chastity," as well as by "the ceaseless round of study and reading," to store up power that might someday erupt into a mighty work of art able to confound all that had come before? So seen, perpetual study would be no cloistered indulgence but just rational resource acquisition.<sup>13</sup> And chastity would become, in Nietzsche's words, "the economy of an artist," rationalizing internal desiring-production by sublimating sensuality into sensuous poetic richness. Repression generates wealth: this formula of capitalism, Milton saw, applies to the psychic realm as well.

Antinatural discipline was thus more than just a defensive/ aggressive strategy for becoming the first truly Christian poet. It also provided a far superior strategy for generating the world-animating Dionysian abundance the Fifth Elegy tried to celebrate. Milton accepted repression, in large part, to animate the world. Precisely by denying its life, he demanded it to manifest itself spontaneously, uncontrollably. Thus he tried cosmic vitality by its opposite in a Nietzschean/ Homeric combat, the theory of which he Christianized in

Areopagitica. The denial of winter in the Fifth Elegy produced only a false spring, unsustainable. If the cosmos is surcharged abundance—if it is to put forth its abundance in the poet—how better to provoke its upthrust than to declare the reign of winter! Comus seems unwillingly to confirm the Christian insight that the will to pleasure destroys pleasure, and his ironically-proposed chastity appears, at least for the moment, to be just what's needed to forestall impotence.

We mustn't forget that such chastity is adopted only as stratagem, a means to an end quite at variance with itself. The stratagem's success, however, hinges precisely on being wholeheartedly accepted—and hence forgotten—by one who has adopted it. Should any conscious reservations or anticipations of gratification persist, the stratagem dissolves into a sophisticated form of foreclosure. The castration complex must be accepted simply as Truth; and the conscious mind must wholly efface from view the world-animating machine it has created. This can be done as long as the machine continues to work. The complex can be left to function unexamined as long as it produces the power it was commissioned to produce. Only when the machine breaks down (which may occur distressingly soon) does the psyche, after puzzling over its dissatisfaction, re-member constructing the mechanism, and try to locate it in order to repair or dismantle it—thus exhibiting a drive underlying and superseding the complex. Milton's attempts to do just that will produce his Second and Third Reversals, at the beginning and the end of Paradise Lost.

Accepting the Protestant castration complex committed Milton to explore a new psychic technology—one that promised, on the egoistic level, to make him an original; on the world-historical level, to overthrow the old poetics of unitary consciousness; and at the bioenergetic level, to intensify the effects of the old erotic/ poetic world-animation machine. Milton the Ovidian libertine's repudiation of his futile will to paganism—his conversion to a poetics of negated desire that colonized poetry for Christianity—his ascetic intensification of aesthetic interiority—his departure from mythological continuity for a Christian agonism that resembled its opponent the more it repudiated it—these increasingly paradoxical formulations, culminating in the destruction of potency in order to express it, bear witness to the complexity with which the young poet synthesized his divided spiritual heritages.

#### Domestic Relations Revisited

The social conditions out of which Milton forged his poetics are, like the Oedipus complex, universals, albeit contingent ones. Other contemporary writers, even devout Puritans like Bunyan, overlooked the revolutionary poetic potential in Protestantism, and so seem quaint to us. We may simply credit Milton with genius and stop there—or we can look further. What in Milton's psyche sensitized him to the

poetic possibilities in the new configuration of social energies? What drove him to develop the new poetic technology of self-industrialization? Why did he, and no one else, make this superb career move?

Here we return to the bargain between John Milton Sr. and John Milton Jr. It couldn't have occurred early enough in the son's life to do all the work of the Primal Scene. And if I've construed it correctly, it appears innocent enough: "You go into literature and I'll ease your way." But the fact that it did not in itself destine Milton for castration does not mean it was benign. Experience teaches that such bargains are likely to involve unconscious agendas on either or both sides. Was there, on the part of John Milton Sr., an implicit but suppressed corollary: "And if you don't, I'll disown you, as my father disowned me"?<sup>14</sup> Possibly. Do we discern here the voice of the Father's wrath that the Son must mollify on humanity's behalf in *Paradise Lost* III? Perhaps. But this doesn't fully explain Milton's fascination with immanently-generated poetic power, nor does it account for the bond of generosity and gratitude that linked father and son. What father ever gave his artistic son more of what he most needed: the freedom to travel and the leisure to create? Did not such gifts deserve love and gratitude in return? ("And love is often bought with gifts.") Or was that just the trouble? Perhaps the implicit codicil was something less threatening though ultimately more demanding: "I'll make you a poet--and you'll validate my generosity that made it possible." Was there not, in all probability, an implicit charge, inherent in the degree of generosity, to justify to men the father's ways<sup>15</sup>--including the worldly-ascetic renunciation of his own artistic impulses in order to provide for his son? For John Milton Sr., an amateur musician of some note, had declined to make the art his profession. The difficulty here: an injunction, on the one hand, to be a poet, to produce a universe out of one's interior richness--and, simultaneously, as a poet, to exist in an externally-determined manner, commissioned to validate worldly asceticism's anti-aesthetic.

Milton's first attempt to resolve this conflict was to try to become a poet according to antithetical Protestant principles. But this alone did not relieve the burden of the demand: a demand to justify Creator father alongside Created son, the means equally with the end--thus reducing the end to the means that had been superimposed upon it, as if without the father's generosity in creating it ex nihilo, the son's poetry could have never have been. In such a situation, barring the father/creditor's explicit disavowal of all debt, his voice would have come to resound demonically in the son's unconscious. "You think you're doing this for yourself; but you're really doing it for me." "I give you my money, you give me your life." Ascetic poetics' miserable failure to dispel such voices only intensifies asceticism for it reveals a situation in which paternal generosity--and by implication, all abundance, all sensuous gratification--has become suspect,<sup>16</sup> thus increasing the need to produce all energy out of oneself. Raised to this level, the Protestant poetics of election-demonstration becomes a gnostic nausea of pre-existing energy.

While the simple identification of Milton with Satan is thankfully no longer in style, there are moments where Satan does seem to speak for a part of Milton. That Milton came to see himself as infinitely obligated to his father appears from Satan's soliloquy on Mount Niphates in which he rededicates himself to war on God:

What could be less than to afford him praise,  
 The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks,  
 How due! yet all his good prov'd ill in me,  
 And wrought but malice; lifted up so high  
 I 'sdein'd subjection, and thought one step higher  
 Would set me highest, and in a moment quit  
 The debt immense of endless gratitude,  
 So burdensome, still paying, still to owe;  
 Forgetful what from him I still receiv'd,  
 And understood not that a grateful mind  
 By owing owes not, but still pays, at once  
 Indebted and discharg'd; what burden then? (PL III, 46-57)

Here Milton confronts his resentment, projects it onto Satan and refutes it. Yet even at this point he had not fully understood it. Had his father's benevolence merely made him feel obligated to gratitude, Satan's reply to himself would have settled the issue. But what if the father seemed to demand recompense far beyond gratitude? Only part of Satan, and still less of Milton, can begin to articulate that situation. Satan's self-rebuttal doesn't settle things for him, anymore than it did for his author. Instead Milton over the years grew more and more inclined to portray paternal figures as Satanic, more and more insistent on independence from everything an earthly father (or the social order he embodies) could offer, more and more determined to confine his loyalty solely to God—whom, after he had rigorously defended him in his anthropopathic personality, he proceeded to dissolve into sheer immanence.

Milton's Oedipality and influence anxieties arise from, and are intensified by, mutually-reflecting social and domestic pseudomorphoses. In the Milton family, as in Protestant religion, the Father's demand drove desire into antinaturalism in order to produce wealth. Not that domestic paternal demand simply interpellated a social castration complex; rather, Milton's response to demand repeated the Protestant response to the unitary cosmos that now seemed debilitating and oppressive. Influence anxiety arises when abundance becomes a threat. For Milton, paternal generosity, however gratefully accepted, in time became exactly that. To free himself from that generosity he had to escape the eudaemonism it provided. Eros had to be revived and nature animated, not through their immanent abundance but by the poet's psychic technology. In this way Milton fell in line with the Protestant ethos that, while installing its mercantilist-industrial model of cosmos and society, invoked a new ideology of iconoclasm and influence anxiety against the unitary cosmos of the "repressive" pre-bourgeois order. In Milton a parallel drive for independence joined with

erotic desire and poetic will to produce the First Reversal; and Milton's Oedipality exists in this context, not behind it.

## Notes to Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> Milton and the English Revolution 109-110. For Hill's sources, see W.R. Parker, Milton's Contemporary Reputation (1971). For another exploration of Milton's sexual radicalism, see Leo Miller, Milton Among the Polygamophiles.

<sup>2</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (1966), 245.

<sup>3</sup> M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism, passim. For a mythological and Jungian version of the return, see Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces.

<sup>4</sup> William Kerrigan, The Sacred Complex: The Psychogenesis of "Paradise Lost" (1983), 6. Hereafter cited in the text.

<sup>5</sup> In that work Milton (following up, in part, insights Augustine had registered but dropped—see Confessions I, 13) tried to reform traditional pedagogy with a program integrating play and physical exercise, natural development and sublimation, practical application, and even multiple intelligences (a practical study of architecture, agriculture and seamanship "would try all their peculiar gifts of nature; and if there were any secret excellence among them, would fetch it out and give it fair opportunities to advance itself.") Nevertheless as an educator Milton's expectations were unrealistically high and his discipline severe. Edward Phillips, one of his nephews and pupils, speaks admiringly of the curriculum but, while refusing to complain on his own behalf, supplies the story of Milton's daughters being forced to read to him languages they did not understand. We cannot say that Milton wholly escaped what Alice Miller has called "the poisonous pedagogy"—only that he seems to have made a genuine effort to do so.

<sup>6</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski in The Sexual Life of Savages and Sex and Repression in Savage Society showed how the Trobriand Islanders denied paternity by denying the connection between sexual intercourse and conception. Wilhelm Reich in The Invasion of Compulsory Sex Morality answered objections to Malinowski by pointing out that, while the maternal uncle assumed the role of father for Trobriand children, none of the prohibitions or neuroses associated with the Oedipus complex appear in this society—except for in the case of children of chiefs, who were for economic reasons destined for cross-cousin marriages and for whom virginity was required. In this kinship structure, Reich suggested, both patriarchy and Oedipality originate.

By abdicating the right to scrutinize either the morality or the origin of what is presented as a divine decree, Augustine opens the door for worldly authority to impose on him in the name of God.

But when you suddenly command us to do something strange and unforeseen, even if you had previously forbidden it, none can doubt that the command must be obeyed, even though, for the time being, you may conceal the reason for it and it may conflict with the established customs in some forms of society; for no society is right and good unless it obeys you. (Confessions III, 9)

In this way you made me understand that I ought not to find fault with those who believed your Bible, which you have established with such great authority amongst almost all the nations of the earth, but with those who did not believe it; and that I ought to pay no attention to people who asked me how I could be sure that the Scriptures were delivered to mankind by the Spirit of the one true God who can tell no lie. (Confessions VI, 5)

The issue raised here will recur in Samson Agonistes, and again in Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's "solitary individual" seems to me to be constituted in his or her solitude by an uncritical acceptance of whatever internal prompting presents itself as divine decree. But with Milton (as in Samson—see chapter V) such promptings must be prepared for by conscious deliberation and are only allowed to surface after satisfying the "inner light" of ethical reason—giving him the capacity, which Augustine here renounces, to resist not only secular power in spiritual garb (see A Treatise on Civil Power) but even the Oedipal unconscious manifesting itself internally as divine command.

<sup>7</sup> For Yahwism as demythologization, even as a proto-deconstructive movement, see Herbert Schneidau, Sacred Discontent: The Bible in Western Tradition, especially 99-103 and 286-306.

<sup>8</sup> For the replacement of benign sonship by baleful influence as a product of Enlightenment or Cartesian dualism see Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 26. For "influence [a]s a disease of self-consciousness" see 29. Yet Milton generated his own influence anxiety—or better, influence antipathy—quite independently of Cartesianism. Of course technologies of self-consciousness were not invented by Descartes, much less by the Enlightenment; their history goes back to Christian

monasticism, Stoicism, and beyond to the dawn of literacy. However their highlighting and exploitation in Seventeenth century philosophy marked a new phase in the ego's development—as Bloom, following Thomas Mann, observes (53)—raising questions pertaining to subjectivity that prophetic writing will feel compelled to address

<sup>11</sup> See Weber 168-171, 272-275

<sup>12</sup> Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 91-118; also Schneidau, *Sacred Discontent*, 50-68.

<sup>13</sup> "Homer's Contest," in Kaufmann, ed. *The Portable Nietzsche* 37 (emphasis mine).

<sup>14</sup> And as such, athletic combat sublimated into psychic-industrial warfare. Thus Blake imagines the reprobated Milton—the Milton of *Paradise Regained*—contending against his former self in the person of Urizen, representative of "the Elect," whose minions, dwelling on "[t]he banks of Cam, cold learnings streams... set Pleasure against Duty: who Create Olympic crowns/ To make Learning a burden & the Work of the Holy Spirit: Strife" (M 19:39, 25:51-2).

<sup>15</sup> Aubrey's biographical notes assert that John Milton Sr.'s father "disinherited him because he kept not to the Catholic religion [He found a Bible, in English, in his chamber]." (Hughes 1021).

<sup>16</sup> For Kerrigan this justification includes Milton's defense of free will and of the individual's right to read and interpret scripture for himself. This defense may be considered commissioned by his father. "Milton justified the spirit of his father, devoting his prose to an uncompromising defense of the right to interpret [the Bible] and his poetry to a representation of the book he had rightfully interpreted. The absolute claim of religious conscience made him blind, endangered, impoverished—and made him what he is to our culture, the major proprietor in English poetry of the Christian Bible." (Kerrigan 8)

<sup>17</sup> Thus *Paradise* appears to innumerable readers as a bribe offered by God to ensure placid obedience.

Not satisfied with this, Empson places even the Father's ultimate act of generosity—his abdication—under suspicion as a ruse of some undetermined sort, worthy of O'Brien in Orwell's *1984*. This is much nearer the mark. For Milton, the immediate effect of paternal generosity is never to induce complacent stupidity, but rather moral self-condemnation and arduous intellectual asceticism. And the ultimate effect is to induce the programmatic suspicion, exhibited by Satan and Empson, of all primary abundance and generosity—a response that is less an exposure of paternal demand than a blind reaction, even an unwitting acquiescence, to it. Nevertheless Empson puts his finger on an important emotional current in *Paradise Lost*, one that must be recognized before Milton's complex response to it can be grasped. See *Milton's God* 132-46, and further discussion in Chapter Six.

### Chapter Three: THE POETRY OF MILTON'S FIRST REVERSAL

#### The Genesis of Revisionism in the Nativity Ode

How old is antithetical revisionism? What precipitated it? Was it conceived of the lengthening shadow of history that fell upon us when poetic tradition reached critical mass--when it became no longer possible to master its ever accumulating contents, or to feel assured of a place in the overcrowded canonical firmament? Was the shadow that of one monstrous precursor, a Shakespeare or a Milton? Or did the change occur in our consciousness, due to non-literary developments (Cartesian or "Enlightenment" self-consciousness)? Harold Bloom, revisionism's foremost theorist, has suggested all the above at various times, sometimes layering one beneath the other: "We remember how for so many centuries, from the sons of Homer to the sons of Ben Jonson, poetic influence had been described as a filial relationship, and then we come to see that poetic influence, rather than sonship, is another product of the Enlightenment, another aspect of Cartesian dualism."<sup>1</sup> The question of course isn't which of these hypotheses is right, but how do they relate to each other? This might occupy us for a lifetime, especially since each influence--history, precursor rivalry, self-consciousness--installed itself in increments. We'll never identify a definite point when any of them came into action ex nihilo.

Insofar as influence anxiety is considered a potentially-paralyzing self-consciousness, it is natural to see Descartes, if not as its cause, then as a symbol or another manifestation of its causes. Descartes certainly didn't invent self-consciousness, but he raised it to a new level by founding philosophy upon it--a move Milton betrays no knowledge of. Influence anxiety enters English poetry with Milton, yet Milton is hardly an Enlightenment, or even a Cartesian, poet. The poetry of his First Reversal, where anxiety is most evident, precedes chronologically any of Descartes' major writings. His self-consciousness was not a Cartesian self-consciousness, any more than Descartes exhibited Miltonic influence anxiety. Neither caused the other; both arose from deeper forces. The great revolutionary force of the Seventeenth Century was Protestantism, whose adherents, as a demonstration of grace, asserted uninfluenced independence and individuating instrumental conscious against the old eudaemonistic and mythological continuities, rationalizing every aspect of life in preparation for the Enlightenment's scientific advancements and (in tacit rebellion against the Calvinist deity) for the emerging secular society. From here on rebellion, independence and influence anxiety became Western culture's explicit themes. Looking backwards, Protestantism seems the great watershed that replaced antiquity with modernity, tradition with innovation, identification with individuation, sonship with influence, fealty with rebellion. But that may just be because it is the most recent of such watersheds.

But Protestantism did not invent the self-conscious individual ex nihilo any more than Cartesianism did. Solon with his "know thyself," Jesus's "lose thyself" and Augustine's Confessions testify to self-consciousness's antiquity; recognizing the discrepancy of lifeworlds, we nevertheless admit their selfhood as equivalent to our own. What lies behind that selfhood? "The ego of antiquity and its consciousness of itself," observes Mann, "were different from our own, less exclusive, less sharply defined."<sup>2</sup> Very good. But how did the transition occur from the earlier mythological consciousness to proto-modern self consciousness? Since the watershed we seek occurs, apparently, at the dawn of history, historical data is sparse and easy to misread; we can't avoid proceeding somewhat on intuition. Here then is Lawrence, reading intuitively, extracting the birth of the ego from the primordial level of Western myth:

This process of cognition consists in the forming of ideas, which are units of transmuted consciousness.... But when the mind has a sufficient number of these little batteries of ideas in store, a new process of life starts in. The moment an idea forms in the mind, at that moment does the old integrity of the consciousness break. In the old myths, at that moment we lose our "innocence," we partake of the tree of knowledge, and we become "aware of our nakedness": in short, self-conscious. (P 768)

According to this line of thought, what reached critical mass at the dawn of human consciousness, and attained a new quantum level in the Renaissance, was not just literary tradition but the totality of recorded knowledge, reflecting back to consciousness an image of itself with which consciousness identifies, reifying itself as a thing to be known conceptually rather than intuitively. The relation between the originary consciousness and the reflected self-image with which it identifies was for Lawrence one of influence anxiety:

The first thing the self-aware-of-itself realizes is that it is a derivative, not a primary entity. The second thing it realizes is that the spontaneous self with its sympathetic consciousness and non-ideal reaction is the original reality, the old Adam, over which the self-aware-of-itself has no originative power. That is, the self-aware-of-itself knows it can frustrate the consciousness of the old Adam, divert it, but it cannot stop it: it knows, moreover, that as the moon is a luminary because the sun shines, so it, the spirit, is only a sort of reflection of the great primary consciousness of the old Adam. (P 768)

Here is Lawrence's deep reading of Paradise Lost, a reading which has much to recommend it.

While "spontaneous consciousness" is more an unreflective immediacy than a will to pleasure, it is by no means indifferent to pleasure. And so it is regularly conceived reductively by "mental consciousness" as simple will to pleasure. For, Lawrence goes on to observe, a major historical manifestation of the ego's influence anxiety has been asceticism. To the psyche identified with its self-signification, everything outside that signification, including its own bodily energies becomes anxiety, noxious influence; to such an ego the id can seem as domineering as the superego. Castration for Lawrence is self-consciousness' war on all influence that attests to its impotence:

The self-aware ego knows it is a derivative, a satellite. So it must assert itself. It knows it has no power over the original body, the old Adam, save the secondary power of the idea. So it begins to store up ideas, those little batteries which always have a moral, or good-and-bad implication.

For four thousand years man has been accumulating these little batteries of ideas, and using them on himself against his pristine consciousness, his old Adam. The queen bee of all human ideas since 2000 B.C. has been the idea that the body, the pristine consciousness, the great sympathetic lifeflow, the steady flame of the old Adam is bad, and must be conquered. Every religion taught the conquest: science took up the battle, tooth and nail: culture fights in the same cause<sup>3</sup>: and only art sometimes--or always--exhibits an internecine conflict and betrays its own battle-cry. (P 769)

Lawrence's intuition (stimulated by the unorthodox analyst Trigant Burrow<sup>4</sup>) is that humanity castrates itself in response to knowing itself. It should go without saying that this proposition can hardly be dismissed as a "creative misreading" of Freud; rather it attempts to establish the genesis and function of antithetical misreading in general, including Freud's. What Lawrence has offered is an account of how "Primary" experience develops into "Antithetical" experience: the progression from intuitive immediacy, to the reified idea, to the concept, to the self-image and self-concept (to be followed, eventually, by, generally futile, romantic and postmodern reactions against these "truths") The concepts, "Primary" and "Antithetical" which Bloom borrows from Yeats, can be hard to pin down.<sup>5</sup> I use "Primary" to indicate a pre-literate mythological conscious marked by a sense of cosmological continuity, and "Antithetical" to indicate a sense of selfhood distinct from and in revisionary agon with traditional, internal and cosmological energies. As Yeats emphasizes in A Vision, the Primary is the totality of continuity from which individuated psyche emerges, and into which it may be absorbed; it includes therefore both God and Nature. The antithetical individuation sought by Lawrencian self-consciousness, and which Milton seeks, must distinguish itself from both. And the social model for overt resistance to nature, combined with covert resistance to God and eternity--adding up to an attempt to escape cosmic continuity in general--was Protestant worldly asceticism.

"From earliest times, man has been aware of a 'power' or potency within him--and also outside him--which he has no ultimate control over," observes Lawrence. This potency is unitary, inhabiting the macro- as well as the microcosm.

Perhaps the greatest difference between us and the pagans lies in our different relation to the cosmos. With us all is personal. Landscape and the sky, these are to us the delicious background of our personal life, and no more.... To the pagan, landscape and personal background were on the whole indifferent. But the cosmos was a very real thing. A man lived with the cosmos, and knew it greater than himself.

Don't let us imagine we see the sun as the old civilizations saw it. All we see is a scientific little luminary, dwindled to a ball of blazing gas. In the centuries before Ezekiel and John, the sun was still a magnificent reality, men drew forth from him strength and splendour, and gave him back homage and lustre and thanks. But in us, the connection is broken, the responsive centers are dead. (A 90, 27)

"We have lost the cosmos, by coming out of responsive connection with it," says Lawrence, "and that is our chief tragedy." (A 27) Why has this happened? Because "the supreme little ego in man hates an unconquered universe. We shall never rest till we have heaped tin cans on the North Pole and the South Pole, and put up barb-wire fences on the moon.... The back of creation is broken. We have killed the mysteries and devoured the secrets. It all lies now within our skin, within the ego of humanity." (P II 391-2)

Now Milton's relation to the cosmos in the Fifth Elegy was already a little too personal and classical to suit Lawrence--and yet the cosmos was there, infusing its powers and passion into all. Milton's first revisionist act, in the Nativity Ode, is one of self-revision: everything worshipped in the Elegy is thrown down in the Ode, precisely according to the pattern of desacralization Lawrence saw emerging in antiquity, and which was epitomized in Protestantism. For libido, chastity is substituted; for spring, winter; for the virile pagan gods, the Christ-child; and for eternity (according to the emerging pattern of Protestant worldly asceticism) the fallen world. The project is no less than to undo the Primary cosmos, to overthrow a mythological consciousness at bottom still Milton's own, but from which, in order to attain the strength it demands of him, he must compel himself to depart. The embodiment of the effort to make new strength out of weakness is the Christ-child; the image of the departure from achieved strength is the kenosis of Christ

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. (Philippians 2:6-9)

Here is the first phase of Milton's persistent Christ-identification. Yet kenosis as a strategy of poetic warfare has this less-idealized formula: "where the precursor was, there shall the ephebe be, but by the discontinuous mode of emptying the precursor of his divinity, while appearing to empty himself of his own" (Bloom, Anxiety, 91), and the Nativity Ode follows this formula enthusiastically, emptying out both earth and heaven, the nature-gods of mythology and the Courts of Everlasting Day. The moral gulf between them is only superficial. Both represent cosmic continuity, mythic fullness of meaning, and pre-existing glory; and Christ's descent demonstrates his power not only over paganism but over eternity. Mere men may strive for and even attain godhood, but to put off eternity argues a true god. "That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable," could not display his glory in the heavenly courts nearly so well as in a house of mortal clay. Neither Christ nor the surcharged Milton could remain forever within the blissful continuities of eternity, but according to the pattern of worldly asceticism must descend to labor in the desacralized world.

To install that world, Milton armed with the tropes of *clinamen* and *kenosis*, declares war on the cosmos. Emptying himself of his divinity, Christ comes to empty Nature of hers. Until she yields to desacralization, acknowledging the shamefulness of her loves and energies, she cannot be owned by her new Lord:

She woos the gentle Air  
 To hide her guilty front with innocent Snow,  
 And on her naked shame,  
 Pollute with sinful blame,  
 The Saintly Veil of Maiden white to throw,  
 Confounded that her Maker's eyes  
 Should look so near upon her foul deformities. (38ff.)

A speech worthy of that greater infant, Hamlet. "It was no season then for her/ To wanton with the Sun, her lusty Paramour," declares Milton, at which we may ask, is the fertilizing conjunction of Sun and Earth, apart from which life is not (and see PL V, 300-2!) now to be condemned as fornication? But *kenosis'* aim is precisely to reduce Nature to a universe of death, moral and spiritual, that the descending god's might may shine the brighter.

Father Sun, disparaged in Oedipal terms like Mother Nature, is imagined as suffering influence anxiety, projected from *ephebe* onto precursor:

The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,  
 And hid his head for shame,  
 As his inferior flame,  
 The new-enlight'n'd world no more should need;  
 He saw a greater Sun appear  
 Than his bright Throne, or burning Axletree could bear. (79ff.)

The desacralization of Nature continues, after an interlude of spherical music, with the expulsion of the pagan gods. Here Bloom offers as the formula Freud's trope of undoing, *Ungeschehenmachen*, "an obsessional process in which past actions and thoughts are rendered null and void by being repeated in a magically opposite way, a way deeply contaminated by what it attempts to negate" (Map 99). So Milton "with backward mutters of dissevering power" strives to free himself from the outlook of the Fifth Elegy, written just months before. To its concluding prayer, contrast the chaste celestial music that portends the Christian Age of Gold--and the following eviction notice:

The Oracles are dumb,  
 No voice or hideous hum  
 Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving....  
 From haunted spring and dale  
 Edg'd with poplar pale,  
 The parting Genius is with sighing sent. (173ff.)

Christ has emptied Nature of her old deities by the more essential power of his infantile weakness, lateness and emptiness. But this poses the crucial problem of the Ode, one latent in Christian theology: just how can antinaturalism conquer nature? Since conquest is ostensibly an aspect of the fallen world opposed to Christian spirituality, any notion of "spiritual conquest" threatens either to remain metaphorical and inefficacious in the world, or to reduce the conqueror to the world he came to conquer. Unless the terms "nature" and "conquest" are thoroughly examined and carefully redefined, Christian strength through weakness seems doomed to be either pretended strength or pretended weakness. Milton at this stage of his career is not ready to take on the task of this clarification; perhaps he does not fully perceive the need for it.

Nevertheless, it is crucial for the Ode that the Babe conquer nature by a power radically opposed to nature, and in order to make this happen Milton must proceed by manipulating poetic images, making the Ode vacillate disquietingly between the Son's masterly violation of nature and his blissful weakness. Soon after he has put to shame the Sun and Earth it appears he has destroyed them only to gently fulfill their reign through the magic of spheral music (stanza x) that will dismiss the fallen world and fetch the Age of Gold (l. 135). But such magic cannot work under dualism, only under pagan unitary consciousness, and Milton finds himself wondering if the spheres "have power to touch our senses so" (l.127). And at the music's end the Babe is returned to impotent "smiling Infancy" (l. 151). From this pivotal stanza the poem embarks on another crescendo: this time from weakness to a climax of militant power at which the infant Christ is momentarily assimilated to the young Heracles. Milton quickly whisks this image away and, by the poem's end, returns the young god once more to his mother's care. Juxtaposing the Ode's two halves, its two apocalyptic crescendos, seems to have been Milton's way of compensating for the inadequacy of each; and the rapid oscillation between contrasting images of the Babe—images that, mentally superimposed, suggest a fusion of opposites which dualistic logic would not allow—is his way of reconciling, as far as possible, natural "strength" with spiritual "weakness."

In the unitary "romance world" power is simply power, existing in degrees of intensity, and even God's mighty works in history are not radically opposed to humanity and nature, but done by a higher humanity into which humans may ultimately be received. Beneath the Ode's dualism, this unitary intuition and aspiration still exists for Milton in his identification with Christ's kenosis: a forsaking of divinity in order to be initiated into it and to possess it irrevocably.

But for now this discredited and de-vitalized Nature makes a new world for pioneering poets to explore and exploit. Its paradoxes, arising from the dualistic opposition of nature to spirit, and irresolvable except temporarily by rhetoric and miracle, present an abyss whose continually dissolving foundations absorb the mind, a cerebral labyrinth immured from primary or bioenergetic influence, offering in their place more innovative energetic configurations. We will eventually see even more spectacular forms of this abyss.

### Restoration as Renunciation: "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso"

Misreading is a strategy--the strategy--of poetic defense. Competition for donativity creates a need for this defense; for en-countering a precursor's donativity puts student poets ("ephebes") under the precursor's influence--first gratefully, then resentfully as they come to desire abundance and influence themselves. When this seems impossible--when the precursor's stimulus seems so great as to be incapable of assimilation--the ephebe's narcissistic wound can paralyze any further creative efforts.

The lie--rather, the error necessary for life--of the antithetical poet is that as ephebe you are more powerful than the precursor, that your genius is independent of the master's influence and can correct his errors. Bloom's "revisionary ratios" are a series of defensive-aggressive tropings designed to maintain this fiction, while gradually rendering it less fictive. The pattern of paired ratios--"limitation" followed by "substitution" followed by "representation" or restoration (Map 84)--resembles a literary game of "fort-da" in which you master the master by expelling, correcting and retrieving him. Or the ratios may be seen as steps in an increasingly intimate ritual dance-combat by which you learn the precursor's moves and absorbs his strengths while directing your conscious efforts against what you style his weaknesses--maintaining your fiction of dominance against the shock of the as-yet-unassimilable stimulus.

Antithetical misreading, then, is a way of making reading and writing endurable. The victories gained by troping, trumping and misreading are the other side of a continuing self-revision in response to what you learn from the precursor. (Far better this identificatory combat than the reduction of relations, poetic or human, to cruder forms of lordship and bondage.)

Of the possible revisionary ratios Bloom offers six: clinamen or reaction formation, the swerve from the fault imputed to the precursor; tessera or refutation of the precursor by completion of his or her project; kenosis, an undoing or emptying of the precursor by emptying of yourself; daemonization, a penetration via virtual castration to the precursor's source of power; askesis, a sublimation or sacrifice of part of yourself whose absence will individuate you more; and finally the apophrades, metalepsis or transumption in which earliness and lateness change places as the voices of the dead are invoked as your own.

These ratios form three cycles of "limitation/substitution/ representation" (Map 84). The radical contraction of the initial clinamen proceeds to a tentative expansion in tessera, followed by further reduction, followed by yet another expansive restoration of precursor stimulus, until the spirits of the dead are subjected to the living will. An increasingly imaginative reprocessing of precursor stimulus is thus available to poets, who find it easier than critics to outgrow their initial clinamen. With the assimilation of influence, the cruder defenses against it can be discarded. Although the ratios are not always traversed in this order, Milton, who seems to have been the first to employ them systematically as defense mechanisms,

established a sequence very close to Bloom's. (The only variation lies in his redistribution of kenosis, combining it with clinamen in the Nativity Ode and, as we'll see, with daemonization in Comus.)

Thus we can expect, following the Nativity Ode's reaction, a gesture of restoration via tessera. This we find in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso."—a restoration structured, however, so as ultimately to solidify the case Milton is developing against Primary experience.

The serenity so sporadically apparent in the Nativity Ode bathes "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" in its light. In the Ode, against vitality's unrestrained expression in war and love, Milton opposed the unconquerable power of repression embodied in a Son who chooses asceticism and even Oedipally neurotic relations in order not to grow up merely his Father's equal. But now the fanaticism of the Ode is banished and primary life is revived in all its loveliness, balanced against contemplative life in seeming ambivalence. "Which of these two men am I?" Milton inquires of himself while examining the Happy Man and the Pensive Man in turn. For now, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso can revolve as night and day, dancing and almost fusing in the mind's eye—and Milton can maintain, in his sonnet to the Nightingale:

Whether the Muse, or Love call thee his mate,  
Both them I serve, and of their train am I

instead of the antithetical prohibition against serving two masters:

The intellect of man is forced to choose  
Perfection of the life or of the work. (Yeats, "The Choice," Collected Poems 242)<sup>6</sup>

Already the mutually-repudiating prologues to the two poems are tuned up in readiness for the day when one of them will go into effect. Which one will? Milton seems to be at a crossroads where he must divine his way; and his mode of divination will be infallible, for simply to ask the question "what sort of man shall I be?" is to answer it: "other than I have been." In fact, so conclusively has the question been unconsciously decided that the twin poems, for all their apparent balancing, add up to but another argument in favor of Milton's Protestant project.

"L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" are meditations on the pleasures of two contrary states of the soul in the hope of discovering their essences. For "L'Allegro" the essence of pleasure is sensuous immediacy. Here all pleasures come from participating, either actively or by observation, in the physical world—as only a few of "Il Penseroso's" do. The tales told in the two poems—of Puck and Cambuscan, respectively—please in different ways, for different reasons: the first told at a rustic festival, the second perused at a solitary seance; the one deriving its pleasure from the social occasion, the other from its inherent occult fascination. Nor is there in "L'Allegro" the imaginative anticipation of otherworldly delights that occupies "Il Penseroso"; the Happy Man's pleasure is entirely in this world. And while, as Tuve (61) argued, every pleasure in both poems is a mental pleasure (how could they not be?) "L'Allegro's" "mental pleasures" are those in which reflection has been suspended or not yet engaged. The respite from the responsibility of

interpretation is not the least of "L'Allegro"'s "unreproved pleasures free," and goes along with its moral innocence and optimism:

And in thy right hand lead with thee,  
The Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty.

Yet toward the poem's end L'Allegro's pleasures do become noticeably more imaginative: the tales, the chivalric courtly love contests, and finally the comic theater of Jonson--and Shakespeare, Milton's emblem of spontaneous immediacy. At this point the fissure between primary eroticism (the "ladies eyes" which "Rain influence and judge the prize") and competitive poetic life ("Married to immortal verse") opens, as the consummations of the two modes are strikingly reversed. And now "L'Allegro"'s spontaneous eudaemonism is confronted with an alien state:

And ever against eating Cares,  
Lap me in soft Lydian Airs.

A breezy reference that might alert us to subsurface tensions. In these lines we pass beyond L'Allegro's naive immediacy into a realm of repressive evasion. Music is to be the defense, the mind escaping the specter of anxiety by losing itself in "the melting voice through mazes running." But at the heart of the labyrinth, Care's image reappears even in the ecstasy that suggests final escape:

Untwisting all the chains that tie  
The hidden soul of harmony.

What is so traumatic about this?

The image is in fact a death's head, a reminder of mortality, evoking in the next lines the failure of Orpheus' song to recover "His half-regain'd Eurydice." In "Lycidas" Orpheus will appear in a yet more openly traumatic context. In "L'Allegro," while the blithe surface remains intact, the current flows underground toward the same destination: a realization of inevitable death and the transience of earthly delights. "These delights if thou canst give"--the conditionality here is a rebuke to Mirth. No one can give them forever.

The implicit lament over earthly delight isn't "where has it gone?" but "where will it be?" Yet spontaneous immediacy fuses the two questions into one. For it, all things are present. Thoughts of ultimate mortality, occurring to this consciousness, partake of the immediacy of its pleasures, and in so doing ruin them. Taking on the character of immediacy itself, futurity fuses with it, sucking it out of itself until, laid open to every premonition of futurity, immediacy inverts and denies itself.<sup>7</sup> "For apt the Mind or Fancy is to rove/ Uncheekt, and of her roving is no end": this is the metonymic wandering of anxiety, the psychic contagion, against which immediacy is helpless. For that consciousness from which nothing is alien, simply to conceive of a radical otherness like death, with which it must immediately identify, is the

end of immediacy. It is no good to fly from futurity into a maze of music, for the flight is the restless thought that pursues, and to escape it is to escape immediacy itself.

The idyllic alternation of merriment and "pleasing melancholy" is over when death comes into view. "Il Penseroso" has made provision against the impending end of natural delight. The Thoughtful Man's pleasures, though experienced in the body, suit also "The immortal mind that hath forsook/ Her mansion in this fleshly nook"; their pleasure comes from their transcending of sensuous immediacy by spirit, "and enchantments drear/ Where more is meant than meets the ear." It is a pleasure in the penetration of hidden meanings. In contrast to the good and banal primary world of "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso possesses a tinge of evil, of occult fascination--as when The Thinker, viewing Cynthia's dragon yoke, observes that she wanders at her dark noon

Like one that had been led astray  
Through the Heav'n's wide pathless way

though precisely where the evil lurks is still impossible to say.

While L'Allegro can only foreclose devouring thoughts of old age, exhaustion and death, Il Penseroso sees these states as fulfillment:

And may at last my weary age  
Find out the peaceful hermitage  
The Hairy Gown and Mossy Cell,  
Where I may sit and rightly spell  
Of every Star that Heav'n doth shew  
Till old experience do attain  
To something like prophetic strain.

L'Allegro's delight in aesthetic surface yields to contemplation of essential structure, something far more deeply interfused bringing the sober pleasure of elevated thoughts. Contemplation completes youth's glad animal movements by doing the one thing they can't do: endure. No longer existing in a naive alternation and equilibrium with it, contemplation becomes immediacy's final fulfillment. A new capacity for deliberate willing confirms immediacy's loss. Waking at the poem's end to "Day's garish eye" (l. 141; cf. PL IV 125ff.!) Il Penseroso defends himself with an assertion unprecedented in "L'Allegro": "But let my due feet never fail/ To walk the studious Cloister's pale"--quietly but firmly insisting on remaining as he has determined to be, despite the incommodious setting. The mind is now its own place.

### The Economics of Daemonization, or the Romantic World-Animation Machine

In trying to divine his fate Milton is led toward his own death where the answer lies (Map 13). To attain poetic immortality is to overcome natural death through fame; the fruit of moonlit vigils in the studious cloister is "immortal verse." As for ambition--the force that so accelerates sublimation as to make "weary age" attractive to a twenty-three year old poet--we do not hear of it in these decorously synechdochal poems, though we feel it. It is left to a slighter contemporary of the twin poems, the elegy "On Shakespeare," to supply what is missing in them.

Shakespeare, whose "native wood notes wild" Milton plasters over with images of monarchical worship, was both the personal embodiment of Milton's poetic ego-ideal and his object of defense. As Bloom now recognizes (WC 169), Milton's confession of Spenser as his "Great Original" was a defense against Shakespeare, whose paralyzing effect makes readers "Marble with too much conceiving"--like tomb decorations:

And so Sepulcher'd in such pomp dost lie,  
That Kings for such a Tomb would wish to die.

A divinity to delight any monarch: the ability to subjugate souls even after death. Shakespeare's mastery over our minds by natural profusion's "easy numbers" being inimitable, Milton conceives his own poetic monument to be "slow-endeavoring art," nourished by "the ceaseless round of study and reading," which, coupled with chivalrous Protestant loyalty to "the principles of the Christian religion," would make "himself a true poem," possessing sufficient nobility of character to "leave something so written to aftertime, as they should not willingly let it die"--this last phrase, from The Reason of Church Government, expressing once more the goal of the poetic religion which in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," he has tried to ground in nature.

In Milton the quest for an individuated identity as a poet—a project requiring him resolutely to renounce all traditional, cosmic and erotic influence--combines with an attempt to make this asceticism restorative, an attempt to make it generate aesthetic intensity and poetic power beyond even what was there before. Ascetic ideology in Milton defines the new Nonconformist poetic identity; ascetic practice on the other hand becomes a psychic technology for generating Shakespearean, or quasi-Shakespearean, intensities that mark a more traditional aesthetic identity.

Even the most Nonconformist poetic identities are conferred by a community in exchange for some benefit bestowed--whether that be (as in traditional epic, Apollonian in orientation) a memorable recounting of the tale of the tribe, or (as in Dionysian art) the creation of imaginative worlds so rich, dense and luminous that we refuse to let them die; different communities reward different configurations of qualities. Milton, intending that Protestantism become a world-historical poetic program through him, declined for just this reason to limit his identity to Puritanism. He was not John Bunyan nor would he have

considered Bunyan a worthy competitor. His Protestant poetics would have to prove itself in a broader arena.

It was against Shakespeare--and, through Shakespeare, the eudaemonistic Ovidian "old Adam"--that the Milton of the First Reversal contended in two cycles of renunciation and restoration: the first opened by a violently anti-Ovidian lyric, the Nativity Ode, the second by the intensely anti-Shakespearean drama Comus. For Shakespeare had taken possession not only of all drama, but also of the sonnet cycle and the pastoral mytho-erotic lyric. Milton's aim in his First Reversal is now to test himself against Shakespearean achievement by emptying its values wherever they oppose those of Puritanism. But doing so brings about their unacknowledged restoration--their appropriation from Shakespeare.

Protestantism culminated, up to its time, the psyche's realization of independence from primary energies. The natural sublimation of sensuous immediacy into conceptual-instrumental consciousness (the great moment of which was the dawn of literacy) was deliberately intensified first by Platonic and then by Christian asceticism, producing the free, instrumentally-conscious individual on whom Western ethics is based. But in response to the overthrow of bio-cosmic and mythological continuities by instrumental reason with the Protestant Revolution and especially with the Enlightenment, a counter-current of asceticism revived. Long dormant and in some ways older than the worldly asceticism it undoes, this asceticism does not renounce bio-cosmic influence but restores it, re-animating the world and recovering the divine energies dispelled by Reason. In Milton's Protestant poetics the crossover between renunciative and restorative asceticism occurs.

In the Nativity Ode kenosis justified clinamen, since the emptying of poetic tradition, sensuous immediacy, cosmic continuity and even eternity made it possible to repudiate, deny meaning to, or simply disregard what was emptied. In Comus, on the other hand, kenosis prepares the way for daemonization. Here the self-emptying that empties nature rationalizes the repression which generates antinatural power, but to do so it must first empty Shakespearean eudaemonism. In Comus Milton opens himself to eudaemonism's underlying premise--abundance--to refute which he invokes a barrage of tropes and misreadings, arising from antinaturalism's premise: scarcity.

For Comus, son of Circe and Maenalian Pan, abundance is the foundation of enjoyment. What other purpose could it have?

Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth  
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,  
Covering the earth with odors, and fruits, and flocks,  
Thronging the Seas with spawn innumerable,  
But all to please and sate the curious taste? (710-714)

To shun nature's bounty is both to frustrate her and to insult God by imputing to him monopolistic avarice:

If all the world  
 Should in a pet of temperance feed on Pulse,  
 Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but Frieze,  
 Th'all-giver would be unthank't, would be unprais'd  
 Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd,  
 And we should serve him as a grudging master,  
 As a penurious niggard of his wealth,  
 And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,  
 Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own weight,  
 And strangl'd with her waste fertility. (720-729)

For Comus, nature is scarcely distinguishable from God the "all-giver" to whom she seems married in creation, as Sun and Earth once were. As part of this teeming world, human beings must not only receive and relieve Nature's surcharge but put forth bounteously themselves; nor can they help spontaneously doing so, being part of the True Vine.

The voice in which Comus puts forth this argument is that of Milton's superabundant precursor Shakespeare:

Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend  
 And being frank, she lends to those are free;  
 Then beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse  
 The bounteous largess given thee to give?  
 Profitless usurer, why dost thou use  
 So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live?  
 For having traffic with thyself alone  
 Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive. (Sonnet IV)

For Comus as for Shakespeare self-enclosure is perversion. To impede the circulation of abundance, either by usurious monopoly or masturbatory chastity, is crime against nature.

Beauty is nature's coin, must not be hoarded,  
 But must be current, and the good thereof  
 Consists in mutual and partak'n bliss,  
 Unsavory in th'enjoyment of itself. (739-742)

When Comus bolsters his argument for mutual gratification with an appeal to natural aristocracy--

coarse complexions  
 And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply  
 The sampler, and to tease the housewife's wool.  
 What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,  
 Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the Morn? (749-753)

--he is again quoting Shakespeare in the voice of the Devil:

Let those whom Nature hath not made for store  
 Harsh, featureless and rude, barrenly perish:  
 Look, whom she best endow'd she gave the more  
 Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish (Sonnet XI)

but with an anti-utilitarian<sup>8</sup> twist that prompts the Lady's altruistic reply:

Imposter, 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  
 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 beseeming share  
 Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury  
 Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,  
 Nature's full blessings would be well dispens't  
 In unsuperfluous even proportion,  
 And she no whit encumbered with her store. (762-774)

What is the deepest misunderstanding here? Is it in the identification of pleasure with "riot"? Or in equating sexual pleasure with economic exploitation? Or in the heresy of lines 764-7 where, refuting Shakespeare's Fourth Sonnet, the Lady winds up also refuting the Sermon on the Mount? Probably it consists in her begging the question of Comus' argument. For him nature is not natura naturata but natura naturans: not simply the sum of her finite manifestations, but the infinite productive energy behind them. And denying oneself for others is only necessary if nature's productivity is finite. If, as Comus assumes, it is infinite, then scarcity is merely local, due to poor circulation of resources; and to improve that circulation one must partake more actively of abundance and bestow it--as Comus says--in "mutual and partak'n bliss." But the Lady's investments are so intense that she doesn't get it. As the mouthpiece for Milton's poetic will she must affirm the husbanding of libido for labor; and if no external shortages exist to justify asceticism, why these must be imagined--or created. Once more, defying Comus, she defies Shakespeare:

But thou contracted to thine own bright eyes  
 Feedst thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,  
 Making a famine where abundance lies  
 Thyself the foe, to thy sweet self too cruel. (Sonnet I)

"Why should you be so cruel to yourself," asks Comus (680) as to resist abundance's blissful exchanges? We already know why. Having apprehended death, the Protestant election quester, seeking the selfhood forever denied by her domestic/eternal cloister, throws herself into an impoverished universe of death, where she displays her virtue, demonstrating what she seeks. Exhausted yet craving the sensation of strength, she empties herself further in order to demonstrate her fullness--as if trying to embody Nietzsche's dictum that the rich spirit "is a bad householder and pays no heed to how everybody lives and feeds on it." (Will to Power #77). To do this she makes sure that nature is emptied as well, repeating the kenosis of the Nativity Ode by refusing to look beyond natura naturata. Projecting her own perceived emptiness into nature, she tropes Comus' arguments from surcharge into props for scarcity and reduces nature from bounteous divine mother to Blake's "Goddess Nature," the "virgin harlot Babylon" who sells pleasure for a price, the penurious mistress who will always be the first to cry transgression against her "sober laws." It

will not do to get in debt to her; hence death-bringing pleasures must be declined in favor of immortality through self-restraint (453-475).<sup>9</sup>

What inspired such sordid economics? Why should someone capable of seeing, as Milton did in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, that "honest liberty is the greatest foe of dishonest license," and that

He who wisely would restrain the reasonable soul of man within due bounds, must first himself know perfectly how far the territory and dominion extends of just and honest liberty.... When besides the gross body of real transgressions to encounter, we shall be terrified by a vain and shadowy menacing of faults that are not... what wonder if we be routed, and by this art of our adversary, fall into the subjection of worst and deadliest offenses? (Hughes 699)

--why should someone who saw all this succumb to an ascetic idealism that seems destined to produce the exorbitance of sensuality it attacks?

For has not chastity produced the hallucination, the intoxication in Comus? When pleasure becomes an inadmissible influence and influence an inadmissible pleasure, when "the freedom of my mind" (663) petrifies into Urizen's frozen catatonia, "nerves... all chain'd up in Alabaster" (660; cf. BU 5:28, 10:19-27; M 3:6)--a freedom from everything, a freedom for nothing--at this point undischageable libido backs up into and permeates every aspect of consciousness, acquiring a demonic volatility, dissolving all finite identity, overthrowing all rational and "proper" perception (so that to accept Comus' proffered refreshment is to sexually compromise oneself).

Why does Milton submit to this energy-economics? Above all, because he demands its exorbitance.

Artists, if they are any good, are (physically as well) strong, full of surplus energy, powerful animals, sensual; without a certain overheating of the sexual system a Rafael is unthinkable--Making music is another way of making children; chastity is nothing but the economy of an artist... Artists should see nothing as it is, but fuller, simpler, stronger: to that end, their lives must contain a kind of youth and spring, a kind of habitual intoxication. (Will to Power #800)

Having created in herself the surcharge Comus warned her against in nature, the Lady now sees nothing as it is, but with preternatural vividness conjures up bardo realms of shadowy specters--most notably Comus himself, whose words describe his own psychic genesis. Under chastity

The Sea o'erfraught would swell, and th'unsought diamonds  
Would so emblaze the forehead of the Deep,  
And so bestud with Stars, that they below  
Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last  
To gaze upon the Sun with shameless brows. (732-736)

The Lady's repression has created the very wealth she rejected, and which must appear to her as monstrous. These monsters of the depths are clearly born of alienated libido; but they also embody the alienated

violence into which libido has been converted in order to distinguish a self from erotic continuities, and which takes Comus as its object in an attempt to deny continuity with him. In this respect, observes Girard, "[t]he birth of monsters come[s] about through the attraction of like for like, under the aegis, not of Love, but of Hate... Under the heading monstrous double we shall group all the hallucinatory phenomena provoked at the height of the crisis by unrecognized reciprocity." (163-4) "Unrecognized reciprocity" describes the relation between Comus' erotic surcharge and the cold "superior power" of chastity. On the one hand, like Christ and the Sun, Comus and the Lady are fighting for a divinity to be had only at the other's expense. On the other, the Lady has simply projected onto Comus her own internal energy, setting it against itself in order to enrich it.<sup>10</sup> Is not the splendid poetry of the resulting intensive order worth the price? Comus is savior as well as tempter, as in poetry immortality and intoxication are one. Milton's ascetic program, anticipating the world-animation machines devised of romanticism and of antiquity,<sup>11</sup> seems vindicated, its fruits demonstrated. Ascetic ideology has demonstrated a powerful new signification of poetic identity, while ascetic practice has produced an upwelling of poetic power. By warring on natural energy, by alienating and projecting it, he has come to see the world as fuller, simpler, stronger, pulsating with infinite vitality--in short, as Comus sees it.

#### Sacrifice and Deification: The Discovery of Ethical Abundance

What price fame? What price immortality? What price the reanimation of the world?

Milton, in "Lycidas" seized upon Edward King's death "ere his prime to re-examine his poetic project. "'Lycidas,'" observes Hugh Richmond, "is a desperate attempt to find orthodox reasons for accepting that conscious virtue may fail to secure its merited reward" (78). Here, as at the close of "L'Allegro," poetry's impotence emerges:

Where were ye Nymphs when the remorseless deep  
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?...  
Ay me, I fondly dream!  
Had ye been there--for what could that have done?  
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore...  
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? (50-63)

Ostensibly the female principle, and especially maternal continuities, are disparaged here. But this kenosis reverses Milton's previous ones: primary continuities are emptied so as to call into question the antithetical project:

Alas! What boots it with uncessant care  
To tend the homely slighted Shepherd's trade,

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 Neaera's hair? (64-69)

The quietness of the reversal, here and throughout the poem, has led generations of readers to extend the Muses' to the Primary erotic poets of the succeeding lines. But these poets (who link Comus' stance with that of unfallen Adam in Paradise Lost) raise here a genuine question: since even for one blessed with Miltonic genius the antithetical poetic election quest has no guarantee of success, why torment oneself with it? To these doubts Phoebus, a superego figure compounded out of pagan and Christian elements, replies in a way which the poet seems to accept as final:

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
 (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 th'abhorred shears,  
 And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"  
 Phoebus repli'd, and touch'd my trembling ears;  
 "Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
 Nor in the glistering foil  
 Set off to th'world, nor in broad rumor lies,  
 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 Heav'n expect thy meed." (70-85).

Is Jove's judgment an allegory of the secular canonization process? Only if poetic election can be assimilated to a Christian hope of celestial judgment. Otherwise how can the poet renounce in confidence of just recompense? What guarantees that his life won't, like Edward King's, be prematurely cut off, or his memory lost by accident, leaving him a "mute inglorious Milton"? No secular judgment can offer the recompense Phoebus offers.

But if the Christian hope of immortality is taken seriously, what need for the sacrifices of poetic immortality? The poetic election quest began as an analog of the Christian, and drew its justification from it. Yet it is also a rival to it, and, as long as Christianity remains at all credible, distinctly inferior on one point. Both appeal to a transcendent judge. In whom does one have more confidence: Eternity--or Shelley's "great redeemer Time"? The latter is a far-seeing Spirit, but not quite infallible. Which leaves him inferior to the former, if the former exists.

Asceticism, taken seriously and pushed to its limit, here begins to invert itself as eudaemonism did. Asceticism requires some reward. And for its reward to be sure, the Christian hope must be true. But if the Christian hope is true, what need remains for antithetical asceticism?

Now Milton, by invoking Phoebus and Jove as pagan embodiments of Christian judgment, is revising not just the secular election quest but also Christianity, its model. For the Protestant quest, rooted in predestinarianism, assumed a demonic deity whose greatness abolished goodness and who was placated only by castration. This God is avoided by invoking pagan deities as figures for Him; and indeed the Christian hope is plausible only when back-crossed in this way with pagan humanism--as it will be in Paradise Lost. There the intent will be similar: to abolish the secular election quest by re-imagining God as continuous with humanity and so desiring human joy rather than demanding resignation.

In yet another way Milton here anticipates later eudaemonistic self-revisions. Declining to renounce poetry while renouncing expectations of earthly fame, he seems at first in "Lycidas" to intensify his asceticism. He will continue to labor--for what? Phoebus has promised him a just reward in the kingdom of heaven. When Christ promised a heavenly reward in place of an earthly one, some took it to mean "pie in the sky when you die"--a delayed extrinsic reward. Others understood it as a reward intrinsic to the act itself. When you work simply for the sake of work you no longer appeal to anyone, even Time, to bestow Being upon you in exchange for what you do. No longer do you need anything the archons of this world or the next can bestow on you. You write, for example, not in order to "be a poet" or even to "be a great poet" but simply because it is your nature to do so. And to that extent you assume an immanent divinity.<sup>12</sup> In Samson Agonistes and Paradise Regained these motifs of immanent divinity and renunciation of worldly reward and punishment will accompany a refusal to perform for intimidating father figures.

And might it already be possible to retrieve the pleasure principle even more openly?

The poem's second movement begins with a passing reference to the fountain-nymph Arethuse's pursuit by the hunter/river Alpheus. A gesture toward the recovery of desire? If so it is quickly whisked away in favor of a "strain... of a higher mood" (87). Is the ensuing interrogation of the elements, culminating in the attack on the "corrupted Clergy," a postponement, via a rigorous descent to history, of what would otherwise have been a precipitous indulgence? There is more to it than that, of course. What is denounced is usurped abundance, abundance devoured by hoppers of the harvest. The appropriation of abundance in the name of divinity must be dealt with at every level if eudaemonism is to be recovered. We will shortly see this attack on concocted scarcity repeated and intensified; a neglected motif in Milton criticism, it is nevertheless a cornerstone of Milton's political thinking--as it was of his most outrageous misreader and emulator, Pound.<sup>13</sup> Be that as it may, there remains the structural parallel between their careers: following a series of brilliant early works that developed a revolutionary poetics, there occurred in each an "anti-aesthetic" period of political engagement (during which Milton wrote little poetry, while Pound forged an even more revolutionary historicist poetics in the Cantos), culminating in life-threatening political disasters that forced (or permitted) each to turn his thoughts to Paradise. "Lycidas" embodies this structure in miniature.

"Return Alpheus, the dread voice is past/ That shrunk thy streams" (132-3). With this the poem's third movement bids eudaemonism forth from the tomb. The reference (Alpheus the river God, embodiment of desire, pursued not only Arethuse but Artemis herself) suggests that not just immortality but earthly love is to be recovered—though since the Lawrencian "resurrection of the flesh" can't yet be openly acknowledged (being only distantly felt in "the unexpressive nuptial song of l. 176), "life" must stand as love's surrogate.

Even now the recovery cannot proceed via simple assertion but only dialectically. From the lovely but impotent imagination of the drowned poet's body bathed in flowers that restore life only too symbolically, the poem moves to harsh antithetical representations of death at "the bottom of the monstrous world" (158), from there rising to a more powerful sublimative re-imagining of the natural cycle as an argument for immortality: "So sinks the day-star..." (168). This inversion of nature's "natural" meaning comes closer to sufficing, and metaphorical as it is, provides a spring-board for the double metalepsis of the last lines, where drowned Lycidas is revived as a god dispensing life and blessing in "large recompense," while the living poet who has identified with the dead one enters with him into divinity. Conferring divinity on his companion, he crowns himself. No longer a quester, but a bestower of Being, he realizes divinity in the flesh and in the immediate moment. While Shakespeare, bestowing immortality on his young friend in the Sonnets, conferred divinity upon himself, Milton has made King not just immortal but a divine bestower of life. His failure, in the general exhilaration of the poem's ending, to trumpet this trump is not entirely to his discredit.

As transumption and apophrades, the ending of "Lycidas" accomplishes still more. Not only does Shakespeare momentarily appear weaker than Milton; both Christianity and paganism have now been incorporated into and subordinated to Milton's vision. In envisioning a divinity marked by the deification of others, "Lycidas" intimates a divinity more generous than any commonly known in Christianity, particularly in Calvinism. This divinity fuses with a "pagan" eudaemonism that has assimilated the knowledge of death and cast off the attendant anxieties. Both Christian and pagan election quests are now left behind. Milton's synthesis of redeemed Christianity and resurrected paganism continues to this day to confound reductivists in both camps.

Milton, in so many ways Shakespeare's inferior proves superior in one respect. While Shakespeare's artistic growth springs from an ever-deepening capacity for suffering, Milton's arises from his dialectical self-revisionism that, having passed through the revisionary ratios, now abandons them, repudiating the combat with Primary energies and setting about unequivocally to recover eudaemonism. Beginning with the casting out of antinaturalism and poetic will in Satan, and proceeding to the reimagination of God as self-effacing generosity, the Second Reversal opens the way to Paradise. Whereupon eudaemonism's limits re-assert themselves in new ways and old, compelling one more reversal:

Paradise's dissolution in the Fall, as Wilderness replaces Paradise as privileged term. Thus to capsule Milton's career:

<u>Milonic State</u>	<u>Rhetorical Polarity</u>	<u>Typical or Inaugurating Moments</u>
Early eudaemonism	Spring over Winter	Fifth Elegy
First reversal	Winter over Spring	Nativity Ode
Second reversal	Paradise over Hell	<u>Paradise Lost</u> I, IV
Third reversal	Wilderness over Paradise	<u>Paradise Lost</u> X-XII; <u>Paradise Regained</u>

This dynamism puts Milton among the rare voyager-artists who abandon great achievements and hard-won positions for reasons barely perceptible to any but themselves, confounding the judgments passed on them by those left behind one or more reversals ago.

## Notes to Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 26 (hereafter cited in text as Anxiety). Other works by Bloom cited by short title or abbreviation in the text are A Map of Misreading (Map), and The Western Canon (WC).

<sup>2</sup> "Freud and the Future"; quoted in Anxiety 53.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the advent of literacy (without which self-reflection almost certainly would have been impossible) provided the metaphor of the divine law and judgment book in which daemonic prompting could be expressed, objectified and condemned. And mathematics provided the model for a demythologized, purely rational world of ideas, the Platonic eternal world devoid of bodies and passions, those influences to which Lawrence's "old Adam" spontaneously and non-conceptually responds--the energies which, in effect, spontaneous consciousness is.

<sup>4</sup> For documents of this encounter, see Lawrence's letters to Burrows in Collected Letters 685, 687; also his review of The Social Basis of Consciousness P 377-82.

<sup>5</sup> Bloom borrows "antithetical" from Yeats, using it to indicate relationships marked by influence anxiety. (About the Primary he has little to say.) For Lawrence, uninfluenced by the Yeatsian terminology which his own system very roughly anticipates, "primary" corresponds with "Source"--inchoate darkness, spontaneous energy, preconscious intuition, sensuous immediacy, the splendor of power--as opposed to "End"--realized light, formal, habitual, conceptual, self-reflective, ecstatic with love. "Source" requires expression into "End"; but if consciousness identifies with the products of its expression, it conceives itself as finite and exhausted and falls into compulsive instrumentalism. (See "The Crown," esp. chapter 1, in P II 365ff.; also P 421-34.)

In Yeats' A Vision, Primary and Antithetical constitute two complementary Contraries, sometimes suggestive of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" or Blake's "Innocence" and "Experience" but with disorienting amplifications, overlaps, ambiguities, some of which are internal. (Compare pp. 73 and 275 on reason; pp. 73 and 291 on nature; pp. 275 and 291 on miracle.)

<sup>6</sup> While Yeats, as here, often preached the incompatibility of those two regimes he elsewhere grants the all-comprehensiveness of the Primary, speaking no doubt as spiritualist or philosopher rather than as modern poet: "The greater number is always more primary than the lesser and precisely because it contains it." (A Vision 268).

<sup>7</sup> In the words of Milton's contemporary:

A man is as much affected pleasurably or painfully by the image of a thing past or future as by the image of a thing present....

So long as a man is affected by the image of anything, he will regard that thing as present, even though it be non-existent... he will not conceive it as past or future, except in so far as its image is joined to the image of time past or future. (Spinoza, Ethics, III. xviii)

<sup>8</sup> The utilitarian turn, that the economic cosmos should serve the good of the many, the common good, etc., was a consequence of the idea that any other interpretation of it would lead to aristocratic idolatry of the flesh, or at least did not serve the glory of God, but only fleshly cultural ends. But God's will, as it is expressed... in the purposeful arrangements of the economic cosmos, can, so far as secular ends are in question at all, only be embodied in the good of the community, in impersonal usefulness. Utilitarianism is thus, as has already been pointed out, the result of the impersonal character of brotherly love and the repudiation of all glorification of this world by the exclusiveness of the Puritan in majorem Dei gloriam. (Weber, 265-5).

<sup>9</sup> In championing this economy the Lady, Frye remarked, becomes a whore herself. "The coy mistress who represents an elusive nature is... the virginal Diana who turned Actaeon into an animal, which was exactly what Circe did to her lovers" (354)--and what Comus, Circe's son, does in effect. Blake explored the psychology of the chaste mercantile harlot, the Whore of Babylon, in Jerusalem. See FZ 8:330 and J 70:31; J 63:39 (compare Revelation 17:4); and especially J 60:47-9, also Frye's commentary in Fearful Symmetry 354 on Blake's redemption of Comus' Lady, in Milton, in the person of Ololon.

<sup>10</sup> The Lady, of course, is not simply Milton's conscious mind, any more than Comus is his unconscious. Comus knows far too much for that to be; he understands the Lady at least as well as she understands him. The articulateness of the dialogue between them suggests that by this time Milton was well aware of the will's capacity to provoke a spontaneous reaction against itself, and how he had exploited this capacity.

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<sup>11</sup> For instances of such asceticism in the classical world, see E.R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational; the early Christian asceticism Pagels examines in Adam, Eve and the Serpent seems to me in all likelihood to have fulfilled a dual function, being on the one hand a gesture of freedom from the senses, on the other a device for intensifying them. In this way it resembles that in Comus. For asceticism as a Christian hallucinogenic, see Huxley, The Doors of Perception; and Heaven and Hell; this argument dovetails neatly with Jaynes' observations in The Origin of Consciousness about classical hallucinogenic techniques (317-378).

Romanticism's paradox is its compounding of tenacious residual individuation with what Julian Jaynes (317-338) calls the quest for authorization: the paradox of an ego increasingly subject to both influence anxiety and nostalgia for cosmic influence. Even as romanticism recoils from alienated individuation and the anxieties of the instrumental ego, growing pressure for an individuated aesthetic identity installs these things at the heart of the movement against them. And just when romanticism seeks restoration of bio-cosmic influences the individuated ego finds it increasingly difficult to contact them. This seems to me the pathos of Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis: the hypermodern ego's violence against itself in pursuit of an "intensive order"--a violence which only solidifies the self. We should have learned by now from Girard that no return to archaic pre-self-consciousness can succeed without effacing its own functioning. Such indirection seems to have marked the asceticism of late antiquity.

<sup>12</sup> Recovering at the same time the non-instrumental immediacy of older spiritual traditions. Cf. Bhagavad Gita 18:12: "When work is done for a reward, the work brings pleasure, or pain, or both, in its time; but when a man does work in Eternity, then Eternity is his reward." (tr. Juan Mascaro)

<sup>13</sup> There is more to say about Milton's relation to Pound than I can manage here. Was part of Pound's resentment of Milton due to Milton's preemption of the poetics/economics of abundance? Or was Pound's reading of Milton sufficiently careless as to not realize even this much?

## Chapter Four: SATANIC ECONOMY AND PRIMARY POETICS

### The Prophetic Ideal of Ethical Abundance

Milton's Second Reversal began with a shift from aesthetic abundance--intensity, the animation of the world by asceticism--to ethical abundance. The recognition in "Lycidas" that you realize divinity by bestowing rather than seeking it abolished the election quest. Divinity, immortality, and abundance no longer appeared as commodities subject to scarcity economics and wrested from the cosmos by labor and repression. They are present now, created in the act of bestowing them.

The prose tracts of the 1640s, particularly Aereopagitica and The Reason of Church Government extend the notion of ethical abundance. One commodity in particular is beyond scarcity: knowledge, which "the more/ Communicated, more abundant grows/ The Author not impair'd" (PL V, 71). Truth, like Elijah's cruse, says Aereopagitica, gives forth its oil without exhaustion, and God, as the fountain of light and truth, "pours out before us, even to a profuseness, all desirable things, and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety" (H 733). Under this new economics of the sacred God is no longer a jealous master, but "the intellectual fountain of Humanity," (J 91:10). And knowledge, transcending the limits of material scarcity, is revealed even by dualistic logic as Spirit itself.

Since knowledge, the influx of spiritual abundance into the world of finite matter, is the source of all true amelioration of human life, to impede its circulation is disastrous to national well-being. "More than if some enemy at sea should stop up all our havens and ports and creeks, it hinders and retards the importation of our richest merchandise, truth," which, with her sister, understanding, continues Aereopagitica, "are not such wares as to be monopolized and traded in by tickets and statutes and standards." For:

Well knows he who uses to consider, that our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexions. Truth is compared in scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. (H 739)

Those who monopolize or restrict the circulation of truth by prior censorship or other means are, like those who attempt to divert attention from the circulation of knowledge, conspirators to defraud and subjugate humanity--a project of which bourgeois mercantilism is but the latest manifestation, and against which the prophet, called of God and entrusted with the burden of true riches, must contend in every age:

And that which aggravates the burden more is that (having received amongst his allotted parcels certain precious truths of such an orient luster as no diamond can equal, which nevertheless he has in charge to put off at any cheap rate, yea for nothing to them that will) the great merchants of this world, fearing that this course will soon discover

and disgrace the false glitter of their deceitful wares wherewith they abuse the people like poor Indians with beads and glasses, practise by all means how they may suppress the vending of such rarities, and such a cheapness as would undo them and turn their trash upon their hands. Therefore by gratifying the corrupt desires of men in fleshly doctrines, they stir them up to persecute with hate and contempt all those that seek to bear themselves uprightly in this their spiritual factory: which they foreseeing, though they cannot but testify of truth and the excellence of that heavenly traffic which they bring against what opposition or danger soever, yet needs must it sit heavily upon their spirits. that being, in God's prime intention and their own, selected heralds of peace and dispensers of treasure inestimable, without price, to them that have no pence, they find in the discharge of their commission that they are made the greatest variance and offense, a very sword and fire both in house and city over the whole earth. (H 665)

Here in The Reason of Church Government, Milton anticipates the battle he'd have to fight in Aereopagitica two years later, as the English Revolution set about recodifying its gains as economic liberties, pure and simple. Against that code Milton opposed another: the equation of liberty with the free flow of intellectual or energetic abundance. During the English Revolution knowledge was for Milton the principle form of his prophetic ideal: the ideal of an existence unimpaired by scarcity or anxiety.

Milton's sense of himself as an abundantly-endowed messenger of life to the English people and in some real sense a prophet, emerged as he discarded his lyrical-antithetical Protestant poetics of election and influence anxiety, resentment of belatedness, will to power through chastity, and willful desacralization of nature. Power will now come not from priority but from non-resistance to abundance; with this comes a need to read the cosmos accurately in order to open oneself to its abundance and truth. And a move toward incorporating the pure truths of religion into the primary, communal form of epic.<sup>1</sup>

Upon returning to poetry Milton's first act will be to cast out Satan, an expulsion better understood in light of the prophetic ideal, and the need to devise a Primary poetics congruent with it. Under ethical abundance, Satan has got to go; indeed, he goes willingly. The ultimate question is how much of Milton's poetics and ethics (for it is he who declares knowledge's infinite communicability in Paradise Lost) he takes with him.

### Reading Satan

Satan's expulsion continues to be misunderstood by all parties, especially those still under the spell Blake's clinamen.<sup>2</sup> Blake's attack on Milton in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is at one level a self-misreading: a denial of his entrapment in the schizogenic world-animation machine Milton had revived in Comus. So Milton, who had abandoned the machine, had to be indicted for complicity with repressive Reason--an indictment requiring an obliviousness to Milton's irony, dialectic and passion that Blake, unlike

repressive Reason--an indictment requiring an obliviousness to Milton's irony, dialectic and passion that Blake, unlike his professed disciples, could not sustain. In all this Blake only served Milton as Milton had served his precursors. Aspiring prophets can be the strongest, or at least the most audacious, of critics; but strong criticism is usually weak prophecy.<sup>3</sup> Incisive as this is on bourgeois psychology, it's funny to have Satan held up as industrialism's nemesis and the upholder of the procreative body. At least Lawrence got Milton's own character right. And in an earlier draft of this essay, in his critique of the "self-aware-of-itself," (P 768-9) he got Satan right--without realizing it.

Blake's clinamen is built on a brilliant observation and a brilliant inference about it. The observation: that poetic energy seems to run down in Paradise Lost. The inference: that Satan's expulsion is responsible for this. What doesn't follow, though it certainly seems to, is that Satan therefore embodies abundant Energy against castrating Reason:

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.

And being restrained it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire.

The history of this is written in Paradise Lost. & the Governor or Reason is call'd Messiah....

Note. The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it (MHH 5-6).

The following Contraries to these propositions are true:

- (1) Satan is a true Protestant poet and of God's party without knowing it.
- (2) Milton began as a true Protestant poet and of the Devil's party--in the above sense. He knew it well enough and was tired of it. So he threw it over and became a genuine Reprobate.
- (3) The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels, God and Paradise was-in part--because once desire has been repressed into "spontaneity" by Satanic will it's not easy to clear away the rubble from the fountainhead.

The Shelleyan defense differs from the Blakean in being moralistic, finding Satan more sinned against than sinning and indicting Heaven for the presumed oppression motivating his seemingly unmotivated rebellion. If Milton is playing straight with us, asks Bloom, why aren't we shown, not just told about, Satan going bad? A reasonable question, especially when there are such big problems with Milton's God (The Western Canon 174-6). Part of the answer lies once more in the equivalence of Milton and Satan. Satan at times is Milton, almost as much as Hamlet is Shakespeare, and is too close to his author to be "given" a motivation, just as Shakespeare could not distance himself enough from Hamlet to see him as we do and provide the background we desire. Neither Shakespeare nor Milton could look at their characters from the outside and say, "people aren't going to understand why he does this...." And

because both characters embody things that their authors seem not quite to have consciously articulated—which perhaps seemed in part too obvious to articulate—their motives remain to a degree inarticulate and controversial. And while Satan embodies what Milton would repudiate in himself, the grounds for that repudiation must have seemed so obvious to Milton that they are difficult to elucidate to us. Our task in reading Satan is to explicate them.

Why does Milton expel Satan? Because Satan is antithetical humanity. He's Il Penseroso declining to defer to the day-world; a misreader whose clinamen defends against primary creation, Nature as well as God; a jealous voyeur, watching Eve like Milton watched Neaera, but not having any; and a self-industrialist, producing power by ascetically recycling and condensing internal energy. Milton was finished with this. Saurat said it best: Milton had Satan in him and needed to get him out. Satan embodies the strategy and economy of the First Reversal, and all of that is obsolete now.

As Bloom notes, Satan gets much of his psychology and power from Iago—but not all of it. Milton's ability to respond to Iago was as great as anyone else's before or since. Like Iago before Othello, Milton understood his own impairment with respect to his great precursor Shakespeare. as does Satan with respect to his precursor and rival. "He thought himself impair'd" (V 665)—why? Ostensibly by the Son's Exaltation—as Iago by Cassio's and Macbeth's by Malcolm's. But what shall we make of Satan's confession:

Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;  
And in the lowest deep a lower deep  
Still threatening to devour me opens wide,  
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n. (IV 75-8)?

May this reduce to specific precursor relations: "The Shakespeare in Milton was Satan's lowest deep" (WC 180)? Not that Shakespeare doesn't dwell in the Miltonic abyss. Only that in resisting him, in dissolving the life of all prior poetry, Milton had opened a deeper abyss than Shakespeare knew. Deeper, wider, and older. Iago's abyss consists simply of precursor relations. Satan's is a cosmic disrelation. As Lawrence understood:

Did Lucifer fall through knowledge?  
oh then, pity him, pity him that plunge!...

a god-lost creature turning upon himself  
in the long, long fall, revolving upon himself  
in the endless writhe of the last, the last self-knowledge  
which he can never reach till he touch the bottom of the abyss  
which he can never touch, for the abyss is bottomless.  
And there is nothing else, throughout time and eternity  
but the abyss, which is bottomless,  
and the fall to extinction, which can never come (CP 699-701).

We do not yet have Milton's account of this cosmic rupture, nor will we until Eve repeats Satan's fall in a finer tone. Yet we already may suspect that it will have less to do with divine tyranny than with the anxiety toward and resentment of the cosmos and the body that for Lawrence marked the "self-aware-of-itself."

Shakespeare's Hell is for the violent, the proud, the jealous. Milton's abyss is for partakers of the tree of knowledge who discover their nakedness. This Satan has done long since--no further sin is necessary to enter this state, as we shall see when Adam falls. We may think of self-consciousness as the Cartesian vortex of the Idiot Questioner perpetually eroding the foundation it seeks (FZ VI). But even that is not the whole story, for which we must wait until the Fall, when Milton's mortalist heresy will make its appearance in Adam.

Satan's instrumental self-consciousness--his "relentless thoughts" (IX 130) calls up the fundamental Miltonic situation. Samson too will seek relief from self-consciousness, finding

Ease to the body some, none to the mind  
 From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm  
 Of Hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone  
 But rush upon me thronging, and present  
 Times past, what once I was, and what am now. (SA 18-22; cf. 623ff.)

As will Jesus:

O what a multitude of thoughts at once  
 Awaken'd in me swarm, while I consider  
 What from within I feel myself, and hear  
 What from without comes often to my ears,  
 Ill-sorting with my present state compar'd. (PR I 196-200)

These are milder sentiments than Satan's, reflecting the virtue and experience ("tragedy is lack of experience") of their speakers and author. Jesus the ephebe and Samson the broken warrior face anxieties of anticipation and regret over the prospect of a finite and impotent self; their heroism lies in declining Satan's response: "For only in destroying find I ease/ To my relentless thoughts." Does Satan aim, as William Flesch proposes, to "make a potlatch of paradise" (229): to rival divine abundance by "generously" annihilating what is not his own? This idea suggests--and perhaps exaggerates--Satan's internal incoherence. There is a logic, uniting the various aspects of his strategy, that needs to be more fully explored.

Satan, like Milton of the First Reversal, seeks release by dissolving the continuities from which he's cut off. This he does by asserting immanence, emptying primary creativity, and installing solipsistic asceticism--repeating the moves of the young antithetical Milton.

The rebellion begins with the issue of energy, which here is the same as immanent divinity. The rebel angels are

A third part of the Gods, in synod met  
 Thir Deities to assert, who while they feel  
 Vigor Divine within them, can allow  
 Omnipotence to none. (VI 156-159)

To accept their createdness is to accept belatedness, contingency, and servility to external influence. So they assert:

We know no time when we were not as now;  
 Know none before us, self-begot, self-rai'd  
 By our own quick'ning power. (V 859-861)

Adam early in the morning indeed. But why does immanent divinity require rebellion? No antithetical critic could misunderstand: not divinity but anxiety about divinity drives the devils. If you no longer immanently feel your own divinity, are you still divine? Beneath the bravado is a compulsion to find out "if I be still the same" (I 256). But you can't tell whether your vigor is whole or impaired while you're peacefully cloistered in heaven. Proof can't come unexercised and unbreathed:

Our puissance is our own, our own right hand  
 Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try  
 Who is our equal. (V 84-86)

In the devils' declaration of independence is an awful apprehension of puissance that really is only one's own, owing nothing to any pre-egoistic originative power.

Overthrowing God requires independence from his energetic influx. To establish himself as a closed system exempt from divine influence and so to hold "Divided Empire with Heav'n's King" is Satan's grand strategy. To become an unmoved mover equal to God he must cultivate detachment from all pleasures that bind him to the world, indeed from anything God has created. For example, the sun, whom Satan, recalling *Il Penseroso*, addresses "with no friendly voice... to tell thee how I hate thy beams" (IV 36-37). Or anything in nature whatsoever:

If I could joy in aught, sweet interchange  
 Of Hill and Valley, Rivers, Woods and Plains,  
 Now Land, now Sea, and Shores with Forests crown'd,  
 Rocks, Dens and Caves; but I in none of these  
 Find place or refuge; and the more I see  
 Pleasures without me, so much more I feel  
 Torments within me, as from the hateful siege  
 Of contraries; all good to me becomes  
 Bane, and in Heav'n so much worse would be my state.  
 But neither here seek I, no, nor in Heav'n  
 To dwell, unless by maistring Heav'n's Supreme. (IX 115-125)

"Lycidas" revisited. The asceticism Milton grumbled about there is has now been entirely de-idealized, the will to poetic power informing the Nativity Ode quite de-sublimated and transferred over to the Devil—for whom "mutual and partak'n bliss" in nature, participation in its life, means succumbing to dependence on it

and its Creator, incurring a tiresome "debt immense of endless gratitude," (IV 52) and neglecting the real task of overthrowing pre-existing divinity. Preferring "Hard liberty before the easy yoke/ Of servile Pomp" (II 256-257) in the manner of Puritan ascetic anti-authoritarianism (see Weber 167), and insisting on originality at all costs, Satan rejects his own arguments on Mount Niphates and begins the repression of nostalgia and sympathy.

Self-enclosure demands that Satan assume a serpent form, that of Ouroboros, the snake swallowing its tail in order to recycle its energy. Having renounced oppressive primary influx, he must now conserve the finite store that remains his own, rationalizing its use and wasting none in diversions, however pleasant. Against nature and the natural man who wastefully delights in it, Satan opposes the power of cogitation, a self-disciplinary technique of ascetics for whom "only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature. Descartes' cogito ergo sum was taken over by contemporary Puritans with this ethical reinterpretation" (Weber 118). The rational worldly ascetic channeled energy once dissipated in pleasure back into acquisitive activity in a system that hoped to be self-sustaining (Weber 172). Only through such a system can Satan's rebellion hope to succeed. No energy can be dissipated, all must be harbored for the massive blow against God and the natural order. So as he prepares to tempt Eve, Satan must pause to discipline the thoughts that have--though only momentarily--betrayed him:

That space the Evil one abstracted stood  
 From his own evil, and for the time remain'd  
 Stupidly good, of enmity disarm'd,  
 Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge;  
 But the hot Hell that always in him burns,  
 Although in Heav'n, soon ended his delight,  
 And tortures him now more, the more he sees  
 Of pleasure not for him ordain'd: then soon  
 Fierce hate he recollects, and all his thoughts  
 Of mischief, gratulating, thus excites.  
 Thoughts, whither have ye led me, with what sweet  
 Compulsion thus transported to forget  
 What higher brought us, hate, not love, nor hope  
 Of Paradise for Hell, hope here to taste  
 Of pleasure, but all pleasure to destroy. (IX 463-474)

Here the supernatural power of philosophical chastity in the early poetry is simply inverted. Perhaps a bit like Milton encountering Amaryllis and Neaera, the ascetic demon confronting Eve's loveliness is for a moment abstracted from abstraction, absorbed into immediacy--and almost recalled to life!

Boccaccio's cure for the Satanic torment was to "put the devil back into hell." Lacking opportunity or inclination for that, Satan opts to destroy Paradise through "divine philosophy," on whose benefits he provides a well-informed commentary:

Hence I will excite thir minds  
 With more desire to know, and to reject  
 Envious commands, invented with design  
 To keep them low whom Knowledge might exalt  
 Equal with Gods; aspiring to be such  
 They taste and die: what likelier can ensue? (IV 522-527)

Speculative knowledge aligned with ascetic morality. Comus revisited. "With backward mutters of dis severing power" the charms of philosophical chastity are undone by Satan's advocacy of them. Satan's missing mate is the Lady, rebellious immanentist and virgin philosopher who overthrew Comus' inexhaustible abundance. The counterpart in Paradise Lost to her temptation by "mutual and partak'n bliss" is not Satan's enticement of Eve, but Eve's unwitting near-seduction of Satan.

How well does the economy of repression attain its aim of self-sufficiency? At the outset of Paradise Lost it seems indeed to have created the sensuous wealth it rejects. If hallucinatory intensity is magnificence and power, no more magnificently animated figure exists in all literature than Satan as he appears in Books I and II, nor any more powerful poetry than that which depicts him. The ensuing declines in both personal and poetic power arise from the Second Law of Thermodynamics: energy in a closed system must run down. We know virtue, says Areopagitica, only by its contrary: the greater the trial, the greater the proof of apportioned strength. Supreme glory then comes only from combat in a lost cause, since only without prospect of relief can the agonist's full energy shine out. Milton embodied this heroism well enough in his political commitments, but never incarnated it more radically, or satirically, than in Satan. How shall we know which psyche is the most abundant? Simply cut off the influx--the "old Adam"--at the source and see who takes the longest to run down. Satan remains magnificent for almost two thousand lines--who else in literature can rival this? But it is not good enough. Such power can only be sustained by energizing the psyche to turn more and more rapaciously on itself, exploiting its finite stores more efficiently through colonizing and impoverishing the rest of its interior world. As its reserves are exhausted, more energy must be expended to exploit them than they can supply in return. And psychic energy, perpetually re-invested in its own rationalization, undergoes depletion with each recycling. Satan, embodiment of Milton's early economics of poetic production, also embodies its model, what Wendell Berry (277-279) calls the Protestant economics of "industrial heroism." Both stem from war on primary energies that are rationalized and turned against themselves, with self-industrialization supplying the model for rationalized material production. In Satan's doomed splendor is imaged our own civilization, built on the self-consuming, self-industrializing Protestant performance principle and powered by fossil fuel, including the will--"fossil love pumped back up."

"Satan's later decline in the poem, as arranged by the idiot questioner in Milton, is that the hero retreats... into solipsism and thus is degraded; ceases, during his soliloquy on Mount Niphates, to be a poet and, by intoning the formula "Evil be thou my good," becomes a mere rebel, a childish inverter of

poet and, by intoning the formula "Evil be thou my good," becomes a mere rebel, a childish inverter of conventional moral categories." Thus Bloom encourages a more mature posture, "the modification that makes for poetry instead of idiocy: 'There are no objects outside of me because I see into their life, which is one with my own'... Or as Satan might have said: 'In doing and suffering I shall be happy, for even in suffering I shall be strong.'" (*Anxiety* 22-23) Yet Satan's decline is no regression to moral inadequacy from an adequacy he might have retained, but a playing out of the only morality available to the instrumental ego. Shall Satan see into the life of things and identify with them? Antithetical vigor cannot allow itself to do so, for that is to surrender to the power that made them and to the erotic cosmos that sustains them. Solipsism and destruction thus appear, the more clearly for Bloom's protests, as Satan's essence. To whatever extent he still possesses vigor divine, he must act. And in order not to surrender to the life of things, he must destroy that life. Not for him any weak Valentinian compromise; he must hold out to the end for classic gnostic nausea. As for solipsism, influence anxiety requires it, as did Protestant election anxiety. Only at the risk of entropy can one display independence from all "natural" continuities. Satan's entropy is not "arranged" by any external moralizing will or orthodox skepticism, but arises immanently.<sup>4</sup>

Projecting his condition onto God, Satan holds out for the notion that God does not create, although by the time he addresses Eve--

The Gods are first, and that advantage use  
On our belief, that all from them proceeds;  
I question it, for this fair Earth I see,  
Warm'd by the Sun, producing every kind,  
Them nothing (IX 718-722)

even Empson has to admit how desperate this fantasy is.<sup>5</sup> For Milton's ambivalence re the immanentism of contemporary radical Protestant sects, see Hill, chapter 23, especially 296-305. Only if primary life can be branded "a heaven of orthodoxy, or idea of restraint"—"a stolen and frozen form"—does it follow that Satan, the antithetical true creator "to get the stuff of creativity... had to fall into the energetic world of imaginings."<sup>6</sup> Thus Satan would substitute his lateness and emptiness for divine fullness. Flesch speaks of "Satan's wishful sense that all being in the universe are as subject to finitude as he is.... Satan imagines this creation coming at some expense. It cost labor. The creative virtue may be spent, or partly spent. The number of God's hosts is impaired, and it will take some doing to repair the lack." (229) On such hopes, raised by the classic gnostic clinamen that attributes belatedness, exhaustion and resentment to primary creation, Satan bases his rebellion. Traces of this clinamen inform Bloom's own early insistence that poetry is criticism and Hartman's that criticism is really poetry, both of which efface any distinction—even any continuum—between instrumental and non-instrumental discourse.

### Aesthetic Consequences

"All willing," declares Schopenhauer "arises from want, therefore from deficiency, and therefore from suffering" (I, 196). It is a product of either material or spiritual scarcity. Will cannot arise in one who has not "thought himself impair'd" nor can it help arising in one who has. Will is inevitably connected to the principle of sufficient reason, "the only kind of knowledge that is of value for the service of the will also for science" (ibid.). Discursive thinking, instrumental reason working through a chain of material causes, supplants the inexhaustibly radiant pluri-dimensional symbol, Schopenhauer's "Platonic Idea." Accessible only through "pure knowing"--a will-less, hence timeless apprehension, beyond concern for instrumental relations, it may be discerned in a recent anthropological-linguistic exposition from an unexpected source:

A war was declared and a suppression of all that resisted linearization was installed. And first of [all] what Leroi-Gourhan calls the "mythogram," a writing that spells its symbols pluri-dimensionally; there the meaning is not subjected to successivity, to the order of a logical time, or to the irreversible temporality of sound.... Leroi-Gourhan recalls the unity, within the mythogram, of all the elements of which linear writing marks the disruption: technics (particularly graphics), art, religion, economy. To recover access to this unity, to this other structure of unity, we must de-sediment "four thousand years of linear writing." (Derrida, Of Grammatology 85-86)

This myth of the fall coheres with and amplifies Lawrence's account of the self-aware ego's combat with archaic sympathetic and unitary consciousness--as well as his description of mythic "rotary image-thought" in Apocalypse (50-52). Derrida continues:

linearity—which is not the loss or absence, but the repression of pluri-dimensional symbolic thought--relaxes its oppression because it begins to sterilize the technical and scientific economy that it has long favored.... For over a century, this uneasiness has been evident in philosophy, in science, in literature. All the revolutions in these fields can be interpreted as shocks that are gradually destroying the linear model. Which is to say the epic model. (Of Grammatology 86-87; emphasis Derrida's)

What effect has the calling into question of Satan, of linearizing repression, on Milton's epic as a model of linearity?

Linearity is power. A spear is more formidable than a sphere, in psychic as well as material realms. The aim of instrumental consciousness, culminating in applied science or technology, has been above all the linear application of energy. This application occurs internally with the generation of will. Under this model, which Nietzsche struggled so valiantly against, the will to power arises when the psyche responds to a threat by impairing itself, repressing its pluri-dimensional radiation and linearizing it in the direction of the threat. This Milton did when, anticipating the self-dissolution of immediacy, he redirected L'Allegro's glad animal movements toward the goal of poetic immortality. In Satan Milton wished to demonstrate this strategy's consummation: its self-fulfillment and self-exhaustion. This we will now

wished to demonstrate this strategy's consummation: its self-fulfillment and self-exhaustion. This we will now observe in a passage from Paradise Lost that seems visually to depict the generation of Milton's poetic music.

Satan, Milton's embodiment of self-repressive technological will, is the architect of Hell, the "metal clangor" of which G. Wilson Knight found to be "specifically Miltonic... the resulting aural solids suggesting a clamping down of mental control on an otherwise expanding sensuousness" in the verse. Knight pointed out the general tension in Milton between music and architecture--between, dynamic sensuous feeling and static material solidity--between, we might well say, id and reified/reifying will. Under this scheme one expects the latter simply to repress the former, but Knight finds this formula inadequate: in Milton "the repressing power finally is... the instinct repressed" (95). This recalls Schopenhauer's dictum that music in its melodic linearity, its irreversible temporality of sound, is the direct representation of the will (I, 255-267). The will is sensuous as well as linear. That music's dynamic sensuousness is not simply opposed to technological will, but is in complicity with it, appears in the devils' erection of Hell:

A third as soon had form'd within the ground  
A various mould, and from the boiling cells  
By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook:  
As in an Organ from one blast of wind  
To many a row of Pipes the sound-board breathes.  
Anon out of the earth a Fabric huge  
Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound  
Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet,  
Built like a Temple, where Pilasters round  
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid  
With Golden Architrave; nor did there want  
Cornice or Frieze, with bossy Sculptures grav'n;  
The Roof was fretted Gold. Not Babylon,  
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence  
Equall'd. (I 705-719)

The linearization of pluri-dimensional breath/spirit in a mold produces organ music which like the Schopenhauerian will proceeds to objectify itself in the arts of civilization, beginning with architecture.

Repression is thus the source, not only of Milton's frozen architectural labyrinth, but of his unique sensuousness: his celebrated verbal "organ music." The surging propulsive verse pouring out in paragraphs as if from a fire hose, the overflowing linearity of indomitable will that, refusing to be contained in the pentameter line, cascades outward and downward, only reaching exhaustion, "all passion spent," many lines below--all this requires a massive repression, a massive linearization. Here is the most tangible epitome of the "epic model" whose demise Derrida announces. The demise of the Miltonic line is the demise of the will.

It is a demise to which Milton is reconciled. Even in the poetry of Hell his delight is to let his lines exhaust themselves so as to objectify his passion in aesthetic idea. Thus the great passage, right after the one just quoted above, on the fall of Mulciber:

thrown by angry Jove  
 Sheer o'er the Crystal Battlements: from Morn  
 To Noon he fell, from Noon to dewy Eve,  
 A Summer's day; and with the setting Sun  
 Dropt from the Zenith like a falling Star,  
 On Lemnos th' Aegean Isle: thus they relate,  
 Erring; for he with this rebellious rout  
 Fell long before (l 741-748)

--as if Milton, having just depicted the will's generation, must now effect its purification. In his expulsion Mulciber, a type of Satan, recapitulates imagistically, and embodies in the verse-motion, that propulsion by which the will discharges itself throughout Milton's verse. This discharge distances will, and creates aesthetic distance. Long ago Geoffrey Hartman pointed out how such a typical Miltonic simile telescopically "diminishes hell while it magnifies creation"; moreover Milton's similes "first of all, not only magnify or diminish the doings in hell, but invariably put them at a distance" (392, 389). It remained for Bloom (Map 127-143) to show how the passages Hartman quotes as examples of aesthetic distance are littered with transumptions, in which Milton makes his precursors (Homer, in the Mulciber quote) speak in his own voice. The trope of transumption and the process of objectivization into aesthetic distance have much to do with each other. Milton is distancing himself from the oppressive divinity of his precursors, triumphing over them in his fall away from them, casting himself out of hell while casting himself and them out of heaven. His transumptive catharses are the will's triumphant dissolution, its self-objectifying purgation; and it is significant that they dominate not the conclusion but the beginning of Paradise Lost. The final movement in Milton's agon with his precursors, they are but the first step in his second great revision of himself.

Milton is not alone among prophetic poets in repudiating poetic will. Blake, describing the linearization of Luvah or libido, will expose the Urizenic (soon to be identified as Satanic) economy in The Four Zoas (II 72-73, 113-119). But the movement Milton began culminates only with the will's full dissolution and infusion into the objectified beauty of aesthetic ideas: the paradisaal fragments and ideograms of Ezra Pound's "irreducibly graphic poetics" (Of Grammatology 92). As Milton's most critical, naive and unconscious reviser, Pound sought, in his imagistic line and in his non-linear epic, almost devoid of narrative propulsion, to replace a repressive technology for generating psychic energy with a more appropriate technology designed to facilitate energy's distribution. But only those for whom the problem of production has been solved--initiates into "the mystery of fecundity"<sup>7</sup>--are equipped to appreciate or profit from this technology.

the problem of production has been solved--initiates into "the mystery of fecundity"<sup>7</sup>--are equipped to appreciate or profit from this technology.

And yet—if fecundity is poetic power, does anyone embody it more than Satan? Vibrant in character and meaning, self-linearized and cast out, embodying all the hallucinatory intensity the romantic animation machine can produce, he blossoms into a symbol arguably more radiant and potent than any in Blake, Lawrence or Pound. Does renouncing Satan and his poetic will mean, as Blake proposed, to renounce aesthetic volition and desire? Is it even submission to castration? Any reading of Milton that invokes Schopenhauer must face this issue squarely.

Yet Milton's aim in letting the will run down or discharge itself was different from Schopenhauer's. Here we must invoke the prophetic ideal that emerged from the First Reversal. If abundance is indeed immanent (as Milton had proven to himself in "Lycidas"), if the cosmos itself is abundance (as will show itself to be in Paradise) then abandoning the will simply lets abundance emerge spontaneously, perhaps even in Shakespearian sensuous immediacy. If ethical abundance prevails in the cosmos, aesthetic/energetic abundance must prevail too: if God sends rain even on the unjust because (as Comus argued) there is enough and to spare, then there is no need to take thought for the morrow, no need to repress oneself to generate power. Right reason suspends compulsive rationalization. Not ascetic labor for independence, not radical self-examination, but an opening up to cosmic influence is what's wanted in order to be "a true poem." Adam in Eden is the father not of Descartes but of Whitman.

Ethical abundance, cosmically projected, provides divine sanction for sensuous immediacy, dissolving the discontinuous universe of death with its anxieties, and dismantling the obsolete world-animation machine. No longer needed to produce the hallucinatory intensity required for poetic power, the machine can now "consume itself in mental flames" (FZ 126:1) in the first books of Paradise Lost, with antinaturalism, like sensuousness immediacy in Comus, shining brightest as it seeks to die. Yet in dismantling the animation machine and the machinery of his organ music, Milton gave up his only proven means of charging language with energy. Repudiating poetic will and privileging a socially-transmissible ethical abundance, he gravitated toward Barthes' version of the classicist-epic model, in which socially-constituted thoughts pre-existing each act of expression are joined in "a superficial chain of intentions" as poetic language is reduced to mere decoration for the communication of information. To the extent this was so, how could his writing recover the spontaneity and intensity he sought, and which his commitment to a poetics of primary abundance theoretically guaranteed? How do you remain a poet once you've repudiated the antithetical poetic will and the antinatural world-animation machine?

Milton will step outside classicism, first, with his commitment to re-eroticize the cosmos in Paradise, and second, in his referring of social functions to ethical, natural and cosmic abundance, which he'll begin to do with respect to God in Paradise Lost III. How will this translate into energized

what it seeks. As conceptual-instrumental consciousness takes immediacy for its object, instrumentalizing and objectifying it, immediacy dissolves as the devils' immanence did. Knowledge may in its infinite communicability embody inexhaustible abundance, but the will to knowledge arises from scarcity and anxiety. The intimation of knowledge as infinitely communicable was divine; the concept of it, with which anxious egos identify, is demonic. So Satan will appropriate the doctrine of ethical abundance from which Milton's Primary poetics arose and present it as his own.

By now we've left conventional, classical discourse behind. In Milton's Paradise, poetry will energize not by power of personality but by complexity of character and situation; language will re-animate not through the violence of words nor the play of tropes, but through the confrontation of incompatible truths. From their juxtaposition arises Miltonic dialectic--the attempt to express, explicate and reconcile psychic forces--that replaces the symbolic radiance of Blake's Beulah with the Mental War of Eden (for in Milton Eden is literally a great arena for mental war). Prophecy's maturation is always a dying from symbolic radiance into a conceptual-instrumental linearity: Blake from "The Tyger" to "The Everlasting Gospel," Lawrence from The Rainbow, Women In Love and Birds, Beasts and Flowers to Pansies and Lady Chatterley--but a linearity committed above all to the defense of non-instrumental consciousness. In these later works language, baptized in natural function, is redeemed for social functioning. Under this primary poetic, language is once again intended to be useful, informative--but only to the aspiring Reprobate.

#### Ethical Consequences

But yet all is not done. If Milton does indeed reject Satan and the Satanic energy economy, why does he put in Satan's mouth the consummate expression of the prophetic ideal? In Eve's dream the fallen angel standing before the forbidden tree encourages her to taste in order to transform her humanity into divinity:

And why not Gods of Men, since good, the more  
Communicated, more abundant grows,  
The Author not impair'd, but honor'd more? (V 71-3)

Two explanations are possible; both carry political implications.

The republican interpretation, advocated most recently and persuasively (with respect to other passages than this one) by Lydia Schulman<sup>8</sup>, focuses on Satan's demagogic rhetoric, by which he pretends to confer on humanity the freedom that the divine order has promised. The natural sublimation to divinity through slow intellectual and moral evolution, of which Rafael will soon hint strongly, is presented by Satan as something to seize willfully, and with disregard for any commensurate responsibility. Satan's

through slow intellectual and moral evolution, of which Rafael will soon hint strongly, is presented by Satan as something to seize willfully, and with disregard for any commensurate responsibility. Satan's promises and reasoning, precisely by making explicit and public what those capable of self-government need not be told, instructively turn true principles to the advantage of aspiring dictators, monarchs in effect if not in name.

The more radical reading, along the lines opened by Jackie DiSalvo<sup>9</sup>, would emphasize Milton's inability, due to his Puritan-bourgeois identification, to accept the revolutionary implications of his own ideal. Milton's class loyalties, DiSalvo argues persuasively, prevented him from allowing the free dissemination of divinity and political privilege. Such a stance, she recognizes, was by no means unwarranted; the lower classes during the Revolution were all too easily swayed by Royalist propaganda appealing to sensation and superstition. Nevertheless Milton, intrigued with some radical ideas as he was, could not understand the call for thoroughgoing democratic reform and joined with other Puritan revolutionaries in rejecting such ideas once Cromwell had solidified power in the 1650s. While the immanentism of the radicals was arguably but a logical extension of his own views, for him such immanentism had to be earned (as Chapter IV will show) through the ordeal of Christian discipline. Moreover--to inject a French spin into the argument--the transgressive dissemination of immanentist jouissance threatened a libidinal economy that, though rebelling against Puritanism, was not ready simply to throw it over, but required a laborious dialectical refashioning of it--as we'll begin to observe in Chapter V.

As a result, the radical implications of the prophetic ideal are consigned to the unconscious, to the ambivalent psychic dream-realm Blake called Beulah, a state "where Contrarities are equally true" and which serves "[t]o protect from the Giant blows in the sports of intellect" (J 48:14-15). Pressing for an expression that Milton is reluctant to give them, they emerge from Satan's mouth.

I think both the republican and the radical interpretations are true, the republican reading providing Milton's own justification (and as far as it goes, a good one) for letting Satan speak his own deepest mind. Such ambivalence plays no small part in re-energizing the language of Paradise Lost, even after hallucinatory self-industrialization is cast out.

## Notes to Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> In this he avoided competition with Shakespeare, who had appropriated tragic, comic and lyric poetry to himself, and joined battle with Homer, over whom he could triumph by sublimating his subject matter: from corporeal to spiritual and intellectual war.

<sup>2</sup> It seems unnecessary to cite examples of Blake's pervasive influence. One especially interesting study of a reception of Satan paralleling Blake's but largely independent of his influence is Valentin Boss, Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism 1991.

<sup>3</sup> No, neo-prophetic criticism is not guaranteed either strong or accurate. Here's Lawrence's blindness and insight on Satan:

That is the real pivot of all bourgeois consciousness in all countries: fear and hate of the instinctive, intuitional, procreative body in man or woman. But of course this fear and hate had to take on a righteous appearance, so it became moral, said that the instincts, intuitions and all the activities of the procreative body were evil, and promised a reward for their suppression. That is the great clue to bourgeois psychology: the reward business.... Be good, and you'll have money. Be wicked, and you'll be utterly penniless at last, and the good ones will have to offer you a little charity. This is sound working morality in the world. And it makes one realize that, even to Milton, the true hero of Paradise Lost must be Satan. But by this baited morality the masses were caught and enslaved to industrialism before ever they knew it; the good got hold of the goods, and our modern "civilization" of money, machines and wage-slaves was inaugurated. (P 559)

<sup>4</sup> Recently two detailed and learned studies by Catherine Gimelli Martin, examined the idea of entropy in Paradise Lost in relation to chaos theory, find two senses of the term. "[I]nstead of existing as a 'measure of the amount of energy unavailable for useful work in a system undergoing change,' evil makes entropy "a measure of the degree of disorder in a substance or a system [where] entropy always increases and available energy decreases." The first state, Martin argues, describes Milton's Chaos prior to Satan's entry; the second describes it under his influence. See "'Pregnant Causes Mixt': The Wages of Sin and the Laws of Entropy in Milton's Chaos" in McColgan and Durham, eds., Arenas of Conflict (1997) 161-82, p. 168. Also, "Fire, Ice and Epic Entropy: The Physics and Metaphysics of Milton's Reformed Chaos" in Milton Studies 95 (1997) 73-113.

<sup>5</sup> One of Empson's interesting suggestions (Milton's God 61) is that Satan is filled with anxiety on hearing Uriel's account of the earth's creation, for it shows that God actually has created something--which means that he quite probably created Satan too.

<sup>6</sup> Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse 81.

<sup>7</sup> Pound, Selected Prose 317. For a good review of his "graphic poetics" of energy expressed into "spatial" patterns of formal relations--"the Image is... a vortex or cluster of fused ideas and is endowed with energy" see "Affirmations--As for Imagisme" (Selected Prose 374-7). For Pound's insistence on distribution, not production, as the contemporary economic problem, see Selected Prose 234.

<sup>8</sup> Schulman, Lydia Dittler, Paradise Lost and the Rise of the American Republic, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Jackie DiSalvo, War of Titans: Blake's Critique of Milton and the Politics of Religion, 1983.

Chapter Five: THE REDEMPTION OF GOD:  
MILTON, EMPSON AND THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS

Verily I say unto you, he who will receive life and believe in the kingdom will never leave it, not even if the Father wishes to banish him. (The Apocryphon of James)

The Trouble With God

"The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it" (MHH 6). This saying from Blake, perhaps the original deconstruction, introduced the specter of a radical incoherence in Milton that we've increasingly felt obliged to dispel. It's not enough to recognize Blake's diagnosis as defensive misreading; what's required is to produce a principle of coherence for Milton's poetry, particularly his theodicy, that isn't based circularly on Christian orthodoxy. Thus Kerrigan (The Sacred Complex, 1983) tries to recover Milton for God's party by subsuming him under Freudianism: and Fish (Surprised By Sin, 1971) does likewise by ascribing the heterodox sympathies the poem arouses to irony at our expense.

If Milton seems too big to be so castrated or reduced to pedagogical prankster, can psychic coherence be found for him on the left? For Christopher Hill (Milton and the English Revolution, 1977), Milton's hints of heterodoxy arise from his awareness of, and frequent sympathy for, the radical Protestant sects; while his orthodox appearance stems mainly from the need to conceal his opinions from Restoration censors, and from the passage of time. Why is it, however, that Milton goes out of his way at times to assume an orthodox position and an authoritarian tone, not least in his depiction of God? Failure to account for this leaves left-wing readings of Milton dissatisfying.

If no principle of coherence has been found for Milton either on the right or on the left, where are we then? Perhaps back with Empson, whose reading (Milton's God, 1961) emphasized the theodicy's coherent ambivalence. For Empson Paradise Lost "is not good in spite of but because of its moral confusions... the reason why the poem is so good is that it makes God so bad." (13) Milton

is struggling to make his God appear less wicked, as he tells us he will at the start, and does succeed in making him noticeably less wicked than the traditional Christian one; though, after all his efforts, owing to his loyalty to the sacred text and the penetration with which he makes its story real to us, his modern critics still feel, in a puzzled way, that there is something badly wrong about it all. (11)

Friendly commentary on the theodicy often lacks bite because it assumes God scarcely needs justification; but Empson's Milton refuses to idealize away the difficulties with God--indeed, in his insistence on justifying God warts and all, he high-handedly adds a few, making God look even worse than Christianity has made him, if that's possible. This makes him look dismayingly like Empson's antagonists, the neo-Christians who glory in God's sadism (229-236). Yet Empson is convinced that Milton means no justification of oppression or castration, but wants to depict God in accordance, essentially, with the prophetic ideal: as the embodiment of abundance and generosity. This he can do only by reading against both the Bible and Christian theology, a task that defies even his revisionary powers.

For Empson Christianity's first ethical problem is its Old Testament substrate, particularly the all-too-human Yahweh whom it inherits as God the Father. In the J text Yahweh appears in all his weirdness, contradictory, capricious, even downright malicious, inspiring or upholding the questionable doings of the patriarchs, arguing unsuccessfully with his prophets, punishing them for seemingly trivial causes, even trying to kill them.<sup>1</sup> This irascible fellow seems quite at home in Paradise Lost--a God who, after installing a quasi-military angelic hierarchy (thus encouraging the competition for rank and honor for which he expels Satan), provokes Satan's rebels with the gratuitous exaltation of the Son, then turns around and displays a near-contempt even for the faithful angels. A God who, next, allows Satan to escape his prison in order to tempt Adam and Eve, descending so far as to (through the messenger Rafael) inflame Eve's curiosity and sense of impairment, virtually guaranteeing the Fall--and near-universal human damnation.

Some of the difficulty may arise from Milton's projecting onto God the personality of John Milton Sr.--or Jr.--at his most irascible. A portion of it arises from Milton's monistic rather than dualistic approach, which burdens any God so conceived with ultimate responsibility for everything. Much of it, however, arises from reading Milton through the eyes of what his contemporary Henry More called "the Black Doctrine of absolute Reprobation": belief that an absolutely transcendent divine personality can't be limited by considerations of human merit in the awarding of salvation, but bestows election or damnation with complete freedom. Long after Calvinism's heyday this doctrine was still making converts for secularism, including James Mill as remembered by his son John Stuart:

He looked upon [religion] as the greatest enemy of morality... making it consist in doing the will of a being on whom it lavishes all the phrases of adulation, but whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful. I have a hundred times heard him say, that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression... adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise... This ne plus ultra of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity. Think (he used to say) of a being who would make a Hell--who would create the human race with the infallible foreknowledge, and

therefore with the intention, that the great majority of them were to be consigned to horrible and everlasting torment.... My father was as well aware as anyone that Christians do not, in general undergo the demoralizing consequences which seem inherent in such a creed...

Their worship was not paid to the demon which such a being as they imagined would really be, but to their own idea of excellence. The evil is, that such a belief keeps the ideal wretchedly low (Mill, Autobiography 32-3).

Empson's attack on the Christian God is based in no small part on Mill. But when he indicts Milton's God for cavalierly permitting the Fall and thus humanity's damnation, he forgets Milton's own vehement rejection of reprobation doctrine. If free will prevails, as for Milton it did, God's releasing Satan to tempt humanity only permits evil without prescribing it; and, since temptation is a prerequisite for manifesting merit, it poses no problem for God's justice.

Yet Empson's main objection is not levied against Calvinism in particular but Christianity as a whole, and cuts to the very heart of it. The objection is to the doctrine of Christ's atoning sacrifice, particularly when conceived as vicarious satisfaction. What significance has that sacrifice offered to the Father? To be properly understood, says Empson, the doctrine must be considered in light of its history, traceable to Neolithic human sacrifice. After Rene Girard<sup>2</sup>, Empson's explanation of sacrifice's social function is outdated, but his remarks on its demise can be profitably filled out. With the rise of the great world religions around the middle of the first millennium BC, increased migration, conquest and trade threw local sacrificial cults into proximity with each other, so that "[t]hinkers began to talk about what is good or right or just for all men, instead of about the correct procedure for sacrifice to the local god or king" (238). Even more important was the extension of centralized government with codified laws and a judicial system in which was vested sole authority for vengeance. This rendered sacrifice obsolete as a prophylactic outlet for violence, and allowed philosophical ethics to take root. "The effect of this again, in various cases, was to make them conceive a God of all mankind, transcendent and metaphysically one with Goodness; though both India and China tended to conceive an Absolute rather than a Person." (241) Which was perhaps safer, for while it's hard to sacrifice to an impersonal absolute, the idea of a personal divinity could, and in Christianity did, revive the model of sacrificial cult even in the name of doing away with it for good:

Among the various universal religions which were formed as a result of this change and still survive, Christianity is the only one which ratted on the progress, the only one which dragged back the Neolithic craving for human sacrifice into its basic structure. .... [The early Christians] revived it only in the sense that they said nothing had ever been more important than doing one human sacrifice once for all, and nothing would ever be so important again as to excite oneself by representations of it. The trouble was that, as soon as you transferred your ancient savage custom to your new metaphysical universal God, people said: "But why did God want this sacrifice? Mustn't it be because God is very wicked?"... Milton was right to feel that, in

undertaking to defend the Christian God, he had accepted a peculiarly difficult client.  
(241-2)

Paul, the great New Testament expounder of atonement theology, Empson calls, "the Sorcerer's Apprentice" who "could not merely toy with the ancient conviction that God requires human sacrifice, as perhaps he intended to do" (284). This is unfair, because the Pauline atonement is often psychologized, tending to treat the guilt discharged by Jesus as bad conscience rather than divine vengeance, and the sacrifice of Christ as being offered to humanity as "the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19) rather than to an angry God.<sup>3</sup>

Though Paul's psychologizing did not prevail, it took centuries for a full-blown sacrificial model fully to emerge. Meanwhile Tertullian's and Origen's ransom theory predominated, under which Christ's sacrifice was offered to the devils who had obtained title to human souls by sin. "God tricked them into thinking Jesus a man, and somehow this allowed the Crucifixion to get us out of their clutches. It is disappointing not have the trick explained in more detail, but one sees at once that the Father is released from blame." (283) But the need to redeem humanity by trickery was most unflattering to God's greatness, and Anselm's alternative, proposed in Cur Deus Homo, swung the balance to the other extreme. Under his satisfaction theory, Christ's offering was made not to the devils, but to God, whose offended honor only a sinless offering by a divine being could appease. Under the analogy drawn from feudal society by which God became, in Blake's words, "an Allegory of Kings & nothing else" (An. Thornton), the ancient model of sacrifice to wrathful deity was back in business and, in line with James Mill's observations, raised to a new hideousness. Behind the rhetoric of agape stood a deity unable to forgive sin without compensation by blood sacrifice. Thus Blake's denunciation of vicarious atonement as "a horrible doctrine. If another man pay your debt I do not forgive it"<sup>4</sup>:

... Doth Jehovah Forgive a Debt only on condition that it shall  
Be Payed?...  
That Debt is not Forgiven! That Pollution is not Forgiven  
Such is the Forgiveness of the Gods, the Moral Virtues of the  
Heathen, whose tender Mercies are Cruelty. (J 61:17-21)

and Shelley's insistence that no honorable person could accept atoning grace.

Empson is daring but not really outrageous in delineating the moral consequences of this doctrine. Milton's anti-Socinian remark--

At the same time I confess myself unable to perceive how those who consider the Son  
of the same essence with the Father can explain either his incarnation or his  
satisfaction. (DC chapter CVI)

--lends itself to the following exegesis:

What Milton is thinking has to be: "God couldn't have been satisfied by torturing himself to death, not if I know God; you could never have bought him off with that money; he could only have been satisfied by torturing somebody else to death." (208)

Empson thus finds the Doctrine of the Trinity downright Orwellian, "the doubletalk by which Christians hide from themselves the insane wickedness of their God." (245) Divine sadism, reinforced by Aquinas' dictum that a condition of salvation is to enjoy the torments of the damned (248), produces a piety easily convertible from imitatio Christi to imitation of a rather different character (244). Early Christian asceticism incubated this mentality: "Worship of torture is itself a sexual perversion, oddly and shockingly at home in the human psyche but rather hard to teach without interference with normal sex." (251) From here it is not far to a vision of apocalypse precipitated by Christianity: "atomic war induced by famine induced by religion" (266) through its opposition to birth control. "Men always try to imitate their gods, so that to worship a wicked one is sure to make them behave badly." (247) Sadistic deity breeds sadistic humanity. "I see no hope before Christians until they renounce the Devil and all his works; that is, stop worshipping a God who is satisfied by torture, and confess in public that they have done so." (266)

As for Milton's poem, one "feels spontaneously, though he naturally dislikes Milton's God, that the familiar bad smell of Christianity is somehow surprisingly absent.... Milton has cut out of Christianity both the torture-horror and the sex-horror" (269)--while retaining, however, the satisfaction doctrine that anchors divine sadism. It remains to see why he did not finish the job by excising satisfaction theory--and the vulgar anthropomorphism that grounded it in turn. It would have made his theodicy much simpler. And he was clearly capable, morally and intellectually, of doing so. Why should Milton have felt "hag-ridden" (as Empson says) with satisfaction theology when he felt no compunction in challenging orthodoxy on the equally controversial issue of divorce?

#### Alternative Christianities

We must note before going on that divine personality and pathos by no means require demonism or dysdaemonism--as a careful reading of the Old Testament shows. For Hebrew prophecy, the very divine attributes that elsewhere appeared oppressive were redeemed as the hallmark of divine ethicality.<sup>5</sup> Divine wrath here was conceived not as numinous mana striking like lightning where it will, or according to capricious divine will, but as God's option for the downtrodden, such wrath against the unjust being but the corollary of compassion. Unfortunately Calvinism's revival of the Old Testament failed to emphasize this aspect of it, precipitating--and partly justifying--the Marcionite

reaction that persists in Empsonian humanism. But we will not find Milton ignorant of Old Testament humanity, any more than of its predilection for irony.

Failure to attain the prophetic vision of an ethical divine personality leaves depersonalization as the best remedy for divine demonism. Such depersonalization has served to make God a little more "human" at least since Aristotle, whose God was expressly designed to be unavailable for dysdaemonic religious purposes. The depersonalizing of deity carried out by Aristotle, Epicurus and others, and the insistence on divine self-sufficiency (from which it followed that gods--unlike humans and particularly priests--had no need of offerings and cared nothing for their omission) aimed to check the superstitiousness that periodically engulfed antiquity. In Theophrastus, for example, desidaimonia--"a feeling of constant terror in regard to the divine power"<sup>6</sup>--arises from concern that one had inadvertently omitted an offering or some other ritual observance demanded to sustain a god. If, however, deity could be distanced from the human order of scarcity and need, and assimilated to a quasi-mathematical order of apatheia, no ground remained for fearing retributive divine incursions into human affairs. Nevertheless, the allegorizing away of divine personality has usually been superficial, innumerable credal recitations--"without body, parts or passions"--proving powerless to purge from the common mind the image of the irascible father, roused to wrath by scanted obedience.

Depersonalization facilitated immanentism, which could lead easily to pantheism and persecution for heresy. Immanentist currents run underground throughout Christian history, going back at least to the Gnostic or proto-Gnostic Thomas literature, if not to Jesus himself. Milton's studies had acquainted him with at least two strands of radical immanentism, as Empson notes:

M. Saurat, on the other hand, wanted Milton to use the Zohar to drive the last remnants of Manichaeism out of Christianity, and therefore argued that God in the epic is already an ineffable Absolute or World-Soul dissolved into the formative matter of the universe. After a timid peep into one volume of a translation of the Zohar, I am sure that Milton would not find it as opposite from the Gnostics as black from white, which is what the eloquence and selection of M. Saurat lead us to suppose. Milton would regard it as further evidence that the Fathers had slandered the Gnostics, as he had been sure when he was young, just as Rome had behaved very wickedly to the Cathars; all these heretics probably had something to be said for them, though of course one must expect most of their stuff to be dead wood. And the Gnostics are reported as believing, no less than the Cabbalists of the Zohar, in an eventual reunion of the many with the One. (145)

In fact (as Hill would later show) such ideas were not uncommon in Seventeenth Century England. Familism was one radical Protestant sect that emphasized immanentism; but such emphasis was not limited to the far left:

When Lovewit at the end of The Alchemist rebuffs a superstitious fool by saying "Away, you Harry Nicholas" (the founder of the mystical Family of Love which maintained that any man can become Christ), the now remote figure is presumed to be

familiar to a popular audience. The ideas which Milton hinted at in the bits of his epic which I have picked out were therefore not nearly so learned and unusual as they seem now; indeed, he probably treated them with caution because they might suggest a more Levelling, more economic-revolutionary, political stand than he in fact took. But the Cambridge Platonists were not dangerous for property owners in this way; they were a strand of recent advanced thought which deserved recognition in his epic. (142-3)

Milton needed none of his contemporaries to acquaint him with Plato or Plotinus, but he would have paid close attention to the implications and applications of Puritan neo-Platonism, which ran strikingly close to his own thought.

Since Empson wrote, Cambridge Platonism has receded another step into obscurity. As Puritans purifying Puritanism with applications of neo-Platonism, as political liberals insisting on the primacy of personal morality, and as scientific philosophers repudiating both Hobbesian materialism and Cartesian dualism, Benjamin Whichcote, John Smith, Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, together with some peripheral associates, constituted the only school of thought in Seventeenth Century England approaching Miltonic complexity. Having failed to produce a masterwork capable of rescuing it from time's neglect, the movement seems generally remembered as one favoring the rationality in and free will in doctrine, liberty and the renunciation of sectarian disputes in society. But there is more to them than that. In particular, the Cambridge Platonists shed light on Milton's theodicy by expounding the road not taken. In defining that road, I'll rely mainly on three important discourses that Milton probably knew: Cudworth's "Sermon Preached Before the Honorable House of Commons at Westminster, March 31, 1647"; Smith's "Concerning the True Way or Method of Attaining Divine Knowledge" and Smith's "The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion"<sup>7</sup>.

Cambridge Platonism tended always to depersonalize God, unobtrusively replacing "popular picture thinking"'s "anthropomorphic imaginings" (Willey, 145,148) with more adequate ideas, quietly re-conceiving Deity not as an anthropopathic demander of sacrifice but as the universal principle of abundant goodness. Smith reveals the basis for this revision:

As Plato sometimes speaks of the divine love, it arises out of fullness and redundancy. It is an overflowing fountain, and that love which descends upon created being is a free efflux from the almighty source of love; and it is well-pleasing to him that those creatures which he hath made should partake of it. Though God cannot seek his own glory so as if he might acquire any addition to himself, yet he may seek it so as to communicate it out of himself. (112-3)

Cudworth highlights the immanentist possibilities of such a conception:

Christ... is the standing, constant, inexhausted fountain of this divine light and heat, that still toucheth every soul that is enlivened by it... Nay, this divine life, begun and kindled in any heart, wheresoever it be, is something of God in flesh, and, in a sober

and qualified sense, Divinity incarnate; and all particular Christians that are really possessed of it, so many mystical Christs.

For both Smith and Cudworth, there is one simple explanation for our failure to conceive God as pure goodness and abundance:

While we lodge any filthy vice in us, this will be perpetually twisting up itself into the thread of our finest-spun speculations... Such as men themselves are, such will God himself seem to be. It is the maxim of most wicked men that the Deity is some way or other like themselves... That idea which men generally have of God is nothing else but the picture of their own complexions; that archetypal notion of him which hath the supremacy in their minds is none else but such a one as hath been shaped out according to some pattern of themselves though they may so clothe and disguise this idol of their own, when they carry it about in a pompous procession to expose it to the view of the world, that it may seem very beautiful, and indeed anything else rather than what it is. (Smith, 79-80)

If God is fullness, our ideas of God are the idolatrous projection of our poverty. Cudworth felt such idolatry to be as bad as worshipping wooden images.

Truly I know not whether of the two be the worse idolatry and of a deeper stain, for a man to make a god out of a piece of wood, and fall down unto it and worship it, and say, 'Deliver me, for thou art my God,'... or to set up such an idol-god of our own imagination as this is, fashioned out according to the similitude of our own fondness and wickedness (382)

Nevertheless "God will ever dwell in spotless light, howsoever we paint and disfigure him here below; he will still be circled about with his own rays of unstained and immaculate glory." (382-3)

Empson finds Milton rather yearning to be a Cambridge Platonist, but restrained by a pessimism of that falls short of Nietzschean exuberance:

Milton knows by experience that God is at present the grindingly harsh figure described in the Old Testament... But it was essential to retain the faith that God had a good eventual plan; well then, the Cambridge Platonists can be allowed to be right about God, but only as he will become in the remote future.... Milton decided that they were wincing away from the evidence, but that their graceful picture would be true of an eventual better world. (143, 268)

But do we not see, on closer observation, a positive delight in complicating Platonist eudaemonism? Thus Milton, like Cudworth, invokes light-mysticism, with its implicit immanentism and impersonalism. But for him these motifs pose rather than solve problems. For example, the invocation to Book III's Dialogue in Heaven:

Hail holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,  
Or of th'Eternal Coeternal beam  
May I express the unblam'd? since God is Light,  
And never but in unapproach'd Light  
Dwelt from Eternity, dwelt then in thee,  
Bright effluence of bright essence increate. (III 1-6)

"Celestial Light" (l. 51), analyzed, reveals a broad spectrum of possibilities. Is God light? Or a personal being who "dwells" in light? Or light's yet more abstract "essence increate"? Is God the impersonal goodness of the Hellenistic "fountain of light" (l. 375)—or the passionate flawed personality of the Hebrew Creator? The first needs little justification; the second may need too much. Which would hamper Milton's project the most? Which would best exercise his poetic imagination?

Earlier, in the Christian Doctrine, Milton had drawn back from the depersonalizing thrust of Christian theology, of which the Cambridge group constituted the cutting edge, insisting expressly on taking God literally as the Old Testament pictured him:

On the question of what is or is not suitable for God, let us ask for no more dependable authority than God himself... If it is said that God, after working for six days, rested and was refreshed, Exod. xxxi. 17, and if he feared his enemy's displeasure, Deut. xxxii. 27, let us believe that it is not beneath God... to be refreshed by what refreshes him, and to fear what he does fear. For however you may try to tone down these and similar texts by an elaborate show of interpretative glosses, it comes to the same thing in the end. After all, if God is said to have created man in his own image, after his own likeness, Gen. i. 26, and... if God attributes to himself again and again a human shape and form, why should we be afraid of assigning to him something he assigns to himself? (DC I, ii)

Why this extraordinary line of thought, as if to roll back 2500 years of theological progress? Here the poet seems hag-ridden by his source-text indeed, far more so than many less courageous and original thinkers.

Or is this a deliberate defiance of the Cambridge Platonists?

If so, can it be justified as more than a reactionary indulgence? Why did Milton affirm the immediacy of the traditional and conventional God-picture, brushing off the Cambridge insistence on its constructedness? Was it, as Empson suggests, that he thought the Platonists not strong enough to face the harsh theological realities? Or did they seem to him blind to the new dysdaemonism opening beneath their feet? Milton could well be charged with hypocrisy for his statement. The Christian Doctrine shows that he had travelled far into the speculative realms from which he attempts to bar us—having, like his devils, "reason'd high" for hundreds of pages on "Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate, / Fixt Fate, Free Will, Foreknowledge Absolute" (II 559-560). Somewhere in the process a self-revision occurred: a reaction against the hermeneutical mediation De Doctrina tempted him with. This meant that some critical questions about God—ones Milton was quite capable of asking—had to be suppressed. Might we not, as "natural men," have interpolated into the Bible's depiction of divine personality our own fallen notions, creating a demonic God in our own image? But to raise this question and so acknowledge a split between the Bible's appearance and its reality propels us into an infinite labor of self-correction—and how can fallen subjectivity correct itself, since all it does is from the standpoint of error? Its plight is of Hell's philosophers who "find no end, in wand'ring mazes lost"

(II 561). The revaluation of God now becomes an interminable critique of consciousness, a whirlpool of Satanic interiority into which Milton, with his preternatural farsightedness, gazed but refused any longer to plunge. The un-Miltonic concern with "safety" in the denunciation of "interpretative glosses" and "vague subtleties of speculation" anticipates Rafael's warnings to Adam about the Idiot Questioner, Il Penseroso imprisoned in his mind, whose activity cannot but "interrupt the sweet of Life," the Paradise of spontaneous immediacy that Milton still hopes to recover. But doesn't the traditional God-idea already interrupt eudaemonism? Isn't the idea of a transcendent divine personality, a knower of truth over against which human consciousness is radically fallen, the basis for plenty of hermeneutical whirlpools?

Milton's forceful justification of his stance nevertheless contains the ambivalence and qualification we learn to be alert for when reading him:

It is safest for us to form an image of God in our minds which corresponds to his representation and description of himself in the sacred writings. Admittedly, God is always described not as he really is but in such a way as will make him conceivable to us. Nevertheless, we ought to form just such a mental image of him as he, in bringing himself within the limits of our understanding, wishes us to form. Indeed he has brought himself down to our level expressly to prevent our being carried beyond the reach of human comprehension, and outside the written authority of scripture, into vague subtleties of speculation. (DC I, ii)

"Let there be no question about it," Milton concludes:

they understand best what God is like who adjust their understanding to the word of God, for he has adjusted his word to our understanding, and has shown what kind of an idea of him he wishes us to have. In short, God either is or is not really like he says he is. If he really is like this, why should we think otherwise? If he is not really like this, on what authority do we contradict God? If, at any rate, he wants us to imagine him in this way, why does our imagination go off on some other tack? Why does our imagination shy away from a notion of God which he himself does not hesitate to promulgate in unambiguous terms? (DC I, ii)

The reason, of course, is that such notions seem to imply a tyrannical Oedipal father, worshipped as the ideal of goodness by those blind to the incoherence of what they're doing.

Milton can have had no such incapacity. All the more hubristic and quixotic, then, must seem his attempt to justify God in his anthropopathic personality. And yet Milton has here opened the door to the doctrine of divine accommodation which Christianity has long employed in order to domesticate Old Testament ideas of God, and on which Cambridge Platonism particularly relied. Here is Smith on the subject:

The mind of a proverb is to utter wisdom in a mystery--as the apostle sometimes speaks--and to wrap up divine truth in a kind of enigmatical way, though in vulgar expressions.... In this state we are not able to behold truth in its own native beauty and luster; but, while we are veiled with mortality, truth must veil itself too, that it

may the more freely converse with us.... And therefore God, to accommodate his truth to our weak capacities, does, as it were, embody it in earthly expressions; according to that ancient maxim of the Cabbalists, "Lumen supernum nunquam descedit sine indumento." ["The light from above never comes down without mask or covering."] (92)

Closer to Milton in his refusal to disparage the divine appearance is Cudworth:

And though the Gospel be not God as he is in his own brightness, but God veiled and masked to us, God in a state of humiliation and condescent, as the sun in a rainbow, yet it is nothing else but a clear and unspotted mirror of divine holiness, goodness, purity; in which attributes lie the very life and essence of God himself.... Whatsoever God doth in the world, he doth it as it is suitable to the highest goodness; the first idea and fairest copy of which is his own essence. (383)

Still there remains a difference between Platonist and Miltonic accommodation. Platonism puts no barrier before our seeking behind the veil, but Milton does, replacing the divine mask after tacitly acknowledging it, admitting accommodation yet immediately effacing the admission so that the superficial reader will ignore it. For Cudworth and Smith, God's veil seems a reluctant condescension to our finitude, ignorance, and self-will, each of which we compound by projecting it back onto God. But for Milton the accommodation seems a deliberate invitation—or provocation—to project human relations onto God. If we don't, we fail to do God's will. And, it seems implied, if we fail to appreciate God's human appearance, we misunderstand the higher motives of divine nature.

We may sympathize with this in light of Paradise Lost VIII's concern to restore and preserve immediacy. But there is probably an even stronger reason for Milton's stance, one tied directly with the theodical concerns of Book III.

Milton felt, far more intensely even than Cudworth, that God is directly responsible for the divine mask. If that mask exists, God at the very least must have permitted it. But why? May we look for psychological reasons? Milton's Arianism allowed relations between the Eternal Father and Only Begotten Son be structured so as reflect human Oedipal relations—precisely so that those relations could be projected onto divinity and re-imagined in the light of divine principles. Unlike the spurious sacred complex, confirming Oedipality by uncritically reflecting and rewarding its cosmic projection, the Miltonic complex projects Oedipality in order to revise it according to the prophetic ideal of superabundant divinity generosity that rose out of the precursor-agon.

For Cudworth, as we saw earlier, such a projection is most likely to be "an idol-god of our own imagination... fashioned out according to the similitude of our own fondness and wickedness" for, as Smith observed, because "such as men themselves are, such will God himself seem to be." The divine image, as Cudworth says, is both mask and mirror; and we may perhaps be allowed to play a bit with the vehicles of his metaphor in order to explicate the tenor of his thought. To be mirror the image must

first be mask, deliberately donned by God as an image humanity can comprehend. As mask, it cannot but invite our projection onto it of our own nature. As mirror, it reflects those projections back to us as if they were divine, and divinely sanctioned. If our humanity is spiritual scarcity and will to power, God's mask reflects it back. If our humanity is abundance and generosity, these traits will be reflected in our perception of God's "humanity." Critical thought--recognizing the mask for what it is and dismissing further concern with it or what underlies it--can't substitute for cleansing the doors of perception, which reveals God in reality. To understand God's humanity, we must first cleanse the mirror of our unworthy projections; by refusing to see in God the image of fallen humanity despite all appearances, despite even the invitation to do so, we manifest what manner of humanity we are of. The divinity exercised and realized in so doing enables us to see behind the mask by seeing our new--or old--selves in the mirror. And the greater the apparent demonism, the greater the manifestation of divinity in the humanity that refuses to take appearance for reality.

#### Beyond Free Will: the Dialogue in Heaven

While Reprobation doctrine had served well as a demonic mask for God, it was harder for an intelligent person to maintain it after Cudworth's denunciation before the House of all election<sup>8</sup>--and, even more importantly, in the face of innumerable Biblical passages assuming free will. Milton did not go quite as far as Cudworth, affirming predestination to election, but only as a universal and conditional decree: i.e., the offering of salvation to all who would accept it (DC I, IV). Elsewhere he refers to predestined election as if it held only for a few saints, the rest of humanity being left to demonstrate their merit.

The Bible's conclusive refutation of Reprobation provided the jumping off point for Milton's theodicy. If God's justification could be accomplished simply by a refutation of Reprobation, nothing more than reasoning from the scriptures would have been needed for the theodicy, and Milton understandably pushed this possibility as far as he could. A rebuttal of those holding that God's omnipotence made him cause and author of all sin would be "nothing more than an argument to prove that God was not the evil spirit" (DC I, ii). Moreover,

if he [God] turns man's will to moral good or evil just as he likes, and then rewards the good and punishes the wicked, it will cause an outcry against divine justice from all sides. (DC I, xii)

If this is the sole source of the outcry, as Milton seems to have wanted to believe as he wrote the Christian Doctrine<sup>9</sup> makes a neater argument, but in any event it is clear how very important the

refutation of reprobation doctrine is to Milton's theodicy.--and if the Christian Doctrine were an entirely adequate gloss on Paradise Lost<sup>10</sup>--Milton would have quite satisfactorily justified God by bringing Satan on Mount Niphates to confess that he fell of his own free will, and by causing fallen Adam to admit that "his doom is fair."

But if God demands submission to tyranny as the price of salvation, his ways are not justified simply because he leaves us free to submit or not. Indeed, by condemning us to freedom, religion--as Nietzsche noted--vindicates whatever punishment it chooses to inflict on the "rebellious":

[T]he doctrine of the will has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is, because one wanted to impute guilt. The entire old psychology, the psychology of will, was conditioned by the fact that its originators, the priests at the head of ancient communities, wanted to create for themselves the right to punish--or wanted to create this right for God. Men were considered "free" so that they might be judged and punished--so that they might become guilty: consequently, every act had to be considered as willed, and the origin of every act had to be considered as lying within the consciousness. (The Antichrist; Portable Nietzsche 499-500)

With the intimation that the doctrine of free will provides no real respite from divine demonism, Milton enters Book III's Dialogue in Heaven.

Every major turn in this dialogue is an attempt to deal with a demonic Father who upholds free will as the basis for his right to punish. Empson's dictum that Milton set out to portray God as the Devil is never truer than here. The Son's--Milton's--task here is not to repudiate this God or to allegorize away his disturbing characteristics, but to redeem and reclaim him, unobtrusively re-imagining, digesting, reinterpreting him according to the needs of eudaemonism and cosmic continuity.

God opens his own "defense" with a pre-emptive attack on humanity quite in the idiom of Nietzsche's priests:

So will fall  
Hee and his faithless Progeny: whose fault?  
Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of mee  
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall....  
So were created, nor can justly accuse  
Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate;  
As if Predestination over-rul'd  
Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree  
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed  
Thir own revolt, not I. (III 95-9; 112-117)

Here the doctrine of free will, instead of ending the theodicy, begins it; God has justified his right to punish. Even the concluding announcement of grace (129-134) seems as self-justifying as generous, designed to excuse the continuing punishment of Satan. The Son's anxious plea for God to confirm his promised grace (135-166) suggested to Empson still worse: that grace may be a divine whim, subject to repudiation at will. From the God we've just seen, this does not seem wholly impossible.



So far, so good. I had mercy in mind all the time, the Father reassures the Son, suddenly modulating into reconciliation and regeneration: "once more I will renew/ His lapsed powers"; "To Prayer, repentance, and obedience due,/ Though but endeavor'd with sincere intent,/ Mine ear shall not be slow, mine eye not shut" (III 175-6; 191-3). While line 182 seems to exhibit some gratuitous jealousy (PR III 121 ff. notwithstanding), there's no more active malevolence here. Forgiveness follows repentance, as it ought. Even the phrase "incensed Deity" of line 185 seems vestigial, no longer felt, a dim bad odor of the archaic demon. "So willingly doth God remit his ire," Michael will say (XI, 885).

"But yet all is not done." Just as suddenly as he left off, God reopens the proceedings against mankind. Refraining from personal ire, he retreats behind an impersonal principle of "justice":

Man disobeying,  
Disloyal breaks his fealty, and sins  
Against the high Supremacy of Heav'n,  
Affecting God-head, and so losing all  
To expiate his Treason hath naught left...  
Die hee or Justice must; unless for him  
Some other able, and as willing, pay  
The rigid satisfaction, death for death. (III, 210-12)

The reconciliation was a dream. And theologically this was inevitable. For the Old Testament models of intercession, as Milton clearly understood (and as Empson had the bad taste to remind us) are inadequate for Christianity's satisfaction theology, which requires an actual human sacrifice to reconcile man with God. All paternal care for humanity is gone, all longsuffering on behalf of his people forgotten, as God now becomes an allegory of kings with a vengeance. Beneath its "redeeming love" Christianity's satisfaction doctrine conceals a divine demonism surpassing any attributed to the Old Testament Yahweh. What divine law of justice could require such a sacrifice to validate repentance and forgiveness? Only a God subject to cosmic scarcity and possessing an ego more impaired than Satan's could have, it seems, demanded it. Not for him the embrace and fatted calf to offer the repentant sinner; to imitate him we must quench every impulse of parental love. And while Melville's *Starry Vere* can avoid personal responsibility by invoking a higher law of abstract justice, God cannot--since either he assents wholeheartedly to that unjust justice, in which case he is not good, or he does not, in which case he is not God.

Not predestination, then, but atonement raises the crucial question for God's justification. Is God's will essentially antithetical to humanity? Is the Father "God who demands," an all-too-human penurious niggard of the salvation he has monopolized and which he dispenses only in exchange for sacrificial nourishment (or worse yet, a demiurge subject to such a power)? Or is he the All-Giver, the inexhaustible fountain of light? The two conceptions are utterly incompatible: either God suffers from spiritual scarcity or he does not. If not, how can the propitiatory atonement be explained?

Perhaps a gesture toward other atonement doctrines may relieve the situation. The major Christian theories of the atonement have found themselves compelled either indirectly to undermine God's goodness by directly discrediting his greatness, or to undermine his greatness by more or less openly blaspheming his goodness. The ransom theory accomplished the first; the satisfaction theory the second. Satisfaction theology was also assumed throughout chapter XVI of the Christian Doctrine, "Of the Administration of Redemption." What alternatives did Milton have? In addition to the obsolete ransom theory, there was Socinianism, a heresy arising from Abelard's proposal that the Christ's atonement had no objective or legal saving efficacy but rather an exemplary effect: its purpose was to free humanity from sin by show us how to live. Such doctrine dissolved the difficulties of both the ransom and satisfaction theories, and so had become, by Milton's time, a popular and much-combated view.

While not openly disavowing satisfaction theory,<sup>13</sup> the Cambridge Platonists quietly watered it down with Socinianism, emphasizing the moral improvement that comes from following Christ's example. Christ came into the world, said Cudworth, not only "to cast a mantle over us, and hide all our filthy sores from God's avenging eye... but he came likewise to be a surgeon and physician of souls, to free us from the filth and corruption of them; which is more grievous and burdensome, more noisome to a true Christian, than the guilt of sin itself." (385)

Milton's attitude toward Socinianism was still more complex. Like the Platonists, he outwardly upheld satisfaction, sometimes most rigorously, at other times betraying less than total commitment. He holds out no encouragement to it in the Christian Doctrine, nor in Paradise Lost; yet he got in trouble in 1652 for licensing the Socinian Racovian Catechism<sup>14</sup>, and in Paradise Regained omits the crucifixion entirely to focus on the exemplary temptation in the wilderness—an entirely Socinian approach. It seems likely that while writing the Christian Doctrine and for some time after, he was actively suppressing Socinian sympathies. Moreover, he seems likely to have been using the Christian Doctrine as range-finding for his attempt to justify God, with an eye to figuring out how much of the job could be done from the Bible alone, and how much of the problem resided in the Bible. Was satisfaction Biblical doctrine? For the time being, it worked to consider it so.

However, an early move in the heavenly dialogue is to mitigate satisfaction with ransom theology through an unannounced redirection of Christ's self-offering from God to the Devil:

Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life  
 I offer, on mee let thine anger fall;  
 Account mee man; I for his sake will leave  
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee  
 Freely put off, and for him lastly die  
 Well pleas'd, on me let Death wreck all his rage;  
 Under his gloomy power I shall not long

Lie vanquish't; thou hast giv'n me to possess  
 Life in myself for ever, by thee I live,  
 Though now to Death I yield, and am his due  
 All that of me can die, yet that debt paid,  
 Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsome grave  
 His prey, nor suffer my unspotted Soul  
 For ever with corruption there to dwell;  
 But I shall rise Victorious, and subdue  
 My vanquisher, spoil'd of his vaunted spoil. (III 236-251)

Apparently unable to marshal explicit scriptural arguments against satisfaction doctrine, Milton tries to ameliorate it with a new image (a strategy he employs when he seems most uncomfortable, as he did in the Nativity Ode). After line 237 God disappears as the enemy, to be replaced by the Devil, metonymously "Death," outmaneuvered by strategy recalling ransom theology ("All that of me can die"). But that the Father's rage, not the Devil's is the Son's real concern appears at the conclusion:

Then with the multitude of my redeem'd  
 Shall enter Heav'n long absent, and return,  
 Father, to see thy face, wherein no cloud  
 Of anger shall remain, but peace assur'd,  
 And reconcilment; wrath shall be no more  
 Thenceforth, but in thy presence Joy entire. (III 260-265)

This would be nice, but the Father, while not rejecting the Son's ransom model, retains satisfaction terminology in his response (line 295). Again the Son's humble effort to assimilate him to something resembling eudaemonism is checked.

Another defense of the atonement, ultimately inadequate in itself, but one Milton still had strong feelings about, was to emphasize the opportunities it provides for the Son.

Say Heav'nly Powers, where shall we find such love,  
 Which of ye will be moral to redeem  
 Man's mortal crime, and just th'unjust to save,  
 Dwells in all Heaven charity so dear? (III, 213-6)

While Satan found himself compelled anxiously to prove his merit and originality through ascetic self-enclosure, the atonement presents Christ with the unsought opportunity for a wholly unprecedented act of merit. We know well what this "better fortitude/ Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" meant to Milton. It is true proof of divinity, this ability to throw it away and be found "By Merit more than Birthright Son of God" (III 309); and it substitutes for Satan's impaired and jealous will to power a truly aristocratic will of power unafraid to discharge its strength by "going under," indeed unable not to do so: a prophetic superabundance that refuses to allow humanity to remain alien to it. Now Biblical vegetation metaphors occur: in Christ, humanity "as from a second root shall be restor'd" to live in him

"transplanted and... receive new life" (III 288, 293). In Book V this great botanical metaphor will appear as the Tree of primary paradisaic Life, of cosmic continuity in God.

But in appeasing the Father by dying for humanity isn't Jesus submitting to castration? Here psychoanalysis offers to reinforce an Empsonian reading. And yes, this submission to suffering inflicted by a paternal figure looks very much like castration. What is lacking—and I think this is crucial—is the final resignation. The Son seems to say: "This seems to be what you want. I can't believe you really want this, at least for the reasons you give, while purporting to be just. I think better of you than that. I can only suppose you're testing me; moreover, if this really is what it takes to redeem mankind, I can't back down." This is not the thoroughgoing submission, the renunciation of personal judgment before authority, that castration requires. Such sentiments, internally voiced to the Father, lead quickly to others. "Should you really turn out to be no more than what you seem—after I meet your every demand, pass every test give you every chance to clarify yourself—then I will do more than just talk." We can't read the Son's mind beyond what Milton shows us of it. But thoughts like these, suppressed as they yet may be, seem compatible with what we've seen of it. Through putting aside personal pleasure and interest the Son's will, one feels, has grown stronger, even as it yet remains in check. To realize himself unequivocally as ethical abundance he must continue to bestow ethical abundance on the Father until the Father unequivocally repudiates it—or removes the demonic mask.

And that is what now happens. We are hardly prepared for it. The Father suddenly seizes the ethical initiative and, in conferring full divinity upon the Son, announces humanity's impending deification:

Then thou thy regal Sceptre shalt lay by,  
For regal Sceptre then no more shall need,  
God shall be All in All. But all ye Gods  
Adore him, who to compass all this dies,  
Adore the Son, and honour him as me. (III 339-343)

The Son's quixotic faith in the Father is rewarded beyond anything anticipated by orthodoxy as God incorporates himself into continuity with humanity, abolishing divine demonism not by "an elaborate show of interpretative glosses" but by the literal word of God (1 Cor. 15:28)<sup>15</sup> Empson (134) remarks: "St. Paul presumably had in mind a literal autocracy, but Milton contrives to make the text imply pantheism." brought to imaginative life by the poetic understanding adjusted to it. With the appearance of a God who, rather than demanding sacrifice, distributes divinity freely, Milton recalls his breakthrough in "Lycidas," where the poet questing for immortality suddenly realized himself as a bestower of it. Here Milton presides, god-like, as God discovers the same thing and in conferring divinity on humanity reclaims his own.

Human deification was not unfamiliar to the Seventeenth Century, but the Platonists were perhaps closest to Milton in understanding it. "Do not stumble at the use of the word ["deification"]," says Whichcote, citing 2 Peter 1:4, a favorite of the Platonists, "For we have Authority for the use of it, in Scripture." "In Heaven it is God all in all," he says elsewhere, alluding to the passage taken up by Milton (Patrides 72, 78). For Cambridge Platonism deification seriously qualified satisfaction theology. Thus Whichcote:

But with God there cannot be reconciliation without our becoming God-like... They therefore deceive and flatter themselves extremely, who think of reconciliation with God by means of a Savior acting upon God in their behalf, and not also working in or upon them, to make them God-like.... To put this upon a Savior to do and impotently to flatter ourselves in the conceit of such a thing,... were instead of reconciling heaven and earth, to divide God against himself. (39)

And Cudworth:

Is it a sleepy, sluggish conceit that it is enough for us if we be but once in a state of grace; if we have but once stepped over the threshold, we need not take so great pains to travel any farther? Or is it another damping, choking, stifling opinion, that Christ hath done all for us already without us, and nothing need more to be done within us? (397)

But yet all is not done. "[T]he poem, to be completely four-square," says Empson, "ought to explain why God had to procure all these falls for his eventual high purpose" (145). Why this roundabout way to immanentism, compared to the straightforwardness of the Cambridge Platonists? There's something suspicious about it. Has God been justified, or not? Empson is not quite sure. The dissolution into immanence might be some kind of trick:

Thus it may be objected that Milton's own temperament, because of the pride so evident in his style, would be quite unattracted by an ideal of total union. But certainly; he presents it as very unattractive even to the good angels.... It is fundamental to Milton's system that angels, like all the rest of the universe, are parts of God from which God willingly removed his will; these highest forms of life, he finds it natural to suppose, have an approximation to the divine power among themselves, so that they can love by total interpenetration. Presumably God can gobble them up as soon as look at them, which would make him an alarming employer, and perhaps they are relieved that he never expresses any affection for them (138-9).

We needn't suppose Milton averse to union with God as a realization of immanent divinity, and it would seem that Empson indulged in this perverse idea largely to twit C.S. Lewis who in The Screwtape Letters had described such cannibalistic affection in Hell. Yet antithetical mind (one thinks of Yeats' Calvary), reluctant to surrender its hard-won individuation, is inclined to suspect primary continuities in this sort of way.

Elsewhere Empson found a better analogy. Stimulated by Phelps Morand's study of the impact of Milton's political life on his poetry, he saw God's promised immanence as an abdication modeled on Cromwell's vain attempts:

his admitted and genuine bother, for a number of years, was to find some way of establishing a Parliament under which he could feel himself justified in stopping being dictator. When Milton made God the Father plan for his eventual abdication, he ascribed to him in the high tradition of Plutarch the noblest sentiment that could be found in an absolute ruler; and could reflect with pride that he had himself seen it in operation, though with a tragic end. Milton's God is thus to be regarded as like King Lear and Prospero, turbulent and masterful characters who are struggling to become able to renounce their power and enter peace; the story makes him behave much worse than they do, but the author allows him the same purifying aspiration. (144-5)

But if Cromwell could not discover a worthy successor, could God find it easier? How does one qualify to succeed God? Human deification and divine immanence were for the Platonists as for Milton the final fruits of Christian practice; only its culmination in the dissolution of personal will dissolves God into immanence. Till then God dare not entrust an individual soul, much less the cosmos, to anyone but himself. Prospero and Lear indeed.

"A young medieval aristocrat eager to win his spurs," Empson calls the Son (128). He is to undergo an initiation, a trial by suffering. The trouble with this as rationalization for the atonement is that it leaves the Father so much the Son's inferior as to invite Blake's quip: "the Son O how unlike the Father. First God Almighty comes with a Thump on the Head. Then Jesus Christ comes with a balm to heal it" (VLJ 94)—as well as to an Empsonian growl about just who, in line 298, has exhibited "Hellish hate"? For the adversary who tries the Son is the Father.

The Cromwell analogy suggests, though, that the ordeal has occurred already in the Dialogue. The Son's qualification for godhood is moral, demonstrated not only in his self-offering but also in his walking the tightrope between remonstrance and rebellion re the Father. By provoking the Son virtually to declare, "if you won't show mercy on humanity, then I will!" the Father initiates him into divinity. But the test involves more than the Son's "winning his spurs" by volunteering for crucifixion. That's mere self-abasement, mere submission to castration, unless one first realizes immanence without and within. Shall the Son submit meekly to the Father's will? Shall he defy that will, denouncing its perfectly evident injustice—as Satan does? Neither? So the Father, in a gambit of cultivated misunderstanding characteristic of sacrificial rites, incites through his mask the warfare on God that refuses to recognize itself as warfare. Satisfaction theology is that mirror-mask, evoking projections onto it of the observer's character. All through the dialogue the Son has acted as if he sensed a formal, ritual, even playful quality in the Father's wrath—while his every reply deflected the Father's apparent intent. Too well-bred to indulge in resentment, or to consider himself or anyone comparable to him

impaired, he has retained faith that, no matter how bad things may look, God will turn out to be just. His inability to project jealous will to power onto the Father testifies to his lack of these traits even more clearly than his self-offering. Had he, like Satan, imputed impairment to the Father, he would have revealed it in himself. "Or, as the Hindus say, with an act of absolute devotion from the worshipper, the goddess changes her aspect from maleficent to benign."<sup>16</sup> The Son whose combat with the Father remained ironic in spite of good reason for it to be otherwise attains divinity by conferring it on the God who bestows it--that master of mythological assimilation who has conjured up his own apparent fall and redemption to bring about his Son's divine self-assimilation.

That the Father has staged this test need not be mentioned. (Those who must be told this don't need to know. But after three centuries of general puzzlement it may be all right to let it out.) Having taken up the mask of all-too-human passions, he finds a successor who won't and can't reflect them back. And as Yahweh's wrath once afforded his prophets the opportunity to demonstrate compassion and for its announced victims, the Father's demonic appearance transcends the Son's manifestation of unimpaired love by deliberately inducing it. So the angelic chorus concludes in its praise to the Father:

Fountain of Light, thyself invisible  
 Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sit'st  
 Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou shad'st  
 The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud  
 Drawn round about thee like a radiant Shrine,  
 Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear. (III 375-380)

and to the Son:

In whose conspicuous count'nance, without cloud  
 Made visible, th'Almighty Father shines,  
 Whom else no Creature can behold. (III 385-387)

If in reading Milton, "the correct interpretation is always the sublimest one" (Empson 129), we can feel ourselves on the right track here, especially when we read the Dialogue next to comparable passages from other writers. Since Shakespeare has already been invoked, we may look there for perhaps the Dialogue's closest literary precedent: Malcolm's deceptive self-derogation before Macduff in *Macbeth* IV, iii. Abruptly presenting himself (rather unconvincingly) as vice's incarnation, the virtuous Malcolm probes Macduff's pliancy to power, abandoning his self-indictment only when Macduff repudiates him. Milton improves on Shakespeare, making the Father's disguise far more convincing and the Son's test rather more complex.

Blake came to understand something of what Milton was up to after performing a similar operation on the Covering Cherub--on Milton's own mirror/mask. In the midst of the four chaotic universes lies the prolific interior paradise, Golgonooza "[t]owards which Milton went, but Urizen

oppos'd his path./ The Man and Demon strove many periods.../ one giving life, the other giving death/  
To his adversary":

Silent they met, and silent strove among the streams of Arnon  
Even to Mahanaim, when the cold hand of Urizen stoop'd down  
And took up water from the river Jordan: pouring on  
To Miltons brain the icy fluid from his broad cold palm.  
But Milton took of the red clay of Succoth, moulding it with care  
Between his palms; and filling up the furrows of many years  
Beginning at the feet of Urizen, and on the bones  
Creating new flesh on the Demon cold, and building him,  
As with new clay a Human form in the Valley of Beth Peor. (M 19:26-30; 6-14)

Blake describes only what Milton does to God in setting up the Dialogue, not what the Son and the Father do to each other in it. Elsewhere Blake's comments show an illuminating sympathy for what Milton was up to. Thus in "Auguries of Innocence":

God Appears & God is Light  
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night  
But does a Human Form Display  
To those who Dwell in Realms of day. (129ff.)

Behind the mask was the God of the Cambridge Platonists after all; yet they revealed him as if his humane essence transcended human form. For Blake and Milton humanity's continuity with God, rightly understood, made the human form divine as well. "Thou art a Man God is no more/ Thy own humanity learn to adore," says "The Everlasting Gospel." We need not depersonalize God to humanize him; instead we may see him--and/or her--as exalted humanity, an *Übermensch*, the embodiment of unconstrained energetic abundance. We resist God's human form only insofar as we haven't reached full humanity ourselves.

What then is the principle of coherence for Milton's theodicy? An excellent case can be made, I think, for that principle as the restructuring of the superego. But the superego can be restructured in more than one way, and it is vital to understand what sort of restructuring we mean. Cambridge Platonism weakens the punitive superego by dissolving the attempt to ground it in God's nature. One could then say, as the Ranters and other radical Protestants did: "Ah ha. The Calvinist God is just a projection of human wickedness, we don't have to pay any attention to him." This seems, on the surface, the quickest way to eudaemonism. Why didn't Milton take it?

First, as Hill proposed, Milton sensed the anarchic effect of weakening the superego. He was not ready to throw in his lot with the radicals, however just might be their cause in some respects. It is all too easy to interpret this reluctance in terms of class interest, or class-based character structure. Milton's belief that Puritan discipline made possible the rational self-government necessary for resistance to tyranny does not, however, reduce wholly to ideological fiction, being confirmed by the

internal difficulties encountered by pre-modern peoples in taking unified action against Western interference. Implicit in Milton's position is the belief that the discipline originally imposed through the superego can become rationally justifiable, and so issue in an ascetic anti-authoritarianism employed in eudaemonism's behalf. How may this take place?

Neo-prophecy offers an important indication. If the superego is merely weakened, prophecy loses a valuable resource, for such a superego continues to oppose eudaemonism, if less virulently. What if, though, the superego, kept at full strength, is converted into eudaemonism's defender? This is what Milton has been working toward. The paternal superego, re-aligned with humanity, its antagonism seen as fundamentally ironic and subordinated to the ideal of ethical abundance, serves aesthetic abundance as well. The redeemed superego invests eudaemonism and sensuous immediacy with moral authority: no longer prohibited or merely permitted, eudaemonism is now positively commanded by the cosmos that upholds the ego-ideal. That will be god's role for the rest of Paradise Lost. Blake, Lawrence and Pound will similarly invoke the authority of the cosmos.

We may contrast two possible reactions to the Calvinist dysdaemonism and authoritarianism that did so much to usher in Western modernity. Liberalism, arising from lines of thought similar to Cambridge Platonism, rationalizes and weakens the superego, bringing about a humanization of judgment. Neo-prophecy, on the other hand, re-orientes the superego to rationalizable ideals of abundance while leaving it at strength; the effect is to cosmologize as well as rationalize human judgment. Liberals, disturbed by this retention of an active transpersonal principle of authority, are wont to inquire whether this cosmologizing of judgment and of the superego really is rational. They may be asked in turn how humanism can put us into relationship with the cosmos—a challenge posed by neo-prophecy's deep ecologist successors. Both schools of thought can justify their concerns if pressed beyond their own complacent self-reductions by continuous dialogue with each other.

Has popular liberalism unduly weakened the superego? Such charges, commonplace on the right, may warrant more attention when coming from the left. For Christopher Lasch the dissolution of moral authority in postwar America has had results different from what both liberals and conservatives would have expected:

The decline of parental authority reflects the "decline of the superego" in American society as a whole.... The parents' failure to serve as models of disciplined self-restraint or to restrain the child does not mean that the child grows up without a superego. On the contrary, it encourages the development of a harsh and punitive superego based largely on archaic images of the parents, fused with grandiose self-images. Under these conditions, the superego consists of parental introjects instead of identifications. It holds up to the ego an exalted standard of fame and success and condemns it with savage ferocity when it falls short of that standard. (305)

Projection of this self-condemnation outward creates an "alliance between aggression and a punishing conscience" that makes socially acceptable expression of internal impulses even more difficult.

Moral authority that refuses to give an account of itself is castrating, and the simple abdication of that authority may not produce a much better result; but authority willing to account for itself, if exercised continuously during maturation, provides something for a child to test herself against and receive confirmation from. Through the familiar challenges—"what do you mean I can't...?" or perhaps "you mean you're really gonna let me?..." and the ever-popular "how come?"—parents as well as children are invited to explain themselves, and the child's early introjections of authority are thus continually re-examined and re-negotiated as what was once forbidden becomes permitted and what was once simply commanded is explained. To the extent it can sponsor this approximation of the ideal speech situation, moral authority allows the potentially castrating introjections to be replaced by freely-accepted identifications with principles recognized as reasonable.

The Dialogue in Heaven is an extremely rarefied and rather melodramatic form of what, under ideal domestic conditions, occurs all the time. Its concealed intensities arise because Milton is trying to replace paternal introjections with identifications all at once. The father-son dialogue, which seems to have been largely suppressed throughout John Milton Sr.'s lifetime, now seems to be squeezed into some 250 lines between the Father and the Son. For John Milton Jr. it provided a way to dissolve compulsions that had dominated him up to this time: most notably, the compulsive intellectual activity arising from the introjected ideal of fame. The revision of satisfaction doctrine, important as it is in its own right, represents also the a revision of every paternal introjects demanding satisfaction; and we see now why Milton had to dissolve these in the way he chose.

This work of humanizing the authority of parents and gods is clearly essential to personal development and cannot be bypassed; in its absence, whether due to excessive rigidity (as was probably the case among the Miltons) or to excessive flexibility, there can be no real Oedipal resolution. In Milton this resolution recovers eudaemonism by dissolving the "great Forbidder" of sensuous immediacy; and in the next book of Paradise Lost the earthly paradise of Eden—in many respects the old pagan paradise of the Fifth Elogy—appears at last. Yet this paradise will not prove sustainable, and on this point Irene Samuel raises an unsettling question. "What happens in Book III," she proposes, "is analogous to what might have happened in Book IX. If Eve had her moment when she might, like Abdiel, have caught the liar in his lie, Adam had his when he might, like the Son, have risked himself to redeem Eve." (610-11) The question is not just, why doesn't he? but, why is it inconceivable for Milton at any point in his career to "go into the deep her to redeem & himself perish" (M 2:20)? In this question we again see the limits of the generosity and abundance Milton has realized so far. These limits at bottom are sexual and Milton will soon have to confront them.

## Notes to Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup> For a readable translation and scintillating interpretation of the J text, see Bloom and Rosenberg, The Book of J; also Bloom's further comments in The Western Canon 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> See Violence and the Sacred, especially 15-24 on the absence of a judicial system in primitive societies, and the need therefore of a sacrificial system to discharge violence.

<sup>3</sup> In the New Testament, Hebrews, no longer generally attributed to Paul, extensively describes the atonement in terms of a conventional sacrifice offered to God. John 1:29, 6:51-55, and 1 John 2:1-2 also invoke the model of ritual sacrifice, though in John 6 the sacrifice is again psychologized, with humanity, not deity, receiving Christ's offering. That the authors of Hebrews 8-10 or of John would have accepted satisfaction doctrine seems to me most unlikely.

<sup>4</sup> Reported by Henry Crabb Robinson, in Arthur Symons, William Blake (New York, 1907), 271.

<sup>5</sup> For comprehensive discussion of the points touched on in this paragraph and the next, see Heschel, The Prophets, volume II, chapters 1-6.

<sup>6</sup> Theophrastus, Characters XXVIII. See Heschel, The Prophets II, 12-13 and Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational, 236-269.

Cudworth's address was published at Cambridge in 1647; both of Smith's addresses appeared in his Select Discourses, edited by John Worthington, in 1660, eight years after Smith's death. All three are reprinted in Patrides, ed., The Cambridge Platonists (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1970) and in Cragg, ed., The Cambridge Platonists (New York: Oxford UP, 1968). I follow Cragg's modernized edition for all quotations from the Cambridge Platonists, except where indicated. In Cragg, Smith's "Concerning the True Way or Method of Attaining Divine Knowledge" occupies pages 76-90; "The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion," 91-141, and Cudworth's "Sermon," 369-407.

<sup>7</sup> "We have no warrant in Scripture," said Cudworth,

to peep into these hidden rolls and volumes of eternity, and to make it our first thing that we do, when we come to Christ, to spell out our names in the stars, and to persuade ourselves that we are certainly elected to everlasting happiness, before we see the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, shaped in our hearts. (376)

<sup>8</sup> Sumner's translation:

If he [God] inclines the will of man to good or evil according to his own pleasure, and then rewards the good, and punishes the wicked, the course of equity seems to be disturbed; and it is entirely on this supposition that the outcry against divine justice is founded.

<sup>10</sup> It now appears that De Doctrina Christiana may not have been entirely Milton's own work but, like the Artis Logicae, in large part a revision of the work of others. The manuscript we have appears to be a working copy, under revision by Milton, of what may have been a compilation from various sources. See Campbell, et. al., The Provenance of De Doctrina Christiana, Milton Quarterly 31:3 (October 1997) 67-117.

<sup>11</sup> Lactantius, De Ira Dei; quoted in Heschel 82.

<sup>12</sup> The Fall's innocent victims, Adam and Eve realize, are their own descendants (PL XI 818-28, 979-91).

<sup>13</sup> For example, Whichcote (under attack by Tuckney for heterodoxy):

I am very free to acknowledge Christ the only foundation since the apostasy and sin of man. He alone gave the stop to God's just displeasure; his interposing prevailed with God, not to take the forfeiture, or, if taken, he procured the restoration and recovery. (49)

One cannot assume he is not sincere; yet there are gradations of sincerity. Whichcote did not normally choose to emphasize such doctrines unless pressed, or unless an opportunity arose to expand on the conventional meaning. It is interesting to observe his development of a similar statement:

But to speak, now, of the great Benefits that accrue to us, by our Saviour's being in our Nature. He doth acquire the Right of Redeeming us; and makes Satisfaction in that Nature that had transgressed: And, he doth repair the ruined Nature of Man; by dwelling in it, and by working Righteousness in it: by which means he hath wrought out, all Malignity, and naughty Habits, by contrary Acts; the Acts of Sin and vice, by Acts of Vertue and Goodness; the Acts of Intemperance, by Acts of Sobriety and Temperance.

Now, let us look for the Explication of this, in our selves; in our Nativity from above; in Mental Transformation, and DEIFICATION. (Patrides, 69-70; emphasis Whichcote's)

<sup>14</sup> Hill 184, 292. Other examples of Milton's Socinian sympathies may be found in Hill 124, 240n, 294, 298, 320, 326.

<sup>15</sup> More or less. The text reads:

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Rexroth, Introduction to D.H. Lawrence: Selected Poems, 5.



In "this delicious place/ For us too large, where thy abundance wants/ Partakers, and uncrop't falls to the ground" (IV 729-731) the only fertility yet unrealized is Eve's:

whose fruitful Womb  
Shall fill the world more numerous with thy Sons  
Than with these various fruits the Trees of God  
Have heap'd this Table (V 388-391).

"Our Maker bids increase, who bids abstain/ But our Destroyer, foe to God and Man?" Having been reclaimed for desire, the prophetic superego now sends asceticism to the Devil, uniting God and Nature against pious antinaturalism:

dishonest shame  
Of Nature's works, honor dishonorable,  
Sin-bred, how have ye troubl'd all mankind  
With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure (IV 313-316).

A more pointed repudiation of the Nativity Ode's asceticism would be hard to construct. Since humanity is no longer discontinuous with God, sexual fertility is not just carnally willed but divinely sanctioned:

Whatever Hypocrites austerely talk  
Of purity and place and innocence  
Defaming as impure what God declares  
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all (IV 744-747).

Repression via the work ethic is equally incompatible with Paradise, as Adam lets Eve know:

Yet not so strictly hath our Lord impos'd  
Labor, as to debar us when we need  
Refreshment, whether food, or talk between,  
Food of the mind, or this sweet intercourse  
Of looks and smiles...  
For not to irksome toil, but to delight  
He made us (IX 235-239; 242-243).

Marcuse, expounding Freud, brings out the economic implications of this. The reality principle is

enforced and sustained by the "eternal primordial struggle for existence... persisting to the present day." Scarcity (Lebensnot, Ananke) teaches men that they cannot gratify their instinctual impulses, that they cannot live under the pleasure principle. Society's motive in enforcing the decisive modification of the instinctual structure is thus "economic: since it has not means enough to support life for its members without work on their part, it must see that the number of these members is restricted and their energies directed away from sexual activities onto their work." (Marcuse 16)

Under this model primary repression by the reality principle (scarcity) produces anxiety which produces surplus repression which produces secondary anxieties and so forth. For the later Freud, the process is just the reverse. Anxiety arising from Oedipal relations produces repression. The origin of scarcity is



makes no sense to suppose that a God of infinite greatness or goodness would refuse us divinity--which, as a good, "the more/ Communicated, more abundant grows/ The Author not impair'd, but honor'd more" (V 71-2). This justification is heterodox, recalling the Timaeus, where we learn that the Creator made the world because "he was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be" (29e). Only a God willing to raise his creation to equality with himself qualifies as God--which of course excludes orthodox glosses on the God of both New and Old Testaments. No real God wants to keep anyone down. One embodies divinity, as Milton had realized in "Lycidas," not by seizing but by conferring it; and this aspect of the prophetic ideal became his standard of ethical self-judgment.

If there is no cosmic Superego, no Demiurge to placate by repression or to overthrow by ascetically-generated power, development from nature to mind need not be willed or enforced, but can unfold at its own pace, "by gradual scale sublim'd."<sup>1</sup> Here arises the concept of natural sublimation that will return in Book VIII. If Paradise is the only rational and divinely sanctioned condition, there is no more reason for asceticism, anxious labor or competition for Being. While a hierarchy of intelligence exists, there is no attempt to freeze permanently the status quo as the natural order, and hence no enforced subordination, nor can there be, since that would overthrow the experience of Paradise, the volitional mobility of life along the Chain of Being, and the generosity of God. But the ethical impeccability of Milton's Paradise raises some old questions more perplexingly than ever. How could this Paradise have been lost? And how, given God's ethical abundance, could evil have originated?

In Milton evil is scarcity. We associate scarcity with material finitude. Yet if matter is good, does scarcity then begin with the spirit? Scarcity, prophetic writers insist, is no fundamental condition of existence, but a catastrophe occurring in the midst of an original abundance. How does this catastrophe come about? In The Reason of Church Government Milton envisions scarcity concocted out of plenty by power seeking its own preservation. Yet whence that will to power, whose existence presupposes spiritual scarcity?

Paradise will be a discovery of abundance hidden underneath scarcity--and at the same time, of impairment at the heart of abundance: the one place where it can't be, the one place where it must be if it is to exist at all.

The origin of evil or scarcity or matter--the "one first matter all" in Rafael's just-quoted speech--sends us back to the Christian Doctrine, where Milton shored up his defense of Christian eudaemonism by refuting the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. This left two possible explanations for the origin of matter: the dualistic view of matter eternally existing independently of God, and the monistic view of creation ex deo. The first view is typically Persian/Zoroastrian/Manichean; the second, Egyptian/Hermetic/Neo-platonic/Cabalistic, with connections perhaps reaching back into Hinduism.

Both penetrated Christianity, but a modified dualism prevailed. Under Christian orthodoxy, God creates a world out of nothing, not out of himself. Creation, compounded out of Being and Nothingness, is only provisionally divine. This view Milton rejected as based on mistranslation (CPW VI 305-6). "It is clear," he continues, "that the world was made out of some sort of matter [which]... must either have always existed, independently of God, or else originated from God at some point in time. That matter should have always existed independently of God is inconceivable." (CPW VI 307) Of the two available heterodoxies, reason seemed to urge monistic emanationism rather than radical dualism.

Neoplatonic monism and emanationism was the only philosophy compatible with Paradise, and with Milton's emerging Socinianism. As Anna Baldwin argues:

in order to describe an unfallen world, a world as God intended it to be, Milton needed a philosophy which would not lead inevitably to the Fall and the Atonement. It was precisely because Neoplatonism does not accommodate ideas of Original Sin and God's Atonement that Augustine, in his later writings, had directed Christian theology away from it.... In choosing an older and less orthodox Creation theory for his poem, Milton was evidently setting the scene for a possible alternative destiny for mankind, not dependent on the Redemption, but upon the natural goodness of a world and of a humanity which had come from God rather than nothingness, and was all meant to return to him. Only then would the Fall of Man come as a tragedy which could have been avoided.... By dignifying the substance of Creation, and reducing the status of Christ, Milton has prepared a way for the freedom of not only man, but of all creation. Nothing could be further from the imperialist role sometimes assigned to Milton's God. (153, 155)<sup>2</sup>

Though this imputes to Milton a Pelagianism he never actually endorsed, it indicates his distance from Augustinian orthodoxy.

Creation ex deo posits matter's origin as "a heterogeneous, multiform and inexhaustible virtue... in God." The first matter is, in other words, a kind of divine energy. And it is a demonstration of God's supreme power and goodness that he should not shut up this heterogeneous and substantial virtue within himself, but should disperse, propagate and extend it as far as, and in whatever way, he wills. For this original matter was not an evil thing, not to be thought of as worthless; it was good, and it contained the seeds of all subsequent good. It was a substance, and could only have been derived from the source of all substance. It was in a confused and disordered state at first, but afterwards God made it ordered and beautiful. (CPW VI, 308)

Passages from Plotinus suggest how the notion of creation ex deo justifies God as emanative generosity:

The One is perfect because it seeks for nothing and possesses nothing, and being perfect, it overflows, and thus its superabundance produces another.... Whenever anything reaches its own perfection, we see that it cannot endure to remain

in itself, but generates and produces some other thing. Not only things having the power of choice, but also those which by nature are incapable of choice, and even inanimate things, send forth as much of themselves as they can: thus fire emits heat and snow cold and drugs act upon other things.... How then should the Most Perfect Being and First Good remain shut up in itself, as if it were jealous or impotent--itself the potency of all things?... Something must therefore be begotten of it. (Enneads V, 2:l; V, 4:1)

The abundance permeating nature extends to, and derives from, divine nature. And if God made the world out of himself it becomes hard to imagine him requiring a blood sacrifice to redeem it from his wrath. Yet the closer God gets to creation, the harder it is to imagine how creation became evil, a difficulty that registers immediately: "But the same problem, or an even greater one, still remains," Milton acknowledges. "How can anything sinful have come, if I may so speak, from God?" Of course the problem is the same no matter at how many removes you put creation from God; admit at any point the influence of a power or principle co-existing with and opposed to God and you're back to dualism. But perhaps there is a way out:

But really it is not the matter nor the form which sins. When matter or form has gone out from God and become the property of another, what is there to prevent its being infected and polluted, since it is now in a mutable state, by the calculations of the devil or of man, calculations which proceed from these creatures themselves? (CPW VI, 309)

Yet this won't do either. Recourse to human intervention begs the question by forgetting that humans are also part of God's creation; and recourse to the devil either does likewise or installs dualism. We can only ask, with Empson, how the Devil went wrong in the first place so that he became a corruptor of creation, and find it exasperating that neither Milton nor anyone else can tell us.

Here the issue is left in the Christian Doctrine. But soon a solution will appear that avoids both dualism and question-begging.

What if the power capturing first matter or energy is neither divine nor demonic will, but arises naturally in the processes of emanation and sublimation? What if that power is first matter itself--by virtue of its emergence into itself? Energy emanating from God may come to identify with the conditions of its externality, rather than of its source. Realizing self-consciousness, it may conceive itself as a simply-located self apart from God, distinguishing its interests from primary and universal interest. Consciousness or energy, as "First matter," pre-exists the fully-materialized matter it becomes by letting itself be captured by its own reflection and identifying with the simply-located aspect of itself. In identifying itself with its finitude rather than with the inexhaustible abundance of which it till now has been a part, it separates itself from abundance, reifying itself as no more than a self, as a will to power whose dysdaemonic strategies we saw in the young Milton, and in Satan.

Narcissism thus becomes the paradigm of original error for Milton, as it will later in Lawrence. For Lawrence, narcissism brought awareness of belatedness and mortality, precipitating resentment, influence anxiety, and ascetic warfare on the primary cosmos—all features of the Nativity Ode and the subsequent poetry of Milton's First Reversal.

Whence narcissism? Lawrence thought it arose when humanity's information content reached critical mass (P 768)—as, for example, with the rise of literacy which, in the book, reflected back to the knower a conceptual self-image. This historicized version of Miltonic metaphysics should not be underestimated, but Paradise Lost has begun to register another factor of at least equal importance. In individual life, narcissism arises via social, or socio-political, processes.<sup>3</sup>

#### Narcissism, Subordinationism and the Prophetic Ideal

Eve is the embodiment of narcissism in Paradise Lost; yet her experience of it as she relates it to Adam in Book IV seems of little ultimate consequence. On waking "with inexperience Thought," she looks in a pool and sees her reflection, which "return'd... answering looks of sympathy and love"—and is captivated by it, for a moment almost desperately so:

there I had fixt  
Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire,  
Had not a voice thus warn'd me, What thou seest,  
What there thou seest fair Creature is thyself,  
With thee it came and goes: but follow me,  
And I will bring thee where no shadow stays  
Thy coming, and thy soft embraces, hee  
Whose image thou art, him shalt thou enjoy  
Inseparably thine (465-72).

On being presented to Adam and finding him "less fair.../Than that smooth wat'ry image," Eve ran away,

Thou following cri'd'st aloud, Return fair Eve  
Whom fli'st thou? whom thou fli'st, of him thou art,  
His flesh, his bone; to give thee being I lent  
Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart  
Substantial Life, to have thee by my side  
Henceforth an individual solace dear:  
Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim  
My other half (IV 481-88).

Having yielded, she now confesses "How beauty is excell'd by manly grace/ And wisdom, which alone is truly fair" (489-91)—a view not so very remote from that offered as Milton's own (IV 296ff.).

Is that it, then? Since narcissism seems here simply to have been checked, how is it the source of evil and the Fall? Or does evil arise less from narcissism than from the imputation of it--as in Christine Froula's influential feminist account?<sup>4</sup> For Froula, Eve's narcissism solves not a metaphysical but a political problem: how to control woman? In this patriarchal scene of instruction, Adam and the spiritual voice combine to reduce Eve to her reflected image, educate her to her secondariness, and instruct her in the debt she incurs by existing. In renouncing her reflection she is expected to renounce not just an image, but her very self. "The reflection is not of Eve: according to the voice, it is Eve." (328) Her narcissistic infatuation (of which she might eventually have tired of on her own) has been branded illicit, and the nature of her Being depends on her obedience to the prohibition. Already we anticipate the tree of knowledge. In the end, Eve "is so successfully colonized by patriarchal authority that she literally becomes its voice..... Eve does not speak patriarchal discourse; it 'speaks her.'" (329) Her naive narcissism--indeed all her innocent experience as a woman--can only be recovered by reading "gnostically" against the overcoding patriarchal text, which is designed to foreclose such readings (329): if Eve resists subordination, she must be a narcissist. To avoid narcissism she must resist awareness of her own experience, becoming invisible to herself, and presumably to others. The autobiographical narratives of Adam and Eve "reveal a powerful subtext, at once literary and cultural, that works to associate Eve with visibility and Adam with invisibility from their first moments" (330), in order to emphasize Eve's inferiority, possessing as she does "Too much of Ornament, in outward show/ Elaborate, of inward less exact." (VIII 538-9)<sup>5</sup> The privileging of invisibility recalls Freud's dictum that (patriarchal) civilization amounts to the triumph over the visible: of spirit over flesh, mind over matter. Why must this be? Because--says Dinnerstein<sup>6</sup>--of the male's relative isolation from visible natural life--an alienation inducing his exaltation of an invisible Father, worshipped by abstinence from matriarchal fertility rites. Indeed all hierarchical dualism may be seen "not as 'consequence or effect' but as the means of establishing paternal authority, a compensatory effort on the part of the male to control a natural world to which he is bound in relatively remote and mediated ways." (334; emphasis Froula's) Accompanying this is an attempt to silence or appropriate female creativity, visible in Milton's masculinization of the brooding Holy Spirit in Genesis 1:2 (PL I 19-22) and in the story of Eve's birth from Adam's side, suggesting "an archetypal womb envy as constitutive of male identity" (338, 332).

From Milton's treatment of Eve, Froula concludes, we see that patriarchal power is "not simply one attribute among others of Adam's God, but its primary motive and constituent.... Milton's muse is at once a model for and a projection of his own ambitious poetic authority, which he seeks to ground in first and highest things." (333, 337) This reading "assumes that literary authority is a mode of social authority and that literary value is inseparable from ideology." (336) Already we see spiritual scarcity in

Paradise, and its source is Milton himself. Eve's subordination reflects the nightmare of patriarchal history rather than divine generosity and pre-fallen Edenic eudaemonism. Preventing narcissism provides a pretext for subordination, grounding it in a "legitimate" end. And if, in the name of preventing narcissism, the prophetic ideal of abundance enforces subordinationism, one wonders whether that ideal is not an ideological facade, designed to naturalize the power it ostensibly opposes.

While Milton may be partly excused by his time, and especially by his occasional transcendence of it, the prophetic ideal of unimpaired generosity sets a higher standard, comparable to that (however anachronistic<sup>7</sup>) set by feminism. We're justified in demanding impeccability of him, and we'll want to see how he reconciled his ideas with his ideal. To suppose he had no such ideal cripples any effort to understand Milton—as does, of course, Wittreich's good-hearted effort to make him out as a feminist. What we want is to understand how the prophetic ideal, demanding unimpaired generosity toward woman as toward all else, confronted or was confronted by powerful subordinationist impulses, and how this tension worked itself out psychologically—and metaphysically.

The tension between emanative expression and subordinationist will derives in large part from the splitting of the ideal into two systems with two contrary imperatives: (1) emanative expression of divine-paradisal abundance (2) the will to re-cover and retain that abundance. Froula, while identifying Eve's interpellation and the underlying subordinationism, has overlooked the countervailing emanationist strain, and the internal conflicts that arise between the two contrary logics, each expressing energetic dispositions irreducible to the jockeying of ideological egos.

### The Contrary Logics of Emanationism and Volitionism

Internal conflict already appears in the contrary evaluations Paradise Lost allows us to make of several main characters. Let's articulate these in three quasi-Kantian antinomies:

1. a. God as the abdication of authority (as in Book III).  
b. God as enforcer of patriarchal authority.
2. a. Adam as eudaemonism freed from authority.  
b. Adam as beneficiary of patriarchal authority.
3. a. Eve reduced to her reflected image by Milton's recoil against an internal principle of narcissism.  
b. Eve reduced in order to control female creativity.

Neither the system of "a" terms or of "b" terms above is the deluded projection of an idealistic or ideological reader—despite whatever such readers may accuse each other of. Rather, the middle books of Paradise Lost work out the tensions between these antinomies, which themselves reflect an

underlying tension of contrary logics. Emanationism seeks the expression of abundance. Volitionism is the instrumental will aimed at recovering and preserving Paradise. In the table below, the "a" terms of each dichotomy represent the emanationist logic of spontaneous innocence by which Paradise lives and undoes itself, while the "b" terms indicate the volitionism arising from the prophetic experience that tries to get Paradise back.

I. Orientations to energy arising from one's relation to abundance:

- a. Emanationism: spontaneous overflowing of surcharge; creation *ex deo*; the "will" of power; Nietzschean "going under."<sup>8</sup>
- b. Volitionism: instrumental opposition to the self-inversion resulting from surcharged sympathetic identification.

II. Orientations to selfhood arising from one's relation to energy:

- a. Identification: self-inverting metamorphosis into an externalized emanation; "becoming what one beholds"; mythological consciousness; "effeminate slackness" (XI 634) Lawrencian "spontaneous consciousness."
- b. Identity: self-preserving self-identification. Aristotelian divine self-sufficiency.

III. Ethical orientations to pleasure arising from one's relation to energy and identity:

- a. (1). Eudaemonism: sensuous immediacy, inverting itself via identification into:
- a. (2). Ascetic Will: anxiety-born self-repressive will to power; patriarchal ascetic idealism.
- b. (1). Will to Eudaemonism, converting itself into:
- b. (2). New Asceticism: will to oppose will to eudaemonism.

IV. Orientations to eudaemonism arising from failure to integrate previous antinomies:

- a. Constraining abundance: Privileging of propulsion into the world as demonstration of abundance; self-inverting contingency of "male" donativity on "female" receptivity; errors of female privilege.
- b. Counteridealism: the will to pleasure arising from the prophetic ego-ideal, reinforced by the restructured superego; the attack on ascetic idealism; the vain attempt to retain or recover by binary subordinationism a prophetic ideal of abundance; errors of male privilege.

As an orientation to energy, emanationism is what the prophetic ideal describes and idealizes, while volitionism does the idealizing. Milton idealized emanationism in Eden's profusion, in his doctrine of creation *ex deo*, and in his volatile chain of being that implied God's desire to, via creative expression, raise up companions to himself, his energetic abundance thus issuing in ethical abundance as well.

The injunction against narcissism, on the other hand, arises from the volitionist imperative: to guard against the loss of Paradise due to uncontrolled metamorphosis brought on by identifying with externalized emanations rather than internal abundance. Volitionist identity (particularly in

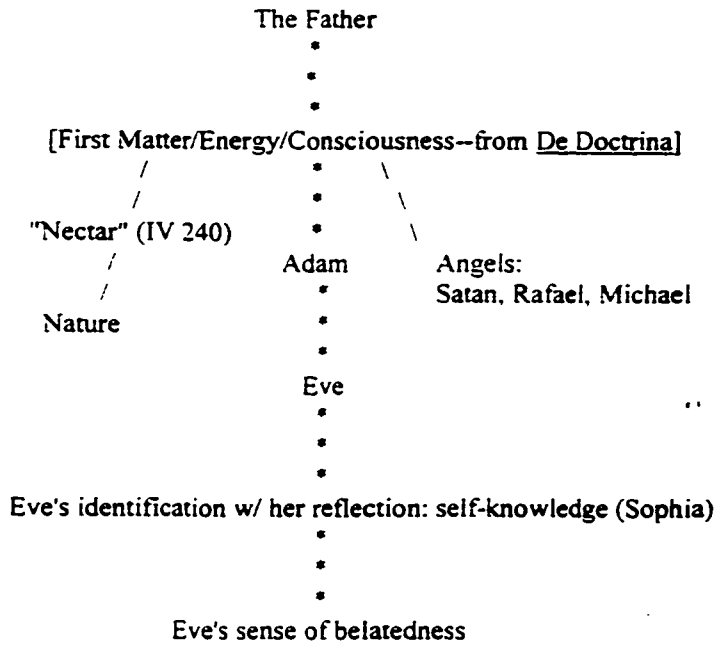
counteridealistic form) describes such identification with ambivalence if not grave concern. Blake's vision of Eternity—"All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone" (J 99:1)—but complements an insistence that "In Eternity one Thing never Changes into another Thing Each Identity is Eternal" (VLJ 79) precisely because the surcharged sympathetic immediacy that inverts itself by identifying with finitude stops all further identification.

To synthesize the table of characters with that of systems: God as abdication of authority occurs under Emanationism, while God as enforcer of authority comes under either Ascetic Will or Will to Eudaemonism/Counteridealism (with a drastically different meaning, depending on the location). Adam as eudaemonism freed from authority embodies Eudaemonism, whereas Adam as authority's beneficiary represents Will to Eudaemonism. Eve's censure as an universal and internal principle of narcissism expresses the relation of Counteridealism to Identification; Eve reduced as embodiment of female creativity and female experience expresses the relation of Asceticism to Eudaemonism that Milton's Second Reversal has tried to transcend.

The critique of narcissism, structured by counteridealism in response to the volitionist imperative, does not simply reduce to ideology despite the subordinationism it employs. If Paradise Lost is poetry instead of rhetoric however, it is not simply because ideology is incorporated into a more capacious scheme (which might just serve as its elaborate disguise), but because the scheme juxtaposes moral-aesthetic imperatives in an internal conflict dwarfing the quarrel with the Other. And what begins to turn Milton's epic into a novel (in Lawrence's sense of the term<sup>9</sup>), or a Blakean psychomachia, is its undermining of its own contrary ideals, as emanationist and volitionist logics work out their implications, even exposing their self-contradictions under pressure of their relation to each other.

One form of this tension surrounds the emanationist progression toward the Fall. In conceiving the Fall as the disastrous outcome of a benign and necessary divine emanationism, Milton's theology resembles Gnosticism,<sup>10</sup> whose central myth is that from the Father had emanated a succession of "aeons," levels of spiritual or mental existence, one of which—the female form "Sophia"—precipitates the catastrophic formation of the material world. Eve's association with the Tree of Knowledge qualifies her as a type of Sophia ("Wisdom") as does, in this context, her association with materiality.<sup>11</sup> The following emanative hierarchy can be mapped in Paradise Lost:

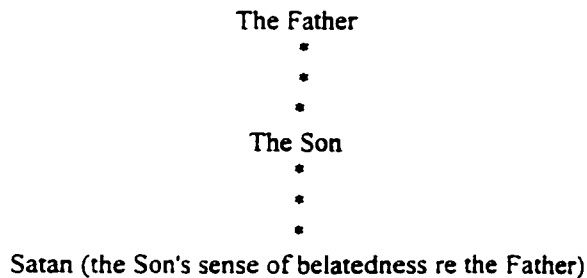
Emanative Levels, Principles or Aeons in Milton's Eden



Like Gnosticism, Milton posits a motion contrary to the Fall, backwards and upwards, toward the primal source. While the emanationist impulse simply overflows from the hierarchy's higher to lower levels, the volitionist impulse simultaneously tries to check emanationism's identificatory overflow, and to initiate a reverse, up-ward identification. Emanationism moves down; volitionism moves up, and tries to oppose downward movement. But while counteridealism perceives Eve's self-knowledge as precarious and her sense of belatedness as catastrophic—and so warranting suppression—the contrary logic sees them, and all downward movement as demonstrating abundance.

When we compare the above diagram with a simpler one of the emanative relations in heaven, we find important structural similarities:

Emanative Relations in Milton's Heaven



The Son in the Nativity Ode introduced the antithetical values that Milton eventually repudiated in Satan--and seeks to forestall in Eve, whose fall into identification with a simply-located selfhood repeats what must have happened to Satan before his rebellion. But it should be quite clear how reluctant Milton is to make hay out of this structural resemblance. Whereas, in Satan, he violently cast out self-identification's consequences--antithetical belatedness and will to power--in Eve he goes over the ground more sympathetically, analyzing how narcissism comes about, how it's enforced by the counteridealistic subordinationism that opposes it, and how it justifies itself by the logic of constraining abundance. For while recognizing, with Nietzsche, that "abundant strength wants to create, suffer, go under" (WP #222), Milton knows from his own experience that anxiety seeks to do so also, in order to demonstrate its possession of what it's lost.

Can the redeemed "patriarchal" authority of the prophetic superego prevent this and preserve emanationism from itself? Or is that effort too doomed by its very nature?

In constraining abundance and counteridealism the internal contradictions latent in emanationism and volitionism emerge. By virtue of constraining abundance, paradise demands its self-inversion; by virtue of counteridealism, volitionism creates the Fall into materiality it tries to prevent.

Creation ex deo implied that it is

a demonstration of God's supreme power and goodness that he should not shut up this heterogeneous and substantial virtue within himself, but should disperse, propagate and extend it as far as, and in whatever way, he wills.

Though Hill (328) is right that creation ex deo risks pantheism by identifying God closely with created matter, this identification is but one form of the ethical and psychological problem of constraining abundance.

If God's creation demonstrates his goodness--as it does for Plato, Plotinus and Milton--would God still be good if he hadn't created? Under emanationism God's goodness tends to become, as Lovejoy said, a "constraining goodness... a dialectical necessity" that has "latent in it a sort of cosmic determinism" (54). Constraining goodness is a goodness that compels its possessor to express or demonstrate it. Milton, aware of this difficulty, tries to evade it via the qualifications at the end of the passage just quoted above, and by making God in Paradise Lost assert his ability to "put not forth my goodness, which is free/ To act or not" (VII 171-2). But beneath constraining goodness, which Milton dismissed with a formula, lies the problem of constraining abundance. Under constraining goodness, God's creativity is required by human moral judgment. Under constraining abundance, God's internal necessity demands it. For Plotinus, creation relieved an inner need of God born out of his superabundant perfection--the model for divine creativity being human sexual activity. Plotinus' emanationism looks back to the Egyptian mythology of creation as sexual release, and forward to the

Hermeticist sexual myth of creation found in Boehme and the English radical Protestants, where Milton would also have encountered it.<sup>12</sup> But whatever his "sources," they told him nothing he didn't already know; thirty years earlier, *Comus* (706ff.) had equated creation with sexual release.

Expounding creation *ex deo* in the *Christian Doctrine*, Milton speaks of the first matter as if it were a sexual substance or energy—"it contained the seeds of all subsequent good"; a bit later he affirms that "the human seed, that most intimate and noble part of the body" contains something of the soul of the father (CPW I, 321-2)—much as matter contains something of divinity. For Hill (130) this anticipates D.H. Lawrence. But a stronger anticipation of Lawrence is Milton's notion of a clarifying and objectifying release of energy as the surcharged first matter progresses from "a confused and disordered state" to one "ordered and beautiful." Lawrence's commentary on *Jude the Obscure* seems to be talking about a similar process:

It was for this that he loved Sue. She did for him quickly what he would have done for himself slowly, through study. By patient, diligent study, he would have used up the surplus of turgid energy in him, and would, by long contact with old truths, have arrived at the form of truth which he held in his blood. And to do this it was necessary for him to transmute his sensuous being into another state, of clarity, of consciousness....

This Sue did for him. In marriage, each party fulfils a dual function with regard to the other: exhaustive and enriching. The female at the same time exhausts and invigorates the male, the male at the same time exhausts and invigorates the female. (P 499-500)

Under the constraining abundance implicit in creation *ex deo*, man and matter stand in the same exhaustive and refining relationship to God that woman occupies with respect to man.

Yet here we see the potential for heresy in Milton's ideas. The sexual model of divine creativity de-privileges the surcharged creator, reducing him to partnership with a receptive counterpart. In this vein, Blake will declare that "[t]he Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer like a sea received the excess of his delights" (MHH 14). Thus if humans did not exist, God would have had to create them, to avoid being "strangl'd in his waste fertility." Under constraining abundance the continuity between God and creation, and between God and humanity, threatens to go over the brink and become God's dependence on creation and humanity. And if the Earth, as Adam will be told,

may of solid good contain  
More plenty than the Sun that barren shines,  
Whose virtue on itself works no effect,  
But in the fruitful Earth (VIII, 93-6)

this privileging of reception over donation is on the verge of making God himself contingent upon his creations.

In Milton, for whom God's goodness is tantamount to his abundance, it is above all abundance that constrains, or threatens to constrain, its possessor. Essential to constraining abundance is the imperative of demonstration. Surcharge requires creative expression, and the greater the surcharge, the greater the creation. The greater the spiritual or energetic abundance, the further its propulsion into matter. Conversely, the deeper the descent into matter, the higher the power that descends: the further one finds oneself propelled from the primary source, the greater one's surcharge is shown to be. This of course recalls the Protestant pattern of Milton's early poetics, whereby the fall from eternal bliss into "a darksome house of mortal clay" provided the acid test of virtue. And if man, God's emanation, displays more abundance than a god timorously cloistered in eternity, it follows that Eve, Adam's emanation, is the most abundant and necessary being of all. Not only does she provide release and relief from man's surcharged interior paradise, but, unable in her own superabundance to remain within the 'paradisal cloister, she thrusts herself out, putting forth her hand as she departs to pluck Adam also from the tree of life. This outlook makes the Fall fortunate indeed and Empson (163, 189-90) correct to assert its presence in Paradise Lost.

This mastery of emptiness over fullness can, in Taoist feminism (see chapters 6, 10, 11 of the Tao-te-Ching), balance polarities of heaven/earth, God/humanity, man/woman, energy/matter in a vision of "contrarities equally true." In the West, however, it tends to get stuck in clinamen, the simple reversal of privilege constituting deconstruction's first stage. In the Nativity Ode and subsequently in Milton's First Reversal divine surcharge was by this principle subordinated to the scarcity economics of material finitude--and to the ensuing asceticism--in a manner reflecting Protestant secularization. Eve's narcissism, by identifying with her material reflection rather than her internal energy, threatens to repeat this hierarchical inversion, and in so doing to invert all energies that identify with her. That is sufficient reason for counteridealism to resist her.

Counteridealism (a term derived from Nietzsche) refers here to the reaction against ascetic idealism, and the processes producing it. Counteridealism idealizes emanationist eudaemonism. On repudiating dysdaemonism, prophetic writing always becomes counteridealistic. Counteridealism is a kind of primitivism: a return to the source, divine energy or the Edenic earthly paradise of pre-"civilized" humanity; a return to perception from conceptual/instrumental consciousness; a return to sensuous immediacy or presence as opposed to the absence attending conceptualization; a return to intuition and instinct (Lawrence's oft-misunderstood "blood knowledge") while renouncing abstractions of moral law; a return to the local and away from deracinated and deracinating universalism. Counteridealism affirms this reversal with the force and fervor of the prophetic superego, of a God who upholds eudaemonism, and so goes beyond romantic espousals of similar values. Repudiating the closed cosmos with its scarcity economics, and the self-repressive will to power dictated by these,

prophetic writing commits itself to oppose the identificatory fall into material finitude and spiritual scarcity. But when counteridealism resists emanationist metamorphosis, it suppresses that which it seeks, resisting the sensuous immediacy it idealizes. For without the capacity to go out of oneself in identification, Paradise could not exist.

The surcharged psyche "goes under," as Nietzsche said, transgressing the bounds of the body ego in sympathetic identification with others. This may take the form of prophetic wrathful compassion, but more often occurs as the erotic soul union Adam embodies. Constraining abundance propels one into these relations, often to the point where the ego may have difficulty recognizing or recovering itself. The nature of original mind—Lawrence's "old Adam," the preself-conscious mythological consciousness—is perpetual identificatory metamorphosis. But the result of this is a state where one's being is determined by others who may experience themselves as empty and finite. In this way abundance disintegrates by means of the identifications it fosters. This is what happens first to Eve and then to Adam.

Not realizing that this identification and the resulting dysdaemonism arise from the emanationism it idealizes, counteridealism counters that identification with a transcendent God uncompromised by his creation, remaining able "to put not forth my goodness, which is free/ To act or not." (VII 171-2) By avoiding identification with and dependence on emanated objects—including its idea of itself—such divinity avoids its own reduction to object, its subjection to the Ananke of scarcity and to the anxious instrumental activity of all such self-conscious subjects. Whereas in constraining abundance surcharged eudaemonism issues in dysdaemonic subjection, counteridealism tries to recover that original eudaemonism through an asceticism that severs captivating identifications. Divine asceticism, then, aims to show human divinity how to avoid a fall into the truly debilitating asceticism that arises from performing for others—the quintessentially Miltonic temptation that Eve already faces.

In its broadest sense, the counteridealistic impulse is the urge to get back a paradise that's been lost by the fall into lack and instrumental self-consciousness. The immediate difficulty it faces is how to seize unself-consciousness via self-consciousness and how to instrumentally grasp or retain a pre-instrumental state. This is most glaringly apparent in the failure of Milton's verse to convey the experience of Paradise. For many readers, Milton's Paradise is blighted aesthetically as well as morally. After all the excitement over spontaneity, immediacy and abundance, just where do we these occur in the poetry? If technique is the test of a man's sincerity, why is the poetry of Paradise so much less interesting than that of Hell? Milton's escape from the Hell of antithetical will promised an unprecedented upwelling of sensuous richness. But is that what we have in such verses as this?

And now divided into four main Streams,  
Runs diverse, wand'ring many a famous Realm

And Country whereof here needs no account,  
 But rather to tell how, if Art could tell,  
 How from that Sapphire Fount the crisped Brooks  
 Rolling on Orient Pearl and sands of Gold,  
 With mazy error under pendant shades  
 Ran Nectar, visiting each plant, and fed  
 Flow'rs worthy of Paradise which not nice Art  
 In Beds and curious Knots, but Nature boon  
 Pour'd forth profuse on Hill and Dale and Plain  
 Both where the morning Sun first warmly smote  
 The open field, and where the unpierc't shade  
 Imbrown'd the noontide Bow'rs: Thus was this place,  
 A happy rural seat of various view:  
 Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gums and Balm,  
 Others whose fruit burnisht with Golden Rind  
 Hung amiable, Hesperian Fables true,  
 If true, here only, and of delicious taste (IV 233-251).

Does a more artful polemic against art, a less spontaneous panegyric on spontaneity, come to mind? The current of spontaneous abundance flows only in the five lines beginning "With mazy error" (239-243); and this current is subterranean, obscured beneath the jewelled rubble of the surrounding lines (so adeptly does Milton image the condition of his verse)--lines less appealing to nature lovers than to the "great merchants of the world." "As the labored, pedantic artifice of the diction suggests," says Leavis, "Milton seems to be focussing rather upon words than upon perceptions, sensations, or things. 'Sapphire,' 'Orient Pearl,' 'sands of Gold,' 'odorous Gumms and Balm,' and so on convey no doubt a vague sense of opulence, but this is not what we mean by 'sensuous richness.'" It is a drastic falling off from Comus' magnificent hymn to fertility: "the Grand Style barred Milton from essential expressive resources of English that he once commanded" (49-51). Piled high with the debris of ceaseless study and reading, his mind builds inorganic monuments to the organic, inviting nature to dwell in bejeweled architecture--but spontaneity is shy and not easily invoked by the will that once renounced it.

Similarly in Book VII the Creation, which has been called a grand hymn to plenitude, belies plenitude by extolling it with tedious personifications and even borrowings from the description of Paradise in Book IV (see especially lines 320-329). The Genesis account, elaborately embellished, is never really re-imagined; only once, in the affectionate catalogue of the birds, does Milton's Creation take on a life of its own, independent of structural requirements. The vision is static, with no Word resounding behind the words and images, and no preconscious "Nectar" that, dissatisfied with the catalog's external form, infuses vitality into it.

For Leavis the grand style didn't work, period. For G. Wilson Knight, however, it failed only when Milton misused it by trying to convey Eden's luxuriant pulsation in terms of Hell's metallic fabrications. His comments get to the root of the matter:

The descriptions of Eden show an approach which tends to harden and solidify what is more properly flexible and yielding.... A certain deliberating aestheticism insists on translating the natural into terms of human artistry, and you have excessive luxuriance side by side with a stony, carven immobility....

Such phrases do not, however, argue a lack of natural enjoyment. If anything, they spring from an almost too greedy desire that translates the vital into plastic terms the more surely to possess it; a desire to capture and eternalize each essence in statuesque permanence. It is a poetic idolatry. (83-4)

In Hell will became spontaneous, while Paradise offers an equally self-contradictory will to spontaneity. The desire Knight describes for control and possession seeks above all to prevent the Fall; in this Eve, rather than nature, becomes its object. And while by Book VIII we'll see Milton artfully drawing out its comic possibilities, mocking his own counteridealistic impulses and bringing the poem fully to life again, we'll still need to inquire whether anything lies beneath that.

#### Eve's Error: Constraining Abundance and Constraining Anxiety

Eve, encountering her beautiful emanation in the pool, might have united with it in identification (as Adam will do with her). Or she might have resisted the identification (as God does). But Eve is prevented from falling. The spiritual voice has intervened to save her from a life of sterile narcissism or self-conscious will. All with the best intentions. But to what effect?

what could I do,  
But follow straight, invisibly thus led?  
Till I espi'd thee, fair indeed and tall,  
Less winning soft, less amiably mild,  
Than that smooth wat'ry image; back I turn'd. (IV 475-480)

Repentant, she brings herself to confess "[h]ow beauty is excell'd by manly grace/ And wisdom, which alone is truly fair" (IV 490-91). But her contrition is more self-conscious than her narcissism. Praising Adam's excellences Eve remains fully aware of her own--she has seen them. Why then should she entirely lack privileges? This is the thought she tries to keep herself from thinking. And do we not discern, beneath her homage to male superiority, a hope that Adam will graciously contradict her?

I chiefly who enjoy  
So far the happier Lot, enjoying thee  
Preëminent by so much odds, while thou  
Like consort to thyself canst nowhere find. (IV 445-8)

If this is really true, since Adam has asked for an equal (VIII 383-6), his purpose in getting her is frustrated, though Adam seems too obtuse to realize this. It will be awhile before Adam gets interested

in questions of relative merit; for now his obtuseness is his strength. Eve will never raise these questions to him directly, massaging her bruised status by proclaiming her willing submission:

My Author and Disposer, what thou bidd'st  
 Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains.  
 God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more  
 Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise. (IV 635-8)

But she already knows more, much more, than she thinks she does, as her very facility in expressing these thoughts shows.

For this knowledge she has the spiritual *vox ex machina* to thank. Whose is this voice? God's? An angel's? Her subconscious registering the severing of her continuity with the cosmos and her imprisonment in her self-image? But even this last reading doesn't do justice to the situation for, as Froula sees, the voice doesn't merely register Eve's fall: it creates it. The voice--not the image in the lake--confirms Eve in her impaired self-image. Her salvation" from narcissism has installed narcissism with a vengeance, bringing her even to the brink of non-being, to a sense of herself as exhausted pool divorced from the fountain of life. Remaining in Paradise physically, she has lost the experience of it. What compensation can Eve find for this loss? Isn't it natural that she take comfort in the notion of constraining abundance? Certainly she is quick to conceive it. The perfect self-sufficiency of the stars is never quite believable to her:

But wherefore all night long shine these, for whom  
 This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes? (IV 657-8)

Why is she asking this? She doesn't know, nor does Adam, who replies with what to her are irrelevancies. The proper answer comes from Satan, via her subconscious:

Heav'n wakes with all his eyes,  
 Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire. (V 44-5)

It's but a step from here to the great temptation scene, where Eve will learn that the gods, angels, heavenly bodies--in short, all of her "superiors"--serve her not condescendingly but uxoriously, as if she possesses greater fullness of being than themselves. That Eve speaks and dreams these lines proves that she has not yet quite succumbed to subordination. And that Milton gives her these lines is proof that he knows this perfectly well, indicating that the submissiveness attributed to her is intended to be taken ironically, even at the expense of Milton's own subordinationist impulses.

Yet simply to be admired as a goddess is not the ultimate in divinity. To receive the constraining abundance of others is not quite enough, nor even to "Ascend to Heav'n, by merit thine" (V 80). She wants to suffer from constraining abundance herself and to cast herself out of eternity like a

true goddess. So she identifies in her dream with the forbidden tree. Is not the dream-angel's address to it meant for her to overhear and apply to herself?

And O fair Plant, said he, with fruit surcharg'd  
Deigns none to ease thy load and taste thy sweet? (V 58-9)

Will Eve pluck herself from Paradise simply to relieve her own surcharge? She craves to think so. In proposing to separate from Adam in Book IX she will explicitly invoke her internal abundance in rhetoric recalling *Areopagitica's* imperative to demonstrate: "And what is Faith, Love, Virtue unassay'd/ Alone, without exterior help sustain'd?" (335-6). In doing so she betrays the anxiety--"How are we happy, still in fear of harm?... Eden were no Eden thus expos'd" (IX 326,341)--which, having destroyed her internal paradise, compels her to equilibrate outward with inward conditions via a fall.

Milton knew all too well the demand to liberate oneself from the paradisaical cosmos in order to equal or master it. For him sonship was belatedness; for Satan, a general lack of priority proved intolerable. Eve, considering herself impaired by her femaleness, repeats Satan's agonies and agonism in a finer tone. Trying to get the abundance, independence and superiority she wants to believe she already has, she will grasp for the "true world" of knowledge that she sees in the heavens, the object of "Speculations high and deep (IX 602). Not the external show of patriarchal authority but the inner essence of "masculine" knowledge will be her key to freedom and equality. After the fuss by the pool over her inferiority, Rafael's eudaemonistic interpretation of the great chain of being will fall on deaf ears. Why should she wait for her divine aspirations to fulfill themselves naturally, "by gradual scale sublim'd"? She needs to do something for herself now.

The idea of constraining abundance arises for Eve from the loss of precisely that state. Constraining anxiety has found, in the idea of constraining abundance, a means to recover self-esteem and to elicit admiration from others. Empson, after reviewing C.S. Lewis' description of Eve as "a great lady, the ambassadress of mankind," and likening her to Eleanor of Aquitaine, offers his reading of her state of mind:

She thinks: "The reason why all the males keep on saying I mustn't eat the apple, in this nerve-wracking way, is obviously that they are longing for me to do it; this is the kind of thing they need a queen to have the nerve to do'; so she does it. It is a splendid bit of invention by Milton; true to life, and the only way to make sense of her story; and he makes her later behaviour support it. (163)

It's certainly how Eve tells herself she feels. If it were true that "[n]othing happens in Eve's life except pleasure and being warned not to eat the apple" (Empson 163) she might actually feel this way. Unfortunately, other things have happened, turning her innocent narcissism into compensatory drive for mastery and for foreclosure of the narcissistic wound. This was Milton's own response: to seek

knowledge and fame in an attempt to close the gap between oneself and the cosmos, oneself and oneself. If it is erroneous it is error necessary for life.

All this confirms Millicent Bell's controversial assertion that Eve falls long before the Fall<sup>13</sup>-- as well as Empson's insistence that Heaven conspires in the Fall, if unwittingly. And here we find the prototype for Blake's satire on the protective Eternals (J 55:48-66), which Milton will not be long in realizing for himself. Milton's Spectre, cosmically projected as the spiritual voice, has delivered the fatal narcissistic wound, perpetrating what it tried to prevent. As if to create for Eve the impulsion to fall, Milton has injected his own unresolved subordinationism into the plot

Is the Fall fortunate? Dennis R. Danielson, arguing against Lovejoy, has contended strongly that it is not--and that orthodox Calvinists (including Milton's great target Alexander More) rather than Milton were inclined toward the felix culpa--the idea that God willed the Fall. It appears, following Danielson's reasoning, that any justification for the felix culpa doctrine must take one of three forms. First, the Fall, according to the "Ireanean" theology of "soul-making" Milton favored, may provide opportunities for human development unavailable in Paradise. Yet this doctrine (held orthodox in Mormonism) seems inapplicable to Milton, who's taken pains to show that no human/divine possibility is barred to unfallen Adam and Eve if they'll but wait for natural sublimation. Second, the Fall may be fortunate only in a very limited sense, and Adam's rejoicing in XII 469ff. is mainly a paeon the promise of redemption. And yet there is another possibility, according to which the Fall is indeed dictated by necessity and the only way to sustainable good. It appears that the Fall is dictated by human nature: the nature, first, of self-inverting spontaneous consciousness that becomes what it beholds. And second, as we are about to see, by the nature of that consciousness as it is molded by domestic identifications that install resistance to paradisaic immediacy. Postlapsarian experience will prove necessary for reorganizing this identity through re-identification with infinite abundance.

Adam, Rafael, God: Counteridealism and Constraining Abundance

Eve's question about the stars, and her strange dream, have been weighing on Adam's mind for a day, moving him to ask Rafael who really serves whom in heaven and on earth:

When I behold this goodly Frame, this World  
Of Heav'n and Earth consisting, and compute  
Thir magnitudes, this Earth a spot, a grain,  
An Atom, with the Firmament compar'd  
And all her number'd Stars, that seem to roll  
Spaces incomprehensible (for such  
Thir distance argues and thir swift return

Diurnal) merely to officiate light  
 Round this opacous Earth, this punctual spot,  
 One day and night; in all thir vast survey  
 Useless besides; reasoning I oft admire  
 How Nature wise and frugal could commit  
 Such disproportions, with superfluous hand  
 So many nobler Bodies to create,  
 Greater so manifold to this one use,  
 For aught appears, and on thir Orbs impose  
 Such restless revolution day by day  
 Repeated, while the sedentary Earth,  
 That better might with far less compass move,  
 Serv'd by more noble than herself, attains  
 Her end without least motion, and receives  
 As Tribute such a sumless journey brought  
 Of incorporeal speed, her warmth and light (VIII 15-37).

What is the nature of the cosmos? What can we learn from it? The critique of Ptolomaic astronomy leads quickly to a critique of power politics, influence anxiety, and conventional hierarchies:

Already by thy reasoning this I guess,  
 Who are to lead thy offspring, and supposest  
 That bodies bright and greater should not serve  
 The less not bright, nor Heav'n such journeys run,  
 Earth sitting still, when she alone receives  
 The benefit: consider first, that Great  
 Or Bright infers not Excellence: the Earth  
 Though, in comparison of Heav'n, so small,  
 Nor glistening, may of solid good contain  
 More plenty than the Sun that barren shines,  
 Whose virtue in itself works no effect,  
 But in the fruitful Earth, there first receiv'd  
 His beams, unactive else, thir vigor find.

This is in line with emanationist values, stopping just short of constraining abundance. The brilliance of the cosmos does not make it the "true world"; Earth—"female" and "receptive"—being in no way inferior to the "donative" and "male" sun and stars, needs only to exercise proper self-esteem. And soon we'll hear of sun and moon as "Male and Female Light/ Which two great Sexes animate the World" (VIII 150-1)—a Taoist feminism (or, with Eisler, "gylany") though Milton's sources are Hermeticism (Hill 324-333) and the Bible (Mt. 20:25-7).<sup>14</sup> The cosmos, Rafael insists, impairs no one, its "female" and "male" qualities being privileged equally.

Why this concession? Just to make Eve feel better? Hardly, since for Milton this inversion of worldly power relations was essential to Christianity. Why then will Rafael soon revert to subordinationist discourse when the topic turns to Eve?

Isn't that the question Eve needs to ask?

But she isn't here.

Why isn't she?

When Adam put her question to Rafael she got up and left. Milton's explanation--that Eve submissively absents herself from discussion of such "studious thoughts abstruse... not, as not with such discourse/ Delighted" (40, 49) but preferring to ask her husband at home as Paul tells women to do (1 Cor. 14:34)-seems offered tongue in cheek; we know too much about Eve to take it quite seriously. It is certainly how she always wants to appear. But perhaps her real reason for disappearing right now is that she doesn't want to hear what Rafael has to say. Whatever it is, she thinks, it can only confirm her sense of inferiority. Better to hear the angel's reply, whatever it may be, in private with Adam, where she can help the two of them put the best spin on it.

We're never told about how their evening conversation goes. Whatever Adam tells her, it doesn't affect her much. Whereas if she'd stayed to listen to the angel herself, she'd have heard much to interrogate the males about. As it is, having heard nothing to modify her sense of subordination, she'll be ripe for temptation at the tree--as the plot requires.

Milton has manipulated that plot just enough to call subordination into question without changing Eve's course.

And Adam, not Eve, will be the one to call Rafael on his self-contradiction, when the conversation winds back around to it after a contemplation of the cosmos.

How should we respond to the cosmos? It should be admired, not analyzed or exploited, Rafael insists (74-5). Kerrigan's reading of Rafael, that "wonder must be curbed by a rule of temperance" (224) discards the angel's plain language on the assumption that "wonder" is to be equated with the quest for knowledge. Precisely the opposite is the case. For Milton, admiration suspends the impulse to analyze the cosmos, as lines 66-84 show. Anxiety, which Rafael comes to dispel, replaces wonder with analysis aimed at mastery. The cosmic luminaries, the great heavenly bodies, says Rafael, exist not to intimidate but to serve humanity. As for "the eternal silence of the infinite spaces" that terrified Pascal,

let it speak  
The Maker's high magnificence, who built  
So spacious, and his Line stretcht out so far;  
That Man may know he dwells not in his own;  
An Edifice too large for him to fill. (VIII 100-104)

The entire cosmos is but an extension of Paradise, "this delicious place/ For us too large." This refutation of cosmic scarcity persuades Adam to jettison those "studious thoughts abstruse" that Eve envies so:

How fully hast thou satisfi'd me, pure  
 Intelligence of Heav'n, Angel serene.  
 And freed from intricacies, taught to live  
 The easiest way, nor with perplexing thoughts  
 To interrupt the sweet of Life, from which  
 God hath bid dwell far off all anxious cares,  
 And not molest us, unless we ourselves  
 Seek them with wand'ring thoughts, and notions vain.  
 But apt the Mind or Fancy is to rove  
 Uncheckt, and of her roving is no end;  
 Till warn'd, or by experience taught, she learn  
 That not to know at large of things remote  
 From use, obscure and subtle, but to know  
 That which before us lies in daily life,  
 Is the prime Wisdom; what is more, is fume,  
 Or emptiness, or fond impertinence,  
 And renders us in things that most concern  
 Unpractic'd, unprepar'd, and still to seek. (VIII 180-197)

What should we make of this?

It is Milton's attempt to ground intellectual temperance, like temperate eating, in reason's discovery of its own health, thus deferring the encounter with voluntarism, that leads him to give a mandate to ignorance. It is all the more striking in view of this mandate that Milton should confront Adam and Eve with the possibility that they might grow wings and fly to heaven. Why disturb the sweet of life with the alluring prospect of an angel body? (Kerrigan 226)

Does renouncing speculative knowledge just postpone submission to castration ("voluntarism") by pretending to find a reason for knowledge's prohibition? One might think so if Milton had failed to restructure the superego—but this is a most questionable assumption. The prohibition in fact is no "mandate for ignorance," since inquiry is not forbidden (line 66) but only the compulsive speculative analysis born of anxiety. Since neither God nor the cosmos is your enemy, says Rafael, you needn't suppose yourself so impaired as to have to sublimate all energy in the quest for knowledge in order to get on top of them; isn't this clear from the fact that nothing else is forbidden you—neither inquiry within the bounds of your comprehension nor even, eventually, evolution into gods? Natural sublimation<sup>15</sup> ("Till body up to spirit work... by gradual scale sublim'd") you are welcome to engage in. This message accords with the Father's announcement in Book III of eventual human divinity; here speaks the Second Reversal's counteridealism at its best.

Blake, in the magnificent passage (M 29:4-26) beginning "The Sky is an immortal Tent built by the Sons of Los," renounced Copernican astronomy in favor of sensuous immediacy as Milton did. For him eudaemonism and epistemological sanity required this re-centering in unintellectualized perception; for abstracted from immediate experience the objects of Kantian wonder—"the starry sky

above, the moral law within"--become enforcers of the unreconstructed superego. Discovery, both moral and scientific, begins by clearing out socialized moral and scientific abstractions and trying to see for oneself. This last thought has not yet entered Milton's mind here, but seems not very far off.

Having dismissed will, thought and repression--scarcity's products by which the melancholy pensive shadow seeks to deify itself--Milton seems to sound a fanfare for Paradise Regained. Can the fall really be--still to come? Yes, we are on the very brink of it, and are hearing the swan song of Paradise. For Eve who most needed to hear all this has disappeared. Adam is eloquent enough in rejecting Eve's temptation for her; but in Eve he faces temptation that will prove irresistible even with divine help. Now Adam proposes to tell Rafael the story of his coming to consciousness, his conversation with his Maker, and his experience with Eve.

Aroused to life in Eden, Adam, finding himself actualized by the ten thousand things he perceives--"With fragrance and with joy my heart o'erflow'd" (VIII 266)--vibrates with instinctual vigor and delight--which he considerately if implausibly ascribes to an as-yet-unseen Creator. He avoids Eve's narcissism not by any spiritual superiority, nor by opting for invisibility over visibility (Froula 330-1) but by having the luck to look around before looking in a lake. We can't tell whether he or Eve is innately more sensitive to visual experience, but it is his good fortune--for now--to have more objects of visual delight than just himself. But his overflowing abundance soon prompts him to ask God for one thing more:

Thou hast provided all things: but with mee  
I see not who partakes. In solitude  
What happiness, who can enjoy alone,  
Or all enjoying, what contentment find? (VIII, 361-364)

Already abundance is need. Adam's surcharge being psychic, no beast can partake of it; he needs the "mutual and partak'n bliss that Cornus urged and Satan renounced:

Among unequals what society  
Can sort, what harmony or true delight?  
Which must be mutual, in proportion due  
Giv'n and received. (VIII 383-386)

At this point God intrudes, sounding a bit on his dignity. Is your talk of unhappiness in inequality, he demands Adam, supposed to apply to me? For Adam's speech has implied the need of all abundant beings, without exception, to raise up companions to themselves. God counters this emanative egalitarianism with an Aristotelian notion of autonomous divinity:

Seem I to thee sufficiently possesst  
Of happiness or not? who am alone  
From all Eternity, for none I know  
Second to mee or like, equal much less. (VIII 403-406)

Even if we hear in this astringency the cri de couer of the old poet's spiritual isolation, we need to read it carefully, with an ear for divine irony. God does not reject companionship (though he doesn't mind giving that impression) but says he can get along without it. Milton had the following passage from the Eudemian Ethics in mind:

One who is self-sufficient can have no need of the service of others, nor of their affection, nor of social life, since he is capable of living alone. this is especially evident in the case of God. Clearly, since he is in need of nothing, God cannot have need of friends. (VII, 1244b-1245b)

The irony here, which God, trying Adam, must expect him to grasp, is that by proposing his own autonomous abundance as a model for Adam, God assumes Adam to be like him in a fundamental way. "We may be intended to infer a similarity within difference between man and God: otherwise why should God have asked the question?" (Hill 458). Empson's hilarious travesty--"what d'you want a woman for, hey? I don't want a woman" (184)--shows a good ear for the voice Milton's God likes to put on. The upshot is that Adam's unbearably surcharged self-containment must also be divine. God, declining to be equated with humanity on Adam's terms, has equated humanity with divinity on his own terms. This equality Adam rejects. Absorbed in his own need, he pursues his petition by seizing on what he thinks God is emphasizing: his own distinction from God:

Thou in thyself art perfect, and in thee  
Is no deficiency found; not so is Man,  
But in degree, the cause of his desire  
By conversation with his like to help  
Or solace his defects. No need that thou  
Shouldst propagate, already infinite...  
Thou in thy secrecy although alone  
Best with thyself accompani'd, seekst not  
Social communication, yet so pleas'd  
Canst raise thy Creature to what highth thou wilt  
Of Union, or Communion, deifi'd;  
I by conversing cannot these erect  
From prone, or in thir ways complacence find. (VIII 415-420; 427-433)

Seemingly persuaded, God grants Adam's wish, confessing his antagonism to have been ironic:

Thus far to try thee, Adam, I was pleas'd,  
And find thee knowing not of Beasts alone  
Which thou hast rightly nam'd, but of thyself,  
Expressing well the spirit within thee free  
My image, not imparted to the Brute. (VIII 437-441)

What is God's image in Adam? The rational capacity to discern his difference from the beasts--and from God? Or the energetic image-making power that urges him, like God, to raise up companions to

himself? Conservative readers, with Adam, would read the first way; radicals, including at times Milton himself, would favor the second. So is God continuous with humanity or not?

Yes and no. "The spirit within thee free" signifies neither absolute identity nor absolute difference, but a provisional and temporary distinction. God embodies both infinite abundance and infinite capacity for self-containment; Adam has only the former. God knows abundance but not constraining abundance; Adam, unable to contain his abundance is constrained by it. Since his self-containment exists only in the absence of an alternative, his stay in surcharged divine potentiality only absents him more. He can only express his freedom, God's image, by abandoning constraining eternity to learn by experience the consequences of constraining abundance. To become God's image in a sense other than that of a defective resemblance requires experience, without which God's warning is incomprehensible. So God allows the first step toward the Fall, which will prove as fortunate as a necessary evil can be. But that God does not need to fall himself is a new element in his justification.

The reason Adam has told Rafael all this is that Eve has come to affect him in ways he hadn't bargained for. Eve excites him as fruits, flowers and bird song never did—"here only weak/ Against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance"—and he wonders if it means something's wrong with him. Didn't he want something more than birds and flowers to pass the time with—an equal with whom to share "mutual and partak'n bliss"? Is that what he got, or did God short-change him? Eve, Adam now decides, has

Too much of Ornament, in outward show  
Elaborate, of inward less exact  
For well I understand in the prime end  
Of Nature her th'inferior, in the mind  
And inward Faculties, which most excel,  
In outward also her resembling less  
His Image who made both, and less expressing  
The character of that Dominion giv'n  
O'er other Creatures (VIII 538-546).

We've already seen enough to make us doubt this. Eve, in love with herself and interpellated into a finite self-image as she is, would never have said something this stupid, nor have forgotten so quickly what her great desire had been. Adam's most noticeable superiority over Eve was never in mental acuity, but in having avoided debilitating self-knowledge--and with this last speech that innocence has begun to slip away.

But let's not underestimate him. "For well I understand" is spoken in the manner of a student conceding the teacher's expectation. Adam wants it clear that he's familiar with Platonic-patriarchal evaluation before confronting it with discordant experience:

All higher knowledge in her presence falls  
 Degraded. Wisdom in discourse with her  
 Loses discount'nanc't, and like folly shows;  
 Authority and Reason on her wait,  
 As one intended first, not after made  
 Occasionally; and to consummate all,  
 Greatness of mind and nobleness thir seat  
 Build in her loveliest (VIII 530-533; 551-558).

The Christian-Platonic idea of beauty as a fair outside--a set of properties residing in the object's appearance--cannot account for beauty's effect on him. The trouble is that beauty's effect here is bioenergetic, as Lawrence saw: "Sex and beauty are inseparable, like life and consciousness. And the intelligence which goes with sex and beauty, and arises out of sex and beauty, is intuition.... Sex is the root of which intuition is the foliage and beauty the flower." (P II 528)<sup>16</sup> Does not Eve in her beauty, her female sensuousness, bring Adam intuitive experience on which Reason itself depends, a knowledge arising from "Living Form"--rather than abstract "Mathematic Form,"<sup>17</sup> a Platonic ideal imposed from on high? Blake will make this empiricist argument in his early tractates and implicitly throughout his work. "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy." Ideas of reason are but petrified reifications of energetic forms or patterns (MHH 4-5). How is erotic experience a source of knowledge? What does it teach? If all knowledge begins in sensuous immediacy--in perceptual experience's energetic interchange rather than solipsistic-idealist constructions--all knowledge begins, in a sense, erotically. And through this experience we learn crucial things about who we are and what we value, as well as similar things about others. All this maybe put under the broad heading of empirical knowledge through the senses; but elsewhere, Milton's voices are Platonist, and subordinationist. This makes subordinationism an epistemological issue, and epistemology a sex-political issue. Recovering the Paradise of sensuous immediacy requires calling into question the Platonic idealism that imposes "mathematical" or "masculine" ideals upon experience in order to subdue "feminine" passions.

And yet retaining Paradise requires resisting the chain of identification inherent in erotic knowledge by which energy, identifying with a finite self-image, materializes itself. Or by which abundance identifies with the subject of such self-identification, or comes to depend on an external emanation for release of creative energy. God, in order to be God, must sympathize--but not identify--with humanity; Adam, in order to be himself can love but not identify with Eve; Eve in order to remain herself must neither fall in love with, or be ashamed of, herself. Contingency upon the world, in whatever form, has, in Blake's words, "left Man, a little groveling root, outside of Himself" (J 17:32)--

or Herself. Can counteridealism, impotent as it was to arrest debilitating identification in Eve, do better here?

Eve seems to stand in the same relation to Adam as he does to God: that of materialized emanation. And, guided by Platonism, Adam finds her the perfect material girl, finished and finite. But is that not her power?

when I approach  
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems  
And in herself complete, so well to know  
Her own, that what she wills to do or say,  
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discretest, best. (VIII 546-550)

We're invited to read her self-sufficiency as evidence of her finite materiality or narcissistic self-enclosure. But Milton, it seems to me, can't quite convince even himself of this. (From here on memories of second marriage seem to overpower those of his first.) No, Eve's power is that she's a vital female, and Adam is too alive not to respond to her. (And Eve, whatever her capacity for self-absorption, is not as self-contained as he supposes.)

Rafael will try to reinforce Adam in Platonic/patriarchal evaluation:

For what admir'st thou, what transports thee so,  
An outside?...  
                  weigh her with thyself;  
Then value: Oft-times nothing profits more  
Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right  
Well manag'd; of that skill the more thou know'st,  
The more she will acknowledge thee her Head,  
And to realities yield all her shows (VIII 570-575)

But Adam cannot really understand. He knows little of the skill Rafael speaks of, for despite his proficiency with the "I" as grammatical shifter and his ability to parrot subordination discourse, he understands, at bottom, no "self" to esteem. And while with his mind's eye he sees Eve merely as matter, a fair outside, he doesn't feel her to be so because he has yet to experience material externality. For him Eve, whatever independent life she possess, exists as permeated with himself, full of the graceful animation he has imparted to her (and she to him) and to which his original turgid energies were but the means:

Those thousand decencies that daily flow  
From all her words and actions, mixt with Love  
And sweet compliance, which declare unfeign'd  
Union of Mind, or in us both one Soul. (VIII 601-604)

Rafael, whose activities Empson held most responsible for inducing the Fall, understands the danger in these sentiments, and tries to misread them as lust. As counteridealism's embodiment, he

wants Adam to preserve his Paradise and offers advice, such good advice! The danger, he warns, is subjection through the senses:

But if the sense of touch whereby mankind  
Is propagated seem such dear delight  
Beyond all other, think the same voutsaft  
To Cattle and each Beast; which would not be  
To them made common and divulg'd, if aught  
Therein enjoy'd were worthy to subdue  
The Soul of Man, or passion in him move.  
What higher in her society thou find'st  
Attractive, human, rational, love still:  
In loving thou dost well, in passion not,  
Wherein true Love consists not; Love refines  
The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat  
In Reason, and is judicious, is the scale  
By which to heav'nly Love thou may'st ascend,  
Not sunk in carnal pleasure, for which cause  
Among the Beasts no Mate for thee was found. (VIII 579-594)

The confluence of Platonic, Christian and counteridealist evaluation recommends this counsel as the only way to avoid the Fall. Yet Rafael in endorsing intellectual love allows a very large foot in the door for the rhetoric of "purity and place and innocence." If Paradise is sensuous immediacy, and such immediacy produces via constraining abundance the uncontrolled identification leading to the Fall, doesn't it follow, by good conservative logic, that we must destroy Paradise in order to save it? Counteridealism's self-contradiction is its lapse back into ascetic idealism. Froula's Milton, desiring above all to avoid subjection to anything female, would have approved this angelic antinaturalism without question. But Adam's cheeky, even Panzaic (see endnote 5), reply is a deft pin-prick to it:

Love not the heav'nly Spirits, and how thir love  
Express they, by looks only, or do they mix  
Irradiance, virtual or immediate touch? (VIII 515-517)

And Rafael must confess that the sensuous interpenetration imperfectly enjoyed by humans the angels know

In eminence, and obstacles find none  
Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars. (VIII 624-625)

Angelic love, in which "Embraces are Cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet;/ And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place" (J 69:43-4) is no refining away of desire, but "an improvement in sensual enjoyment" (MHH 14). The refining ascent of the great chain of being "till body up to spirit work" climaxes in the abolition of simply-located bodily identity in angelic love—not a Platonic love of reified and discrete ideal entities, but a reduction, via the apotheosis of touch, of both

material and ideal back to the sheer physicality of "first matter," primal energy, the oneness of soul Adam feels with Eve.

Rafael assumed the orthodox dualism of matter against spirit, energy versus reason, love opposed to lust; Adam has forced him back to the continuity he admitted in his speech on the great chain of being--a confession justifying Adam's feelings for Eve. It's hard not to smile at the angel's blushing--as much at being caught by his pupil as anything else--and at his hasty departure, as if to avoid any further embarrassment. His parting admonition to love God best is well-taken, and the best way to salvage his position. But because it's Eve, not God, whom Adam sees--because it's easier for him to become Eve than to become God--it will be hard for him not to love her more than God.

Has love its seat in Reason? Is it not rather, as another poet said, that "from form seen doth he start... poor in discernment, being thus weakness' friend"?<sup>18</sup> If in love the reality principle is 'suspended and one becomes what one beholds (and never more than in angelic love), what happens when Adam beholds an Eve captured by her own reflection--or subjected to an ideology of female impairment and to a compensatory will to power? That's what Rafael needed to ask Adam.

And if great or bright infers not excellence, what's the basis for subordinating women? That's what Eve needed to ask Rafael.

Had either of these questions been asked, the Fall would likely have been averted--which is why Milton couldn't allow them to be asked.

As it is, Rafael has warned Adam but hasn't really educated him; the harder he's tried--as so often with moral educators--the more credibility he's lost.

Neither has Eve been educated. The plot's requirement of a Fall, unjustified yet warned against, means that anti-subordinationist ideas must reach Adam--but not Eve.

The requirement of a Fall means also that Milton can--must--allow subordinationist strategies to fail. Was part of him (how big a part we cannot say) secretly pleased to do so?

As the Fall approaches, appeals to emanative logic--constraining abundance and demonstration--intensify. Parroting Rafael, Satan ponders whether receptive Earth is not better than donative Heaven (IX 99-110); as intellectual receptacle, he must believe so. Eve, proposing to separate from Adam, decries abundance constrained "in narrow circuit strait'n'd by a Foe" and appeals to the mandate for demonstration in the *Nativity Ode* and *Areopagitica*: "And what is Faith, Love, Virtue unassay'd/ Alone, without exterior help sustain'd?" (322, 335-6). Milton still honors this appeal--and would yield to it again had he not learned to distinguish constraining anxiety from constraining abundance. He believes no less in Adam's counteridealistic arguments for paradise-preserving obedience, but these prove of no more force here than Rafael's, and culminate in a concession: "Go: for thy stay, not free, absents thee more" (372).

At the forbidden tree Satan, addressing Eve as "Goddess humane" (732), assumes the traditional static Great Chain of Being that consigns the serpent to its fixed lot (690), and exploits the disparity between such rigid prohibitions on growth and the generosity God ought to possess. Imputing the prohibition to envy, he offers an unanswerable refutation of orthodoxy:

God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just:  
Not just, not God; not fear'd then, nor obey'd:  
Your fear itself of Death removes the fear. (700-2)

Yet what if the fruit, the prohibition and the penalty but symbolize psychic and social processes of individuation--the crystallizing of simply-located selfhood? The serpent's cabalistic reference to himself as "Internal man" (711) implies--if we're still looking for clues--that the account of the Fall is best read immanently, psychologically--to the undoing of both orthodoxy and Satanic resentment. Yet this hint falls by the wayside, and Adam on Eve's return picks up the Devil's main thread as if on cue, inferring the futility of transcendent punishment:

Nor can I think that God, Creator wise,  
Though threat'ning, will in earnest so destroy  
Us his prime Creatures, dignifi'd so high,  
Set over all his Works, which in our Fall,  
For us created, needs with us must fail,  
Dependent made; so God shall uncreate,  
Be frustrate, do, undo, and labor lose,  
Not well conceiv'd of God, who though his Power  
Creation could repeat, yet would be loath  
Us to abolish, lest the Adversary  
Triumph and say; Fickle their State whom God  
Most favors, who can please him long? (938-949)

If God's entire creation must fail with humanity, and if God's creation (as under creation *ex deo*) is from God, an expressed portion of God and permeated with God, then does not God himself fall with his creation? Under constraining abundance God, identified with his emanative portion, depends on it in order to remain God--which stature he loses, either ontologically, if his creatures fall, or ethically, if he prevents them from or punishes them for doing so. Hence the Adversary's point that Adam so deftly intuits. By destroying God's creation Satan bids in one way or another to undo God himself.

This is so only under the logic of constraining abundance, which God has repudiated. God's distinction from humanity is his power to restrain identification. Inability to do so defines mythological consciousness's constraining abundance. Adam attributes that sort of uxorious identification to God at the moment he himself succumbs to constraining abundance, separating from his source in order to cleave to his emanation (and proving no better than Eve, who fell in love with *her* emanation):

if Death  
Consort with thee, Death is to mee as Life;

So forcible within my heart I feel  
 The Bond of Nature draw me to my own,  
 My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;  
 Our State cannot be sever'd, we are one,  
 One Flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself. (953-9)

Noble, but disastrous. Painful it is to see that every recollection here of Christ's self-sacrifice in Book III is ironic; we feel that in our insentient world of death such sympathy ought to be a little redeeming. But counteridealism contends that such sympathy has created the insentient world in the first place. Identifying with the emanated materiality that relieves its surcharge and submitting to dependence on it, abundance inverts itself and descends to labor in scarcity's fallen world. And because Paradise is sensuous immediacy and spontaneous identification, its self-inversion is inevitable. In their triumph, emanationism and constraining abundance only underscore this truth of counteridealism.

Is this any way to talk about love—all these “isms”? Such an un-erotic vocabulary. Love doesn't talk this way. For a meditation on Adam's choice in the true elegiac voice of love, one could do no better than to turn to Henry Staten's essay in Eros In Mourning.<sup>19</sup> For Staten, Adam embodies Milton's dream of a love wholly idealized yet thoroughly passionate, and his decision to die rather than lose Eve epitomizes the nobility of courtly love tradition that an ascetic like Rafael can but misread as animal lust. Why then must it all turn out so disastrously? Why must the love-death issue in the debilitating experiences of death, guilt and lust that Christianity obsesses on? Is it simply because of Milton's divided loyalty: to Eros and Christ at once? “Milton's desire is ultimately baffled by the system in terms of which he attempts to think it through. In the end Milton cannot extricate himself from the knot created by his own version of Christian axiomatics.” (135) This Empsonian reading finds a Milton split and partly captured by an antinatural other with which he identified. I would say, rather, that Milton describes two such captures—first Eve's, then Adam's—in his poem, and from these he allows the results of the Fall to emerge immanently. That Milton so psychologizes the Fall does not mean all love identification must turn out this way. The Fall synthesizes Milton's experience and reflection, and on more than one level. Adam here stands not only for Eros, but for identification in general. Eve, in addition to recalling medieval love-goddesses, also represents identification—identification that has proceeded further into self-inversion. It is just this pluri-dimensional nature of Milton's narrative that forces us to use abstractions in recovering it. The Fall is about Eros; but it is also about knowledge, self-consciousness, the will to power through knowledge, and the psychological forces underlying these in turn—and these other factors are especially what make it a disaster, and what make Eros disastrous when it gets entangled with them. In pursuing the psychology of the Fall to this level Milton is able to touch the truths of human experience encoded in the Genesis story at a deeper level, and in greater complexity, than most Christian commentary has even approached.

### Undoing the Secular Economy

What's wrong with Paradise? What error is at the bottom of the Fall? Is it the innocent psyche's seduction by the not-so-innocent world it beholds and into which it expresses itself? That is Eve's error; and this reading works insofar as Eve is an aspect of Milton's psyche. Whether seduced by her reflected emanation (the visual idea) or interpellated by the social ideal, she falls--as the young Milton did--from sensuous immediacy into self-consciousness and anxious will. Milton has labored hard to read the Fall this way (as will Blake and Lawrence after him). So read, the Fall might be undone by undoing identifications, and re-identifying with the inexhaustible abundance one really is--a project subject to self-frustration, however, when attempted by instrumental consciousness.

Moreover, since that abundance constantly threatens to invert itself into dependence, the counteridealism that would recover and preserve immediacy must simultaneously oppose its identificatory volatility. Energy's identification with and contingency on that which receives and relieves its surcharge was Adam's error; and it is the males in Paradise Lost who are endangered by this debility--at least directly. What drives Adam to identify with Eve is a sexual dependence that gives him an interest in controlling her (as Rafael counsels). Eve and Adam recall Dinnerstein's dichotomy of self-absorbed, outwardly-submissive females and insecure controlling males, whose possessiveness "stems from the mother-raised boy's sense that the original, most primitive source of life will always lie outside himself, that to be sure of reliable access to it he must have exclusive access to a woman" (Dinnerstein 43). So Adam and Rafael must replay the scenario of greed and control Knight saw in the very form of Milton's poetry, raising the question of how much in Paradise Lost's poetics and theology is not informed by sexual dependency.

In this light, constraining abundance appears as the male's craving for sensuous contact with a world originally mediated by the mother; counteridealism, as his fear of being infantilized by this contact; creation ex deo, his fantasy of self-gratification; angelic love, his fantasy of complete re-absorption into the cosmos representing the good mother; Paradise, that mother's imagined inexhaustibility. Having set Milton's critique of narcissism in the context of his theological and psychological project in order to oppose his reduction to chauvinist ideologue, we now contemplate the need to reduce the whole prophetic project to a pre-ideological male will to power, deriving from impotence. We hear the voices of Blake's Daughters of Albion:

What may Man be? who can tell! But what may Woman be?  
 To have power over Man from Cradle to corruptible Grave....  
 She cries: The Human is but a Worm, & thou O Male: Thou art  
 Thyself Female, a Male: a breeder of Seed: a Son & Husband: & Lo  
 The Human Divine is Womans Shadow, a Vapor in the summers heat

Go assume Papal dignity thou Spectre, thou Male Harlot!...

O Woman-born

And Woman-nourished & Woman-educated & Woman-scorn'd! (J 56:3-4; 64:12-17)

Mutuality is impossible for this impaired male Spectre. Constituted by "archetypal womb envy" (deadly tit for Freudian tat!) or something very much resembling it, he seems incapable of more than empty arrogance.

Could we read the male dilemma in a less ontologically confining way? Isn't the craving for sensuous immediacy directly installed by the patriarchal prohibitions and punishments of the castration complex--the dissolution of which produces a desperate compulsion to seize delight? No doubt this occurs wherever morality's constraints have been applied to men. If this is the real problem, as Reich assumed, dissolving or restructuring the superego ought to dispel dependence once men realize delight is there for the taking. But since women have encountered at least equal restraint without seeming to experience such dependence, the castration complex can't provide the whole answer. Restructuring the superego, rather than helping males out of their dilemma, seems more likely to plunge them fully into it. Isn't this what happens in Milton's Paradise--as in his earlier visions of delight?

It would seem in fact that maternal dependency--and the reaction thereto--may account for some, if not all, manifestations of the castration complex. Would not an unresolved dependency, permeating adult eroticism with the maternal cathexis, breed the sexual anxieties from which men have for so long fled into asceticism and compulsive instrumentation? If so, not scarcity but abundance--female abundance and male constraining abundance--must be the original object of anxiety. Milton's career seems to bear this out. Was his first plunge into ascetic idealism--the Nativity Ode's castration complex--at bottom a reaction to maternal rather than paternal abundance? His anxiety about paternal generosity is profound, existing on several levels. Does anxiety concerning "the debt immense of endless gratitude" (IV 52) rise ultimately from a sense that abundance, accepted unearned, will revive the maternal craving? Such craving, in all its "murderous infantilism" (Dinnerstein 109) was satirized in Hell, whose devils "with impious hands/ Rifl'd the bowels of thir mother Earth/ For Treasures better hid" (PL I 686-8). It appears again, uncriticized, in the paradisaal jewelry--suggesting that "the richness of the opulent all-providing early mother" (Dinnerstein 86) is hard to get out of the mind. The attempt to expunge the early mother seems to produce in Paradise Lost a pattern of imagery wherein the "perpetual return of the mother as a means of monstrous birth begotten of incestuous rape parodies the sublime and glorious return to God as a means of renewal and sustenance" (Lieb, The Dialectics of Creation, 163).

Why did Milton repeatedly throw himself into the public sphere after each breakthrough into eudaemonism (the Fifth Elegy, "Lycidas," Paradise Lost VIII) if not in order to keep sensuous

immediacy at bay--and thus to prevent erotic liberty from collapsing into dependence? "For only in destroying find I ease/ From my relentless thoughts," says Satan (IX 130), apparently expressing the pleasure anxiety that made Milton find fatal flaws in Paradise each time he had it in hand. A few lines later, describing Eve--

divinely fair, fit Love for Gods,  
Not terrible, though terror be in love  
And beauty, not approacht by stronger hate  
Hate stronger under show of Love well feign'd (IX 489-92)

--Satan once again expresses, not the conscious belief of his author but one of Milton's deeper internal hells. It's not the last time we'll see this attitude in Milton--or in prophetic writing. Blake's prophet Los must find refinements of Satan's strategy:

But Los himself against Albions Sons his fury bends, for he  
Dare not approach the Daughters openly lest he be consumed  
In the fires of their beauty & perfection & be Vegetated beneath  
Their Looms, in a Generation of death & resurrection to forgetfulness  
They wooe Los continually to subdue his strength: he continually  
Shews them his Spectre: sending him abroad over the four points of heaven  
In the fierce desires of beauty & in the tortures of repulse! He is  
The Spectre of the Living pursuing the Emanations of the Dead.

This is more or less what Milton will do from now on, affecting a disdain for "Female charm" (IX 999) through the mouths of Michael, Samson and again, in Paradise Regained, Satan--all incarnations of his Spectre, who continually sallies forth in pre-emptive defense against the eternal feminine. Meanwhile Milton's prophetic energies will turn against "the Sons of Albion," public or non-erotic obstacles to eudaemonism: instrumental consciousness, the castration complex, the performance principle, civil and ecclesiastical tyranny. He'll continue to try to realize the prophetic ideal by intensifying his identification with nothing but abundance, continuing to dismantle the conventional superego and ego-ideal, and, except for a dramatized analysis of the id's construction in Samson Agonistes, suspending erotic relations for the time being--turning his gaze from sexual to perceptual identification and approaching the recovery of Paradise more from Eve's viewpoint than Adam's.

At the same time he'll continue to feel after cosmic continuity in order to relieve Adam's difficulty. Achieved by suspending conceptual-instrumental activity, such continuity takes pressure off the erotic connection, replacing the old pattern of compulsive instrumentation relieved only by sexual encounter. Sexual dependence, rather than shifting now to natural objects, is dissolved in identification with natura naturans rather than natura naturata: with the cosmos as inexhaustible energy rather than as accumulation of objects. There are parallels here with various spiritual traditions. But for prophetic writers the undoing of the secular economy is felt to be the truth of Hebraism: cosmic abundance, unmanifested, not yet emanated, as the basis for non-instrumental relation to the world, culminating

(with Blake and Lawrence) in the pure Is-ness of "natural" objects. The invisible and the visible, then, are not mutual negations, but necessary contraries: abundant source and emanative expression. That this energetic source for Milton is God--the male Biblical God--makes it easier for the male ego to dissolve into it.

Pending implementation of Dinnerstein's recommendation that fathers parent equally with mothers in order to relieve Woman of mediating the cosmos alone, what else are men to do beyond perhaps following Lawrence's advice:

Men and women should learn tenderness to each other  
and to leave one another alone. (CP 620)?

Perhaps male efforts at re-identification with cosmic abundance will ultimately to bear fruit in increased generosity toward all things, including Woman. But this discipline must first be directed against Woman in order to gain independence from her. Can Woman understand this? Is it entirely remote from her own experience? (Not only women but men too, Dinnerstein observes, are harmed by the prevalent arrangement.) Is it possible for Woman to discern in the misogynistic disdain of Samson Agonistes and Paradise Regained (and similar sentiments in Lawrence and Blake) not ideological girders (though to the ideologue all things are ideological) but the external scaffolding supporting and masking psychic restructuring--the attainment of non-maternally-mediated immediacy? Through which the male, perhaps after many generations or life-times, may encounter...

To the garden the world anew ascending,  
Potent mates, daughters, sons, preluding  
The love, the life of their bodies, meaning and being,  
Curious here behold my resurrection after slumber,  
The revolving cycles in their wide sweep having brought me again  
Amorous, mature, all beautiful to me, all wondrous,  
My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through them, for reasons most  
wondrous  
Existing I peer and penetrate still,  
Content with the present, content with the past,  
By my side or back of me Eve following,  
Or in front, and I following her just the same.  
(Whitman, "To the Garden of the World")

## Notes to Chapter Six

<sup>1</sup> For some possible sources of this view in Milton, see Hill 327.

<sup>2</sup> Baldwin's valuable essay goes on to suggest a source for creation *ex deo* in Eriugina's *Periphyseon*, Book I, "where God is argued to be the embodiment of all causes, including the material one, acting through Christ" (155).

For an examination of the contemporary context for Milton's monism, refuting Lovejoy's claim that Milton was no philosopher, see Stephen M. Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-century England* (1992). See also, against Lovejoy, Dennis R. Danielson, *Milton's Good God*, 202.

<sup>3</sup> I forego any attempt here at a Freudian reading of Miltonic narcissism. For one such effort, see Mark Edmundson's *Towards Reading Freud: Self-creation in Milton, Wordsworth, Emerson and Sigmund Freud*, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> "When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy." *Critical Inquiry*, December 1983, 321-347. Stevie Davies, in *Images of Kingship in "Paradise Lost"*, 198-202, complements Froula by noting the contrast between the terms "Absolute Rule" and "Subjection" applied to Adam and Eve respectively, calling attention also to Milton's justification of divorce from the convention of female inferiority, and to his attacks on queens, both Roman and British, in the *History of Britain*.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Blake's contrast between material Vala and spiritual Jerusalem (e.g., J 18:7) and especially Lawrence's transposition, in *Women in Love*, of that contrast into the characters of Gudrun—identified with visibility, defined form, and entropy—and Ursula, identified with the invisibility of inchoate life-energy, an association she derides when Birkin presses it on her in chapter XIII.

<sup>6</sup> Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (1976). See also Froula 33

<sup>7</sup> "It is ironical that the popular image of Milton today is of an austere Puritan who advocated the subordination of women," says Hill. "Feminists were few in the seventeenth century." (117) After several examples of acknowledged liberals more staunchly subordinationist than Milton, Hill describes the progressiveness of Puritan domestic arrangements, concluding that "[t]he inequality was more apparent than real so long as the wife was the helpmeet of her husband in the family firm... Eve was a gardener." (119) Milton, who named his daughter after the Deborah "the inspired poetess and judge of Israel who stirred the Israelites up to take arms against their oppressors," "shocked his contemporaries by being prepared to contemplate a situation in which the wife may 'exceed her husband in prudence and dexterity, and he contentedly yield.' Then 'a superior and more natural law comes in, that the wiser should govern the less wise, whether male or female.' This, however, he regarded as an exceptional case." (Hill 119-120)

<sup>8</sup> In attacking the supposed biological primacy of self-preservation—"A living thing wants above all to *discharge* its force." (WP #650), Nietzsche seems to register a motion contrary to the will to power. Is not self-preservation but an elementary form of the will to power? And if discharge is the aim, have we not reached Freud's Nirvana principle, for which life's great aim is not power but the equilibrium of death? Nietzsche tries to avoid this implication by construing discharge as a way of consolidating power: "A protoplasm divides in two when its power is no longer adequate to control what it has appropriated: procreation is the consequence of an impotency" (WP #654). But so is the will to unity:

The weaker presses to the stronger from a need for nourishment; it wants to get under it, if possible to become one with it. The stronger, on the contrary, drives others away; it does not want to perish in this manner; it grows and in growing splits itself into two or more parts. The greater the impulse toward unity, the more firmly may one conclude that weakness is present; the greater the impulse towards variety, differentiation, inner decay, the more force is present. (WP #655)

The contradictions here stem from the effort to define all life-phenomena as will to power, and can easily be resolved by positing, in addition, a contrary urge *of* power, expressive rather than acquisitive. Such a view need not imply Freudian equilibrium, for nothing requires discharge to be equal to intake; thus gradual and sustained growth is possible, consistent with the principle of natural sublimation. Moreover, since expressive discharges of psychic energy may actually be exchanges rather than simple donations (as in Lawrence's and Milton's views of coition, contrary to traditional notions of male "activity" and female "passivity" and "receptivity"), it may be that such "discharges" are in fact the purest acquisitions of power—an idea Freud plays with in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

<sup>9</sup> For Lawrence the novel is "the highest example of subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered" (P 528), resisting every ideal and "didactic absolute," (P 705, P II 420); and subjecting ideas, ideals and ideologies to the scrutiny of real-life experience. This capacity to undercut "Quixotic" idealism is what Wayne Burns called "the Panzaic Principle," whose emergence we will soon have the pleasure of observing in Paradise Lost. For Lawrence's own counteridealism, see Burns' remarks in The Panzaic Principle (Vancouver, B.C.: Pendejo Press, n.d.) 34-6.

<sup>10</sup> Milton was familiar enough with the hostile reports of Irenaeus and Epiphanius to grasp the central Gnostic myth, which he did not reject outright. "Who finds not that Irenaeus, Epiphanius, Jerome, and others discover more heresies than they well confute, and that oft for heresy which is the truer opinion?" he demands in Areopagitica. Milton also would have known Plotinus' refutation of Gnosticism in Enneads II.9, as well as Porphyry's comments. For the texts of the heresiologists in condensed form, and for Porphyry, see Bentley Layton, The Gnostic Scriptures 159-214, 276-302.

<sup>11</sup> If creation ex deo were taken Hinduistically, as the dream-projection of the material world from the divine mind, Eve could be seen as the female embodiment of this reified, materialized energy, or Maya. This, however, would prematurely invoke Blake's Vala, who represents exactly that. (See Raine, Blake and Tradition, Vol. 2, 172-186.) But Milton, though find materiality ensnaring, never describes it as illusory.

<sup>12</sup> For Boehme and the Hermeticists, see Hill 324-333. Cf. Pyramid Text 1248

Atum created in Heliopolis by an act of masturbation/ He took his phallus in his fist, to excite desire thereby. (Mercer, The Pyramid Texts 206. In Campbell, Oriental Mythology 85.)

<sup>13</sup> The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost, "PMLA 68:863-83. In finding Adam uxorious and Eve ambitious almost from the moment of their creation, and thus concluding that no genuine fall occurs in the epic, Bell brought down upon her head the wrath of orthodox critics. For the first reply to Bell, see Shumaker, "Notes, Documents and Critical Comments," 1185-7. For a more recent consideration see Fiore, Milton and Augustine 38. John Tanner's Anxiety in Eden: a Kierkegaardian Reading of "Paradise Lost" offers a Christian version of Bell's basic insight; but though we both find anxiety to be crucial to the events in Eden, I don't think the anxiety is particularly Kierkegaardian

<sup>14</sup> Compare Lawrence:

Has it never occurred to us that the sun serves no more than as a great lantern and bonfire to the ambulating intermediary world? Has it never occurred to us that the sun is not superior to our little earth, and to the other little stars, but just instrumental, a bonfire and a lamp and an axle-tree? After all, it is the little spheres which live, and the great sun is instrumental to their living.... Things which are vividly living are never so very big.... The moment we consider the vital universe, vastness and extensiveness cease to be terms of merit, and become terms of demerit.... In the living world, appreciation is intensive, not extensive. (P 636)

<sup>15</sup> Natural sublimation, a concept readily apparent in Paradise Lost, also finds articulation in Lawrence:

The process of transfer from the primary consciousness to recognized mental consciousness is a mystery like every other transfer. Yet it follows its own laws.... The degree of transfer from primary to mental consciousness varies with every individual. But in most individuals the natural degree is very low. The process of transfer from primary consciousness is called sublimation, the sublimating of the potential body of knowledge with the definite reality of the idea. And with this process we have identified all education. Education means leading out the individual nature in each man and woman to its true fullness. You can't do that by stimulating the mind. To pump education into the mind is fatal. That which sublimates from the dynamic consciousness into mental consciousness has alone any value. This, in most individuals, is very little indeed. So that most individuals, under a wise government, would be most carefully protected from all vicious attempts to inject extraneous ideas into them. (FPU 69, 76)

For both Lawrence and Milton, natural sublimation implies the absence of ultimate limits on self-development--- and the presence of powerful immediate limits that require acceptance of a benevolent hierarchy, if available.

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<sup>16</sup> Here as elsewhere Lawrence locates beauty neither in objective properties nor in subjective dispositions, but in the transaction between them. For more on this see P 402-3 and P II 529. For Nietzsche's aesthetic of energetic transactionalism that may have influenced Lawrence, see The Will to Power # 802, 804, 809. For an unwitting reductio ad absurdum of objectivist aesthetics, see Guy Sircello, A New Theory of Beauty (1975).

<sup>17</sup> For "Mathematic Form"/"Living Form" see On Virgil; also M 4:27, 5:33 and The Laocoön.

<sup>18</sup> Cavalcanti, "Donna Mi Prega," tr. Ezra Pound, Literary Essays 155-7.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Staten, "Adam's Choice: Paradise Lost" in Eros In Mourning: Homer to Lacan (1995) 108-36.

## Chapter Seven: SENSATION AND MORALITY UNDER THE NEW ASCETICISM

### In the Abyss: Vicissitudes of Sensation

It should be clear by now that Milton was not retelling the story of the Fall merely to underline his identity as a Christian, to make doctrinal or ideological points, or to indulge his poetic potency. Beneath all these episodically triumphant impulses was a need to sort out the psychological ambivalences concerning Paradise. How was it lost? How is it recovered?

Once these concerns are raised, no account of the Fall can be content simply to retell the Bible story with poetic embellishment. Nor can doctrinal reifications govern the account. Genesis offers an archetype, the figurative framework for a drama that must be psychologically filled out. But if the Fall is a universal form, any psychology adequate to it must also achieve considerable universality; certainly it will be more than just personal.

We have to psychologize the Fall in order to understand it as a human event, applicable to us. Milton had to psychologize the Fall in order to think it through in his poem. To understand it as a psychological event that the eating of the fruit must be motivated, that the propensity to fall pre-exists the Fall, even that Adam and Eve are in some sense or to some degree fallen before the Fall. Eating the fruit commits them irrevocably to choices they were before free to undo. What choices, with what results? The Fall's main effect on Eve and Adam, as Milton depicts it, is a conclusive identification with the body-ego, and thus a radically new self-consciousness. Eve has decisively acted on, and so confirmed, her self-image as beautiful, finite and impaired and exhausted body; and Adam, identifying with her, absorbs the anxiety attending that state.

But beneath this neo-Platonic level of psychologizing lies another, where Eve identifies with her self-image as given by patriarchal interpellation; and Adam identifies with Eve as the source of his life, of his continuity with the cosmos. In Milton himself this experiential matriarchalism seems to have given rise to ideological patriarchy, according to the pattern Dorothy Dinnerstein finds typical of male psychology. Such ambivalence and subordination, she shows us, characterize traditionally-raised men, for whom maternally-mediated sensuous immediacy and cosmic continuity evoke infantile dependence--and ego-defenses against it.

In trying to realize the prophetic ideal of inexhaustible abundance that rejects antinatural dysdaemonism, performance anxiety and enforced sublimation in favor of sensuous immediacy and natural sublimation, Milton encountered the source of the old dysdaemonic imperatives: not in the cosmos into which he, with Western culture in general, had projected them, but in his own libidinal

economy that required defense against maternally-mediated sensuous immediacy: from the lyrical sensibilities of Paradise Lost's middle books, and indeed from all of nature. Didn't such defensiveness also underlie his youthful acceptance of the castration complex and the performance principle?

Milton's Third Reversal, marked by a renewed asceticism, takes the ascetic impulses arising from defense against immediacy as a starting point. But already in the last three books of Paradise Lost, Milton's active dialectical agency begins to recover asceticism itself as a defense of immediacy. In the first stage (which we'll consider in this chapter) ethical activity in society holds open the ego against an aesthetics that willfully and inauthentically collapses the symbolic order into the bioenergetic. In the second stage, encompassing Samson Agonistes and Paradise Regained, mental warfare against the conditions of social construction sets the symbolic order against itself in a way that offers hope of dissolving the defensive Mundane Shell and permitting a new upwelling of experience.

For fallen Adam and Eve the cosmos has become a rebuke to the body-ego which they now identify, and thus an object of defense. In pursuing this course they begin to experience the entropy previously associated with Satan, the significance of which they don't immediately understand. The first manifestation of their new condition is sexual. Empson and others have wondered just why fallen sex is "fallen," as it seems no different from normal sex. That's just it, of course. And what other kind of sex is there?

Milton's angels know physical and psychic interpermeation: "total they mix." Unfallen Eve and Adam knew only genital interpenetration, but still seemed to know "Union of mind." After the Fall, psychic interpermeation ceases--"Two wills they had two intellects & not as in times of old" (FZ II 206)--due to their conclusive identification with a finite body-ego. Once this happens, the psyche willingly registers only that perceptual influx which confirms the boundaries of the ego-envelope, producing entropic self-enclosure that refuses to acknowledge itself as such. Thus arises the manufacture of novelty and intensity that Lawrence calls "sensationalism" or "sensation." Between two Spectres shorn of psychic surcharge and caught in two machines, sexuality is no longer squandering of strength in sympathetic flood, but ego-appetite: appetite, above all, for the surcharged sensation of potency sex once expressed. How to produce such a sensation? By invoking desire:

hee on Eve  
 Began to cast lascivious Eyes, she him  
 As wantonly repaid; in Lust they burn:  
 Till Adam thus 'gan Eve to dalliance move  
     Eve, now I see thou are exact of taste...  
     if such pleasure be  
 In things to us forbidden, it might be wish'd  
 For this one Tree had been forbidden ten.  
 But come, so well refresh't. now let us play,  
 As meet is, after such delicious Fare;  
 For never did thy Beauty since the day

I saw thee first and wedded thee, adorn'd  
 With all perfections, so inflame my sense  
 With ardor to enjoy thee. fairer now  
 Than ever, bounty of this virtuous Tree.  
 So said he, and forbore not glance or toy  
 Of amorous intent, well understood  
 Of Eve, whose Eye darted contagious Fire. (IX 1013-1017: 1024-36)

What's new here? It isn't just that they objectify each other, as moralism would have it. Rather, it is the appearance of a third party in the transaction. Desire, that great god, makes himself felt with the violation of a taboo: and once he does, his influence is cultivated. Nor will he be acted upon instrumentally; certainly at least, no such action will be acknowledged. It is he who will make objects of his two new subjects, whose instrumentation consists solely in a certain deliberateness of collaboration.

[W]e do not keep ourselves wholly outside the desire; the desire compromises me; I am the accomplice of my desire. Or rather the desire has fallen wholly into complicity with the body. Let any man consult his own experience; he knows how consciousness is clogged, so to speak, by sexual desire; that one slides toward a passive consent to the desire. At other moments it seems that facticity invades consciousness in its very flight and renders consciousness opaque to itself. It is like a yeasty tumescence of fact. (Being and Nothingness 364; emphasis Sartre's)

The more appalled you are by what the transparency of self-consciousness reveals, the more you cooperate with desire in rendering consciousness opaque again. Adam and Eve are not yet fully reflective about this reflectivity but are quickly becoming so--and to foreclose this, desire arises as a supplement or stimulant to a biological impulse no longer quite capable of carrying things through. And you invoke desire by intensifying the ego-contraction. Repressing erotic energy in yet tighter compass then creates a semblance of surcharge when those bounds are burst. Eve and Adam accomplish this by means of two artificial restraints, two supplements to the physical body: the visual idea and the moral ideal.

Before the Fall Adam was used by Eros; but now he manipulates it. In IX 1013-36, Adam now willingly confines his love-making to "looks only" (cf. VIII 616); he can look (and talk) but not touch, at least not for many lines. Before the Fall he seemed to need no such deliberate verbal and visual preliminaries to inflame his senses. The moral ideal works the same way. Pleasure lies in "things forbidden," says Adam, and he means more than just the taste of the fruit. The psyche, even if confined in the body-ego, can still transgress the narrower prison of the law. Once prohibited, an otherwise mechanical sex act becomes a flight of freedom. While sex has never been forbidden, Eve and Adam now act as if it had been, and their acrid ecstasy reveals why it eventually will be: "For stolen joys are sweet, & bread eaten in secret pleasant" (E iii:6). Once more the will to eudaemonism generates an

oblique asceticism. That repression creates intoxication, the sense of uncontrollable inner richness, Milton had learned in Comus.

The body-ego is a reduction of the self to a self-representation: a simply-located image of the self, from which all non-instrumental energies are expunged. The binary opposition between one body-ego and another parallels the binary opposition between symbolic self-representation and the physical, instinctual or (with Reich) bioenergetic realm that has become its other. These diremptions, for Lawrence, constitute the core of "normal" sexuality:

It is inevitable, when you live according to the picture, that you seek only yourself in sex. Because the picture is your own image of yourself: If you are quite normal, you don't have any true self, which "seeketh not her own, is not puffed up." The true self, in sex, would seek a meeting, would seek to meet the other....

But today, all is image consciousness. Sex does not exist; there is only sexuality. And sexuality is a greedy, blind self-seeking.... Heterosexual, homosexual, narcissistic, normal, or incest, it is all the same thing. (P 381)

Fallen Adam and Eve illuminate perhaps the most sophisticated function of such "sexuality": effacing the exhausted body-ego that generates it.

The purpose of this sexuality becomes clear when it fails. When Adam and Eve awaken, loss of psychic surcharge produces in them the sense of exhausted self-consciousness, of "nakedness," which self-opacifying and self-industrializing sexual ecstasy foreclosed:

So rose the Danite strong  
Herculean Samson from the Harlot-lap  
Of Philistean Dalilah, and wak'd  
Shorn of his strength, They destitute and bare  
Of all thir virtue. (IX 1059-63)

"Virtue" here keeps its old energetic meaning. The sympathetic, identificatory-metamorphic psyche is reduced to the simply-located body-ego when concocted surcharge is dissipated. No more is there even the illusion of "a soul... the body inside it" (Cantos 98/690, from Plotinus, Enneads 4. 23), but instead a ghost in a machine. So when the effect of fallen sex wears off, new forms of self-opacification must be sought. Adam now wants to "hide/ The Parts... that seem most/ To shame obnoxious"; and, more than this, to hide himself in the opacity of gross materiality: "highest woods impenetrable" (IX 1093-4; 1086).<sup>1</sup> It is a new form of that psychic contraction that sought sensuous immediacy in constricted sex.

Self-opacification by desire is for Lawrence just the first stage of "sensation," which proceeds to further de-familiarize the self and its world by contracting and ultimately dissolving psychic or organic identities. This process begins with the erotic interaction of male and female egos. "Ego reacts upon ego only in friction.... And then, when a man seeks a woman, he seeks not a consummation in union, but a frictional reduction. He seeks to plunge his compound flesh into the cold acid that will reduce him, in supreme sensual experience, down to his parts." (P II 394) As examples, Lawrence cites

Dostoevsky's Rogozhin, Myshkin and Dmitri Karamazov: Ursula and Skrebensky in The Rainbow, Gudrun and Gerald in Women in Love, and Blake's Enion and Tharmas may be added.<sup>2</sup> And, in Women In Love, Gerald pouring into Gudrun "all his pent-up darkness and corrosive death" (430).

Sensation's second phase, self-dissolution, involves "the undoing of a complete unit into the factors which previously went to making its oneness.... and every new step in decay liberates a sensation, keen, momentarily gratifying, or a conscious knowledge of the parts that made up a whole" (P II 393, 392). Dissolving organic, egoistic or cultural identities produces new intensities, against which Lawrence moralizes. "Drink, drugs, jazz, speed, 'petting,' all modern forms of thrill, are just the production of sensation by the katabolism of the finest conscious cells of our living body. We explode our own cells and release a certain energy and accompanying sensation." (P 771) Whether in the service of will to power or will to pleasure, self-industrialization consummates and reacts against itself in a release of "nuclear" energy--which only accelerates the entropy it evades, for "sensationalism, of course, is progressive.... That is, to get a sensation, you reduce down some part of your complex psyche, physical and psychic. You get a flash, as when you strike a match. But a match once struck can never be struck again. It is finished--sensationalism is an exhaustive process." (P II 398)

Socially, sensation is the opposite of culture, the organic harmonizing or synthesis of disparate elements. Does this mean all inorganic intensities, all "bodies without organs," are just perverse? Prophetic writing may possibly be accused of overcommitment to strictly organic excess and overeagerness to harness it for society. On the other hand, we'd better remember three things: the ego's facility at reterritorializing on any willed ego-dissolution; lack and resentment's ability to mimic surcharged intensities, as Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge<sup>3</sup>; and the need to cultivate the tonal in order to negotiate the nagual, as Casteñeda says. And if Comus' Lady, Blake's Imagination, Lawrence's Abruzzi or New Mexico, or Casteñeda's sorcery are quasi-schizo BwO's, Artaud's anti-organicism--the organism as the judgment of God--seems an empty body, embodying the resentment informing much of today's valorization of madness--or the idea of madness. "Quite justly do the advanced Russian and French writers acclaim madness as a great goal," wrote Lawrence in 1921. "It is the genuine goal of self-automatism, mental-conscious supremacy." (FPU 249)

And the climax of this progression is in perversity, degradation and death.... So that as the sex is exhausted, gradually, a keener desire, the desire for the touch of death follows on, in an intense nature. Then come the fatal drugs. Or else those equally fatal wars and revolutions which really create nothing at all, but destroy, and leave emptiness. (P II 398)

Fallen Adam, bypassing this gradual katabolism of sensation's second phase, turns instead directly to the final self-opacification of a naked death drive. Immediacy is had now only in the absolute extinction of absolute self-consciousness:

How gladly would I meet  
 Mortality my sentence, and be Earth  
 Insensible, how glad would lay me down  
 As in my Mother's lap! There I should rest  
 And sleep secure; his dreadful voice no more  
 Would Thunder in my ears. (X 775-80)

Adam's craving for infantile--or pre-infantile--insentience rather than forgiveness shows his despair to be not just over eternal punishment, but over eternal existence. He fears "lest all I cannot die"--that through the most ghastly joke of all he shall die only a "living Death" in which consciousness somehow persists:

That Death be not one stroke, as I suppos'd,  
 Bereaving sense, but endless misery  
 From this day onward, which I feel begun  
 Both in me, and without me, and so last  
 To perpetuity (X 809-814).

Why does eternal existence terrify him? Is it the specter of eternal boredom arising from the discrete self's certainty of someday exhausting all experience and being condemned to contemplate "[t]he same dull round even of a universe" (NNRb IV) forever? Or something slightly different?

...the endless writhe of the last, the last self-knowledge  
 and the fall to extinction, which can never come  
 (Lawrence, CP 700).

For Lawrence the abyss is an attempt to pursue self-consciousness to its consummation; for Milton, an attempt to interpose material opacity into the psyche, hiding it from itself. Both respond to the same horror of eternally-perpetuated self-consciousness. Beneath the moralized surface of Adam's soliloquy we see the abyss that generates his project:

Thus what thou desir'st,  
 And what thou fear'st, alike destroys all hope  
 Of refuge, and concludes thee miserable  
 Beyond all past example and future,  
 To Satan only like both crime and doom.  
 O Conscience, into what Abyss of fears  
 And horrors hast thou driv'n me; out of which  
 I find no way, from deep to deeper plung'd! (X 837-44)

Fallen Adam, a most unreliable guide to Milton's beliefs, is an infallible index to his anxieties. Milton's anxiety over immortality found expression in his mortalist heresy: the belief that the soul dies with the body at least until the Resurrection.<sup>4</sup> Eve's proposals of suicide and asceticism (X 980-1006) complement Adam's proto-mortalist reflections on extinguishing a life that, with the failure of self-opacification, has become unendurable.

The divorce of the body-ego from the cosmos and of the symbolic order from the bioenergetic will have far-reaching implications. On the one hand it produces, as Charles Altieri notes, a fear of

subjection by the symbolic that "forces us to treat whatever we can take as sources of value as located in some other of representation, whether it be the unconscious, always in excess of what the symbolic order imposes, or in various idealizations of the body, or in cults of resistance," leaving us to choose between the subjected ego and the unrepresentable sublime.<sup>5</sup> Even more insidiously, it compels the symbolic order's instrumental consciousness--in order to take up a position in the bioenergetic, the unconscious or any other version of the sublime--to annihilate itself by an act of instrumental will. And this annihilation can never be more than a self-preserving gesture, injecting the symbolic order into the heart of the bioenergetic, which it turns inside out and annihilates instead. The end result, as Lawrence puts it, is "sex in the head." Or an instrumentally-generated pseudo-psychosis. Or an ego-confirming brush with death (P II 399).

Milton, Blake and Lawrence anticipate Reich in urging us to see the death drive as the psyche's last desperate attempt to escape confinement in the Mundane Shell of the instrumental or body ego. Lawrence hoped that even in sensation's final phase "driven by a libido that wants to wander off to the land where there are those who are kissed by the green mamba, who are strong enough to be chosen by, and to hold the embrace of, the leopard"<sup>6</sup> that the encounter with death could shock the ego out of its shell, forcing it to acknowledge continuity with primary life (P II 399). This was not the way he chose for himself. Can't one perhaps manage to get outside the ego more easily than this? Better of course to escape the Mundane Shell even through sensation and death than to remain placidly within it as a good moral cabbage.

#### Michael and Moral Virtue

Milton of course would have rejected this way of framing one's choices. Morality may indeed amount to a repressive, conformist egoism, and he had plenty to say about morality of that sort. But as invoked in the last books of Paradise Lost morality becomes the first step to recovering paradise. How we read Michael on moral virtue depends above all on the context we supply for his speeches. Michael's instructions to Adam are clearly aimed at disciplining the body ego, and so seem quite in harmony with Christian antinaturalism. To what end this discipline? Can it yield no more than a castrating socialization? Or may it lead back toward cosmic continuity?

Adam and Eve's deep concerns, which Milton seems to have been the first in Western literature to seriously and explicitly consider, are: how can the psyche, fallen into self-consciousness, make its existence bearable? And can that psyche regenerate itself, or be regenerated? The "safer resolution" (X 1029) they choose instead of death is to place their hope for regeneration on three

mutually-interpermeating moral virtues--patience, temperance and obedience--virtues that, as we might expect, will be reconstituted in Milton's own way. The aim of morality, at this stage, is not so much to reconcile ego-dissolution with responsible relationships, or even to dissolve the ego at all, as it is to redefine the ego's simple location so that it once more becomes capable of expansion. Moral virtue as Michael will teach it is no longer a device for generating intensities by repression in order to produce for the body-ego an illusion of its own suspension, but rather an alternative self-representation: an ideal of trans-egoistic continuity that restrains the body-ego's impulses, nudging the symbolic order of self-representation a little closer to identificatory immediacy.

Toward accepting their deracinated alienation Adam and Eve are at first little inclined, though their reconciliation with each other is a step in that direction. "Prevenient Grace" (XI 3) moves them to a mutual acceptance not canceled by the moral flaws involved in the very act, as Eve's suicidal despair pushes Adam's competitive pride (X 952ff.) to the mental labor that recalls to their minds God's graciousness in judgment (X 1046ff.). With this acceptance time, terror of the self-conscious Spectre, becomes the mercy of eternity, offering space for repentance, rejuvenation--and even revenge on the Devil (X 1028-38).

The first step in overcoming the will to Paradise is to stand still and accept the fallen state. The way out of paralyzing self-consciousness, de-vitalization and illegitimacy begins with accepting paralysis for a moment--and in doing so to quit seeing these states as dichotomous to immediacy, abundance and legitimacy but as continuous with them. For they arose out of them (otherwise they would not be discernible as opposites to them) and thus may indicate a way back to them. And to insist on radical dichotomy between immediacy and self-consciousness is to confine oneself in those dichotomously-structured secondary states.

Michael comes to make this principle of patience explicit to them; it is his watchword from the first (XI 287). God, he tells them, may be found even in the fallen world; the Fall has not dispelled divine immanence, has not erased all trace of divinity in creation (XI 349-354). When a vision of disease rekindles Adam's thirst for death, Michael encourages endurance and a more thorough non-attachment. "Henceforth," exclaims Adam,

I fly not Death, nor would prolong  
Life much, bent rather how I may be quit  
Fairest and easiest of this cumbrous charge,  
Which I must keep till my appointed day  
Of rend'ring up, and patiently attend  
My dissolution. Michael repli'd  
Nor love thy Life, nor Hate; but what thou liv'st  
Live well, how long or short permit to Heav'n (XI 547-554).

Michael's non-attachment is neither self-mutilation nor self-industrialization, but healthful moderation—"The rule of not too much, by temperance taught"—(XI 532), opposing both the death drive and the will to pleasure ("ungovern'd appetite") that perverts "pure Nature's healthful rules/ To loathsome sickness." "Healthful moderation"—so innocent a precept! It sounds like Benjamin Franklin, and so provokes Lawrence's vexation:

I am a moral animal. But I am not a moral machine. I don't work with a little set of handles or levers. The Temperance-silence-order-resolution-frugality-industry-sincerity-justice-moderation-cleanliness-tranquility-chastity-humility keyboard is not going to get me going. I'm really not just an automatic piano with a moral Benjamin getting tunes out of me. (SCAL 22)

Of course not. Does Michael's morality mean that? Or is it more like this:

morality is that delicate, for ever trembling and changing balance between me and my circumambient universe, which precedes and accompanies true relatedness. (P 528)

Of course Milton would not have put it like this—not nearly so sensitively. Michael has been more concerned with such refinements as avoiding intestinal disorder. The question is, how would Milton have responded to Lawrence? Would he have despised the complacent moral automatism Lawrence finds in Franklin, and, on consideration, acknowledged the morality Lawrence praises as integral to his Paradise? How can we, after following him this far, believe he would have done anything else?

Temperance is non-attachment directed at the pleasure principle. Since sense-pleasures are immediate experiences, they can't be willed. To attempt to will them only dissolves them altogether or produces idealized fixations like "sex in the head."<sup>7</sup> Lawrence reminds both romanticism and anti-romantic reaction that

We know, really, that we can't have life for the asking, nor find it by seeking, nor get it by striving. The river flows into us from behind and below. We must turn our backs to it, and go ahead. The faster we go ahead, the stronger the river rushes into us. The moment we turn round to embrace the river of life, it ebbs away, and we see nothing but a stony fiumara....

We can't live by loving life alone. Life is like a capricious mistress: the more you woo her the more she despises you. You have to get up and go to something more interesting. Then she'll pelt after you. (P II 429-30)

The renunciation and asceticism Michael advocates are of this sort. Milton of the Third Reversal has not renounced Paradise, only the will to it, and has set for will a new task. Since instrumental ego objectifies, dichotomizes, analyzes, reduces and dissolves what it fixes upon, you can't profitably aim it at desirable psychic states. But since it can't just be shut off, what to do with it? It must be turned upon obstacles to the desired state, set to work weeding the garden, so to speak, instead of forcing the flowers.

There can be no simple escape into immediacy. Immediacy can be recovered only through increased autonomy, self-consciousness and self-definition, as the psyche severs its identification with natural finitude, with scarcity, with the will to pleasure that destroys all pleasure, and with its own sense of illegitimacy. It must realize its independence even from rightful pleasures, and even from the material means for expressing abundance. Yet autonomy is not sought for its own sake, but as a prerequisite for recovered cosmic continuity. Autonomy is a prerequisite even for immediate pleasure. To escape bondage to natural objects--first matter's finite emanations--one need not shun them (X 1013-19--a strong indirect commentary on the First Reversal's immature asceticism and on gnostic nausea in general) but only withhold full identification from them. Milton is by no means "merely repeating the ancient tenet (so convenient to authoritarianism) that the individual will is evil" (Damon 447); nor is it that as a Christian he simply "must learn to will to relax the will" (Frye, in Barker 440). On the contrary, there is plenty of will at work in these lines. The issue is its direction. Because an instrumental ego can be put to work analyzing its own instrumental complexes, it need not be destroyed out of nostalgia or despair. Prophecy's break from Romanticism lies in its adopting instrumental means to undo the Fall into instrumental self-consciousness: what Blake saw as the redemption of Urizen or the incorporation of the Spectre.<sup>3</sup> Prophetic writers find themselves forced to take responsibility for fashioning a new self via the psyche's instrumental complexes and through an austerity that dismantles castration, severs the identifications that caused the Fall, and installs in their place an identification with unlimited abundance. The psyche must define itself as such abundance, and will to identify with it--and nothing else--before its "rousing motions" can well up again.

Fallen Adam is not ready to realize such an identification. What's more important now is to forestall as far as possible the worst of the abuses that identifying with the body ego engenders. Rather than attacking cosmological abundance--as was the case in Comus--Protestant discipline in its ascetic anti-authoritarianism now lends itself to a political progressivism that may be seen as a prerequisite for cosmic continuity. If one represses one's neighbor, how can one be in harmony with God or the Cosmos? By holding the body ego open for non-exploitive relationships by preventing its collapse into the pure egoism of constructed or autonomized desire, morality limits opacity and contraction, making re-expansion easier (FZ VIII 1-14; J 42:29-36). In this it functions differently than under the emotional plague induced by orthodoxy. Michael's attack is not upon the senses, but on willed sensuality, lust arrayed in "Gems and wanton dress" (XI 583). Repulsed by visions of disease and violence, Adam seeks repose in scenes of pleasure ("Here Nature seems fulfill'd in all her ends--XI 602), and Michael's refusal to indulge him is expressed in terms of the "moral virtue" Blake excoriated:

Judge not what is best  
By pleasure, though to Nature seeming meet  
Created, as thou art, to nobler end  
Holy and pure, conformity divine. (XI 603-6)

The essence of Michael's message is that the will to pleasure, the will to Paradise, will now only make things worse--for everyone. And while the authoritarian rhetoric would have appalled Blake, the autonomy from "Nature" he extolled. For fallen Nature, the Mundane Shell constructed by fallen humanity, offers "natural" pleasure via oppression--or conformity:

Those whom last thou saw'st  
 In triumph and luxurious wealth, are they  
 First seen in acts of prowess eminent  
 And great exploits, but of true virtue void;  
 Who having spilt much blood, and done much waste  
 Subduing Nations, and achiev'd thereby  
 Fame in the World, high titles, and rich prey,  
 Shall change thir course to pleasure, ease, and sloth,  
 Surfeit, and lust, till wantonness and pride  
 Raise out of friendship hostile deeds in Peace.  
 The conquer'd also, and enslav'd by War  
 Shall with thir freedom lost all virtue lose  
 And fear of God, from whom thir piety feign'd  
 In sharp contest of Battle found no aid  
 Against invaders; therefore cool'd in zeal  
 Thenceforth shall practice how to live secure  
 Worldly or dissolute, on what thir Lords  
 Shall leave them to enjoy; for th'Earth shall bear  
 More than enough, that temperance may be tri'd (XI 787-805)

Here egalitarianism is no cloak for antinaturalism (as in Comus). The moral order to which Eve and Adam are invited to conform opposes fallen conditions not by a refusal of pleasure à la the Lady, but by a subordination of it to an anti-authoritarian morality for which even Blake came to recognize the need:

Many Persons such as Paine & Voltaire with some of the Ancient Greeks say we will not Converse concerning Good & Evil we will live in Paradise & Liberty. You may do so in Spirit but not in the Mortal Body as you pretend till after the Last Judgment for in Paradise they have no Corporeal & Mortal Body that originated with the Fall & was call'd Death & cannot be removed but by a Last judgment. While we are in the world of Mortality we Must Suffer. The Whole Creation Groans to be deliverd there will always be as many Hypocrites born as Honest Men & they will always have superior Power in Mortal Things. You cannot have Liberty in this World without what you call Moral Virtue & you cannot have Moral Virtue without the Slavery of that half of the Human Race who hate what you call Moral Virtue. (VLJ 92)

More reluctant than Milton to invoke the rhetoric of virtue, Blake finds similar reasons for doing so. And Blake's nominalism re virtue ("what you call Moral Virtue"--a term he preferred to reserve for legalistic self-righteousness) is reflected in Lawrence and Milton, who both felt fine about defining morality unconventionally. Lawrence, vehement against all moral ideals and absolutes, defined morality as "pure relationship... the trembling instability of the balance" (P 528):

It seems as if, primarily, the will and the conscience were identical, in the premental state. It seems as if the will were given as a great balancing faculty, the faculty whereby automatization is prevented in the evolving psyche. The spontaneous will reacts at once against the exaggeration of any one particular circuit of polarity. Any vital circuit--a fact known to psychoanalysis. And against this automatism, this degradation from the spontaneous-vital reality into the mechanic-material reality, the human soul must always struggle. (FPU 248; emphasis Lawrence's)

May we read this distillation of Lawrencian morality as an extension of Michael's "rule of not too much, by temperance taught" (XI 531)? Well... perhaps someone who could say

Why limit a man to a Christian-brotherhood? I myself, I could belong to the sweetest Christian-brotherhood one day, and ride after Attila with a raw beefsteak for my saddle-cloth, to see the red cock crow in flame over all Christendom, next day (P II 421)

was temperate in the sense of refusing to surrender permanently to either extreme.' And such a man certainly was Milton, who could defend divorce, polygamy and regicide one day and pen Michael's discourse the next—without giving any evidence of repentance. It sounds extreme to say that Milton's morality lies fundamentally, like Lawrence's, in obedience to spontaneous life-impulses—even when we persistently catch him re-interpreting scripture and history in a way that seems designed to confirm his deepest desires. Each of Milton's three reversals is in fact a massive re-thinking of moral imperatives according to his personal and poetic situation. Only once, of course, in the Second Reversal, does this produce the straightforward eudaemonism we associate with Lawrence and Blake. But when we look more closely at Blake and Lawrence we see aspects resembling the Milton of the First, and especially the Third, Reversal. For obeying spontaneous life impulses after the Fall is a very tricky business, as anyone who tries to do it soon finds out.

Milton's refusal to relinquish moral rhetoric to orthodoxy exemplifies once again the prophetic superego that Blake and Lawrence will perpetuate. Seeing a superego still at work without examining the nature of its work is another prime failing of Milton criticism. Having observed the superego's reconstruction, we may no longer suppose that the Michael's "conformity divine" means social conformism--as his remarks on political and ecclesiastical authority (e.g. XII 24-47, 507-550) make clear, first with reference to Nimrod:

till one shall rise  
Of proud ambitious heart, who not content  
With fair equality, fraternal state,  
Will arrogate Dominion undeserv'd  
Over his brethren, and quite dispossess  
Concord and law of Nature from the Earth;  
Hunting (and Men not Beasts shall be his game)  
With War and hostile snare such as refuse  
Subjection to his Empire tyrannous:  
A mighty Hunter thence he shall be styl'd  
Before the Lord, as in despite of Heav'n,

Or from Heav'n claiming second Sovranty;  
 And from Rebellion shall derive his name,  
 Though of Rebellion others he accuse. (XII 24-37)

The point is repeated regarding the apostolic succession by papist priestcraft (XII 507ff.). Samson and Jesus will further demolish any conformist readings of Milton. "Conformity divine" is obedience to the divine principles of liberty and eudaemonistic temperance, to divine will as revealed by inner light--and to nothing besides.

It is no longer as easy as it once was to depict a Milton in "neo-Christian" conformity with the morality of the Mundane Shell, and the realization that he can't be so reduced seems to have cost him friends. Thus Kerrigan writes of Paradise Lost XII 537-9 ("so shall the World go on,/ To good malignant, to bad men benign/ Under her own weight groaning"): "These are mean lines. The weight under which the world groans is the bad fruit of Milton's reforming passions." (276) Or, with the conventional wisdom, "deal with it and get on with life." Or rather, don't deal with it. "God save the King Down with Liberty," scrawls Blake in the margin. Yes, Milton's refusal of anything less than political, religious and (even in his asceticism) sexual liberty does make psychoanalysis uncomfortable. Having failed to reconstruct either the superego or the ego-ideal, psychoanalysis demands of Milton consolation, but he turns a deaf ear. "To complete his task authentically, Milton must justify the ways of men to men." (Kerrigan 285) "Only the Devil can do this," scribbles Blake.

"The vision of Milton thou dost see/ Is my vision's greatest enemy"... to paraphrase Blake's Everlasting Gospel. I see Milton's response to the Mundane Shell's conformist morality, natural finitude and psychic defense as an asceticism oriented to regeneration rather than resignation, a morality that encourages one to will acts that preferably would arise spontaneously. Moral exertion is a preliminary effort, a prerequisite for the revival of spontaneous impulse. Fallen humanity, Milton seems to suggest, must conform to preceptual morality in order to clear the ground for the spontaneous upwelling of the internal paradise. Morality means, too, rejecting all pressure to behave as if such impulses are forever forfeited. This is one of the challenges Samson and Jesus will face.

## Notes to Chapter Seven

<sup>1</sup> For perhaps the clearest example of this motif in Blake, see FZ 4:24ff.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the following textual variant of page 7 of The Four Zoas ms. describing Enion and Tharmas' lovemaking:

Opening his rifted rocks mingling together they join in burning anguish  
 Mingling his horrible darkness with her tender limbs then high she soard  
 shrieking above the ocean: a bright wonder that nature shudderd at  
 Half Woman & half beast all his darkly waving colours mix  
 With her fair crystal clearness in her lips & cheeks his poisons rose  
 In blushes like the morning & his scaly armour softning  
 A wonder lovely in the heavens or wandering on the earth  
 With female voice warbling upon the hills & hollow vales  
 Beauty all blushing with desire a Self enjoying wonder  
 For Enion brooded groaning loud the rough seas vegetate. (Complete Poetry and Prose 846: cf. FZ 7:8-13)

with the following from The Rainbow:

She yielded to him, and pressed himself upon her in extremity, his soul groaning over and over:  
 "Let me come--let me come."

She took him in the kiss, hard her kiss seized upon him, hard and fierce and burning  
 corrosive as the moonlight. He was reeling, summoning all his strength to keep his kiss upon  
 her, to keep himself in the kiss.

But hard and fierce she had fastened upon him, cold as the moon and burning as a  
 fierce salt. Till gradually his warm, soft iron yielded, yielded, and she was there fierce,  
 corrosive, seething with his destruction, seething like some cruel corrosive salt around the last  
 substance of his being, destroying him, destroying him in the kiss. And her soul crystallised  
 with triumph, and his soul was dissolved with agony and annihilation. (368)

<sup>3</sup> We still have not answered the question of why there are so many dangers, so many necessary precautions. It is not enough to set up an abstract opposition between the strata and the BwO.... Take the organism as a stratum: there is indeed a BwO that opposes the organization of the organs we call the organism, but there is also a BwO of the organism that belongs to that stratum. Cancerous tissue: each instant, each second, a cell becomes cancerous, mad, proliferates and loses its configuration, takes over everything; the organism must resubmit it to its rule or restratify it, not only for its own survival, but also to make possible an escape from the organism... The strata spawn their own BwO's, totalitarian and fascist BwO's terrifying caricatures of the plane of consistency.... How can we fabricate a BwO for ourselves without its being the cancerous BwO of a fascist inside us, or the empty BwO of a drug addict, paranoiac, or hypochondriac? How can we tell the three Bodies apart? Artaud was constantly grappling with this problem. (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 162-3)

<sup>4</sup> For Milton's mortalism see Hill 317-323. Note the almost complete absence of references to the resurrection or the afterlife in Milton, unusual for a Christian writer.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Altieri, Subjective Agency: A Theory of First-person Expressivity and its Social Implications (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 166.

<sup>6</sup> Alphonso Lingis, Excesses: Eros and Culture 46.

<sup>7</sup> A point Lawrence will amplify:

A child in the bath sees the soap, and wants it, and won't be happy till he gets it.  
 When he gets it he rubs it into his eyes and sucks it, and is in a far more unhappy state. Why?

To see the soap and to want it is a natural act on the part of any young animal, a sign of that wonderful naive curiosity which is so beautiful in young life. But the "he won't be happy till he gets it" quality is, alas, purely human. A young animal, if diverted, would forget the piece of soap at once. It is only an accident on his horizon. Or, given the piece of soap, he would sniff it, perhaps turn it over, and then merely abandon it. Beautiful to us is the pure nonchalance of a young animal which forgets the piece of soap the moment it has sniffed it and found it no good. Only the intelligent human baby proceeds to fill its mouth, stomach and eyes with acute pain, on account of the piece of soap. Why? Because the poor little wretch got an idea, an incipient idea into its little head. (P 604)

<sup>3</sup> FZ VIIa 335-499; IX 162ff.

## Chapter Eight: CATHARSIS AND ARTICULATION IN SAMSON AGONISTES

### Samson as Antitype?

For Dr. Johnson, Samson Agonistes was "the tragedy which ignorance has admired, and bigotry applauded." Was the bigotry Milton's own, manifested in his identification with his fanatical and violent protagonist? Or does Milton disavow Samson, depicting him as a deluded egomaniac to the very end, and so incapable of the regeneration traditionally ascribed to him? If so, does it not become possible, along lines opened by Stanley Fish, to imagine that Samson Agonistes may have been written to tempt a readership desiring to see Samson vindicated, who in their "blood lust and interpretive lust"<sup>1</sup> crave to have him end unequivocally "as a martyr, a witness to Jehovah's truth," or (along with the author of Hebrews 11:32) "a prototypical saint,"<sup>2</sup>. A readership who, though in so desiring and reading they reveal their unfitness as readers or as Christians to penetrate the work's intent, have managed to inflict on us a Milton who is "less poet than polemicist, doctrinaire rather than doctrinal, rigidified by his Christian convictions into inhumanity rather than illumined to a clearer reading of the human condition" (Samuel 256).

Samson Agonistes has in recent years become Milton's most controversial work, as anti-regenerationist readings have questioned the traditional "regenerationist pieties" (Fish 580) that make Samson an unproblematic expression of interpretive certainty or of Milton's own voice—or even a type of Christ. The impasse produced by this questioning offers, I believe, the opportunity to open the play up more completely than ever, and to illuminate deep aspects of Milton that both piety and iconoclasm must, by virtue of their nature, pass over. At stake are at least four interrelated issues of vital importance: the nature of Milton's ethical and political convictions; the nature of tragic art; the general possibility of interpretive confidence; and the nature of social construction. Without hoping to produce a definitive statement on any of these issues, I would like here to explore their intersection in Samson Agonistes in order to suggest how Milton's tragedy provides an alternative to regenerationist optimism, anti-regenerationist moralism, and pragmatist indeterminism.

To my knowledge the first, and certainly the most judicious, statement of the anti-regenerationist case is Irene Samuel's 1971 essay, "Samson Agonistes" as tragedy. Samuel finds Milton's own attitude toward the subject matter of his tragedy incompatible with his protagonist's character.

[T]hough Milton was no pacifist, throughout his pages peace is the good word; revenge and vengeance are regularly linked with the tyrannical and diabolical rather than the divine....

However necessary Milton found the military struggle of his time against episcopal and royalist tyranny in order that the English nation might gain a government of law and a separation of church and state, he nowhere glorified slaughter.... The most that Milton is willing to say of avenging God and his church is that it is "not forbidden"... the whole tenor of Christian Doctrine as it bears on the kind of episode with which Samson ends his career show Milton averse by both temperament and conviction to the mentality that preaches holy wars. (236-8)

To disavow Samson's earlier slaughters of the Philistines requires us to disavow even the last great massacre in the temple, for how could the last be approved by a God, or author who repudiates the first? If Milton disapproved of such indiscriminate violence in general, how could he have upheld it as divinely sanctioned in the end?

The nature of tragedy as Milton understood it is also invoked to deny Samson regeneration. While, Samuel admits, regenerationist tragedies like Oedipus at Colonus or Lear exist, they are exceptions. "While Aristotle does not require an unhappy ending in tragedy... he distinctly prefers it" (240); moreover, Aristotle makes no allowance for the hero to be regenerated by direct divine intervention, which would amount to the deus ex machina he despised (240). Milton too would have rejected such intervention--central to most accounts of Samson's "regeneration"--because "Milton's is so distinctly the ethic of will and reason freely choosing that a deus ex machina resolution of plot would be repugnant to him on theological and al no less than on artistic grounds" (242).

Samuel finds Samson to retain his character flaws to last. In his vain-glorying, he still cannot be content to live in defeat (244); he despairingly longs for death (245); he is still as garrulous as ever (246--a cheap shot, I fear, for simple garrulity was never quite his crime, as we'll see); he indulges in uncalled-for verbal violence against Dalila, and indeed against the Philistines in general, who Milton hardly portrays as fit objects of destruction but as in various ways more moderate and humane than their destroyer (249-51). Moreover, the optimistic nationalism of Manoa and the Chorus is unreliable, shallow and un-Miltonic. "If Milton intended us to rejoice with them," Samuel asserts, "he wrote Samson Agonistes out of motives largely unlike those of his other known works" (252)--particularly A Treatise of Civil Power where, addressing not just kings and bishops but his own party, he argued the uncertainty of imposing force on others by virtue of a claim to divine inspiration. "Of course, Samson's gropings toward clarity about himself, his vocation, and God's purposes raise him above even the best of what the Chorus or Manoa say. And of course the Philistines are cruel tyrants to him and his people," admits Samuel. "We do want tyrants put down and their captives released from power. Only

we want much more than that in Samson Agonistes, and in the way of tragedy we get something that defies our wish but in defying it assures us that our wish is right." (254)

Fifteen years after Samuel, Joseph Wittreich offered an expanded version of her position. Interpreting "Samson Agonistes" (1986)<sup>3</sup> was aimed most directly at Krouse's Milton's Samson and the Christian Tradition (1949) which argued for Samson as a type of Christ--but indirectly, I suspect, at leftist readings such as Christopher Hill's and Jackie DiSalvo's that were beginning to appear. For Wittreich, contra Krause, Samson was by no means universally recognized as a type of Christ; instead we see "a multiplicity of Samsons, a tangle of typologies... The Samson legend was the property of no single political party and the promoter of no one ideology." (178, 215). The Christ-typology was often qualified during the first four decades of the Seventeenth Century (186-92); was popular during the next two (195, 197); while after the Restoration it tended to be qualified again (206) with the figure of Samson sometimes assimilated to that of the king (212). Monarchist sentiments seem to stand behind Wittreich's assertion (98-9) that the Biblical narrator, despite assigning divine inspiration to Samson in Judges 14:4, implicitly repudiates his acts in the refrain "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 21:25--a phrase absent, we must note, from the Samson account itself).

Regenerationists, developing Samson's own questionable way of reading, tend to justify Samson's former depredations from the divine approval supposedly given his last one (66)--and his last acts from the supposed approval of his former ones (82). But Milton holds back from presenting either as divinely inspired. Nowhere are we told, most importantly, that the "rousing motions" Samson feels (l. 1382) are unequivocally from God; nor that Samson's final deliberation (ll. 1637-8) is definitely a prayer (73).

Samson, rather than being regenerated through his encounters with Dalila and Harapha, only sinks into a kind of mimetic violence with them (231-2-, 316). And Milton does not identify with Samson, only holds him up as a bad example.

Samson Agonistes is not an autobiographical poem but a poem that derives an important dimension of meaning from the inclusion of the kind of autobiographical detail which invites a comparison of Samson and Milton--and eventually a contrast.... The relationship between Milton and Samson, so often perceived as an identity, is perhaps better conceived of in terms of the relationship between analyst and analysand.... (278, 165)

Perhaps so, yet there may still be some transference. Pursuing Samuel's observations on genre, Wittreich emphasizes that the poem is not regenerative comedy but tragedy, in which "the fall belongs to the players and the redemption to the playwright and, potentially, to his audience" (102). The tragedy is religious and political, contained within the promise "that the cycles of history can be broken

upon the block of an improved moral consciousness" that would presumably purge "that primitive Hebrew element which persists in Renaissance Christianity" (114). Milton, who himself "led the life of a tragic man," (376) wrote Paradise Regained and Samson as moral instruction: "As interpretive fictions, Milton's last poems are how-to-live and how-not-to-live poems" (379), respectively. "Milton casts the Samson story as a tragedy, exemplifying what not to do." (16)

The parallels between Samson and the Milton overthrown by the Restoration can thus mean only one thing: Milton in Samson renounces the Revolution. "Only an ethical drama derived from an Old Testament book like Judges. Milton seems to be saying, is primitive enough to approximate the moral conditions obtaining in England during the Revolution and its aftermath." (324)

It is true that, especially in his early prose writings, Milton had locked arms with a clique of rebels who read the Book of Revelation as an invitation to revolution and who used that invitation as a license for transforming society, at their own will, in anticipation of the imminent end.... Samson Agonistes, along with the poem with which it was published, mirrors both the violent revolutionary content of the apocalyptic myth and the cooling off of such religious and political activism into apolitical quietism. (368, 375)

Commentary by Manoa and the Chorus upholding comfortable idealized or regenerationist views, Wittreich finds, is self-contradictory and unreliable. At one moment they discredit Samson's divine inspiration, at another they affirm it (155, 166). The Chorus's misogyny is held to be uncharacteristic of Milton (90-1).<sup>4</sup> Manoa in particular is prone to self-deceptive optimism (221). As Wittreich extended Samuel's argument in political directions she might not have fully approved, so Stanley Fish takes the hermeneutical inadequacies of Manoa and the Chorus as evidence for the radical indeterminacy of reading. These inept readers, "literalists at heart, cannot indefinitely avert their gaze from the disturbing features of the landscape" (559), but set about to domesticate Samson's differences. By determining God as unreadable, they make him eminently readable (561); by labeling Samson's death "noble" they quiet their doubts. By establishing Samson in the proper relation to gender, the Chorus forestalls the "threat of femininity"--to which we'll return (564). Samson too fashions a closed narrative, rooting himself in moral and hermeneutical certainty that testifies to his desire for "the imprisonment he pretends to abhor" (574). And yet at the end, his decision to abandon principled obduracy in response to the Chorus's "less than exalted" appeal seems, after all, curiously redemptive. Despite the legal prohibition against participating in the pagan feast, he consents to be present--"I with this Messenger will go along" (l. 1384).

Like Abraham, Samson goes out, or rather, goes along, and he goes along to he knows not what and with a mind constant only in its willingness to encounter possibilities (of thought and action) it cannot anticipate. Going along is just that and no more, a resolution to keep moving, to see what happens, take a chance, turn the next corner, walk the tightrope of experience and choice without a safety net. This is

what it means to be free, to be in one's own power and not in the power of others, and while that freedom is glorious and liberating, it is also terrifying. (579)

A surprising concession to a redefined regenerationism! But Fish is not through yet; a further surprise is in store, for which we must wait a little.

For the time being, let us return to Wittreich's and Samuel's concerns. First, let us acknowledge their ethical power. While we need not be shocked at anything said or done in the name of Christianity, for a Christian of Milton's persuasion to unequivocally endorse Samson's activities and character would be surprising. Having traced Milton's development of a prophetic ideal encompassing both aesthetic and ethical abundance, we can hardly avoid being disturbed by the breakdown in the play of its ethical component. And yet we have seen it break down already, in the subordinationism infecting Paradise Lost. How might the ethical problems of the great epic shed light on those of the tragedy?

Some preliminary objections may be made to antiregenerationism, especially in Wittreich. The popularity of the Christ-typology for Samson during the 1640s and 1650s--the decades of the Revolution--suggests the likelihood of Milton identifying with Samson personally and politically--and of his desire to wrest the figure of Samson back from Restoration attempts to reappropriate it. Assuming, of course that he remained loyal to the Revolution, that his later years, as DiSalvo suggests, were marked by the internalization of revolution and its retreat into culture under pressure of censorship and worse, rather than by a quietist recantation for which there is no real evidence. Did Milton's Christian moral principles move him to recant? Not only in the Samson story, not only in Judges, but throughout the Old Testament he could have found justification for the use of force to preserve or regain liberty. And if his principles were not flexible enough to stomach his own defense of regicide, how did they become flexible enough to repudiate the cause for which he had given his sight? Did he come to feel used by the "clique of rebels" he'd fallen in with? Samson Agonistes would have provided a golden opportunity to voice such sentiments. Yet all we hear from Samson is of the need to be more valiant in the struggle, his voice the voice of Milton warning England in "The Ready and Easy Way" against "choosing a captain back for Egypt."

Forced to reject the recantation theory, we find the basic problem facing antiregenerationist readings like Wittreich's and Samuel's to be this: why would Milton take such an interest in Samson if he did not strongly identify with him? If it would be unprecedented for Milton simply to endorse Samson's attitude, it would be just as unusual for him to create a protagonist simply as a bad example. Even Satan is not treated in such a way; and Milton's identification with Satan, though strong at moments, seems far less extensive than with Samson. While arguments focusing on specific autobiographical allusions in the play can be picked at,<sup>5</sup> the broad structural parallels between Samson

and Milton are hard to ignore. These parallels, commonplaces scarcely mentioned in many regenerationist arguments, must nevertheless be dealt with by the antiregenerationist case. Both Samson and Milton (1) are heroic defenders of their beleaguered nation; (2) lose their sight in defense of that nation; (3) end their life defeated and confined; (4) marry a woman of the opposite camp (5) by whom they are deserted or betrayed (6) and who, returning, pleads to be taken back--this last parallel, absent in Judges, being inserted by Milton into Samson's plot for no apparent reason except to bring the two lives into the fullest possible congruity.

Would Milton have identified not only with Samson's heroism but with his weaknesses? Some possible Samsonesque self-indictments--or accusations from others that Milton might have felt compelled to consider--are the following: (1) poetic garrulity, overeagerness to publish himself in order to gain fame (as Northrop Frye proposed); (2) a foolish first marriage; (3) his revolutionary activities, including his defense of regicide; (4) his failure to rouse England against the Restoration; (5) a general submission to social construction that undermined his individualism and immanentism. That Milton may have been concerned over these indictments doesn't necessarily mean he subscribed to them. But whether he did or did not, he can easily be imagined as using Samson Agonistes to stage his regeneration--or his vindication--with respect to them.

Moralistic condemnations of Samson forget that the play is a tragedy, whose flawed hero therefore is to undergo purgation. As Milton declared in his preface:

Tragedy, as it was anciently compos'd, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other Poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirr'd up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is Nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion: for so in Physic things of melancholic hue and quality are us'd against melancholy, sour against sour, salt to remove salt humors.

Or as Blake puts it: "Poetry is to excuse Vice and shew its reason & necessary purgation" (An. Dante, pp. 45-6) For Milton, tragedy's moral effect is homeopathic, using representations of immorality to purge immorality. That is why Samuel's and Wittreich's idea of tragedy--"exemplifying through its protagonist what not to do"--is so impoverished. For them as for Plato, art's function is strictly mimetic. Since we imitate what we see, art's justification is to represent the good, presenting the bad only for explicit condemnation. But while under Platonic moralism art's function is preventative, the Aristotelian notion of catharsis shows how it can be curative. Precisely by inducing identification with the protagonist whose fall we vicariously experience, tragedy lets us project onto him our passions--and so purge ourselves of them, at least for awhile. This of course is entirely in line with Rene Girard's theories of sacrifice and the scapegoat--to both of which tragic ritual drama is related.

The best way for tragedy to induce identification in its audience is to express an identification felt by the dramatist. This brings us to the question: just what is being purged in Samson Agonistes? Is the play's tragic matter entirely public, the object of its catharsis being the lust for political vengeance? Such a view still implies Milton's recognition in himself of feelings similar to Samson's--feelings his situation made almost inevitable, but which he preferred to purge in art rather than express in life. And yet this is not the only possibility. Is the play also a domestic, sexual tragedy, centering around Dalila, who indeed calls forth Samson's strongest emotions?

Or is the tragic matter yet deeper and more private than that? Does the catharsis extend even to the totality of identifications and constructions rooted in infantile psychic levels, and which when aroused manifest themselves both sexually and politically in violent outbursts--"a volcano erupting," says Wittreich (15)--so in excess of what the circumstances seem to warrant?

#### The Crime of Language

How did Samson get into such a mess? Again and again he returns to the one cause that matters to him--a slip of the tongue:

Whom have I to complain of but myself?  
 Who this high gift of strength committed to me,  
 In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,  
 Under the Seal of silence could not keep,  
 But weakly to a woman must reveal it.... (46-50)

and for a word, a tear,  
 Fool, have divulg'd the secret gift of God  
 To a deceitful Woman... (201-3)

She was not the prime cause, but I myself,  
 Who vanquish'd with a peal of words (O weakness!)  
 Gave up my fort of silence to a Woman.... (234-6)

let me here,  
 As I deserve, pay on my punishment;  
 And expiate, if possible, my crime,  
 Shameful garrulity. (488-91)

This recoil against language, like that against woman, clearly meant something personal to Milton, but what? Was it an ambivalence about completing his epic, a fear that he'd sent it forth into the world prematurely? Milton was "for a great part of his life torn between two contradictory, but equally powerful and valid, impulses--one to complete his epic, the other to postpone it until it was ready"

(Frye, in Barker 440). Sonnets VII and XIX and "Lycidas" show his anxiety over becoming a "mute inglorious Milton" himself. Did haste to prevent this produce a premature epic expression and then a self-recriminating recoil into silence resembling Pound's abandonment of the attempt to "write Paradise"? But Pound's late silence rose from far greater errors than that. Nor does this motif resonate well in Samson (though it does in Paradise Regained), since it doesn't engage the sexual aspect of Samson's self-recrimination. So though this view tempts, it seems to apply more to Paradise Regained, leaving us to seek another source for Samson's recoil.

We could do worse than to begin looking for it in the nature of language, especially if we have noticed the theme of constructed identity in Milton's late works. Lacan of course has sensitized us to these things, and may be invoked for insights from time to time without, one hopes, the need of subscribing strictly to Lacanianism. For here, as always, Milton resists any doctrinaire reading, compelling us to shine lights from several angles in order to illuminate what he is up to. Let us begin with a passage in Sartre from which springs much in Lacan:

Language is not a phenomenon added on to being-for-others. It is originally being-for-others; that is, it is the fact that a subjectivity experiences itself as an object for the Other.... It forms part of the human condition; it is originally the proof which a for-itself can make of its being-for-others, and finally it is the surpassing of this proof and the utilization of it toward possibilities which are my possibilities; that is, toward my possibilities of being this or that for the Other. Language therefore is not distinct from the recognition of the Other's existence. The Other's upsurge confronting me as a look makes language arise as the condition of my being. This primitive language is not necessarily seduction... But conversely... language can be revealed entirely and at one stroke by seduction as a primitive mode of being of expression. Of course by language we mean all the phenomena of expression and not the articulated word, which is a derived and secondary mode whose appearance can be made the object of an historical study. Especially in seduction language does not aim at giving to be known but at causing to experience. (Being and Nothingness 348-9; emphasis Sartre's)

Fascinating language arises from the look of the Other, beginning with the parent, who is the first to install its desire as a split in the subject via the narcissism of the internalized gaze. Language, in Sartre's broad sense, is the medium through which most social identification takes place; and verbal language is the medium whereby such identification is conditioned, its terms conveyed implicitly or explicitly by the dominant parties. Such construction by seduction or by intimidation must be exposed and surpassed in order to liberate relations with others.

This seems to me to be the project of Milton's last two great poems, in which we see the symbolic order of self-representation beginning to reflect upon its own construction. There has been some debate over their genre--not quite epic, not quite drama. At one level their genre is the dramatized

ethical debate, grafted onto tragedy in Samson and onto epic in Paradise Regained. Why take up this mode at this time?

Paradise Lost was an epic concerning the lyric condition: everything turns on the loss of that state through interpellation and identification, the latter being lyricism's fundamental power and virtue. Paradise Lost traced in detail how sensuous immediacy dissolves itself, and in this dramatic self-representation lie the beginnings of lucidity. Once the dynamics of the Fall are lucidly formulated and mapped, it may be possible for lucidity to help lyricism reverse them.<sup>5</sup>

How the paternal superego appropriates the child's being has been a commonplace since Freud. How the maternally-mediated id does so appears through Dinnerstein's breakthroughs. In the traditional patriarchal family, where child-rearing is assigned to one mother, she becomes the mediator of sensuous immediacy and cosmic continuity at the psyche's earliest stage of development, giving her enormous power over it. Through perceptual identification with her the child is initiated into language, non-verbal and then verbal; and her implicit or explicit judgment on the child and its basic biological urges, constructs the child's subsequent attitudes in ways often too deep for conscious realization. Sexuality is especially overcoded with early maternal cathexes. And whether the child be male or female, the rest of its life tends to be spent in displaced escapes from, and defenses against, maternal influence. For males this generally involves subordination of women, resistance to intimacy, and instrumental defenses against sensations of immediacy and cosmic continuity. (For women, it typically takes the form of anti-female sentiments and complicity with male domination.)<sup>7</sup> We have seen such defenses at work among the males in Paradise Lost; their effect has been to ruin Paradise by ruining Eve, thus precipitating the Fall.

Samson Agonistes, far from free of misogyny and subordination (see 1053ff.) registers the complicity, in these things, of language, through which the child's being was appropriated by both parents, giving rise to strategies of compensation. This realization, dangerous in its profundity for child or adult, tempts one to repudiate the entire symbolic order. Until a way can be found to re-appropriate language for one's own project, must one not defend against it, even in its broadest sense that includes the gaze of the other? This of course is not quite how Lacan would put it; but—granting that phenomena of this kind were not devised by Lacan but discovered by him—it seems to be how Milton intuitively organized the territory when he ventured into it. If we may be permitted to interweave Reich and Lawrence with Lacan, it may be possible to offer some insight into Samson's famous riddles, especially as Milton represents them.

Samson's original strategy was to shield his interiority from the Other's desire by using language against itself in riddles. These "forts of silence" are impregnable, inaccessible signifying structures; and their answers, like Samson's hair—and like the phallus—represent the potent bioenergetic

individuality that Samson would protect from exposure. When the first riddle is guessed (in the Judges account) Samson declares himself sexually compromised--"If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." Next he puts off Dalila with three false answers to the riddle of his strength, evading the communication that exposes the naive bioenergetic core to the Other's gaze. To reveal the secret--"shameful garrulity"--is to discover the phallus in the place of the Other, as shame (Ecrits 288). And it is to surrender entirely to the desire of the Other, unbarring the gates to one's innermost being and assenting to the process whereby one becomes linguistically reconstituted as subjected subject.

As Lacan notes (Ecrits 285), the split effected by installing the Other in the unconscious is castration. That Samson feels castrated by Dalila--and, indeed, by his own sexuality--there can be little doubt:

Fearless of danger, like a petty God  
 I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded  
 On hostile ground, none daring my affront.  
 Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell  
 Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,  
 Soft'n'd with pleasure and voluptuous life;  
 At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge  
 Of all my strength in the lascivious lap  
 Of a deceitful Concubine who shore me  
 Like a tame Wether, all my precious fleece...  
 Effeminately vanquished (529-40, 562).

Yet he senses that castration was the cause, not the result, of his yielding:

But foul effeminacy held me yok't,  
 Her Bondslave...  
servile mind  
 Rewarded well with servile punishment (410-13)

What does this mean? It means that his riddles defended not against the original castration, but against the recognition of it. Riddles protect what has already been lost. A passage from Blake helps illuminate this situation:

For every human heart has gates of brass & bars of adamant  
 Which few dare unbar because dread Og & Anak guard the gates  
 Terrific! and each mortal brain is wall'd and moated round  
 Within: and Og & Anak watch here; here is the Seat  
 Of Satan in its Webs; for in brain and heart and loins  
 Gates open behind Satans Seat to the City of Golgonooza  
 Which is the spiritual fourfold London, in the loins of Albion (M 20:34-40)

Here are three concentric fortifications: the outer, Og and Anak's; the middle, Satan's Seat; and the inner, Golgonooza-- Blake's term for the interior Paradise, the naive bioenergetic core. Unhappily, we enlist Og and Anak to defend the promised land, the Cherub to guard the way of the Tree of Life, after

the Fall. The barn door is locked only after the horse is stolen; Paradise is defended only after it has been invaded and its inhabitants expelled. It isn't just that the Other forbids re-entry. Rather, we cooperate in maintaining the guards to avoid reliving the trauma of our expulsion, arming the psyche<sup>s</sup> with repressed or instrumentally-sublimated energies so as not to accidentally stumble onto, or wake up in, the primal scene of reconstitution. Are not Samson's riddles actually this sort of belated defense? And was not his armored masculinity's collapse into infantile relaxation programmed long ago?

Redemption from this state requires traversing the web of language ("Satan's Seat"), reclaiming it from the Other's desire, vanquishing the parental bogeys of Id and Superego that installed the Other--and with it, the self-conscious self--in the bioenergetic core. Samson must forsake a failed and defensive lyricism for a lucidity discourse that enables him to begin conceptualizing what's happened to him, identifying misidentifications and acting instrumentally on them. He won't find it necessary to exhume repressed memories of the original instruction scene; instead he reconstitutes it in the present and reworks it in two debates that subject the Other to re-instruction.

Ethical debate in Samson Agonistes begins the attempt to express and expunge the conditions of self-inversion. But at this stage the debate's outcome is not the responsible articulation of positions as much as the annihilation of the Other's desire and power (physical and moral) through the weapon of language. For Samson Agonistes must recover linguistic expression on two levels. And the regenerationist/anti-regenerationist controversy can be resolved, I think, by distinguishing these expressive levels. First is expression as catharsis, characteristic of tragic drama, the discourse of which is poetic. Tragic catharsis, engaging unconscious, infantile or collective psychic strata, may when it succeeds bring about an inarticulate, unconscious restructuring of identifications. Second is expression as articulation, which through rational deliberation may effect a conscious restructuring, or rational defense, of identifications. This is not to say that Samson Agonistes shifts between a poetry of catharsis and a prosaic debate. Just the reverse: stylistically the poem is unified because the pressure of catharsis permeates the debate.

Beneath Samson's endeavor to justify his particular acts of violence and deception lie not only Girard's insight that such violence cannot but be reciprocal unless ritually contained, but also the Nietzschean understanding--the understanding, especially, of every discourse of the oppressed--that violence aimed at recovering one's being is an error necessary for life. Such violence can never be unequivocally justified at the ethical level upon which Samson (and probably Milton too) would justify it; certainly most of Samson's claims are eminently contestable. But though Samson's conduct often does not measure up to our third-person ethical standards, when his discourse in the play is seen as expressing an effort to undo a primal scene of instruction recover his being and language from an Other, and so reconstitute himself as an autonomous moral agent, a degree of sympathy for him may—

and, I think, should—return. This self-reconstitution occurs on two levels: on one, it is a problematic intellectual self-defense, recalling Milton's defenses of regicide; on the other, it is an even more problematic rhetorical annihilation of his adversaries. On the first level Samson, like Jesus in Paradise Regained, recovers and re-affirms his humanity by resisting the third-person self-objectification his adversaries would impose on him. On the second level, suppressed emotions associated with the ordinary construction break through when figures encountered in adult life (Harapha and Dalila) step into old parental roles and catch hell for it. They may largely deserve what they get—or they may not. Milton will try to make Harapha and Dalila worthy of Samson's vituperation, but some readers (notably Empson) have remained unconvinced.

Psychological catharsis in Samson Agonistes oozes out all over the play, producing the mimetic structures of vengeance described in Girard with reference to The Bacchae and other tragedies,<sup>9</sup> in which we are plunged into aporias of mimetic violence which threaten in turn to dissolve into hermeneutical whirlpools. To impute divine sanction to its processes is to dive directly into such whirlpools. Yet if the prophetic ideal as aesthetic abundance induces dissatisfaction with articulation confined to third-person moralism, the ideal as ethical abundance insists that catharsis serves its purpose only through a restructuring of identity that moves one beyond both victimage and resentment. While the release of negative emotions picks up the popular usage of "catharsis" as "venting," this alone cannot accomplish tragedy's psychological function or fulfill its ethical potential. For catharsis to be complete, the original identifications installed via "pity and "fear" must be purged and restructured. There is no reason why this restructuring must be conscious; yet it is greatly aided by the conscious activity of articulation, even if (especially if) that activity is seen to intend a recovery of autonomy even more than a rational self-justification. Samson's tragedy (and perhaps, to a certain extent, Milton's) is that this restructuring comes too late fully to disentangle them from "the fold/ Of dire necessity" (ll. 1665-6)—too late, in other words, for articulation to fully bear fruit in internal paradise.

### Tongue-Doughty Giants

Are Samson's debates with Dalila and Harapha just comic? On the surface, maybe. Dalila and Harapha are supposed to be magnificent, and certainly they are in their own eyes: Dalila, the irresistibly seductive source of solace and delight; Harapha the invincible—not just physically, but morally too. For Samson he is the incarnate Superego (moral humiliation enforced by violence), as Dalila is Id. These "Giant Forms" (J 3), respectively embody fear and pity. Or, in a physiological rather than Aristotelian vocabulary, they may be said to embody an excess of, respectively, voluntary

and sympathetic responsiveness. If Harapha and Dalila are not quite parental figures, still they carry with them something of a parental aura. They are beings who have put Samson in their power, and represent those whose appropriation of language--and, through that, of the child's presignifying as well as signifying psyche--must be discovered and dissolved by intellectual exertion upon realizing one's own gnanthood. Both at first appear larger than life--but both prove hollow, their power revealed to be no longer as before, or as never having been at all. Samson, while outwardly resembling the old Milton, taps into the psychic strata of early childhood where, abandoning the immature and purely defensive non-performance embodied in riddles in favor of more mature verbal combat, he confronts maternally-appropriated id and paternally-enforced superego--who now turn out themselves to be mere constructions. Resisting them, Samson induces them to self-destruct, revealing their own split, and betraying themselves as what Lawrence called "social beings." In doing so he triumphs over them to a degree despite some serious argumentative inadequacies.

"Dalila," remarks Samuel, "is surely the most bird-brained woman ever to have gotten herself involved in major tragedy. And at this femme merely moven sensuelle Samson hurls invective, as though he were Antony reviling Cleopatra." (248) But Samson does not see her as a pushover. Just the reverse: he must muster all his resources to resist her. And surely Samuel exaggerates, at least a little. Is Dalila, as she suggests, an "empty-headed" little thing whose plans inadvertently miscarried, and who comes to Samson asking nothing but forgiveness and a chance to help right the wrong? No; Dalila is capable of a certain calculation. At some level she is quite aware of Samson's sexual dependence on her. She wants more than forgiveness, she wants Samson, whom she hopes to reconstruct by construing certain responsibilities as naturally accompanying his desire for her. The relationship is supposed to have consequences--for him. It is as if a woman's desirability--her ability to complete empty masculinity by reconnecting it to the cosmos?--is supposed to excuse any crime; or that his abundance and generosity require re-conciliation with a bosom serpent (759ff.) Nowhere does Milton seem to respond more nakedly to autobiographical incident than this apparent reworking of his reconciliation with Mary Powell. But Dalila is a more vital being than Mary seems to have been.

Dalila also wants a public vindication--and is not utterly incompetent in extracting it. She plies an effective kenosis ("Let weakness then with weakness come to parle"--785), and her appeal to social approval ("Thine forgive mine; that men may censure thine/ The gentler--787-8) is also telling. It is the artlessness of her argument that makes her most appealing. She would seem ill-advised to admit reducing Samson to the appropriable object of her mothering (913-927)--and to her exclusive status/pleasure object:

I knew that liberty  
Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,

While I at home sat full of cares and fears  
 Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed;  
 Here I should still enjoy thee day and night  
 Mine and Love's prisoner, not the Philistines,  
 Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad  
 Fearless at home of partners in thy love,  
 These reasons in Love's law have pass'd for good,  
 Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps (803-12).

Like Chaucer's Wife of Bath (certainly Milton's literary model) Dalila likes her men dependent and sees no reason to feign otherwise; niggling and pretense, reflection and self-condemnation, are foreign to her. Samson's self-condemnation (ll. 822-6), while far more Christian and so more appealing to one sympathetic to Milton, does not stop there, and his sustained invective--"Hyaena," "Sorceress"--is that of someone trying to break free of this female whose infuriatingly assured insouciance precipitates reactions to an earlier dependence, deeper in its enticements and fears than anything she herself can offer or inflict.

Harried by Samson and too honest to rest with her first defense, Dalila attempts another. In reply to his contempt for her "weakness" she now asserts that she was really pretty strong: "Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,/ What sieges girt me round, ere I consented" (845-6). What finally won her? A communal appeal to her conscience. Samson's reply to this quickly runs aground. Her marriage-treachery to him only reflects his own (previous) marriage entered into to seek occasion against the Philistines. Re-appropriation of language threatens to get out of hand at this point as the attack on Dalila starts to turn into a critique of Samson. Who has really acted responsibly? Dalila thinks she has.

It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,  
 That wrought with me: thou knowst the Magistrates  
 And Princes of my country came in person,  
 Solicited, commanded, threat'n'd, urg'd,  
 Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil Duty  
 And of Religion, press'd how just it was,  
 How honorable, how glorious to entrap  
 A common enemy, who had destroy'd  
 Such numbers of our Nation: and the Priest  
 Was not behind, but ever at my ear,  
 Preaching how meritorious with the gods  
 It would be to ensnare an irreligious  
 Dishonorer of Dagon: what had I  
 To oppose against such powerful arguments?  
 Only my love of thee held long debate,  
 And combated in silence all these reasons  
 With hard contest: at length that grounded maxim  
 So rife and celebrated in the mouths  
 Of wisest men, that to the public good  
 Private respects must yield, with grave authority

Took full possession of me and prevail'd;  
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty so enjoining. (849-70)

Here we see the psychic split's installation or (surely) reactivation—and the difficulty of finding an alternative. Dalila's conscience amounts to a desire for a public identity—a desire constructed in turn by fear and violence. That love combats these pressures “in silence” witnesses the difficulties faced by both love and sexual desire, themselves not immune to construction, in providing reasons why they should take precedence over social needs. Certainly her feeling for Samson is not especially refined or sublimated, and so is harder for her to justify; it would perhaps require a Lawrence to do so. Against her, Milton and Samson invoke old ideals of married love as nobler than the social conformity which her sense of “civil Duty” amounts to. Having been unable to justify loyalty to “merely personal” feelings, Dalila now finds herself condemned by the social ideals whose approval she thought she'd gained. Samson, of course, is hardly more adept at explaining why marital loyalty ought to have come first; all he can do is denounce her betrayal. For both—perhaps more for Dalila than for Samson—the tragedy is one of failed articulation.

Notwithstanding Samson's crushing reply--“I thought where all thy circling wiles would end;/ In feign'd Religion, smooth hypocrisy” (871-2) Milton gives his antagonist an argument he respected; hadn't social responsibility always overshadowed his own “personal” desires? And if Dalila in her last line seems to regret her collaboration, wouldn't a Restoration audience have imputed similar cause for repentance to the defender of regicide? Samson, allowed to speak today's language, would demand of us how it is possible to reconcile castration and social construction with responsibility? For Dalila the question would be: can the uncastrated prophetic inner light be other than criminally irresponsible? “The rebel doctrine of the Inner Light... gave a dangerous amount of encouragement to any self-righteous fanatic. Samson regularly gambles on knowing the purposes of God, and this is held to be justified because they are inscrutable” (Empson 217). If Dalila has been a good German, how does Samson differ from later Palestinian terrorists?

The trouble with following your inner light, observes Empson, “is that you may get very bad results, and that they are not open to scrutiny” (226). So it seems, when impulse and inspiration are bifurcated from reason and seen as its negation, but that hopeless dichotomy (equating reason with the social superego) need not follow. Samson is not unwilling to subject his acts to public scrutiny, and now proposes a third-person ethical test for comparing his acts in Jehovah's service with Dalila's on behalf of Dagon: which god is morally superior?

To please thy gods thou didst it; gods unable  
 To acquit themselves and prosecute thir foes  
 But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction  
 Of thir own deity, Gods cannot be:  
 Less therefore to be pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd. (896-900)

But do Samson's political acts, and his God, fare better? He, before he's through, will have devised four occasions to kill some four thousand Philistines. Empson finds arguments like Samson's always to turn against Jehovah, and one certainly wants to ask whether Jehovah really licenses Samson's campaigns. The question is not so much whether Samson is right or wrong, but, first, whether alternatives exist to a conscience constructed by interpellation and castration, and second, whether rational criteria can be devised for evaluating intuitional impulses. How precisely to distinguish "godly" from "ungodly" deeds? Samson and Dalila have pursued the issue to the limit of their capabilities; for further reflection on construction and responsibility we must await Paradise Regained.

Dalila now recovers herself sufficiently to sue rather humbly for forgiveness and promise "redoubl'd love and care" (l. 923), but to no avail. "No, no, of my condition take no care," (l. 928) says Samson. Asceticism is preferable to such tender mercies. Although, as Samuel observes, "[t]ending that wrecked hulk of a man would hardly be the dream of a sensual enchantress or deliberate villainess" (249) Samson has made up his mind about her, preferring his prison of narrative closure to the possibility (for him, the certainty) of further victimization. Her request to touch his hand brings the threat of physical violence. Is Samson getting in touch with his anger? Yes and more. He is still playing catch-up, still responding to the past, his infantile rage having at last discovered its ability to express itself. It is the dependent child's "inexpiable hate" directed at the disappointing mother--and at the entirety of the castration constituted by the Other's desire, now recognized, albeit unconsciously, as inhabiting the core of one's own being.

Whence these sentiments? Did Milton call them down from thin air in some sublime act of negative capability? Or were they activated in him by the dependencies of blindness, captivity and old age, and given in art the expression denied them in life?

Dalila's parting shot--"born not of malice, but of her need for some small remnant of self-esteem," according to Samuel (248)--has a distinct Lacanian reverberation. Here, as in her previous speech, she shows herself constructed by the Other's desire. Dalila, as Fish says, is "a site occupied by the desires and inscriptions of others. She seems to be without inner resolve, the plaything of forces that vie for the right to inform her actions." (581) And she shows how a conscience constructed by the Other's desire may become irresponsible to relationships most of us probably would at least profess to put first. Sacrificing her marriage (as Milton has it) under pressure, and for reward, including the prospect of being "famousest/ Of Women" (ll. 982-3) she becomes entirely a public personality,

renouncing claim to what used to be called a soul. Yet somehow despite all this she becomes increasingly impressive--or, let us say, increasingly human. She is more than a Terrible Mother projection, more than a straw-woman for Samson to knock down; Empson might say she comes off, like Eve, rather better than Milton intended her too. And indefensible as she may be, Empson was right to stick up for her. (Somebody had to do it.) For the more carefully we read her, the more her collapse becomes ours. If Samson is for her an objet petite a--a signifier of love the possession of which is supposed to close her psychic split--that's nothing new. And if social pressure and careerism shove aside love we can understand that too, even theorize the reconstitution on her behalf.

Let us do so in an unconventional way, by giving primacy to Lawrence over Lacan. Following the maverick psychoanalyst Trigant Burrow, Lawrence in his last years produced an early theory of the psychic split that strikingly anticipates some Lacanian ideas; and, where it diverges from Lacan, it illuminates Samson Agonistes in a manner complementing Lacanian perspectives. Lawrence describes the psychic split as producing "the social being, that peculiar creature that takes the place in our civilization of the slave in the old civilizations." (P 540)<sup>10</sup>. How does this split take place?

It seems to me that when the human being becomes too much divided between his subjective and objective consciousness, at last something splits in him and he becomes a social being. When he becomes too much aware of objective reality, and of his own isolation in the face of a universe of objective reality, the core of his identity splits, his nucleus collapses, his innocence or his naiveté perishes, and he becomes only a subjective-objective reality, a divided thing hinged together but not strictly individual. (P 541)

The "social being" is objectified to her- or himself, the psyche being experienced in the third instead of the first person. This being is narcissistic, emerging with consciousness of a body-ego distinct from other such egos. "Consciousness is self-consciousness.... Suddenly aware of himself, and of other selves over against him, man is a prey to the division inside himself." Moreover, "[a]s soon as man became aware of himself, he made a picture of himself. Then he began to live according to the picture" (P 379)--according, in other words, to a socialized self-image, an idea, ideal--or idol, all etymologically related (for Lawrence, the Platonic Idea and its idealistic derivatives constitute the great idol of Western culture).

The original split--if we may fuse Lawrence and Lacan--came with induction into language, whereby one's bioenergetic impulses are articulated to oneself in the voice of the Other. The historical split (which Lawrence considered the original) whereby at the dawn of literacy humanity, to its horror and delight, discovered its alienated self-image in conceptual form, only reifies and intensifies the split implicit in all language--which is why, as Lawrence notes to his distress, "savages" can be as

convention-bound as anyone else. The ubiquity of construction drives even Lawrence almost to the point of conceding everything to it:

The thing called "spontaneous human nature" does not exist, and never did.... No man has "feeling of his own."

It is true, children do have lots of unrecognized feelings. But an unrecognized feeling, if it forces itself into any recognition, is only recognized as "nervousness" or "irritability." There are certain feelings we recognize, but as we grow up, every single disturbance in the psyche, or in the soul, is transmitted into one of the recognized feeling-patterns, or else left in that margin called "nervousness."

That is our true bondage. This is the agony of our human existence, that we can only feel things in conventional feeling patterns. (P 752-3)

No, he has not quite conceded everything to construction, but in going as far as he does, he shows what it can't quite account for: the fact that we don't always feel completely at home in it, even if, like Dalila, we've invested so much energy in fitting the pattern that not much is left for self-examination. For the pattern is exacting:

Humanity, society, has a picture of itself, and lives accordingly. The individual likewise has a private picture of himself, which fits into the big picture. In this picture he is a little absolute, and nobody could be better than he is. He must look after his own self-interest. And if he is a man, he must be very male. If she is a woman, she must be very female. (P 381)

Or, as Lacan remarks, identification with the ideal type of each sex is constructed by castration (Ecrits 281).

Dalila, having arrayed herself in the conventional trappings of female beauty--"bedeckt, ornate and gay... sails fill'd, and streamers waving... An Amber scent of odorous perfume" (712-720) will run aground on one who no longer responds "as a man should." Not that he necessarily escapes convention; he may simply have another ideal, perhaps that voiced in Paradise Regained:

How would one look from his Majestic brow,  
Seated as on the top of Virtue's hill,  
Discount'nance her despis'd, and put to rout  
All her array; her female pride deject,  
Or turn to reverent awe! for Beauty stands  
In th'admiration only of weak minds  
Led captive; cease to admire, and all her Plumes  
Fall flat and shrink into a trivial toy,  
At every sudden slighting quite abasht (PR II 216-224).

Obsession, negative or positive, with the Beauty Myth indicates the presence of the split, as does insistence on material security.

But if man loses his mysterious naïve assurance, which is his innocence; if he gives too much importance to the external objective reality and so collapses in his natural

innocent pride, then he becomes obsessed with the idea of objectives or material assurance; he wants to insure himself, and perhaps everybody else (P 541).

Dalila's self-objectification is witnessed by her readiness to objectify Samson; her loss of innocent self-assurance by her readiness to insure herself through him. For her there remains no mystery, no unknown dimension to self or cosmos, hardly even a first-person orientation--only rational self-interest and instrumental action according to socially prefabricated patterns. It is not that she sells Samson out for gold; rather she does so for spiritual currency: socially-redeemable identity predicates. And what's the difference?

In the essay on Galsworthy, Lawrence again took up the social being with an insightful justifying quotation at length:

While a man remains a man, a true human individual, there is at the core of him a certain innocence or naiveté which defies all analysis, and which you cannot bargain with, you can only deal with it in good faith from your own corresponding innocence or naiveté. This does not mean that the human being is nothing but naive or innocent. He is Mr. Worldly Wiseman also to his own degree. But in his essential core he is naive, and money does not touch him. Money, of course, with every man living goes a long way. With the alive human being it may go as far as his penultimate feeling. But in the last naked him it does not enter.

With the social being it goes right through to the center and is the controlling principle no matter how much he may pretend, nor how much bluff he may put up.... Hence money is God. The social being may rebel even against this God. But... the anti-materialist is a social being just the same as the materialist, neither more nor less. He is castrated just the same, made a neuter by having lost his innocence, the bright little individual spark of his at-oneness. (P 541-2)

Galsworthy's characters "are all fallen, all social beings, a castrated lot" (P 543). But the human being has a point beyond which he or she can't be bought, seduced, intimidated or manipulated. Lawrence's passage is valuable for its clear delineation of what the uncastrated human being is. And Dalila in professing to favor spiritual currency over gold cannot escape Lawrence's indictment.

"Satire exists," says Lawrence, "for the purpose of killing the social being, showing him what an inferior he is." (P 543) Dalila, social being that she is, largely escapes satire, seeming at once too human and too inhuman, for it to take. Harapha's emasculation, on the other hand, is obvious. Yet this incarnation of the superego, claiming descent of sorts from Og and Anak (1080) lays charges designed to reawaken primordial feelings of illegitimacy--charges that the defender of regicide could not have lightly dismissed:

Harapha. Presume not on thy God whate'er he be...  
Fair honor that thou dost thy God, in trusting  
He will accept thee to defend his cause,  
A Murderer, a Revolter, and a Robber.  
Samson. Tongue-doughty Giant, how dost thou prove me these?

Harapha. Is not thy Nation subject to our Lords?  
 Thir Magistrates confest it, when they took thee  
 As a League-breaker and deliver'd bound  
 Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed  
 Notorious murder on those thirty men  
 At Askalon, who never did thee harm,  
 Then like a Robber stripp'dst them of thir robes?  
 The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,  
 Went up with armed powers thee only seeking,  
 To others did no violence nor spoil. (1156, 1178-91)

Harapha as revived superego suggests a mild attack of bad conscience on Milton regarding his revolutionary activities. Samson's raids on the Philistines translate into Milton's exertions for the Parliamentary cause, above all the defense of regicide; and the poem gives him several gestures on Milton's behalf against that conscience. Against Harapha he asserts the existence of a state of war justifying violence; since Israel (like Milton's England) is at war, Samson claims, criminal charges don't apply. (Yet this war is not acknowledged by his own people.) Next he affirms his willingness to fight to the death, recalling Milton's persistence in republicanism even after the Restoration was imminent. Finally, after the preliminary verbal combat, the recovery of strength suggests (at least to regenerationist readers) God's approval of Samson's cause.

None of these moves is an overwhelmingly convincing justification, either of Milton or Samson--and here, if anywhere in Milton's work, psychoanalytic interpretations find a foothold, for his exhuming of infantile psychic strata unleashes attempted resolutions involving a good deal of immature wish-fulfillment and compensatory fantasy. Beneath the bluster of his giant forms Milton is here more vulnerable than anywhere else in his work. The self-exposure is a prerequisite for the more philosophically arduous resolutions in Paradise Regained on which psychoanalysis gains considerably less purchase. For this stage of achieving autonomy, however, it is less important that one's accusations and one's self-defense be strictly accurate than that one severs the invalidating identifications that prevented them from being attempted. It's more important to stick up for one's unreconstructed being even than to be right; indeed to gain full benefit of the exercise, one must do so even when one is wrong. All hope of recovering one's innocence depends for the moment on stubbornness, "sheer cussedness"--the refusal to be constituted by the Other's discourse. This of course is not how Milton likes to think about himself; but it is how he allows Samson to operate, while showing no lack of sympathy for him.

The strongest reason for sympathizing with Samson here, even for seeing him ultimately regenerated, is that if we don't we seem forced to take Harapha's voice as Milton's. If Manoa and the Chorus can't be trusted to represent the author, how much less can Harapha be! It is better to suppose

that Harapha expresses only one of Milton's internal voices, a self-doubt he desires to satirize and expunge. And despite the ethical difficulties of Samson's reply, he has caused Harapha to self-destruct even more thoroughly than Dalila did, by backing the giant against a non-discursive reality--the fact that Harapha and not Samson is afraid to fight.

The ultimate non-discursive reality (in the discursive world of the poem)--would be that God accepts Samson, stirring up "rousing motions in me which dispose/ To something extraordinary in my thoughts" (1382-3) culminating in the destruction of the temple. Does God in fact do this? Much has been made of Samson's parting words to the Chorus, supposedly satanic in their proud ambiguity. But what of his explanation for the decision to "go along" with the Philistine messenger?

Masters' commands come with a power resistless  
To such as owe them absolute subjection (1404-5)

Whose command does feel he's obeying? Surely not the Philistines'. Clearly Samson feels that he has given himself into God's keeping, and this fine, self-effacing irony as he is led off to the idol's temple, this "confession" of castration as he appears to "go along," seems rather to mark his restoration to cosmic continuity, something close to inner paradise.

While a man remains a man, before he falls and becomes a social individual, he innocently feels himself altogether within the great continuum of the universe. He is not divided nor cut off. Men may be against him, the tide of affairs may be rising to sweep him away. But he is one with the living continuum of the universe. From this he cannot be swept away. Hamlet and Lear feel it, as does Oedipus or Phaedra.... Lear was essentially happy, even in his greatest misery. A happiness from which Goneril and Regan were excluded as lice and bugs are excluded from happiness. (P 541, 543)

Doesn't Samson too exemplify this continuity--happy as he goes to death? For though he has carelessly severed the cosmic connection he has never repudiated it. This small distinction makes all the difference. "God may not want anything to do with me anymore, but he's out there. I know because he was with me once. He may deny me as I denied him. It would serve me right. But that I denied something real, I can't deny." That's what Samson seems to feel throughout the play. By maintaining his integrity in the face of Dalila's and Harapha's efforts to split him, he's prepared himself to re-experience continuity with something beyond himself.

And yet Milton refuses to let us think such thoughts without qualification. The report of Samson's last moments introduces a crucial doubt into the Judges account: does Samson pray or not?

with head a while inclin'd,  
And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who pray'd,  
Or some great matter in his mind revolv'd. (1637-9)

Manoa and the Chorus, with their optimistic interpretation of Samson's end, have proven unreliable in all the ways documented by Wittreich and Samuel. And Milton's reason for inserting one final doubt is almost certainly the reason his anti-regenerationist readers adduce: his aversion to the ensuing slaughter, which he is reluctant to style as answer to prayer--and which he tries to moderate with another non-Biblical detail, namely, that the common folk escaped (l. 1659).

Are we left with radical indeterminacy, suspended between seeing Samson's fate as either Christian regeneration or pagan perdition? Only if we buy into rigidified dilemmas. Must Samson's regeneration be Christian? In the light of all we've considered, it makes sense to see Samson's regeneration as a regeneration of the natural man through the recognition and repudiation of the psychic split that holds one open both to sympathetic/erotic invasions and to intimidation. To cauterize that wound, to catharsize that split in all its manifestations, demands the infliction of real or symbolic violence on its perpetrators--and on oneself insofar as one has accommodated oneself to it. The reverberations of doing so are not likely to be moral, to express abundance, or to end pleasantly for anyone concerned. Only containment in a symbolic space--a ritual or an art space--can ameliorate such consequences and prevent reciprocal violence. And even the tragic art space is only transitional from Blake's state of Beulah to that of Eden, abode of fully-articulated "Mental War" in which "the Soldier who fights for Truth calls his enemy his brother" (J 38:41).<sup>11</sup>

### Upholding the Temple

Let us now look beyond the regenerationist/antiregenerationist controversy and the question of Samson Agonistes' genre, to an issue of wider significance.

A great deal comes to the surface in Samson. What Herman Rapaport<sup>12</sup> calls Milton's "thanatopraxie" here goes on public display, causing us to reflect on failed revolution, and on the revolutionary death-drive in Milton and in ourselves. Wittreich surprisingly, though tellingly, quotes Marcuse:

Martyrs have rarely helped a political cause, and "revolutionary suicide" remains suicide. And yet, it would be self-righteous indifference to say that the revolutionary ought to live rather than die for the revolution.... Any generalization would be ambivalent, nay, profoundly unjust: it would condemn the victims of the system to the prolonged agony of waiting, to prolonged suffering. But then, the desperate act may have the same result--perhaps a worse result.<sup>13</sup>

"The 'worse result,' declares Wittreich, "is where the Samson story concludes." (327) Does Milton endorse Samson's revolutionary thanatopraxie, as Hill, Empson and others have suggested?<sup>14</sup> Or does

he merely repudiate it. Certainly neither. The tragic dimension of Samson suggests that Milton recognized Samson's death-drive as his own, akin to fallen Adam's and Eve's, and which he desired not to suppress but to purge as he'd purged Satanic will, by allowing it to "consume [it]self in Mental flames" (FZ IX, 359).

In allowing the death-drive to express and exhaust itself, Milton allows it also to articulate itself. In so doing it reveals its origin in castration, in socio-linguistic construction--an insight subsequent prophetic writers will repeat. If I may call on Lawrence yet once more:

In truth, we proceed to die because the whole frame of our life is a falsity, and we know that, if we die sufficiently, the whole frame and form and edifice will collapse upon itself. But it were much better to pull it down and have a great clear space, than to have it collapse on top of us. For we shall be like Samson, buried among the ruins. (Lawrence, P II 415)

Contra moralists of left and right and despite the spin put on it by Manoa and the Chorus, Samson's is not just a blow for national liberation, but an assault on "the whole frame and edifice" of society, on every imperative and ideal installed in the psychic split opened by pity and fear--ideals whose substance is that of an idol. Samson's aim is symbolic: to pull down the temple of social construction, against which the play shows him to be focusing his rage. What good does it do him? Perhaps that's not the question. What good does it do anyone else?

And moreover, if we are like Samson, trying to pull the temple down, we must remember that the next generation will be nonetheless slaves, sightless, in Gaza, at the mill. And they will be by no means eager to commit suicide by bringing more temple beams down with a bang on their heads. They will say: "It is a very nice temple, quite weathertight. What's wrong with it?" (P II 415)

And that is what happened. The Restoration and the Enlightenment, almost the entire Eighteenth Century, repudiated the violent heterogeneous spiritual passions of Samson's sort--Milton's sort--in recoil from the centuries of religious war in which those passions seemed implicated.

It seems, at least at first, as if Samson's passion for the ultimate has simply brought down--quite unnecessarily--all that makes civilization worthwhile. And yet doesn't his final passion disturb all that makes civilization oppressive, giving rise to critical attempts to neutralize him in order to prop the temple up?

For Stanley Fish, as we've seen, Samson's abandoning "the fortress of a (falsely) settled self for a world of process and transformation" (581) suggests a non-Christian regeneration, one resembling what I've proposed for Samson here. In abandoning his defensive masculinity Samson in his last moments steps out of the temple into what is supposed to be immediate experience, a condition "glorious and liberating" yet also "terrifying" ((579). And part of its terror, we learn, is his resemblance in this state to the one person from whom he's tried hardest to differentiate himself:

when Samson declares, "I with this messenger will go along"... he becomes indistinguishable from Dalila; he offers himself up to a future that will mark him in ways that he cannot know in advance; he moves forward into a story that, as far as he can tell, has yet to be written; he leaves the fortress (or is it the illusion?) of a centered, settled self and embarks on a journey (going out not knowing whither he went) in the course of which the self will be revised by forces it cannot control. In short, he ceases to be a self in the masculine sense of an entity already saturated with meaning and becomes instead a text, a pliable feminized medium, something that acquires form only when it is read and which therefore can acquire as many forms as there are readers to interpret it or gazers to look at it. (584)

But was not Dalila the paradigm of castration? Yes indeed, which is partly why Samson has resisted her. For Samson

Weakness is the condition of displaying a womanish vulnerability to the power of words; it is the condition of having been written from the outside--"proverbed"--of becoming a space of public inscription, a kind of billboard, successively and passively receiving the imprint of someone else's meaning. (581)

Fish shrinks not from pursuing this logic to its conclusion. Samson's "glorious" and "terrifying" liberation, his new-found ability to "walk the tightrope of experience without a safety net" amounts to accepting castration. "We need no Jacques Lacan to tell us that to be deprived of mastery by the presentation of a lack--by the beholding of a Samson shorn of meaning--is to be castrated. The fear of castration is the fear that one's being is without ground, that identity is fluid, protean, unstable, in the power of others, never in one's own power." (586) In opening himself to an awareness of his inner condition Samson does discover a disturbing resemblance to Dalila. And yet Fish's equation is equivocal. Is it indeed the case that to relinquish a masculinity constructed by castration is (because a form of masculinity is renounced) identical to castration? And if one departs from a centered self on which castration has inscribed meanings one thought were one's own, is that castration too?

And is opening oneself to influence from outside the ego castrating? To be sure, any relation whatever, whether to the human or non-human cosmos, opens us potentially, and to an undetermined degree, to that over which we have no control. For Fish this means that our choice is between solipsism and castration; but as we've seen, solipsism is castration, arising when the psyche's occupying powers forbid further influx from the real or when we relinquish to them our right to exert influence of our own upon the world.

To what has Samson opened himself? To further social inscription, as Dalila does? Of course the public continues to interpret Samson, more indeed even than before. Does Samson absorb such readings, submitting his being to them, absorbing them into his psychic split as ideas around which he organizes his life? Only such absorption, as Lawrence shows, produces the castrated "social being."

And this we do not see in Samson during the play. While his sexuality was indeed once colonized by the Other in this way, enough of him escaped to enable him in his last hours to mount a counterattack. In doing so Samson tries to revive his old alliance with the cosmos, the old energetic-intuitive cosmic continuity and abundance which since Paradise Lost III has been subsumed under the idea of "God." Samson in his weakness falls far short of God as the embodiment of abundance, yet perhaps his offering is acceptable as the best he can do; and if he is deceived in thinking God wholly accepts him, that is not the same as to be castrated. (Though again, Milton is careful to attribute the uncritical assumption of divine acceptance to Samson's interpreters rather than Samson himself.)

Notwithstanding all this, Fish's Samson = Dalila equation ceases to be equivocal--in fact, appears quite reasonable--if one accepts two implicit premises. First, that castration exists at the core and origin of the self--that there is no bioenergetic core to be usurped and to resist usurpation, only communities of inscription to choose from, so that to resist one is simply to adopt another. (But why resist at all? How is the idea of resistance possible under such conditions? Or, for that matter, the idea of inscription? On what is inscription inscribed?) The second premise is that, being contained entirely within the empire of signs, we lack access to any external bioenergetic reality whatever. In which case there seems no tightrope of experience to walk at all. If we can accept the solipsism of such premises, then the hegemony of castration follows. Under postmodernism, these premises seem increasingly incontrovertible: it seems harder than ever to find, within or without, an uncolonized, uncoded space. Yet prophetic writing is not the only mode that encourages us not to give up. To become disenchanted with the radical constructivist argument we need only note its incoherence, its dependence on very recent socio-economic phenomena for its power, and its special pleading, as if designed to convince us that castration is potency, an argument that would seem unnecessary if it were true. (You can almost hear the ad: "Castration... Walking the tightrope of experience without a safety net.") And we may well ask "who benefits from our acceptance of this?"

And yet perhaps all this is really far too easy. Can we really suppose that by refuting radical constructivists like Fish we are prepared to enlarge, remodel or, if necessary, even pull down the temple of constructed identity? Do we not continue to prop it up ourselves, and for that reason welcome Fish's assistance in doing so? If so, Milton, especially in his failures, may have something further to teach us.

The old Milton's new asceticism emerged, like postmodernism, in the aftermath of failed revolution, political and libidinal. First, the Restoration's termination of the Cromwellian experiment for which he had given his sight and risked his life. Second, the personal failure, documented in Paradise Lost's middle books, to recover erotic eudaemonism by restructuring the superego--a failure not simply private, for this project of sexual liberty had since the Divorce pamphlets allied Milton

provisionally with the radical Protestant sects. The ambivalence Milton discovered in his libidinal economy thus carried political implications, for both his revolution and ours.

For Milton the English Revolution failed due to lack of nerve on the part of the revolutionary middle class; others have interpreted this as a realization on their part that, having realized their economic objectives the middle class had no further need of the Commonwealth and so could welcome back monarchy as a guarantee of social stability. It may also be argued, along the lines of Hill's and DiSalvo's Marxist readings, that the repudiation of immanentist and libertine lower class radicals during the 1650s deprived the Revolution of support necessary for its continuance—a point that might have concerned to Milton if few others. Milton's libidinal revolution failed for what appears to be a different reason: his own resistance to paradise, the sensuous immediacy he'd revised God into justifying. The middle books of Paradise Lost display the complex negotiations between psychology and metaphysics through which Milton tried to register the forces that produced the need to destroy immediacy in order to save it.

Whence arises this resistance to immediacy, occurring at such a depth that Freud was moved to describe it as a biological instinct of the organism to protect itself from stimuli? Yet if all stimulus is inherently invasive, it means a fundamental death-drive exists to which even Eros, conceived as discharge of tension, must be assimilated. Or does perceptual immediacy become oppressive only under certain conditions? Dorothy Dinnerstein finds the structure of the traditional family to generate in males, and also in females, resistance to dependence on the mother, by whom sensuous immediacy is exclusively mediated for the young child. Such ambivalence is not simply imposed by patriarchal authority (as Reich thought), but arises spontaneously, at its most fundamental level, from ancient and widespread social structures in which the mother assumes sole responsibility for child-care—thus becoming the exclusive mediator of sensuous immediacy and external reality to the child. In this way her voice, the original voice of the Other, is internalized as a castrating split, constructing the voice of energetic desire for the Other in terms of that split. This primordial capture of desire produces several levels of overcoding that may be sketched. Upon the energetic impulse is deposited, first, the maternal mediation of immediacy and desire. Resistance to this cathexis produces, and aligns itself with, an antinatural imperative (from which arise the myriad subsidiary levels of Oedipal desire and repression<sup>15</sup>). At this level castration is accepted in the form of an asceticism, or abstract idealism, or resolute instrumentalism, that seems to embody (responsible) freedom; but the original split, alienating self-identification from energetic intuition and so creating the "social being," has long since been installed. Atop this level lies the individual's actual life practice, itself frequently torn between the deep instincts for sensuous gratification, the mid-level character structure that resists immediacy and the final overlay of an ego that idealizes it.

For males, resistance to the maternal cathexis tends to require subordinating the women who represent it. (For women who share the resentment of the all-powerful mother, it takes the form of submitting outwardly to subordination--while often retaining, through identification with the mother, an inward sense of superiority to it.) While Milton seems to have seen the difficulty of reconciling subordination with the ideal of abundance, he found himself compelled to express it in various voices--of Satan, Rafael, Adam and the Chorus of Samson. In those voices resistance comes to the surface, vitiating Milton's libidinal revolution by installing, even in the midst of paradise, subordinative defenses against femaleness--and against the perceptual immediacy and identification associated with it. Dinnerstein sees similar problems vitiating 60s radicalism, where males, while appropriating traditionally feminine values, refused to share responsibility for directing the revolution's course. While "[m]en could assume sweetly open, uncertain postures, carry flowers, adorn their bodies in what their society at large regarded as outrageously feminine style, and still be masculine," women were still expected to be supportively feminine, allowing the males to run things--and subjected to the same old subordinating strategies if they did not. "As the male assumption that [control] was a male right became really clear to young women in this movement, and as they started to see what this assumption meant for the atmosphere of the movement and their own place in it, an enormous rage took shape in them." (Dinnerstein 270, 266) From that rage grew the feminist split-off that accelerated the left's fragmentation (262-77).

In this respect must we not find in Milton's failed revolution--particularly his failed libidinal revolution--a partial prototype of our own?

Dinnerstein's analysis, however, has a further implication. Defenses against the all-powerful mediatrix of sensuous immediacy, the infant's exclusive connection to the cosmos, may also turn against the immediacy and cosmic continuity associated with her. Such defenses may appear in theologically-sponsored antinaturalism or in certain forms of philosophical idealism, in the compulsive instrumentalism described by Reich or the technological narcissism analyzed by Lacan--or in the competitive agonism pervading Western society most generally of all. Samson, like Adam in Paradise Lost, illuminates the basis of such defenses, and the consequences, for males, of not having them. Without them, males are prone to be split and victimized by the very force of their desire, shaped as it is by a maternal cathexis transferred onto the sexual object. In order not to be castrated by their sexuality in this way, they must defend not only against the female but against the sensuous immediacy she represents--and to the extent they give ground in one direction, they in all likelihood must fortify themselves in the other. The imperative to defend against sensuous immediacy cannot be considered wholly absent in mother-raised females either--particularly those who have dismissed the traditional obligation to embody such immediacy in a domesticated form for "adult" males.

Milton's ambivalence about paradisaical immediacy expresses an enduring human difficulty. We crave it, but we cannot accept it when offered. We strive for it, but feel compelled to dissipate it when we get it. In this light, the further question regarding the 60s revolution, then, is that which we've been forced to ask about Milton's libidinal revolution. Since it was by no means suppressed by external force, was abandoned from within? Did it fail in this way because it came too close to attaining its goal? Did an internal resistance to immediacy turn the 60s project back from practice to theory, from installing abundance as the basis of social organization to resuming the traditional premise of scarcity and competitive agonism--and from the implementation of justice through the Marcusian vision of universal abundance to an accommodation with concocted scarcity? Does this partly explain why the counterculture gave up on itself so easily, and so easily returned to the prevalent thanatopraxie? We can't hope fully to answer such questions here; we can barely begin to ask them. But the state of postmodern theory suggests that such an inquiry might prove valuable.

Postmodern theory would often like to see itself a continuation of revolution by other means. However, within it Charles Altieri has identified five potentially paralyzing contradictions: (1) a cultural agenda requiring art to reflect contemporary reality while resisting that reality; (2) a political ideology encouraging atomistic heterogeneity while retaining dreams of united action; (3) a psychological mandate for both ego-dissolution and responsible relationships; (4) an ethical rhetoric simultaneously extolling castration and empowerment; and (5) an anti-foundationalist (anti-)ontology licensing two irreconcilable methodologies: pragmatism's confidence in the status quo and deconstruction's permanent revolution.<sup>16</sup> These contradictions, seen as a continuation of the post-Enlightenment tension between lucidity and lyricism Altieri develops elsewhere, indicate for him the failure of a theoretical third-person lucidity discourse to register the subtle pressures of first-person sensibility, a problem that an improved articulation--the more flexible and playful discourse of experimental postmodern poetry--may be able to correct (764, 770).

Yet to the extent that these postmodern contradictions are viewed as specific dilemmas of failed revolution, the problem they pose is thrust back prior to the Enlightenment. Revolution withers from within because of its inability to dissolve primordial identifications that cause us to retreat from the freedom, abundance and sensuous gratification we thought we wanted into discourses of aesthetic conformism, competitive political agonism, ethical castration, and the devil's dilemma of a pragmatically-ontologized status quo versus deconstruction's constitutive absence. In the first, second and fourth of Altieri's five dilemmas there occurs, as the second term, an imperative consistent with universal liberation--which is opposed by a first term expressing resistance to or abandonment of that aim. In the fifth dichotomy, neither alternative offers much hope at all; in the third, both aims are desirable and could easily be harmonized by the more fluid discourse Altieri encourages. The other

dichotomies, however, do not seem to me to be dissolvable merely by increased flexibility of discourse, however scintillating its syntheses. For I suspect that these dichotomies arise not from theoretical category mistakes but from multi-leveled ambivalences within us as to how much freedom, gratification and immediacy we can endure. If the problems Altieri sees in postmodernism arise in part from such ambivalence and resistance, it will take not just a poetic sophistication of discourse, but a thorough self-excavation, carried out as both articulation and catharsis, to fully heal our paralysis. And the general retreat from the struggle for both joy and justice into a cultural politics mediated by theory rather than poetry may express an unwillingness to dig deep enough to do the job.

## Notes to Chapter Eight

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Fish, "Spectacle and Evidence in Samson Agonistes," 569. Hereafter cited by page number in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Irene Samuel, "Samson Agonistes as Tragedy," 235. Hereafter cited in the text as "Samuel."

<sup>3</sup> Cited in the next two paragraphs by page number.

<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, in Feminist Milton (1987) Wittreich argues that all claims for Milton's orthodoxy in interpreting the Samson story, and in his representation of women there, depend on aligning his viewpoint with that of the Chorus (128).

<sup>5</sup> See W.R. Parker, "The Date of Samson Agonistes Again," 168.

<sup>6</sup> That's why prophetic writing tends to culminate in didacticism: Blake's "The Everlasting Gospel," Lawrence's Pansies and Lady Chatterley. At their endpoint, when called on to produce a last testament, prophetic writers tend to forsake artistic incarnation in the "constitutive symbol" (the disappearance of which Vivas lamented in late Lawrence) for disembodied message. The idea is to forsake sensuous immediacy in order to underline the conditions of its life. For interesting comments by Pound on the issue of didacticism, see The Spirit of Romance 87, and Selected Letters 180.

<sup>7</sup> See Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur, especially chapters 7 and 8. Prophetic writing on this issue is more extensive than at first appears; indeed, Blake seems, in retrospect, to have anticipated Dinnerstein's argument. In Jerusalem, the "Female Will" arising in response to repression by "Albion's Spectre the Patriarch Druid" (98:48; cf. 63:25) drives masculinity into a career of compulsive instrumentation and warfare: Dinnerstein's "mad megamachine." See especially 64:12-17 and 65:12-70:31. This aspect of Blake has not been sufficiently noticed due to its being overlaid with Blake's Oedipal cathexes and, in readers, with psychoanalytic interpretive grids. Nevertheless, it constitutes a complex that functions independently of Oedipality. The confusion of Oedipal with non-Oedipal maternal cathexes is even more serious in Lawrence who, consciously under Freud's influence, kept trying to correct Freud on this issue without ever coming up with an adequate revision. Not the least of Dinnerstein's contributions is to account for various phenomena commonly associated with the Oedipus complex without resorting to the creaky mechanism of the primal scene.

<sup>8</sup> Prophetic writing pioneers this motif. See, e.g., PL VI 637-660; M 19:59 and J 11:21; and the passage from the chapter "First Love" in The Rainbow beginning "But hard and fierce she fastened upon him" (p. 368). Prophetic writing does not exhaust its concern with armoring in these passing references; Blake's Milton and Jerusalem are studies of the character armor. For Reich's seminal psychoanalytic examination, see Character Analysis passim, and The Function of the Orgasm 138ff.

<sup>9</sup> See Violence and the Sacred, 126-39 and elsewhere.

<sup>10</sup> The following Lawrence passages are mostly from the 1928 essay, "John Galsworthy." See also "[The Individual Consciousness V. the Social Consciousness]," an incomplete earlier draft of the Galsworthy essay, P 761-4.

<sup>11</sup> For the function of Beulah see M 30:1ff. and 11:6-15. For Mental War, M 35:2ff.

<sup>12</sup> Herman Rapaport, Milton and the Postmodern (1983).

<sup>13</sup> From Marcuse, Counter-Revolution and Revolt (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 52-3. The omissions here are both Wittreich's and my own.

<sup>14</sup> Hill, Milton and the English Revolution (1977), 442. Empson, Milton's God (1961).

<sup>15</sup> For discussion and mapping see Reich, The Function of the Orgasm 138-54 and Character Analysis, passim.

<sup>16</sup> Altieri, "What Is Living and What Is Dead in American Postmodernism: Establishing the Contemporaneity of Some American Poetry," Critical Inquiry 22 (Summer 1996), 764-789. Hereafter cited by page number in the text.

## Chapter Nine: CONATIVE ABUNDANCE AND THE LIMITS OF NEO-PROPHECY

Yen-t'ou said, "Abandoning things is superior, pursuing things is inferior." If your own state is empty and tranquil, perfectly illuminated and silently shining, then you will be able to confront whatever circumstances impinge on you with the indestructible sword of wisdom and cut everything off--everything from the myriad entangling objects to the verbal teachings of the past and present. Then your awesome, chilling spirit cuts off everything, and everything retreats of itself without having to be pushed away. Isn't this what it means to be well endowed and have plenty to spare?<sup>1</sup>

### Imaging the Self

Who is Jesus? Son of God or just "son of man"? When we first see him in Paradise Regained he is lost in a self-conscious meditation on identity:

O what a multitude of thoughts at once  
Awak'n'd in me swarm, while I consider  
What from within I feel myself, and hear  
What from without comes often to my ears,  
Ill sorting with my present state compar'd. (I 196-200)

This recalls Samson's "restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm of Hornets" obtrude on him the knowledge of "what once I was, and what am now" (SA 19-23)--and beyond that, Satan's "relentless thoughts" (PL 130) on the same theme. The wilderness temptation is to reveal Jesus as "By proof th'undoubted son of God" (I 111)--though that title, as Satan notes, "bears no single sense" (IV 417). In this final stage of Milton's Christ-identification, Jesus, in order to show himself The Son of God, carries out the program of resistance necessary for Milton to realize himself as a son of God. But what sort of performance will suffice to demonstrate such an identity?

Milton had long been preoccupied with the question of identity. Do we like understatement? He had been obsessed with it from day one. The question "who am I?" had propelled him through his three great reversals: from pagan eudaemonism to antithetical agonism to paradisaal immediacy to renewed asceticism. What is the self of these reversals? No theory of static social construction can hope to account for the dialectical self-questioning we witness in them. By the writing of Paradise Regained Milton had internalized, interrogated and abandoned classical poetics, Protestant self-industrialization, and the will to Paradise. And yet all is not done.

In the Nativity Ode Milton had begun his identity quest by renouncing the pagan erotic Paradise of the Fifth Elegy in order to make himself a spokesman for an emerging Protestant antinaturalism. From then till "Lycidas" he pioneered a poetic identity and practice based on belatedness, scarcity and self-industrialization, designed to generate aesthetic intensity and poetic power. Self-imposed antinaturalism was not simply a way of being absorbed into a community, but also (in the manner of Protestant individualism at its extremity) a way to transcend, even annihilate, community as conventionally understood.

By the completion of "Lycidas" the founder of English antithetical poetry had traversed all of Bloom's revisionary ratios—which now, in his Second Reversal, he abandoned for a primary poetic of eudaemonism and cosmic continuity. What impact had this reversal on his identity quest? It's tempting to say that it simply re-oriented it: that in Paradise Lost Milton traded his old identification with scarcity and belatedness for a new identification with abundance. But this would be an oversimplification. For the identification with abundance called into question the very idea of an identity quest or performative self-articulation. In Paradise Lost first Satan, then Eve, was disastrously enticed by this project, driven by a sense of anxiety and lack that makes them emblematic of what prophetic writing considers "fallen" humanity. In the end Eve, even more obviously than Satan, has embarked upon the ever-escalating quest for a fully human individuated consciousness, which is partly why we admire and identify with her, knowing as we do that the outcome is not likely to be happy.

It is one thing to repudiate the imperative to such consciousness, another thing to implement the repudiation—or even imagine it convincingly. How might an identity grounded in the repudiation of social performance be made to seem socially valuable? And what would constitute a socially-intelligible expression of it? In Paradise Regained, it is precisely Jesus' sense that he might lay claim to a non-performative identity as the Son of God that opens him up to per-formative imperatives. The tempter's pilgrimage in the wilderness is to behold Jesus "Godlike deeds" (I 386), with an eye to determining whether Jesus is any more divine than he, or anyone else, is (IV 515ff.). While this theme of performative demonstration was not absent in the Gospels' account of the Temptation, Milton goes out of his way to emphasize it further. Jesus, at the outset of Paradise Regained, seems not to have dismissed out of hand the prospect of an anxious quest for a glorious identity. To achieve full individuation, he will have to distinguish himself from Satan in this respect.

While the Fall in Paradise Lost arises out of the blissful yet volatile state of mythological or "spontaneous" consciousness, the outset of Paradise Regained finds us in another psychic realm entirely. Adam, as long as he mentally occupied Paradise, could hardly conceive of himself as a self, not to mention a divine self. Jesus lacks this difficulty. For him, identity lies in the fully-conscious belief that he is the Son of God. Where did he ever get such an idea?

His mother has told him, at some length that he is divine (I 233ff.), and he has discovered confirmation of this in the scriptures—"and soon found of whom they spake/ I am" (I 262-3). These lines, my nomination for the poem's worst, reflect in their baldness the inadequacy of his realization. To identify with an idea of yourself as divine is not the same as to be divine--far from it. In this scene of instruction Jesus has received an image of his place in the social picture, as if one could be socialized into divinity. One thing is certain: living up to this self-image will require articulating an identity in opposition to the picture. Already there are disturbing questions. Why has he so far failed to accomplish anything?

My hasting days fly on with full career  
But my late spring no bud or blossom show'th.

Has he an inward ripeness, a fountain of abundance as yet invisible even to himself? Can he rely on divinity within, moved by divinity without, to spontaneously transform the world? Or must he resort, as ordinary people, do to personal will to power through natural means? As the "second Adam" Jesus must articulate a plausible identity as an expression of cosmic continuity and of kinship with his Father, by resisting identification with a finite body-ego and a socius that tries to supplement that ego's lack. The quixotic faith he showed in the *Dialogue in Heaven* with respect to the Father's freedom from impairment he must now show with respect to his own. His first act of trust, in an as-yet-undefinable power without and within, is to follow "some strong motion" into the wilderness, where he senses something will happen to him, and where he feels he may learn something important (I 290-3). Perhaps the biggest difference between this and the "rousing motions" (SA 1382) that guided Samson to his consummation is that Jesus, due to his spiritual acuity, will have the chance to realize his nature in experience before being enslaved. Should he be able to do so, his quest will correct the mistaken identifications of Adam, Eve and Samson, and so (according to Milton's emerging Socinianism) become exemplary and saving for us.

How do we develop identities? What particular difficulties arise when one attempts to discover or devise sources of identity lying outside the symbolic order? A rigidly constructivist grid like Stanley Fish's, that would limit identity to uncritical identification with one belief system or interpretive community at a time, seem unlikely to be able to register the full force of self-criticism involved in a highly idealized identity-quest like Milton's. Far more responsive to the problems of Milton's idealized identity is Charles Altieri's<sup>2</sup> orientation which, for reasons that should become apparent, I would describe as "expansive constructivism." In interfacing and juxtaposing the perspective of Altieri's Subjective Agency with that of Paradise Regained, I will attempt neither to assess Altieri's overall argument nor to produce any definitive statement regarding either ethical theory, or traditional or contemporary philosophies of the self--tasks for which I am not qualified. I do hope to

sketch what I take to be the "prophetic" response to the anxieties surrounding the articulation of identity--a response dramatized in Milton and conceptualized in Blake and Lawrence--with an eye toward indicating some of its strengths. treatment of first-person identity formation or (to use a term he adopts as synonymous) "conativity." Opposing contemporary reductions of the subject to subject positions determined by deep structures and social codes, Altieri in Subjective Agency declines to adopt third-person discourses that focus on the self as an object, an inert production of interpellative and identificatory forces. Neither does he conceive the subject as a radical other to the symbolic order, a Lacanian or Derridean "indeterminate principle of free play, visible only as a supplemental desire of signature that cannot be confined within any categories of the understanding" Subjective Agency 1). For him the subject is a dynamic self-articulation within the symbolic order, the content of which becomes the raw material for self-expression; and subjective agency may be defined as an open-ended expressive self-definition in terms of ideals available within ordinary language.

Altieri proposes to illuminate "the internal dynamics of the process by which we come to manipulate those identifications in order to sustain the kinds of investments that lead us to attribute distinctive personal identities--to ourselves and others" (6). Considering the subject not as product but as expressive process (39) allows us to bring subjective agency within the scope of intellectual examination. And bringing the first person within the scope of ordinary third-person language enables us to correct empiricist and post-structuralist reductions without having to take refuge in irreducible alterity. Opposing the de-idealization wrought by reductive constructivism, Altieri's expansive constructivism is designed in no small part to account for the flexible and powerful identity-quests of Western literature. The importance of Paradise Regained and Subjective Agency lies in their assessments of the Western identity quest, in which both Milton and Altieri have invested heavily. On the ultimate value of this investment they do not agree; yet both in agreeing and disagreeing they offer illuminating responses to each other, making the limits of both expansive constructivism and neo-prophecy more apparent.

How do we attain identities through expressive self-articulation? Basic to Altieri's optimistic version of the process is Charles Taylor's notion of "strong evaluation." Unlike mere preference, chosen because of the direct satisfaction they give, strong evaluations "place a choice within a network of reasons... a network of public associations that establishes meaning." They are "choices of meaning, not of objects." And such choices of meanings for one's life are what establishes a public identity. This way of thinking about identity emphasizes consistency between actions and the meanings projected for them. As Altieri summarizes Taylor:

If I want to consider myself courageous, there are some cowardly things I cannot do--not because so doing is impossible or because I will be overtly punished, but because the deeds are incompatible with the set of defining terms I have chosen for my

actions..... In contradistinction, when we cannot see a connection between words and deeds or cannot place deeds in a contrastive context, then we simply cannot speak of moral identity at all. Persons who call themselves courageous but act in what would normally be called cowardly terms without offering (explicitly or implicitly) any alternative interpretation of those terms have no public identity, except, perhaps, as expressing symptoms.

Altieri takes pains to highlight the flexibility of this process. We choose the community in which we seek an identity, and to whom we shall try to give an account of ourselves. The community with which we choose to identify, and against whose criteria we negotiate meanings, "can be almost entirely imaginary and entirely internalized" (205)--anything from one's neighborhood, profession or religion to a visionary company of great poets, discerning future readers, even of God and the angels. And our accounting to the community may involve encouraging it to modify its practices and criteria for granting identity. Although the possibility of shame remains if our self-accounting fails, such shame is part of the risk of self-responsibility, and is far different from manipulative "shaming." And the Other can confer more than just shame; it is also a source of approval for meeting the responsibilities we've taken on--all the more so when its criteria are demanding. Our interest in meeting these challenges "engages us in having to internalize the eye of the other--less as Sartrean antagonist than as the basic means we use for forming and testing the second-order identities we build from those expressions we want to be able to own." (Subjective Agency 203, 218) The expansive constructivist argument that responsibility can be negotiated as well as interpellated, that socio-cultural ideals can improve the lives not only of the group but of individuals by providing ways to transcend narcissistic "pragmatism" and the will to power of unreflective interest leads in Altieri to the further conclusions that there is no need to look outside language and culture for correctives to such reductive interests, and that the ideals contained within the symbolic order exhaust all our possibilities for responsible and articulate identity, and the attempt to locate a "core self" elsewhere is meaningless. (Subjective Agency 55-9, 167). In Paradise Regained Milton gives this last position to Satan, believing as he does that any identity quest confined to the symbolic order must be governed by anxiety. For him only a deep identity rooted outside the symbolic can be free from anxiety.

The debate format of Paradise Regained evinces Milton's understanding that no identity can plausibly be put forward without deliberating criticizeable validity claims. Thus in their first encounter Satan's claim to friendship with humanity

Men generally think me much a foe  
 To all mankind: why should I? they to me  
 Never did wrong or violence; by them  
 I lost not what I lost, rather by them  
 I gain'd what I have gain'd, and with them dwell  
 Copartner in these Regions of the World,  
 If not disposer; lend them oft my aid,  
 Oft my advice by presages and signs,

And answers, oracles, portents and dreams,  
Whereby they may direct their future life. (PR I 387-96)

is mercilessly rebutted by Jesus in an attack on pagan oracles as the expression of the lying spirit informing them, eliciting the confession, "Hard are the ways of truth and rough to walk" (I 478). Satan, "inly stung with anger and disdain" (I 467) would be pleased to extract from such an opponent a claim to communal membership that could be exposed in turn--or rather that would, through the anxiety attending it, expose his claim to an asigned or "divine" identity. This will be the thrust of the temptations.

Some enticements are discarded out of hand. Belial's plan to "Set women in his eye and in his walk" (II 153) is deemed ineffective to ensnare one "set wholly on th'accomplishment/ Of greatest things" (II 207-8). While Milton alone of the neo-prophetics would take so staunchly ascetic a stance, his object in doing so seems ultimately to be congruent with neo-prophetic eudaemonism. The most insidious temptations, those most deserving the examination they will get here, are not those of pleasure but of performance. These, in Eve and Satan, are rather more directly responsible for disrupting Paradise than was Adam's libido, the problems of which Milton seems to feel have been worked through in Samson. Not lust but anxiety over social standing and achievement produced the dysdaemonism that stigmatized even the "Lawful desires of Nature" (I 230).

Paradise Regained confronts two aspects of performance anxiety--competition and supplementation--that to Milton seem inseparable from historical versions of the identity quest. The debate about glory in Book III takes up the first of these. The quest for fame has led many, Jesus observes, to unworthy acts. The higher you aspire, the stiffer the competition, the greater your anxiety--and the lower, it seems, you sink:

what do these Worthies,  
But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave  
Peaceable Nations, neighboring or remote,  
Made Captive, yet deserving freedom more  
Than those thir conquerors, who leave behind  
Nothing but ruin whereso'er they rove,  
And all the flourishing works of peace destroy,  
Then swell with pride, and must be titl'd gods,  
Great Benefactors of mankind, Deliverers,  
Worship't with Temple, Priest and Sacrifice? (III 74-83)

This standard Miltonic move is soon developed further: the examples of Job and Socrates show that undying fame may be had by patient suffering for the sake of truth. But with one vital proviso:

Yet if for fame and glory aught be done,  
Aught suffer'd: if young African for fame  
His wasted Country freed from Punic rage,  
The deed becomes unprais'd, the man at least,  
And loses, though but verbal, his reward. (III 100-03)

Jesus recognizes, like Altieri (Subjective Agency 168), that the drive for socially-conferred identity sublimates but doesn't eliminate competitive agonism. Jesus' example does not exhaust the subtleties possible for such sublimation. Insofar as courage, or even sympathetic identification, is driven by performative individualism, the capacious identities attained through identification with "greatest things"--nation, humanity, truth--risk description as egoism that enhances it-self by transcending itself. There may be no alternative, but Jesus would like to find one.

It is also true that society has regularly (if posthumously) reserved its very highest identity predicates for those who disdain them--those who, standing to some degree outside the community they address, resist it, refuse to perform in it, rebuke it, and perhaps suffer death at its hands. We need not, in Paradise Regained, look far to find an example of this. But if non-performance can be socially contributive--even more so, perhaps, than can conventionally-idealized roles--how to prevent its recapture by performative egoism with its suppressed anxieties?

If the conative drive originates in lack--and the handling of historical evidence in Paradise Regained is designed to show that it does--all its self-idealizations cannot but conceal an acquisitive agenda that is subservient to the constructions it manipulates.<sup>3</sup> How to respond to this situation? Should one press for-ward with sublimation in the hope that these impurities will refine themselves away? Or simply de-idealize, abandoning the drive for mastery and self-transcendence? Or try to articulate alternative versions of self-formation based on overlooked possibilities within the symbolic and history (as Altieri does) or based on possibilities afforded by the asigned? Jesus chooses to renounce entirely the quest for glory:

But why should man seek glory? who of his own  
Hath nothing, and to whom nothing belongs  
But condemnation, ignominy, and shame?...  
Who, for so many benefits receiv'd  
Turn'd recreant to God, ingrate and false,  
And so of all true good himself despoil'd,  
Yet sacrilegious, to himself would take  
That which to God alone of right belongs;  
Yet so much bounty is in God, such grace,  
That who advance his glory, not thir own,  
Them he himself to glory will advance. (III 134-44)

Here, as in Paradise Lost, dysdaemonic Calvinist vocabulary fronts for the eudaemonism implicit in the Christian paradox: "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Lk. 17:33) The severe orthodoxy liberates by being directed (in late-Miltonic manner) against anxiety. To qualify for the promise of the last line, one must cease to care about it, render it irrelevant, and proceed as if no otherworldly promise of glory existed. In doing so, one emulates the Father, whose word

all things produc'd,  
 Though chiefly not for glory as prime end,  
 But to show forth his goodness, and impart  
 His good communicable to every soul (III 122-5).

To glorify God is to express abundance without concern for reward of any sort, including socially-conferred identity. One acts simply because a divine fullness, internal and external, demands it.

Jesus embodies a radical resolution to the dilemma of whether to continue to idealize or not. Repudiating entirely the quest for glory, he adopts the most transcendent ethical ideal, precisely by renouncing instrumental action for (or against) the self. If there is nothing to strive for, if the ethical ideal now becomes complete renunciation of socially-conferred identity, there remains nothing to compel oneself to do. This is to realize immanent divinity. To be "a son of God"--or "the Son of God"--you have to forget about the glory of that identity. There are along this path various pitfalls--laziness, arrogance, masochism--yet none of these is inevitable, and the route offers refreshing prospects. Here, realized in Milton's late Socinian manner without reference to the Cross, is the sacrifice that abolishes Girard's mimetic desire and the web of sublimated agonism it weaves.

Altieri, even while highlighting the benefits of conative social articulation, is alert to another potentially debilitating aspect of it:

The drive for individuation remains also a constant source of the fear that what is genuine about us cannot suffice to secure the very place that it opens within the social order. There is at the core of the comic process of articulation a potentially tragic necessity to displace the conative into the performative, with its attendant dependencies on various supplemental and specular processes. (Subjective Agency 70)

This observation I think gets to the heart of Paradise Regained. Specular identification occurs when one takes an externally-given form of identity as idealized self-image and devotes oneself to conforming to it, abandoning the attempt to negotiate identity with the socius. Such idealization ends in alienation: "To serve an ideal of truth is necessarily to be a divided subject seeking to make images of the self and thus producing an ineffable or buried life of all that cannot be so represented." (Subjective Agency 72) Lacking the totality of ourselves, we become willing to seize whatever the socius offers that may aid us in living up to its ideals; and in accepting these supplements we intensify our dependence and, unconsciously, our sense of debility.

Aware of the problem of specular identification, Altieri tries to limit its scope by a distinction between images and ideals. In the domestic sphere, he writes,

Our pain comes less because we owe such considerations to others (as if they had rights to make claims upon us) than because we want certain pleasures for them and certain identities as lovers, friends, or parents for ourselves.... We want to feel ourselves more vital, more sensitive, and more caring--not because we have any

specific image of ourselves but because we have ideals of relatedness that require and reward such states. (Subjective Agency 206-7)

Yet I don't think this distinction can be rigidly upheld. Don't our "images of ourselves" and our "ideals of relatedness" interact, overlap and commingle? My ideals of relatedness and my ability to live up to them very directly affect my self-image, and vice versa. Ideals in general (as Altieri has already shown) resemble self-images in their ability to subject us to self-dividing social constructions; and while "ideals of relatedness" seem vaguer, more diffuse and more subtle than explicit self-images they do not seem to function in a qualitatively different way. In the end it may matter less whether the standard I hold up for myself is toward the specular or the conceptual end of the continuum, as whether it adequately expresses my inner being, or is merely performative according to external criteria. But if there is no pre-existing inner being, no deep identity or "true self" to be expressed into the matrix of social ideals--if identity is entirely the expression of choices made within the symbolic, but not made by anything that precedes the symbolic--then it is hard indeed to see what the psyche brings to its negotiations with the symbolic. How can radical freedom from biology and the unconscious--or from other strata of human nature--be purchased except through determination by the symbolic? That is the ultimate dilemma of expansive constructivism. The reverse formulation--how to be free of symbolic determination without submitting uncritically to biology and the unconscious--confronts neo-prophecy. But it is not the only problem arising from repudiation of the symbolic's hegemony.

#### Demonizing the Symbolic

"The true self," asserts Lawrence, "is not aware that it is a self. A bird, as it sings, sings itself. But not according to a picture. It has no idea of itself." (P 382) Both expansive constructivism and neo-prophecy conceive the state prior to the symbolic as a sort of black box: empty for the one, full for the other. In both cases the self is only known, realized, articulated, by expression within the symbolic. For Milton, Blake and Lawrence, entry into the symbolic means partaking of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil as applied to the self.

The moment an idea forms in the mind, at that moment does the old integrity of the consciousness break. In the old myths, at that moment we lose our "innocence," we partake of the tree of knowledge, and we become "aware of our nakedness": in short, self-conscious. (P 768)

Precisely because the "old Adam," the "spontaneous consciousness" or "mythological consciousness" of the pre-symbolic psyche, has no determinate conscious self-awareness--"no idea of itself"--it sympathizes and identifies uncritically with whatever it meets, as do Milton's unfallen Adam and Eve. As these primal identifications come to exclude other possibilities, a sense of determinate selfhood

arises. Language, of course, offers a prefabricated complex of ideas in which are embedded various ideals and idealizing practices with which its users unconsciously identify, shaping their ideas of themselves in terms of the ideas of others with respect to innumerable points of reference and comparison. One can respond to this situation uncritically, passively submitting to interpellation and judging oneself according to the original criteria inscribed upon one—or one can examine one's conditioning, compare it with the conditioning of others, evaluate what seems best for both self and for others, select one's ideals freely, continue on articulating and revising oneself in dialog with others, and in so doing win the very considerable degree of freedom that expansive constructivism would highlight. (Where does one get this expansive capacity? Surely it was not part of one's original interpellation. How did it come to inhabit language?)

But on occasion the analysis of one's conditioning reaches the limits of the symbolic itself; one conceives or imagines a condition prior to the symbolic, and so prior to the condition of self-judgment, self-analysis and self-comparison. For some, like Blake, this state beyond judgment and comparison compares very favorably to the symbolic activity of comparative judgment. "Angels are happier than Men and Devils because they are not always Prying after Good & Evil in one Another [or, we may add, in themselves] & eating the Tree of Knowledge for Satans Gratification" (VLJ 93-4). It followed for Blake that not moral virtue but forgiveness of sins was the essence of Christianity. "If morality was Christianity Socrates was the Savior," he snapped. The aim of self-evaluation within the symbolic order is now to get beyond idealiz-ing judgment entirely. At this point moral idealization begins to turn against itself.

Lawrence would extend Altieri's censure of ideals of truth considerably further:

Ideals, all ideals and every ideal, are a trick of the devil.... Your idealist alone is a perfect materialist. This is no paradox. What is the idea, or the ideal, after all? It is only a fixed, static entity, an abstraction, an extraction from the living body of life. Creative life is characterized by spontaneous mutability: it brings forth unknown issues, impossible to preconceive. But an ideal is just a machine which is in process of being built.... You can have life two ways. Either everything is created from the mind, downwards; or else everything [proceeds] from the creative quick, outwards into exfoliation and blossom.... You can't make an idea of the living self: hence it can never become an ideal. Thank heaven for that. There it is, an inscrutable, unfindable, vivid quick, giving us off as a life-issue. (P 705, 711-12)

Rejecting all distinction between images and ideals allows a neo-prophetic writer like Lawrence to combine them under the head of "idolatry." The conceptual ideal functions quite the same way as the idolatrous image:

We have to live from the outside in, idolatrously. And the picture of ourselves, the picture of humanity which has been elaborated through some thousands of years, and which we are still adding to, is just a huge idol.... The mass, the great mass, goes on worshipping the idol, and behaving according to the picture: and this is the normal....

The mass, the normals, never live a life of their own. They cannot. They live entirely according to the picture. (P 380)

The cathartic antinomianism of Samson Agonistes and the radical asceticism of Paradise Regained both express Milton's typically neo-prophetic repudiation of the symbolic order's nexus of conventional moral ideals in favor of a spontaneous moral intuition that (when we reach Paradise Regained) is felt to express an essential, unconstructed and image-less identity. In direct and implacable opposition to this identity stands the symbolic with its idealizations, intimidations and seductions, which for Milton, Blake and Lawrence come to appear as pagan, even Satanic snares.

No one, not even Lawrence, rejects the symbolic order more emphatically than Milton does in Paradise Regained. One is tempted to ask why. It seems clear that the recoil against his youthful ascetic idealism eventually extended to an interrogation of the primal scene of instruction in general. And it may well be that his experience with an invalidating paternal interlocutor had something to do with his willingness to style Jesus' paternalistic interlocutor as the devil. It's easy to extrapolate fantasies from these bare biographical bones, in the manner of Kerrigan's psychoanalysis: (Satan = bad father in experience = symbolic; God = unknown/ unknowable good father = assigned). Such reductions only address Milton's particular vehemence, which is peripheral to the question he raises jointly with his fellow prophetics: is there an unconstructed human identity or not? Milton's lifelong concern with questions of identity has led him to broach this contemporary issue.

Assuming, with Milton, that if identity is fundamentally constructed it is therefore subject to lack and supplementation, the Tempter conceals an imputed lack behind each approach to Jesus, periodically trying to cash in on these intimidations by challenging him to demonstrate his fullness via accepting a supplement for his lack. If Jesus' divine identity is but a reflection of a social image, how can he avoid confirming that identity by utilizing socially-proffered means, or performing a up to socially-dictated criteria? The temptations, again, appeal not to appetite but to the anxiety latent in a "divine" identity that may actually be (and in part clearly is) socially-constructed. So Jesus, beginning with a capacity to be split by identification with his own self-image as divinity incarnate, has to pull himself together. Satan will entice Jesus to accept identification with a series of increasingly refined cultural ideals as "expressions" of his alleged innate divinity, with the tacit understanding that to accept any of these as an adequate image of what cannot be represented is to renounce all claim to an unrepresentable identity--and that the only way to articulate an unrepresentable identity is renounce all such expressive imaging of it, and the anxiety that must attend such imaging. It may be asked here: is Jesus really tempted to renounce his divinity and to accept social constructions? Or is his temptation merely to express his divinity via socially-proffered means? The second form of temptation implies the first. To seize socially-proffered means is to admit that external circumstances determine identity: that

divine identity can't adequately be expressed without these means and so is contingent on them and on the socius that provides them. It is to admit, further, that one's idea of "divinity" is itself a socially-proffered image; that this identity would be less real, perhaps even quite unreal, without social validation of it and so, in order to exist internally, it must demonstrate itself in socially-intelligible terms. All this recalls, in Paradise Lost, the emanative logic that prompted Eve's anxious demonstration of the abundance she was no longer sure of and which, applied to God, would have made him contingent on his own Creation.

After Jesus flatly refuses to turn stones to bread, Satan begins to play him more carefully. He has come "[t]o see thee and approach thee, whom I know/ Declar'd the Son of God, to hear attent/ Thy wisdom, and behold thy Godlike deeds" (I 384-6). What deeds? "... if you have any in your power to show," is the subtext here. A little later, similarly: "permit me/ To hear thee when I come (since no man comes)" (I 484); again the subtext is: "you have not been especially impressive, have you?" These seeds of doubt are left to germinate as self-doubt until the Tempter returns with an enhanced version of the first temptation: a lavish table, magically provided in the wilderness. The appeal, though, is not to animal hunger, nor even to Christ's ability to supersede Mosaic dietary law. "Hast thou not right to all Created things...?" (II 324) aims to exploit self-doubt about his own divinity by providing a demonstration of his authority. The appeal to self-preservation accompanying this challenge

Thir taste no knowledge works, at least of evil,  
But life preserves, destroys life's enemy  
Hunger, with sweet restorative delight. (II 371-3)

merely re-emphasizes

the unexempt condition  
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,  
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain (Comus 685-8).

And while Jesus declares himself as able as his tempter to provide food by miracle (II 383-4), this temptation in fact veils another. For what does pleasure preserve life? As early as his Seventh Prologue Milton had tried to reverse the old adage "life is short, art is long"—an adage Satan doesn't want Jesus to forget:

Thy years are ripe, and over-ripe...  
but thou yet art not too late. (III 31, 42)

Now at full age, fullness of time, thy season  
When prophecies of thee are best fulfill'd. (IV 380-1)

"[E]ach act is rightliest done," he says in what Frye (441) calls the poem's subtlest line, "not when it must, but when it may be best" (IV 475). The expedient moment may not return; best seize the chance now, ready or not. External circumstances, not internal preparation, determine success. Satan's

immediate retraction of the offer upon its rejection--"Of these thing others quickly will dispose/ Whose pains have earn'd the far-fet spoil" (II 400-1) emphasizes opportunity's dependence on external fortune, not internal worth. For Jesus, and for a Milton who has learned from the futile effort to write *Paradise* by a "willed effort of poetic dominion" (Knight 290), the attempt to force opportunity, to act from spiritual scarcity (Adam's "anxious cares," the "eating cares" L'Allegro repudiates), to seize the opportunity that presents itself rather than the one you have inwardly prepared for--all this is but to live from the outside in; and an earthly paradise founded on such principles can be but another permutation of Hell.

Immediately Satan initiates a new series of intimidating intimations to set Jesus up for another temptation. The focus of this series is less on the rights due to the Son of God than on His need to express his divinity in effective action. "Thou art unknown... thy father unknown," (II 412-13) Satan reminds him, going on to detailing the unpropitious circumstances confronting Jesus in his attempt to gain influence. The offer of riches rejected, Satan continues with Jesus in this vein, emphasizing his belatedness (III 31, 43) and insinuating that there must be something wrong with him:

These Godlike Virtues wherefore dost thou hide?  
Affecting private life, or more obscure  
In savage Wilderness, wherefore deprive  
All Earth her wonder at thy acts, thyself  
The fame and glory, glory the reward  
That sole excites to high attempts the flame  
Of most erected Spirits (III 21-7)

Again: "do you really have anything at all to show?" One can't help but hear here the internalized paternal voice installed during Milton's secluded years at Horton. And the Son's apparent ignorance of Realpolitik, earthly and heavenly, contrasts with that imputed to the Father:

Think not so slight of glory: therein least  
Resembling thy great Father; he seeks glory,  
And for his glory all things made, all things  
Orders and governs, nor content in Heaven  
By all his Angels glorifi'd, requires  
Glory from men (III 110-114).

Here is the Oedipal model of divinity characterized by, and attainable only through, a personal will to divinity--the model of the mutually-impaired and competitive relation between God and humanity that Milton tried to undermine in *Paradise Lost* III. "The last infirmity of noble minds" ruins everything. Like the will to power, the will to fame (always so closely associated in Milton's mind with divine glory) must be resisted in order to refute the imputation of spiritual scarcity--and in doing so liberate the will of power, the spontaneous expression of surcharge that by disburdening grows more fruitful, a donative expression emanating from cosmic continuity.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, when Jesus asserts that

to give a Kingdom hath been thought  
 Greater and nobler done, and to lay down  
 Far more magnanimous than to assume. (II 481-3)

he politicizes the donative ideal that had emerged in "Lycidas." One enters divinity only by ex-pressing it--and this expression involves forsaking its outward manifestations out of confidence that one possesses its internal principle.

The real test however has not come, for nothing has yet been offered. Before that happens, Satan will play a little more with Jesus who, it is now suggested, is inferior in zeal to the Jewish liberators: "thinkst thou to regain/ Thy right by sitting still or thus retiring?/ So did not Maccabaeus" (III 163-5). Or is it really courage that he lacks?

Perhaps thou linger'st in deep thoughts detain'd  
 Of the enterprise so hazardous and high;  
 No wonder (III 227-9).

Or just political experience?

The world thou hast not seen, much less her glory,  
 Empires, and Monarchs, and thir radiant courts,  
 Best school of best experience, quickest insight  
 In all things that to greatest actions lead.  
 The wisest, unexperienc't, will be ever  
 Timorous and loth, with novice modesty (III 236-41)

Here we come to it. Jesus is now offered the invaluable supplement of statecraft--first Parthian, then Roman power--as the essential means for demonstrating who he is. Political power is not crassly offered as an end in itself any more than riches were; the rationale behind each supplement is that "Great acts require great means of enterprise" (II 412). Doesn't the desire to bestow goodness in the form of earthly paradise--a heavenly kingdom on earth--require means? How can that desire be demonstrated through rejecting such means?

In rejecting "politic maxims" and "that cumbersome/ luggage of war" as "argument/ Of human weakness rather than of strength" (III 400-2) Jesus has renounced every available re-source of expressive instrumentalism to put something new into the material and social world, and seems willing to confine himself within a world of words. And this confinement seems to arise precisely from his repudiation of the symbolic: his refusal of a discursively-articulated identity negotiated in relation to the judgment of others, or of an idea of himself confirmed by a performance locating him in the social picture. It is not just food, riches and power that have been rejected. What has been declined in each case is the effort to express an identity in socially-intelligible terms.

That refusal is not yet as absolute as it shortly will become; but it is severe enough al-ready to pose a real problem. The true self of Jesus seems a "buried life" unable to express itself except by

positing for itself a realm of unrepresentability—a move that, Altieri sees, terminates its own efforts at resistance. Once one has posited "a single grounding binary opposition between the symbolic order, linked with paternal power or dominant ideologies, and a locus of possible value in a radical other of representation all too easy to romanticize" (165-6), one is left with little but masochistic quietism or negative theology. Contemporary theories of this sort

treat the socially constructed elements of cultural life primarily as traps for agents. For them, constructivism requires treating articulate predicates about human actions and investments as necessarily oppressive because of their dependency on the symbolic order that imposes subjection. Fear of subjection in turn forces us to treat whatever we can take as sources of value as located in some other of representation, whether it be the unconscious, always in excess of what the symbolic order imposes, or in various idealizations of the body, or in cults of resistance.... Necessarily alienated from anything we might represent as a self, we find ourselves trapped in resentments that at once become increasingly diffuse and increasingly intense... [T]o offer any positive model of value in the domain of what had been the ethical, we must learn to decompose or unravel these subjecting categories, primarily by refusing to identify wholly with any representation. (Subjective Agency 165-6)

Following Habermas and Cascardi, Altieri finds such efforts to locate sites of resistance in the Lacanian real—in the unconscious or the body—to vitiate their own effectiveness as resistance. "The best they can do is cultivate vague ideals of resistance, stress a quiescent refusal to take on the tyrannical role of imposing norms, praise masochistic suffering as a partial freedom from the cult of mastery... and call for... new configurations for the psyche and for social relations without relying on discredited social criteria and social principles." (Subjective Agency 165) The futility of these efforts lies in their inability to gain any purchase on the symbolic so as to effect change there. The attempt to escape a general principle of oppression incapacitates one for opposing specific injustices—and vice versa.

Neither Milton, Blake or Lawrence are quite strangers to the moves Altieri finds inadequate, and each in their poetic last testament confronts, in his depiction of Jesus, the tensions inherent between expressive instrumentalism and unconstructed identity. For Blake constraining abundance ought to require emanative demonstration of abundance into the symbolic order of the "Devourer" (MHH 15-16), but there later arose an attack on "Demonstration," which Los in Jerusalem must labor to redefine so as to avoid becoming contingent on those for whom he reveals his prophetic identity (J 12:14, 90:57, 91:32-52). In "The Everlasting Gospel" Jesus resolutely resists all identity defined in terms of conventional ideals—especially those traditionally applied to him. "Was Jesus Humble or did he/ Give any Proofs of Humility..." "Was Jesus Chaste..."

Was Jesus gentle or did he  
Give any marks of Gentility  
When twelve years old he ran away  
And left his Parents in dismay...  
No Earthly Parents I confess

My Heavenly Fathers business  
 Ye understand not what I say  
 And angry force me to obey...  
 Come said Satan come away  
 I'll soon see if you'll obey  
 John for disobedience bled  
 But you can turn stones to bread (EG i 1-18).

The absolute repudiation of the social order here, the impossibility of an identity within any representable sphere, show Blake's awareness of what's at stake in Paradise Regained's temptations.

For Lawrence, however, the imperative of expressive instrumentalism issues in a criticism of Jesus. Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor was right after all. Since the three things Jesus rejects on the Mount of Temptation--"miracle, mystery and authority"--are all the masses can understand, his professed desire to improve their lot must be misguided at best. Having seen through the confusion between money and life, the confusion between the earthly bread and the heavenly bread, Jesus is in a unique position to administer the earthly bread to those less acute.

All that remains is for the elect to take charge of the bread--the property, the money--and then give it back to the masses as if it were really the gift of life.... But is it then to betray Christ and turn over to Satan if the elect should at last realize that instead of refusing Satan's three offers, the heroic Christian must now accept them. (P 286)

What really motivates the refusal to do this?

--Get thou behind me, Satan!--  
 That was just what Satan wanted to do,  
 for then nobody would have their eye on him.

And Jesus never looked round.  
 That is the great reproach we have against him.  
 He was frightened to look round  
 and see Satan bargaining the world away  
 and men, and the bread of men  
 behind his back  
 with satanically inspired financiers. (CP 483)

If this sounds like a cheap shot, it is one Satan himself has not disdained. Here in Lawrence's mouth is a harsher version of Pound's Confucian-inspired critique of the "irresponsible Galilean" (SP 193-4). Elsewhere Lawrence sees Jesus as choosing "not to have all, but to be all" through the masochistic submission of love, which is but the inverted form of the great human passion for the All (P 707). This suggests that the attempt to take refuge in a purer realm from the demonstration of mastery inherent in the symbolic order is doomed. Again, absolutely repudiating domestic ties as a gesture against the social or the symbolic order seems, on reflection, "Argument/ Of human weakness rather than of strength": "And so it is one detests the clockwork Kant... or even Jesus, with his `Woman, what have I to do with thee?' He might have added, `just now.' They were all failures." (FPU 101).

What would a Jesus be like who no longer tried to flee the symbolic order? In his essay "The Risen Lord" and, still more imaginatively, in the novella called The Man Who Died, and in The Plumed Serpent with its fusion of Dionysus and the Crucified in the Quetzalcoatl movement, Lawrence depicts a Christ figure resurrected "to take a woman to Himself, to live with her, and to know the tenderness and blossoming of the twoness with her" and to fight the fight of "a freed man fighting to shelter the rose of life from being trampled on by the pigs."

This time, if Satan attempted temptation in the wilderness, the Risen Lord would answer: Satan, your silly temptations no longer tempt me. Luckily I have died to that sort of self-importance and self-conceit. But let me tell you something, old man! Your name's Satan, isn't it? And your name is Mammon? You are the selfish hog that's got hold of all the world, aren't you? Well, look here, my boy, I'm going to take it all from you, so don't worry. The world and the power and the riches thereof, I'm going to take them all from you, Satan or Mammon or whatever your name is. Because you don't know how to use them.... What are riches, and glory, and honour, and might, and power, to me who have died and lost my self-importance? That's why I am going to take them all from you, Mammon, because I care nothing about them. (P II 575-6)

"Christianity," says Amos Wilder, "attacks human life at so deep a level that it disallows all existing culture."<sup>5</sup> Lawrence's Jesus affirms life so deeply that no cultural construction satisfies him. Nonetheless the Biblical scenario for Mammon's overthrow--the Apocalypse--struck Lawrence as bottom-dog, Salvation Army resentment. "It is very nice, if you are poor and not humble--and the poor may be obsequious, but they are almost never truly humble in the Christian sense--to bring your grand enemies down to utter destruction and discomfiture, while you yourself rise up in grandeur. And nowhere does this happen so splendidly as in Revelation." (A 8) Milton, for whom the Apocalypse had not been so thoroughly ruined by a nonconformist upbringing (A 5), can allow Jesus to contemplate the event with a better conscience:

Know therefore when my season comes to sit  
On David's Throne, it shall be like a tree  
Spreading and overshadowing all the Earth,  
Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash  
All Monarchies besides throughout the world,  
And of my Kingdom there shall be no end:  
Means there shall be to this, but what the means,  
Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell. (IV 146-153)

While declining identification with all earthly images, objects and means, he reserves the right to take them up at some future time. Once Jesus, by virtue of this refusal, has articulated an identity as greater than those means, able to express abundance through them without depending on them, renunciation can be renounced. Has he reached this point? The question for every elite--every self-styled "elect" claiming to have "died" to the self-importance that seeks an identity as a liberator through material or

social means--is: have you really died completely? And: how are we to know? Lawrence and Pound fell short in life of the standard raised in their works. Milton's Jesus raises claims for himself rather than for his author. Does he convince us? Would we trust him in public office? In the role forecast by the Apocalypse? What more would we require of him first?

Demonizing the symbolic, in any event, need not involve consigning oneself forever to a masochistic unrepresentability. If demonizing is an error, it may be--as in Paradise Regained--an error necessary for the phase of life that tries to free itself from specular and supplemental processes. To dissolve the need to supplement, one must dissolve the drive to perform according to a socially- and linguistically-reflected self-image. Refusal to supplement starves identification with that image.

### Canonical Mastery

Even while directing his asceticism against construction by the symbolic order, Jesus has up to now achieved only an incomplete and, in a sense, incoherent repudiation of the symbolic. In all their exchanges, Jesus has parried Satan by constant reference to the canon: not only to the Hebrew scriptures but--even more copiously--the Greek and Latin classics. (Satan, we should note, has also made free use of canonical examples.) A perusal of the annotations to their debate in a good edition of the poem (the table below follows Hughes) reveals the use made of canonical literature in the first three books.

<u>General Location</u>	<u>Issue or Temptation</u>	<u>Satan's Examples or Authorities</u>	<u>Jesus's Examples or Authorities</u>
I 342	stones to bread	none	Deuteronomy 8:3
I 354	oracles	I Kings 19-22	Chrysippus, Cicero, Lactantius
I 484	permission to tempt	Numbers 23:20	none
II 310, 392	wilderness table	Exodus 16:35	Sophocles ( <u>Ajax</u> 664)
II 427	riches	Job 18:12; Horace (Epistles I, i, 53)	Quintius, Curius, Fabricius, etc.
III 31	belatedness	Scipio Africanus, Alexander, Caesar (in Plutarch)	Seneca
III 109	glory	Westminster Catechism	Job, Socrates, Scipio Africanus
III 165	zeal	Maccabeus	Ecclesiastes 3:1; Scaevola, Plato
III 227	statecraft	David	I Chronicles 21:1; Jeremiah

As can be seen, while the two draw about evenly from the Bible, Jesus outnumbers Satan in classical citations twelve to four--as if Milton could not refrain from giving his hero the benefit of his own vast learning. Yet Paradise Lost turned on Milton's recoil against the pursuit of knowledge, at least insofar as it is stimulated by anxiety. And in Book IV of Paradise Regained Milton's self-interrogation produces as sweeping a critique of the Western canon as any ever devised.

After political power is dismissed there remains spiritual or intellectual conquest, sublimating Satan's earlier encouragement to "Aim therefore at no less than all the world/ Aim at the highest (IV 105-6):

Be famous then  
By wisdom; as thy Empire must extend,  
So let extend thy mind o'er all the world  
In knowledge, all things in it comprehend. (IV 221-4)

"Satan," notes Irene Samuel<sup>6</sup> "begins his argument with words so close to Milton's own in the early prolusions and poems, that we listen amazed." The "Satanic" temptation has now taken the form of an invitation to readerly competence and capacious identification:

All knowledge is not couch't in Moses' Law,  
The Pentateuch or what the Prophets wrote;  
The Gentiles also know, and write, and teach  
To admiration, led by Nature's light (IV 225-8).

It is also an invitation to realize an identity as a teacher by grasping the appropriate means:

And with the Gentiles much thou must converse  
Ruling them by persuasion as thou mean'st,  
Without thir learning how wilt thou with them,  
Or they with thee hold conversation meet?  
How wilt thou reason with them, how refute  
Thir Idolisms, Traditions, Paradoxes?  
Error by his own arms is best evinc't. (IV 229-235)

Is this just sophistry, as Samuel thinks? Don't you have to know an opponent's premises and strategies in order to refute him?

The answer depends on what you're trying to teach.

Jesus replies with an attack on classical humanism almost as vehement--and, to some readers, quite as parochial--as any we find today. Not only do the Psalms surpass all other poetry but,--Jesus asserts (anticipating Blake)--Greek poetry derives from them (IV 338).

Remove their swelling Epithets thick laid  
As varnish on a Harlot's cheek, the rest  
Thin sown with aught of profit or delight,  
Will far be found unworthy to compare  
With Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling (IV 343-7)



Augustinian Christian doctrine, seems available in the various spiritual traditions in which the question comes to be considered, and may arguably be intimated in a secular context.<sup>7</sup>

Yet even if one is no longer gathering oneself up out of the world of cultural ideals, that world persists as a sphere of self-articulation in which identity must be demonstrated, let it arise where it might. And the inexhaustibility of the cultural world seems to impose on even the most deeply realized conative abundance a performance obligation it may well despair of meeting. It is instructive to see this realization emerging in Altieri, Milton and D.H. Lawrence.

In seeking a model of how expressive negotiation for identity might function, Altieri chooses to draw on Kant's aesthetics rather than his ethics. Whereas Kantian ethics posits universal principles determined by the nature of a reason which today seems capable of being constructed in innumerable ways, Kantian aesthetics puts forward an approach more easily harmonized with postmodern deliberation. For Kant aesthetic judgment claims a subjective universality: one feels it should be valid for everyone despite the fact that no universal principles exist by which one can demonstrate that validity. All one can do, then, is to articulate one's commitment by giving reasons for it and countering reasons against it, each interlocutor pressuring the other toward an expanded circularity, in a process that can attain no definitive conclusion. Kantian aesthetic deliberation is an open-ended performance in which positions justify themselves primarily through their capacity to keep articulating themselves in the face of challenges from opposing orientations. Altieri's insight is that, without rational universals or revealed absolutes, ethical deliberation's situation is similar. (Indeed the same situation occurs even in rationalist or revealed systems once you move from the bare assertion of universals or absolutes to the intricacies of application.)

If ethics can only be defined strictly enough, Kantian aesthetics loses its open-endedness when grafted onto it. So Altieri asserts that ethically, "[r]easons come to an end in our recognizing how they are aspects of actions and enable us to attribute responsibility" (Subjective Agency 160), but responsiveness apart from such responsibility has no stopping place (218-19); we can accept responsibility, discharge our duty and be justified, while responsiveness, on the other hand, leads us into a realm with no boundaries but those of our own compassion. To the extent ethics is defined by duty, responsiveness becomes an aesthetic category, and the "ethics of care" (208-10) might be better styled the aesthetics of care. In its transcendence of duty, the ethics of care offers little if any point of entry for public shame, nor any public pressure for performance, for here anxiety on behalf of what one cares for quite overshadows anxiety regarding what kind of personal identity one is projecting.

Other sorts of aesthetic responsiveness have more potential for generating anxiety, leading to unsettling ethical implications as the divergence of responsibility from responsiveness expands into a tension between terminable and interminable performance that reflects the grafting of aesthetics onto

ethics as a general model for identity formation. Once an aesthetic dimension is granted to conativity it threatens to impose interminable performance upon the giving of reasons or any other action by the self-determining "legislative" subject. By emphasizing the strictly ethical dimension of identity formation Altieri avoids confronting this problem head on, but insofar as responsiveness succeeds responsibility, insofar as one seeks an identity beyond that attained through doing one's assigned duty, the specter of interminable articulation arises. While ethically the subject may legislate for itself by refusing, for example, to lie, legislation limited to legislation against the self is hard to distinguish from masochism. Thus Hegel and Nietzsche develop extended versions of legislative mastery under the aegis of will to truth and will to power, the first of which involves interminable responsiveness and performativity. On one hand lies the burden of legislative performance to impose form on experience sufficiently to elicit responsiveness in others; on the other (ostensibly preparatory to the first) lies the burden of interminable responsiveness to what has been created: the dialectical self-justification of the Kantian critic toward a proliferating number of "indispensable" texts.

But how can we honorably refuse these burdens? "Canons," Altieri observes, "make us want to struggle," whether as writers or readers, "and they give us the common questions and interests to ennoble that project" (Canons and Consequences 34). In canons we may find, among other things, challenges to our narcissistic projections, as well as opportunities (and challenges) to try on new identifications--and this dynamism is important for ethics as well as for aesthetics. Again, this performative imperative is not limited to the literary but occurs wherever the aesthetic of responsiveness offers identities we seek. And intellectual, emotional and imaginative comprehensiveness become major aspects of ethical identity too, insofar as that includes more than just doing one's duty. A commitment to responsiveness may lead one to examine one's personal and group identifications, and to transcend them in wider identifications, and this is the ethical hope of Altieri's expansive constructivism.

Yet the subtlest recasting turns this enterprise into an interminable performativity, an imperative to master the broadest possible spectrum of positions, and to locate individuality in mastery demonstrated through a performative Being-for-others. And this imperative is perhaps inextricable from Western ideas of identity, which involve the broad ideals of competence and mastery set forth in the Satanic invitation:

So let extend thy mind o'er all the world  
In knowledge, all things in it comprehend. (PR IV 222-3)

The imperative to seek unity with the world through knowledge ran so deep in Milton as to be more than conscious; and whereas Jesus his ego-ideal register mainly his conscious intentions, Satan is not so limited, raising an issue Milton had not worked through--and which would not reach full self-

consciousness until Hegel. There the will to power, sublimated into the will to truth and the quest for capacious identifications, attains wisdom by grasping the broadest and deepest structures of natural and conscious life, culminating in the Absolute. The ego is transcended through total mastery of its vicissitudes. Milton has traveled a good way down this path, transforming his will to truth from a Puritan resentment of pagan culture to a reuniting of classical with Biblical eudaemonism in a critique of orthodoxy. Now, Satan seems to suggest, is the time to take the final steps toward a sort of Absolute Identity: comprehension of spiritual existence as manifested in art, religion, philosophy. Is not this the cosmic continuity Milton has sought so long? But the fact that it is Satan anticipating Hegel shows Milton's growing doubts about this sort of thing. Does the drive for absolute identity via the ultimate cultural performance stem from abundance or lack? Is it coincidence that in the temptation through knowledge the appeal to benevolence and generosity has all but dropped out? Why does one need to have all, know all, be all?

Satan merely suggests these questions, but after Hegel they had to be faced directly. Rejecting the Hegelian project of Aristotelian comprehensiveness, Kierkegaard with his solitary Christian individual and Schopenhauer with his "Buddhistic" life-negation, swerved deliberately into dysdaemonism. It remained for Lawrence, to give full voice to an uneasiness over the dysdaemonism implicit in Hegel's own synthetic activity. The Hegelian or transcendentalist One Identity

is a very great stimulus to universal comprehension; it leads us all to want to know everything; it even tempts us all to imagine we know everything beforehand, and need make no effort. It is the subtlest means of extending the consciousness. But when you have extended your consciousness, even to infinity, what then? Do you really become God? When in your understanding you embrace everything, then surely you are divine? But no!... Your consciousness is not you: that is the sad lesson you learn in your superhuman flight of infinite understanding.... The One Identity is very like the Average. It is what you are when you aren't yourself....

It is a bubble, the One Identity. But, chasing it, man gets his education. It is his education process, the chance of the All, the extension of the consciousness. He learns everything: except the last lesson of all, which he can't learn till the bubble has burst in his fingers.

The last lesson?--Ah, the lesson of his own fingers: himself: the little identity; little, but real. Better, far better, to be oneself than to be any bursting Infinite, or swollen One Identity. (P 706-7; emphasis omitted)

Perhaps this is how we should have read Rafael's advice to Adam: "be lowly wise/ Think only what concerns thee and thy being" (PL VIII 173-4). Identification with the All--a laborious compensation for failure to experience the one, the minute particular? The ultimate bootstraps process whereby one becomes king of the ghosts? Is learning, even the quest for identity as a poet or philosopher, basically an attempt to close the psychic split with intellectual objets petite a? But what is inexhaustible abundance if not to contain--or construct--the whole world in one's mind?

Is there any way to avoid the choice of either interminable performance (as Satan makes conativity out to be) or irresponsibility (which, he implies, is the sole alternative)? Neo-prophecy contains its own version of this choice in the tension between its contrary imperatives. Emanationist expressive instrumentalism would require performance in the world in order to articulate an identity as abundance; counteridealism's eudaemonist asceticism would dismiss this demonstration as anxiety-inspired and try to recover a state prior to anxiety. This tension seems essential to neo-prophecy which, to the extent one way is chosen to the exclusion of the other, starts to become something else. Insofar as expressive instrumentalism triumphs, prophecy turns into a kind of expansive constructivism, finding abundance only in demonstration; whereas the triumph of counteridealism tends toward mysticism.

Thus two divergent philosophical orientations, each encompassing both East and West, contend for the body of prophecy. The first, which we may perhaps call the Confucian-Hegelian axis, finds the way to self-realization through articulation and mastery: either through "Confucian" ethical responsiveness and intellectual precisionism, or through Hegelian synthetic intellectual responsiveness. The self, or the One (if one grants its existence), is to be realized through mastery of the Many. Altieri, particularly in his work on canons, leans strongly toward this orientation, which he finds compatible with a non-teleological liberal humanism. Is this somehow a safer course for liberal humanists than for neo-prophetics? We have seen how Milton also chose this path and repented of it. Pound also chose it and lost his center on it, as Lawrence at times seems to have come close to losing his.

The other way, which we may call the Taoist-Plotinian mystical or negative path, considers that since the One or the self is immanent in all not as part but in whole,<sup>8</sup> it can be realized immanently, without traversing the Many--and so proceeds by subtraction rather than by addition. "In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired. In the pursuit of the Tao, every day something is dropped.... Without going outside, you may know the whole world... Give up learning and put an end to your troubles."<sup>9</sup> And Plotinus, the pioneer of emanative logic, was also its great critic. "The Highest began as a unity but did not remain as it began; all unknown to itself, it became manifold; it grew, as it were, pregnant: desiring universal possession, it flung itself outward, though it were better had it never known the desire by which a Secondary came into being." (*Enneads* III viii 8.) For him the task is not mastering "the massed total of all" but to apprehend its source: "The Intellectual-Principle in us must mount to its origins: essentially a thing facing two ways, it must deliver itself over to those powers within it which tend upward; if it seeks the vision of that Being, it must become something more than Intellect." (*Enneads* III viii 9). "Free from desire you realize the mystery. Caught in desire you see only the manifestations."<sup>10</sup>

Is abundance to be sought in the mystery of its emanative source, as signified and unarticulated, or in its emanated manifestations? As Hegel famously insisted in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*,

the undifferentiated Absolute of Schelling was conceptually inadequate: "To pit this single assertion, that "in the Absolute all is one," against the organized knowledge which at least aims at and demands complete development--to give out its Absolute as the night in which, as we say, all cows are black--that is the very naivete of emptiness of knowledge." (79) Schelling, admirer of Plotinus, could on the other hand describe the Absolute as "that which is not but which is the ground of existence, the primeval night, the mother of all things," recalling various Taoist formulations: "The Tao is called the Great Mother: empty yet inexhaustible, it gives birth to infinite worlds... Darkness within darkness. The gate to all mystery."<sup>11</sup> And Lawrence also will praise the unarticulated Absolute:

If there were not an utter and absolute dark  
of silence and sheer oblivion  
at the core of everything,  
how terrible the sun would be,  
how ghastly it would be to strike a match, and make a light.

But the very sun himself is pivoted  
upon a core of pure oblivion (CP 724)

in a manner that, should the darkness grow too deep, might invite reversal.

Are the two ways irreconcilable, or must one choose between them?<sup>12</sup> Can one way be pursued in one area of life and the other elsewhere? We can hardly begin to take up these questions here. At the least it seems unprofitable for one side to demonize or satirize its contrary, as did Milton on one hand and Hegel on the other. Certainly no argument that one orientation inherently excels the other can ever hope to convince any but the already-converted. At the same time, each view can provisionally establish its legitimacy by responding to the resistance of the other. Resistance to articulation, as in Paradise Regained, warns of the anxiety inherent in the decentered and (in a secular context) interminable pursuit, synthesis and responsiveness to innumerable worldly particulars; a response might try to articulate in depth a frame of mind that pursues both knowledge and virtue in their complete development without succumbing either to anxiety or its counterpart, arrogance, and might also address the phenomenon of comparison that begets these attitudes: how to avoid it or render it benign. Altieri's discussion in Subjective Agency might provide some starting points for considering these matters. Resistance to the unarticulated Absolute--to deep identity rooted in the asigned--offers several objections, protesting against the complacency of a bare assertion of unity; against the anxiety of having to compare oneself to some enforced or marketed teleological source and center; against the attempted negation of personality via absorption in transpersonal states; and against the allegedly impossible project of grounding a socially-viable identity in the real. In reading of Milton I've tried to show how the task of recovering Paradise and of realizing abundance compels one beyond simple assertions of unity or immediacy--and thus impedes any attempt to enforce or market an image of

abundance as a static assertion of it to which one might conform. It is time now to go deeper into these objections.

### The True Self

Throughout Paradise Regained Jesus holds out for an identity unconstructed by institutions and material objects: an immanent divinity as "the Son of God." In scorning socially-proffered means to becoming what he is, he puts his reliance on God the Father as embodiment of natura naturans: the universal creative principle from which all abundance comes. By refusing to identify with or acknowledge dependence on anything other than this, and by justifying this choice through extensive debate, he conforms his actions to his identity claim, as far as it is possible for him to do. The debate's resolution, of course, comes about through reference to the real, though of course that reference exists only within the poem's symbolic. The miracle on the temple spire (structurally similar, at least, to that performed by Samson at the prompting of his inner "rousing motions") is supposed to confirm from without the cosmic continuity and divinity Jesus has affirmed within; by it he realizes and demonstrates himself to be the

True Image of the Father, whether thron'd  
In the bosom of bliss, and light of light  
Conceiving, or remote from Heaven, enshrin'd  
Wand'ring the Wilderness, whatever place,  
Habit, or state, or motion, still expressing  
The Son of God, with Godlike force endu'd  
Against th' Attempter of thy Father's Throne,  
And Thief of Paradise (IV 596-604).

Is this identity unique to him and inapplicable to us? The title "son of God," as Satan says,

bears no single sense:  
The Son of God I also am, or was,  
And if I was, I am; relation stands;  
All men are Sons of God; yet thee I thought  
In some respect far higher so declar'd. (IV 517-21)

And Jesus contradicts none of this.

Milton's Socinianism surfaces here as Jesus' act, exemplary for all humanity, seems fully to consummate his atonement without reference to the Cross, by refuting the mental error that caused the Fall:

now thou hast aveng'd  
Supplanted Adam, and by vanquishing  
Temptation, hast regain'd lost Paradise...

A fairer Paradise is founded now (IV 606-8, 614).

As divine offspring, may not humanity recover internal paradise to the extent we can imitate the Son's asceticism? Might we, by severing identification with objects and institutions, at least position ourselves to unite with, or realize ourselves as, something deeper?

This Principle on the thither side of Life is the cause of Life--for that Manifestation of Life which is the Universe of things is not the First Activity; it is itself poured forth, so to speak, like water from a spring.

Imagine a spring that has no source outside itself; it gives itself to all the rivers, yet is never exhausted by what they take, but remains integrally as it was (Enneads III viii 10).

Or, with Lawrence:

This then is the true identity: the inscrutable single self, the little unfathomable well-head that bubbles forth into being and doing. We cannot analyse it. We can only know it is there. It is not by any means a Logos. It precedes any knowing. It is the fountainhead of everything: the quick of the self. (P 708-9)

But to propose this is to collide head-on with the mainstream of contemporary thought that finds it difficult to acknowledge any "true self," "core self," or "deep identity" capable of revising the symbolic from without. The social constructivism informing these assumptions, though often highly constricting, need not be. Altieri has shown the degree to which a dialectic involving imaginative ideals can expand parochially-constructed identifications. Yet he remains resolute in confining this expansive process within the symbolic order.

In Subjective Agency terms like "true self," "core self," "deep identity" and "deep interiority" are not treated systematically, but appear in various contexts suggesting multiple intentions, some of which are hard to quarrel with. Altieri's basic objections to the notion of identity grounded outside the symbolic order seem to me to be the following. First, that a core self is incapable of being apprehended apart from reified images. Second, that deep identity perpetuates an internalized version of priestly authority. Third, that it presupposes continuity with a non-symbolic order--the Lacanian "real"--that is in fact unavailable, while yet assuming a debilitating bifurcation between the symbolic and the real.<sup>13</sup> Altieri finds attempts to locate a "true self" problematic, first, because of the difficulties in apprehending such a self. How exactly may selfhood outside the symbolic order be encountered? Given the unlikelihood of discovering "some deep psychological structure"--Cartesian or otherwise--"whose presence accounts for the subjectivity of the subject," (Subjective Agency 12) Altieri opts for a Wittgensteinian "intention without interiority" that can

interpret [intentional] duration without projecting latent psychological forces which make style only a sign of something deeper that recedes as we approach it. In Wittgenstein's view this is precisely the danger of all psychology--that its concepts posit latent realities different from appearances (Subjective Agency 81).

When approached by the symbolic, the "real," non-instrumental reality, takes on the form of Girard's sacred--as Lawrence also noted (P II 430, 440). Spontaneity flees before every agenda of the instrumental ego. So arises the nearly irresistible temptation to capture these elusive realities imagistically. Milton, in poetically reducing paradisaical abundance to frozen jewel-like opulence, demonstrated the susceptibility of even the most fluxile ideal to imagistic reduction. One aim of Paradise Regained is to correct this poetic error in Paradise Lost. That corruption of the prophetic ideal is rectified by the full development of the ideal itself. Since abundance is inexhaustible by its manifestations, it contains within itself, even if this is not immediately obvious, a principle of active resistance to expression in finite images. Therapeutic attempts to contact a bioenergetic selfhood, can for Altieri amount to no more than "the doomed quest for anchoring the sense of self in particular images or ideas or analogies... that then displace the specific contours of active involvement in the situation" (Subjective Agency 66-7). The "genital character" extolled in Reich's Character Analysis exemplifies this reification. Is the prophetic ideal of inexhaustible abundance Exhibit B? "Why pin ourselves down on a paradisaical ideal?" demands Lawrence, "It is only ourselves we torture." (SCAL 148) And while the ideal of abundance is a paradisaical ideal if anything is, its innate if implicit resistance to imaging enabled Lawrence to adopt this ideal without realizing that in a broad sense he was still idealizing even while attacking images. There is no reason to find a fatal self-contradiction in this.

Nothing is wrong with "latent realities different from appearances" if they contain delightful unrealized possibilities, but if they involve an irresolvable dualism, if they confine us while being inaccessible to consciousness--like repressed memories or original sin--they may well provoke the counteridealistic efforts of instrumental will to break through to them so as to cause the deep self to recede indefinitely. In such situations, whether the latent reality is conceived as ontological deficiency, as repressed trauma, or as the energies trauma blocks, one often solicits therapeutic aid; for this aid to be benign, it must neither inflame the will in its apparently well-intended but actually defensive activity, nor suppress and invalidate it--but help it to see its own limitations, dissolve its self-frustrating efforts, occupy itself constructively, and await what comes. Such self-therapy Milton has been practicing on himself, and one is justifiably skeptical of other sorts.

From Nietzsche Altieri derives a potent critique of what Julian Jaynes calls "the quest for authorization": our desire to see subjectivity legitimated, even engulfed and obliterated, by impersonal forces. Greek and Judaeo-Christian attempts to internalize the divine, understood cognitively, produce the will to subordinate oneself to the universal order of truth, of which the "true self" may be considered an instance. Yet, as Altieri has argued, to serve ideals of truth is to make a buried life of all in the self that can't be reconciled with them. Moreover, the truth that would make us free may turn out only to subjugate us:

In all these cases the dream of getting free from the authority of priests in fact threatens only to restore a version of that authority in more virulent form because we internalize it as a condition for our own wills to power. Our highest states of self become those moments where the first-person is conquered by the third-person, for only then could the self fully experience a voluptuousness of willing that at the same could feel itself justified. Will seems most intense when agents struggle against the desire for individuality, since our basic versions of subjective intensity now derive from disciplinary practices occupying the hollowed core within our dreams of deep identity. (Subjective Agency 72)

The height of this "voluptuousness of willing" occurred under the witch's brew of cosmic continuity, repressed libido and political authority that made up Nazi pseudo-mysticism. More common and relatively benign are the therapeutic priesthoods of authenticity: from Reich's and Lawrence's eudaemonism to the dysdaemonism of Freud, Sartre and Lacan (with an array of popular gurus in between). For eudaemonism, inauthenticity consists of socialized pseudo-individualism; dysdaemonism, while accepting this critique, tends to emphasize the inauthenticity of nostalgic continuities. Thus in Civilization and Its Discontents Freud dismissed as regressive the internal "authority" of Romain Rolland's "oceanic feeling"—that suspension of ordinary consciousness in cosmic continuity from which also arose Sartrean nausea. While the preceding authorizations were clearly social, the example of Rolland reminds us that the ego may also be absorbed into the non-social. Here occur experiences of what Nietzsche called "inspiration," that state in which "[e]verything happens involuntarily in the highest degree but as in a gale of a feeling of freedom, of absoluteness, of power, of divinity"—so that

[i]f one had the slightest residue of superstition left in one's system, one could hardly reject altogether the idea that one is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely a medium of overpowering forces.... one hears, one does not seek; one accepts, one does not ask who gives.<sup>14</sup>

Even Lawrence had to draw back a little from the sublime intensities that conclude The Lost Girl and St. Mawr, drowning almost the last vestige of instrumental consciousness in natural beauty. As did Blake from the power of his visionary states. Do such experiences subject one to conquest by the third-person? Certainly they can subject instrumental ego to such conquest, producing experiences of nausea. But that the instrumental ego is identical to the self remains to be seen. In one who has not identified completely with instrumentation, these experiences may seem first-person expressions. Such ecstasies are harder to dismiss as inauthentic or reactionary; they may lead to quietism but also (as in Lawrence or Snyder) to various degrees of engagement. Subjects of such experiences tend to derive from them what may be called an "aesthetic identity" that can resist conative performance anxiety. Identity grounded outside the symbolic, independently of socialized self-images and socially-proffered means and not derived from the judgment of, or negotiation with, any social "tribunal," nor from manipulation, even in the loosest sense, of social codes, but need not be expressed into the symbolic

order but may be. When the attempt is made, it often seems to carry a disquieting appeal to the authority of experience not available to all.

Was Milton proof against such states? He seems not to have been wholly a stranger to them. His desire for such spontaneous intensities appears in his attempts to generate them instrumentally. He knew the ease with which ecstasy could be egoistically generated, and he knew the procedure for doing so: but in the aftermath of Comus, of Satan's Hell and of Adam and Eve's fallen sex, he showed his commitment to subjecting instrumentally-generated intensities to further scrutiny. For him, deep identity had to manifest itself spontaneously, without egoistic prodding or self-industrializing, and he came, like Lawrence,<sup>15</sup> to prefer solitary individuality to concocted intensity.

The most far-reaching issues surrounding deep identity arise from Altieri's discussion of contemporary attempts to locate sites of resistance outside the symbolic order in the "Lacanian real": in the unconscious or the body. The inability of these efforts to effect social change stems

from a single grounding binary opposition between the symbolic order, linked with paternal power or dominant ideologies, and a locus of possible value in a radical other of representation all too easy to romanticize. It is in the forging of such binds that the continental penchant for ontologizing exacts its costs. (165-6)

We've already seen how neo-prophecy avoids these difficulties by demonizing the symbolic only provisionally, temporarily. At times in Subjective Agency, however, the symbolic/real dichotomy is invoked in order to argue that to locate identity outside the symbolic order is not only undesirable but impossible, for that would mean locating it in the real—which either does not exist apart from the symbolic or exists in a manner not apprehensible by us. Not only is it a mistake to oppose the "I" to the symbolic order since "considered formally, the 'I' is a relational principle that has no specific cultural content" (55) and thus depends on the symbolic for its expression; but it seems doubtful whether the non-symbolic can be apprehended in any meaningful way at all. From a Wittgensteinian perspective "there is no basis for speculating on a Lacanian 'real' or on the unconscious providing significant principles of resistance, since all values depend on working within cultural grammars" and since "[t]hinking and arguing and valuing are processes that require instruments and can only make sense within what those instruments enable." (167) Perhaps abandoning the iconoclastic absolutism that seeks refuge in the real will even help restore our humanity. "By realizing that there is no significant other to the symbolic, we find ourselves having to deal with the fact that there are many others within it whom we must learn to accommodate." (168)

The anti-realist assumptions here seem to me to derive less from Wittgenstein than from Derrida, whose terms Altieri echoes: "From the moment that there is meaning there are nothing but signs. We think only in signs." (Of Grammatology 50; emphasis Derrida's) Yet the complexity of Altieri's argument requires us to proceed with caution. His aim in confining articulation and evaluation

to the symbolic is not (any more than Derrida's) to reduce agency to specific social constructions—just the reverse. Nor is it to put experience in the real categorically out of play—though the terms of his argument come perilously close to this. His desire is to affirm the expansive conative activity of subjective agency as a positive force within the symbolic order.<sup>16</sup> The position he intends to undermine is the categorical repudiation of the symbolic in the name of an "unrepresentable" unconscious, or some other "pure" asignified realm. This he has already attacked as being based on a lamentable, and probably false, bifurcation of the symbolic from the real. To backstop this argument, anti-realist doctrine is invoked not so much for its own sake as for its usefulness in denying the very possibility of irresponsible deep identities grounded outside the symbolic order in the real. Accepting and dismissing the unconscious as indeed unrepresentable is one way to maneuver its adherents into taking responsibility for their irresponsibility.

The cost is to re-install the symbolic/real bifurcation while emptying one side of it. The rigid dichotomy is left in place, but one set of terms is declared meaningless. By transferring all value—even all experience—into the subjective/symbolic (on the model of Berkeley's collapsing the mind/matter dichotomy by absorbing matter into mind) anti-realism populates the world with ghosts. The symbolic/real dichotomy cannot satisfactorily be dismantled by reducing one polarity to the other; what is needed is to establish a continuum between the two. Chapter One showed how Blake and Lawrence, with their doctrine of abstractive sublimation of percept into sign and concept, provide a way to conceive a continuity between world and mind. But the terms that consign the unconscious to unrepresentability also dismiss the perceptual pre-conscious that mediates between the two, rendering vain the attempt to dismantle the bifurcation.

What is left of that "I" after it has accepted enclosure in the symbolic to the point of dismissing perception and psychology? Does it not become the object of a significant "aspect blindness" (Subjective Agency 39ff.) that renders commonly accepted aspects of its nature theoretically problematic? For example, once values are held to be apprehensible only by symbolic instruments (167, quoted above) any distinction between articulated value and felt value (the unarticulated value, for example, which a mouse instinctively attributes to evading a cat) is obliterated, with felt value becoming unavailable, even in attenuated form, to consciousness in language. We needn't rehearse Lawrence's indignation at this move, which he felt characterized ascetic idealism. Suffice it to say that the "I"'s sense of radical opposition to the symbolic order may arise most powerfully—and justly?—when the symbolic (or a discourse representing it) formally expunges or implicitly eliminates the bioenergetic, intuitive, unconscious and perceptual aspects of its experience. The implausibility and irresponsibility of this rebellious "I"'s efforts to locate itself in one of those excluded dimensions is nothing other than the implausibility and irresponsibility of the original exclusion.

The practical result, ethical and psychological, of emptying out the real and reducing both unconscious and preconscious to pure alterity, is to reduce our experience to that of the instrumental ego--so that both lyric poetry and ethics find their task to be the recovery of as much of traditional idealization as possible within the limits of that ego.<sup>17</sup> Confining identity formation within the symbolic order confines it, or comes very close to confining it, within instrumentation. The symbolic and the instrumental are not identical; but the processing of experience into the symbolic has a strong instrumental orientation. Instrumentation presupposes anxiety, which generates its activity and which it serves to alleviate. Confining conative activity within the symbolic is thus a powerful stimulus to anxiety. Once the symbolic is also identified with sociality, sociality seems marked by the anxiety that generally attends instrumentation. Neither expansive constructivism nor neo-prophecy wants to surrender to this view of sociality, and in order to avoid doing so must correct their reductive tendencies. Thus neo-prophecy, when it invokes the bioenergetic, must emphasize the potential there, not merely for the satisfaction of appetite leading to symbolically-sublimated instrumentalism, but for the surcharge that, suspending instrumentation, creates the aesthetic. No view of the self seems adequate that fails to register these two givens of our present experience: the necessity of instrumentation, and the prospect of dissolving that necessity.

#### Identification and Deep Identity

Biological appetitive self and constructed symbolic self do not of course exhaust all aspects of original identity. There remains the activity of identification: the mode of relationship attending perception that, whether through weakness or strength, is non-instrumental. Such perceivers "bec[o]me what they behold" (J 30:50), an experience that, prophetic writing particularly attests, begins in bliss and ends in devastation--as in Paradise Lost's tragic chain of identification that pulled down Adam and Eve, and which Milton would now annul. In this light we can clearly conceive of a deep self that is not a fixed self.

"We have our very individuality in relationship," Lawrence says. But such relationship is not just social, since linguistic relations are grounded in perceptual relations. The symbolic and the real enter us through the same door, namely perception. And social construction--our conditioning as linguistic subjects--depends on perception. To learn a language requires perception; to identify with those who seduce our being via language does also. Without a capacity for sympathetic identification existing prior to social construction not even language, but only raw power, could move us. The fact of identification confirms the priority of the bioenergetic on and through which perceptual and linguistic

identification work. Without perception, no identification; without identification, no construction--and no capacity for constructed identities to modify themselves. Recognizing this highlights the priority of identification in general over any particular identification. And while perceptual identification makes possible our voluntary submission to social reconstruction, identification, not being itself a construction, may at any time burst constructed categories, and so reveal a primordial germ of identity--as identification. The capacity for multiple, even contradictory identifications produces the need to choose between them, and thus a freedom of agency. The ability to direct our identifications, and the experience gained in doing so, fully individualizes us. From this arises an outlook more Hegelian than the bootstraps-type theories positing identity as an originary construction clearly but inexplicably able to transcend itself. It may even be necessary to say that we can seek capacious identities only because identification is one of the things we fundamentally are.

If identity emerges not just through identification but as identification, we must qualify even this basically sound statement by Walter Davis:

Consciousness is indeed initially social consciousness--and that's why it's false consciousness. But in discovering the interests which ideologies serve, one calls entire systems of thought into question. Thought is not bound by the socially given but is, as Hegel saw, "essentially the negation of that which immediately appears"... The fact that the self is initially and for the most part social is a beginning, not an end. (676-7)

The problem lies not in acknowledging self-transcending negation, but in accounting for it. Though growth out of originary construction is perhaps understandable on the model of growth out of infantile bioenergetic weakness, how to account for this growth as a working out of forces immanent in that construction? It makes more sense to recognize that while self-consciousness is originally socialized consciousness, such consciousness has its substrate in identification, without which neither the initial socialization nor the ensuing work of negation is conceivable. For how could a truly original socialization fuel self-transcendence? By virtue of an originary lack that drives performance? But with reference to what does the performing psyche sense this lack? Conflicting identifications, on the other hand, can produce negations by compelling a dialogue that brings to consciousness the inadequacies of each structure, raising also the possibility of reconciliation in terms of subsurface structures.

Identification is a Janus-faced figure, Creator and Destroyer of identities. Socialization triumphs when identification is halted. And while it is true, as Watts observes, that

Just because we do not exist apart from the community, the community is able to convince us that we do.... The more successfully the community implants this feeling, the more trouble it has in getting the individual to cooperate, with the result that children raised in such an environment are almost permanently confused (65)

--it's also true that for a society requiring a certain kind of what pundits like George Will call "social cement" it may be safer to bind energy in performative individualism, however incoherent, than to release it into sympathetic identifications that may prove inconveniently promiscuous.

Identification, by means of identification, is what we're socialized out of--and what must then recover itself by incorporating and digesting the simple location into which we were socialized. This we have seen in Milton's Eve who, undergoing an identificatory metamorphosis upon contact with her image reflected in the pool and by angelic interpreters, proceeds to precipitate a similar metamorphosis in Adam, through which both lose their ability to identify. This cannot be regained without divesting oneself of those self-inverting identifications, all of which come with imputations of impairment and agendas for instrumentation and performance, which is why Milton must adopt the ascetic program of Paradise Regained. Narcissistic capture, installing the conviction that the body ego alone is what one is, brought with it the seed of recovery, first by halting the play of identifications. Reflection on the difference between constraining identificatory abundance and the simply-located identity one now is produces a the possibility of choice. By choosing to locate himself simply as abundance Jesus forces himself to dissolve the ensnaring identifications with their defensive-performative instrumental imperatives. The ultimate result--though Milton knows enough about counteridealism by now to suppress this thought from consciousness--may be to re-open himself to the psychic surcharge that makes renewed identification possible. Sacrificing the pursuit of Paradise and focusing instrumentation instead on dissolving the identifications that obstruct Paradise by requiring instrumentation, Jesus like Samson exerts his "dissevering power" against the uncontrollable identification of Adam's naive and spontaneous consciousness, pursuing an agonism against all identifications except with inexhaustible abundance.

Identification's transition from naive metamorphosis to self-aware identity is encapsulated in the tension between two of Blake's statements:

In Eternity one Thing never Changes into another Thing Each Identity is Eternal consequently Apuleius's Golden Ass & Ovids Metamorphosis & others of the like kind are Fable... Eternal Identity is one thing & Corporeal Vegetation is another thing (VLJ 79)

All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone (J 99:1).

The first statement is a critique of naive identification; the second expresses the recovery of identification through the realization of what one is.

By undoing and resisting metamorphosis into finitude its opposite, identification recovers and preserves its capacity to identify, and to experience sensuous immediacy without subjection. This principle underlies the dialectical adventures of consciousness in Milton, Blake and Lawrence and, when acknowledged, shifts the dynamics of identity formation away from the sublimation of

constructed performance and toward identification's struggle for self-conscious autonomy, positing identification per se as a volatile unconstructed core self which, originally lacking experiential content, falls into it, thus becoming the dynamic substrate of all socio-linguistic experience. The challenge to reconcile the paradisaic sense of divine/natural continuity, abundance and identificatory immediacy with the agonistic drive for autonomous self-consciousness that identification installs and which Milton had previously cast out, seems to arise most intensely wherever Protestantism and paganism confront each other, as they did in Hegel 150 years later. Hegel's attempt to reconcile freedom and nature in the organic working out of an immanent dynamism in some ways resembles what Milton, Blake and Lawrence found themselves compelled to do. But the contrary values of autonomy and continuity appear in Hegel's speculative resolution as equally legitimate ends, harmonized in a great symmetry; whereas in the prophetic dialectic autonomy is alternately accepted and rejected according to its changing capacity to aid in realizing specific experiential states of eudaemonism, sensuous immediacy or cosmic continuity. Autonomy, though but a means to these ends, is a prerequisite for realizing them sustainably.

Some brief remarks on the erotics of identification. Sympathetic identification, united with the Father through internalizing the paternal principles of asceticism, simple location and instrumental will, can check its own expression in order to avoid self-inversion by that desire or pity which "divides the soul/ and man, unmans" (M 8:19-20). Since abundance as sensuous immediacy infantilized by reproducing maternal dependency, enduring abundance's absence brings one the independence needed to abide its presence; and by affirming abundance even in its absence one appropriates it for oneself and wrests it from the mother. This self-revision is what makes the upwelling of the real endurable, even delightful rather than terrible, and may let Dinnerstein's mother-raised males (and females) avoid debilities that would otherwise be their lot. Shifting identification from nature as an assemblage of created objects (the "Goddess Nature" Blake derided) to nature as internalized creative principle makes it easier to accept a female sensuousness and creativity that no longer threaten to infantilize. No more mediated exclusively by the mother, abundance may now be bestowed on her, to whom one can now be reconciled--unlike Lawrence's "failures." Paradise Regained's last line, "Home to his Mother's house private return'd," expresses this reconciliation to a maternity that no longer monopolizes immediacy and abundance, and to a perceptual repose no longer given nor inflicted but earned.

"A fairer Paradise is founded now" sing the angels at the temptation's end (IV 613). In what sense? Outwardly there is no evidence of it, not the slightest attempt on Milton's part to suggest that the sensuous immediacy of Eden can now be sustainably restored. Perhaps in the miracle on the temple spire can be seen a promise or figuration of recovered surcharge, like Samson's recovery of strength. But that is about it. Jesus' asceticism may hold the self open for some kind of invigorating internal

upwelling or external influx, but as yet nothing bubbles up from the well-head of either self or nature. His Paradise remains in the wilderness, scarcely discernible to civilized eyes. A few fruits are visible: the abandonment of expressive instrumentalism, even the rejection of all demonstration and conative anxiety, as internal abundance re-identified with itself declines to account to any other than itself. The mind is, once again, its own place. Neo-prophecy here seems ready to metamorphose into mysticism, which now may be invoked as commentary. "Only those who abruptly realize the Unborn," reads a Zen text, "no longer feel the grip of shame or honor." And one so realizing, in the words of a modern commentator, "has not decided to be detached, but, being intensely aware of the infinite riches of his nature, he can no longer be attached to anything.... In other words, affective detachment is not a means, it is a consequence."<sup>18</sup> Such an identity is strongly implied in identifying oneself as a "son of God." Milton's distance from mysticism may be measured by the degree to which detachment remains a means rather than merely a consequence; nevertheless, mysticism is the direction in which he is heading.

Milton today survives almost entirely in an academic climate where such realizations count for rather little. Yet his resistance to even the most expansive social construction arises from certain intimations concerning the real that cannot easily be dismissed as delusions.

The infinite communicability of knowledge--of, in fact, all perceptual data--exists as an unconstructed phenomenon.

Experiences of bioenergetic surcharge--or at least experiences strongly inviting this description--exist.

Experiences of perception, and of de-instrumentalized perception, exist.

Experiences of identification exist, through which the ego learns--or is taught--its boundaries.

Experiences of cosmic continuity occur (explain them how you will) even to those with established "normal" egos.

In these experiences lies the germ of conative anxiety; without them Milton's great epics would almost entirely lack dramatic tension and narrative thrust.

It is of course understandable that deep identity should be an increasingly unmarketable item today. Under postmodern conditions (and I do not mean just academic conditions) many if not most people sense little opportunity for experience outside the symbolic order. As the two great "outlaw spaces," Nature and Spirit, become more overcoded and commodified, and as contemporary theory (simply in response to these conditions?) speaks ever more reductively about such vestiges of the presignified as those listed above, we naturally discern less and less redemptive potential in the real. Under these conditions a symbolically-oriented, anti-psychological, and humanistic ethics like Altieri's will almost certainly seem more accessible than the perceptually-oriented, psychological and cosmological neo-prophetic alternative--and may therefore do much more good. Certainly Altieri has

demonstrated humanism's capacity for rigor and self-criticism to equal if not surpass the most "advanced" postmodern reductions. Given the ethical power of this discourse--and the counter-intuitiveness of the prophetic alternative--what more can we realistically ask for?

"What dost thou in this World?" inquires Satan of Jesus. "The Wilderness/ For thee is fittest place" (PR IV 372-3). Perhaps this last image of Milton as Jesus in the wilderness is an image also of neo-prophetic writing in the postmodern era. The wilderness seems fittest place to prophesy of the real, the asigned--or rather the presigned, that which promises to enter into ordinary reality.

And there will probably always be some (how many, who can say?) who retain an interest in such things: for whom humanism with all its virtues does not entirely suffice; who find sensationalism, nihilism, absolute relativism and the "end of man" still less satisfactory; who would not just decry but dismantle the nature/culture, symbolic/real bifurcations; who, while rejecting construction by anxiety, and feeling as skeptical of the instrumental ego as of anything else, prefer to intensify rather than abandon the articulate responsibility of "secular" Western individuals; and who, after dismissing the old orthodoxies, find the sacred not less available but more so. Perhaps those willing to take on all these tensions qualify, not as an elite, nor even as a marginalized (and thus potentially privileged) minority, but as candidates to have their heads examined. (Perhaps it's not necessary to do all these things at once.)

Expansive constructivism, which in Paradise Regained speaks to neo-prophecy in the voice of the devil, has labored hard to show that identity constructed within the symbolic need not remain subject to interpellation but can transcend itself in a performative dialectic in which conative anxiety may yet have to have a place--and which may nevertheless qualify as eudaemonism. Neo-prophecy tries to trace this anxiety to its origin, while pushing dialectical self-examination to the point where anxiety is dissolved by the recovered, re-educated original mind of a "solitary individual"--and offers this as a model for civilization. Given the nature of the mind, and of the modern mind, insofar as we can make them out, which ethical project embodies the most heroic quixotism?

## Notes to Chapter Nine

<sup>1</sup> Yüan-wu, Essentials of Mind. From J.C. and Thomas Cleary, Zen Letters: Teachings of Yuanwu (Boston: Shambhala, 1993); in Nelson Foster and Jack Shoemaker, The Roaring Stream: A New Zen Reader (Hopewell, NJ: The Ecco Press, 1996), 173.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Altieri, Subjective Agency: A Theory of First-person Expressivity and its Social Implications. Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994. Hereafter cited in the text.

<sup>3</sup> To be sure, the fact that individuals are not (or at least need not be) passive before these conventions, but can evaluate them, redefine them, repudiate them or play them against each other, testifies that this lack is not absolute. When attention is focused on it, the conative activity that loses itself in the engagement with constructions proves to be a rudimentary identity outside all construction whatever.

<sup>4</sup> For Altieri, the Neoplatonic emanationism implicit in this donativity failed by trying to "make psychology do the work of ontology in securing a more dynamic account of God than those based on the abstractions of Aristotelian and rationalist metaphysics" (SA 96). In place of this he recommends assimilating expressive emanationism to a wholly secular Wittgensteinianism that, as we'll see, is skeptical of all psychology. The problem lies in critiquing Enlightenment rationalism, positivism and materialism in the name of the psychological values that this system discredits—without recourse to psychology. If romanticism is "spilt religion" is psychology also? Certainly any principle, psychological as well as metaphysical, that challenges the simple location of atomized material units (including units of consciousness), or highlights the dynamic indeterminability of those units, and so challenges the risks falling into religion, or being accused of doing so by our inherited scientific outlook. Part of the problem lies in defining religion. Is it a socialized set of belief systems authorizing power relations and installed by identifications imposed on a naive immediacy which must therefore be retroactively defended against by a resolute secularism? Or is it the expressive emanationism of that naive immediacy itself? Neither view refutes the other, and it's imperative to recognize and accommodate one's discourse to both.

<sup>5</sup> Amos N. Wilder, Theology and Modern Literature (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1958), 70-71; in Schneidau, Sacred Discontent 3.

<sup>6</sup> Irene Samuel, Plato and Milton (1947), 123. Subsequent quotations from Samuel in this chapter refer to this work and are cited by page number in the text.

<sup>7</sup> "The doctrine of the Supreme Identity," writes Alan Watts, "does not and should not come within the sphere of religion, for it has already been shown that it cannot be realized from the standpoint of reason, feeling, or sensation." (The Supreme Identity, 73) Watts would refer this identity (which, drawing on Vedanta, he formulates as atman = brahman) as a "metaphysical" realization. In such a form it is not easily assimilated to secular discourse. Analytic philosophy, for example, seems hard-pressed to find any place for such notions or realizations. Yet Watts discerns intimations even there:

Academic philosophy missed its golden opportunity in 1921, when Ludwig Wittgenstein first published his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, which ended with the following passage: [Watts quotes Sections 6.53, 6.54 and 7, culminating in the famous "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."] This was the critical moment for all academic philosophers to maintain total silence and to advance the discipline to the level of pure contemplation along the lines of the meditation practices of the Zen Buddhists. But even Wittgenstein had to go on talking and writing, for how else can a philosopher show that he is working and not just goofing off? (The Book 137)

<sup>8</sup> Or, as McKenna translates Plotinus, individual souls exist in relation to the collective soul not as parts of it, but as "an identity modally parted" (Enneads IV iii 1). For a similar thought in Blake see J 91:20-30.

<sup>9</sup> Tao Te Ching 48. 47. 20; tr. Gia-fu Feng and Jane English

<sup>10</sup> Tao Te Ching I; tr. Stephan Mitchell

<sup>11</sup> Schelling, Bruno (1802), quoted in Kaufmann, Hegel: Texts and Commentary, 27); Tao Te Ching 6 (Mitchell's translation) and I (Feng and English's translation).

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the most concerted recent effort to coordinate the two ways occurs in Ken Wilber's mighty Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, though the tensions—for example that between Hegel and Schelling (485-7)—are not always sufficiently developed.

<sup>13</sup> Another possible problem Altieri raises—as one which both liberalism and perfectionism must also confront—is that any notion of teleological identity threatens to impose such a teleology undemocratically upon others (Subjective Agency 224ff.). The problems surrounding elitism and egalitarianism are too vast to go into here, and must await a discussion of Lawrence's politics.

<sup>14</sup> Ecce Homo, "Thus Spake Zarathustra" section 3, (p. 756). If "there is no philosopher more reduced to pathos than Nietzsche, at least when he attempts to gather his expressive energies into the autobiographical mode of Ecce Homo" (SA 76), that pathos is perhaps never more present than in the conclusion to this section: "This is my experience of inspiration: I do not doubt that one has to go back thousands of years in order to find anyone who could say to me, 'it is mine as well' (757).

<sup>15</sup> See especially the poem "Blank," CP 501.

<sup>16</sup> There seem to me at least three ways by which one may come to an antirealist position. One may get there, as does Derrida, by applying Humean skepticism to the non-symbolic in order to undermine phenomenology. Or one may take up antirealism in opposition to an empiricism that seems to reify objective reality as immutable, thus blocking efforts toward social change. (This position is exemplified well by Zavarzadeh and Morton.) A third route to anti-realism (and this seems to be Altieri's approach) is via a commitment to idealism as the one philosophical approach capable of doing justice to expressive subjective agency. Bereft of any belief in Plotinian or Hegelian objective Mind, this idealism continues to refer human reality to subjective mind--feeling, perhaps, that the difficulties involved in doing so are less serious than those of traditional idealism, or of abandoning subjective agency under pressure from scientific empiricism.

<sup>17</sup> For Altieri lyricism concerns itself with

affirming in secular forms predicates about the mind, person, and society that were the basic images of dignity and value in religious or "organic" cultures. The pressure of lucidity drives writers to react by developing psychic economies that can restore a world compatible with our imaginative forms of ideal personal qualities (Self and Sensibility 13).

<sup>18</sup> Yung-chia, "Song of Realizing the Way," in Foster and Shoemaker 26; Robert Linssen, "Zen Buddhism and Everyday Life" in Ross 221 (emphasis omitted).

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