REWRITTEN TO AFTERTIMES: ADAPTATIONS OF JOHN MILTON'S POETRY, 1674-1767

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Abstract: Post-Romantic Milton criticism often sees a dichotomy in the poet's thought. On the one hand, he is considered a champion of modern values, such as the freedom of worship and the freedom of speech, and a strong proponent of open-mindedness and restless intellectual inquiry. On the other, his religious-moral system is often considered brutally restrictive in its emphasis upon human sinfulness and depravity and for its insistence on self-control and obedience to God as the pathway to salvation. Little attention, however, has been paid to how the eighteenth century contributed to this dichotomy, and, in particular, how musical adaptations of the eighteenth century acted as "staged criticism" that regularly highlighted the paradox in Milton's thought that one must be constrained in order to be free. In the century, five adaptations of Milton's poetry appeared on the British stage: *Comus*, *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*, *Samson*, *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio*, and *Lycidas*. These adaptations consistently create an aura of religious and moral authority around the poet, celebrating him as a national literary hero and a representative of true "British" values, such as piety, liberty, and temperance. In doing so, adaptations exploited Milton's reputation as a defender of British values while also ignoring, erasing, or soft-pedaling around those facets of his thought that could not be easily appropriated into a broadly-defined notion of "Britishness." They also simplified Milton's religious ideas, converting his mature poetry from their rigorous theological inquiries into musical acts of devotion that espouse moral orthodoxy and a comforting soteriology. The picture emerging of the poet in these adaptations is one of Milton as the poet of discipline. Thus, well before the Romantics made a rebel out of Milton, the eighteenth century made a conservative "extremist" out of him through their simplified renderings of his religious thought, and they did so despite avidly professing an unwavering fidelity to the "spirit" of his works and thought.

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INTRODUCTION

THE POET PRESENTS HIMSELF AND THE POET REPRESENTED

John Milton was a man who cared deeply about what others thought of him. His career as a prose controversialist often demanded meticulously-crafted self-personae, and in response to his various opponents and attackers, he regularly responds with defenses of himself that offer far more information than the rhetorical situations call for. Answering the charges of lewdness leveled at him in the early 1640s, Milton begins the second half of *The Reason of Church-Government* (1642) with a lengthy account of his education and of how he came to choose poetry as his calling, a topic he touches on again in *An Apology against a Pamphlet* (1642). He would later again defend himself through autobiography in the wake of reactions to his *Defensio Pro Populo Anglicano* (1651). At other times, Milton needed little provocation to talk about himself; his presence in his poetry amounts to a stylized self-portrait that is hard to ignore. In the strongly-autobiographical eleventh and twelfth sonnets, one detects his peevishness and hurt feelings over reactions to his divorce tracts. Milton's attitude is especially acidic in Sonnet 12, in which he complains that his well-meant intentions "to prompt the age to quit their cloggs / By the known rules of antient libertie" met only a "barbarous noise" of "Owles and cuckoes, asses, apes and dogs" (1-4). This is what he gets, he supposes, for casting "Pearl to hogs; / That bawle for freedom . . . And still revolt when truth would set them free" (8-11).[1] Two decades later, the

defensive explanation of *Paradise Lost*'s blank verse as "ancient liberty recover'd to heroic poem from the troublesom and modern bondage of rimeing" (250) reaffirms Milton's view of himself as a liberator, a title he rightly deserves. Finally, if Milton believed himself a prophet or *vates*—and the invocations of *Paradise Lost* suggest he did—he was at the very least prophetic in his aim to write something that "aftertimes . . . should not willingly let . . . die" (*The Reason of Church-Government* 810).

If this is what Milton thought of himself, or, more accurately, what he wished others to think of him, what did "aftertimes" actually think? More than 120 years after Milton's death, William Blake certainly believed him an author of something deserving preservation across generations, but he also considered Milton a divided identity, a woefully misguided religious thinker who prostrated himself before a tyrannous God called "Reason" and "a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it" (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 5). He was also the key character in Blake's *Milton* (1810), in which the eponymous poet returns to earth to correct his errors by (curiously) entering into Blake's heel (1:49-50). Blake clearly believed Milton was a prophet, but he also felt the legalistic rationality of Milton's God and his mature poetry's constant insistence on self-control and obedience did not match his reputation as Great Britain's sublime poet-champion of liberty. In *Milton*, Blake thus chose to rewrite the poet's religion to make it fit with his revered status as a revolutionary liberator. This was not the first time an artist took it upon himself to force Milton into a more flattering mold.

Blake's focus on Milton as the key figure in one of his major "prophetic" poems and the Romantics' general habit of using Milton's thought as the grindstone upon which they sharpened their own illustrate the remarkable recuperation of the poet-pamphleteer's reputation from its nadir following the Restoration in 1660. Of course, they cannot take sole credit for this recovery. It began at least more than a century before Blake began to redefin Milton criticism in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1792-93). Moreover, the dichotomy he sensed in Milton's work was present from the late seventeenth century on, though he was certainly more aware of it and

addressed it in a radically new manner that has made his iconoclastic interpretation of Milton difficult to ignore more than 200 years later. Put simply, the question revolves around a perceived tension between Milton's strident, lifelong defense of intellectual and religious freedom and his insistence in *Paradise Lost* (and the other mature works) that observing the limits set on human aspiration, human intellect, and human behavior paves the way for salvation. On the one hand, there is the Milton of *Areopagitica*, the restless intellectual and the liberator who warns against close-minded complacency that leads to one becoming "a heretick in the truth" (543). For Blake, this Milton, identified with Satan as an opponent to God's tyranny, is the "true Milton," the poet of original or "Satanic" energy and poetic creation. On the other, there is the "false Milton," the misguided religious thinker who embraces the fetters of rationality and obedience.[2] This Milton believes God is always to be obeyed and bullies readers into the same realization, forcing them recognize and never forget it, no matter the temptations to think otherwise. Many will recognize this Milton from Stanley Fish's landmark book *Surprised by Sin* (1967) and his later work, *How Milton Works* (2003). In the former, Fish insists that two primary patterns exist in *Paradise Lost*—"the reader's humiliation and his education," which take place to make the reader "fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam's troubled clarity" in order to "give [Milton's] audience a basis for moral action" (xiii, 1). From Fish's perspective, Milton not only bullies readers into obedience; he hoodwinks them into it by subtly tempting them to reenact Adam's fall through reading the poem.

Although one may attribute this dichotomy to Blake, its origins reach back to Milton himself and to the critics, scholars, and publishers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But when telling the story of Milton's "afterlife," one becomes entangled in a web spreading much further than essays, commentaries, and handsome editions with annotations and illustrations. In many ways, the century and a half from 1688 to the early nineteenth century can be called the high-water mark for Milton as a cultural commodity in England, for he enjoyed a vogue in high culture circles and in more "popular" ones that celebrations of his 400th birthday in

2008 could not equal. Milton was in the papers read by an educated middle-class, and he was present in a stunning quantity of books with academic and intellectual aspirations. His works and his name also lived on in "translations" geared towards women and children, in poetic odes to his sublimity, in imitations of his verse, and, finally, in musical theatre.

Indeed, musical drama and theatre present one of the more exciting developments in Milton's posthumous reception. In his lifetime, there was only one attempt to adapt his verse for dramatic performance. Unfortunately, Dryden's operatic redaction of *Paradise Lost* never made it past the page, so the poet had to wait until the mid-eighteenth century for adaptations of his works to find their way to the stage. But once John Dalton and Thomas Arne's *Comus* debuted in March 1738, they proved that Milton's poetry was an attractive choice for theatre companies searching for vernacular sources to present on stage. Some scholarship has looked into these areas to extend our understanding of how past times understood Milton; these studies regularly mention Milton's high standing in the eighteenth century and offer valuable insight into eighteenth-century culture and theatre. Unfortunately, the link between Milton adaptations and early Milton criticism rarely extends beyond *en passant* mentions of the poet's "reputation." As a result, more often than not, tracing the evolutions of the "Godly" and "Satanic" Milton involves a line of descent extending from Marvell and Dryden, to the critics and biographers of the late seventeenth century, through the same in eighteenth century, and ending with the Romantics. But if Milton was such a valuable commodity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and he was—looking only to criticism and biography will inevitably leave much of story of Milton's importance to aftertimes untold. One can profitably examine eighteenth-century dramatic/musical adaptations as examples of staged criticism to attain a more developed picture of how aftertimes thought of the man and his works. Among early twentieth-century scholars, John W. Good's *Studies in the Milton Tradition* (1915) and David H. Stevens's *Milton Papers* (1927) discuss the popularity of John Dalton and Thomas Arne's *Comus* (1738), and Alwin Thaler broadly covers the topic of Milton on stage. Stevens and Good limit their remarks to one adaptation, and Thaler, though helpful for

understanding the frequency of performances, offers little more than negative commentary on the butchering of Milton's poetry. In fact, Thaler believes that "the great Puritan poet, had he known, would have objected bitterly to some of the methods [adapters] took to exploit his works" (269). The second volume of John Shawcross's *Milton: The Critical Heritage* (1972) and Dustin Griffin's *Regaining Paradise: Milton in the Eighteenth Century* (1986) acknowledge the existence of musical adaptations and present them as examples of Milton's reputation and popularity, but neither provides much in-depth analysis of the texts themselves.

Fortunately, early adaptations have been the focus of more recent studies by Don-John Dugas, Berta Joncus, Kay Gilliland Stevenson and Margaret Seares, and Stella Revard. Dugas ably illuminates the performance history and popularity of *Comus*, linking them to Milton's popular esteem in the 1730s, and Joncus offers a salutary vision by stressing the equal importance of performers such as Kitty Clive to the adaptations of *A Maske*, the twin poems, and *Samson Agonistes* ("Handel" 219-20; "Milton" 8-9). Winton Dean's *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (1957) and Ruth Smith's *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (1995) investigate Handel's attempts to set Milton's poetry to music and, by virtue of their focus on the composer, suggest Milton was not necessarily the central focus in adaptations of his works. Joncus's investigation of *Comus* also implies Miltonists may overstate the importance of the poet's reputation and moral authority to understanding these adaptations. From her point of view, the actress/singer Kitty Clive was a central figure for whose talents Dalton and Arne specifically crafted much of the opera. And in their 1998 study of Benjamin Stillingfleet and John Christopher Smith's *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio* (1760), Stevenson and Seares discuss the demands of transforming poetry into oratorio and reveal that adaptation requires far more than simple faithfulness to the poet's master-text.[3] Contrary to this view, Revard and Smith uncover the nationalistic subtexts of molding Milton's politically-charged *Samson Agonistes* into an oratorio, and their analysis shows quite clearly that the poet's reputation as a champion of republican values made his poem an attractive option (or from Revard's point of view, a dangerous one) for

adaptation in the 1740s (Smith, *Handel's Oratorios* 288-334; Revard, "Restoring" 379-95). Finally, Revard's brief history of *Paradise Lost* on stage proves that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century librettists and musicians responded to and relied heavily on the currency of Milton's supposed orthodoxy and religious authority.

Running through this scholarship is the assumption that the maneuvers used to present Milton's poetry as musical ode, Handelian oratorio, or vernacular opera render a picture that gels with the predominant idea of Milton's pre-Romantic reputation—particularly, his reputation as a national literary hero, a poet-divine and religious prophet, and a native champion of "British" liberty and values. Dugas ably shows that by 1737, when Dalton composed his libretto, acceptance for Milton's politics was on the rise and that "*Comus*'s time had come" (139), and he points to Dalton's Prologue as a "distillation of the admiration that Milton enjoyed in 1738" (146). Joncus similarly argues that the Prologue and the advertisements for *Comus* illustrate Drury Lane's exploitation of Milton as a beacon of British values, even though the performance itself (especially the added songs and dances) may present a decidedly less moral vision ("Milton" 8). She also points to later productions of *Comus* as evidence of Drury Lane's continued use of Milton's rising political favor among opposition parties ("Milton" 13-14). Smith and Revard also hone in on the importance of "Whig" or "patriot" Milton to *Samson*, which Smith believes "could well symbolize this Britain [i.e., Protestant Britain beset by Catholic adversaries]—[with its] native strength shackled by misadministration" (296). Revard sees things differently, believing that Hamilton and Handel, "political conservatives, ardent royalists, who courted the favor of King George II and the conservative establishment," had "no intention of reminding the king of Milton, the supporter of regicide, nor of the revolutionary nature of *Samson Agonistes*," and so they "suppressed [the poem's] political underpinnings, eliminating or softening Milton's sharp political edges" ("Restoring" 383). As for *Paradise Lost*, Stevenson and Seares observe that the plot of *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio* relies heavily on the events of Books 9 and 10, which indicates the eighteenth-century preference for "pastoral" Milton to the

"rebellious" Milton of the Romantics. Revard further notes that Stillingfleet and Smith's treatment of the epic conforms to prevailing musical tastes and practices: "Most eighteenth-century composers and librettists approached *Paradise Lost* as a Christian epic for which they were providing proper liturgical settings" ("Fortunes" 94).

Those investigating adaptations of Milton's poetry often find more in them than mere "reflections" of widely held ideas about Milton's worldview and reputation. Rather, they highlight the extremely selective process by which aftertimes sought a coherent picture of "Milton," and they illustrate that adaptation—of both his early poems and his late ones—entails a surgical process akin to that which Joseph Wittreich attributes to early criticism and reception of *Paradise Lost* alone:

> Milton's earliest critics . . . —*each of them well grounded in orthodoxy*—fretted over Milton's intentions in *Paradise Lost*, worrying that he would ruin the sacred truths of Scripture, and thus unsettled by . . . Milton's "uncertainty" . . . used their imitations and translations . . . to contradict Milton out of his contradictions and thereby coax *Paradise Lost* back into orthodoxy. (*Why Milton Matters* 267, emphasis Wittreich's)

In more general terms, Bernard Sharratt describes this practice as the appropriation of Milton for causes and beliefs he may not himself have held, a process he too centers on *Paradise Lost*. Early criticism, he explains, transformed Milton's epic from an intense, scrutinizing "theological inquiry" into a piece of mere "literature" and "devotion" (42-43).

Indeed, "devotion" best describes eighteenth-century adaptations of Milton's poetry. In some shape or another, those fitting his works to the exigencies of performance and many attending those performances participated in an act of worship: worship of God, of "Milton," or of their own values and ideologies and, hence, of themselves. Not without some justice, then, does historian Linda Colley argue that self-worship was inherent in musical drama from Handel on: "the men and women . . . listening so intently were indeed engaged in an act of faith. Only

what many of them were worshipping was Great Britain, and indirectly themselves" (32). As this study will show, in musical adaptations of Milton's works, Britons' worship of Great Britain and of themselves fused imperceptibly with devotion to "Milton" as one of their champions. Such devotion, however, did not always mirror Milton's idea of God or of himself, for adapting Milton also required accommodating Milton, molding him into a man of the eighteenth century. Thus, in *Samson*, the eponymous hero becomes a less disturbing figure than in *Samson Agonistes*. Thus, in *Comus*, the eponymous villain resembles an eighteenth-century gentleman-rake. Thus, in Handel and Charles Jennens's *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* (1740-43), one gains a sense of closure not necessarily inherent in the original twin poems. Thus, in 1767, William Jackson saw nothing amiss in using "Lycidas," a poem by a vocal supporter of regicide and an ardent antimonarchist, to lament the death of a prince. And, thus, the parts of *Paradise Lost* most represented in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century musical settings focus on Books 4-8 and include Adam and Eve's morning and evening songs and their lyrical exchanges, the marriage hymn, and the angelic choruses on Creation. As Revard helpfully speculates, the "poetic structure" of these passages "seemed most apt for musical setting," and, perhaps, "their praise of God's creative powers and their celebration of ideal human love appealed to eighteenth-century tastes" ("Fortunes" 95). Her speculations are supported by Richard Jago's redaction of *Paradise Lost*. Jago appears to have penned his libretto (*Adam, or, The Fatal Disobedience*) around the same time as Stillingfleet, and like Stillingfleet, he focuses on the idyllic scenes of Paradise. Finally, excepting Dryden's *The State of Innocence* (1674), all treatments of *Paradise Lost* until the later nineteenth century remove Satan, the fallen angels, and the temptation from sight, yet what remains "is not totally un-Miltonic" and is "totally consonant with the eighteenth-century notion of *Paradise Lost*" ("Fortunes" 100). These notions are the same Shawcross and James Thorpe have established in their overviews of early Milton criticism and reception: that is, although opinion often divided on matters of Milton's prosody, politics, and religion, the prevailing portrait was that of a divine poet of supreme artistry and sublimity admired for his ability to amaze readers with his imaginative

poetry and edify their minds with his moral and religious teachings. To underscore this last point, Shawcross states, "many learned the Bible at the hands of Milton" (2:25).[4]

This project aims to synthesize scholarship on eighteenth-century Milton adaptations with an investigation of early Milton criticism, biography, and reception to forge a stronger link among them. In doing so, a new vision of eighteenth-century "Milton" emerges. More accurately, the Milton found is not so much new as buried beneath the prevailing notions of him as a national literary treasure, an English poet-divine, and a political figurehead. From the surgical processes by which musicians and librettists lopped off parts of his poetry, altered the remainder, and added pieces of his other poems as well as their own original contributions, there arises a Frankenstein-esque "Milton" that one must call the poet of discipline. This Milton bears a strong resemblance to Blake's tyrannical Milton, whom Fish envisions more positively as Godly Milton; indeed, Milton the poet of discipline is their predecessor.

Underpinning this assertion that Milton criticism and adaptation created a representation of English values based upon discipline is the broader contention surrounding how one understands the early modern period (defined here as the 300-plus-year span from the early sixteenth century to the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century). Specifically, the debate customarily focuses on the so-called Enlightenment, sandwiched between the 1600s and the birth of industry in the 1800s. In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1985), Jürgen Habermas argues that the Enlightenment expanded the possibilities for individuality and democracy (18), a view that responds directly to Michel Foucault's assertion that Enlightenment thought created a police state that upheld the status quo through new psychological and discursive methods of discipline, which he describes in *Discipline and Punish* (1975).[5] Much like the dichotomy between Godly Milton and Satanic Milton, this one may also be far too simplistic. It may be more accurate to say that the era was paradoxically both. Even more accurately, the era was, for Great Britain at least, one of expanding freedom both on the national and individual scales *because* it was one of thorough-going self-discipline. Eighteenth-century "Milton"

crystallizes this paradox. The adaptations of the 1700s exploited the poet's reputation as a champion of liberty and a great deliverer to celebrate "British" values, yet the signal virtues he is believed to espouse invariably remain obedience and self-discipline. For Milton, liberty necessitates submission, control, and obedience—a paradox strongly resembling John Donne's "Holy Sonnet 14": "Take me to you, imprison me, for I / Except you enthrall me, never shall be free" (12-13). Similarity, a free Great Britain was not possible unless the individual subjugated his or her desires to the boundaries of Reason, an act Milton critics and adapters believed Milton's poetry ably illustrated and taught. However, in order to exalt him as the patron-poet of discipline, librettists and musicians had to smooth over the personal uncertainties, religious heterodoxies, interpretive quandaries, and political edges and discontents of his thought.

The process of "coaxing" Milton back into orthodoxy that Wittreich observes in early Milton criticism is the same that will be elucidated here in eighteenth-century adaptations: that of building Milton up as a moral and religious authority whose central message is obedience and discipline. These virtues are central to his mature works and to some of the earlier ones, such as *A Maske* and "Lycidas," but aftertimes took Milton's theme of disobedience in his masterpiece further than the poet ever hoped and looked upon his claims to prophetic vision with less skepticism than he himself did. Studies of Milton's reception and of eighteenth-century musical adaptations relate the poet's religious authority to the overall tendency of the age to overlook potential heterodoxies in his thought, especially those expressed in *Paradise Lost*. But they overlook more than this, for these adaptations act upon the assertions of contemporary Milton criticism and cut out not only possible heterodoxy and heresy but also the theological inquiries and epistemological cruxes that drive his poetry and thought. Where Milton questions, they answer. Where he guesses, they assert. Where he hedges, they proclaim. And, ironically, they do so out of their peculiar understanding of what constitutes the "spirit" or "essence" of his thought.

This is not to say Milton's authority was a settled matter as soon as Samuel Simmons placed the first copies of *Paradise Lost* on the shelf in 1667. Rather, challenges to Milton's views

sprung up sporadically after his death. Charles Leslie's "Preface to *The History of Sin and Heresy*" (1698), John Clarke's *An Essay on Study* (1731), and one writer to the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1738-39) known only as "Theophilus" all voiced the concern that Milton's greatest poem contains ideas "harmful" to religion and morality, including heresy and blasphemy. In *Soliloquy: or, Advice to an Author* (1711), the Earl of Shaftesbury dances around the issue with awesome dexterity but implies something rather similar.[6] By and large, however, Milton did not want for fervid defenders who shouted down objections and reaffirmed his untroubled orthodoxy. In conjunction with prevailing critical opinion, these defenses led not only to an expansion of the poet's reputation, but also to a proportional rise in his authority as a religious teacher. Additionally, this religious authority was often tinged with nationalistic pride; as so many were quick to remind readers, it was an Englishman who equaled, or even surpassed, Homer and Virgil in epic poetry. Adding patriotism into the mix further complicated questions of Milton's authority on all matters (religious, political, moral, etc.), as Whigs, Tories, and opposition figures fought over his legacy even when they agreed that his legacy (whatever it was) was well worth preserving.

James Thorpe has noted briefly and Wittreich and Peter Herman in great detail that the understanding of Milton's authority came about by neglecting or explaining away potentially troubling elements in his religious views.[7] Moreover, the insistent denial that his poetry was in anyway heterodox, heretical, or impious contributed and strengthened the understanding of him as a poet of imposing moral and religious authority, and it is this idea of "Milton," a construct of the eighteenth century, that Blake and other Romantic poets reacted against. This project investigates the role musical adaptations of Milton's poetry play in creating a Milton whose reputation as a liberator made those very productions more attractive. In short, the exploitation of him as the restorer of ancient liberty paradoxically created an understanding of his moral message as an extreme manifestation of Fish's Godly Milton: "We must discern the will of God and do it" (*How Milton Works* 57) becomes "You must always do as you are told." It is no coincidence that

the common eighteenth-century idea of "Milton," the poet of obedience, strongly resembles Blake's Urizen, a symbol of the extreme rationality that shackles religious and thinking with conventions. If Blake made an extremist of Milton, the more "balanced" and "moderate" eighteenth century first created its own extreme Milton. Urizen was not a figure Blake created; rather, he saw him behind prevailing perceptions of the poet and gave him a name.

While adaptations may appear a curious way through which to understand how a time or people thought of a writer, it is important to keep in mind that Enlightenment-era Britain's entertainment industry differs greatly from modern-day show business. In the eighteenth century, productions of poetry on the dramatic and musical stages had not yet fled the popular stage for more exclusive and elite venues, and their centrality can provide a distinct insight. Nor had literary criticism yet receded into the less-well trodden halls of academia. Learned writers like Addison reached a wide readership, and criticism and adaptation, so closely related in the era, maintained some hold on the popular mind. Moreover, adaptations of and borrowings from Milton's poems appeared on the British musical stage with great regularity in the eighteenth century. Six of his works—*A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle*, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" (combined into one), *Samson Agonistes*, *Paradise Lost*, and "Lycidas"—enjoyed the privilege of full-length presentations in London as well as in Scotland, Ireland, and the English provinces. Parts from a number of others ("At a Solemn Musick," "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," "On Time," and some of his Psalms translations) as well as various excerpts from the longer poems also figured into musical works and miscellanies. Such treatment by no means made Milton special. Dustin Griffin also names Homer, Virgil, Chaucer, Spenser, Donne, Shakespeare, and Dryden as poets whose works were regularly adapted; however, he singles out Milton adaptations for "their variety and frequency" (62). The number of past English poets tapped for musical-dramatic performance shows one way in which the British nation was then growing conscious of its artistic worth and achievement. Indeed, ballad-opera, English opera, and oratorio grew at least partially out of desire for vernacular musical forms to supplant Italian opera. Using

the greatest English artists of the past to herald the arrival of the British art of the present seems an inevitable move as the celebrated masters became soldiers in a "culture war" between native, "British" art and the values it stood for, on the one hand, and its "foreign" adversaries, on the other. But the stage was also a business, and what did not fill seats would not thrive. As cultural touchstones and as selling points—and the two are not mutually exclusive—sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets, Milton colossal among them, enjoyed a long and prosperous afterlife on the musical-dramatic stage.

However, at least one critic believes "John Milton" and the original themes and concerns of his poetry mattered little in adaptations. Dustin Griffin distinguishes adaptations from imitations, defining the former as works that transfer the original into a new medium (e.g., translations of an original into rhymed verse or more accessible English, paintings based on poems, or musical settings of poems): "Eighteenth-century adapters of Milton set out to translate his work into a different medium, or a different style, or to suit a different taste." He further separates adaptation from imitation by stating that adaptation "does not require its reader (or spectator) to make an implicit comparison between original and remodeled poem" (62-63).

To the contrary, the prefaces appended to some adaptations suggest composers and librettists at the very least expected comparison. In some cases, they seem to have feared and, in others, tacitly welcomed it. First, librettos and playbills regularly name Milton or mention that the work is "adapt'd from" Milton. Of course, his was not the only name presented; quite often, the composer, the singers, and even the musicians also get top-billing. Nor was Milton the only poet to have his name prevalently displayed; Dryden, for instance, regularly appears on title pages and bills for performances of *Alexander's Feast* and of the *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*. Rather than diminishing the importance of poet, this underscores how much the original poet (Milton or someone else) was expected to be part of what drew people to performances, and the sales pitch indicates librettists, composers, and theatre managers assumed a prior knowledge of the works they altered and re-presented on stage. Second, three librettists—John Dalton (*Comus*, 1738),

Newburgh Hamilton (*Samson*, 1743), and Benjamin Stillingfleet (*Paradise Lost: An Oratorio*, 1760)—wrote prefaces that express a high regard for Milton and profess their intentions to do as little violence as possible to his work. Dalton's Prologue spectacularly proclaims that the "Spirit" of the poet himself has come down to view and participate in the events (like the Attendant Spirit of the original masque).[8] Hamilton explains that he stays true to "the spirit of the subject." And Stillingfleet declares his "greatest difficulty" has been "to bring materials furnished by Milton into so small a compass, and at the same time to preserve some idea of the original plan" (1). In an age long before adaptation theory, faithfulness to the text—or to the so-called spirit of the text—appears to have been a concern for adapters and one they expected audiences to share. But what spirit? Such is the trouble with abstractions, for the "spirit" gave adapters leeway to remake the poems without completely rewriting them—thus the many masks eighteenth-century adapters put onto Milton's works as an extension of the era's perceptions of him. But no matter the label—sublime Milton, prophetic Milton, patriot Milton—behind it remains Milton the poet of discipline and obedience.

By and large, librettists and musicians derived their perceptions of Milton from literary critics and scholars such as Joseph Addison and Thomas Newton. One must, therefore, look to criticism as the jumping off point for those who adapted Milton to the stage. According to Shawcross and Thorpe, by about 1730, there was an established tradition of Milton criticism with three basic components: Milton the man, Milton the artist, and Milton the philosopher. Although "the man" would seem to mean biographical concerns, much of what falls under this category also deals with Milton's defense of Charles I's execution and his service to the Council of State and the Protectorate. The political matters that heavily color early ideas about Milton as a man explain the Tory tendency to castigate his personality and his politics (e.g., Samuel Johnson) and the Whig habit of eulogizing him as a champion of liberty (e.g., James Thomson and Thomas Warton). As such, Milton's politics and his political utility for Whigs, patriots, and other

opposition parties predictably play a large part adapting his work for the stage, as is apparent in *Comus* and *Samson*.

But Milton the artist often did not play well with Milton the pamphleteer, nor did Milton the philosopher prove any more of an accommodating partner for adaptation. The solution was to overlook those facets of the poet's politics and religion that made uneasy material for adaptation. The practice complements a process in early Milton criticism, noted by Thorpe, in which Milton's thought gradually became disassociated from his expression (his style and artistry), as the slow drop in esteem for theology (not to be confused with esteem for religion) led to a proportional drop in esteem for Milton's religious authority. By the nineteenth century, it thus became possible to denigrate Milton's thought while exalting his artistry (Thorpe 6), as did Percy Shelley, who could find Milton's religion abhorrent while also praising the artistry of *Paradise Lost*. Acting upon Milton's own autobiographical touches throughout his oeuvre and the work of early biographers relying on Milton himself for their information, the Romantics perfected the notion of Milton as the Artist. Indeed, from 1840 to 1890, David Masson worked tirelessly and mightily in his *Life of Milton* to establish the picture of an isolated and austere Puritan, a man of abundant poetic skill but of few friends due to his general disagreeableness. However, the perception of Milton as an isolated genius predates the Romantics, for it was part of the normal stock and trade of eighteenth-century Milton lore. For instance, in Dalton's Prologue to *Comus*, he relies heavily on the commonly-pedaled notion of Milton's poor reception in his lifetime, something first popularized by eighteenth-century biographer, Elijah Fenton. This picture has slowly changed over the past twenty years thanks to the work of scholars like Peter Lindenbaum, Stephen Dobranksi, Edward Jones, Thomas Corns, and Gordon Campbell—all of whom in their own ways debunk the myth of the isolated genius.[9] These new biographical approaches reveal Milton to have been a man of the world with numerous social and business connections throughout his life.[10] For the Romantics and for much of the eighteenth century, however, the common picture

was that of a neglected genius. The key difference was the degree to which readers believed him orthodox (eighteenth-century readers) or radical (the Romantics).

Although the myth of the isolated genius was present well before the Romantics, it is a commonplace that they initiated resistance to Milton's moral and religious authority even as they exalted him as the great and lonely poet. Blake's resistance and Shelley's odd brand of respect were predicated on careful "misreadings" of Milton's poetry, and the majority of earlier criticism shows a more "orthodox" reading of his works and a high regard for his religious authority with his political authority fluctuating more wildly. When Thorpe speaks of Milton the philosopher, he alludes to Milton's high standing as a religious teacher, for critics frequently used words like "sublime" and "divine" to describe his works, especially *Paradise Lost*. For example, cutting through the knotty question of genre, Addison's *Spectator* essays suggest that if one is dissatisfied with calling *Paradise Lost* a heroic poem, one may rest content with calling it "a divine poem" (qtd. in Shawcross 1:147). Most importantly, the heterodox parts of the *Paradise Lost* were often ignored or smoothed over. The suppression of these elements led to the expansion of Milton's reputation as his work could be admired by Anglicans, Dissenters, Roman Catholics, and Deists. This also led to the, perhaps unfortunate, conclusion of one commentator that *Paradise Lost* had "contributed more to support the orthodox creed than all the books of divinity that were ever written" (qtd. in Thorpe 6). Or as Shawcross aptly puts it, "Many people in England seem to have learned their Bible with *Paradise Lost* in hand, for it was considered an exposition of the orthodox creed" (1:25). The masterfully sedate neoclassicism of *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio* attests to Milton's importance to orthodox religious teaching, as do the changes William Jackson made to create the musical elegy *Lycidas*.

It is here that one must take issue with the notion that resistant reading to Milton's authority began with the Romantics. The resistance, however, is of a curious sort as it takes place even as librettists insist upon their faithfulness to Milton's words and even in some cases his "sentiments" (i.e., his thoughts). Stillingfleet, a scholar turned librettist, was certainly no stranger

to the poet's works and no debutante in literary criticism, and he makes an explicit claim of his faithfulness to the essence of *Paradise Lost* in his libretto. Contrary to such a claim, the adaptations of *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* reveal that Stillingfleet and Hamilton, respectively, helped establish Milton's religious authority by altering his religious thought. Indeed, both were able to present their librettos as pious, religiously credible works only by first ridding them of their sources' heterodoxies and their equally troubling moral and theological inquiries. Attempting to distill the "spirit" of Milton's religious teachings and working under the constraints of performance, they create an orthodox, Anglican Milton. Finally, while something of the dissident poet remains in Jackson's *Lycidas*, his work erases (somewhat ineffectively) the "prophecy" of the corrupt clergy's fall, which Milton highlighted in *Poems* (1645, 1673). Slashing this troubling passage suggests that Jackson reduced Milton's religious authority by removing explicit proof of "something like prophetic strain"; however, Jackson's cuts to the end of "Lycidas" make his piece much like those of Hamilton and Stillingfleet. All three attempt to tie up the "loose ends" in Milton's poetry, ends that left untouched would raise more questions than the poetry deigns to answer. The endeavor to make Milton more orthodox than he appears was less of a problem for Dalton since *A Maske* does not broach the same interpretive quandaries as the late poems, but one does sense an aversion to open-endedness in Handel and Jennens's reworking of the twin poems. Despite its wildly variant forms, *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* seeks closure for good and for all on which temperament is superior and which Milton himself preferred.

Each adaptation exalts Milton as a national literary hero and as a moral or religious authority, but each does so in its own way and with varying degrees of explicitness. Some (*Comus*, *Samson*, *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio*) quite literally place the poet at the forefront of their productions by referring to him in the prefatory matter—some (*Comus* and *Lycidas*) even using excerpts from his poetry as "framing" or as interpretive guides to the performances. Others (*L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*) silently banked on the poet's cultural currency to help draw

audiences. Nevertheless, they all prove that uncertainty and tension propelled considerations of Milton's poetry and thought well before Romantic and modern criticism began highlighting the ambiguities of his poetry. Looking at these works, one perceives the same maneuvers Wittreich and Herman observe in early criticism: the need to smooth over what may have been unsettling in Milton's works.[11] Particularly, there was Milton's own intellectual, political, and religious independence—all of which he ostentatiously displays in his prose and which served to highlight the gap between his own thought and the hopes of those who wished him to be a mouthpiece of orthodox British values. Furthermore, his belief that personal and civic liberty depend on rigorous inquiry and constant vigilance, a belief that informs the interpretive quandaries of his mature poetry, becomes a danger in need of control. So do the late works' theological controversies and moral debates that serve as a means to exercise the judgment of his readers. If Milton's mature poems were exercises in reading, inquiry, and judgment, the adaptations were less demanding "devotional" exercises disguised as entertainments. Thus, the adaptations of *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* bury interpretive problems and uncertainties by suppressing the fears Marvell expresses in his dedicatory poem to *Paradise Lost* and offering more serene versions of the "essential" meanings of those texts than are present.

It is true that adaptations comprise only a fraction of the eighteenth-century "Milton industry," which included not only numerous editions of his works but also imitations and "translations" as well as paintings and sculptures of the poet and of scenes from his poetry. Nevertheless, they encapsulate one of the dominant attitudes toward Milton in the century: the poet's insistence on obedience and on self-discipline through reason. Feeding off the critical tradition that coaxed Milton into orthodoxy and established him as an authority of those orthodoxies, the eighteenth-century adaptations invoked the "spirit" of Milton's oeuvre—his insistence upon obedience and reason—in order to control the dangers of his works. Their efforts helped raise an idol of Milton as the tyrannical poet that Blake and the Romantics sought to dismantle.

CHAPTER I

PRAISED AND ERASED: DRYDEN'S *THE STATE OF INNOCENCE* AND MILTON'S REPUTATION DURING THE RESTORATION

By the time *Comus* debuted at Drury Lane in 1738, Milton biography and criticism had been established for almost fifty years. Focusing primarily on the poet's life and on *Paradise Lost,* the critical tradition helped form most readers', including librettists' and composers', ideas about the poem and the poet, and the line between biography and commentary was often none too clear. Statements about the "ideas," "thoughts," or "sentiments" of *Paradise Lost* led seamlessly into reflections upon Milton the man, and the sublimity of the poem or the artistry of a specific scene or passage attested to his great "soul" or "imagination." "Nowhere," notes Wittreich, "are poet and poem so irrevocably involved as in the writings of John Milton, so much so that the poet and poem—Milton and *Paradise Lost*—can be used metonymically each for the other" (*Why Milton Matters* 1). The early critics support Wittreich. In *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701), John Dennis asks readers to compare the description of Satan (PL 1:589-601) to the ten lines preceding them. "[T]hen tell me," he demands, "Why the spirit should be so much greater in [the former] . . . unless it proceeded from the greatness of the ideas? Or, how the greatness of the ideas could cause it, but by infusing into the poet, admiration, and a noble pride, which express'd, make the spirit?" (qtd. in Shawcross 1:125). In *Spectator* 279 (19 Jan. 1712), Addison, Dennis's most eminent critical descendant, places Milton's genius above that of Homer, Virgil, and Shakespeare because they relied on history and tradition for their characters, whereas

Milton had only his imagination to provide proper sentiments for his. Satan, the fallen angels, and unfallen Adam and Eve thus testify to Milton's genius, imagination, and "invention" (15-16). Apparently, early readers, critics, and biographers took Milton at his word when he said, "he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himselfe to bee a true poem" (*Apology against a Pamphlet* 890).

The formidable body of writings on which eighteenth-century readers of Milton rely subscribe overwhelmingly to the perception of him as a poet-prophet of unparalleled sublimity, a national literary hero, and a champion of native "British" liberty and values. The exceptions are very few. Criticism also firmly established an understanding of *Paradise Lost* that more often than not overlooked possibilities of heresy and blasphemy and sought to ease interpretative and aesthetic tensions by offering a vision of the poem as nearly perfect and the poet as ever "just" in his decisions. If the author of a praiseworthy poem was himself a true poem, early criticism, especially from 1688 on, was equal to the task of coauthoring that poem into being with Milton. Influential writers such as Addison touted *Paradise Lost* as the consummation of English poetic artistry, a tour-de-force in which Milton topped Homer and Virgil. Integral to this view was a tacit (and sometimes not so tacit) assumption that Milton is a perfectly orthodox religious thinker to whom pious readers could look for religious truths complementary and comparable to, and in some cases surpassing, Scripture.[1] The authority attached to the epic gradually reflected back onto the epic poet himself and onto his other works, and librettists adapted his poems and framed them to be carriers of deep and abiding religious and moral truths. Many of those who brought his works to the stage also strongly identified the poet with and by his poetry. This was Milton bardolatry at its strongest, and it laid the groundwork for his emergence as the poet of discipline.

At least, this is true in the eighteenth century; the one seventeenth-century adaptation tells quite another tale, for during Charles II's reign (1660-85), no one, not even Milton himself, probably envisioned or hoped for such a rise in the poet's fortunes. To men like Dalton, Jennens, Hamilton, Stillingfleet, and Jackson—working between 1737 and 1767—Milton's authority and

artistry were largely beyond dispute, but prior to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, he may have been a poet of undeniable skill, but he was a man unfit for the time.[2] *Paradise Lost* sold well and was recognized (by some) as a poem of considerable virtuosity, vision, and learning, but during the Restoration, the poet could not be separated from the pamphleteer. Milton was thus seen as a man of, at best, ambiguous politics and religion and, at worst, stubborn anti-monarchism and combative religious dissent. To be fair, Corns and Campbell question how difficult life really was for Milton in the Restoration, implicitly challenging his view of himself as "On evil dayes . . . fall'n, and evil tongues" (*PL* 7:26).[3] Moreover, one must tread lightly when considering his religious dissent. His approach to ecclesiastical reform and his views on marriage and divorce place him among the radicals of his day, but the potential Arminianism of *Paradise Lost* (discussed later) places him close to the soteriology of the seventeenth-century Church of England. His disdain for the most radical and antinomian religious sects and his differences with his Quaker associates (i.e., his emphasis, against Quakerism, that Scriptural interpretation take precedent over the inward spirit) also suggest some wariness is needed when placing Milton on the spectrum of seventeenth-century dissent.

Nevertheless, Milton undeniably fell out with the Anglican Church in the 1640s and with the monarchy not soon thereafter, and the separations, unlike that between him and his first wife, remained permanent. He may not have ranked extremely high on the list of social pariahs in late Stuart England and the days may not have been as "evil" as they appeared, but the social and political climate of the Restoration was certainly unfit for making *Paradise Lost* an instant classic. Indeed, one may look to the uncertainty and doubt he sometimes betrays in the invocations of *Paradise Lost* as evidence that he did not expect the success that his epic (and eventually, much of his oeuvre) attained. Moreover, the first adaptation of his poetry—Dryden's Restoration opera, *The State of Innocence* (1677)—although a testament to Dryden's high regard for Milton, speaks to the latter's relatively poor standing in contrast to his fate from 1688 on. *The State of Innocence* vividly illustrates that the exigencies of adaptation, always and in any age,

demand changes to the source text, and Dryden's publication of the opera reveals that even before Milton became a national literary hero and poet-divine, he was allowed some modicum of religious and moral authority. Above all, however, *The State of Innocence* shows the erasure of Milton from the first adaptation based on one of his poems. This would prove a far cry from the eighteenth-century bardolators who laid the foundations of his fame upon his achievements in epic poetry.

The 1660s and '70s may not have been ripe for Milton's apotheosis as the English Virgil, but the seeds of this rise and of the establishment of his religious and moral authority were planted during the Restoration. Unfortunately for Milton, they had a long gestation period and shot forth only after Jacob Tonson's publication of the landmark fourth edition of *Paradise Lost* and the Glorious Revolution, both in 1688, fourteen years after his death. This does not mean Milton did not have his readers and defenders before then. Friends and family (his former coworker Marvell, his friend Thomas Ellwood, and his nephew Edward Phillips) praised his poetry at the same time as others like Samuel Butler and Richard Leigh lashed him for his politics and rarely missed an opportunity to assault his verse. Leigh's *The Transproser Rehears'd* (1673) predictably but brutally mocks Milton's blindness by alluding to the invocation of Holy Light in *Paradise Lost* Book 3 (Shawcross 1:77). This attack, which Marvell promptly answered in *The Rehearsall Transpros'd* (1674), took place only a year ahead of the second edition of the epic. Even as Milton's reputation as an epic poet began to first take shape, his reputation as a regicide supporter and an antiprelatical reformer endured.

This did not stop some from making grandiose claims about the poet and his work. One commonplace arising in the seventeenth and eighteenth century is that Milton not only intended but always knew he would become a divine or heroic poet, and this idea further fueled beliefs in his prophetic status and his religious/moral authority. Admittedly, the notion that Milton's rise to fame was inevitable and foreseen by the poet himself has some credence, for there are ample moments in his poetry and prose in which he discusses the office of the poet and his poetic

ambitions. When one hears him speak of writing "laudable things" in the early 1640s, it is difficult not to equate that statement with *Paradise Lost* and the mature poems of his later years. These statements, later accepted as prophecy, were mere statements of intent. They were also extremely conscious echoes of Virgil, whose career Milton, like sundry other Renaissance poets, imitated. But for Milton the Secretary of Foreign Tongues in the 1650s, his youthful aims must have appeared in danger of ever bearing fruit as his professional duties and his personal life pulled him ever further from the path of Virgil.

But despite the demands of the world and in spite of personal tragedies, the blind and aging Milton fulfilled the promises of his younger self when he completed his "heroick" poem. Yet, the first edition curbs the bold claims of his early career, and it appears that Milton intended to stray quite far from Virgil's path. Foremost, in 1667, Milton divided his epic into ten books, rather than twelve. Barbara Lewalski believes this to be "an overt political statement" in which "Milton eschewed Virgil's twelve-book epic format with its Roman imperialist and royalist associations for the ten-book model of the republican Lucan" (460). Indeed, *Paradise Lost* at many points still imitates the epic poet of imperial Rome, yet Milton's brashness comes with a heavy dose of humility. He knew his task to be adventurous and innovative, but whether it would endure, he does not say. Instead, the poet asks for divine assistance in finding a "fit audience, though few" (*PL* 7:29). In other words, his labors' fate is out of his hands, and it would depend on others to determine whether *Paradise Lost* would be that work of which he spoke more than two decades before. Moreover, the first edition of 1667 limits itself to expressions of intent. There is no prefatory matter commenting on how to approach it, especially none proclaiming the epic that laudable thing which aftertimes would not soon let die.

The second, twelve-book edition of *Paradise Lost* in 1674 contains the first statements outside the poem itself that offer readers a notion of the poem's authority and "immortality." The first edition contained few suggestions of how the poem ought to be read, but in the second, Milton offers defensive but illuminating comments on his choice of blank verse and on the genre

of the poem. The verse, and hence the poem, is "heroic," which Milton links to Homer and Virgil and the best, most learned of Italian and Spanish poets and English tragedians. The conclusion also reminds those who had forgotten Milton's role as a liberator (as if anyone in 1674 would have): "This neglect then of rhime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteem'd an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recover'd to heroic poem from the troublesom and modern bondage of rimeing" (250). Milton frames his poem as a rebellion from prevailing aesthetic custom, one of many gestures throughout his career that set him at odds with many of his contemporaries. By 1674, Milton (largely silent since the restoration of the monarchy) was apparently getting reacquainted with the defiant pluck of his earlier days. Though few could have doubted his authorship of the first edition, which sometimes names the author only as "J.M.," the dearth of prefatory matter suggests modesty on the poet and publisher's part. By contrast, the second edition puts Milton's delightful cantankerousness on display, as his note on the verse could not help but call to mind his role in "the Great Rebellion," as influential Milton biographer Elijah Fenton called it (vi).

Not surprisingly, then, the verse became an early and by far the most visited issue for commentators seeking to make Milton a less contentious and "foreign" figure more fit to be a national poet. Even those who clamored the loudest over his artistic faults (his "rough" prosody and violation of "rules") conceded that his achievement and the greatness of his "subject" could not be denied. Dryden may have lifted him above Virgil and Homer and stated in his the prefatory matter to *The State of Innocence* that *Paradise Lost* was one of the "most noble" poems ever written, but after Milton's death, he raised a loud ruckus about Milton's verse. Moreover, in his *Apology for Heroique Poetry*, Dryden enlists Milton as one of the worthies, but he later balks at including him in the ranks of "heroic" poets. The most insistent and influential voice on Milton's flaws as a poet, Dryden often speaks about his "flat" parts admits "his subject is not that of an heroic poem, properly so called" (*Origin and Progress of Satire* 18).

Milton may have been the first voice in the second edition, but he was not the only one offering critical signposts, and the issues that would later dominate Milton criticism extend far beyond prosody. Samuel Barrow's Latin dedication curiously speaks only of the war in Heaven after alluding to the immense scope of *Paradise Lost*, but he anticipates Dryden's praise by placing Milton on equal footing with Homer and Virgil. By the far the more interesting and more important piece is Marvell's "On Mr. Milton's 'Paradise Lost.'" This poem illustrates with extreme clarity that early critics "fretted over Milton's intentions . . . worrying that he would ruin the sacred truths of Scripture" (Wittreich, *Why Milton Matters* 267). Marvell's poem is also the first attempt by someone other than Milton to claim for him immortality and religious authority. The argument and the aim of the epic hold Marvell "a while misdoubting [Milton's] intent" and in fear "That he would ruine . . . The sacred truths to fable and old song, / (So Sampson groap'd the temples posts in spight) / The world o'rewhelming to revenge his sight" (6-10). Marvell proclaims to have found Milton's intentions honorable but doubts his ability to achieve his aims:

> I lik'd his project, the success did fear;
> Through that wide field how he his way should find
> O're which lame faith leads understanding blind;
> Lest he perplext the things he would explain,
> And what was easie he should render vain. (12-16)

Resembling Milton's invocations, Marvell's experience of reading *Paradise Lost* navigates between anxiety and assurance. He "misdoubts" Milton's intentions and fears that the blind, aging poet will be unable to make sacred truths less than "perplexed" or vain, echoing Milton's own concerns in Book 7 when he confesses that he may fall into error if heavenly Urania deserts his efforts.[4] But as Marvell's fear subsides, he claims for Milton more certainty and authority, assuring readers that they will find nothing amiss or impious in *Paradise Lost*, a poem completely unified and consistent with scriptural truth. His assertion would echo for many years. Of note

here is that Marvell's doubts arise from a sense of duty to religious truth, a "causeless, yet not impious, surmise" (24). Thus he deems all within the poem consistent with piety and Scripture:

> Thou hast not miss'd one thought that could be fit,
> And all that was improper dost omit:
> So that no room is here for writers left,
> But to detect their ignorance or theft.
> That majesty which through thy work doth reign
> Draws the devout, deterring the profane.
> And things divine thou treats of in such state
> As them preserves, and thee, inviolate. (26-33)

Marvell is vague on what exactly made him fear the intent and success of *Paradise Lost*, but whatever it was, he believes Milton ultimately leaves the reader "With peace and consolation . . . And calm of mind" (*SA* 1757-58). Marvell's dedication would not appear in the watershed fourth edition of *Paradise Lost*, but it would resurface in Tonson's *The Poetical Works of Mr. John Milton* (1705, 1720). Reading this dedication, one would get the sense that the epic is a perfect construction on matters of faith in which everything is included "that could be fit" and with nothing "improper" remaining.

Marvell voices the uneasiness readers of many generations have felt when approaching *Paradise Lost* and Milton's works more generally, even if each generation has its own unique fears and grumbles. But Marvell ultimately insists that what one takes away from *Paradise Lost* is assurance and ease. However, to do so, he not only "coaxes" the poem into orthodoxy, but also initiates a claim for Milton as a religious authority beyond dispute. Such grand claims in dedicatory poems and epistles were as common in the early modern era as rain in London, but the difference is that Marvell's claims came true in the next century. Marvell extends his assertions of Milton's poetic and religious superiority until there is "no room here" for question or alteration. Those who attempt any such thing—who through imitation, adaptation, or response attempt to

continue the conversation about divine justice and the ways of God to men (i.e., the argument)—will betray only their "ignorance or theft." The deferential tone of eighteenth-century librettists toward Milton and his works suggests many took Marvell's claim to heart.

Marvell leaves only two options for those who would revise Milton's truths: flat-out error or wholesale theft of the truth already uttered by the vatic poet—a rather curious proclamation considering Milton borrows from and revises Scripture in composing *Paradise Lost*. Marvell's claims for Milton's divine prophecy, whether meant hyperbolically or sincerely, anticipate and complement Dryden's epigram in the fourth edition of *Paradise Lost*. For Dryden, Homer's "loftiness of thought" and Virgil's "majesty" meet in Milton, and so "The force of nature cou'd no farther goe: / To make a third she joined the former two." Milton becomes the *ne plus ultra* of poets, the perfection of the epic tradition and the end of divine revelation in poetry. Dryden's later criticism of Milton expose this as mere flattery, but the genie Marvell let out of the bottle could not be stuffed back in, and Dryden's epigram, sincerely meant or not, lent him speed.[5]

More than a decade before penning this epigram, however, Dryden had said much more about "Milton"—and to a far different end. In April 1674, he entered at the Stationers' Register of *The Fall of Angells, and Men in Innocence: An Heroic Opera*, which he published as *The State of Innocence, and Fall of Man: An Opera* in 1677. *The State of Innocence* was never performed but was a popular text during the Restoration. Indeed, in the seventeenth century it rivaled Milton's original with printings in 1677, 1678, 1684, 1690, 1692, and 1695. *The State of Innocence* is a fascinating specimen because of what it says about Milton's authority and stature in the 1670s, in contrast to later adaptations that full-throatedly assert his moral and religious authority as justification for their works.

In *The State of Innocence*, Dryden balances his respect for Milton with his need to entertain and please his patron, Mary of Modena, and to thrive in a world markedly at odds with everything Milton had envisioned for England. Most importantly, *The State of Innocence* shows what a Milton adaptation looked like before he was considered a "classic" author. Nonetheless,

the "opera" is a sign of things to come in some respects. Excluding the overall plot (the "design"), Dryden stays close to the "essence" of *Paradise Lost* on religious matters (free will, soteriology, divine justice, and human obedience). This suggests Dryden's Restoration readers felt less discomfort than later generations with the religion of *Paradise Lost*, save its possible Arianism and the anti-prelatism that flares up in the later books, both of which Dryden appropriately excises. Apparently, even a Restoration audience ill-disposed towards Milton's politics and religious independence was nevertheless able to grant him some measure of theological authority. For this audience, his politics may have been completely wrong-headed and even treasonous, but he had some things right religiously.

By far, Dryden's largest alterations are his presentations of Satan and of the relationship between Adam and Eve. (His treatment of the unfallen state of the first humans also reveals a major difference between his adaptation and Stillingfleet's almost a century later.) Dryden largely defers to Milton's religious authority, preserving his soteriology and theodicy and erasing only those parts he deemed most potentially offensive to his audience. Stillingfleet, professing to respect Milton's authority on religious matters, would in reality go much further than Dryden to make the religious attitude of his adaptation palatable to his clientele, and he does so despite the by then long-established tradition of viewing Milton as a national poet-divine. But the real departure between *The State of Innocence* and Stillingfleet's *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio* resides in what each man believed to be—or felt he had to represent as—the true state of prelapsarian life in Eden.

Although Dryden had permission to "tag" Milton's verse, which suggests he had nothing more than sanction to convert the plot of *Paradise Lost* to rhyme, *The State of Innocence* is a monument to the license one could take with a work that had not yet become a treasured classic of a proud nation. Indeed, the redactions and changes lead one to wonder how much Milton really knew or cared to know about Dryden's project, entered at The Stationers' Register seven months before Milton's death but published three years after it. Dryden tries to preserve the sublimity and

energy of the original while also trimming its political thorns; in this he is not far afield of later librettists. But his understanding of his redaction in the prefatory matter and the picture others held of Dryden's project starkly contrast with the bardolatry and insistent claims to textual fidelity that mark eighteenth-century adaptations. In particular, the front matter to *The State of Innocence* illuminates the peculiar treatment Milton received from Dryden—a contemporary, a friend, and a rival poet—as opposed to a later generation for whom Milton had always been the English Virgil.

Seventeenth-century editions of *The State of Innocence* contain ample prefatory material addressing the issue of textual fidelity. Dryden professes some faithfulness to the original; however, the aggregate effect of the front matter—a dedicatory poem, an essay on genre and criticism, and a dedicatory letter to Dryden's patron—implicitly and explicitly reduce the importance of Milton to the adaptation and challenge Dryden's professions of fidelity. Nathaniel Lee's dedication reveals how much—and how little—esteem *Paradise Lost* had in 1677, eleven years after the first edition and only three years after the second edition in 1674 and Marvell's praise of the poem's "perfection." Clearly, some readers did not agree with Marvell. To Lee, Dryden is a civilizing force who whips Milton's roughness into presentable shape to appear in "polite" company. As dismissive of Milton's achievement as later writers are fulsome, he is critical of the verse, calling it rough and praising Dryden for refining it, and although eighteenth-century librettists invoke the greatness of Milton's "immortal verse" as inspiration for adaptation, Lee blankly states that "To the dead Bard, [Dryden's] fame a little owes." A little, but not the all that librettists like Dalton would claim, for Dalton's "pure essence" is Lee's "Wealthy mine," which Milton uncovered

> And rudely cast what [Dryden] cou'd well dispose:
> [Milton] roughly drew, on an old fashion'd ground,
> A chaos, for no perfect world was found,

> Till through the heap, [Dryden's] mighty genius shin'd;
> [Milton's] was the golden ore which [Dryden] refin'd.

In a masterfully backhanded compliment, Lee gives Milton his due for creating the worthy matter but dismisses "the dead bard" as a mere source for a more elevated poet. *Paradise Lost* is a "rustic maid" whom Dryden "to court . . . brought / Drest her with gemms, new weav'd her hard spun thought / And softest language, sweetest manners taught." He also praises Dryden for clearing the "mystic scene" and changing the melancholy tone for a more delighting one. The tropes and comparisons are telling, especially that which follows Lee's astral metaphor: "from a comet she a star did rise, / Not to affright, but please our wondring eyes." As Milton emphasized obedience and the just punishment for disobedience, it is not surprising that "terror" would be associated with *Paradise Lost*. For Lee, Milton's poem is full of great matter, but it is also old-fashioned, dour, mystic, and rough—thus the need for Dryden to refine and revise it, the reverse attitude of eighteenth-century librettists. Most tellingly, the honorific title of genius, so often laid at Milton's feet in the next century, here crowns Dryden's head, for Lee intimates that the poet laureate deserves the better fame for transforming Milton's baroque beast into a refined beauty.

Lee may be voicing his own peculiar sentiments toward *Paradise Lost*, but Dryden appears rather anxious that others might think similarly and compare the heroic opera to the epic poem. Dryden's *Apology for Heroique Verse*, which follows Lee's dedication, gives Milton his due and attempts to distance *The State of Innocence* from Lee's conceits. "I cannot, without injury to the deceased author of *Paradise Lost*," says Dryden,

> but acknowledge, that this poem has received its entire foundation, part of the design, and many of the ornaments, from him. . . . And truly I should be sorry, for my own sake, that any one should take the pains to compare them together; the original being undoubtedly one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime poems, which either this age or nation has produced.

Stating the debts he owes to Milton, Dryden implicitly refutes Lee's abusive descriptions of the poem's "roughness" and "melancholy," and he attempts to mitigate the harshness of Lee's judgment: "And though I could not refuse the partiality of my friend, who is pleased to commend me in his verses, I hope they will rather be esteemed the effect of his love to me, than of his deliberate and sober judgment."

Like the librettists who followed him, Dryden praises the original. In fact, the epigram he wrote in 1688 edition no doubt helped elevate Milton to the status he later attained. Dryden's hands thus helped raise the idol the eighteenth-century librettists worshiped. Yet he takes a decidedly different path from his descendants in his apology. Articulating his method of redaction, he claims to have built his work on Milton's "foundation" and to have borrowed some of his design and ornaments. Although he offers a resounding assessment of *Paradise Lost*, he does not strain himself to assert the greatness and authority of his source. He betrays some uneasiness lest readers compare his "mean" work to the noble one of Milton, but he does not insist that he in anyway clings to the "essence" of the original. For Dryden, *Paradise Lost* is the jumping-off point for his own work rather than the great original to which he must remain faithful in word and sentiment. Moreover, Milton is not even the primary subject of Dryden's prefatory essay, which he intends more as a defense of himself. After some perfunctory praise of Milton to separate himself from Lee's potentially embarrassing dedication, Dryden devotes the rest of the essay to setting critics on the right path and to defending "heroic poetry." Although he mentions Milton a few more times, in answering those who accused the late poet of "poetic license," he mentions Abraham Cowley just as much. He liberally quotes the ancients (Homer, Aristotle, Horace, etc.) but mentions only these two English poets by name. In the end, Dryden names Cowley and Milton four times each and places them on equal footing, exalting both as authors of heroic poetry and shielding them from charges of artistic excess. Though defending Milton, the apology never approaches the fervid bardolatry of later times.

Dryden's attempt to curb Lee's enthusiasm suggests the latter hit upon a sensitive issue the former was acutely aware of but preferred to ignore or hide: *The State of Innocence* is not simply an adaptation of *Paradise Lost* but a revision of it. Dryden may not have conceived of the relationship in such a manner, but his dedicatory epistle to the Duchess of York, wife of the future James II, and the text itself divert attention from his source's notorious associations with religious controversy, republicanism, and rebellion. Dryden also does not participate in later librettists' prostration at the altar of sublime Milton—but he does partake of his own rather telling idolatry. Praising Mary, he appropriates the term zeal on behalf of his patron's perfect beauty:

> It [beauty] strikes an impression of awful reverence; 'tis indeed that love which is more properly a zeal than passion. 'Tis the rapture which anchorites find in prayer, when a beam of the divinity shines upon them; that which makes them despise all worldly objects; and yet 'tis all but contemplation. They are seldom visited from above, but a single vision so transports them, that it makes up the happiness of their lives. Mortality cannot bear it often: it finds them in the eagerness and height of their devotion; they are speechless for the time that it continues, and prostrate and dead when it departs. That ecstacy had need be strong, which, without any end, but that of admiration has power enough to destroy all other passions.

This may sound like inane and excessive flattery (and it is), but Dryden's fawning lip service hides sharp political teeth. While praising his royal patron, he deftly redefines zeal, seizing it from the religious extremists of the day and attaching it to his admiration of and devotion to the soon-to-be Queen Consort. More pointedly, Dryden states that most serious and zealous devotees "seldom" attain anything like prophetic strain, inadvertently (perhaps) alluding to Milton's claim in *Paradise Lost* that the Holy Spirit visited him "nightly." The implication is clear: Just as Lee saw Dryden taking Milton's rustic maid to court to make her a refined lady, Dryden appropriates Milton's supposed zealotry and confines it to more proper bounds.

As a friend and a one-time coworker of Milton's who turned royal servant after the Restoration, Dryden needed to disavow Milton's controversial politics and religion without explicitly addressing them. For instance, Dryden obliquely gestures towards his source when he shifts from zeal and devotion to obedience and liberty. The duchess, says Dryden, has "destroyed the empire of love in a court which was the seat of his dominion" and "subverted (may I dare to accuse you of it?) even our fundamental laws; and reign absolute over the hearts of a stubborn and free-born people, tenacious almost to madness of their liberty." Favorably comparing the duchess to other ladies, he cheekily echoes the language of revolutionary politics:

> The brightest and most victorious of our ladies make daily complaints of revolted subjects, if they may be said to be revolted, whose servitude is not accepted; for your royal highness is too great, and too just a monarch, either to want or to receive the homage of rebellious fugitives. Yet, if some few among the multitude continue stedfast to their first pretensions, 'tis an obedience so lukewarm and languishing, that it merits not the name of passion. . . .

The conceit effectively turns back the clock to post-revolutionary England as Dryden co-opts discourses of obedience, sovereignty, and liberty for the language of courtly admiration. He also symbolically reenacts the Restoration, for the only "revolting subjects" one finds here are those who, swearing fealty to someone other than Mary, soon recant their false and rebellious allegiance and return to the rightful—and imminently just—monarch of beauty. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton wrote to humanity and his invocations dedicate his work to God; Dryden dedicates his to royal beauty and influence. Tipping the hand he seeks to hide, the dedication betrays what Lee affirms and what the *Apology* denies.

The dedication to Mary is a sign of things to come in the text itself. Dryden radically alters the relationship between unfallen Adam and Eve to makes them speak the "refined" language of courtly lovers, and his portrayal of Satan, a less politically ambiguous figure than Milton's, seeks to expose the dangers of antimonarchism and republicanism. The political import

of Milton's Satan has long been a subject of debate: Is he a representative of the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell, the tyrannical "man of blood" Charles I, or both? Does the poem renounce the poet's political convictions, reaffirm them, or avoid them? Most probably, Satan is Milton's final expression of monarchial government's unfitness for humanity, as evidenced by his vision of a fallen world subject to tyranny that begins with the internal failings of the tyrant himself, starting with Satan (or perhaps even with God) as the author of evil and spreading via Adam and Eve's sin to all of humanity. Whatever the case, for any adaptation of *Paradise Lost*, Satan is a full-grown and ill-tempered elephant in the room. In addition to raising many questions about theodicy, he is one of Milton's most alluring creations, especially for modern readers, and so his inclusion or omission demands attention. For audiences of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, he was sometimes an example of Milton's terrible sublimity and often a troubling figure, and in *The State of Innocence*, Dryden focuses many of his changes on Satan in order to make the "design" and "foundation" of the original more accommodating to his audience. Most tellingly, the blurry lines between monarchy and tyranny and Milton's pointed statements about tyrants (e.g., Satan, husbands and fathers, Nimrod) suffer heavy alterations.

Unable and unwilling to risk ambiguity, Dryden links Satan with hypocritical anti-monarchial republicanism. The Counsel of Hell in Act 1 owes much to Book 2 of *Paradise Lost*, but Dryden changes just enough to condemn republicanism explicitly. Prior to the Counsel, which includes only the highest ranking devils and excludes the "vulgar" multitude, Satan dubs his compatriots "States-General of Hell" who share a hatred of "Universal Monarchy." The reference is to the States-General of Holland, the republican nation with which England was then at war for the third time in less than twenty years, the first ironically breaking out during Cromwell's Protectorate and dashing his hopes for a Protestant union of the two countries.

Anticipating Hamilton's libretto for *Samson* in the 1740s, which would use Milton text to drum up efforts for war against Spain, Dryden alludes to an external enemy to unite his English audience. Unlike Hamilton, the external adversaries in *The State of Innocence* also lead back to

internal enemies, including Milton himself. For a Restoration audience not far removed from civil wars that dragged the country swiftly from monarchy to republicanism to military dictatorship, hostility towards monarchy could not and would not have been exclusively associated with the Dutch republic. As such, Dryden's first act also depicts the Interregnum (or what he and others might call "The Great Rebellion") in miniature. In *Paradise Lost*, Hell is an absolute monarchy (or dictatorship) from the very beginning, for readers soon learn the infernal parliament is a sham rigged to ratify Satan's predetermined resolutions for continued war against God (2:379-80). Additionally, Milton's fallen angels look to their commander for leadership and hope, but they also fear him. Hearing his call, they are "abasht" and swiftly spring to action "as when men wont to watch / On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread, / Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake" (1:331-34). Charles I's determination to go to war with the Scots in the late 1630s and his assumption that Parliament would readily grant him the means to do so must not have been lost on many readers encountering Satan's determined belligerence in Books 1 and 2 of the epic.

In *The State of Innocence*, however, Hell starts off a republic spawned of rebellion against monarchy and rapidly devolves into a dictatorship. Unlike the fixed parliamentary debates of *Paradise Lost*, Dryden's Counsel seems—at first—to genuinely explore and debate their options. The initial republicanism of Hell stems from Dryden's redistribution of Satan's speeches and his resolutions (from Books 1 and 2) amongst a multitude of devils. Once Satan awakens and calls his compatriots to rise from the fiery lake, they proceed to confer with one another over their next move, and rather than rallying around their leader for inspiring words, they console and consult one another. Moloch, not Satan, asserts: "We have, by Hell, at least, gain'd liberty: / That's worth our fall . . . Better to rule in Hell, than serve in Heaven" (3). And it is Asmodel who suggests a counsel in order to determine their next action:

> 'Tis fit in frequent Senate we confer,
>
> And then determine how to steer our course;

To wage new war by fraud, or open force.

The doom's now past; submission were in vain. (3)

To this Moloch agrees, and so does Beelzebub:

Moloch, all are resolv'd like thee.

The means are unpropos'd; but 'tis not fit

Our dark divan in publick view should sit:

Or what we plot against the Thunderer,

Th' ignoble crowd of vulgar devils hear. (3-4)

Dryden thus gives the lie to any protestations that a free republic is a government for and by the people; it is more like an oligarchy. Furthermore, Dryden must have read Milton carefully, for he craftily turns the latter's association of monarchy with eastern tyrants on its head, suggesting, in response, that senates and republics are more like eastern "divans," the councils that sat when the Sultan was absent from his empire. From Dryden's perspective, it is not kingship that is exotic and "other"; it is any form of government that is not kingship.

Moreover, Hell's republic, like the Interregnum government, soon yields to the tyranny of one. Belial voices dissent from war and is seconded by Beelzebub, but soon the tide of the demonic senate turns towards open war. Moloch is the loudest proponent for overt war, and in Dryden's retelling of the story, Satan agrees with his motion until swayed another way. In response to Moloch's call for immediate open war, Satan says,

I agree,

With this brave vote; and if in Hell there be

Ten more such spirits, Heav'n is our own again:

We venture nothing, and may all obtain. (4)

Only after Asmodel suggests "some easier enterprize" does Satan opt for covert war, and there is no indication in the stage directions that Dryden intended this as a predetermined resolution forced on a credulous Senate by the shady dealings of Satan and his second-in-command. War, in

some form or another, is certainly a foregone conclusion from the point-of-view of the infernal magnates that constitute Satan's inner circle (as Asmodel's call for a senate indicate), but the "means," as Beelzebub remarks, must be decided by further deliberation among the elite.

Dryden illustrates the ease with which republicanism founded on antimonarchism yields a worse brand of kingship, for the infernal deliberations give the lie to "the good old cause," exposing it as hypocritically elitist in its exclusion of the "vulgar" angels and in Satan's gradual seizure of power. Debate opens with Satan as the leader, but he appears to be merely the first amongst equals; once the counsel determines the next step (the means by which they will wage further war against God), he soon shows his true desires. When Moloch volunteers for the dangerous mission, Satan cuts him off mid-sentence:

> Rash angel, stay; *[Rising, and laying his scepter on Moloch's head.]*
> That palm is mine, which none shall take away.
> Hot braves, like thee, may fight; but know not well
> To manage this, the last great stake of Hell.
> Why am I rank'd in state above the rest,
> If while I stand of sovereign pow'r possest,
> Another dares, in danger, farther go?
> Kings are not made for ease, and pageant-show.
> Who would be conquerour, must venture all:
> He merits not to rise, who dares not fall. (6)

If the connection of Milton's Satan to Charles I was not lost on many readers of *Paradise Lost*, the resemblance of Dryden's Satan to Cromwell's unexpected rise to virtual kingship would not have been lost on those who read *The State of Innocence*. Ultimately, Satan in *Paradise Lost* can never be a one-to-one correspondence to Cromwell or Charles I, but a composite of both and, more complexly, a grim reminder of the origins of tyranny no matter its political form. This is not a nuance Dryden could afford to preserve.

Departing from Milton politically, Dryden stays true to Milton's concern with obedience and sticks close to his source on theological matters. To give Dryden his due, in stressing the importance of obedience he also takes the audience through its theological underpinnings as Raphael and Adam debate foreknowledge, necessity, and free will in Act 4, Scene 1, which borrows heavily from Book 3 of *Paradise Lost*. In *The State of Innocence*, Raphael, for instance, advises Adam on the nature of obedience and free will:

> Praise him alone who, God-like, form'd thee free,
> With will unbounded, as a deity;
> Who gave thee reason, as thy aid, to chuse
> Apparent good, and evil to refuse.
> Obedience is that good; This Heav'n exacts
> And Heav'n, all just, from man requires not acts
> Which man wants pow'r to do: pow'r then is giv'n
> Of doing good; but not compell'd by Heav'n. (24)

The archangel also answers Adam's concerns over the troubling relation of free will to divine foreknowledge and omniscience: "Heav'n by fore-knowing what will surely be, / Does only, first, effects in causes see; / And finds, but does not make necessity" (24). Clearly, a Restoration audience had little discomfort with questions of free will and necessity, no doubt due to the Arminian bent of mainstream Anglicanism at the time. Milton's politics were obviously another story, and what theological troubles could arise from adapting *Paradise Lost* are easily erased under the guise of decorum. Theatrical conventions and blasphemy laws barred Dryden from presenting the Godhead on stage; indeed, as discussed later, one charge leveled against Milton even after his reputation began to recover was his presumption, or blasphemy, in presenting God in a poem. In satisfying decorum and law, Dryden is conveniently able to dodge Milton's potential Arian heresy in depicting God the Son as separate from and subordinate to God the Father.

For Dryden, obedience to God and obedience to an earthly potentate are not at odds as they are in *Paradise Lost*, in which tyranny and monarchy spring from sin. Two things that are at odds in *The State of Innocence* are Adam's obedience to God and his love for Eve—also a major point of conflict in *Paradise Lost*. Milton well prepares readers to see Adam's fall written in his devotion to Eve, but he also arms readers (through angelic warnings to Adam) against his fondness. Once Adam falls, Michael discourages Adam from blaming the woman for everything when he substitutes Adam's facile misogyny for a heaven-refined anti-feminism. Man's woes do not "from woman" begin but from "Man's effeminate slackness" (11:634). Michael's harsh lesson presses home the Son's earlier rebuff when Adam first shifts blame onto his wife:

> Was shee thy God, that her thou didst obey
> Before his voice, or was shee made thy guide,
> Superior, or but equal, that to her
> Thou did'st resigne thy manhood? (10:144-48)

Milton's divine figures stifle any urge the reader has to excuse Adam for his fall and praise his resolve as an act of heroic love. Dryden does quite the opposite. He dedicates his work to Mary of Modena, whose beauty has rendered "mankind insensible to other beauties" and "subverted . . . even our fundamental laws; and reign absolute over the hearts of a stubborn and free-born people." Dryden echoes Adam, who finds himself "onely weake / Against the charm of beauties powerful glance" (8:532-33). But Dryden, of necessity catering to the taste of his regal masters, goes a step further, turning Adam into a cavalier and intensifying the eroticism of Paradise. To Adam, Eve is a "goddess" whom "the Eternal did ordain, / His softer substitute on earth to reign" and who pushes him to the same extremes as in *Paradise Lost*: "Made to command, thus freely I obey, / And at thy feet the whole creation lay" (14). The Eve of *Paradise Lost* may hesitate to submit to Adam's embraces, but she cannot compete with Dryden's coquettish creation. The latter Eve advises Adam that "long should [he] beg" and she "long deny." She also coyly (and rather oddly) envisions a potential rival for Adam's affections:

I well foresee, whene'er thy suit I grant,

That I my much-loved sovereignty shall want:

Or like myself some other may be made,

And her new beauty may thy heart invade. (14)

In Milton's Eden, unfallen man mixes sensual love with intellectual stimulation (the latter curiously shared more with the angels than with Eve) and honest, unburdensome work. Dryden's pair labor in the garden, but most of the intellectual conversation of *Paradise Lost* he converts into quick lessons on obedience and duty in which the angels lead Adam along the path to knowledge. However, innocence for Dryden leans inordinately towards amatory dalliance:

Adam[:] Thus shall we live in perfect bliss, and see,

Deathless ourselves, our numerous progeny.

Thou young and beauteous, my desires to bless;

I, still desiring, what I still possess.

Eve[:] Heaven, from whence love, our greatest blessing, came,

Can give no more, but still to be the same.

Thou more of pleasure may'st with me partake;

I, more of pride, because thy bliss I make. (15)

Dryden also injects Adam and Eve's relationship with a heavy-breathing eroticism not found in Milton's more ethereal treatment of "wedded bliss." Milton may remind his readers rather frequently that Eve is naked, suggesting against his intent and outside his consciousness that he and the male reader share Satan's desire for Eve, but nowhere in the epic does anything compare to Eve's description of her and Adam's first act of love in *The State of Innocence*:

When your kind eyes looked languishing on mine,

And wreathing arms did soft embraces join,

A doubtful trembling seized me first all o'er;

Then, wishes; and a warmth, unknown before:

What followed was all ecstasy and trance;

Immortal pleasures round my swimming eyes did dance,

And speechless joys, in whose sweet tumult tost,

I thought my breath and my new being lost. (16)

Dryden defines the state of bliss as still desiring what is still possessed, and that desire is overtly and almost exclusively sexual. Like Milton, Dryden well prepares readers to see Adam's fall in his over-fond love: "But you have beauty still, and I have love. / Not cozened, I with choice my life resign: / Imprudence was your fault, but love was mine" (35). It could be that readers were to understand Adam's decision and his earlier expressions on the power of Eve's beauty as moral and intellectual error, a thought Milton forcefully expresses, but Dryden's heavy emphasis on erotic love combined with his paean to Mary's beauty excuse and even valorize Adam's dotage.

What Dryden truly thought of Mary's beauty is hard to say, though if the portraits of her are accurate, she was without dispute a beauty. Whatever the case, his dedicatory epistle makes light of the discourses of dissent and irrevocably distances him ideologically from Milton. His praise of Milton in the *Apology* and his dedicatory epigram to *Paradise Lost* may be partially sincere, despite what he later said about the roughness of Milton's verse, and it could not have been an easy task to adapt the work of a friend to the tastes of people and patrons who were no friends to Milton. Whatever Dryden's difficulties, *The State of Innocence* reveals how little cultural capital both Milton and *Paradise Lost* had gained by the late 1670s. Dryden admirably gives credit where it is due for the "entire foundation, part of the design, and many of the ornaments," but above all, *The State of Innocence* is Dryden's rather than Milton's. To make his opera serve the tastes of the time, he found it best not to praise Milton but erase him. How different things would prove with the librettists of the next century who ostentatiously staked their own fame and success on his "deathless trophies."

CHAPTER II

"WHERE MORE IS MEANT THAN MEETS THE EAR": DALTON AND ARNE'S PATRIOT UR-TEXT, *COMUS*

After *The State of Innocence*, Milton's poetry was not adapted again until Thomas Arne and John Dalton's *Comus* debuted 4 March 1738, a span of almost sixty years. Milton had by no means remained invisible in English culture at large, for in that time, much had changed for the nation and for the poet's fortunes. In June 1688, James II and Mary's first son was born. The prospect of a Catholic dynasty pushed a desperate country to finish the work of "the good old cause," again deposing a Stuart and establishing a constitutional monarchy closer to the ideals of Milton and Interregnum republicans. 1688 proved a watershed moment for Milton as well, for the political changes signaled the rise of "Whig" principles consonant with many of his own. Not coincidentally, the year saw arrival of Jacob Tonson's fourth edition of *Paradise Lost*, which ostentatiously displays the publisher's intentions to frame the epic as an English classic. A folio edition whereas the previous editions had been quarto-sized, this edition, "with its high-quality paper, its clear 14-point type, and wide margins, is unquestionably handsome" (Moyles 33). It also includes the grave frontispiece of Milton adapted from William Faithorne's portrait, matched in its seriousness by Dryden's epigram:

> Three Poets, in three distant ages born,
> Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
> The first in loftiness of thought surpass'd;
> To make a third she joynd the former two

The next in majesty; in both the last

The force of Nature cou'd no farther goe.

If Marvell's "On Mr. Milton's 'Paradise Lost'" initiated the process of solidifying Milton's authority, Dryden, despite his critical remarks elsewhere and his erasure of Milton in *The State of Innocence*, begins the process of elevating him to the same level as Homer and Virgil. The first illustrated edition of the epic and the first English work published by subscription, the fourth edition of *Paradise Lost* signals a shift in Milton's standing that the new political climate aided. No longer a marginal poet and famous republican and supporter of regicide, Milton here begins his rise into the upper echelons of English poetry.

Fittingly, the remaining years of the seventeenth century brought an explosion of Milton publications, including three biographies and two more editions of *Paradise Lost* in 1691 and 1695.[1] The latter of these editions is remarkable for its bulky appendix consisting of Patrick Hume's *Explanatory Notes* or *Annotations on Milton's* Paradise Lost. Moyles calls Hume's annotations "superficial and simplistic" (40), and in the grand scheme of Milton criticism, there is perhaps some justice in that assessment. But, that Milton was deemed worthy of this kind of treatment speaks to his expanding reputation; normally, only classical poets like Virgil and Homer enjoyed extensive annotation and explanation. In addition to handsome editions and rigorous annotations, biography was a major architect of the poet's aura of authority; the "lives," especially after 1688, further recuperated of Milton's reputation and prepared the ground for eighteenth-century bardolatry. In particular, they developed the understanding of the poet-pamphleteer as a national hero for his defense of religious and political liberty against tyranny, and they softened the edges of his independent religious thought.[2]

Milton's "image makeover" must be linked with a larger change in the images and identities of England, Scotland, and Wales in the long wake of the Glorious Revolution. Following the 1706 and 1707 Acts of Union, the nation thereafter known as Great Britain would come to pride itself on—indeed, define itself by—its freedom, and Milton fit right into this

burgeoning national narrative. The stage played its own part in defining the new country and its people, and Milton proved an important collaborator in this enterprise. In 1732, playwright and theatre manager Aaron Hill expressed to Handel his hopes that the composer would deliver English musical-theatre from "Italian bondage" (Dugas 141). Handel's innovations in oratorio would eventually make Hill's wish come true, and, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4, the importance of Milton as a source for Handel indicates the poet's significant role in this "deliverance." Yet the history of early English oratorio tells only part of the story of how eighteenth-century "Milton" was made to take up yet once more his old office of liberator. With an assist from Dalton and Arne, he also fulfilled this role in English opera, helping "free" the nation, not from the yoke of monarchy, but from that of Italianate musical-dramatic practice. As Don-John Dugas observes, Drury Lane believed *Comus* would prove a potent weapon in the operatic wars of the 1730s: "With an English genre (the masque), a libretto and score by an English author-composer team, and a story by one of England's greatest poets, Arne almost certainly saw *Comus* as another way to compete against the Italians" (144).[3] Significantly, the liberation of Great Britain from Italian music took place not only on the aesthetic and commercial planes, but also on the moral one, and Drury Lane's opposition of English opera to Italian opera rests upon the claims to the former's moral superiority. In relying on Milton for moral and aesthetic authority, the British stage evoked values of self-control and temperance that molded him into the poet of discipline.

Comus signals one of the first steps outside of literary criticism and biography to exalt Milton as a moral and religious authority. Its popularity throughout the century attests to Arne and Dalton's sense of spectacle and drama as well as their keen exploitation of Milton's cultural significance. Don-John Dugas ably describes the work's appeal and its impact on the poet's reputation: "For London's theatre-goers after 1738, 'Milton' most likely meant an exciting and spectacular night's entertainment. . . . 'Milton' meant a good time, and better yet he appealed to the moral tastes of the time, by offering a story of evil resisted and virtue proved" (154). Other

scholars have similarly remarked upon the importance of moral orthodoxy to the success of Milton's masque and of Dalton and Arne's opera. In "Milton and the Dance," William Sessions argues that the popularity of *A Maske* stems from the adaptability and manipulability of "the basic dialectic of Milton's myth of temperance" (194). Indeed, Dalton's ability to retain this dialectic while making radical changes reveals how "adaptable" *A Maske* is. Also important, among Milton's early works, it was the most praised in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. In his *Life of Milton* (1699),Toland names the masque with *Paradise Lost* as works that "make good" Milton's moral character and claims that for "the peculiar disposition of the story, the sweetness of the numbers, the justness of the expression, and the moral it teaches, there is nothing extant in the English language" like it (114).

Regarding other reasons for the popularity and success of *Comus*, both Dugas and Berta Joncus call attention to the implicit nationalism of presenting "Milton" on stage in the late 1730s (although the latter reduces the importance of him to these performances). As Joncus observes, Drury Lane aggressively marketed the English opera and its "author," Milton, as expressions of consummately "British" values, and the 1730s was a highpoint for his appropriation as a "patriot" poet symbolizing "the incorruptibility and love of liberty which Walpole and his followers had compromised" ("Milton" 11). Indeed, if there was ever a time other than 1688 at which this could happen to Milton, the 1730s were it, for the span between 1720 and the early '40s marks the highpoint of "opposition" politics arising from a widely-shared disdain for Robert Walpole and his the ministry. Walpole's rise to *de facto* prime minister caused a splintering in the political parties, and no longer could one speak simply of Whigs and Tories, for many who flocked to the opposition were Whigs ousted by Walpole.

Discontent with Walpole and attendant anxieties concerning the birth and growth of modern finance and banking gave rise to the patriot ideology of the 1720s, '30s, and early '40s, and "patriots" immediately appropriated Milton (and other dead poets) to their cause. For instance, one Whig who found himself on the outside looking in was Lord Cobham, who was

forced out of government in 1733 after opposing Walpole's Excise Bill. Cobham later erected a bust of Milton to include in his renowned "Worthies of England" garden at Stowe in the 1730s ("Milton" 11). For Cobham, these figures represented the civic virtue the current administration had failed to honor; in other words, Walpole and his ilk had failed to be "patriots." Christine Gerrard helpfully describes this "civic virtue" as founded upon temperance, resistance to the "luxury" that burgeoning British trade had made available, and "constant vigilance, a suspicion of anything that threatened the independence of the Commons, particularly corruption" (12-13). One can see how the poet-pamphleteer could be absorbed into this ideology. Early biographers like Phillips and Toland depicted Milton as an ardent defender of liberty, and the accounts of his life showed that he had lived a temperate life. His descriptions of the poetic office in his poetry and prose often sing the benefits of clean, moderate living, such as in *Elegia sexta* and *The Reason for Church-Government*. And in *Paradise Lost*, Michael prescribes to Adam the "rule of not too much" as a guide for a healthy life and a (hopefully) peaceful death (11:531). Moreover, Milton's defense of the press in *Areopagitica* calls for the constant vigilance and restless intellect that the eighteenth-century patriots believed requisite to preserve a free and virtuous nation. Finally (and often ignored by scholars), for the vast majority of Britons, Milton was believed to be no Arian heretic, and so his religious beliefs arguably fell under the umbrella of the 1688 Toleration Act (arguably being the operative word).[4] He may have been a dissenter, but he was still a British Protestant. It not surprising, then, that scholars like Ruth Smith and Joncus have noted the "patriot" undertones of adaptations of his poetry, particularly *Comus* and Hamilton and Handel's *Samson*, which appeared five years later.

Yet much remains to be said concerning Drury Lane's exploitation and transmutation of popular notions of Milton, and this chapter aims to draw out the further subtleties and subtexts of Milton as a patriot and *Comus* as a patriot text. First, one must consider the lengthy title used to describe the piece and the libretto's epigrams as interpretive guides, for they discourage sympathy with the subversive elements added to the plot and instead direct attention to the common

perception of Milton as a national hero and a moral authority. They also illuminate how the poet and his masque were absorbed into the ongoing process of defining Britishness in the wake of the Acts of Union that created Great Britain. Second—and stemming from the first—Dalton's additions foreground the importance of Spenserian allegory to *Comus*, a connection inherent in the original masque and hinted at in the epigrams. The strengthened "Spenserian flavor" indicates a veiled, allegorical satire that takes aim at the political "wizard" Walpole and that demonizes the more unruly elements of the performance as symbols of the foreign luxuries eroding British strength. Third, Dalton assimilates passages from Milton's twin poems, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," to expand *Comus*'s dialectic between sensuality and temperance into a politically-charged struggle between corrupted mirth and a distinctly "British" melancholy virtue. And the melancholy presented is clearly a virtue based on self-control and abstention rather than a sickness stemming from an imbalance of the humors or an overabundance of sensibility. Once again, the alterations reveal how Milton and his work were assimilated into a shared national endeavor of identifying consummately "British" virtues and values.

As an onstage performance and especially as a printed text, *Comus* emphasizes Milton's self-proclaimed role as a defender of liberty; the work itself becomes a patriot urtext liberating English opera from the "Italian yoke" and touting Milton's "melancholy temperance" as an expression of what is great about "Milton" and Great Britain. Dalton's Prologue sets the tone, establishing the common perception of Milton's long-neglected genius and styling him as a representative of Britain's moral integrity and superiority:

> Our steadfast bard, to his own genius true,
> Still bade his muse, fit audience find, tho' few.
> Scorning the judgment of a trifling age,
> To choicer spirits he bequeath'd his page.
> He too was scorn'd, and to Britannia's shame,
> She scarce for half an age knew Milton's name.

Like the early biographers, Dalton subscribes to Milton's presentation of himself in his prose and in *Paradise Lost* as an isolated man, and, as Dugas notes, the Prologue is "a distillation of the admiration Milton enjoyed in 1738" (146).[5] Admiration also presented an opportunity for the praise to reflect back on the admirers themselves and compliments the audience, for if "a trifling age" did not care for Milton's genius, then the fact that "now, his fame [is] by every trumpet blown" implies the "choicer spirits" Milton hoped for belong to Dalton's time. The librettist deems Milton a sublime genius who "All things his eye, thro' wit's bright empire thrown, / Beheld, and made what it beheld his own," and if Milton was such a being and his such a task, then the task of Dalton's age is "to bring him forth . . . [and] to vindicate neglected worth." The vindication is two-fold. Milton's achievements are not for the poet alone but for the country as well.

The Prologue also introduces the first injections of patriot ideology into the piece, albeit as an aesthetic rather than a strictly political matter. The Prologue not only presents a distillation of 1730s Milton bardolatry but also signals the work's political allegiances via its cultural ones. Particularly, the assertion of moral civility buoyed by artistic genius opposes the opera to other arts of the time. The writers Walpole hired for his propaganda efforts, often called "Sir Robert Walpole's Poets," were "at best paid to defend narrow ministerial policies and to attack his critics" (Gerrard 16). With such a stable of poets at Walpole's beck and call, the myth of cultural "dullness" attached to him, such as in Pope's *The Dunciad* (1728, 1742), is not without some justice. As such, it fell not to the Whigs or the Tories but to the patriots to defend intellectual enlightenment, political liberty, and politeness, and the primary modes of anti-Walpole poetry were satire and epic/heroic verse that imitated "sublime Milton." Milton's prosody (normally the blank verse of the late poems) thus became a politically charged aesthetic choice in the 1720s and '30s, so to appreciate or imitate *any* of his verse could be understood as a statement of civility opposed to the cultural decline of "modern" Britain. If the choice of Milton was itself a statement, the plot of *A Maske* further lent itself to this concern, and Dalton's *Comus*, with its many added

scenes, further confirms the image of Milton as a bulwark against cultural degeneracy. (Jackson's *Lycidas* would prove that this image survived well into the 1760s).

The Prologue "makes concrete his 'Spirit,'" projecting Milton as a national hero by "imagining his physical presence . . . reminding audiences of the attitudes or values he represented . . . [and] insisting that the significance of *Comus* lay in its clear mediation of the values ascribed to the hero" (Joncus, "Milton"14). In effect, the Prologue offers a metaphorical bust of the poet to compare with the literal ones erected at Westminster Abbey and Stowe. Yet the conceit does not end with calling forth his physical presence; Pygmalion-like, Dalton builds a concrete presence out of Milton's "Spirit" and then brings it to life as a part of the plot. The performance (or reading) of *Comus* conjures a spirit not only to teach the readers and audience members but also to minister to the brothers and the Lady:

> Like some bless'd spirit he [Milton] to night [sic] descends,
> Mankind he visits, and their steps befriends,
> Thro' mazy Error's dark perplexing wood,
> Points out the path of truth and real good,
> Warns erring youth, and guards the spotless maid
> From spell of magic Vice, by Reason's aid.

It is a campy conceit, but Dalton suggests the Attendant Spirits are, in a sense, Milton. The opera opens on a "wild wood" and after the First Spirit enters, the Second Spirit descends. The former soon recognizes the latter as "gentle Philadel" and requests his help in ministering to the wandering children: "Be it my care the sever'd youths to guide / To their distress'd and lonely sister; thine / To cheer her foot-steps through the magick wood" (13). Indeed, Dalton invokes Milton's kindly spirit to "befriend" the steps of humankind, and the Second Spirit's name, Philadel ("lover of one's brother"), links the poet's presiding spirit with the one who helps the Lady through her trial. As in Milton's famous elegy in which the eponymous Lycidas becomes

genius of the shore, a two-fold "genius" appears here: the poet responsible for *Comus* and the spirit presiding over the performance and guiding the young siblings.

The "spirit" of Milton takes on further significance in reading and performing *Comus*, for Dalton looks to the "stedfast bard" as the guiding spirit for him as a librettist. Concluding the Prologue, Dalton (via the actor speaking for him) asks that "should some meaner phrase" jar with Milton's "nobler lays," the audience must excuse "what we with trembling hand supply, / To give his beauties to the public eye." The poet's words and style are "the pure essence," and that which is added, "the grosser mean, / Thro' which his spirit is in action seen." Taking a page out of *Areopagitica,* Dalton intimates that the original masque contains its author's "potency of life," his best part that lives on as a "violl, the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them" (492). He clearly felt differently about his efforts than Nathaniel Lee did about Dryden's in *The State of Innocence*. If the latter believed Dryden owed "a little" to the "dead bard," Dalton, reversing Lee's equation, admits that the "portion" of those involved in *Comus* is "small" compared to Milton's "deathless trophies," and, he says, "we wish 'twere none."

Dalton had need of Milton's "spirit," for *Comus* was part of a new genre, English opera, which was then attempting to distinguish itself from Italian opera and from the more unruly vernacular genre of ballad opera. The nature of appropriating Milton appears evident not just in the Prologue but the front matter. The epigrams and the title preceding the Prologue allow those reading and those attending performances to follow along in their wordbooks. In particular, they encode the whole with potent statements about British values and about the very definition of Britishness itself.

Above all, Dalton's choice of Milton as a source was an important one, the poet's name invoked far more at this time than the common perception of the poet as native genius and moral teacher. Significantly, the 1737-38 theatre season was the first to take place under the tightening strictures of the 1737 Licensing Act, so there was an increase in the "safe" works of established authors (Dugas 140). For instance, the act in some way accounts for "the considerable increase in

Shakespearean performances" that year (Scouten 679), and Dugas asserts that the act no doubt inspired Dalton's choice of Milton for a libretto since he was an established "moral" poet (140-41). His choice in the wake of the Licensing Act was a pregnant gesture in another way; Milton the pamphleteer was known to be a vocal opponent of licensing (despite being employed as one for a time in the Interregnum government). The choice of Milton and his masque was certainly safe, but it also had some edge to it for those aware of his ardent support for freedom of expression, a topic central to the act since political satires targeting Walpole, such as John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) and Henry Fielding's *Tom Thumb* (1732), provoked the government to pass the act in the first place.

Indeed, those involved in *Comus* did all they could to frame the text and performances as a patriotic affair and an opposition piece, which is apparent not only in the epigrams but also in the complete title given to the work. Title pages for *Comus* restore the details of the original performance of *A Maske* in 1634—information Milton and bookseller Thomas Dring deliberately stripped away when publishing *A Maske* in the second edition of *Poems* in 1673. Milton and Dring trimmed the title to erase the stoutly Royalist Egerton family's part in the masque: "A / Maske / Presented / At Ludlow-Castle, 1634, &C" (1673 *Poems* 84). Although "&C." (Etc.) is a common abbreviation of the time, its use, along with slashing the fawning letter to the Egertons dismisses the masque's origins as an entertainment owing its existence, not to Milton, but to an aristocratic system of literary patronage. In the librettos of *Comus* a century later, the Egertons and other details of the original performance return:

> Comus, a Maske: / (Now adapted to the Stage) / As Alter'd from / Milton's Maske / At / Ludlow-Castle, / Which was never represented / But on Michaelmas-Day, 1634; / Before The / Right Honorable the Earl of Bridgewater, / Lord President of Wales. / The Principal [sic] Performers were / The Lord Brackly, Mr. [Thomas] Egerton, The Lady Alice Egerton. / The Musick was composed / By Mr. Henry Lawes, / Who also represented the Attendant Spirit.

If the restored title attempts "to transport Drury Lane audiences back to the storied days of pre-Restoration production" (Joncus, "Milton" 10), it also speaks to contemporary British concerns by reminding audiences of the settings of the plot and the original performance in Wales. Native vigor and virtue were great concerns in opposition discourse, and more than a few poets looked to Wales for a source of British greatness. In Johnson's *London* (1738), the "true Briton" Thales flees the degenerate English capital "To breathe in distance fields a purer air, / And, fix'd on Cambria's [Wales's] solitary shore, / Give to St. David one true Briton more" (7-9). The title pages of *Comus*, which let audiences know where the first and only performance of *A Maske* took place, establishes the setting and the children's destination: Wales, the land of native, British vitality, where "true Britons," "bards," and patriots looked for inspiration. The Lady's liberation thus takes on a new significance in *Comus*. As in the original, her brothers chase away the seducer Comus, but the final act of deliverance is left to Sabrina, "a gentle nymph . . . That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream" (56). The English children may be on their way to their father, an English peer charged "with tempered awe / To guide an old and haughty nation, proud in arms," but it is a Welsh nymph—an indigenous "true Briton"—who frees the Lady.

The epigrams, excerpts from "Il Penseroso" and *Ad Patrem*, also invest *Comus* with definite political and aesthetic meanings. Of special interest is the fourth edition of 1738, the only one to include both epigrams on the title page—beneath the title that alerts the audience that the scene will play out in the Welsh Marches. Earlier librettos contained just one, and later ones would fluctuate between one or none while others, such as the fifth edition of 1750, place both between the title page and the start of the actual text.[6] The choice of these passages illuminate how the producers saw, and wished audiences to see, *Comus*, for the context loads the epigrams—and as a result, the opera itself—with aesthetic, political, and national significance.

The passage from *Ad Patrem* was the only one included in the first edition and appears more frequently than its counterpart in librettos: "And now, to sum it all up, what pleasure is there in the inane modulation of the voice without words and meaning and rhythmic eloquence?"

(Hughes 84). No lines in the libretto itself better express what Drury Lane hoped *Comus* would appear to be. It frames the opera as act of artistic and cultural liberation from Italian opera. Recent scholarship often claims that Milton's praise of words sung in clear and discernible language conveys his antipathy to early opera and polyphonic experimentation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[7] John Harper, however, has effectively put to rest the notion of Milton as musically "modern" or "avant-garde": "There is nothing to suggest that he was ever in the vanguard of English musical tastes, or that he was versed in the theories and aesthetics of Italian music of the *secunda practica*" (2). Furthermore, Campbell and Corns describe the tastes and practices of the elder John Milton and his musical circle as "conservative," and the son's preferences, they conclude, "place him in the same conservative musical tradition as his father" (10-11).

Eighteenth-century musicians, librettists, and audiences may not have tackled the question of Milton's tastes in the same terms as twentieth-century scholarship; nevertheless, his musical preferences were on the minds of those involved in *Comus*. In the context of the 1730s, *Ad Patrem* presents Milton's musical tastes as decidedly antithetical to Italian, and hence, "foreign," music and culture. In the early eighteenth century, defining the tastes of one of the nation's most brilliant artists as "British" or "Italian" was no idle or academic debate. Linda Colley remarks that despite sundry disparities between the English, the Scots, and the Welsh, they were able to forge a coherent identity as "Britons" after 1707 by looking outward at others rather than at themselves: "They came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but in reaction to the Other beyond the shores" (6).

More often than not, the Other was Catholic France (Britain's primary military, economic, and imperial adversary in the eighteenth century), but the Other also included non-Christians in the New World and Continental Europeans much closer to home, such as, of course, Italians. Italy did not present the same military and economic threat as Spain and France, but even as Italy's actual power and influence waned, its cultural prestige lived on. The continued

existence of Italian opera in London well into the 1730s attests to this. Indeed, theatre managers and composers, including Handel, spent no small amount of time recruiting Italian singers to come to London (Burrows, "Handel"). Italy was also one of the places young men of means were expected to visit on their Grand Tours, and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the steady influx of Italian painting as British connoisseurs purchased the works of Renaissance painters for their private collections. So strong was the grip of the Italian "old masters" on Great Britain that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood sought to dismantle their influence on British painting in the mid- and late 1800s. It was perhaps inevitable that Britons seeking to define themselves would look towards Italian civility in order to define British civility. The "opera wars of the 1730s" were but one, early manifestation of that reflex.

These "wars" played out on three not always inextricable fronts: the aesthetic, the commercial, and the nationalistic. Dugas gestures towards these concerns and appropriately cites the success of Paolo Rolli's Italian opera *Sabrina* (also based on Milton's masque) at the King's Theatre in 1737 as an incentive for Drury Lane to pick up Dalton's effort, despite the "buyer's market" the Licensing Act of 1737 ushered in (140-41). In fact, a competition between *Sabrina* and *Comus* may have been intended (Dugas 144). Joncus also notes that *Comus* seeks to propagate "British" values by exalting Milton as "as a patriotic hero" ("Milton" 9). The inclusion of Milton's own statement on "the inane modulation of the voice without words and meaning," brief though that statement may be, is a shot fired squarely at Italian opera, and it illustrates that the utility of "Milton" extended well beyond his poetic achievements and the conventional "British" moral values he was made to represent. Via an epigram taken from his own poetry, he was made to endorse the cultural enterprise of English opera.

That Milton was molded into a proponent of an ostensibly "British" musical theory and practice hostile to the "meaningless" modulations of Italian opera is somewhat ironic. It also starkly illustrates his appropriation to causes with which he did not necessarily sympathize. First, the epigram is in Latin rather than English, which might have been a small embarrassment for

Drury Lane (though it would not have been to Milton, whose Continental reputation in his own time rested upon his wit, rhetorical prowess, and masterful Latin.) More significantly, Milton's musical tastes may have been conservative, but those tastes were quite Italianate. While in Venice in 1638 during his tour of Europe, he purchased numerous Italian music books, and when in Rome, he attended an opera at the house of Cardinal Barberini and fulsomely praised the singer Leonora Baroni in his poem *Ad Leonoram Romæ canantum* (pub. 1645).

Additionally, Milton never shared the xenophobic attitudes of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English humanists nor of the eighteenth-century Britons who feared the incursion of foreign arts, attitudes, and fashions would lead to enervation and emasculation. In the sixteenth-century, Roger Ascham, for instance, harbored an abiding hatred and fear of the Italianized Englishman: "If some yet do not well understand what is an Englishman Italianated, I will plainly tell him: he that by living and travelling in Italy bringeth home . . . the religion, the learning, the policy, the experience, and the manners of Italy" (78). By religion, he means papistry; by learning, less than the young man left with; new mischief in experience; and vanity and filthy living in manners (78). Ascham even quotes a popular proverb to sum up his stance, "*Inglese Italianto, e un Diabolo incarnato*,"—"the Italianate Englishman is the Devil incarnate" (77). Humanism may have fallen into obsolescence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the complex and contentious relationship of the English (and British) to Italy survived. In *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), Alexander Pope credits Pope Leo X (the Italian Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici), with ushering in "golden days" and restoring "Rome's Genius" (697-99), but in *The Dunciad* (1742), he personifies Italian opera as "a Harlot form . . . With mincing step, small voice, and languid eye" (4:45-46). Johnson's *London* also ridicules Italy. Thales complains that London is now "The Common Shore of Paris and of Rome," meaning the fashions of Italy and France, and Johnson looks askance at Italian and French "imports" such as dress, manners, and politics (94).[8]

By contrast, Milton sporadically disparages the Italians, but he generally holds them in extremely high regard, objecting only to their Roman Catholicism but frequently praising their art, civility, and manners. *Areopagitica* looks to Italy as a prime example of the dangers of licensing, for it was such a practice that "dampt' the glory of Italian wits" and the reason "that nothing had been there writt'n now these many years but flattery and fustian" (737). Of course, Milton links this practice with the Inquisition as evidence of Catholic (rather than exclusively Italian) anti-intellectualism and oppression. Indeed, the statement mourns the fall of Italy's greatness because of its religion rather than castigating the nation itself. Earlier in his career, Milton's admiration is less qualified. He interrupts *The Reason for Church-Government* to offer an account of himself in which he relates his stay at an Italian academy, an anecdote he deploys to display his cultural credentials:

> But much latelier in the privat academies of Italy . . . some trifles which I had in memory, compos'd at under twenty or thereabout . . . met with acceptance above what was lookt for, and other things which I had shifted in scarsity of books and conveniences to patch up amongst them, were receiv'd with written encomiums, which the Italian is not forward to bestow on men of this side the Alps. (809-10)

In *Of Education* (1644), he recommends the word-chewing English aspire to "a distinct and clear pronuntiation, as near as may be to the Italian, especially in the vowels" (882-83) Additionally, regarding those insidious Italian books Ascham feared, Milton confidently asserts that good use may be made of even the most scurrilous of books: "Basil teaches how some good use may be made of *Margites*, a sportfull poem, not now extant, writ by Homer; and why not then of *Morgante*, an Italian romanze much to the same purpose?" (*Areopagitica* 510-11).[9] About twenty years later, Milton's explanation of the verse in *Paradise Lost* ranks his poem with ancient Greek and Roman poetry, the best of English tragedy, and with the accomplishments of modern Italy (presumably Tasso). Finally, Milton's ties to the Italian community close by his boyhood home bespeak of something warmer than mere "academic" admiration for Italian culture (Campbell and

Corns 22), for Milton's best friend and most intimate confidant in his youth, Charles Diodati, was of this community.

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), Milton's affection for the Italians mattered little for those content to style him as the apogee of "British" artistry and values, and so his seemingly innocuous statement about his musical tastes became linked with his role as liberator. The placement of the epigram reminds audiences of this role and connects it to the performance of *Comus* as a deliverance from Italian opera. As a proponent of "ancient liberty," Milton well deserves this title. One wonders, however, how he would have felt about being conscripted as a culture warrior in the struggle to free Great Britain from the aesthetic influence of a country he believed worthy of emulation in all things save religion. Perhaps this is what Alwin Thaler meant when he said Milton "would have objected bitterly to some of the methods [adapters] took to exploit his works" (269).

The second epigram, added to later editions of the libretto, expands the patriotic aims of the opera. Taken from "Il Penseroso," it calls attention to the masque's debts and affinities to Spenser: "Of forests, and inchantments drear, / Where more is meant than meets the ear." The couplet comes at the end of Milton's description of the thoughtful man's aesthetic enjoyments. The catalogue includes ancient Greek tragedy and poetry, what small quantity of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama Milton deemed worthy (i.e., Jonson's tragedies and Shakespeare's comedies), Chaucer, and (last but not least) Spenser—England's first great epic poet, who sung "Of turneys and of trophies hung; / Of forests, and inchantments dreer, /Where more is meant than meets the ear" (118-20). In the context of "Il Penseroso," Milton succinctly describes Spenser's allegorical method, and in the context of *Comus*, it is an apt description of the plot, which takes place in a forest, where dwells an Archimago-like enchanter whose words mean more than they seem. At another level, the epigram alerts readers that *Comus* will be a Spenserian allegory in the patriot vein. In fact, the epigram anticipates the Epilogue, which defends and explains "this wild, this allegorick mask" (62).

Invoking Spenser with Milton also taps into a long-running discourse on self-control as the pathway to national greatness and personal freedom—a discourse connected to defining Britishness and that opposition ideology revitalized as they took aim at their adversaries both at home and abroad. Such rhetoric was an especially familiar gesture in politics, and opposition poets regularly co-opted figures from the past to their cause. Mining the past for models of greatness and virtue, they turned not only to Milton but also to Spenser, England's chief singer of Britain's mythical heroic past. They transmuted his "dark conceits" to opposition discourse, just as they transformed the man and his poetry for the same purpose. In *London,* for instance, one of the more pointed comments about contemporary politics is an oblique reference to Walpole as "Orgoglio" (94), the giant from Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* who captures the weakened Redcrosse Knight after he has indulged in sensual delights with the witch-temptress, Duessa. The "forests, and inchantments drear" of the epigram thus summarize the plot of *Comus* at the same time that the epigram alerts audiences to Milton's admiration of Spenser and to the then-fashionable use of both as patriot figureheads. As will be discussed later, many saw *Samson* as a perfect combination of British civility and virtue as Handel, the great master of British music, joined with one of the nation's greatest poets, Milton. In *Comus,* Dalton one-ups opposition poets by borrowing from both poetic modes and fusing Spenserian poetics with "Miltonic" values.

In its second epigram, its prologue, its body, and its epilogue, *Comus* strengthens the common conception of Milton as a devoutly English (or British) poet by creating a "family tie" between two of the nation's most accomplished and beloved poets. First, the original masque is arguably Milton's most Spenserian work, so the comparison cannot have been difficult for audience members familiar with *A Maske* to make. Second, Spenser is one of the very few English poets whom Milton alludes to specifically in his writings. He praises Spenser in *Areopagitica,* which of all his political prose was among the most respected and widely read in the eighteenth century. Speaking of the trial "by what is contrary" that hones one's moral senses and actions, Milton asserts that virtue which does not seek to know "the utmost that vice promises

to her followers" and simply avoids temptation altogether is "but a blank vertue, not a pure; her whitenesse is but an excrementall whitenesse." Because untested virtue is not virtue at all, continues Milton,

> our sage and serious poet Spencer [sic], whom I dare be known to think a better teacher then Scotus or Aquinas, describing true temperance under the person of Guion [Guyon], brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon, and the bowr of earthly blisse that he might see and know, and yet abstain. (516)

It should thus come as no surprise that Dalton's additions place an even stronger emphasis on the debt Milton's masque owes to Spenser and invokes the popular vein of "Spenserian satire."

These additions warrant close scrutiny, first, because the importance of Spenserian allegory to the patriot ideology injected into *Comus* has not yet been fully investigated, and, second, because some scholarship on *Comus* suggests the additions have a different agenda. Specifically, Joncus argues that the marketing scheme for *Comus* and the libretto establish the moral tenor of the work, yet the performance presents quite another vision:

> Drury Lane was projecting Milton as the embodiment of British values and achievements, and this profiling—together with the Arcadian conceits inserted into the adaptation—sanction extended musical scenes in which social conventions were flouted. While the libretto reflected and reinscribed a politicized Milton reception evident since the turn of the century, independent musical scenes showed Nymphs and their lovers engaging in revels and celebrations of love against a pastoral backdrop. ("Milton" 8)

She further notes the songs hearken to the discursive tradition of ballad opera in which songs sidestep the dramatic action "to instruct the audience directly." The innovation is that Arne's music, "rather than probing the moral dilemmas explicated by Milton, indulged the viewer in a brief tableaux of Arcadian license, whose 'moral' was largely the delights of breaking social taboos" ("Milton" 8). Thus the original performance of *A Maske* pitted Vice against Virtue in a

triumph of "Puritan values," but in *Comus*, "Vice was transmogrified into a familiar Pleasure (Mrs. Clive) who had the last word" ("Milton" 9).

To be sure, Clive speaks the Epilogue in the guise of Euphrosyne, a homage to her many roles that personified pleasure and mirth. One might justly wonder at the visual effect of Mirth professing "to be grave" and moralizing that "All vice is folly, and makes man a beast." However, one must attend to how Dalton's changes play up his source's similarities to *The Faerie Queene*, for such emphasis curbs the subversive elements of the opera and frames the whole as an allegorical satire. Dalton may add subversive songs and the performance of the opera may add equally subversive dances, but the librettist also adds other characters with their own songs that respond to these subversive elements, which maintain the balance between convention and subversion. His major additions—the scene between the brothers and "The Woman" (the first of Clive's two roles) and the extremely-elongated temptation of the Lady—make use of Milton's debts to Spenser and of Milton's twin poems to lend greater moral and political weight to the contest between Vice and Virtue at the heart of the masque and the opera.

When speaking of Dalton's major additions to Milton's original plot, one covers almost all of his alterations, for his libretto holds the distinction among Milton adaptations in the century of being the only one that adds far more than it subtracts. The possible exception is Charles Jennens's work with the twin poems, and even then, the inclusion of his own "Il Moderato," which runs to three and half pages in the 1740 libretto, does not compare to the more than sixteen pages of material added to the masque. Unlike later librettists (especially Hamilton, Stillingfleet, and Jackson), Dalton's choice (*A Maske*) is, relatively speaking, a conventional work morally and aesthetically. It does not contain (like "Lycidas") hints of Milton's nascent radicalism, nor does it trouble readers (like *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost* do) with interpretative quandaries and searching theological inquiries that potentially complicate the text's moral and religious outlook. As a result, Dalton did not need to bring the same level of surgical precision to his task that later librettists did because there was little, if anything, in *A Maske* that an eighteenth-century audience

would find controversial and that would thus require excision. Such was not the case for other Milton works adapted for performance.

Despite the many embellishments, one could say *Comus* is one of the more faithful adaptations of the century given how very little of the original work Dalton removes. He distributes his expanded plot across three acts that coincide with the three episodes of the original. Act 1 consists of the opening exchange between the First Spirit and Philadel, the introduction of Comus and his rabble, the introduction of the Lady, her initial encounter with Comus (disguised as a homely shepherd), and, lastly, her decision to go with him to his forest abode. This act covers the first 330 lines of Milton's masque, and from this part of the text, Dalton omits absolutely nothing. To the contrary, the first act includes only additions, such as lines for Philadel, which are mainly designed to lay the groundwork for his appearance in Act 3 and to break up the First Spirit's lengthy exposition, which goes on for ninety-two lines in *A Maske*. The other changes (discussed in detail later) are new songs to embellish Comus and his train's midnight revelry and to provide tonal colors after the Lady agrees to go with Comus. Finally, in those parts that originally belong to Milton, Dalton generally retains the original wording and meter and changes only small instances of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

When not cutting away whole swaths of text, which he does with extreme rarity, Dalton at most alters a few words in order to bridge logical gaps and carry on the meter between what he keeps and what he adds. For instance, the opera opens with the first sixteen lines of the masque before Dalton introduces his first change, the First Spirit catching sight of "yon slanting stream of purer light" that he soon recognizes as Philadel (10). Once the latter accounts for his appearance, the First Spirit resumes his exposition (Dalton's alterations in brackets, and his omissions struck through):

> [Then mark th' occasion that demands it here.]
>
> ~~But to my task,~~ Neptune, [I need not tell] besides the sway
>
> Of ev'ry salt flood and each ebbing stream,

Took by lot ‘twixt high and nether Jove. . . . (10)

Such changes can be attributed exclusively to dramatic exigencies. In the third act, Dalton adds a song by the Second Spirit that only the Lady can hear, so he introduces this new character early to explain his presence in the forest. He also opts to break up the lengthy exposition that begins the original masque, and the above changes reflect the need for the lines to make sense and to preserve the blank verse.

Excluding Dalton’s additions, the method described above is the same Dalton employs in the second and third acts. Act 2 contains the introduction of the brothers, their meeting with the First Spirit (disguised as Thrysis), their encounter with the First Woman and Comus’s crew (discussed below), and the brothers’ exit with the First Spirit to rescue their sister. The act thus covers lines 331 to 657 of the masque, and out of these more than 300 lines, Dalton removes only sixteen lines, the most substantial of which are the six in which the Attendant Spirit explains the origins of the plant Haemony. Act 3 covers the Lady’s exchanges with Comus, her brothers’ entry and the flight of Comus, and Sabrina’s deliverance of the Lady, all of which corresponds to lines 659 to 1022 (the end) of Milton’s poem. To this Dalton adds plenty, which will be discussed momentarily. As for his omissions, this act reveals the librettist at his slashing utmost. He cuts the First Spirit’s relation of Sabrina’s origins (827-51 in *A Maske*) and the spoken lines (867-89) between the songs invoking her aid. Including the omission of the earlier passage on Haemony, the sum total of Dalton’s cuts amount to a paltry sixty-two lines from a 1022-line text. In other terms, he cuts six percent of the original. Jennens would initially erase more than 100 lines from the twin poems (roughly a third of their total line count), and, of course, Stillingfleet of necessity had to leave out the bulk of *Paradise Lost* from his oratorio. Even Hamilton, with a ready-made drama on his hands in *Samson Agonistes*, would omit more than that for the libretto of *Samson*. And proportionally, Jackson cuts more of the total percentage (48 of 193 lines, or, 24.8%) of “Lycidas” from his adaptation than Dalton does of *A Maske* to create the opera *Comus*.

As previously stated, the temperate use of the scalpel in this first Milton adaptation of the eighteenth century stems from the source's relative conventionality and lack of controversy. Even if Dalton did not have to put his source under the knife to render it more conventional and uncontroversial, he and Arne nevertheless added much in order, first, to reaffirm that perception and, second, to accommodate Milton as an eighteenth-century British patriot. Indeed, Milton's masque, as said, is 1022 lines long; Dalton's *Comus* is 1320, a number that does not even figure in the thirty-four-line Prologue and the twenty-eight-line Epilogue, which bring the total to 1382.

It is true that Dalton introduces Philadel early in order to explain his presence later, but one can see his interpretation of *A Maske* and his understanding of Milton as a morally orthodox poet verified in what Philadel says. As stated above, Great Britain often defined itself in the eighteenth-century by that which it was not and forged its identity through violent military encounters with the Other (Catholic France or Spain or the Catholic Stuarts and their Jacobite followers). At other times, such as in the arts, the encounter with the Other was of a less violent nature, such as in defining national virtue against the supposed corruptions of Continental Europe. Early in the opera, Dalton signals that the latter type will be the conflict presented in *Comus*. Explaining to Philadel his reason for being in the forest, the First Spirit alludes to "A noble peer of mickle trust and power" who "Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide / An old and haughty nation, proud in arms" (11). Philadel quickly interrupts to ask if "any danger threat his legal sway / From bold sedition, or close-ambushed treason?" (11).

This is perhaps the only point in the opera in which Dalton irons out a potentially embarrassing moment in his source, for the Welsh may have been radically other from England in the seventeenth century, but after 1707, they were part of the British nation. Dalton thus has the First Spirit explains that the plot will not relate to any political tumults in the Welch Marches. Rather, their reason for being in the woods relates to the Lord's "blooming offspring" (11). "What peril can their innocence assail, / Within these lonely and unpeopled shades"? asks Philadel. To which the First Spirit replies, "Attend my words. No place but harbours danger: / In

ev'ry region virtue finds a foe" (11). This does Dalton establish the nature of the conflict in the opera as a moral struggle rather than a martial one, and Philadel's many interjections as the First Spirit details Comus's history further strengthen this notion. When the First Spirit describes Comus's birth and parentage, Philadel exclaims, "Ill-omened birth to virtue and her sons!" (12). The lines given to Philadel reinforce the dichotomy of Milton's masque between virtue and vice—which is right in line with his additions in the later acts.

Dalton not only strengthens the dichotomy between vice and virtue, but he also takes up the Miltonic theme of liberty and its relation to license, and his later additions continue Milton's task (in the masque and throughout his whole career) of defining the terms of freedom. The new songs in Act 1 for members of Comus's party revel in Arcadian scenes of license that they style as freedom: "From tyrant laws and customs free, / We follow sweet variety," sings one of his thralls (16), and another echoes Comus's own calls for nighttime merrymaking by establishing their liberation from time as measured by social customs: "What have we with day to do? / Sons of care! 'Twas made for you!" (17). The songs appear to embellish Comus's depiction of himself and his captives of those free spirits "of purer fire [who] / Imitate the starry choir" and come alive at night (15). As will be discussed, momentarily, however, Dalton's embellishment of this theme also takes on a greater significance.

Extra material in the second and third acts also takes up the theme of liberty. For instance, one of Dalton's most substantial innovations is "The Woman" who does not appear in *A Maske* and whose unsuccessful seduction allows the brothers to resist their own temptations to parallel their sister's in the next act. Indeed, the extension of the brothers' scene is second only to the thoroughgoing revision of Comus's temptation of the Lady, and Dalton must have meant the one to mirror the other. The second act at first echoes almost verbatim Milton's masque, as it shifts focus from the Lady to the brothers, but one soon sees the radical alterations Dalton undertook to add drama and to underscore the hybrid Spenserian/Miltonic moral allegory. As in Milton's masque, the brothers worry about their sister and discuss the divine "philosophy" of

virtue and then meet the (First) Spirit in the guise of their father's shepherd. But from hereon, the opera departs significantly from the masque. The brothers next encounter Comus's party. The long exchange that ensues between them and the First Woman invokes Guyon's trials in Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene* and pits Reason and Virtue against Pleasure and Love.

After the brothers and Thrysis, hidden from sight, watch the "reveling" and "caressing" of the party, they emerge and ask after the revelers. The First Woman's response further develops what the new songs of the first act do:

> We are the happiest of the race of men;
> Of freedom, mirth, and joy the only heirs:
> But you shall share them with us; for this cup,
> This nectar'd cup, the sweet assurance gives
> Of present and the pledge of future bliss. (32)

Circe-like, the First Woman offers the brothers her cup, and they dutifully refuse and take the opportunity to declaim upon the woman as her "sex's shame" (32). The Woman responds, seemingly off topic, with her song on Fame, "an empty, airy, glittering bubble," and then she turns to the young men and asks:

> Why, then, why such toil and pain
> Fame's uncertain smiles to gain?
> Like her sister, Fortune, blind,
> To the best she's oft unkind,
> And the worst her favour find. (33)

Contrary to Joncus, it is difficult to see this song as ultimately subversive—or even off topic ("Milton" 16). First, one must wonder if Dalton and audiences perceived the song as ironic, for the sentiment echoes Milton's statement in *Paradise Lost* that the fallen world "shall goe on, / To good malignant, to bad men benign" (12:537-38). It also more generally echoes the sentiments of patriot poetry that frequently lamented that "Worth . . . in these degen'rate days / Wants even

the cheap reward of empty praise" (*London* 35-36). In other words, the Woman may be speaking more truth than she knows. Second, Dalton may have penned the song and Arne composed the music with Kitty Clive in mind, but Dalton also stays close to Milton's design by bringing the Spenserian elements of *A Maske* closer to the surface. Comprehending this relies on noting the alternative meanings of the word fame that lend the song itself a meaning not at all off topic from what precedes it. The modern definition of fame (being well known or celebrated by the public) relates to Clive's travails, but the alternative meanings for fame align the song with the work's ostensible moral aim. In the early modern period, fame also meant reputation, "That which people say or tell; public report, common talk; a particular instance of this, a report, rumour," or "The condition of being much talked about. Chiefly in good sense: Reputation derived from great achievements; celebrity, honour, renown." OED cites Nathan Bailey's 1736 *Dictionarium Britannicum* for an example of the former usage and Pope's *Temple of Fame* (1715) for the latter (fame, n.1; fame n.2a). The meaning of fame based on good report and reputation is also one Spenser uses frequently. For instance, in Book 2, he describes Archimago as one who is fatal to the fame of aspiring knights:

> For all he did, was to deceiue good knights,
> And draw them from pursuit of praise and fame,
> To slug in slouth and sensuall delights,
> And end their daies with irrenowmed shame. (2:1:23)

Spenser points to sensuality as a great danger to one's "fame" and does so frequently in the adventures of Guyon, the Knight of Temperance. As the knight and the Palmer travel towards the Bower of Bliss—the lair of Acrasia, the witch and sensual tempter *par excellence*—they pass by The Rock of Vile Reproach:

> On whose sharpe clifts the ribs of vessels broke,
> And shivered ships, which had bene wrecked late,
> Yet stuck, with carkasses exanimate

Of such, as having all their substance spent

In wanton joyes, and lustes intemperate,

Did afterwards make shipwracke violent,

Both of their life, and fame for ever fowly blent. (2:12:7, emphasis mine)

The First Woman's song on fame thus puns on the meanings of fame and plays a clever intertextual game that looks past (or through) Milton to Spenser. It is thus no coincidence that the Woman invites the severe young men to join her in "the Bower of Bliss," a phrase that does not appear in Milton's original (34).

Furthermore, a song by "a Woman in a pastoral habit" follows the First Woman's invitation to "the Bower of Bliss," and it is difficult not to think Dalton had Spenser fully in mind when writing the song:

I.

Would you taste the noontide air?

To yon fragrant bower repair,

Where woven with the poplar bough

The mantling vine will shelter you.

II.

Down each side a fountain flows,

Tinkling, murmuring, as it goes

Lightly o'er the mossy ground,

Sultry Pheobus scorching round.

III.

Round, the languid herds and sheep

Stretch'd o'er hillocks sleep,

While on the hyacinth and the rose

The Fair does alone repose.

IV.

All alone—and in her arms

Your breast may beat to love's alarms,

Till bless'd and blessing you shall own,

The joys of love are joys alone. (34-35)

Like Spenser's Bower of Bliss, this seems a "Paradise on ground" (12:58:1) that has a climate so calm that inspires languidness, and the song's allusion to "the Fair" (i.e., the First Woman) on her bed of hyacinths and roses evokes the appearance of Acrasia within her home: "Upon a bed of roses she was layd" (12:77:1). Clearly, the First woman is a would-be Acrasia lacking only her victim/paramour, her very own Verdant, to complete the tableau.

The alterations tailor the role of the First Woman for Clive while also crafting the figure and the whole temptation scene to bring out the Spenserian elements of *A Maske* that pit sensuality against virtue, here figured forth by the brothers, young would-be knights careful of their own and their sister's "fame." Dalton's word choice—"fame" and "Bower of Bliss"—suggests he was familiar with the affinities between Spenser's chivalric epic and Milton's masque, and the addition of the epigram from "Il Penseroso" strengthens this connection by framing the whole as a Spenserian allegory. The reference to "mazy Error's dark perplexing wood" in the Prologue also calls to mind Redcrosse's encounter with the monster Error in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* (which implies that Milton's "spirit" serves the same function as Una [Religious Truth] does for the Redcrosse Knight). The brothers, "nursed in princely lore," become child Redcrosses and little Guyons, aspiring knights of "British" holiness and temperance.

When speaking of the Spenserian elements of *Comus*, one must not neglect the eponymous seducer himself, for Dalton exploits the fashionable use of Spenserian tropes in patriot poetry to create a two-pronged attack on vice that employs allegory to transform Milton into a satirist. In *A Maske*, the wizard-seducer bears a strong resemblance to Circe, the magical temptress of Homer's *Odyssey* whom Milton's identifies as Comus's mother. He also resembles

Archimago, Duessa, and Acrasia from Books 1 and 2 of *The Faerie Queene*. In "Spenser's Acrasia and the Circe of the Renaissance" (1943), Merritt Hughes discusses the importance of Virgil's sensual witch to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poetry and thought, but witches and wizards took on a new—and politically-charged—significance in the next century as well. Maynard Mack describes the rich tapestry of aesthetic connections and resonances across early eighteenth-century satire as "an argot whose variations were inexhaustible" and that had "an interior coherence which made it possible to touch one string to strike another too, or even to set them all vibrating without, apparently touching any" (qtd. in Gerrard 16). Gerrard singles out Pope's "wizard old" in *The Dunciad* as an example of this argot at work: "With that, a wizard old his cup extends; / Which whoso tastes, forgets his former friends, / Sir, ancestors, himself" (4:517-19). The description evokes Archimago and Acrasia and opens onto "a whole history of anti-Whig writing which casts Whigs as wizards," such as the pot-bellied wizard (Walpole) of the anonymous 1737 *Festival of the Golden Rump* (Gerrard 16-17).

Just as in Milton's masque, in the opera, Comus's seduction is not without its visual appeal. In the former, his home is "a stately Palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness; soft Musick, Tables spred with all dainties." In the latter, the tempter's palace is, by contrast, "a magnificent Hall . . . set off with all gay decorations proper for an ancient Banqueting Room." Dalton's shifts the appeal of Comus's palace from mere sensual delights for the tongue and ears to an ostentatious display of riches. The tempter turns out not to be the homely shepherd he appears when first meeting the Lady, but a handsome youth with a home fit for a peer of the realm—or, perhaps, fit for a "prime minister" who rose to the peerage and built for himself a stately home in Norfolk, Houghton, that he decorated with magnificent art collected from around the world.

It is true that Comus is more a lascivious seducer than one who grasps after fortune, and so a satire aimed at Walpole using Milton's masque would seem misdirected. Attacks on Walpole's reputation, justified or not, frequently leveled their darts at his greed and corruption,

not at his licentiousness. Though his romantic escapades did not completely escape notice, strictly speaking, Walpole is more like Spenser's Mammon than Milton's Comus. However, it is quite probable that Dalton relied on that "argot" of early eighteenth-century satire that linked deceitful wizards like Comus with corrupt Whigs and with Walpole in particular, and so he had no need to change much about Comus himself. Dalton had no need to rewrite the figure of Comus; he could, to borrow Mack's trope, merely "pluck a string" nearby to set the rest moving. Walpole and Whig demagogues were often likened to wizards; Comus is a wizard; therefore, as Satan in *Paradise Regained* says, relation stands.

The richly allusive network of eighteenth-century satire appropriated Spenserian figures to serve as symbols of contemporary luxury and vice, and those in this network would have been ready to equate the wizard-seducer Comus not only with Spenser's magical tempters but also with Walpole and the "sensual sty" his administration was believed to promote. To a young Johnson, Walpole was Orgoglio (greed personified) for his acceptance of bribes and his strong promotion of British finance and commerce, but his support of trade also made him a fit representative of the temptations of modern (and foreign) luxuries commerce made available. There was also an established tendency to see Whig demagogues as wizards because of their political maneuvers and deceitful practices, so the equation of Walpole to Archimago and Acrasia was not hard to make. From there, it was but a short step to see in Comus a little bit of Walpole and to understand the extended temptation scene in *Comus* as a national allegory in which the wizard and his votaries attempt to seduce Britain (the brothers and the Lady) from the paths of "native" virtue. Thus, Comus's riches, his deceitful charms, his flouting of common law and custom, and his attempts to seduce others from the paths of temperance and virtue partake of the common belief that Walpole and his followers had transformed Great Britain from a once great nation of warriors (like Johnson's Edward III in *London*) to a sorry, swinish collection of dissolute beaus and greedy statesmen, figured forth as the Bacchanals in *Comus*.

Of course, there is nowhere near the same one-to-one correspondence between Walpole and, say, Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera*, and the allegory is not so concentrated and explicit as Fielding's or Johnson's more savage attacks. There was, after all, only so much Dalton could do with a "premade" plot. (As will be discussed, this is similar to the case of Hamilton's "patriot" *Samson*). There are also more strident expressions of patriot ideology in English musical theatre of the time, such as *Alfred* (1742), for which Arne also composed the music. But, once again, the level of explicitness may result from the fact that *Alfred* was an original composition, not an adaptation. Nevertheless, Dalton and Arne did the best they could to transform the masque by their own "magic" into an opposition allegory.

In the late 1730s, Dalton had need of a discretionary use of satirical allegory to express his Miltonic, or patriot, sympathies. At the time he was adapting the masque for the stage (1736-37), he was employed by the Seymour family as a tutor for Lord Beauchamp, the only son of Algernon Seymour, later the seventh Duke of Somerset. Seymour was himself a Whig and loyal to Walpole and his ministry from the moment he was summoned to the House of Lords in 1722 until Walpole's resignation in 1742. In fact, he attained a number of military appointments thanks in part to his support of Walpole and even briefly lost his position as Colonel of Horse Guards Regiment after Walpole's fall (Bucholtz). As heir to the second dukedom in the kingdom and as Dalton's employer, Seymour was not a man Dalton would wish to displease. However, he may have found a more sympathetic figure in his tutor's grandfather, Charles Seymour, the sixth Duke of Somerset. The elder Seymour was also a Whig, but, unlike his son, he had at the very least a tangential relationship with opposition politics. The sixth Duke of Somerset had largely been politically inactive since 1715, but in 1740-41, he is listed "as having given his proxy for various motions in support of the removal of Robert Walpole" (Bucholtz). With such a schism in the great family employing him (Charles Seymour and his son rarely spoke later in their lives), Dalton would have been wise to keep his opinions on Walpole to himself. As such, in *Comus*, he couches his political beliefs in the "dark" conceits of Spenserian allegory and in an adaptation of

an already extant text. In short, it was better to speak through Spenser and Milton than to speak as himself.

In fact, the need for an expressive outlet from which he could distance himself explains why Dalton's *Comus* came to be in the first place. The opera fits in well with much of Arne's other works in the 1730s and early '40s, for the patriotism buried just beneath the surface of *Comus* and alluded to in its prefatory material came to the forefront later. In 1740, to celebrate the third birthday of his daughter Augusta, Frederick, the Prince of Wales, held an event at Cliefden House at which the masque *Alfred* was the main entertainment (Golby). The libretto was written by David Mallet and James Thomson, the latter of whom (as later chapters discuss) appropriated Milton to patriotic aims when writing his British georgic poem, *The Seasons*. Arne set their words to music. In addition to being extremely nationalistic, *Alfred* (which Arne later converted into an oratorio and later still to an English opera) is best known today for including the first appearance of "Rule, Britannia." Clearly, patriot pieces were a large component of Arne's personal repertoire, and as house composer for Drury Lane in 1738, he apparently felt Dalton's work with Milton would be a welcome addition to their catalogue. In fact, Arne was no novice to producing "patriot" pieces critical of Walpole. When working for the Little Theatre at Haymarket in 1733, he produced a setting of Fielding's *Tom Thumb* as an afterpiece (Golby). Taken with his later role in composing *Alfred*, one can see how Dalton's libretto might have attracted Arne's attention. In the career of Dalton, however, *Comus* remains an outlier. It is the only work of his that appears to have ever been intended for the stage, the rest of his publications being sermons, moral epistles, and "picturesque" poems (Courtney), and besides *Comus*, Dalton had no further links to the stage for the rest of his life. Considering its monumental success, perhaps he felt he needed no further ties (a grimly ironic implication, if true, given the work's assertions of its moral aims.)

In addition to overwriting and bringing out the Spenserian elements in the plot, Dalton also inscribes the twin poems onto the plot of *Comus*. Under his care, the plot transcends Milton's dichotomy between Virtue and Vice and embodies a struggle between melancholy virtue ("Il

Penseroso") and mirthful vice (a contortion of Milton's "L'Allegro"). Unlike the companion poems, which remain forever leagued in lighthearted competition, the far more serious contest in *Comus* ends with Melancholy having the last word. In 1645 *Poems*, Comus's party consists of "sundry sorts of wilde Beasts, but otherwise like men and women." In *Comus*, they are "men and women, dress'd as Bacchanals" (13). As stated previously, Dalton also converts Comus's famous speech calling for midnight revelry into the first songs, divided between the magician and his Bacchanals. This and the added songs coming between Comus's call to Cotytto, which concludes his first address, and his invitation to "knit hands" and beat the ground change the tone of this scene. In *A Maske*, Comus's opening speech begins with a call to revelry and riot but gradually darkens as he shifts from merrymaking to midnight witchcraft, the solemnities owed to the "Dark vail'd Cotytto," the "mysterious dame"

> That ne're art call'd, but when the dragon woom
> Of Stygian darknes spets her thickest gloom,
> And makes one blot of all the ayr. (129-33)

All things considered, the "light fantastic round" seems rather dark, but Dalton pulls the matter from the realm of magical disorder into that of social evils as the singers throw "Tyrant laws" and "customs" to the wind and count the hours by their pleasures and their drinking (16). These "vowed priests" turn out to be unruly folk who prefer "sport and play" to law and labor. "Why should niggard rules controul / The transports of the soul?" asks one song, for "No dull stinting hour we own; / Pleasure counts our time alone" (16).

The next song continues the theme of revelers who employ different timepieces than the rest of society:

> By the gayly circling glas,
> We can see how minutes pass;
> By the hollow cask are told
> How the waining night grows old.

Soon, too soon; the busy day

Drives us from our sport and play.

What have we with day to do?

Sons of care! ‘twas made for you. (17)

Up to this point, many of Dalton’s additions revel in pastoral libertinism that flout the social norms Milton was thought to represent and enforce. Indeed, his addition of the song in which the Bacchanals claim to count their hours by cups rather than clocks places them beyond the pale of the normal workday, making them a highly disruptive social force preferring to party rather than to work. This may seem a small change, but it reflects eighteenth-century perception of Milton as a poet of social norms and constraints. In fact, it is perhaps more than mere coincidence that Stillingfleet’s 1760 libretto redacted from *Paradise Lost* hones in on well-regulated work and the carefully scheduled days and nights of Adam and Eve as the essence of what it meant to be unfallen.

Although there are subversive songs to tempt the brothers (and perhaps the audience), when considering the additions that close the first act, one cannot help but think the attitude of many audience members, if they were tempted at all, would have shifted quickly. Dalton adds a song after the Lady decides to accompany the disguised Comus, and the song makes it quite clear what he is about: “The nameless soft transports that beauty can give; / The bowl’s frolick joys let him her teach to prove, / And she in return yield the raptures of love” (23). The choral piece celebrates the same:

Away, away, away,

To Comus’ court repair;

There night out-shines the day,

There yields the melting fair. (24)

The song itself supposes it praises nothing but innocent, careless “Love and Wine, Wit and Beauty,” but assuming that many in the audience were familiar with the plot of the original, they

were well prepared to see through the screen. There are undercurrents of disorder and seduction (or possibly rape) in *A Maske*; *Comus* makes these elements more explicit. In place of a Circe-like menagerie, there is a Hogarthian lot of drunkards and ne'er-do-wells, and the magical tempter becomes under Dalton's care a proto-Richardsonian gentleman rake. The rabble who follow Comus in Milton's original represent "midnight shout" and "ill-managed merriment," and in Dalton's alterations, their existence outside the bounds of societal norms become more pronounced as they stress their own existence outside of daylight, working hours. But any attraction audiences or readers may have felt in these *carpe diem* siren songs would have jarred violently with this close of act one, with its implications of yielded virtue (or worse). As the popularity of novels like Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748) indicate, the prospect of a "fallen woman" was no laughing matter in the eighteenth century.

Dalton adds songs and dance for Comus's rabble in Acts 1 and 2, and he also adds more lines of "divine philosophy" for the brothers to parallel those of the sister in Act 3. No doubt Dalton and Arne knew very well that the entertaining "selling points" (Clive's star power, the songs, the dance, the spectacle) put them in dodgy moral territory. The brothers' retorts allow Dalton the curb the subversive appeal of his additions with further alterations with a more "Miltonic" bent. A song by a second woman follows the first exchange between the First Woman and the brothers, and it echoes the invitations to wayfarers in the Bower of Bliss and the earlier songs by Comus and his followers in act one. "Live, and love, enjoy the fair," invites the Second Woman, "Banish sorrow, banish care . . . From the fruits of sweet delight / Let not scare-crow virtue fright" (35). The Elder Brother sees these calls as mere seductions of vice, asking how "impious tongues" can "prophane the name / Of sacred virtue, and yet promise pleasure / In lying songs of vanity and vice?" (36). The First Woman may have a few more words to say, dismissing the brothers as "pedant youths" and "beardless cynic[s]" worthy of her contempt and perhaps her pity, but the last word for this round belongs to the Elder Brother: "She's gone! May scorn pursue

her wanton arts, / And all the painted charms, that vice can wear. . . . Let us be free / And, to secure our freedom, virtuous" (37).

Furthermore, via the brothers, Dalton calls upon the "Miltonic" theme of liberty in order to curb Comus and his thralls' excesses of perverted mirth. Beholding the songs and dances, the audience may have enjoyed a bit of the freedom from "Tyrant laws and customs," but such a freedom was short-lived and quite controlled. The temptations and the seeming beauties of vice were a constant concern for Milton, and for many an early-modern writer, and Dalton and Arne made sure that these vices were extremely beautiful. Yet Dalton brings the text back around to the Miltonic contemplation of true liberty and thus reinscribes Milton as a moral authority whose poetry and moral philosophy were capable of bringing the unruly passions to heel. For instance, included in the Elder Brother's answer to the First Woman's song on Fame is a reference to Milton's earlier inversion and internalization of the day-night dichotomy. To the Woman and to his younger sibling, the Elder Brother replies,

> Who wants his own, no other praise enjoys;
> His ear receives it as a fulsome tale,
> To which his heart in secret gives the lye.
> Nay, slandered innocence must feel a peace,
> An inward peace, which flatter'd guilt ne'er knew. (33)

The lines echo the elder's earlier statement, from the original masque, that

> He that hath light within his own clear breast,
> May sit in'th' center, and enjoy bright day;
> But he that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts,
> Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
> Himself his own dungeon. (26)

As previously stated, the conceit that one must submit in order to be free (as in Donne's "Holy Sonnet 14") was not particular to Milton, but with the popularity of *Paradise Lost* and the rise in

Milton's fortunes after 1688, the notion apparently came to be regarded as consummately "Miltonic." Indeed, in the eighteenth century, obedience to God and to common morality threatened to override those aspects of Milton's thought that were less common and orthodox. Certainly, this was to be the case for later adaptations of his works.

Dalton and Arne reserve the largest and by far the most fascinating changes for Act 3. Indeed, between line 658, in which the brother's depart with the First Spirit to look for the Lady and line 659, which begins Comus's temptation of the Lady ("Nay Lady sit"), more than nine pages (151 lines) intervene. Comus begins the act by calling on Euphrosyne, using the twenty-eight lines of Milton's "L'Allegro." The tempter banishes "loathed Melancholy" and calls on "heart-easing Mirth":

> Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest and youthful Jollity,
> Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
> Nods, and Becks, and wreathed Smiles,
> Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
> And love to live in dimple sleek;
> Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,
> And Laughter holding both his sides.
> Come, and trip it as ye go,
> On the light fantastick toe,
> And in thy right-hand lead with thee,
> The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty. (41-42)

When Dalton places the invitation to Euphrosyne (Mirth personified) into Comus's mouth, he is not wholly faithful to Milton's text. He omits lines 17-24, which relate an alternative genealogy of Mirth:

Or whether (as som sager sing)

The frolick wind that breathes the spring,

Zephir with Aurora playing,

As he met her once a maying,

There on beds of violets blew,

And fresh-blown roses washt in dew,

Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,

So bucksom, blith, and debonair. (17-24)

Dalton's omission is first and foremost a practical necessity of dramatic production, for it makes little sense for Comus to expound upon an alternative lineage. But the sacrifice to pragmatic constraints has thematic fallout. In allowing the first suggested family tree to stand, Dalton makes Euphrosyne a half-sister of Comus, one "Whom lovely Venus at a birth / With two sister Graces more / To Ivy-crowned Bacchus bore." By altering the genealogy of Mirth and placing the opening lines of "L'Allegro" in the mouth of her half-brother, Dalton sees to it that others interpret Milton's companion poems in much the same way.

Before Comus speaks the words to the Lady he does in Milton's masque, there is his invocation to Euphrosyne, a song from Euphrosyne, a dance of the Naiads, a song from the Pastoral Nymph, a musical rejoinder from Euphrosyne, and a song by Philadel. As with the inclusion of excerpts from "L'Allegro," these new passages also develop the dichotomy between virtue and vice, but they also intensify the Spenserian flavor of the opera. The First Woman and her temptation of the brothers, which parallels Comus's attempted seduction of their sister, is patterned after Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*. Euphrosyne's first song also appears to invoke the Bower of Bliss in that book's final canto. The goddess of mirth sings to the Lady:

I.

Come, come, bid adieu to fear,

Love and Harmony live here.

No domestic jealous jars,

Buzzing slanders, wordy wars,

In my presence will appear,

Love and Harmony reign here.

II.

Sighs to amorous sighs returning,

Pulses beating, bosoms burning,

Bosoms with warm wishes panting,

Words to speak those whishes wanting,

Are the only tumults here,

All the woes you need to fear,

Love and Harmony reign here. (43)

Like Spenser's thoroughly alluring depiction of the Bower of Bliss, the scene Euphrosyne paints is imminently temperate yet highly sexualized. Excepting the tumults of love, Euphrosyne offers to the Lady an existence that is "a stedfast state" that will "Ne suffred storme ne frost . . . Ne scorching heat, nor cold intemperate" (2:12:51:2-5). What she offers is indeed "a Paradise on ground . . . In which all pleasures plenteously abownd, / And none does others happinesse enuye" (2:12:57:1-4).

Appropriating the happy person's words, Comus perverts the message of Mirth, and with that perversion, the definitions of "sweet Liberty" and of Melancholy also shift. The second act makes much of the distinction between liberty and license in the brothers' exchange with the First Woman, and Dalton obviously meant to expound upon that concern further in the last act. Act 3 opens in Comus's palace, where sits the Lady on the enchanted chair "and by her looks and gestures expresses great signs of uneasiness and melancholy" (41). Dalton creates a standoff between warring temperaments in this final act, for even though melancholy was often considered an "affliction" akin to modern conceptions of depression, it here appears in a more positive light

as moral restraint. The Lady's signs of uneasiness and melancholy stem from Comus's ill-managed notion of mirth. Thus when he begins Act 3 with L'Allegro's banishment of "loathed Melancholy," Melancholy becomes a personification of the Lady's virtue and chastity. When Comus calls on Euphrosyne, "heart-easing Mirth," there will be no "unreproved pleasures free" because Comus and his rout have throughout the drama taken mirth to extremes and contorted the meaning of freedom into license, especially sexual license. In a manner that Milton never does in the companion poem, Comus and his train conflate the "sweet Liberty" of "L'Allegro" with "Love." Euphrosyne/Clive thus sings that

> Sighs to amorous sighs returning,
> Pulses beating, bosoms burning,
> Bosoms with warm wishes panting,
> Words to speak those wishes wanting,
> Are the only tumults here,
> All the woes you need to fear,
> Love and harmony reign here. (43)

Not even the Lydian airs mean in *Comus* what they mean in "L'Allegro." The "soft Lydian airs" married to "immortal verse" grant the happy person a state of mind and being much like that of the solemn music in "Il Penseroso," but for Comus, "Lydian measures . . . breathe the pleasing pangs of gentle love" (44).

The Lady testily dismisses the song and the pageantry of Mirth as the "odious strains / Of shameful folly." Apparently Dalton believed that if there was strife between L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, the latter won. This final act also includes recitatives for Mirth and for a Pastoral Nymph, who represents Comus's version of Melancholy. A creation of Comus's magic, the Pastoral Nymph bewails her plight as a fallen woman. Her one-time lover, Damon, having enjoyed her, has fled and left her in state of melancholy despondency:

> From hill, from dale, each charm is fled,

Groves, flocks, and fountains please no more;

Each flower in pity droops its head,

All nature does my loss deplore.

All, all reproach the faithless swain,

Yet Damon still I seek in vain. (46)

If left standing alone, the Pastoral Nymph would be a fearful example of the brothers' belief that virtue laid down for momentary pleasure soon falls under the long shadow of grief: "Short is the course of every lawless pleasure; / Grief, like a shade, on all its footsteps waits" (35). But all the while Euphrosyne also stands on stage and "by her gesture expresses to the audience her different sentiments of the subject of her [the Nymph's] complaint" (44). The goddess Mirth with Circe-like power transforms this example of the price of sexual pleasure into a lesson on how women ought to deal with inconstancy in men: with "rosy wine" and better company. Echoing her earlier role's song on Fame, Clive's Euphrosyne cavalierly dismisses the stigma of ill-repute:

If I am scorn'd, because enjoy'd,

Sure the squeamish fops are free

To rid me of dull company. . . .

Why shou'd they e'er give me pain,

Who to give me joy disdain? (47)

Predictably, the Lady's response is as cold and disdaining as her brothers' to the First Woman, and after this pageant, when Comus sets up a feast and offers the Lady his cup, she dashes it to the ground. Again, Dalton emphasizes the Spenserian elements of the masque, for the Lady's action reenacts Guyon's fit of puritanical rejection when Acrasia offers him her golden cup and he takes "it out of her tender hond," and "to ground did violently cast [it], / That all in peeces it was broken fond" (2:12.57). The feast is then cut short by a sound from heaven, which turns out to be the descent of the second spirit, Philadel/Milton. As is Dalton's pattern in *Comus*, at every point when he adds song and dance to intensify the attraction and spectacle of Mirth (or

Vice), he adds corresponding lines assuring Virtue has a say. Such is Philadel's song that responds directly to Euphrosyne's commentary on the Pastoral Nymph's complaint. Philadel reminds the Lady that not on "Beds of fading flowers . . . Nor with swains in syren bowers, / Will true pleasure lone reside," but "on awful Virtue's hill sublime," which one reaches only with toil and care, for "So from the first did Jove ordain, / Eternal bliss for transient pain" (49). Judging from her behavior and her "melancholy" manner, the Lady needs no reminding, which suggests the reminder is meant for those watching or reading lest they feel swayed by Euphrosyne's mocking retort to the rather flimsy Pastoral Nymph. Apparently, Dalton did not deaire his readers to be surprised by sin.

After this song and responses from the Lady and Comus, Dalton again resumes with Milton's lines, starting with line 659 in the 1645 *Poems* version ("Nay Lady sit"). Soon more songs and dances from Euphrosyne ensue to persuade the Lady that, as Comus immediately thereafter urges, she be "not coy, and be not cozen'd / With that same vaunted name virginity" since "Beauty is nature's coin, must not be hoarded, / But must be current" (54). After this now extremely elongated temptation scene, Dalton repositions lines taken from Milton. To all of original persuasions and the added songs and dances, the Lady responds as she does in Milton's masque but with some cuts to shorten the speech: "Enjoy your deer wit, and gay rhetorick / That hath so well been taught her dazling fence," the Lady proclaims, "Thou art not fit to hear thy self convinc't." "Yet should I try," she continues,

> the uncontrouled worth
> Of this pure cause would kindle my rap't spirits
> To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
> That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
> And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
> Till all thy magick structures rear'd so high,
> Were shatter'd into heaps o're thy false head. (55)

To this Comus can only admits that "She fables not," before feebly dismissing her argument as "but the lees / And settlings of a melancholy blood" and offering his cup as the only cure. Having spent all his powers of spectacle and rhetoric, Comus can do no more.

Comus's abortive temptation of the Lady complements Dalton's vision of the tempter and his crew as rambunctious outcasts who flout conventional morality and social mores, for the additions juxtapose the First Woman's temptation of the brothers to Comus's of the Lady. When the Lady responds to Comus's sophistic logic on Nature's bounty, Dalton adds a response in the middle of her long diatribe. When the Lady asks, "Shall I go on? / Or have I said enough?" Comus responds,

> Enough to shew
> That you are cheated by lying boasts
> Of starving pedants, that affect a fame
> From scorning pleasures which they cannot reach. (52)

Comus's response refers to the same meaning of fame that the First Woman evokes, and his reply ushers in another round of songs from Euphrosyne, Clive's second role in *Comus*. This creates a wonderful parallelism both on the textual and visual levels for the audience. In this scene as in that between the brothers and the woman, melancholy virtue has the last word.

But these are not the last words altogether. The plot of *Comus* ends just as *A Maske* does: with the brothers' entry, Comus's escape, and Sabrina's intervention to free the Lady. Afterwards, Euphrosyne enters holding Comus's staff and delivers the Epilogue extolling the virtues of temperance (as Milton's epilogue does) and concluding with a moral pronouncement for the audience: "All vice is folly, and makes man a beast." It is not known with what gestures and expressions, if any, Clive graced this final speech. However, if Joncus believes that Clive often spoke "out of character," then we must allow that she is doing so here and perhaps speaking not simply as the goddess of Mirth but as Kitty Clive, who, though an actress, was widely known and celebrated for her chastity, as Joncus herself observes ("Milton" 20). To this must be added

that Clive was "renowned" for her "Patriot sympathies" (Joncus, "Handel" 219). For those familiar with Clive, the actress undermines the character, for the former's life was a model of temperance and whose politics leaned towards the oppositional. The last speech and final visual image, Clive in the garb of Euphrosyne holding Comus's charming staff, transforms the Goddess of Mirth into chaste woman and patriot actress who supplants the ill-managed merriment of Comus with her "grave" (i.e., melancholy,) address. Clive-Euphrosyne in the end proves no adversary to "Our steadfast bard," Milton, but rather a fit companion reaffirming the moral legitimacy and authority of the work.

Whig and opposition discourses appropriated melancholy as a necessary cultural value for a free people; the appropriation bears a striking similarity to the assimilation of the one-time rebel, Milton, to their cause. Dalton's alterations to the masque thus illustrates Drury Lane's attempt to make "that Grand Whig, Milton" into "Milton, that Grand Melancholy Patriot." Milton's meaning in *Ad Patrem* mattered little to Drury Lane's intention to conscript Milton for a culture war. Similarly, the open-ended nature of the twin poems, including the possibility that one is not supposed to side with one over the other but rather acknowledge the necessity of both, was a moot point for Arne and Dalton, who depicted Milton as a representative of melancholic contemplation and restraint. The dialectic of temperance and sensuality in *A Maske* accounts for one reason the work remained popular both as a poem and as an English opera, and Dalton's grafting of Spenserian allegory, contemporary satire, and the dialectic of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" onto the original lend the work a more "British" flavor and helps explain why the work continued to be popular for the entire century.

However, to further explain the popularity of both Milton and *Comus*, one must keep in mind that both were seen as renewers of the "ancient liberty" that modern life and foreign military aggression and foreign fashions endangered. Again, Colley's assertion that otherness, above all other things, defined Britishness is important. Thus the fear over foreign incursions and the need for temperance and self-control as salutary virtues against the internal corruptions that

would lead to a loss of liberty were quite real to eighteenth-century Britons. No doubt Milton was a potent voice of such belief, for behind the intensified and expanded dichotomy of vice and virtue and behind the "liberation" undertones of *Comus*, audiences may have recalled a particular passage near the end of *Paradise Lost*. Once shown how the Son will ultimately triumph over Satan and rejuvenate lost humankind, Adam says that he now knows that

> to obey is best,
> And love with feare the onely God, to walk
> As in his presence, ever to observe
> His providence, and on him sole depend. (12:561-64)

Michael's reply, especially the close, still resounds as one of the more famous passages of the epic:

> This having learnt, thou hast attained the summe
> Of wisdom. . . . onely add
> Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,
> Add vertue, patience, temperance, add love,
> By name to come call'd charitie, the soul
> Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
> To leave this paradise, but shalt possess
> A paradise within thee, happier farr. (12:575-87)

In *Comus*, audiences may have apprehended a similar sentiment when the Elder Brother says,

> He that hath light within his own clear breast,
> May sit in'th' center, and enjoy bright day;
> But he that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts,
> Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
> Himself his own dungeon. (26)

The careful reader of Milton knows that this paradise is the best liberty, something Dalton also knew. And to the freeing aspects of *Comus*, intensified by additions of his own hand and by the star power and spectacle of live performances, Dalton opposes Milton's idea of liberty linked hand-in-hand with virtue. Indeed, Dalton appears to have thought this the most important lesson readers could take from Milton, for once Sabrina appears and frees the Lady from the bonds of Comus's enchanted chair, Elder Brother expresses his amazement that such wonders exist in the world:

> I oft have heard, but ne'er believ'd till now,
> There are, who can by potent magick spells,
> Bend to their crooked purpose nature's law,
> Blot the Moon from her resplendent orb,
> Bid whirling planets stop destin'd course,
> And thro' the yawning Earth from Stygian gloom
> Call up meagre ghost to walks of light:
> It may be so—for some mysterious end!
> Yet still the freedom of the mind, you see,
> No spell can reach. (59)

This passage voices post-Newtonian, eighteenth-century skepticism that had little patience with and no need for magic and mystery; thus, the speech prepares the way for the Epilogue that preempts any critical backlash for this "wild" allegory. If Milton's views on science (at worst wrong, at best evasive) had fallen into obsolescence, Dalton reminds readers that Milton's poetry still contained wisdom of another sort in his thoughts on the true and virtuous liberty of the mind. The last word may literally belong to Clive in the guise of Euphrosyne, but her last reminder—"All vice is folly, and makes man a beast"—belongs to the moral discourse that extols virtue as the pathway to the true freedom of "the paradise within."

CHAPTER III

"SUCH SIGHTS AS YOUTHFUL POETS DREAM": MILTON'S BRITISHNESS IN *L'ALLEGRO ED IL PENSEROSO* (AND SOMETIMES "IL MODERATO")

The advent of English opera opened fresh fields beyond the page for Milton to thrive as a cultural force, and in other musical-theatrical forms, such as the ode and the oratorio, one sees what debt the poet's continued importance owed to the stage. From 1738 on, Drury Lane and Covent Garden exploited Milton as a consummate patriot figurehead, presenting Dalton and Arne's *Comus* and later Hamilton and Handel's oratorio, *Samson*, as musical entertainments of high aesthetic and moral value that also packed some political bite. In the early 1740s, Lincoln's Inn Fields tried to cash in on the success of *Comus* and promoted the poet and his twin poems less divisively as a representative of British values firmly invested in georgic poetics and in the discourse of English melancholy. Charles Jennens and Frederick Handel's musical ode, *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*, illustrates the expanding utility and importance of Milton beyond opposition ideology.[1]

Doubtlessly, Milton's reputation contributed to the work's attraction, for an English author was a potent selling point for vernacular entertainments aspiring to purge the stage of Italian encroachments. The producers of *Comus* felt this to be so, and nearly thirty years later, William Jackson's choice of "Lycidas" to express his antipathy to Handel's "foreign" influence indicates Milton remained a symbol of "native" political-aesthetic values. For the generation

preceding Jackson, however, Handel, despite his German heritage, *was* native. As Sandra Cookson remarks, the latter's need to please audiences and to compete as an entertainer made the twin poems ideal candidates for adaptation, and his recent achievements in English oratorio and his successful setting of Dryden's *St. Cecilia's Day Ode* (1687) in 1739 "may have prompted his choice for Milton's companion poems, as he cast about for new ways to engage his English audiences with English subjects by English poets" (134). Though Cookson is generally on the mark, Handel actually sought to engage his *British* audience with "British" subjects by English poets (Dryden and Milton) who were retroactively naturalized as Britons.

Even then, native pedigree was but one of many concerns, for musical adaptation also juggled the need to entertain with the requirement to edify—not an easy task when one also had to consider the commercial potential of a work. No work "adapted from Milton" demonstrates this juggling act more starkly than Handel and Jennens's piece. The entertainment factor is readily apparent for anyone who has read the original poems or heard the ode performed. Arguably two of Milton's most pleasurable works to read aloud, the twin poems have a fluid verse that his other well-known early poems, such as "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and "Lycidas," often do not. Indeed, the latter two contain by design a great deal of prosodic cacophony that one encounters only briefly in L'Allegro's banishment of "loathed melancholy" (1-10). Moreover, the poems are among his most jocular, as the playfulness of the speakers chastely wooing their respective deities echoes the lighthearted competition between the happy and thoughtful temperaments. Fittingly, the final version of the ode (*L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*) and the first two parts of its original form (*L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato*) sonically and verbally reenact this playful strife. The point-counterpoint structure of Jennens's libretto complements Handel's tempo shifts and instrumental alternations between "merry" strings and "grave" organ. The ode is on all fronts a triumph of artistry. But the art conceals the business. Although hosting a concert with no promise of the spectacle of a Drury Lane or Covent Garden opera, the theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields follows their lead in appealing to audiences' patriotism,

and *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* deftly utilizes "Milton" to celebrate Great Britain by praising and defining Britishness.

First, however, one must consider how much the ode can be and was attributed to "Milton" and whether aesthetic and practical concerns negate the textual fidelity that Dalton insisted was integral to *Comus*. For the English opera, faithfulness (or at least a claim to it) was both a practical and an aesthetic matter since the "author" (Milton) helped fill seats. It is quite probable he was almost as important to Lincoln's Inn Fields. Almost, one must say, because *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* relies on Handel's reputation as much as, if not more than, Milton's. Copies of librettos indicate it was nowhere near the fulsome love-fest *Comus* was. Part of the reason may be due to the different genre. *Comus* was musical theatre; *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* is more concert than drama, which left little room for a prologue like Dalton's. Accordingly, no bardolatrous preface graces the various librettos of the ode.

Dalton (and later Hamilton and Stillingfleet) wrote prologues explaining their methods and offering effusive praise of the poet and in the cases of the latter two, the composers (Handel and John Christopher Smith, respectively). The absence of such a preface distinguishes *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* and Jackson's *Lycidas* from the other full-length pieces in the century. Unlike Jackson's 1767 elegy, however, the earliest librettos of the ode call attention to another absence: Milton's. The inaugural wordbook of 1740, printed by the Tonsons, ostensibly relied on Handel's present fame, rather than Milton's established name. The title page announces the work—"L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato. In Three Parts" and "Set to Musick by Mr. Handel." The only other names appearing are the booksellers, "J. and R. Tonson in the Strand." Nowhere does the poet's name appear.

It is hard to know what to make of this absence, especially considering Milton's importance to *Comus*, to the later oratorios, and to Jackson's *Lycidas*. Moreover, Jennens and Handel were quite probably hoping Milton's reputation and his current fashionableness would help make the piece successful, for, at the time, Handel was working with less financial support

and less star power support than he had previously enjoyed. The 1739-40 and 1740-41 seasons were odd ones for the composer. 1738-39 marked his season of "independence" from the young, aristocratic manager-patrons of the recently defunct Opera of the Nobility, with whom he had worked the previous year. He thus occupied the King's Theatre "in his own right" in 1738-39, and even though his works were well-received, "he probably felt that, unless he could present operas with recognizably first-rate soloists, the King's Theatre was an extravagant venue, and in the two following seasons he gave performances at the neglected theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields" (Burrows, "Handel"). Without the star power he relied on previously, Handel had need of another "star" to place beside his own, and his choices while at Lincoln's Inn Fields suggest he relied on the "native pedigree" of his sources to draw crowds: "For the 1738-39 season, he presented his first 'all-English' programme in London" (Burrows, "Handel"), both because he did not have Italian singers and because English-language performances were then in the ascendancy. During this time, Handel also fell back on his earlier setting of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, a new one of the *Song* [or *Ode*] *for St. Cecilia's Day*, and with Jennens's help, he added Milton's companions poems to his vernacular repertoire.

If English authors and "British" subjects were important, why did the librettos for *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* at first not make an asset of Milton? Perhaps the restructuring of the companion poems as a back-and-forth dialogue and the addition of a third section by a hand not Milton's indicated too far of a separation between the originals and the ode. Perhaps Handel and Jennens feared a comparison. (If they did, they were right do to do, as reactions to "Il Moderato" show). Or perhaps it was the bookseller's decision or the act of a careless printer, although it is difficult to fathom why a member of the Tonson family would fail to capitalize on Milton's name. It was *Paradise Lost* that made Jacob Tonson a wealthy man and London's king of publishers in the eighteenth century—so much so that when he posed for his Kit-Kat Club portrait, Tonson did so with a copy of one of his edition of the poem.

Whatever the reason, Milton's name soon gained the place it enjoyed in other adaptations of the century. By the time the ode congealed into its final form (without Jennens's "Il Moderato"), Milton appears alongside Handel, as in the 1743 libretto: "L'Allegro, / ed Il Penseroso. By Milton. / And a Song for St. Cecelia's [sic] Day. By Dryden. / Set to Musick by George Frederick Handel." However, Milton's name was used with less frequency for advertisements of performances than on printed copies of the libretto, although sundry copies of the libretto exist in which his name does not appear. As discussed earlier, this indicates that the poet's name, though a drawing point, was sometimes not as important as the composer and/or the performers. English authors, however, by no means stopped being a vital part of musical adaptations' appeal. In many advertisements from the 1790s, Milton appears regularly on playbills for *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*. For instance, the headline for one reads:

> At PLAY-HOUSE PRICES. / BY PARTICULAR DESIRE. / Theatre Royal, Covent Garden / To-morrow, FRIDAY, March 18, 1791, / L'ALLEGRO ED IL PENSEROSO. / Written by MILTON, Set to Music by HANDEL.

Although it is a perilous enterprise to interpret early modern capitalization practices, one is led to wonder if Covent Garden intended the key selling points to be those which appear in uppercase letters. If so, they are advertising a low price for a work in high demand, when that work will take place, what that piece is, and who "wrote" it and who composed it. The format of the playbill conforms to Covent Garden's signature style in the 1790s, for advertisements of performances at Drury Lane from the 1780s do not include Milton's name at all, and Covent Garden gives *Alexander's Feast* and Dryden the same treatment: "Written by Dryden, Set to Music by Handel."[2] Even though Milton and other native authors had to share the metaphorical spotlight with others, the musical stage continued to rely on English (or "British") authors and what they were believed to represent as part of their established marketing practices

Despite the poet's absence from the early librettos, it is probable many did not need to be reminded of the ode's source. Along with *A Maske*, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," and

"Lycidas," the companion poems were among the most popular works of Milton's early works. Among the "juvenilia," the Jonathon Richardsons (father and son) praise *A Maske*, "Lycidas," and the twin poems, calling the lattermost "exquisite pictures" (212). Thomas Newton also praises "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" along with "The Nativity Ode" and *A Maske*, stating that even without the late poems, "these would have been sufficient to render [Milton's] name immortal" (xix). Moreover, Milton was already in the minds of the theatre-going populace in the late 1730s and early '40s. *Comus* had been performed on five occasions in the 1739-40 season by the time the ode debuted on 8 February 1740, and the latest performance of the opera on 10 January 1740 preceded the ode's first performance by about a month (Scouten 814). *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato* was performed four more times that season, and in between its first performance (8 February) and its last (23 April), *Comus* would be performed again on 8 April (Scouten 822-34). Milton might not have appeared on early librettos, but given the popularity of *Comus* in theatres and of the twin poems with readers, audiences doubtlessly knew the source, even if Lincoln's Inn Fields did not at first make it an explicit asset. Later, theatre houses would, but in 1739-40, Handel and Lincoln's Inn Fields silently invested in Milton's high stock.

One must wonder, then, if the elements of *Comus*, an English opera, carried over to a different genre for a different venue. Since temperance was so essential to *A Maske* and *Comus*, in *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato*, the addition of a third part espousing moderation as the reigning value suggests that much did indeed transfer from one adaptation to another. A further look at the separate parts of the ode and at both of its versions supports a claim that Lincoln's Inn Fields was following Drury Lane's pattern with *Comus*. One can thus see a resemblance between the "Milton" behind performances of the ode and the "Milton" literally placed in front of performances of *Comus*. Handel's continued attempts to stress the importance of temperance in the ode's revised form, and the patriotic subtexts of the work in all its forms also indicate that even if "Milton" was not explicitly highlighted, he was well known to be behind

them. He was, after all, a rich source for the burgeoning vernacular entertainment industry that ostentatiously espoused its own Britishness.

Despite shifting about Milton's lines and including an entirely new temperament (Moderation), Jennens's changes are minimal. For the initial libretto, he cut more than 100 lines, many of which Handel later restored, and he retains Milton's rhyme and meter, often changing or omitting a word from the lines he keeps. For instance, when the melancholy person responds to the happy one's air in which he calls on the goddess of mirth (lines 11-16 of "L'Allegro), Jennens alters line 11 of "Il Penseroso" in order to make the response more "dramatic" (Jennens's omissions struck through, other alterations in brackets):

> [Come rather,] ~~But hail thou~~ Goddes[s], sage and holy,
> Hail[,] divinest Melancholy[!]
> Whose saintly visage is too bright
> To hit the sense of human sight;
> ~~And therfore to our weaker view,~~
> ~~Ore laid with black staid Wisdoms hue.~~
> ~~Black, but such as in esteem,~~
> ~~Prince Memnons sister might beseem,~~
> ~~Or that Starr'd Ethiope Queen that strove~~
> ~~To set her beauties praise above~~
> ~~The Sea Nymphs, and their powers offended.~~
> ~~Yet thou art higher far descended,~~
> Thee bright-hair'd Vesta long of yore,
> To solitary Saturn bore[.] (4)

Although Jennens changes minor incidences of wording, he preserves as much as possible the "sentiments" of the original, for the overall complexions of Mirth and Melancholy remain the same. One cannot but be impressed with Jennens and Handel's efforts to mold the

twin poems into a suitable entertainment. Noting their parallel structures, Jennens places matching passages in dialogue with each other, creating dramatic repartee from Milton's lengthy rhetorical declamations. The juxtaposition creates a wonderful point-counterpoint structure that, combined with Handel's contrasting musical compositions, make the ode a joy to hear. Part 1 opens with L'Allegro chasing away Melancholy, the first ten lines of Milton's poem ("Hence! Loathed Melancholy!"). Il Penseroso promptly responds with a combination of the first line with lines 5-6: "Hence! Vain deluding joys, / Dwell in some idle brain. . . ." (3-4).[3] After Il Penseroso's corresponding banishment of Mirth, L'Allegro calls on Euphrosyne and is answered in kind by Il Penseroso's invocation of "divinest Melancholy." For the rest of part one, each calls upon his residing deity and her train and associates himself with his respective musical fowl—the lark for L'Allegro, for Il Penseroso, the nightingale. But as the first part winds to a close, the happy person enjoys the ascendancy. The thoughtful person wanders "on a plat of rising ground" or in "some still removed place . . . Where glowing embers, through the room, / Teach light to counterfeit a gloom" (8), but then two airs and a chorus present L'Allegro's daytime revels "not unseen" amongst sights of merry England, where "the plowman near at hand" and "the milkmaid singeth blithe; / And the mower whets his scythe" and "the merry bells" or "jocund rebecks sound" and "young and old come forth to play." The mirthful one ends with the closing of the day and a close to pastoral merriment: "Thus pass'd the day, to bed they creep, / By whisp'ring winds soon lull'd asleep" (8-9). Obviously, the first round of competition belongs to Mirth. Indeed, of the 115 lines in the first part, 71 are from "L'Allegro," tipping the percentage of this first part to 61.7% in favor of Mirth.

Apparently, Handel intended to follow a three-part movement from mirth to pensiveness to moderation even though Parts 1 and 2 mix the original temperaments together. Appropriately, Part 2 begins with Il Penseroso repeating his banishment of Mirth, signaling the ascendancy of Melancholy. The opening recitative not only chases away the mirthful lot but also celebrates the nighttime activities of the melancholy, such as their midnight studies in "some high lonely tower"

unfolding "What worlds, what vast regions hold / Th' immortal mind that hath forsook / Her mansion in this fleshly nook" (10). Such are the joys of pensiveness until "unwelcome morn appear," when L'Allegro then takes up where he left off, depicting the nighttime revels of the happy ones as the scene shifts from pastoral towns to "Populous" (instead of Milton's "towered") cities. Jennens contrasts L'Allegro's nocturnal diversions with those of Il Penseroso, who hides "from day's garish eye." A clever stroke on his part, as he not only balances parallel sections of the poems but reveals how little the two temperaments agree; they cannot even speak of the same time of day at the same time. As the night thickens, the happy one goes to "the well-trod stage anon," or loses himself in soft Lydian airs; meanwhile, the melancholy man retreats from day "To walk the studious cloisters pale" and dissolve in "extasies" at the sound of the "pealing organ." Round two thus closes with Il Penseroso having the last word: "These pleasures, melancholy, give, / And with thee will [I] chuse to live" (14). The second part is somewhat shorter than the first, with only 88 lines, but Jennens almost perfectly reverses the balance in favor of Melancholy. Of those 88 lines, 56 come from "Il Penseroso," or 66.6%. As a result, each temperament enjoys an almost 2:1 ratio in its respective "part."

As seen, Jennens signature alteration is that he cuts the twin poems into strips and glues them back together as a dramatic argument, but he changes only how the temperaments present themselves. He does not change the nature of the temperaments themselves, for what they say about themselves remains the same. However, the complicated demands to delight and to instruct led to the initial inclusion of a third part, "Il Moderato," which retroactively alters one's perception of Mirth and Melancholy and casts them as extremes that must be expelled from the human psyche by temperance. Part 3 caters to the inextricable but often conflicting demands of eighteenth-century performance art, for "Il Moderato" satisfies conventional expectations of a three-part entertainment and staples an explicit moral message to the whole, a message that is not exactly clear in the original twin poems. Fortunately for later music lovers, early audiences did not appreciate the third part, and Handel revised the ode when this became clear. He slashed "Il

Moderato" and heavily revised the first two parts until it reached its final form, *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso,* in 1742. Removing the forced closure of "Il Moderato," Handel attempts to resolve the conflict between the warring temperaments by reinscribing temperance into the linguistic and sonic balance of the ode's ultimate form. The changes encapsulate the struggle to satisfy crowds while remaining true to a moral aim that was expected from art and that Milton's poetry was believed to provide.[4]

Before discussing the patriotic and aesthetic conceits underlying the initial transformation of the original poems as well as Handel's revisions, the rather large problem that is "Il Moderato" must be addressed. Before the work's debut, Handel insisted on a third part (Burrows, *Handel* 316). Jennens readily obliged. More often than not now excised from performances, "Il Moderato" has posed something of an interpretive quandary for those seeking to know why Handel requested it in the first place. Invariably, the answer is a desire for "Georgian balance" consonant with the aesthetic and moral tastes of the time. For instance, John Powell and Michael O'Connell dub the third part "a somewhat typical eighteenth-century desire to resolve the antitheses which Milton . . . left unresolved" (24).[5] It might also be that Handel simply desired a conventional three-movement structure and felt there was insufficient material in the twin poems to attain this goal. The latter possibility is supported by Handel's later pairing the *St. Cecilia's Day Ode* with the considerably shortened *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*. Given the tension in eighteenth-century entertainments between the need to delight and to edify, the answer lies (fittingly) in between.

Whatever the reasons for Handel's request, the outcome and effect cannot be doubted. Part 3 clearly indicates that from the perspective of Il Moderato Mirth and Melancholy promise joy but deliver only misery:

> Hence! Boast not, ye profane,
>
> Of vainly fancy'd, little tasted pleasure,
>
> Persu'd beyond all measure,

And by its own excess transformed to pain. (15)

L'Allegro and Il Penseroso exchange insults at the start of their songs, which might indicate serious antipathy and extremism but which more likely signal benign competition in which each hyperbolically—and with a wink to the audience—caricatures his "opponent." "Il Moderato" cancels any possibility of playful hyperbole, for moderation does not exaggerate. Moreover, the first two speakers may provide a dubious progeny for the other, but an additional and stronger moral taint attaches to both once Il Moderato promises consequences (pain) for adhering to one or the other. In place of Euphrosyne and Melancholy, the temperate man calls on Moderation and her train: Temperance, Health, Frugality, Bounty, Chaste Love, Reason, and Happy Life. With the advent of temperance in Part 3, playful strife and celebration give way to unrelenting seriousness. As Donald Burrows observes, the third part "presents argument—indeed assertion—rather than images, and pours cold water over some of the scenes that had been depicted with such warmth in the preceding parts" (*Handel* 316).

Temperature is an apt trope to describe the contrast of Part 3 to Parts 1 and 2. The first two depict symbolic seduction and wooing: honor to the goddess depends upon her delivering the promised delights. Milton thus buries sexual playfulness beneath the prayer-like invocations of the highly feminized deities. Zeal and erotic desire walk hand-in-hand in the twin poems, and Jennens and Handel's work adequately exudes this flirtatious warmth. In contrast, the third part offers no conditions to Moderation. She is not a lady to be wooed, nor is her devotee a man in need of persuading. Furthermore, her offers are not joys or enticements in the sense that Mirth and Melancholy's are, for she is the "grace divine / Whom the wise God of nature gave, / Mad mortals from themselves to save" (15). Thus, for a temperate woman, she is rather domineering:

Come, with gentle hand restrain

Those who fondly court their bane;

One extreme with caution shunning,

To another blindly running.

Kindly teach, how blest are they

Who Nature's equal rules obey;

Who safely steer two rocks between,

And prudent keep the golden mean. (16-17)

There is no condition and no offer, only the (gentle) force of salvation. In fact, the imposition of Moderation and her virtues resembles the resistless grace of Calvinist doctrine. Adding to the religious significance of the final section, the closing lines of "Il Moderato" sound more like a prophecy or a decree than an invitation or flirtation:

Each action will derive new grace

From order, measure, time, and place;

'Till life, the goodly structure, rise

In due proportion to the skies. (17)

Despite the gentleness and the kindliness of Moderation, the use of the verb "will" has a force and certainty that the conditional invocations of the "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" do not permit. Play and rhetoric have fully yielded to argument and sermon. To underscore the point, the happy and the thoughtful persons join in the final chorus:

As steals the morn upon the night,

And melts the shades away,

So truth does fancy's charms dissolve

And rising reason puts to flight

The fumes that did the mind involve,

Restoring intellectual day. (17-18)

From the point of view of Moderation, mirth is not the only inhabitant of "some idle brain," for to this must be added the joys of melancholy as both dispositions are pushed away as extremes not fit for the intellect guided by reason. Moreover, with the exception of these six lines, the fifty-line long final section is given over uniformly to the voice and perspective of Moderation. Gone is the

back-and-forth repartee, the point-counterpoint structure, and gone too is the overall oscillation between temperaments. First, Mirth holds two-thirds of the lines; then Melancholy responds in kind by enjoying two-thirds of the second part. But here, ironically, there is no "balance": Part 3 is 100% "Il Moderato." The dominance of Moderation comes through clearly in the last lines of the ode, which cancel once and for all any possibility of conditional wooing: "Thy pleasure, moderation give; / In them alone we truly live" (18).

It is difficult not to interpret the final part as a desire for "Georgian balance," but some have sought more oblique intentions in "Il Moderato." Stephen Buhler believes the original form of the ode hints as Jennens's and Handel's hostility to "radical Milton," as the "interrelated perspectives" of the twin poems become "a presentation of attractive but dangerous polarities" (339-40). Buhler accurately asserts that Milton's arrangement

> allows not only for mutual acknowledgment of such [musical] dissolution's appeal [i.e. the ecstasies and Lydian airs of "Il Penseroso" and "L'Allegro," respectively] but also for mutual critique of its associations and dangers. Despite their different paths and anxious insistence on their differences the speakers share a musical locos and telos. (337)

This shared ground nearly disappears when Handel sets the poems to music, for the 1740 version of the ode presents the temperaments "as emotional extremes" warring with "rationality," figured forth in Part 3 (Buhler 337-39). Buhler further speculates that Jennens's ardent Protestantism and his loyalty "the twice-deposed royal House of Stuart . . . informed his . . . rearrangements" (338-39). Calling attention to Jennens's nonjuror status, his financial support of Jacobites, his prized portraits of the Stuarts, and his inclusion of Charles I on his personal seal, Buhler speculates that his treatment of the companion poems paves the way for the *via media* of the third part and its political and cultural associations with "Stuart Anglicanism" (343-44).

Given the Tory habit of castigating Milton for his political convictions, it is not a stretch to believe a clandestine Jacobite (or any manner of eighteenth-century political conservative, for

that matter) would view the poems and the poet as representatives of "dangerous polarities." Furthermore, Buhler is certainly accurate to assert—for the initial form of the ode at least—that "Il Moderato" paints mirth and melancholy as extremes that are by no means inherent in the original poems. But there are fatal flaws in seeing the composition as a piece of covert Jacobitism that celebrates Stuart Anglicanism by rewriting the work of the dynasty's old foe. First, Buhler does not acknowledge Handel's revisions and the ultimate disappearance of "Il Moderato" and how this affects the complexion of the mirthful and melancholy temperaments. Nor does he acknowledge that the third part was the Handel's idea, not Jennens's. Second, although it is possible Jennens's Jacobite sympathies influenced his depiction of Mirth and Melancholy, it is more likely that he tapped his deeply-held convictions of the rightness of an Anglican *via media*—which is not necessarily, or at least would not have appeared to eighteenth-century eyes as, "Stuart" in nature. Whatever personal notions Jennens entertained concerning "Stuart Anglicanism," for the country at large, the late Stuarts were associated with Roman Catholicism—an association strengthened by the fact that James II, his son James Francis Edward Stuart, and his grandson Charles Edward Stuart were all Roman Catholics. Indeed, so strong were the convictions of The Old Pretender and Bonnie Prince Charlie (or so strong was their personal pride) that both refused to convert to Protestantism, a gesture that would have certainly helped their cause to regain the British throne. Moreover, Ruth Smith remarks that Jennens's ardent support for English Protestantism trumped his support of the Stuarts, for with the exception of some moderate financial loans to Jacobite friends, his support was never as heated or active as others in his circle (*Handel's Oratorios* 144). In other words, he was an English Protestant first and a Jacobite second, and even then, perhaps more of a Jacobite in name than in deed. One might say that Jennens, with his collection of Stuart paraphernalia and his low level of activity on behalf of the deposed dynasty, was like Samuel Johnson, more a "sentimental Jacobite" than a Jacobite through and through. Third, whatever Jennens's political allegiances, the desire for balance was a hallmark of eighteenth-century thought, and the presence of "Il Moderato" does not

necessitate buried Jacobitism to explain it. Finally, if the addition of the third part was Handel's behest, then his close links to the Hanoverian court mean there are possibly two separate "royalist aesthetics" at play: the Stuarts' and the Hanoverians'.

It may be more accurate to say that the essentially conservative Handel and Jennens were leery of allowing any perceivable hint of extremism to survive in an adaptation of a poet who, though a symbol of national virtue and artistic achievement, was also a religious dissenter with a mean streak of antiprelatism and antimonarchism in him. The eighteenth century may have been a time of greater religious toleration after the Toleration Act of 1689, which allowed free worship for all kinds of religious dissenters and sects independent of the Anglican Church, but Milton's beliefs still placed him on the margins. For instance, one the Toleration Act disallowed the so-called Arian Heresy (denying the Holy Trinity), and the "Arian principle" of *Paradise Lost* was debated on more than one occasion. Furthermore, unlike eighteenth-century religious independents, Milton did not merely seek a life of faith outside the mainstream church; he clamored for full-scale reform of—and even dissolution—of the Anglican Church. A man from a different time in which religious sentiments ran much hotter and in which more was at stake in debates on doctrine and discipline, Milton may have been appropriated as a national literary hero and a political figurehead, but his controversial arguments on church reform and his savage attacks on the Anglican hierarchy highlighted his differences from the eighteenth century.

In their adaptations, Hamilton and Jackson certainly appeared uncomfortable with any hint of "radical Milton," and that same discomfort surfaces in *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*, even though the companion poems are far less controversial pieces than *Samson Agonistes* and "Lycidas." To suppress Milton's perceived extremism, Jennens and Handel worked in league to remove any suggestion that their ode presents a contest between zealous votaries of irreconcilable positions. In a doomed attempt to satisfy the composer and audiences, Jennens inscribed the work with a moderate Anglicanism to cater to the religious sentiments of those attending performances. Such would be the method Hamilton followed in his redactions for *Samson* and Jackson for

Lycidas, which are far more troubling pieces for adaptation than two poems about sports, studies, and music.

Additionally, it would be supremely ironic if the Stuart-loving Jennens altered the Stuart-hating Milton in order to express his clandestine Jacobitism, for "Il Penseroso" contains a rather roseate depiction of early Stuart Anglicanism. Campbell and Corns believe a 1631 dating for the twin poems the "least unlikely" possibility, which places them well before the first signs of Milton's radicalization; one can thus conclude that "Il Penseroso" indicates the young poet as yet had no scruples over the Caroline Church's emphasis on "the beauty of holiness (61-62). As discussed previously, eighteenth-century readers of Milton knew well his radical hostility to monarchy and to the English Church, but as the early lives indicate, many were nonetheless quick to find the points where Milton displayed his convictions on the rightness of Protestantism. It is quite likely, then, that "Il Penseroso" by implication came to be seen as a point where Milton was closest with and friendliest to conventional, mainstream Anglicanism. Of course, seeing the poem and the ode in such a light requires that readers and audiences not look too hard. There was certainly a precedent for doing so; in their 1734 *Life of Milton*, for instance, the Richardsons claimed that Milton's dissent was "rather political than religious" and related "to the circumstantial rather than to the essentials or substance of religion. . . on which it is not necessary to enlarge" (240).

Additionally, for an eighteenth-century audience, there was nothing in Jennens's libretto that would strike them as representative of distinctly *Stuart* Anglicanism. For "the studious cloister's [sic] pale" with their "dim religious light" and "pealing organ" and "full-voic'd quire" (13-14) apply as much to the Hanoverian High Church as to the pre-war Caroline/Laudian one. Indeed, the musical ecstasies that conclude the original poem describe the sounds and images of an Anglican mass. Milton's sensual enjoyment of "church music" may have become an issue once he put on the persona of the dissident reformer, such as in *Eikonoklastes* (1649), but such was not the case for the companion poems. Neither was it the case for more moderate members of

the Church in the next century who would not need to look back to the 1630s for examples of "the beauty of holiness" described in "Il Penseroso." One sees behind the scenes of *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* what would become more apparent in later adaptations; the suppression of Milton's antipathy towards the Church of England in *Samson, Paradise Lost: An Oratorio,* and *Lycidas,* all of which stifle the theological inquiries and interpretive cruxes that problematize the mature poems. By comparison, to see an expression of their own values in the relatively uncontroversial twin poems would have been easy for most eighteenth-century audiences.

Whatever flattering ideals audiences saw in the ode, they clearly disliked some of what they heard, and due to the poor reception of "Il Moderato," there are two versions of the ode: the original 1740 composition known as *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato* and *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso,* which took form in and around 1742. The removal of "Il Moderato" is the most obvious revision, but not the only one. During the first year of performance, Handel added seven individual musical pieces, and as early as 1741, some performances were sung without "Il Moderato" (and sometimes without the new additions). Handel eventually gave "Il Penseroso" more of a presence at the end of Part 1. For instance, in the 1740 ode, after an air and chorus both based on lines 33-34 of "L'Allegro" ("Come, and trip it as you go, / On the light fantastick toe"), the melancholy person sings a recitative derived from 31-34 of "Il Penseroso" ("Come, pensive nun") and an air from lines 37-40 ("Come, but keep thy wanted state"). Melancholy ends this portion of the ode with a chorus of lines 45-46: "Join with thee clam peace and quiet, / Spare fast, that oft with gods doth diet." Later Handel added six more lines, a four-line recitative ("There held in holy passion still") and two more lines to the air: "And hears the muses in a ring / Round about Jove's altar sing."

In the later version, towards the end of Part 1, after a recitative from lines 37-38 of "L'Allegro" ("If I give thee honor due, / Mirth admit me of thy crew") and an air based on lines 38 and 53-56 ("To listen how the hounds and horn"), the melancholy person sings two airs instead of one, providing a glimpse into melancholy nighttime walks. In 1740, the recitative and

the airs above by the happy person precede only one air by the melancholy person, taken from lines 73-80 of "Il Penseroso":

> Oft' on a plat of rising ground,
> I hear the far-off curfeu sound,
> Over some wide-water'd shore,
> Swinging slow, with sullen roar:
> Or if the air will not permit,
> Some still removed place will fit,
> Where glowing embers, through the room,
> Teach light to counterfeit a gloom. (8)

In 1740, the first part closes with the last fifteen lines coming from "L'Allegro." There is a recitative repeating lines 37-38, then an air based on 57-58 and 63-68 ("Let me wander, not unseen"), another taken from 93-96 ("Or let the merry bells ring round"), and the concluding chorus of 97-99 and 115-16:

> And young and old come forth to play,
> On a sunshine holiday,
> 'Till the live-long day-light fail.
> Thus pass'd the day, to be they creep,
> By whisp'ring winds soon lull'd asleep. (9)

In the later version, the first part ends with the same slant towards the happy person, but Handel does include an addition four-line air for the melancholy person before the last four parts go to the happy one:

> Far from all resort of Mirth,
> Save the cricket on the hearth,
> Or the bell-man's drowsy charm,
> To bless the door from nightly harm. (8)

After returning from Dublin in 1743, Handel undertook an extensive structural revision. He dropped "Il Moderato," reordered the second half of Part 2, and moved two pieces from Part 1 to Part 2. He appears to have made no revisions from this point on: "Although the necessity of musical contrast obliged Handel and Jennens to split Milton's poems into aria-length sections and to alternate between them, they nevertheless preserved in this version [1743] something of the poet's ordering of the poems" (O'Connell and Powell 40). It was not until after 1742 that the ode took the shape by which it is now known: a two-part musical ode containing only the temperaments of Milton's original poems.

For both versions, many of the changes appear to have less to do with the substance or faithfulness to the sources and more to do with the practical constraints of musical performance. As previously noted, Jennens cut over 100 lines from the poems. Whereas the omission of Euphrosyne's alternative parentage in *Comus* has both theatrical and thematic reasons behind it, Jennens omits the lengthy descriptions of both Euphrosyne and Melancholy to make both passages acceptable lengths for arias. The cuts produce two sections of equal length, further underscoring the balance and antitheses running through the whole. As O'Connell and Powell state, the need for constant contrast is stronger in music than in poetry, and there is a "lack of contrast in Moderato's pieces; instead of the alteration between Allegro and Penseroso, one musical praise of moderation follows another for seven numbers." With that in mind, the failure of Part 3 does seem, as they say, "inevitable," and "Handel's revisions of 1743 . . . acknowledge that failure" (40-41).

If Handel's changes stem from aesthetic (and commercial) concerns related to negative reception, he did not abandon the moral aim of the original ode when he bowed to audience desires. He instead found a new means to express it. For O'Connell and Powell, the work, even in its revised form, indicates a desire for resolution: "Now, however, that resolution is expressed by means of the settings of Milton's poems" (41). From 1740-42, the ode had a "middle version" in

which Handel restored the predominance of L'Allegro at the end of Part 1 and that of Il Penseroso at the end of Part 2:

> If the augmented version of 1740-42 had been allowed to stand without Il Moderato, the work would portray quite effectively the progressive understanding of Milton's companion poems. . . . [and] from the alterations of the two states of mind, Penseroso would emerge, not as victorious—Mirth's claims cannot be cancelled—but as expressive of a greater elevation of spirit. (45)

However, by 1743, no longer does Il Penseroso have the final say in Part 2. Rather, the melancholy man praises "The hairy gown and mossy cell" ("May at last my weary age"), and the second part ends with L'Allegro, who sings an air ("And ever against eating cares") and a chorus ("These delights"). Handel ultimately "still appears to treat them as temperaments and personalities, but now temperaments who discover their affinity," and the musical treatment signifies psychological states between which one is not obliged to choose (O'Connell and Powell 44).

Indeed, Handel's additions of sections from "L'Allegro" help the temperaments "discover their affinity." In 1740, the last four musical pieces of Part 2 belong to the melancholy person. The melancholy man sings a recitative based on lines 155-60 of "Il Penseroso" (Jennens's additions in brackets and his omissions struck through):

> But let my due feet never fail
> To walk the studious [cloister's] ~~Cloysters~~ pale,
> And love the high embowed Roof,
> With ~~antick~~ [antique] Pillars massy proof,
> And ~~storied~~ [story'd] Windows richly dight,
> Casting a dim~~m~~ religious light.

A chorus follows these lines taken from "Il Penseroso" 161-63: "There let the pealing organ blow / To the full-voic'd quire below, / In service high, and anthem clear," followed by a five-line solo:

> And let their sweetness through mine ear,
>
> Dissolve me into extasies,
>
> And bring all heaven before mine eyes.
>
> These pleasures, melancholy, give,
>
> And I with thee will chuse to live. (14)

The final chorus repeats these last two lines. Before this conclusion, the happy person sings four parts. There is an air based on "L'Allegro" 131-34 ("I'll to the well-trod stage anon") followed by a thematically very important air on the happy person's musical preferences:

> And ever against eating cares,
>
> Lap me in soft Lydian Aires;
>
> [Sooth me in] ~~Married to~~ immortal verse
>
> Such as the meeting soul may pierce
>
> In notes, with many a winding bout
>
> Of linked sweetness long drawn out;
>
> With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
>
> The melting voice through mazes running,
>
> Untwisting all the chains that [tie] ~~ty~~
>
> The hidden soul of harmony. (13)

The last words of the happy person in this part are an air and a chorus that repeat his final offer to the goddess: "These delights if thou canst give, / Mirth, with thee I mean to live." Thus the second part in 1740 ends with the happy person and the melancholy one alternating their visions of musical ecstasies and with their closing offers to their respective goddesses.

After 1743, Handel would omit the final two-line chorus and the air ("And let their sweetness through mine ear") that includes these lines from the melancholy person. This version

of the ode also, by contrast, closes with four parts for the happy person, instead of four for the pensive one, while also adding another air for the latter. On the surface, these changes would seem to tilt the balance in favor of mirth, but the extra sections from "L'Allegro" reveal Handel to be a careful reader of Milton's companion poems. For all the differences between the temperaments in the original poems, Milton uncovers their common ground towards the ends of the poems; that ground, fittingly, is music. Both the happy person and the melancholy one deal in conditional statements, but on the topic of musical enjoyments, they are both absolute. "And *ever* against eating Cares," says the mirthful one, "Lap me in soft Lydian airs" (135-36, emphasis mine). And the melancholy one says, "But let my due feet *never* fail, / To walk in studious cloysters pale," where he finds the organ and the choir (155-56, emphasis also mine). Moreover, both poems reveal the young Milton's interests in the myth of Orpheus, a life-long fascination of his. In "Il Penseroso," the speaker wishes that the goddess could

> bid the soul of Orpheus sing
> Such notes as warbled to the string
> Drew iron tears form Pluto's cheek,
> And made hell grant what love did seek. (105-08)

In "L'Allegro," so great is the power of the "hidden soul of Harmony"

> That Orpheus self may heave his head
> From golden slumber on a bed
> Of heapt Elysian flowrs, and hear
> Such streins as would have won the ear
> Of Pluto to have quite set free
> His half-regain'd Eurydice. (145-50)

In his revisions, Handel appears aware of Milton's affinity for Orphic verse linked with song. After the air in which the happy person attends "the well-trod stage," the pensive one retires to the studious cloisters pale. This recitative is followed by a chorus and a solo, the former

depicting the organ and the "service high, and anthem clear," the former describing the dissolving "extasies" of this music (13). After this Handel inserts three parts for the happy one. The first is an air based on lines 69-72 of "L'Allegro" ("Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures"), and the second expands upon those new pleasures with lines 73-78 of the same poem:

> Mountains, on whose barren breast
> The lab'ring clouds do often rest,
> Meadows trim with daisies pied,
> Shallow brooks, and rivers wide,
> Tow'rs and battlements it sees,
> Bosom'd high in tufted trees. (14)

An air on the happy one's musical pleasures follows:

> Orpheus himself may heave his head
> From golden slumber on a bed
> Of heap'd Elysian flow'rs, and hear
> Such strains as would have won the ear
> Of Pluto, to have quite set free
> His half-regain'd Eurydice. (14)

The lines come from "L'Allegro," but one can sense a tinge of melancholy in some of these pleasures. Barren mountains and laboring clouds and the tale of Orpheus do not seem wholly carefree joys. It appears the mirthful one does allow some sobriety in, and the next air, from the pensive one, underscores this growing somberness:

> May at last my weary age
> Find out the peaceful hermitage
> The hairy gown, and mossy cell,
> Where I way [may?] sit, and rightly spell
> Of ev'ry star that heav'n doth shew,

And ev'ry herb that sips the dew. (14-15)

The revised second part then ends with the happy one's air ("And ever against eating cares, / Lap me in soft Lydian airs") and with an air and a chorus repeating the last two lines of "L'Allegro": "These delights if thou canst give, / Mirth, with thee I mean to live" (15). Thus, as in the 1740 version of the ode, the second part winds to a close with dueling visions of musical ecstasy, but with the added parts, the happy person appears to find his sympathy with the melancholy one as the former's pleasures take on a mature sobriety. Indeed, when one simply looks at the libretto without the aid of the music, one would be forgiven for assuming the air on Orpheus comes from "Il Penseroso." And when the melancholy air on the hermit in his "weary age" gives way to the mirthful one's Lydian airs that shore him up against "eating cares," it appears the two have come to an understanding that there are different means by which human beings stave off life's cares. One cannot, then, simply view the new closing of Part 2 as the happy one having the last word; instead, the "delights" he hopes to gain come shot through with the melancholy prospects of barren mountains, aged hermits, and the tragic tale of Orpheus and Eurydice. This is not exactly temperance writ large as it is in "Il Moderato," but it is temperance writ another way.

As Handel's revisions illustrate, the attempt to please audiences by removing the displeasing third section did not lead the composer to abandon his pursuit of temperance as a key moral tenet of the work. Handel adroitly juggled the needs for entertainment and edification. However, the ode in both forms promises far more than musical delight mixed with a moral message of moderation, for like Drury Lane, Lincoln's Inn Fields appropriates Milton to satisfy the then rising fashion for native art to challenge Italian opera. The ode thus continues the enterprising exploitation of Milton as a national treasure, for the mirthful prospects and melancholy activities invoke fashionable strains of British nationalism that he is made to articulate. The popular strains do not relate to the patriot ideology of *Comus*, but to two other current cultural fascinations: British georgics and British melancholy.

The scenes in Milton's "L'Allegro" can be most appropriately termed pastoral. Like a conventional poetic shepherd who does little actual shepherding and more loafing and singing, the happy person largely remains a spectator leisurely scanning natural scenes, rural sports, and other pastimes. At first glance, there is precious little in the poem one would label "georgic." Similarly, the nocturnal contemplations of arcane knowledge in "Il Penseroso" appear to have little in common with the empirically-based, scientific observations eighteenth-century British georgics overlaid onto their Virgilian imitations. In the century, however, the very act of presenting or reading the twin poems imposes on them the nationalistic concerns of this ascendant poetic genre. The Acts of Union engendered a growing consciousness of British greatness that manifests itself in poetry, as authors readily appropriated the imperial overtones of Virgil's "middle epic" on Roman agriculture and husbandry's links to national virtue and prosperity. As Juan Christian Pellicer notes, there is a marked prevalence of British georgics "in the half century [and more] following the union" (403). A short list of such poems illustrates the vitality of the mode: John Phillip's *Cyder* (1708), John Gay's *Rural Sports* (1713, revised 1720), James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730), Christopher Smart's *The Hop-Garden* (1752), James Dodsley's "Agriculture" (1753), John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757), James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* (1764), and Richard Jago's *Edge Hill* (1767).[6]

Into this discourse Milton was quickly absorbed via poetic imitation and musical adaptation. Indeed, the eighteenth century was not only the heyday of British georgics but also that of Milton's afterlife as an honorary georgic poet. The debut of *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato* followed about a decade after James Thomson's immensely popular "georgic epic," *The Seasons* (1730), which owes its form to Virgil but its blank verse and many of its allusions to Milton. This was no mere idiosyncrasy of Thomson's, for Miltonic verse was the common stock of Virgilian imitations espousing the importance of agriculture and animal husbandry to national prosperity. As Pellicer states, "eighteenth-century georgic is grafted on the verbal stock of *Paradise Lost*," and Miltonic blank verse, in addition to its connotations of national liberation,

"supplied georgic poets with a remarkably absorptive poetic idiom, a language designed to draw on a heterogeneous wealth of source material . . . and to achieve an exceptional density of reference within the compass of a coherent, decorous style" (407).

The links between Milton and British georgics went beyond the use of Miltonic verse to imitate Virgilian conceits. Newton was quick to see allusions to Virgil's agrarian "epic" in *Paradise Lost*, and, as will be discussed in a later chapter, Benjamin Stillingfleet's redactions to the epic fold Milton into the discourse of British georgics. It is also more than a coincidence that the aforementioned Richard Jago, who contributed poetry and prose to the agrarian/georgic cause, penned his own libretto from *Paradise Lost* (though unlike Stillingfleet, he failed to find a musician to set his work to music). Furthermore, eighteenth-century georgics imitated Virgil's aim of providing broader knowledge on the nature of the world and humanity's place in it. The Roman poet inherited this pursuit from Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, and it was certainly not lost on Thomson and other poets that Milton participated in this endeavor in his poetry (*Paradise Lost*) and supported it in his prose (*Of Education* and *Areopagitica*).

Of course, the twin poems are not in the blank verse georgic poets found so rich for imitation. Nor did *A Maske* contain the satirical bent of Dalton's *Comus*. Nor did Milton harbor the xenophobic suspicion of Italian art that librettos of *Comus* suggest he did. All the same, these ideologies filtered through the adaptation of the masque and also enveloped the poet himself. One must wonder, then, how much British georgics bled into not just *Paradise Lost* but "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." The happy person may not seek knowledge in his observations, but the thoughtful man certainly does. The Platonic meanderings of "Il Penseroso" may have been distasteful to the empirically-minded eighteenth century, but his ardent search for knowledge is a passion they well understood: "a roving, 'georgic' eye . . . is scientifically 'curious': the injunctions to observe 'how' and 'why' emphasizes his restless empirical drive" (Pellicer 408). The empirical method separates Enlightenment-era Britain from ancient Greece and Rome and from Milton's England of only a few generations before, but the eighteenth-century scientists and

the georgic poets whose verse celebrated their discoveries viewed the drive to know as a heritage dating back to ancient times. In *The Seasons*, for instance, Thomson corrects the scientific errors of earlier poets. In *Autumn* (Book 3), he takes to task the ancient "percolation theory" on the origins of freshwater springs, lakes, and rivers, replacing it with the modern theory of condensation:

> Now, by the cool declining year condensed,
> Descend the copious exhalations, check'd
> As up the middle sky unseen they stole,
> And roll the doubling fogs around the hill. (3:707-10)

Lucretius and Milton believed that salt water from the ocean worked its way into mountains and rocks, traveling upward and inward to the mainland and becoming purged of saltiness in the process. Thus does Milton account for inland bodies of water:

> so the watrie throng,
> Wave rowling after wave, where way they found,
> If steep, with torrent rapture, if through plaine,
> Soft-ebbing; nor withstood them rock or hill,
> But they, or under ground, or circuit wide
> With serpent errour wandring, found thir way,
> And on the washie oose deep channels wore;
> Easie, e're God had bid the ground be drie,
> All but within those banks, where Rivers now
> Stream, and perpetual draw thir humid traine. (7:297-306)

Using the works of men like Haley from the previous century, Thomson puts forth the argument that rain and condensation account for freshwater. That he engaged Lucretius and Milton on such matters shows that British thinkers saw them as fellow (albeit misled) seekers of *scientia* (i.e., knowledge). They were, in their own time, "scientists." In reading "Il Penseroso" or hearing the

musical ode, one hears the pensive man sing of his "Lamp at midnight hour" and his "high lonely Towr," where he will

> out-watch the Bear
>
> With thrice great Hermes, or unsphear
>
> The spirit of Plato to unfold
>
> What worlds, or what vast regions hold
>
> The immortal mind that hath forsook
>
> Her mansion in this fleshly nook. (10)

Thanks to the advent of British georgics, one reading or hearing this passage did not see a prior age's vain quest for fruitless knowledge; one instead beheld a fellow seeker of knowledge, an ancestral line of observing eyes from Lucretius to Virgil to Milton and to the eighteenth-century.

The rise of georgic tropes and concerns seeped into "L'Allegro" as well. The eighteenth century renovated georgic poetry by adding to the genre celebrations of scientists and merchants, but their imitation was also conventional in its Virgilian idealization of laborers. As with many of Thomson's scenes, the daytime sights the happy person describes contain not only play but merry labor, and what may have been simply pleasant and innocuous sights for Milton become potent symbols of British greatness for an eighteenth-century audience. For Milton, the sights of mirth were most probably examples of well-managed merriment, a morally upright contrast to the riotous mirth of Comus's party in *A Maske*. But it would not have been lost on Jennens or on many in the audience that his scenes also depict productivity and work. Towards the end of Part 1, L'Allegro asks,

> Let me wander not unseen
>
> By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
>
> There the plowman near at hand,
>
> Whistles o'er the furrow'd land;
>
> And the milkmaid singeth blithe;

> And the mower whets his scythe;
>
> And every shepherd tells his tale
>
> Under the hawthorn, in the dale. (8)

The landscape is populated with rural folk enjoying a holiday and its mirthful sports and pastimes, and it also includes laborers happily pursuing their daily tasks.

The ploughman immediately calls to mind the Virgilian symbol of the plough, and the laborers—ploughman, mower, and milkmaid—resemble the hard-working farmer of *Georgics* 2, whom Virgil exalts as a representative of the industry that made Rome what it was:

> The farmer works the soil with his curved plow;
>
> This is the work he does, and it sustains
>
> His country, and his family, and his cattle,
>
> His worthy bullocks and his herd of cows. (87, translation by David Ferry)

Virgil, remarks James Sambrook, wove "his detailed and accurate accounts of husbandry into an appealing myth of innocence, felicity, vigour, and piety of the husbandman's life, and into an inspiring vision of national greatness" (xi). Indeed, one of the constant images throughout *Georgics* and *The Seasons* is the plough, and James Thomson, continues Sambrook,

> goes on to elevate the ordinary labours of the field by his reference to Virgil and reminders of the Romans' respect for agriculture. As the poet's vision expands the plough turns from a thing into a symbol, and the sharp and concrete particularity of the ploughman bending over and scrapping his ploughshare is inflated (or diffused) into generalizations about Autumn's treasures, superior boon and the better blessings of England's export trade. (xi)

Milton may not have intended the ploughman and the furrowed land to signify English productivity and fertility, but his intentions mattered little for those adapting his work—despite their strident claims of textual fidelity. Dalton and Arne's appropriation of *A Maske* and of *Ad Patrem* and "Il Penseroso" (as epigrams) ably illustrates his absorption into a patriot ideology that

did not exist when he was alive. Similarly, the musical ode transforms Milton into a georgic poet. If Thomson and his ilk planted the seeds of Milton's assimilation into British georgics in the 1730s, Jennens and Handel nursed them until Stillingfleet and Smith's 1760 oratorio of *Paradise Lost* fully harvested the presentation of "georgic Milton."

Georgic Milton is but one appropriation of the poet as a national symbol. The ode contains prior attempts as well, especially in its implicit exploitation of Milton's aesthetic capital. As discussed earlier, by 1740 he already fit into a discourse on national greatness, for criticism of the early eighteenth century, such as Dennis and Addison, regularly spoke with pride that it was an Englishman who had approached and even surpassed the great poets of antiquity. Moreover, although little extensive criticism of the twin poems exists prior to Thomas Warton's 1785 edition of the shorter poems, what there is often engages in the bardolatry and patriotism marking the criticism of the longer works. This is most evident in the Richardsons and Newton's praise of the twin poems. In his annotations to Milton's poetical works (1749-52), Newton ranks "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" with "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and *A Maske*, stating that even without the late poems, "these would have been sufficient to render his name immortal" (xix). Aside from mere admiration, the dominant critical approach was to hunt for allusions and links to other poems in order to situate "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" in an English tradition of *belles lettres*. Many of Newton's notes call attention to possible echoes of ancient poetry and ask readers to compare the poems to English poets, particularly Spenser and Shakespeare. Warton's more rigorously interpretive annotations often do the same.

Newton and Warton's efforts appeared too late to have a bearing on the ode and its reception, but criticism of Milton and other English poets (especially Spenser, Shakespeare, and Dryden) up to 1740 indicates that the swell of patriotism brought about by the Acts of Union had its corollary in the ongoing formation of the British literary canon. In attending a performance of *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato* (or to the later version containing only the first two) one would have beheld, albeit briefly, the act of canon-making. Jennens retains Milton's departure

from rural mirth to observe more urbane pastimes, such as "the well-trod stage" where one has a choice between Jonson and Shakespeare, titans from England's theatrical heyday. In the 1630s, when Milton most probably wrote the companion poems, the passage expresses his theatrical taste and stands as one of the poet's very few statements on the stage's positive contributions to English letters. The sense of achievement and greatness only strengthened over the next century. In fact, London theatre-goers of the late 1730s and early '40s did not need to look back to Elizabethan and Jacobean times for a sign of the stage's past glory, for if they went to Lincoln's Inn Fields to listen to Handel one night, they could have just as easily gone to Drury Lane or Covent Garden the night before or after to see "Shakespeare." Sometimes, one might have even had a choice between "Shakespeare" and "Milton." On the night of the ode's third staging at Lincoln's Inn Fields (10 March 1740), Covent Garden hosted an operatic version of *Othello* bearing some semblance to the treatment of Milton's masque at Drury Lane (Scouten 824). In the context of eighteenth-century London, Milton's description of theatre-going looks backwards to England's first flowering in drama and forward (or, more accurately, sideways) to the continued vitality of the old masters on the contemporary stage (Milton now included among them). If, as Cookson intimates, Handel was casting about for "English poets" writing on "English subjects," he could have done little better than staging "Milton" praising "Shakespeare."

As for "Il Penseroso," it too was further inscribed with nationalistic undertones beyond georgic praise of knowledge-building. Humeral theory may have fallen into obsolescence with the growth of modern science in the eighteenth century, but "melancholy" remained a vital poetic conceit into which Milton was appropriated. The link of melancholy and virtue is rather pronounced in *Comus*, and Joncus's research of *Comus* and the ode reveals that "melancholy Milton" was a fashionable cultural meme in the mid-eighteenth century, no doubt due in part to the success of Dalton and Arne's opera. John Tyers remodeled and reopened the Vauxhall pleasure gardens in the late 1730s, and "Some time after 1738, Tyers erected a lead statue of Milton . . . in his 'musical downes' . . . [in which] Milton appeared 'seated on a rock, an in an

attitude listening to soft music . . . as in Il Penseroso'" ("Milton" 32). Apparently, Milton's melancholy muse, which so terrified Nathaniel Lee in 1677, appeared a far friendlier, more sociable companion in the next century.

Melancholy (also called spleen, the vapors, hysteria, hypochondria, hyp, or, more evasively, a "nervous disorder") was simultaneously a cause for alarm and a badge of pride for the British. For some, the so-called English Malady was a symptom of luxury, an ailment of the higher classes and the social elite; for others, it was a sign of madness or, presumably worse, effeminacy. The malady, however, was not uniformly considered an evil, nor was it always considered a malady. The discourse of hysteria (aka, melancholy or spleen) places the intellect or reason in conflict with sensibility (a new dressing for Aristotle's old separation of Reason and the Affections), yet it also views heightened sensitivity as a prerequisite to philosophical and intellectual work. Taking more than a page from Richard Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Dr. George Cheyne's *The English Malady* (1733) believed studiousness and thoughtfulness led to sensitive organs, which in turn led to melancholy:

> Now since the present age has made efforts to go beyond former times, in all arts of ingenuity, invention, study, learning, and all contemplative and sedentary professions, (I speak here of our own nation, our own times, and of the better sort, whose chief employments and studies there are), the organs of these faculties being thereby worn and spoil'd, must affect and deaden the whole system, and lay a foundation for the diseases of lowness and weakness. (37-38)

The affliction, he continues, "if right us'd and manag'd . . . may be the occasions of greater felicity" leading to a greater appreciation of "the innocent enjoyments of life" and of "intellectual pleasures" (14-15). Cheyne molds a disability into a national virtue by linking melancholy and a weakness of body and spirit with eighteenth-century Great Britain's progress in scientific exploration.

Eric Gidal's survey of French commentary on the English malady further illustrates melancholy's transformation from a disease into a sign of national strength and vigor. According to Gidal, French visitors praised the English for their liberty (the role of the people in government) while also

> wondering at the English penchant for melancholy. Whether attributed to the cold and foggy climate, the coal-smoke of their cities, their excessive consumption of meat and ale, the severity of their Protestant sects, or the systematic rigor of their empirical sciences, melancholy was viewed as a distinguishing feature of the English nation. (24)

Most fascinating is that the French consistently linked spleen with the English love of liberty. The distemper, so the story goes, led to discontent and so a greater sense of civic action and duty. English civic harmony sprung from the individual gloom of the contemplative personality, and melancholy became "the disposition of the autonomous self *par excellence*." "Englishmen," says Gidal, "were observed to vacillate between proud self-justification and suicidal despair, just as their nation lurched from constitutional freedom and civic pride to regicide and civil war" (25-26), and "a distinctly Whig discourse of English physicians subsequently sought to recast the English melancholy from an unstable condition of revolutionary madness to a manageable condition of a free and advancing society" (31).

Whiggish revision of melancholy as a civic blessing is analogous to claiming Milton as a Whig or a patriot and converting his political opinions into virtues to be celebrated rather than faults to be castigated or, at best, ignored. Indeed, among those noted as representatives of Britain's melancholy genius, Gidal places Milton beside Oliver Cromwell and Sir Isaac Newton (34). The poet and other Englishmen were "isolated" geniuses, and

> such luminaries would seem to embody the positive achievements of melancholy without the despair and self-loathing. Neither pathologically humble nor contemptuously vain, [these] men of genius, and the emulation they inspire,

partake of a noble pride that breaks from social custom only to reinvigorate it. (36)[7]

The inclusion of "Il Penseroso" as a counterpart to georgic and theatrical scenes of "L'Allegro" invokes not simply a contrasting personality type, but a complete discourse seeking to identify what traits and virtues made Great Britain great. Just as with the passages taken from "L'Allegro," what the thoughtful person sees contain cultural significance. For Milton, the pensive person who burns his "lamp, at midnight hour . . . in some high lonely tow'r" (10) probably related to himself and many others of the studious temperament whom Burton depicts. For those attending a performance of the ode, the melancholy man was a British type who was best suited to enjoy intellectual and aesthetic pursuits. Among such men they would have ranked Isaac Newton and the empirical scientists praised in contemporary georgic poetry. For example, Newtonian optics play an integral part in *The Seasons*. Thus, British melancholy fueled not only the supposedly distinctive drive for political liberty but also the British accomplishments in the arts and sciences; in other words, melancholy fueled the pursuits of knowledge and the scientific discoveries that georgic poetry often lauded.

As the ode congealed in its final form around 1742-43, Handel's removal of "Il Moderato" and his rearrangement of Parts 1 and 2 would come close to achieving the balance between mirth and melancholy Cheyne believed essential to a regulated life. Before this point, Handel attempted to meet at the same end with the inclusion of a third part, and only later did he find it in the revised post-1743 ode. It is a sign of Handel's greatness that even as he conceded the failure of "Il Moderato," he created a compromise achieving a balance between mirthful sports and play and sedentary studiousness and thought—a compromise prescribed in the discourses of melancholy and spleen. One needed some activity (dancing and music or perhaps theatre-going) to avoid the weakening faculties Cheyne feared, yet English society understood the importance of sedentary contemplation and study to their national identity despite its supposed dangers to one's mental and physical health. However, at best, one can say that the conditional nature of the

speakers' respective addresses to Mirth and Melancholy leave the possibility that one may choose which one he likes best or that one need not choose at all. Indeed, the irreproachable pastimes and activities of mirth (including georgic labor) and the intellectual pursuits of the melancholy person intimate that one never had to choose because there are no dangerous extremes in the original poems. As Newton would conclude in 1749, the contrast displayed in the poems was the same contained within a single human soul as it shifts from one mood to the other: "it is remarkable that the poet represents several of the same objects as exciting both mirth and melancholy, and affecting us differently according to the different dispositions and affections of the soul. This is nature and experience" (1:154).

The original version of the ode removes such openness and decides the question once and for all. Yet "Il Moderato," only seems to cancel the "spirit" of Milton's poems, for, in one sense, Jennens can be said to attempt to stay true to a greater Miltonic "spirit." For the precedent, one can look to *A Maske* and *Comus* and to the mature works for the importance of temperance to Milton. In his own way, Jennens contributes to the "progressive" theme of maturation with his third section indicating that one's personal development is not complete until he moves from youthful joy to melancholy reaction and finally to a synthesis of the two in moderation. This sounds consummately adherent to the notion of eighteenth-century balance, but of the many faces of Milton in the century, that of the poet of reason and restraint predominates. It is the Milton critics and readers often saw in *Paradise Lost*, and it is the one audiences saw in Dalton's *Comus*.

Perhaps Handel and Jennens believed they had done their best to remain true to "Milton" by curbing the supposed excesses of the unresolved companion poems. But even as Handel revised according to his own reasons and perhaps in reaction to lackluster audience reactions, he puts forth a pleasing product in accordance with dominant ideas about the poet. In the final 1743 version, the "affinity" the two personalities discover for each other replaces the enforced resolution of moderation with a more peaceful agreement between the two erstwhile extremes. It is moderation based upon an understanding of Miltonic temperance. It is, furthermore, a

temperance that allows for the mirthful sports and artistic entertainments, the happy industry and labor, and the dedicated, if a little melancholy, studies that the British saw as essential to their identity. One did not need to decide between them because the nation itself needed all these various aspects of the British identity in order to survive and thrive. Finally, given the importance of temperance and self-control in *Comus* and strong emphasis on the poet's moral and religious orthodox poet in the century, one is tempted to think audiences listening to either form of the ode would have believed "Milton" would have approved of the attempted closure. In the various permutations of Jennens and Handel's *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*, one observes the process of "disciplining" the twin poems and, hence, disciplining the poet—another step in the continued development of Milton as a poet of unqualified orthodoxy.

CHAPTER IV

MAN'S PROPER STUDY: ADAPTING *SAMSON AGONISTES* TO ORATORIO

Next to *Comus*, Newburgh Hamilton and Frederick Handel's *Samson* (1743) was the century's most popular Milton adaptation, and it marks a departure from the spectacular, operatic *Comus* and the more strictly musical *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*.[1] The genre itself, Handelian (or English) oratorio, was a significant step forward in vernacular musical theatre vying for legitimacy and supremacy with its Italian competition, and it is rather fitting that in a genre distinguished for its restraint and its use of Scripture, two of Milton's poems, *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost*, were deemed equal to the high seriousness and religious sentiments the form required. This is a true testament to the poet's stature as a religious teacher in the century or more following his death. Yet the full-throated praise and the proclamation of textual fidelity in Hamilton's preface to *Samson* disguises the "violence" inherent in appropriating Milton as patriot poet of orthodox piety. Some redaction was an unavoidable consequence of adaptation, yet in streamlining the plot, Hamilton inscribes his own values and a radically-altered perception of the poet onto the presentation of the "spirit of the text" and hence of "essential Milton."[2] The oratorio adroitly combines Milton's political utility as a champion of liberty with his reputation as a moral and religious authority, and, like *Comus*, it presents and represents deliverance via the "freedom" of virtue and piety. A more literal, bellicose "liberation" may have been intended as well. Ruth Smith and Stella Revard have extensively investigated the context of *Samson* and illuminated the

politics underlying the adaptation of Milton's closet drama to oratorio.[3] Particularly, they both argue that performances contained a patriot agenda in its erasure of the conflict between the Israelites and Samson. For instance, Hamilton creates a new character, Micah, who takes over the Chorus's role, but although Micah offers the same comfort as Milton's Chorus, Hamilton removes the recriminations the Chorus levels at their deliverer and their deliverer's accusatory retorts. To Revard, the changes are understandable: "Hamilton and Handel were political conservatives, ardent royalists, who courted the favor of King George II and the conservative establishment," and who sought the favor of "the politically conservative moneyed bourgeoisie audience, which approved English language biblical oratorio with its conventional religious piety." As a result, "They had no intention of reminding the king of Milton, the supporter of regicide, nor of the revolutionary nature of *Samson Agonistes*" ("Restoring" 383). Revard is right that Hamilton and Handel "suppressed [the poem's] political underpinnings, eliminating or softening Milton's sharp political edges," but they do not blunt the edges of Milton's original. They polish them to create a new, sharper political attack. As Smith and Joncus have both averred, *Samson* expresses prevalent concerns of the late 1630s and early '40s, and it is the self-proclaimed piety of patriot ideology that accounts for many of Hamilton and Handel's politically-motivated changes (292-93; "Handel and Drury Lane" 219).

However, "patriot Milton" and "patriot Samson" are not the end-all, be-all of this adaptation, for one must look to Hamilton's alterations not only because they file certain political edges off Milton's poem to sharpen their attack against their own targets but also because they soften its religious edge in order to meet those political aims. This is not to say *Samson* is without religious conflict; rather, Milton's ultimate focus—the demanding trial of obedience and redemption—though present in the oratorio, runs smoother. The real conflict is not that within Samson or even that between him and his people or between him and his god; the real conflict is the religio-national struggle between the Hebrew God and Dagon, which Hamilton exploits for optimum jingoistic effect. In the process, Hamilton focuses on the emotional torment of Samson

and the Israelites but removes their mutual accusations and the intellectual and theological *agon* driving their torment and accusations. In fact, to relieve the tension found in the source, one must look not only to Hamilton's excisions but also to his additions, for he, like Dalton, he also includes excerpts from Milton's shorter poems ("On Time, " "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," and "At a Solemn Musick") in his libretto. Also like *Comus*, the additions embellish a theme; only in *Samson*, the theme (the comforts of prayer and religion) is not so much Milton's as Hamilton's.

In *Samson Agonistes*, the uncertainty of the world and the elusive nature of God vex Samson, the Chorus, and Manoa, and they burn their energy struggling with these questions. The oratorio's altered title (*Samson* rather than *Samson Agonistes*) announces what audiences will get, for Hamilton retains the characters' emotional torture but dulls its existential edge by rewriting the epistemology of Milton's original and adding more certainty concerning Samson and God. Milton's poem is dominated by a theologically-motivated, discursive struggle between Samson and everyone else (the Chorus, Manoa, Dalila, Harapha, and even Samson himself). Only after he has wrestled these foes through language does battle become a metaphysical war between the god of the Israelites and the god of the Philistines with Samson as the former's instrument. Hamilton boils this conflict down to its deities, which reflects the struggle between eighteenth-century British Protestants and Continental Catholics. But despite the nationalistic concerns, there appears to be less at stake in the exchanges between Samson and his nation. They lament Samson's fall and pray for divine aid, but, unlike Milton's retelling of the story, the Israelites and Samson stand quite assured of their God, who answers their prayers with palpable haste.

Hamilton achieves this effect through a creative use of (1) an "expository" aesthetic based on precepts and exempla and (2) a devotional aesthetic in which the oratorio's arias and choruses become the prayers and hymns celebrating God's power, rather than the lengthy contemplations constituting Milton's theological inquiries. In a sense, Hamilton follows Alexander Pope's verse "essay" model, providing precepts or theses at the start of a passage that

the remainder of a respective stanza supports. If one can argue that Handel and Jennens force "Georgian balance" onto the companion poems, one can with more justice assert that Hamilton (and later Stillingfleet) superimposes onto Milton's mature poetry an "Augustan" aesthetic based less on pursuing questions of theology than on prescribing truths via essay-like presentations of precepts and examples.

First, as with *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*, one must ask how much *Samson* is "Milton's" at all. R. A. Streatfield and Percy Young think the oratorio largely reflects the composer, Handel, much as some believe the title figure of *Samson Agonistes* reflects Milton.[4] Winton Dean also believes it to be first and foremost Handel's and also sees the work as ethereally removed from politics, philosophy, and religion. Declaring *Samson* has been admired for all the wrong reasons, he proclaims that if an enquiry into the different authors of the story (the biblical author, Milton, Hamilton, and Handel) "leads to the conclusion that *Samson* is little concerned with religion and philosophy, that does not diminish its artistic stature" because "Hamilton sought to mate Handel with Milton, not with the Bible" and "therefore took over Milton's conception of the universe, while abating much of the social propaganda (e.g., for temperance) with which Milton filled the early part of the play" (326). Speaking more generally of Handel's entire career, Dean boldly asserts, "The voice of the moralist, the preacher, and the propagandist he rejected; the Puritanism of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, liking it for its own sake and in need of a respectable reason for surrendering to the seductions of the music, put it back into his mouth and accepted its own gift with relish" (332).

Dean oversteps in his attempt to lift *Samson* and Handel's other oratorios out of the troubled earthly realm of politics, religion, and morality into the rarified, illusory realm of pure musical art. However, he correctly resists tendencies to read the oratorio as "a favored vehicle for the composer's thought," as if Handel identified himself with the eponymous hero and as if he were the only creative mind overseeing the project. In *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (1995), Smith calls attention to the collaborative nature of eighteenth-century

oratorio while also challenging Dean's exclusively aesthetic analysis. To Smith, if the libretto of *Samson* reflects anyone, it is Hamilton, who had to make Milton's plot presentable on the stage and amendable to singing. One is compelled to agree. *Samson* reflects at least three authors (Handel, Milton, and Hamilton)—four, if one counts the biblical author. But in the eighteenth century, Hamilton is the one name among those which filled no seats. Nowhere on the wordbooks does the librettist appear; the largest names are Milton and Handel—just as in Covent Garden playbills for *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*. Audiences may have recognized the collaboration inherent in such works (written by one, redacted by another, set to music by another, and performed by others still), but for them, *Samson* belonged to the poet and the composer, and audiences came to see and hear certain performers and to hear what wonders one master worked with the art of another.

Clearly, Milton was important to Covent Garden's production of *Samson*, and Dean is right to say Hamilton sought to "mate Handel with Milton," but "Milton" meant more than pure artistry to the eighteenth century. Springing from the same popular notion of "patriot Milton" underlying *Comus*, *Samson* presents Milton as the poet-patron of Britishness and orthodox piety. It is therefore difficult to agree with Dean's proposed elision of the "social propaganda" of temperance from the oratorio, for the plot itself contemplates, albeit with less uncertainty than Milton's, Samson's self-control (or lack of it) as a cause of his fall, and Hamilton intensifies the sensuality of Dalila's temptation of her husband. Furthermore, there was strong connection between Milton and patriot ideology, of which a central tenet was resistance to the temptations of modern "luxury." A second was piety, and the alterations to the poem's religious thought in the adaptation transform Milton into a devotional poet and a conventional moral teacher. Finally, *Samson* and other oratorios were often reserved for the Lenten months, and one must wonder what effect this had on audiences. During Lent, contemplation Christ's sacrifice was expected. In some cases, contemplation yielded to practice as believers abstained from earthly pleasures in a

symbolic imitation of the Messiah's sacrifice. The context of the performances, in other words, encourages temperance via the meditation upon sacrifice and the abnegation of pleasures.

The political context and patriot undertones of *Samson* further indicate how important Milton was to the work. Hamilton began writing the libretto in the fall of 1741, and there was a seventeen-month gap between Handel starting on the music and the first performance in early 1743. The intervening space was a troubled time, and "*Samson* could well symbolize this Britain—native strength shackled by misadministration" (Smith, *Handel's Oratorios* 296). For most of the 1730s and 40s, when oratorio developed, Great Britain was either at war or threatening (or threatened with) war. In the early 1730s, conflict with France was avoided despite Bourbon attacks on Austria (The War of Polish Succession, 1733-35). The British were not so fortunate with Spain. The War of Jenkins' Ear began in 1739, and the nation was subsequently at war until 1748. Late in 1740, George II's nephew, Frederick II of Prussia, invaded Silesia, igniting The War of Austrian Succession (1740-48) and pulling Great Britain into that conflict. Exacerbating national anxieties, there were constant fears of Jacobite plots supported by Catholic France. Indeed, Jacobite activity intensified in the early 1740s and would culminate with The Forty-Five (1745), the ousted Stuarts' most effective (though ultimately failed) attempt to regain the British throne.

One can see the justice in Great Britain viewing itself as beset by enemies, much like the Israelites of the Old Testament. Indeed, for many in the patriot ranks, the analogy was a valid reason for "religious wars" with Catholic enemies (Colley 3). The British perception of themselves as the new Israel and as God's elect was fueled not only by almost constant warfare with Catholic foes but by "Protestant almanacs" and "jingoistic sermons" on national history that "demonstrate the country's centrality and 'miraculous deliverance from popery'" (Colley 19-22). By the simple change of time along with less simple changes to the source text, Milton's English Philistines are transmogrified into Continental—and hence Catholic—Philistines.

With enemies abroad, things were no less contentious at home. Opposition to Robert Walpole, growing since the 1730s, called for his removal in the wake of Britain's war efforts in the West Indies, and between the initial conception of *Samson* and its debut, Walpole resigned in February 1742. During this time, discontented Whigs and Tories found a unifying figure in Frederick Lewis, the Prince of Wales. Observing a Hanoverian tradition of mutual loathing between father and son, Frederick, whose parents had expelled him from court in 1737, set himself and his court in opposition to his parents (Kilburn, "Fredrick Lewis"). The prince sponsored the Italianate Opera of the Nobility in the 1730s to rival his father's Second Royal Academy of Music, which Handel directed; however, Handel spent his main oratorio years in the service of Prince Frederick. Indeed, one must stand in awe of the prince's political acumen, for his shift on patronage from Italian opera to English oratorio roughly coincides with his rise as a patriot leader in the mid-1730s. Frederick was also an opposition figure in more explicitly political arenas. He famously bemoaned the waning of popular patriotism and in the late 1740s campaigned for its renewal, and Smith speculates that *Samson* and other oratorios such as *Joshua* reflect his influence (240). Thus Smith concludes, "In its basic plot of the renewal and exertion of national strength against the heathen oppressor, Newburgh Hamilton's libretto of *Samson* . . . reflects the prince's support for the war with Spain for which the Patriots had clamored" (292). Given Hamilton's dedication of the libretto to the Prince of Wales, there is good reason to believe this.

Samson Agonistes nevertheless seems a somewhat odd choice for the purposes to which Handel and Hamilton put it. Though a rather bellicose work, the poem has long been read, at worst, as a revenge fantasy, and even when taking a more benign interpretive line, it is hard to deny it at least partially reflects Milton's personal dissatisfaction with Restoration England. The most glaring of Hamilton's alterations preempts such an interpretation. Milton had amplified the tension found in the Book of Judges between Samson and his fellow Israelites; Hamilton allows absolutely no such dissention to surface. Their union against the Philistines constitutes a call for

British Protestants to band together against a common enemy. But even prior to this change, the poet was a wise bet for other reasons. As Smith notes and as Dalton's *Comus* affirms, Milton "was something of a Patriot opposition figurehead at the time," so the oratorio

> was not an isolated instance of harnessing the reputation of Milton the radical to current opposition propaganda. On the contrary, it was written precisely during the years (1738-42) when his works (genuine and attributed) were reprinted to uphold the liberty of the press against the Licensing Act (*Areopagitica*) and to support opposition demands for robust behavior towards Spain (the *Manifesto of the Lord Protector* [erroneously attributed to Milton], justifying Cromwell's war with Spain). (292-93)[5]

Indeed, of all Milton's poems, *Samson Agonistes* alone lends itself to the belligerent intentions of eighteenth-century patriots hoping for a "holy war" with Continental adversaries. It is the only poem in his entire catalogue that does not preach "deeds of peace" (as in Sonnets 15 and 17) over those of war, and among the mature poems, it may not celebrate violence, but it does not seem to abhor it either.

Accordingly, Hamilton erases some of the "revolutionary nature" from the libretto, but like Dalton, he adds a more current political thrust.[6] And like the front matter for *Comus*, that for *Samson* hints at the significant function of Milton. Hamilton's address to the Prince of Wales invokes the patriot agenda of his royal patron and the supposed patriot credentials of his source. But, again as was the case with *Comus*, Milton's patriot credibility does not tell the whole story of his attractiveness for adaptation. One must not ignore the topics broached by the prefatory matter to *Samson*, nor can one neglect the significance of genre, which was as important an issue for eighteenth-century oratorio as it was for English opera. Both offer guidance for audience interpretation of the work and suggest how the producers of *Samson* framed performances.

Indeed, genre was also integral to Milton's recovered reputation and the growth of his authority. From the beginning of his rise as one of England's greatest poets, his status and

authority were built almost exclusively on criticism of *Paradise Lost*, for his accomplishment in epic poetry, widely considered the most demanding and exultant poetic form, contributed to his cultural capital. *Samson Agonistes* may not have earned equal praise to the epic, but its success in fusing Scriptural narrative with tragedy, another high-ranking genre, further solidified Milton's deserved standing as one of England's (and after 1707, Great Britain's) most accomplished poets. Edward Phillips thought it "an excellent tragedy" (75), and John Toland, relying on Milton's own explanation of the piece, calls it "an admirable tragedy, not a ridiculous mixture of gravity and farce according to most of the modern, but after the example of the yet unequal'd antients" (185). A harder audience to please, the Richardsons also spoke well, if not effusively so, of it: "the last of these [i.e., *Samson Agonistes*] is worthy of him, the other [*Paradise Regained*] of any one else" (275).

Milton's prestige can only have increased when the tragedy and later the epic were adapted for the most serious and respected form in eighteenth-century British musical theatre. Indeed, *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost* were ideal candidates for adaptation to oratorio. All three genres necessitated more restraint than the transformation of *A Maske* into *Comus*. A closet drama based on an Old Testament narrative and written in the classical vein does not promise the same spectacle as a masque, and oratorio is inherently less stagy than English opera, despite the latter's claims to moral and artistic superiority to Italianate opera. Nevertheless, the high seriousness of oratorios did not mean they were not expected to entertain as much as they uplifted and edified, and, hopefully, the potential for *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost* to entertain is apparent enough.

Furthermore, Kay Gilliland Stevenson and Margaret Seares point out that early oratorio did not necessarily want for dramatic action and spectacle, although by the 1740s, audiences would by no means expect them. A performance of Handel's *Esther* in 1732 incited the Bishop of London to forbid the Children of the Chapel Royal to perform a full dramatic version of it. "Thereafter," say Stevenson and Seares, "neither action nor costume provided visual

entertainment" (62). Even so, Handel continued to think in terms of dramatic action long after this rebuff, and the typical Handelian oratorio is a three-act musical piece "with possible stage action" based on an Old Testament story. Others besides the composer also considered the form in relation to conventional drama. Handel biographer John Mainwaring believed oratorio could benefit from some "action and gesticulation," and even John Brown, a defender of the genre who believed it far superior to opera, felt performances suffered from a lack of drama: "The singers are not always so animated in their manner, as to create a belief . . . that they feel the sentiments they express" (qtd. in Stevenson and Seares 64). The question was how far to pursue expression and dress while remaining respectful of the dignity of sacred characters and within the boundaries of decorum. And even when oratorio was considered as an entertainment with dramatic elements (plot, characters, and "dialogue"), most still identified it as something other than drama. For instance, one anonymous eighteenth-century writer takes pains to distinguish oratorio from drama and opera, both of which he sees as less austere. To the writer, an oratorio is a poem accompanied by music but without "dramatic exhibition . . . because an oratorio, if acted, becomes immediately an opera" (qtd. in Stevenson and Seares 62). Audiences of *Comus* expected a spectacular show: settings, costumes, music and choreography, and songs and drama. For *Samson*, audiences could reasonably expect wonderful music and amazing singers (well dressed but not costumed) and only secondarily a plot in which mimetic drama yields precedence to the music. Indeed, from the earliest performances to the most recent, Micah, Samson's male friend, has been "played" by a female singer; clearly, verisimilitude does not rank as high in oratorio as it does in conventional drama. In short, *Samson* was (and remains) a concert first and a drama second.

That oratorio is primarily a feast for the ears does not mean it does not nourish the mind, and privileging music over mimetic drama does not reduce words—plot, sentiment, and theme—to mere instruments of sensual delight. The demotion of acting, costumes, and setting to secondary matters means audiences not only focus on aural delights but on the words, unobscured by spectacle and sung in understandable English. Furthermore, the words mattered a great deal to

the genre's moral aims, for the eighteenth-century had to contend with the inherited hostility of seventeenth-century Puritanism towards the theatre. The fact that oratorio was more music than drama did not blunt these expectations. In his attack on the stage in 1698, Jeremy Collier also turned his cold, disapproving eye to music, and he and his ilk influenced the eighteenth-century musical stage as they did conventional theatre. "Musick," Collier claimed, "warms the passions, and unlocks the fancy, and makes it open to pleasure like a flower to the sun. . . . It throws a man off his guard, makes way for all impression, and is most commodiously planted to do mischief" (278). He also asserts that "Musick is as dangerous as gunpowder; and it maybe requires looking after no less than the press, or the mint. 'Tis possible a public regulation may not be amiss" (279).

Joncus's investigation of *Comus* suggests Collier may have had a case—thus the front matter, Prologue, and Epilogue's strenuous attempts to frame performances in a favorable light and thus Dalton's additions that counterbalance the sensuality and spectacle with which he and Arne extended and embellished Milton's masque. Even though the genre of English oratorio seems in and of itself to counter Collier's rigid scruples, such concerns apparently did not die. For instance, the timing of oratorio performances indicates a moral and religious function. By the middle of the century, "it became customary in the London theatres to present only oratorios on the Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, providing during the forty days of fasting and repentance a musical evening that combined amusement with a religious flavor" (Stevenson and Seares 62). The religious flavor stemmed from the sacred subject matter, predominately Old Testament narratives. Furthermore, *Samson* in particular boasted a sound aesthetic pedigree with moral and religious credibility: as the libretto stated, it was "adpat'd from the SAMSON AGONISTES of *John Milton*," one of Britain's most prized poets and a symbol of the nation's artistic civility, and "Set to Musick by GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL," by 1743 a firmly established and celebrated name in British music despite his German birth.

Like previous adaptations, *Samson* benefits from the cultural capital Milton's name carried by the 1730s and 40s, and the addition of Handel's name and the inherent seriousness of

oratorio (including the very timing of performances) lend *Samson* a prestige neither *Comus* nor *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* can claim. Evidently, Covent Garden marketed this prestige. Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields banked on Milton's name lending their productions moral weight, and the makers of *Samson* do the same. Hamilton thus wisely leans on Handel's "genius" and on the "divine poet" Milton's religious and moral authority in his dedicatory epistle. The letter expresses a high regard for the poet, not only in the promise that most of the recitative comes "almost wholly from Milton," but also in Hamilton's "opinion that nothing of that divine poet's wou'd appear in the theatre with greater propriety or applause than his *Samson Agonistes*."

Even though Hamilton changes plenty, he insists what the audience sees is essentially Milton's. Amiably self-effacing, he exalts Milton and Handel as the oratorio's presiding spirits, suggesting that all he has done is make a long work a shorter, connected whole:

> In adapting this poem to the stage, the recitative is taken almost wholly from Milton, making use only of those parts in this long work most necessary to preserve the spirit of the subject and justly connect it. In the airs and choruses which I was oblig'd to add I have interspers'd several lines, words, and expressions borrowed from his smaller poems, to make the whole as much of a piece as possible.

As with Dalton, Hamilton places a high premium on faithfulness to the text, and when necessity obliges him to cut, he claims adherence to the "spirit" of the text as a screen. For those believing *Samson* reflects the composer first and foremost, such statements illustrate how the librettist (an effectual coauthor) saw the work and how he hoped audiences would see it.

The libretto's prefatory address and the performances of *Samson* shrewdly invoke three functions of "Milton": the British patriot, the "divine poet" (or religious teacher), and the representative of "propriety" (i.e., decorum and appropriateness). Dalton's Prologue to *Comus* uses "Milton" as a defense against perceived improprieties, and Hamilton also tackles the moral/aesthetic concerns surrounding eighteenth-century entertainments. Asserting the work's

propriety marks the differences between oratorio, on the one hand, and drama and opera, on the other. Smith notes that the hybridity of oratorio (sometimes described as a "sacred drama" and sometimes as equal parts church music and opera) was no mere academic squabble over genre, for the supposed mismatch between the music, the religious subject matter, and the performance venue left such entertainments vulnerable to criticism (44-45). "In putting onto the theatrical stage works that endorsed Christian teaching and advocated public and private virtue," she says, "Handel and his librettists were fulfilling many elements of the programme being pursued by a variety of groups to produce a reformed, public art that would revitalize the nation's morals, religious belief, spirituality and patriotism" (49, 52-53). No movement of a select group eyeing art suspiciously, the programme reflected eighteenth-century aesthetic humanism's prevailing belief that the best art was rational and instructive.

When Hamilton says he expects *Samson Agonistes* to appear with great "propriety and applause," he is aware of the controversy of presenting sacred subjects on stage, even in the austere genre of oratorio. His preface implies that his source already subscribes to the bounds of decorum. Milton's tetchy preface to *Samson Agonistes* indicates he believed it did as well.[7] Whatever the case, that Hamilton had to addresses these matters in the first place indicates some defense was in order despite the established seriousness of oratorio. Much like English opera, oratorio was in its nascent state in the 1740s, and Milton was a "safe" choice in both genres. Yet, much like the English opera *Comus*, the English oratorio *Samson* relied on the "safety" of Milton's moral, religious, and aesthetic authority whilst redirecting his political bite to targets other than Milton's.

The oratorio's austerity and Milton's reputation did not excuse Hamilton and Handel from seriously reworking the poem to make it not only practically presentable but also aesthetically, morally, and religiously acceptable for mid-eighteenth-century audiences. *Samson* exemplifies how eighteenth-century politics co-opted Milton for their cause, and the changes to the religion of the poem cannot be separated from the political subtext. Alterations to one inform

and necessitate alterations to the other, and patriot Milton made a fit companion to the "divine poet"—so long as "divine" meant orthodox and un-vexing Protestantism. Thus Hamilton trims the Israelites' internal strife of the Book of Judges and *Samson Agonistes* to celebrate the common religion of the Israelites—and the British Protestants they represent—and to highlight the battle between Dagon and God in which Samson is merely an instrument. Tormented by his fall, patriot Samson awaits his death dejected and seemingly God-forsaken, but he is not vexed with a sense of God's arbitrariness, injustice, and ineffableness. Patriot *Samson*, with the embellishments of music and the addition of choral pieces, elongates the hero's journey to the temple pillars, much as Milton does. But if the way is still long, it is not as hard.

Erasing the mutual recriminations between Samson and his nation allows the hero to stand less troublingly as a moral exemplum, an interpretative reflex against which Milton's Samson fights. The oratorio's laments and questions almost invariably give way to prayers, supplications, and hymns offering a far more assured tone than in the source text. In the opening sequence, Hamilton breaks up Samson's opening lament (115 lines long in Milton's poem) over the course of the first act. The redistributions and additions suppress the potentially blasphemous queries of the hero and the Israelites. In the first scene, for instance, Samson wonders why his birth was foretold and his breeding set apart if he is to come to the end it seems he will. Yet, he does not question why God imbued him with strength but not with the wisdom to use it well, nor does he quibble with God over his loss of sight by questioning God's choices to create human beings as he did. (Hamilton, as will be discussed, had a different plan for the latter complaint.) Instead, Hamilton's hero leaps over the self-corrections of Milton's figure to bemoan the torments of the mind:

> My griefs find no redress; they inward prey,
>
> Like gangreen'd wounds, immedicable grow.
>
> [Air for Samson:]
>
> Torments, alas! Are not confin'd

To heart, or head, or breast;

But will a secret passage find

Into the very inmost mind,

With pains intense oppress

The rob the soul itself of rest. (2)

This song comprises Samson's explication of his plight and his lamentation, for after his air, Micah arrives to lament his "change beyond report" (3) and to offer his own air on Samson as a "mirror of our fickle state."

In place of despairing outbursts that fuel theological inquiry, Hamilton's hero meditates the torture of his own thoughts and buries the reasons Milton provides for that torture. In the opening 115 lines of *Samson Agonistes*, the title figure regularly stops himself when he senses he has moved from lamentation to "rashly [calling] in doubt / Divine Prediction" and quarreling "with the will / Of highest dispensation" (43-44; 60-61). As an agonist, Milton's Samson wrestles with "the ways of God to men," which he often considers unreasonable, even unjust. As a result of his inner struggle, the beginning of *Samson Agonistes* ebbs and flows between Samson accusing God and recriminating himself, between questioning God and stifling such questions. Four times Samson quarrels with God early on, first asking why his role as deliverer was foretold if he was to end up "eyeless in Gaza" and again when he complains that though he is to blame for giving up his secret, it was God who gave him strength "without a double share / Of wisdom." Regarding the latter, he speculates that God meant to show him how slight the gift was but soon realizes he has veered into questioning God and again stops himself: "But peace, I must not quarrel with the will / Of highest dispensation" (60-61). A little further on, he questions divine will for a fourth time, asking why sight was placed only in the eyes:

if it be true

That light is in the soul,

She all in every part; why was the sight

To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd?

So obvious and so easie to be quench't,

And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,

That she might look at will through every pore? (91-97)

Readers of *Samson Agonistes* familiar with its biblical source approach Milton's text knowing Samson will eventually end his life with a heroic act of liberation (and possibly with redemption), but nothing in the Book of Judges prepares them for the long and winding road Milton's hero takes in order to arrive between the temple pillars.

Of course, a sense of "Heaven's desertion" and of God's injustice may be implicit in the "pains intense" of *Samson*, but what follows the hero's opening complaint shifts his and the audience's focus away from God and towards the vagaries of human existence. Micah's recitative and air mourn his friend's sudden change of fortune and offer a declamation on human existence, rather than a complaint that further meditates upon God's nature:

O mirrour of our fickle state!

In birth, in strength, in deeds how great!

From highest glory fall'n so low,

Sunk in the deep abyss of woe. (3)

Hamilton delivers on his promise that he takes much of the content for the airs and choruses from Milton's poetry, for the lines and the sentiment are from Milton's Chorus. But the shift in placement and the excision of Samson's self-corrections shift blame from God, where it implicitly begins, to Fortune (explicitly linked at times with God in *Samson Agonistes*), then ultimately to where it ends in both Milton and Hamilton's text: Samson.

For instance, the hero's reply to Micah presents one of the few indications that Samson or any other character is second-guessing God:

Whom have I to complain of but myself,

Who Heav'n's great trust cou'd not in silence keep,

But weakly to a woman must reveal it?

O glorious strength! O impotence of mind!

But without wisdom what does strength avail

Proudly secure, yet liable to fall.

God (when he gave it) hung it in my hair,

To shew how slight the gift—but, peace, my soul,

Strength was my bane, the source of all my woes,

Each told apart wou'd ask a life to wail. (3)

Samson's correction ("But, peace, my soul") comprises one of the few moments in which Hamilton's gestures towards Samson's impious but necessary inquiries. However, he omits four lines to smooth away Samson's impieties—in addition to excising the prior instances in which Samson starts down this direction only to stop himself. As a result, the oratorio does not establish the pattern of recrimination of God turning to self-recrimination. Instead, Micah offers up Samson as a "mirror" of tumultuous human state. Rather than turn this attempt to "emblematize" him towards theological contemplation, Samson agrees ("Whom have I to complain of but myself?"), thus emphasizing the validity of Micah's interpretation

Upon his entrance, Manoa echoes Micah's explanation of events, asking "Oh, miserable change! Is this the man, / Renown'd afar, the dread of Israel's foes?" (6). Micah's response complements this mediation: "Oh, ever failing trust in mortal strength! / And oh, what not deceivable and vain in man!" (6). Micah then breaks into an air that preempts a potentially subversive query of God's ways with an instructive precept:

God of our fathers, what is man?

So proud, so vain, so great in story!

His fame a blast, his life a span,

A bubble at the height of glory!

Oft he that is exalted high,

Unseemly falls in human eye. (6)

The opening line broaches the "thesis" or central topic ("what is man?"), and the rest elaborates upon it (man is proud and vain, and his fame a brief trumpet's blast and his life a fragile bubble). The second and third lines epitomize the Augustan penchant for declamatory poetry trimmed to its absolute and clearest minimum. Hamilton may not write heroic couplets, but the trim, balanced, and clear prosody of his airs approximates Pope's verse.

A comparison of this air to the passage from which Hamilton borrows is instructive. When Milton's Chorus comes to comfort Samson, despair becomes contagious, for in the midst of preaching fortitude and God's "secret refreshings," the Chorus asks,

God of our Fathers, what is man!

That thou towards him with hand so various,

Or might I say contrarious,

Temperst thy providence through his short course,

Not evenly, as thou rul'st

The angelic orders and inferiour creatures mute,

Irrational and brute. (667-73)

Indeed, by this point in Milton's text, Samson has already asked this question himself in different forms. His father asks it as well. Meditations upon human existence invariably lead characters to contemplate the nature of divinity as well. In contrast, Hamilton's alterations result in the involved discussions on the "ways of God to men" becoming precepts on and examples of fleeting human prosperity and accomplishment.

To be sure, Milton investigates human nature and provides a number of precepts on human existence, but instruction is often problematized by the shift from "emblematizing" Samson to interpreting the emblem in order to propel theological inquiry. The Israelites tacitly

and sometimes explicitly reject one explanation of human misfortune for another (Fortune, an arbitrary God, a just God, and so on). When Milton's Chorus enters to comfort their erstwhile hero, Samson fashions himself as an example of strength without wisdom, but he swiftly and seamlessly resumes his quarrel with God:

> Immeasurable strength they might behold
> In me, of wisdom nothing more then [sic] mean;
> This with the other should, at least, have paird,
> These two proportion'd ill drove me transverse. (206-09)

Milton's characters teeter between truth and error, and here the Chorus, rather than Samson himself, offers corrections: "Tax not divine disposal, wisest men / Have err'd, and by bad women been deceiv'd; / And shall again, pretend they ne're so wise" (210-12). Characters in more explicitly didactic early modern texts like, say, *A Mirror for Magistrates* (first pub. 1559), offer themselves up as fearful examples to avoid, but Samson resists the reflex to make a lesson of him, and his meditations and the responses of the Chorus force the moral concerns over human behavior into the theological realm of divine justice.

In the oratorio, Samson is less resistant to emblematic interpretations of his fall. Following the air fashioning him as a mirror of fickle fortune, Samson fashions himself similarly: "Thus for a word, or tear, divulge / To a false woman God's most secret gift, / And then be sung, or proverb'd a fool." To this, Micah only replies, "The wisest men have err'd, and been deceive'd / By female arts," which reiterates Samson's picture of himself as an "ensample" to others, a "proverb" of a fool with great strength and feeble wisdom. Furthermore, Micah, like Milton's Chorus, asks Samson why he did not take a wife from his own tribe, but in accordance with Hamilton's *modus operandi*, this does not lead to questions and interpretations of law and the "intimate impulse" from God that allowed Samson to break the law (219-25). Hamilton's hero does not excuse his marriages, and his first bride does not figure into the oratorio at all. And so,

the audience is relieved of the troubling matter of how one is to interpret Samson's (and perhaps their own) "inward motions" from God.

The audience is also spared the potential impieties bordering on blasphemies that Milton's characters utter as they come to terms with their lot and with God's justice. For instance, prior to the above exchange in *Samson*, the hero and Micah bewail Samson's loss of sight, a moment in *Samson Agonistes* in which Samson once again slips into recriminations against divinity. Hamilton's Samson complains that blindness is his sorest affliction and in the succeeding air asks why "thus depriv'd thy prime decree, / Sun, moon, and stars are dark to me?" (4), but he does not quarrel with God's design of physical man: "why was the sight / To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd?" (93-94). Instead, Hamilton shifts this question to Micah, who follows Samson with his own query: "Since light so necessary is to life / . . . / Why to the tender eye is sight confin'd?" Diverting the issue from the mysterious ways of God, Micah's succeeding air is more supplication than theological contemplation:

> O first created beam, and thou great Word,
> Let there be light, and light was over all;
> One heav'nly blaze shone round this earthly ball.
> To thy dark servant life by light afford. (5)

The mediation on Samson's blindness begins with the question: Why? But the endgame is not scanning the world to render an understanding of God, but a plea for divine intervention ("To thy dark servant life by light afford"). The change places Milton's focus on God's role in how things came to be beyond the scope of the oratorio. It also reveals Hamilton's pattern of following a potentially troubling question or concern in recitative with prayer and supplication in the airs and choruses.

Later in the first act, however, Samson veers about as close as anywhere to an outright accusation of God. After an air upon the nature of man from Micah and one from Manoa upon his prayers for a son, Manoa informs Samson that despite his afflictions, "Worse yet remains," for

there is to be a day of "pomps and sports, / And sacrifices to Dagon" that will blaspheme "the living God" (7). Similar to Milton's Samson, this stings Hamilton's hero sorely, as he realizes his responsibility for this. But he soon arrives on surer ground:

> But now the strife shall end; me overthrown,
> Dagon presumes to enter lists with God;
> Who, thus provok'd will not connive but rouze
> His fury soon, and his great name assert. (7)

Samson's air comes close to questioning God, but he shifts quickly to a prayer based on Jeremiah 30:23:

> Why does the God of Israel sleep?
> Arise with dreadful sound,
> And clouds encompas'd round,
> Then shall the heathen hear thy thunder deep.
> The tempest of thy wrath now raise,
> In whirlwind them pursue,
> Full fraught with vengeance due,
> 'Till shame and trouble all thy foes shall seize. (8)

Like Milton's Manoa, Hamilton accepts these words as prophecy, and assuredly proclaims, "Nor let us doubt whether God is Lord, or Dagon" (8). The lines echo Milton:

> With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words
> I as a prophecy receive: for God,
> Nothing more certain, will not long defer
> To vindicate the glory of his name
> Against all competition, nor will long
> Endure it, doubtful whether God be Lord,
> Or Dagon. (472-78)

Despite the surety here, much has transpired in Milton's plot by this point to call God into doubt. In *Samson Agonistes*, the Chorus, Manoa, and Samson wrestle with the unsettling fact that the eponymous figure embodies. Their interpretations of the hero's fall and the Chorus and Manoa's celebration of his triumphant rejuvenation generally transcend the topic of earthly morality and enter into meditations upon God's nature and his ways.

While the shift in focus from the earth to the heavens sounds conventional, one must recognize that in *Samson Agonistes*, pronouncements and conclusions on God remain interpretation. The poem is arguably as much about hermeneutics and epistemology as it is about theology. Readers must interpret the interpretations presented in the poem, and unlike the third-person narratives of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, the dramatic presentation of *Samson Agonistes* offers considerably less interpretive guidance. There is no authoritative voice dismissing characters' words for bearing only "Semblance of worth, not substance" (PL 12:529). No angels steer them away from error, and neither characters nor readers explicitly and undeniably see or hear from God. The Chorus claims to dismiss the readers with "calm and passion spent," but it cannot assure them that the events that have just transpired render God and the world completely and rationally open and knowable. For the Israelites, there is work yet to be done, and for readers, they may be comforted that God revealed his plan for Samson "in the close," but that does not mean God has revealed his plans for them. Life goes on. Readers must take up Samson's search for God and truth, and if the poem is any indication, the search will be a sore one.[8]

Hamilton cuts Samson's self-corrections and the questions that lead to those corrections, retaining the emotional impact of Samson's fall but removing the intellectual and theological *agon* from his despair. Focus lingers on the human conscience and on the nature of humanity rather than on the nature of divinity, a tendency Revard as well as Stevenson and Seares observe as distinguishing musical treatments of *Paradise Lost* from the early eighteenth century well into the nineteenth. Apparently, the practice filtered through other Milton adaptations, and Hamilton

had a sensitive finger on the pulse of contemporary tastes. In the oratorio, there is very little questioning of anything about the nature of God or how he works. And above all, there is no second-guessing of God.

The first act typifies Hamilton's method, and it encapsulates the process by which Milton's poetry became works of "devotion" or "Sunday books." Milton's mature verse encourages winding speculations and constant reinterpretation as his characters reason (often erringly) and hit upon a truth or a wise saying only to err again. The characters in the oratorio, by contrast, wring their hands at the terrible sight of their fallen deliverer but only hint that God is to blame or that he could be unjust or arbitrary. The hints soon come to nothing and turn instead (in the airs and choruses) to hymns, prayers, and supplications. Revard observes that in the eighteenth century and for much of the nineteenth century, musicians focused on the human aspects of *Paradise Lost* and on the sections most amendable to "liturgical" settings ("Fortunes" 95-97), the musical equivalent to literary criticism coaxing Milton into orthodoxy. *Samson* resembles this process of diverting inquiry and Milton's baroque aesthetic to liturgical or devotional ends.

Hamilton's pattern of following recitatives that contain most of the intellectual and spiritual *agon* with palliative airs and choruses is no small change, given the difference between the text on the page and during performance. "For a reader of the libretto, the recitative passages provide the bulk of the text," but

> In performance, the proportions are reversed, with arias and choruses lengthier and more prominent, and the composer's choice of words for repetition and musical embellishment make prosody less striking than the themes and moods expressed: creation or doom, rejoicing or foreboding, loving harmony or agitation. (Stevenson and Seares 72-73)

In this instance, Stevenson and Seares are actually discussing Stillingfleet's *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio*, but their statements equally apply to *Samson Agonistes* and its adaptation. One need

only attend or listen to a performance of *Samson* to understand how the choruses and arias stir the ear more and resonate in memory far longer than the recitatives. Moreover, the greater time and the embellishment given to the arias and choruses also give the impression that these parts were not only more musically interesting but also more thematically important, or, to put it differently, essential to the so-called the spirit of the subject. For Hamilton's libretto, they deftly provide emotional elaboration to compensate for much of what he cuts due to time constraints (a testament to his talents as a librettist), but they also alter the tone and rewrite the poem's theology.

For instance, Hamilton departs from his source in his investigation of the efficacy of prayer. Milton's Manoa outright questions prayer's value when he asks why good things "tempt" men to prayers if the blessing proves a bane, and, in Milton's poem, Samson's rousing "motions" come seemingly unbidden. Although he seems to pray among the Philistines ("with head a while enclin'd, / And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who prayd, / Or some great matter in his mind revolv'd" [1636-68]) and apparently gets an answer, the God of *Samson Agonistes* responds to human plight and supplication in his own time and for his own unknowable reasons. That is, if he responds at all. Hamilton must have found this implication troubling, for he removes Manoa's contemplations of God's purpose in granting his prayers for a son, shortens the time between human prayer and divine response, and generally illustrates the full efficacy of prayers, which the airs and the choruses, in effect, represent.

For instance, near the end of the first act, Samson approaches his spiritual and intellectual nadir, and Micah's response by no means matches the tone and content of his friend's agony. Samson waits only for death, which "invocated oft' shall end my pains, / And lay me gently down with them that rest." What follows strikes a far more joyous tone. Micah's responds with comforting words that Hamilton borrows from Milton's "On Time":

[Recitative] *Micah*

Then long eternity shall greet your bliss;

No more of earthly joys, so false and vain!

Air [Micah]

Joys that are pure, sincerely good,

Shall then o'ertake you as a flood:

Where truth and peace do ever shine,

With love that's perfectly divine.

Chorus of Israelites

Then round about the starry throne

Of Him who ever rules alone,

Your heav'nly-guided soul shall climb:

Of all this earthly grossness quit,

With glory crown'd, for ever sit,

And triumph over death, and thee, O Time! (9)

Hamilton delivers on his prefatory promise that he "interspers'd several lines, words, and expressions" from Milton's smaller poems, "to make the whole as much of a piece as possible." It is telling that to develop the theme of God's ways Hamilton chose to go back to much earlier and much more certain poems in Milton's oeuvre and include them in one of the more intellectually and emotionally turbulent works. What were originally "fainting, swoonings of despair, / And sense of Heaven's desertion" become a series of musically astounding hymns.

As he states in his dedicatory letter to the Prince of Wales, Hamilton uses Milton's "smaller poems" to "make the whole as much of a piece as possible," but he is also using them to pave the way for Samson's apotheosis a type of British saint. In a sense, Hamilton is appropriating Milton into the discourse of British martryology, a holdover from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For instance, Colley remarks on the continued importance of Foxe's *Book*

of Martyrs (1561) in the eighteenth century; a new edition appeared in 1732 and proceeded to go through thirty-one printings and include two new editions later in the century with far more printings (25-26). Eighteenth-century Britons were thus well aware of the nation's rich history of "saints" dying for the Protestant cause, and Milton's (heavily altered) Samson fit right in as a type of British Protestant martyr. In fact, Milton probably intended Samson to be a type of Protestant martyr; whether his typology extended to nationality is debatable.

The portion of *Samson Agonistes* that corresponds to the end of Act 1 of Samson offers no such resoundingly reassuring notes as Hamilton injects through his use of "On Time." In Milton's poem, Manoa responds to his son's despair by suggesting God can, and *might*, restore his son's sight for purposes not yet seen. Samson, however, doubts this:

> All otherwise to me my thoughts portend,
> That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,
> Nor th' other light of life continue long,
> But yield to double darkness nigh at hand:
> So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
> My hopes all flat, nature within me seems
> In all her functions weary of her self;
> My race of glory run, and race of shame,
> And I shall shortly be with them that rest. (590-98)

There is a certainty in these lines—certainty that death will visit Samson soon and with death, rest. But all certainties end there; Samson holds out no hope for some glorious triumph and apotheosis, as in Hamilton's version, in which Samson's "heav'nly-guided soul shall climb: / Of all this earthly grossness quit" and "With glory crown'd, for ever sit."

In addition to uniting the Israelites with Samson, the changes, partially a practical matter, also further remove the theological *agon* of the source. For instance, one of the more troubling and controversial passages in *Samson Agonistes* is the Chorus's lengthy declamation on God's

justice. Hamilton considerably shortens this mediation, combines it with excerpts from the closing speech of Milton's poem (lines 1745-48), and gives resulting mix of lines to Micah as comforting words for his friend:

> Just are the ways of God to man,
>
> Let none his secret actions scan;
>
> For all is best, though oft we doubt,
>
> Of what his wisdom brings about.
>
> Still his unsearchable dispose
>
> Blesses the righteous in the close. (10)

In Hamilton's source, these "healing words" that open this palliating speech are part of the Chorus's long exposition on atheism and skepticism as part of the debate over Samson's extra-tribal marriages and Israel's continued bondage:

> Just are the ways of God,
>
> And justifiable to men;
>
> Unless there be who think not God at all,
>
> If any be, they walk obscure;
>
> For of such doctrine never was there school,
>
> But the heart of the fool,
>
> And no man therein doctor but himself.
>
> Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just,
>
> As to his own edicts, found contradicting,
>
> Then give the rains to wandring thought,
>
> Regardless of his glories diminution;
>
> Till by thir own perplexities involv'd
>
> They ravel more, still less resolv'd,
>
> But never find self-satisfying solution.

As if they would confine th' interminable,

And tie him to his own prescript,

Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,

And hath full right to exempt

Whom so it pleases him by choice

From national obstriction, without taint

Of sin, or legal debt;

For with his own laws he can best dispence. (293-314)

The two lines that open this mediation signal a moral proclamation on divine justice, with the rest serving as an elucidation rebutting those who doubt the validity of the Chorus's "thesis" ("Just are the ways of God, / And justifiable to men"). But the Chorus has complicated his own claim by earlier holding up Samson as a "mirror of our fickle state" (164), which suggests that the ways of the world (and hence of God) are arbitrary. Moreover, this pious deliberation adroitly dodges Samson's charge that Israel still serves the Philistines because of their own deeds, not their hero's, and thus what appears a resounding and palliating proclamation of God's justice is tainted by the Chorus's exploitation of God to excuse the Israelites and screen their failings. Milton's Samson ultimately cannot stand as a "mirror of our fickle state" because fortune eventually must be dismissed as a valid interpretation of Samson's fall. With Hamilton's Samson, there is no such difficulty. The ways of God to men are scarcely clear in *Samson Agonistes*, and the ways of men are no less murky.

One can see why, given the discomfort with Milton's politics, Hamilton would choose to cut this long section, for in accordance with the patriot agenda underlying his dedication to Prince Frederick, he needed to paint a united façade onto the Israelites' plight in order to render a more flattering vision of Great Britain girding its loins for battle with Catholic Spain. The proclamation of God's justice is highly problematic in *Samson Agonistes*, but Hamilton diverts it to more orthodox ends. The air reaffirms Manoa's comforting words that precede it: "Trust yet in God;

the Father's timely care / Shall procure the means to free thee hence" (10). Coming just prior to the conclusion of Act 1, this song comprises invocations that are far more certain and satisfying than they are *Samson Agonistes*. The concluding fourteen lines of *Samson Agonistes*, form which Hamilton borrows for the end of his first act, do tie the whole together by reiterating a concern with God's plan and his justice, but one cannot take this last part as a stand-in for the whole or a pithy statement of the poem's "lesson."

Further omissions indicate Hamilton's understanding of "the spirit of the subject" did not include religious controversy. In Act 1, Manoa still laments the fall of his son, asking "But who'd be now a father in my stead? / The blessing drew a scorpion's tail behind." Replying to this recitative and Manoa's song, Samson reiterates his culpability: "Justly these evils have befaln thy son; / Sole author I, sole cause, who have profan'd / The mysteries of God" (6). Hamilton stays close to Milton's text in Manoa's belief that his son is a mixed blessing and in Samson's realization of his responsibility for his fall. Human faults and human responsibility figure prevalently in Milton's mature poetry, so Hamilton is certainly close to a Miltonic "spirit" here. But, in *Samson*, the realization of the individual's culpability of his own fall and its connection to the nature of God's justice do not lead to the misdirected accusations of God strewn about like intellectual land mines throughout Milton's poem.

In *Samson Agonistes*, Manoa's questioning of God echoes his son's. "Nay what thing good / Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane?" asks Manoa,

> O wherefore did God grant me my request,
> And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd?
> Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
> Our earnest prayers, then giv'n with solemn hand
> As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind?
> For this did the angel twice descend? for this
> Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a plant;

Select, and sacred, glorious for a while,
The miracle of men: then in an hour
Ensnar'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound,
Thy foes derision, captive, poor, and blind
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves?
Alas methinks whom God hath chosen once
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,
He should not so o'rewhelm, and as a thrall
Subject him to so foul indignities,
Be it but for honours sake of former deeds. (356-72)

Manoa's doubts are integral to the structure of the plot and to Samson's progressions, for the father's questions reenact and even surpass those which the son voices when he first enters. Unlike Samson, Manoa does not stop short but continues a line of inquiry that leads to second guessing God. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century critics like Charles Leslie and John Clarke may have honed in on *Paradise Lost* to castigate Milton for impieties and blasphemies, but it is probable they would have been no less perturbed by Samson, Manoa, and the Chorus than they were by Satan and the fallen angels.

In what has already become a motif, Milton's Samson curbs his father's doubts just as he earlier corrects his own: "Appoint not heavenly disposition, father, / Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me / But justly" (373-75). This is an important moment for Samson, for from here on, he no longer questions God. Yet his transformation remains incomplete. Having acknowledged his fault, he now grapples with despair and must temper his acknowledgment of sin and justice with knowledge of repentance and grace. Thus when Samson prefers to stay in bondage to "pay on my punishment; / And expiate, if possible, my crime," he is in need of some fatherly advice. Manoa directs him to "Be penitent and for thy fault contrite" but not to be over-rigorous in seeking punishment:

Repent the sin, but if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids;
Or th' execution leave to high disposal,
And let another hand, not thine, exact
Thy penal forfeit from thy self; perhaps
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;
Who evermore approves and more accepts
(Best pleas'd with humble and filial submission)
Him who imploring mercy sues for life,
Then who self-rigorous chooses death as due;
Which argues over-just, and self-displeas'd
For self-offence, more then [sic]for God offended. (502-15)

If one focuses on the final six lines of Manoa's advice, it appears that Milton, via Samson's father, doles out a pithy expression of God's mercy and the need for human repentance. The comforting proclamation would complement the Chorus's speech on God's justice, with Manoa's acknowledgment of God's mercy tempering the Chorus's assertion of his justice. Milton thus makes justice and mercy central tenants of his faith, and he suggests that God, ultimately, will prove merciful to those who sincerely sought his mercy.

Nevertheless, the comforts of divine mercy remain obscure, behind a veil of doubt and an acknowledgment that human beings are imperfect vessels to apprehend divinity in all its workings. Manoa's hopes aptly encapsulate these obscurities, for he blankets his well-meant advice with condition and doubt: "Perhaps God will relent." Manoa is certain God is more pleased with those who accept their guilt and beg for mercy than with those who are over-rigorous in self-condemnation. Like Una in the Cave of Despair reminding Redcrosse that God tempers justice with grace, Manoa warns against taking too much guilt upon himself. Yet all this certainty is troubled by doubt: Perhaps God will relent. The condition opens the possibility that

mercy might have to wait until the afterlife and that suffering in this life continues in spite of sincere repentance—a possibility as grimly unsettling as it is comforting.

Similarly, when it comes to the strife between God and Dagon, Samson, for all his doubts, assures his father and the Chorus that God, "be sure, / Will not connive or linger, thus provok'd" (465-66). Manoa accepts these words "as a prophecy," "for God, / Nothing more certain, will not long defer / To vindicate the glory of his name" (473-75). This is certain, but what remains undecided is what is to become of Samson in the meanwhile and whether he must continue to suffer deservedly, as he feels, or, as his father believes, be penitent but seek release, leaving to God what punishment he sees fit. The answer is a metaphorical shrug similar to the Chorus's quizzical and troublingly conclusion elsewhere: "with his own laws [God] can best dispence" (314). *Paradise Lost* makes known the workings of God's justice and mercy, but God the Father remains "dark with excessive bright." *Samson Agonistes* can be said to continue this mediation on the unknowableness of God and the ultimate inability to confine his ways to rational human understanding.

Hamilton's alterations constitute a departure from Milton's theological and epistemological concerns. In *Samson Agonistes*, the characters seek to reconcile Samson's fall with their belief that God is good and understandable. If the latter belief is true, then Samson's fall is an uncomfortable fact, and in dealing with reality, they often fall to questioning the nature of God. In *Samson*, their questions serve a different purpose. The nature of God and his ways are not at stake. Instead, the passages that broach this topic do not contemplate the unknowableness of God, but make Samson a moral example of fallen humanity by describing human life's transience, its vulnerability, and its sheer unpredictability.

Hamilton assimilates Manoa's lamentation of God's mixed blessing (i.e., Samson) to this discourse. But instead of offering a worrisome expression on God's curious manner of answering prayers, Manoa reaffirms what he and Micah have just established:

The good we wish for, often proves our bane.

I pray'd for children, and I gain'd a son,

And such a son, as all men hail'd me happy.

But who'd be now a father in my stead?

The blessing drew a scorpion's tail behind;

This plant (select and sacred for awhile,

The miracle of all!) was in one hour

Ensnar'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound,

His foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind! (6)

One might infer a quarrel with divine dispensation, but the lines more easily invite a different reading. Samson is the prime example of Manoa's "thesis" that "The good we wish for, often proves our bane," which complements Micah's previous "essay on man" ("God of our fathers, what is man?") prior to Manoa's complaint.

Milton's Manoa and Chorus also seek to make Samson an example or emblem in order to make sense of their world, but the interpretation always turns back to the nature of God; in the oratorio, the exempla stand alone as instructive illustrations of human nature. Micah and Manoa dwell upon the fickleness of human existence, and Samson explains that his sudden fall, their prime example of man's unsteady standing, is his own fault and therefore just. Indeed, before focus shifts to Dagon and the Philistine revels, Samson closes Manoa and Micah's intimations on mortality with an incontestable interpretation of its cause: "Justly these evils have befall'n thy son; / Sole author I, sole cause, who have profan'd / The mysteries of God" (7). Obviously, Hamilton took Milton's lesson on obedience and responsibility to heart. But his alterations, pursued for the sake of preserving this very lesson (the spirit of the subject), also remove the epistemological and moral quandaries at the heart of Milton's notion of obedience: To acknowledge that one's sole duty consists in remaining obedient to God is easy to see. It is also

the fundamental lesson of human existence. The cruel fact of human existence, however, is that the fundamentals are often the hardest things to remember and to apply.

Act 1 of *Samson* expresses patriot ideology largely in what Hamilton cuts: the dissension among Samson, Manoa, and the Israelites and the recriminations they level at each other and at God. In Act 2, the patriot agenda is manifest in what Hamilton retains and what he adds in order to develop more fully a contrast between the temperate and penitent Israel (Great Britain) and the merry and corrupted Philistia (Catholic Spain and France). Indeed, contrary to Dean's assertions, one sees a "propaganda of temperance" written all over the second act. Hamilton sets up the dichotomy between national fortunes and their respective temperaments in the first act, for the "solemn feast to Dagon" Samson describes turns out, upon the entrance of a chorus of Philistine priest, to be nothing of the sort. The priests begin gravely enough, calling on the "men of Gaza" to "bring / The merry pipe and pleasing string, / The solemn hymn and chearful song" (1). But in the air that follows, one sees just how solemn the devotions of Philistia are:

> Then free of sorrow, free from thrall,
> All blithe and gay,
> With sports and play
> We'll celebrate his festival. (3)

Sonically and thematically (though probably not visually) the worshipers of Dagon resemble the "Bacchanals" that populate the woods of Dalton's *Comus*.

Dalila's appearance and Hamilton's additions strengthen the resemblance. Modeling this section after Milton's Chorus's view of Dalila, Hamilton's Micah describes Dalila as "bedeck'd and gay," a "stately ship, / With all her streamers waving in the winds; / An odorous perfume her harbinger" (11). Departing from Milton, Hamilton's Dalila is more exclusively sensual, a siren-like songstress who woos and tempts her husband with promises of "redoubled love, and nursing care" from her and her "virgin train" who "Shall tend about [him] to extremest age" (13).

Moreover, Dalila's train has a voice in Hamilton's telling of the tale, a voice that could not help but evoke the sensual temptations of "The Woman" in *Comus*:

> With plaintive notes and am'rous moan
> Thus coos the turtle dove left alone;
> Like her, averse to each delight,
> She wears the tedious widow'd night:
> But when her absent mate returns,
> With doubled raptures then she burns. (12)

Dalila later stresses these calls to love when she tempts Samson with a *carpe diem* appeal to "fleeting pleasures": "No moment lose, for life is short; / The present now's our only time, / The missing [of?] that our only crime" (13).

While Hamilton's pair exchanges some of the accusations and self-defenses found in *Samson Agonistes*, the musical compositions and much of the scene strongly resemble the temptations in *Comus*, and no doubt Hamilton intended Samson's rejections of "love" to represent patriot virtue and temperance. For Samson—and ultimately for the British nation—to be free, one has to be good, which means one must be liberated from the temptations of the flesh and luxury, here symbolized in Dalila's rich gowns. Indeed, the fact that she is a "foreigner" could well symbolize Great Britain's "marriage" to foreign (i.e., French) fashions. Accordingly, Samson's later rejection of his outsider wife presents Great Britain casting off the fashions and attitude of the Continent and finding once again its ancient piety and virtue. Samson's resistance of Dalila frees him from her sensual thralldom—a prelude to the more violent liberation he will complete offstage.

Though Harapha is less altered than Dalila, he too no doubt resonated with a patriotic British audience. He is every bit the *miles gloriosus* Milton paints him, but he is also a symbol of the cravenness which the luxuries and superstitions of Catholicism presumably inculcated in its followers. To make him such a symbol, Hamilton had little to do, for the context of the

performances and his changes to Dalila—encoded as they are with "British" values—almost automatically imbue the Philistine braggart with similar significance. Thus Harapha's empty boasts and his dodges of Samson's challenges easily come to symbolize the supposedly empty courage of Catholic Europe.

Hamilton certainly intended the "confrontation" between Samson and Harapha to have greater resonance. Indeed, by the time of Harapha's entrance, Samson's boldness has returned sufficiently in order for him to proclaim himself a Miltonic champion of liberty against tyranny:

> My strength is from the living God,
> By Heav'n free-gifted at my birth,
> To quell the mighty of the earth,
> And prove the brutal tyrant's rod;
> But to the righteous peace and rest,
> With liberty to all opprest. (17)

From here, the exchange between Samson and Harapha yields to a broader national/religious conflict. Thus Micah sets a condition that moves the focus of the struggle from the two champions to their respective deities:

> If Dagon be thy God,
> With high devotion invocate his aid,
> His glory is concerned. Let him dissolve
> Those magick spells that gave our hero strength,
> Then know whose God is God. (18)

As the second acts winds to a close, the trading of challenges and insults between the Israelite and Philistine champions gives way to a point-counterpoint chorus of Israelites and Philistines invoking their gods. The Israelite Chorus sings that "Jehovah rules the world in state," and the Philistine chorus of priests respond, "Great Dagon rules the world in state" (19). After a shared chorus in which the nations sing of their respective god's might, again the choruses proclaim their

god the greatest. “Jehovah is of Gods the first and last,” sing the Israelites, only to be answered one last time by the Philistines: “Great Dagon is of Gods the first and last” (19). The musical effect is astounding to hear. English oratorio may have been a more restrained and less “dramatic” form than English opera, but with its chest-thumping and saber-rattling, the conclusion to the second act of *Samson* is about as “operatic” as eighteenth-century oratorio can get.

To emphasize Samson as a patriot and true Briton, the ambiguities that surround his “inward motions” evaporate in the final act of *Samson*, which instead sets up the Philistine’s demise in a clear way. Hamilton links Samson’s rousing motions to the Israelites’ submission to God, specifically their supplication of him through prayer. As in *Comus*, the freedom of the mind presages a more literal freedom. Micah expresses that Samson’s refusal on the grounds of law and personal conscience have strained things to the breaking point: “How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach; / ‘Tis Heav’n alone can save, both us and thee” (21). The chorus responds with prayer:

> With thunder arm’d, great God, arise!
> Help, Lord, or Israel’s champion dies!
> To thy protection this thy servant take,
> And save, oh, save us for thy servant’s sake!
> With thunder arm’d, great God, arise!
> Help, Lord, or Israel’s champion dies! (21)

God is apparently listening, for Samson immediately states, “Be of good courage, I begin to feel / Some inward motions, which do bid me go” (21). But before Samson goes, he speaks with Micah and the Israelites, and although audiences know how the story will end, a certainty and deliberateness marks Hamilton’s Samson and the Israelites as the hero departs—a certainty one does not find in Milton’s poem. Departing with Harapha to the theatre, Samson expresses his intentions unambiguously:

Let but that spirit (which first rush'd on me
In the camp of Dan) inspire me at my need:
Then shall I make Jehovah's glory known!
Their idol gods shall from his presence fly,
Scatter'd like sheep before the God of hosts. (22)

Samson follows with an air crafted out of excerpts from "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" that lend a bellicose certainty to the hero's intentions:

Thus when the sun from's watry bed,
All curtain'd with a cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave;
The wand'ring shadows ghastly pale
All troop to their infernal jail,
Each fetter'd ghost slips to his sev'ral grave. (22)

Such additions fully support Revard and Smith's assertions that *Samson* was a patriot piece. As the plot comes to its crisis, martial boasts proliferate in the libretto and would no doubt have struck a nerve with many as Great Britain prepared to go to war with Spain. Although Britain's wars had their economic and imperial causes, the fact that Great Britain was an island separated by geography and by religion from its Continental adversaries pressed home to many the sense that they were God's elect. While it is highly doubtful that by the time he published *Samson Agonistes* Milton still believed the English were a chosen people—a belief he proudly espoused in his prose of the 1650s—one can see his appropriation as national propagandist in the curbing of theological inquiry and in the British tribalism of *Samson*. Milton is thus once more made to take up his role as national defender and mouthpiece for a people, a role he relished in his Latin prose. Ironically, this very role, which led to his poor esteem in the Restoration, served him well in the next century.

After Samson's boastful recitative and air, Micah and a chorus of Israelites rise to a crescendo, as if knowing they are sending their hero off to his last battle. "With might endu'd above the sons of men," says Micah, "Swift as the lightning's glance His errand execute, / And spread His name amongst the heathen round" (22). His air is just as clear:

> The Holy One of Israel be thy guide,
> The angel of thy birth stand by thy side!
> To fame immortal go,
> Heav'n bids thee strike the blow:
> The Holy One of Israel is thy guide. (23)

The wording comes largely from Milton, but the certainty of Samson's purpose is Hamilton's. As Milton's Samson heads to the Philistine theatre, there are no ominous references to scattering idols or striking blows. Milton's characters are certain only that "what" Samson will do "may serve [God's] glory best, & spread his name." There are no angels or voices from Heaven directing Samson in the oratorio. Nonetheless, the Israelite's prayer followed hard by Samson's rousing motions and their songs presaging his heroic deeds make the hero's rejuvenation and resolve considerably less understated than in Milton's telling.

In both works, handwringing and discussion eventually come to a dead end when Samson faces the choice of remaining obedient to God and refusing to follow the messenger (Harapha in the oratorio) to the theatre or disobeying the law for the sake of his and his countrymen's wellbeing. In *Samson Agonistes*, readers are prepared for the catch-22 in which obedience to the law plunges the believer, for Samson and the Chorus explore the question extensively. Their discussions and interpretations give the hero some comfort but leave some questions unanswered. When he departs, he is not exactly sure what he is doing or what will become of him:

> Be of good courage, I begin to feel
> Some rouzing motions in me which dispose
> To something extraordinary my thoughts.

I with this messenger will go along,

Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour

Our Law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.

If there be aught of presage in the mind,

This day will be remarkable in my life

By some great act, or of my days the last. (1381-89)

That "something extraordinary" awaits and that God leads him on, Samson is sure, but beyond that, he has only indefinite notions. The day will be remarkable, he knows, but whether remarkable for "some great act" or because it will be "the last" of his days he does not know. Apparently, Samson has not yet figured out that the options are not mutually exclusive—thus his enigmatic statements at this point. "Happ'n what may," he proclaims, "of me expect to hear / Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy / Our God, our law, my nation, or my self" (1423-25). That is as far as his knowledge goes, as he exits expressing uncertainty: "The last of me or no I cannot warrant" (1426). To this the Chorus replies:

Go, and the Holy One

Of Israel be thy guide

To what may serve his glory best, & spread his name

Great among the heathen round:

Send thee the angel of thy birth, to stand

Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field

Rode up in flames after his message told

Of thy conception, and be now a shield

Of fire; that spirit that first rusht on thee

In the camp of Dan

Be efficacious in thee now at need.

For never was from Heaven imparted

Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,

As in thy wond'rous actions hath been seen. (1427-40)

Like Samson, they are certain that whatever he does—whatever God intends him to do—will not defame his name or nation or go against God's law and that his action will glorify the god of Israel. But they leave it to heavenly guidance to decide the unanswered question of "what may serve his glory best, & spread his name."

After Samson's "triumph," Milton's Semichorus indicates all is now well in a manner that provides the impetus for Hamilton's alterations:

All is best, though we oft doubt,

What th' unsearchable dispose

Of highest wisdom brings about,

And ever best found in the close.

Oft he seems to hide his face,

But unexpectedly returns

And to his faithful champion hath in place

Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns

And all that band them to resist

His uncontroulable intent,

His servants he with new acquist

Of true experience from this great event

With peace and consolation hath dismist,

And calm of mind all passion spent. (1745-58)

Despite the Aristotelian conceit, however, there remains work to be done. Manoa earlier calls on Israel to take advantage of the opportunity Samson has given them. "Come, come, no time for lamentation now," he says, "Nor much more cause, Samson hath quit himself / Like Samson"

(1708-10). But now is the time, he continues, for Israel to quit itself like Israel. To his nation, Samson has left "Honour," if they but "Find courage to lay hold on this occasion" (1717).

Hamilton ties up matters far tidier than Milton both before and after the slaughter of the Philistines. The work ends with a "Hymn of Sorrow" and a celebration of Samson's life rather than with the ongoing work of securing liberty. Manoa does interrupt the lamentations in the oratorio: "Come, come; no time for lamentation now." But he does not say why there is no time, though there seems to be some urgency. If Hamilton were writing a simple piece of war propaganda, it would have made sense to retain Manoa's call to action as a call to arms against Britain's Catholic enemies. For all the patriot undertones, however, Hamilton appears to have something else in mind: praising God rather than goading human beings to action. When Samson was alive, suffering—when he was "not Samson"—then was the time for lamentations, but, now, there is "No cause for grief," for Samson fell like Samson. Micah reaffirms the urge to celebrate a life ended heroically and to give thanks to God:

> Why should we weep or wail, dispraise or blame,
> Where all is well and fair to quiet us?
> Praise we Jehovah then, who to the end
> Not parted from him, but assisted still,
> 'Till desolation fill'd Philistia's lands,
> Honour and freedom giv'n to Jacob's seed. (28)

Thus Micah opens the way for the grand chorus of the close, which Hamilton borrows from Milton's "At a Solemn Musick":

> Air [Israelite Woman]:
> Let the bright seraphim in burning row,
> Their loud, uplifted angel trumpets blow.
> Let the cherubic host, in tuneful choirs,
> Touch their immortal harps with golden wires.

Chorus [of Israelites]:

Let their celestial concerts all unite,

Ever to sound his praise in endless blaze of light. (29)

Hamilton slightly alters lines 10-14 of Milton's poem on the "Blest pair of sirens, voice, and vers," and the last two lines of the oratorio approximate the concluding four lines of the same poem:

O may we soon again renew that song,

And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long

To his celestial consort us unite,

To live with him, and sing in endles morn of light. (25-28)

As with Hamilton's earlier use of "On Time," the addition of Milton's "smaller poems" adds a tone of assurance and harmony that is not necessarily inherent in Milton's original poem. Also, like epigrams for *Comus*, a clever self-reflexive game plays out here. "At a Solemn Musick" describes the ecstatic experience of listening to sacred music, so Hamilton concludes the oratorio on a comforting note that reflects upon the "sacred music" audiences are hearing. Yet again, Milton's expressions of his musical tastes are made to endorse musical forms not in existence when he was alive.

This close also alerts one to another peculiar change to Milton's mature poetry that Hamilton enacts (and that Stillingfleet would reenact seventeen years later). Revard and Stevenson and Seares observe that treatments of *Paradise Lost* focus on the human aspects, and their observations also apply to Hamilton's treatment of *Samson Agonistes*. However, Hamilton goes against this habit in the end of his adaptation. Milton ends the poem focused on humanity: Manoa and the Israelites praise Samson but recognize that they must complete his act of deliverance by liberating themselves. In *Samson*, the focus reverses as the gaze shifts from the strictly human actions to the ways of God. In other words, Hamilton removes God from the plot but ends with the human characters watching God, so to speak. As a result, typology, prayer, and

precept predominate in *Samson*, whereas hermeneutics and epistemology predominate in *Samson Agonistes*.

To mold Samson into a patriot hero and Milton into a national mouthpiece, the plethora of hard questions, doubts, shifts, and self-corrections of *Samson Agonistes* become in *Samson* a series of lamentations, prayers, hymns, and supplications. At nearly every turn, Hamilton's choices illustrate the alterations needed to make Milton conform to prevailing tastes and ideologies, including the Augustan desire for pithy teachings on moral commonplaces. *Samson Agonistes* contains ample maxims (on the need to balance wisdom with strength, on patience, on the dangers of beauty, and on the nature of God's justice and human responsibilities). But much like *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes* illustrates the failure of pithy wisdom to steer one in the right direction as the characters regularly find truths only to ignore their own maxims and err again. Lessons learned can be forgotten. The errors and missteps are essential to the reading practices as the reader must negotiate the thorny paths themselves (God's justice, the nature of religious and civic obedience, etc.). Even though the actual moment when Samson is regenerated remains inaccessible, had he yielded to Dalila's importunities, his role as champion might never have been fulfilled. If readers believe Samson's last actions are heroic and desirable, then they must commend his hard-bought wisdom concerning his wife and his temperance (his refusal to yield for second time to Dalila's sensuous overtures). Samson's refusal may not directly cause or earn his rejuvenation, but his refusal makes it possible. This, as one sees in *Paradise Lost*, is how Milton believed God's will and His Grace influenced humanity while nevertheless allowing free will and choice; Samson makes certain choices that effect his fall and rise, but he ultimately concedes that God may do with him as he will: "Yet that he may dispense with me or thee / Present in temples at idolatrous rites / For some important cause, thou needst not doubt" (1376-78). If Milton's God can dispense with the laws as he sees fit without permanently dashing the law to pieces, law remains a sound guide for humanity but one that remains contingent on God's will as communicated to the individual human heart. For Milton, such qualifications are essential.

Qualifications are not the *forte* of the Augustan aesthetic to which *Samson* adheres, and Hamilton erases these thorny concerns or reduces them to secondary roles. For obvious reasons, the political concerns of Milton's drama largely fall by the wayside with the exception of a few catchwords like "oppression" and "liberty" and the prefatory letter to the Prince of Wales. But Milton's role as a champion of liberty and a cultural heavyweight who could draw a crowd mixes uneasily with his heterodox religious thinking. To address this, Hamilton cuts what is "inscrutable" from the adaptation and provides audience members with a more assured theological vision—an Anglican church sermon complete with "church-musick" and hymns to God's greatness and love posing as devotional airs.

Precepts are what Hamilton provides, along with an essential misreading of Milton's message about God's ways. Milton's Samson regularly corrects himself, saying he "must not quarrel with the will / Of highest dispensation, which herein / Happ'ly had ends above my reach to know" (60-61). There is a fundamental difference between quarrelling with God's ways and scanning them. Impatient with such distinctions, Hamilton conflates not scanning certain workings of God and not quarreling with one's God-given lot with not questioning the ways of God at all. The change is a prime example of how eighteenth-century reception of the poet took Milton's lessons on obedience to heart and made them orthodox *in extremis*. Hamilton's *Samson* enacts a rather linear progression from sin and despair to acknowledgment of sin, to repentance and redemption. Hamilton takes small but precious nuggets in *Samson Agonistes* and puts them on display as the essential religious and moral lessons he wishes the libretto to stress. Stillingfleet would adhere to a comparable pattern seventeen years later.

For Milton, these treasured bits of knowledge and wisdom are hard-won, and the search for the treasure is as important as finding it. Hamilton also removes these treasures from the poem's rich fabric of theological concerns, and the libretto shares more in common aesthetically with Pope's neoclassical perspicuity than Milton's baroque artistry and serpentine inquisitiveness. Moreover, the focus on human nature as opposed to theology tacitly subscribes to Pope's

proclamation in *An Essay on Man*: "Know, then, thyself, presume not God to scan; / The proper study of mankind is man" (2:1-2). *Samson* thus gave mid-eighteenth-century Britons exactly what they wanted and what its makers and the genre promised: a restrained entertainment with a sacred, edifying subject; a masterful composition from the great Frederick Handel; the best singers Britain could offer; and, finally, a poem by Milton altered and adapted to reflect exactly what they thought made "Milton" great.

CHAPTER V

PARADISE ADAPTED: MILTON THE POETIC TASKMASTER IN BENJAMIN STILLINGFLEET'S *PARADISE LOST: AN ORATORIO*

Paradise Lost made Milton's name as a poet, and, appropriately, John Christopher Smith and Benjamin Stillingfleet's 1760 oratorio most clearly illustrates the on-stage evolution of Milton into the poet of discipline and restraint. On the one hand, Milton's longest poem contemplates obedience and self-mastery as part of its exploration of faith and origins, so it would seem predictable that an adaptation would do the same. On the other, the overarching theme of disobedience often fades into the background in *Paradise Lost*. The awesome sweep of the verse, the wondrous and terrible visions of Heaven and Hell, the copious natural descriptions of Eden, the human pair's beauty, their "wedded bliss," the many originary tales, the ridiculously elaborate war in Heaven, the dramatic impetus of Satan's plotting, the vehement energy of his torment and of fallen Adam and Eve—all divert and often edify readers without keeping their focus on obedience and justice (although Milton calls readers back to this theme constantly). Furthermore, the poet may seek to "justifie the wayes of God to men" (*PL* 1:26), but the theology, theodicy, and soteriology of *Paradise Lost* contain much that readers have found troubling, and for many the poem's political undertones have proven difficult to ignore. Like *Samson Agonistes*, *Paradise Lost* offers moral pronouncements and religious palliatives, but it also raises as many questions as it answers. Stillingfleet, like Hamilton, answers more than he questions and seeks not restless

theological inquiry but entertaining, edifying devotion in his adaptation of Milton's mature poetry. More than a work of mere derivation, however, *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio* also reveals the poet's further appropriation into eighteenth-century causes not extant when he was alive, for Stillingfleet's redactions present a "Milton" not often seen in the eighteenth century or today: Milton the georgic poet.

To Stillingfleet and Smith's credit, they condense the profuse, baroque epic into a trim neoclassical tragedy on the Fall emulating Milton's own imitation of classical tragedy in Book 9. Recent scholarship has brought to light the tastes and conventions that inform these redactions. Investigating Milton's legacy in music, Stella Revard notes that Stillingfleet and Smith closely adhere to predominant musical practices. Although only two full-length versions of the epic were performed in the eighteenth century (Stillingfleet and Smith's vernacular oratorio and Joseph Hayden and Gottfried Van Swietan's German *The Creation* in 1799), composers and librettists began setting passages from the epic to music much earlier. Most musicians, says Revard, "approached *Paradise Lost* as a Christian epic for which they were providing proper liturgical settings" ("Fortunes" 94). The parts most represented come from Books 4 through 7, such as the morning and evening hymns and the angelic choruses. Other popular passages include the marriage hymn and the lyrical exchanges of Adam and Eve ("Fortunes" 95-97), which figure heavily into Stillingfleet's libretto and in Richard Jago's *Adam, or, The Fatal Disobedience*, which never made it to the stage. Furthermore, in 1760, Smith printed twenty-five songs from the oratorio, and "the musical score, as Smith published it, puts its emphasis on Adam and Eve and the human drama, depicting their emotions at all points in the action. That these emotions should be religious awe and marital joy before the Fall and anguish and agitation after is not at all surprising" ("Fortunes" 102-03). Perhaps, speculates Revard, these were popular because "their poetic structure seemed most apt for musical setting" or "because their praise of God's creative powers or their celebration of ideal human love appealed to eighteenth-century tastes. Whatever

the reason, first in song and then in oratorio, the prelapsarian world of Eden was re-created by eighteenth-century composers" ("Fortunes" 95).[1]

Stillingfleet's libretto and his belief in music as "devotion" (expressed in his dedicatory epistle) confirm that prevailing tastes gravitated towards the human dimensions and the liturgical utility of Milton's epic, which underscore the process of molding him into an orthodox poet. More than the artificially manufactured orthodoxy alone should give one pause; it is also the approach to Milton's thought that performance as oratorio engenders. Establishing a pattern early nineteenth-century librettists would follow, Stillingfleet removes Satan, the fallen angels, and the temptation from sight, but what remains—the theme of (dis)obedience, the emphasis on justice and mercy, the hymns to God's power—as Revard concludes, "is not totally un-Miltonic" and "is totally consonant with the eighteenth-century notion of *Paradise Lost*" seen in other musical pieces ("Fortunes" 100). Though an accurate statement, one must acknowledge that it is not yet totally clear what "the eighteenth-century notion of *Paradise Lost*" means, and so one must consider in more detail what eighteenth-century tastes deemed and defined as "Miltonic." An analysis of Stillingfleet's "georgic Paradise" promises to expand our understanding of Milton's reputation in the eighteenth century and further illuminate how adapters approached his work and made it speak to their own personal and cultural concerns.

In *The Georgic Revolution* (1985), Anthony Low defines georgic poetry as that which "stresses the value of intensive and persistent labor against hardships and difficulties" and which "differs from the pastoral because it emphasizes work instead of ease" and "from epic because it emphasizes planting and building instead of killing and destruction." Georgic is thus "preeminently the mode suited to the establishment of civilization and the founding of nations" (12). After 1707 and for the rest of the century, Great Britain was a fledgling empire and a new nation eager to identify itself, and Milton was eagerly appropriated into the enterprise of defining Britishness. As previously mentioned, the eighteenth century often viewed his pastoral scenes through a georgic lens that focused not on otiose shepherds but on idealized prospects of

productive farmers, husbandmen, and merchants. Thus the combination of Virgilian conceits with Miltonic blank verse in Thomson's *The Seasons*. In the domain of musical adaptation, Stillingfleet proved the right man at the right time to graft georgic discourse onto Milton more completely and coherently than Jennens had.

Indeed, Stillingfleet's libretto presents "georgic Milton" as the poet at his most disciplined. The oratorio predictably focuses on the Fall and the themes of sinful disobedience, repentance, and mercy. However, it also extracts those parts of the epic that contemplate work and strongly underscore duty, combines these parts with songs on submission and discipline, and (as a result of the shortened, more concentrated treatment), outdoes the poet in his insistence on these virtues. Yet Stillingfleet's prefatory address indicates that the oratorio presents Milton's thought—not Stillingfleet's own interpretation and alteration of it. Removing the more troubling aspects of *Paradise Lost* and smoothing out others, such as the conclusion, Stillingfleet diverts the poem's theological inquiry into a litany designed to edify and uplift. Moreover, as a Lenten entertainment, the oratorio posed a something of a religious service, and under Stillingfleet's care, Milton becomes the preacher of discipline *par excellence*.

The libretto sufficiently gives one an idea of how Stillingfleet's Paradise differs from Milton's (and Dryden's), but prior to the libretto, the front matter, as it often does, reveals how much had changed since the epic was last adapted. In the 1670s, it was inevitable that adapting *Paradise Lost*, no matter how loosely, would require grappling with its political undercurrents. Memories of the civil wars and Charles I's execution were too green not to, and Dryden crafts his vision of Eden and the Fall to cater to the tastes of Charles II's court. Almost 100 years later, Stillingfleet was writing for a different theatre and under no such constraint. His friend and patron, Elizabeth Montagu, may have been of gentle stock, but she was no aristocrat, and her moral and intellectual interests, which earned her the name "queen of the bluestockings," did not necessitate Dryden's fawning compliments (Schnorrenberg). (Interestingly, the bluestocking moniker originated in 1756 when Stillingfleet "appeared at one of Montagu's assemblies wearing

blue worsted stockings, normally the garb of working men, instead of the more formal and courtly white silk" [Eger and Peltz 29-30].) Speaking less of his dedicatee and more of the situation of adaptation, Stillingfleet addresses oratorio's devotional purpose and his method of redaction. In fact, Montagu seems his subject only at the start and the close of the dedication. "As I am ambitious of giving some public testimony of my high esteem and regard for you," he begins, "I beg leave to grace the following poem with your name" (11). He thereafter discusses the cultural value of "Milton" and of oratorio and expresses his anxieties in laying rough hands and fingers rude on an English classic. As Montagu was an avid lover of "classic" English literature and an acquaintance of contemporary authors like Samuel Johnson and Horace Walpole, no doubt Stillingfleet deemed this sufficient praise (Schnorrenberg). Above all, the change in the tone and the subject of the dedicatory epistle from Dryden to Stillingfleet reveals the change in theatrical "masters" from the Restoration court to a broader client base including the gentry and the affluent bourgeoisie who supported oratorio in eighteenth century.

The masters and the means of production changed, and so had the fortunes of Milton and his poem, as Stillingfleet's letter well indicates. Naturally, the monumental length and scope of *Paradise Lost* necessitated thoroughgoing changes for adaptation. This assumption underlies Dryden's redactions, but like Dalton and Hamilton, Stillingfleet asserts his extreme textual fidelity, stating he remains as close to Milton's original vision as possible. True or not, this was a wise maneuver. In the 1740s, Covent Garden had reaped the benefits of *Samson*'s success, and they no doubt hoped *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio* would prove another hit of the Lenten season. Indeed, the patterns for each are quite similar. Like Hamilton's redactions to *Samson Agonistes*, Stillingfleet's transform his source's extensive theological and moral inquiries into a series of religious obsequies. If the oratorio is a musical sermon on the Fall and on the promise of spiritual rejuvenation, Stillingfleet assumes Milton is the primary preacher. He thus admits the "greatest difficulty has been to bring the materials furnished by Milton into so small a compass, and at the same time to preserve some idea of the original plan" (15). More specifically, he points out that

nearly all of the recitative "is taken word for word out of my author" and that the added songs "are in general so much his, that I have tryed to compose them from the sentiments [i.e., thoughts] which I found in him, and as often as I was able to preserve his very words" (15). Though conceding he ignores some parts of the epic out of necessity, Stillingfleet assures audiences that the wording is largely Milton's, and, even when it is not, the "sentiments" are.

As with other adaptations, the librettists relies on the poet for selling tickets and for establishing the moral tone and credibility of performances, for the dedication to Montagu implicitly invokes the common idea of "Milton" as national literary treasure, religious authority, and moral teacher in order to justify the libretto. Acknowledging "how low a rank performances of this kind have usually been placed," he avers that the great esteem of "the original from which it is taken, and the lustre which it has received from" Smith give him "reason to think, that such a testimony is likely to prove more lasting and more general than I could hope from any work merely my own" (15). With less flare than Dalton and in a manner similar to Hamilton, Stillingfleet engages in Milton bardolatry, hoping to raise his own trophy on the poet's "deathless" ones, and his statement shrewdly invokes the poet's cultural capital as the British Virgil in order to promote and defend his work. Stillingfleet further follows in Hamilton's footsteps by yoking the purpose of oratorio to Milton's reputation as the British poet-divine. He credits Handel for introducing "a new kind of entertainment," oratorio, in which "one of the finest arts is made subservient to the noblest and most exalted affection belonging to human nature and which alone could furnish subjects adequate to his [Handel's] wonderful conceptions. You will easily see that I mean devotion" (15). No more explicit statement of oratorio's function in the eighteenth century exists, and it starkly illustrates how the librettist (and no doubt many others) approached the genre. If there was still some suspicion surrounding musical entertainments' moral and religious value, Stillingfleet diffuses those doubts through an alliance of "Milton" and oratorio.

Despite his self-effacement, Stillingfleet gradually betrays a desire to shield himself from criticism. He gives almost all credit to the musician, the genre, and the source but concludes with an appeal to his patron to protect him from harsh comparisons of his work to Milton's. The success of his attempt, he concedes,

> must be left to the decision of people of taste and judgment, and I could wish it might be decided by such as yours, Madam, who are at the same time capable of relishing the unrivaled sublimity of *Paradise Lost*, and candid enough to make allowances in so hazardous a comparison as I expose myself to. (13)

Dryden had also thought the prospect of comparison undesirable. Either he was too prideful a man or Milton too little established a poet for Dryden to sue for such mercy, and so he chooses to discourage comparison altogether. Nearly a century later, Stillingfleet could not be so naïve. And even if he could, it is hard to imagine any scenario where someone would claim, as Lee did in the 1670s, that Stillingfleet's fame would only "a little owe" to Milton's.

Even as Milton's fame grew exponentially in the eighteenth century, a notion Stillingfleet's dedication supports, he never fully shook his reputation as a radical and a supporter of regicide. In the decade following Stillingfleet and Smith's adaptation, for example, Johnson's *Life of Milton* (1779) would again call attention to the surviving taint sometimes attached to him. Clearly, the poet's politics remained a point of contention, but as the pains of internecine war subsided, those involved in musical adaptation could turn to *Paradise Lost* and look elsewhere than to its politics and heavy-handed theology for "essential" matter. This was not a luxury Dryden enjoyed. Almost a century later, faithfulness to the text was clearly expected, but the lapse in urgency concerning theological questions vital to the seventeenth century, such as soteriology, created a great deal of wiggle room for textual fidelity. For Dryden, the heart of the matter may have been religion (or more accurately, theology), but for much of the seventeenth century, such matters were inextricably bound up with the state and politics. The eighteenth-century was little inclined to repeat the doctrinal conflicts of the past. *Paradise Lost* may have

been "a Christian epic for which [musicians and librettists] were providing proper liturgical settings" (Revard, "Fortunes" 94), but for Stillingfleet, and no doubt for many others, the spirit of the poem rests not in the logical gymnastics that meditate upon tyranny and soteriology, but in the moral maxims and the (supposedly) comforting synthesis of divine justice and mercy.[2] And even then, that synthesis is repackaged to make the adaptation a more comforting religious text than its source is.

Many of these assumptions about the poem's spirit came "premade" to librettists and musician. They inherited prevailing musical practice and tastes, such as the preferences for the "liturgical" passages, the human dimensions, and the idyllic scenes of the middle books. Stillingfleet also inherited the critical orthodoxies surrounding *Paradise Lost* that privilege comforting religious pronouncement over theological inquiry—a preference seen most clearly in the conclusion to the oratorio. However, the utility of *Paradise Lost* as a "devotional" poem or "Sunday book" does not tell the whole story of Stillingfleet's alterations. In addition to working from an "inheritance," the librettist presents Milton's Paradise as decidedly Virgilian. In *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio*, the very georgic—and Miltonic—theme of labor is central to the oratorio's vision of unfallen existence.

A georgic Eden, however, does not stem from Stillingfleet's own imagination as a mere aberration or peculiarity of his adaptation. Comparisons of English epic poets such as Spenser and Milton to Virgil were quite prevalent in the eighteenth century. Indeed, the former modeled their poetic careers on the latter, and both fill their poetry with allusions to Virgil and with self-presentations that ostentatiously imitate ancient Rome's most renowned poet. Furthermore, georgic was a fashionable mode in the eighteenth century, so assessments linking Virgil and Milton often extended beyond the epic genre. Accordingly, early Milton critics hunted down possible allusions not only to *The Aeneid* but also to *Georgics*. Newton regularly spots such echoes. He compares the angels flitting about Pandemonium "As bees / In spring time, when the Sun with Taurus rides, / Pour forth thir populous youth about the hive / In clusters" (1:768-71) to

Georgics 4:21-22: "When the new kings lead out the first swarms; the spring being theirs, the youth play, sent forth from the hive" (82).[8] He also compares *Paradise Lost* 1.16 ("Things unattempted yet in prose or rhime") to the opening of *Georgics* 3:

> I too must find
> The way to rise in flight above the earth,
> Triumphant on the speech of men, for I
> Will be the first, if life be granted me,
> To bring the Muses home from Helicon
> To my own native country. (93, 9-10)

Regarding the description likening Satan to the "the Sun new ris'n . . . Shorn of his beams, or from behind the Moon / In dim eclipse" that "with fear of change / Perplexes monarchs" (1:594-99), Newton believes that this "is saying little more than poets have said under the most absolute monarchs; [such] as Virgil" in *Georgics* 1:464 (598). Among his notes, Newton further points to the potential influence of *Georgics* 2 on Milton's description *Paradise Lost*. For example, he states that the "eternal Spring" of Eden (4:268) links Milton to "All the poets [who] favor the opinion of the world's creation in spring," such as in *Georgics* 2:338 (276). Finally, Jennens and Handel's *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* illustrates how Milton was not only linked to Virgil via potential allusions to *The Aeneid* and *Georgics* but was also implicated in a georgic enterprise itself. Thus, "georgic Milton" was not unknown before Stillingfleet and Smith.

Newton and other eighteenth-century Milton critics and editors remain silent on the possibility of Adam and Eve's unfallen state relating to Virgil's golden age farmers and husbandmen. One must then give credit to Stillingfleet's keen eye, for precious little beyond allusion-hunting existed in his time for him to rely upon. By contrast, recent scholarship has extensively investigated the influence of Virgil's "middle epic" on Milton. Revard and Low believe the vision of prelapsarian Adam and Eve owes more to *Georgics* than to the fashionable pastoralism of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In "Milton, *Paradise Regained*, and

Georgics," Low digresses from his main argument on *Paradise Regained* to compare *Paradise Lost* to *Georgics* 2, observing that

> Virgil's georgic theodicy, with its double vision of labor as both a curse and a blessing and its assumption that a historical devolution occurred from a primal golden age of pastoral ease and abundance . . . might be Christianized by portraying man's prelapsarian state as pastoral and his postlapsarian state as georgic. (152)

Milton, he concludes, "clearly reflects a broad movement from pastoral to georgic. All the early scenes in the Garden of Eden portray Adam and Eve enjoying the true pastoral *otium*. . . . The fall transforms their state" (153-69). In "Vergil's *Georgics* and *Paradise Lost*," Revard also calls attention to unfallen Adam and Eve's resemblance to Virgil's golden age farmers and husbandmen (260-61).[3]

Through his adaptation, Stillingfleet stands alone among his contemporaries for his engagement with the moral and intellectual importance of georgic concepts to *Paradise Lost*.[4] Indeed, he proves himself a rather close reader of the epic, for his presentation of the unfallen state anticipates modern criticism by more than 200 years. Although Low is generally correct in seeing a progression from innocent pastoral *otium* to prelapsarian georgic toil, a georgic spirit prevails before the Fall, and Stillingfleet appears well aware of this. Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve do not labor intensely and persistently against hardship and difficulty like Virgil's workers, yet theirs is not an existence wholly given over to pastoral ease. God charges them to work in the garden and bestows on them the more grandiose and weighty responsibility of building, not a nation or civilization, but an entire species. Considering Milton's extreme familiarity with ancient poetry and his own sense of his poetic endeavor, one is tempted to see a bit of epic one-upmanship here with Milton raising the stakes in order to outdo Virgil. Moreover, Adam and Eve's tasks are not without their challenges, as their failure to remain obedient attests, so adversity exists even before the Fall. Milton's elaboration of the unfallen state in Paradise thus

revises not only Scripture but the idea of the golden age he inherited from Virgil and other ancient poets. He recognizes a need to balance work with rest so that *otium* (as well as eating, conversation, and sex) become more pleasurable. Stillingfleet also recognizes the connection of prelapsarian existence with georgic labor and toil.[5] Not only does he sense it; he makes it a major theme of his adaptation. Thus, in addition to being a pious entertainment containing the themes and "airs" most commonly determined to be Miltonic and most conducive to devotion, *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio* presents a hybrid Virgilian/Miltonic golden age defined predominately by labor and duty.

The notion of a georgic Paradise also spoke to Stillingfleet on a personal level, for his interests in agriculture made him prone to see links between *Georgics* and *Paradise Lost.* Looking into his life and writings reveals that he relies on the august authority of Milton's epic to express beliefs about civic duties and agrarian values that were near and dear to his heart. If early modern English poetry was often drawn to pastoralism, the eighteenth century was drawn to the georgic. Indeed, it is not too bold to call the eighteenth century the great age of British georgics, for poets churned out such verse with startling regularity.[7] Yet the georgic mode was more than a mere poetic conceit, for many prose works may not take Virgil as their model, but they nevertheless share the Roman poet's emphasis on farming and husbandry as essential matters for a nation to thrive morally and economically. The georgic mode thus provided a rich trove for poetic utterance and also provided Great Britain with a vital conceit in their search for a coherent national identity.

Fittingly, Stillingfleet (and Jago) contributed to this discourse in prose. In addition to being a librettist, Stillingfleet was "a gifted scholar and botanist, and one of the first English advocates of the Linnaean system of plant classification according to their sexual parts" (Eger and Peltz 30). Indeed, W. Coxe's *Literary Life of Benjamin Stillingfleet* (1811) reveals a learned scholar with considerable interests in those who till the earth. Coxe mentions that Stillingfleet's "tastes for classical poetry, and his love of Virgil, in particular, induced him to plan a minute

commentary on the *Georgics*, which he justly considered as an improved compendium of Greek and Roman agriculture" (555). Stillingfleet also left behind a number of works on natural history and apparently hoped to write a complete *History of Husbandry*, which he unfortunately never finished. Coxe nonetheless includes in his collection a "Memoranda for History of Husbandry," a compilation of sketches and plans for Stillingfleet's abortive enterprise.

Furthermore, during his time as a tutor, Stillingfleet wrote a letter to his pupil which Coxe also includes in the *Life*. The "Letter from Mr. Stillingfleet to Mr. Windham on His Coming of Age" helps one to understand what the librettists may have seen in *Paradise Lost* when he turned to adaptation. The letter contains well-meant advice that one must remain duteous first to religion and give no ear to the arguments against religion by "freethinkers" (29). Stillingfleet proposes a gentleman's other important responsibilities belong to his fellow "social beings" and his country (34, 54-55). In fact, the word "duty" appears ten times in a forty-five page letter, which explains one peculiarity of his treatment of *Paradise Lost*. Predictably, obedience is a prevalent catchword in his libretto. Another is "duty." Stevenson and Seares remark upon this heavy emphasis on duty, a word Milton uses sparingly, with some puzzlement (40). The librettist's interests in farming and his beliefs in what constitute an English gentleman's duties solve this puzzle. For Stillingfleet, adapting *Paradise Lost* involved far more than the highlights related to religious creed (i.e., the origins of sin and the workings of God's mercy and human salvation) and to popular musical tastes. It involved extracting Milton's essential "sentiments" on one's moral (and apparently civic) duties.

Unfortunately, Coxe's *Life* does not contain any instance of Stillingfleet explicitly connecting Virgil and Milton, and the only links between the latter and natural history (a close kin to the georgic enterprise in the eighteenth century) are a smattering of Milton quotes in the "Calendar of Flora." Nevertheless, Stillingfleet's investment in natural history and in georgic endeavors informs his redaction of *Paradise Lost*. In fact, unlike other librettists who adapted Milton to the musical stage, Stillingfleet was a Milton scholar. He barely missed being a fellow at

Trinity College, Cambridge when Richard Bentley was master there. In fact, Bentley apparently had some hand in denying him a fellowship, for which Stillingfleet bore a lifelong grudge against him (Hughes). Despite the setback, Stillingfleet did not abandon his scholarly endeavors. He was working on his own edition of Milton's poems when he heard of Newton's pending variorum, at which point he modestly left off his own work (Stevenson and Seares 42). It is unknown what commentary he intended for his edition, but one is tempted to speculate as to what links he would have drawn between *Paradise Lost* and *Georgics*. Unfortunately, this will probably never be known. In lieu of Stillingfleet's Milton edition, however, one may look to his libretto. In this light, *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio*, especially the libretto that includes passages omitted from performance, stands as staged criticism of "georgic Milton."

The epistle to Windham and Stillingfleet's other works on farming and husbandry explain why he linked the idyllic scenes of *Paradise Lost* so strongly with labor and duty. The letter places a high premium on the duty a gentleman owes to God, his fellow human beings, and his nation, but Stillingfleet does not neglect the diversions most acceptable for the country gentry. He accordingly devotes a few pages to a gentleman's chief and ideal pastime: "little farming." Such a diversion would give a gentleman an understanding of his tenants and also acquaint him with "country life, the proper residence for men of estates." But the gentry's commitment (or lack of it) to agrarian practices connects to national strength, as it does with Virgil. Thus, avers Stillingfleet, the gentry's alienation from their tenants and from the land contributes to national decline:

> The want of this taste, from whatever cause it has sprung, has filled this nation with gamesters, dancing-masters, fiddlers, French tailors, and Italian singers, the disgrace and ruin of common sense and virtue. It has crowded the town with gaudy beggars, and distressed the country with racking landlords, who think they have nothing to do upon their estate but go once a year to gather their rents, and

pass a few months in a pitiful obscurity, the better to make a figure in town. (54-59)

Not coincidentally, Stillingfleet identifies foreign fashions (French tailors and Italian singers) as corruptions sapping Great Britain of its native strength—its Virgilian connection to the land. His grouping of national virtue and prosperity with agrarian practice must have inspired him to pull Milton's epic more explicitly into this discourse. In his way, therefore, Stillingfleet injects some nationalism in his adaptation of *Paradise Lost*, a poem that at times appears supremely unconcerned with mundane matters. Milton himself set out to write a poem outdoing the martial, civic-minded epic of Virgil, but as with all adaptation of his work in the eighteenth century, Stillingfleet brings Milton back from heaven to the earth.

In the oratorio (though largely in Act 1), prelapsarian Eden is a state of enjoyable work in which angelic tasks and duties are juxtaposed to human ones. Not surprisingly, duty and obedience are catchwords early and late, and, fittingly, the angels open the oratorio celebrating the work God has charged them with. The archangel Gabriel sings:

O glorious task to us asisgn'd! how blest
The high employment! Ministers of God
Appointed, station'd in this pleasing scene,
His last created works to watch and tend. (17)

The following exchange with Uriel, cut from performances but included in most librettos, also underscores duty and labor. Uriel approaches Gabriel, whose "course by lot hath / Given charge and strict watch / Over the human pair and over Eden." After informing Gabriel of a suspicious "spirit zealous" whom he encountered (offstage), both conclude it must be Satan. The recognition leads to an air on Satan's fall that ends with an edifying couplet: "Glory, beauty fades away / When we from our duty stray" (18). The similarity to Hamilton's method ought to be apparent. Indeed, the pattern is not theirs alone, but oratorio's in a general. Yet both librettists have a talent, indicative of many eighteenth century writers (e.g., Pope), for packaging maxims and lessons into

compact verse. The attempt to reduce Milton into such a form—and the assumption that his poetry could be boiled down to the Augustan expository aesthetic—says something of how audience approached both the oratorio and "Milton."

Regarding the human pair, Dryden had intensified their sexuality in *The State of Innocence*. Stillingfleet takes another route. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve are well-regulated gardeners; they give all obedience and glory to God, refraining from eating of the one tree their creator has prohibited, and—most reflective of eighteenth-century views of Milton—they work when they are meant to work and sleep when they are meant to sleep. All of which Stillingfleet takes from *Paradise Lost*, borrowing liberally from Adam and Eve's exchanges in Book 4. The opening of the oratorio echoes the pastoral bliss of Milton's scenes, but as with Thomson's *The Seasons* and Handel and Jennens's ode, pastoral delights include georgic discipline and productivity. The first human scene comes almost wholly from Book 4, in which Adam and Eve explain their one prohibition, the "only sign of our obedience / Among so many signs of power and rule / Confer'd upon us" (18). The requirements of obedience and the latent comment upon the responsibilities of earthly lordship get further emphasis in the song (as is customary for airs and choruses in musical dramas):

> Would we hold dominion given,
> We must keep the laws of heaven:
> Wisdom this has all things plan'd;
> Who submits shall have command. (19)

Part of the submission, apparently, is knowing when to labor and when to rest, for Adam follows this song with an explanation of humankind's duties for nights and days: "Other creatures all day long / Rove, unemploy'd, and less need rest," he explains, but "Man hath his daily work of body or mind / Appointed, which declares his dignity; / And the regard of heaven on all his ways" (19). Indeed, in Act 2, Eve's complaint of distempered dreams indicates that even in sleep, the human pair has work on their minds. Her night was troubled because, she says, "I dream'd / (If dream'd)

not as I oft am wont, of thee, / Works of day pass'd, or morrow's next design" (23). Adam dismisses her concern as an innocent delusion of vain fancy before he encourages her to rise and "to our fresh employments haste. / For now the sun above th' horizon rais'd / Shoots parallel to the earth his dewy ray" (24).

For all of Act 1 and the early part of Act 2, humans and angels echo one another: task, appointment, employment, charge, work, labour. In response to Eve's question of the purpose of celestial bodies (an implicit challenge to sleep as it implies these bodies exist to be seen), Adam places celestial motion in the same context of work: "these have their course to finish" (21). Stillingfleet deftly works in a small account of the Creation—one of the more popular musical pieces of the age—but the song breaks off when Gabriel sends his compatriots to search for the intruder, that is, to fulfill their duties and perform their task of watching the human pair like angelic shepherds tending their human flock. Through such songs, Stillingfleet is able to work in material from *Paradise Lost* that is not directly related to questions of duty and obedience, yet the angels, having duly performed their evensong to God, return to their task as angelic shepherds. Finding Satan and chasing him out of Eden (offstage), they reestablish the "true" theme of with a song that ends Act 1: "back, oh! Back again to hell, / Learn obedient there to dwell" (22). Including the first song omitted for performances, the first four songs (out of seven in the first act) sing of "works," "duty," "the laws of heaven" (i.e., submission and command), "Duty and delight," and "toil." The middle ones focus on Creation, and the last one orders the fallen angel back to hell to learn his lesson of obedience.

That God's angels have errands and tasks is nothing innovative, and the belief that work dignifies Adam and Eve and elevates them above the rest of Creation is central to Milton's vision of prelapsarian existence. Stillingfleet derives all of this from a careful reading of *Paradise Lost*, and his extractions from his source that form Act 1 remain thoroughly Miltonic. But what he cuts is just as equally Miltonic. As a result of omitting Satan almost completely from the oratorio, audiences and readers do not see his plotting and his many explosions of despair and torment, nor

do they hear the archangel's defenses of himself and his own explanations of his fall. Given Milton's belief that heresy refines religious truth, one is tempted to believe that the poet hoped readers would seriously consider Satan's words. For instance, Satan's soliloquy on Mt. Niphates in Book 4 provides an in-depth look into the damned mind casting about for an escape God's rigorous justice. "What could be less then to afford him praise, / The easiest recompence, and pay him thanks, / How due!" the fallen archangel asks (4:46-48). Yet, he continues, "all [God's] good prov'd ill in me, / And wrought but malice," for the angel admits he was

> Forgetful what from him I still receivd,
> And understood not that a grateful mind
> By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
> Indebted and dischargd.

Having arrived part of the way towards accounting for his fall via his forgetfulness of how best to repay God, Satan just as quickly plunges into further error, as he second-guesses divine purposes:

> O had his powerful destiny ordaind
> Me some inferiour angel, I had stood
> Then happie; no unbounded hope had rais'd
> Ambition. Yet why not? som other power
> As great might have aspir'd, and me though mean
> Drawn to his part; but other powers as great
> Fell not, but stand unshak'n, from within
> Or from without, to all temptations arm'd.
> Hadst thou the same free will and power to stand?
> Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what to accuse,
> But Heav'ns free love dealt equally to all?
> Be then his Love accurst, since love or hate,
> To me alike, it deals eternal woe.

Nay curs'd be thou; since against his thy will

Chose freely what it now so justly rues. (4:46-72)

From an acknowledgment of his forgetfulness, the archangel wonders why God did not set him lower on the angelic hierarchy so as not to tempt him to revolt. Rejecting that possibility since lower angels fell in his rebellion, he blames God's love, and then, at last, dismisses that explanation too, as his blame alights where it seemingly belonged all along: on himself.

Arguably, Satan's long, tempestuous mediation upon his own fall contains a "lesson" on God's justice and the free will of his created beings. In fact, Satan reaffirms what God earlier proclaims concerning free will and disobedience:

What pleasure I from such obedience paid,

When will and reason (reason also is choice)

Useless and vain, of freedom both despoild,

Made passive both, had servd necessitie.

Not mee. They therefore as to right belongd,

So were created, nor can justly accuse

Thir maker, or thir making, or thir fate. (3:107-13)

Like Milton's Samson, Satan eventually arrives at self-recrimination and an acknowledgment of his own culpability in his fall. Also like Samson, it takes him many a winding turn to arrive at this insight. Among angels as among humans, knowledge can be lost as quickly as it is found. In keeping with the tastes and the critical conventions of the time, however, Stillingfleet quite literally denies the fallen angel a voice and reduces him to a precept, a fearful example of what happens "When we from our duty stray."

With no grisly king plotting his revenge and soliloquizing upon his fall and God's justice, the oratorio erases the troubled theodicy of *Paradise Lost*, as the focus of the oratorio shifts to Adam and Eve and the unfallen angels fulfilling their duty to watch them. Prevailing musical tastes and practices may have preferred the human and liturgical dimensions of his poetry, which

explains the erasure of Satan and the fallen angels. However, one must be aware of the effect such elisions have on the eighteenth-century perception of Milton's "great original." To John Dennis and Joseph Addison, Satan was a triumph of Milton's sublime imagination. They regularly cite Books 1 and 2 (Satan seizing Hell, Pandemonium, and the Counsel of Hell), 5 and 6 (The War in Heaven) and 7 (Creation) as the prime examples of the poem's sublimity and greatness. They also recognize Milton's abilities to convey the awesomeness of God's creative force and the fruits of divine creativity as evidence of his sublimity. Obviously, Books 1 and 2 have little place in musical compositions privileging the devotional capacity of poetry linked with music, as Stillingfleet himself did. Yet the practice reveals the peculiar manner in which eighteenth-century readers generally ignored anything potentially subversive or troubling in Milton's epic and preferred to see him as a carrier of and authority on religious orthodoxy. In short, the erasure implicitly endorses Addison's ultimate dismissal of Satan: "Amidst those impieties which this enraged spirit utters . . . the author has taken care to introduce none that is not big with absurdity, and incapable of shocking a religious reader; his words, as the poet himself describes them, bearing only a semblance of worth, not substance" (45).

With Satan quite literally out of the picture, Stillingfleet is free to focus on his depiction and interpretations of "the state of innocence." In Act 2, Adam awakens Eve, who relates her troubled dreams, and once comforted and after the morning hymn (another popular piece of the time), Eve, as in Book 9, becomes an efficiency expert. "Adam, well may we labor still to dress / This garden, still to tend plant, herb and flower, / Our pleasant task enjoin'd," she says, but "what we by day / Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind, / One night or two with wanton growth derides / Tending to wild" (25). Thus she suggests,

> Let us divide our labors, each as choice
>
> May chance to lead us, or necessity.
>
> For while so near each other thus all day
>
> Our task we choose, what wonder if so near

Looks intervene and smiles; or object new

Casual discourse draw on, which intermits

Our day's work brought to little, though begun

Early, and the hour of supper comes unearn'd. (25)

In Adam's replay conveys the appeal Milton's pastoral golden world held for Stillingfleet:

Well hast thou motion'd, well thy thoughts employ'd

How we might best fulfill our work assign'd;

But not so strictly has our Lord impos'd

Labor, as to debar us when we need

Refreshment, looks, or smiles, or talk between. (26)

These passages preserve, as Stillingfleet promises, as much of Milton's words and sentiments as he could. But his choices for inclusion are telling. Dryden too addresses the nature of work in Eden, but in *The State of Innocence*, he prefers to focus on a different kind of fertility. Stillingfleet's intense focus on the state of unfallen grace and its relationship to works indicate what he and a later generation deemed "Miltonic."

It also proves the librettist was a careful reader. Milton stresses that some work and toil are desirable, even in Eden. More than that, God designed human beings for just such a special purpose. Their erect posture and their capacity and responsibility to labor elevate them above the beasts of the field. The prelapsarian tasks set for humanity were regulated but not backbreaking and harried. In disobeying God, Adam and Eve lose Paradise, their state of grace, and a cushy gardening job with favorable hours and light demands. But as in the book of Genesis, Milton stresses that labor becomes toilsome and necessary only after the Fall, after which Adam must sweat to earn his bread and Eve "labor" in great pain to bring forth children.

Of all the things Stillingfleet excises for the adaptation, his silence on the nature of labor after the Fall speaks the loudest. He emphasizes that prelapsarian work is not a burden, but he ignores the necessity of work in the postlapsarian world. The word "task" appears four times in

the libretto, all in Acts 1 and 2, all before the Fall. The words "toil" and "toilsome" appear four times if one includes lines omitted from performances but retained in the libretto. "Labour" or "labours" appear on five occasions and "work" or "works" eight—all in Acts 1 and 2, again, all before the Fall. There are no mentions of labor or tasks after the Fall, and God's "doom," only partially reported second-hand in song rather than spoken or sung in full, ignores Adam's sweating toil and the pains of Eve's labor:

> But he the Lord, the judge of earth and heaven,
> Shall pour his vengeance on thy impious head.
> His righteous hand shall hold the ballance even,
> And give thee thy full due for this foul deed. (29)

This threat to the "rebel" grimly closes the second act, and the third begins with Gabriel saying to the other angels that they have heard "the doom" (29), but neither he nor any other angel further elaborates.

Instead, after the Fall, Stillingfleet shifts the emphasis on work to an emphasis on the slippage of Reason, the reign of Passions, and the role of love. Indeed, love plays in entirely different role here than it did in *The State of Innocence*, and the change reveals how strenuously Stillingfleet sought adherence to Milton's concerns. In Acts 1 and 2 of the oratorio, Adam and Eve clearly love each other. But excepting their many affectionate epithets—"Sole partner and sole part of all these joys" (18); "flesh of my flesh" (19); "My fairest, my espous'd" (19); "accomplish'd Eve" (21); "fair Eve" (23); "My glory, my perfection" (23)—their love is rarely an explicit topic of conversation—at least, prior to the Fall. In fact, they openly discuss their love only once, when Eve sings her "sonnet" to Adam in Act 2 ("Sweet is the breath of morn"), which along with the morning and evening hymns were among the most popular passages for musical setting in the eighteenth century. Prior to their lapse, they instead devote their attention and their songs to praising their creator and duly fulfilling and celebrating their "delightful task."

Stillingfleet replaces Dryden's valorization of love with a celebration of work. It should come as no shock to anyone that Dryden, writing under the rule of a famously amorous monarch and working partially in an aristocratic mode of production, sings less of cheerful, unfallen work and duty and more of love in the garden. Adam's account of his and Eve's unfallen state would no doubt have pleased an aristocratic audience as much as Stillingfleet's would have pleased a more buttoned-up, bourgeoisie clientele. In fact, Dryden focuses on sexual love's role in unfallen nature and makes scant mention of work, such as when Eve's describes the plenty of Eden, which seems more for their sensual pleasure than for their rending hands:

> Blest in our selves, all pleasures else abound;
> Without our care, behold th' unlabour'd ground,
> Bounteous of fruit, above our shady bowers
> The creeping jess'min thrusts her fragrant flowers;
> Thy myrtle, orange, and the blushing rose,
> With bending heaps so nigh their blooms disclose,
> Each seems to smell the flavor which the other blows:
> By these the peach, the guava, and the pine,
> And creeping 'twixt 'em all, the mant'ling vine,
> Does round their trunks, her purple clusters twine. (16)

Dryden describes work, but with less frequency than Milton and Stillingfleet, as when Adam invites Eve to their morning employment:

> Come, my fair love, our mornings task we lose;
> Some labor ev'n the easiest life would choose:
> Ours is not great; the dangling boughs to crop,
> Whose too luxuriant growth our alleys stop,
> And choak the paths: this our delight requires,
> And Heav'n no more of daily work desires. (17)

Yet Eve expresses that what little work they have goes slowly: "I fear small progress will be made this day; / So much our kisses will our task delay" (17). Apparently, the rites of love interfere with labor, and given the eroticism of Dryden's Adam and Eve and his selection of Milton's passages describing Eden as a place of plenty, the state of innocence in Dryden's adaptation is an extremely sensual one.[6]

In Stillingfleet and Smith's oratorio, by contrast, love becomes a pressing concern only after Eve's fall. The word itself, "love," appears three times in the span of Eve's return after eating the fruit and Adam's departure with her to do the same, a space of about forty lines (p. 28-29). Love is the main theme of Eve's offer to Adam: "Thou therefore also taste, that equal lot, / May join us, equal joy, as equal love" (28). "Love incites" Adam, and "fear restrains" him, but ultimately love wins out: "How can I live without thee! How forego / Thy sweet converse, and love so dearly join'd!" (28). Moreover, the two songs in this scene would have taken up considerable time in performance, and audience members must have been tempted to see something heroic in Adam's action and understand the songs as Eve does: a "glorious trial of exceeding love" (29). Unlike Dryden, however, Stillingfleet attempts to preclude such an interpretation. As Adam and Eve exit, the archangel Gabriel sees the "human pair disturb'd; / Passion was in their faces" (29). Stillingfleet further corrects the idea that Adam falls for love by offering an alternative take on how fallen human beings can display their love for others. In Act 3, Eve implores Adam not to forsake her and asks Heaven to witness "What love sincere, and reverence in my heart / I bear thee" (31). Returning to his senses, Adam urges that they no longer blame each other (even though in the oratorio he does all the blaming) "but strive / In offices of love how we may ease / each other's burden, in our state of woe" (31). Keeping to Milton's explicit warnings to readers, Stillingfleet's libretto implies there is no admirable example of unparalleled love in Adam's disobedience. Disobedience breeds only disturbance. Even before Adam eats the fruit Gabriel sees him and Eve "disturb'd," and once Adam falls, Gabriel witnesses Michael's descent, supposing him arrived to raise Adam "from the dust where groveling he now

lies with mind disturb'd, / And curses his creation" (30-31). Again, Stillingfleet has read Milton carefully, for he curbs the impulse to excuse Adam for his excessive love, and he even retains at least a tinge of Milton's punning on words containing dis- and their links the Hell (i.e., Dis).

Stillingfleet's own notions of religious and civic duty inform his vision of Paradise, which he builds though cherry-picking the passages in *Paradise Lost* most focused on work. In his other choices, he appears more "conventional," such as in his vision of humankind's moral make-up after the Fall. Despite their different ideas of the unfallen state, Stillingfleet and Dryden both retain Milton's belief that along with the loss of innocence, Eden, and the face-to-face presence of God, one of the sorest losses is the loss of control over one's emotions and appetites. For Milton, unfallen existence was temperate and well-regulated through and through, from the elements up to the plants and animals and on through humans and the seasons and the astral bodies. Satan and Sin through disobedience first bring disturbance into the world, such as intemperance and the reign of the passions over reason. Dryden and Stillingfleet both emphasize the reign of passions and the need for reason's guide in the postlapsarian world. One of the central concerns after the Fall in *The State of Innocence* is the rule of "Right Reason." Prior to humankind's first disobedience, Dryden's Raphael advises Adam that reason will guide him to the best ways to obey and glory God, and after he and Adam "debate" the need of a helpmate, he tells Adam that man's reason should rule woman's "weak reason." In *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio*, when Michael comes to expel the pair from the garden, he also lets Adam know what the future holds. "First then," says the archangel,

> Since thou hast op'd the gates of death . . .
> Passion has gain'd dominion; anger, hate,
> Mistrust, suspicion, discord. These and worse
> Usurping over reason, thence shall claim
> Superior sway, and thy unhappy race
> Shall fall to these a sacrifice. (33-34)

The sentiment echoes what Michael says to Adam in the epic. In *Paradise Lost*, however, Michael's discourse upon the passions and reason comes after Adam has seen a vision of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel and execrated the vanities of his progeny. Michael approves of Adam abhorrence of one "who on the quiet state of men / Such trouble brought, affecting to subdue / rational libertie" (12.80-83). But as is often the case with Michael, his pronouncement comes back around to force Adam to reflect upon his own disobedience and culpability:

> yet know withall,
> Since thy original lapse, true libertie
> Is lost, which alwayes with right reason dwells
> Twinn'd, and from her hath no dividual being:
> Reason in man obscur'd, or not obeyd,
> Immediately inordinate desires
> And upstart passions catch the government
> From reason, and to servitude reduce
> Man till then free. Therefore since hee permits
> Within himself unworthie powers to reign
> Over free reason, God in judgement just
> Subjects him from without to violent lords;
> Who oft as undeservedly enthrall
> His outward freedom: tyrannie must be,
> Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse. (12:80-96)

It is difficult to ignore the political undertones of Michael's rebuke, for Milton links political tyranny with the individual (such as he perceived in Charles I and anticipated in Charles II). Tyranny begins within, and one who strays from the righteous path is not worthy of liberty.

In Stillingfleet's libretto, when Adam laments this wretched state, Michael's advice appears unaccompanied by any mention of tyranny, either inward or outward:

Adam, be patient. This shall be the course
Of those, who listen not to reason's lore,
Or boldly scorn the dawning lights, that heaven
Shall send at intervals to guide mankind. (34)

Duty, obedience, and labor predominantly occupy the thoughts of angels and human beings before the Fall in the oratorio, and after it, the workings of repentance and mercy come to the forefront.

A key to living upright and a key to salvation, second only to God's prevenient grace, is reason. And reason means self-control and obedience. This is very "Miltonic," indeed, for self-control and temperance are virtues in *A Maske* and in the mature poems. But similar to Hamilton, Stillingfleet shortens the path by which his characters arrive at the "truth." In *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve accuse each other and Adam unleashes a torrent of despairing meditations on his existence and on his god in a soliloquy that resembles nothing so much in the poem as Satan on Mt. Niphates and nothing so much outside of it as Samson in *Samson Agonistes*. Like these other fallen figures, Adam questions his very creation and God's justice and ways in Book 10, and he falls into despair, waiting and even begging for death. It is only in Books 11 and 12, after reconciling with each other and repenting that Adam and Eve are ready not only for grace but also for Michael's prescription of "the rule of not too much" (11:531) and his advice that to their knowledge of the redeemer they must "add / Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith, / Add vertue, patience, temperance, add love, / By name to come call'd charitie" (12:581-84). Cutting Adam and Eve's mutual recriminations, Adam's despair and contemplations, and he and Eve's reconcilement and repentance, Stillingfleet only mentions their "distempered" state before moving to the good news of Christ's sacrifice and the sound advice that Adam and Eve must "be patient" and heed "reason's lore."

As with *Samson*, when considering such moral maxims, one must keep in mind the difference between encountering an oratorio as a libretto and as a performance, for greater

proportion was given to the airs and choruses during performances (Stevenson and Seares 72-73). In *Samson*, the proportion deemphasizes the despair and troubles of the recitative in favor of the prayers and palliatives of the airs and choruses. Performance has a similar effect on *Paradise Lost*, for many of the sections Stillingfleet and Smith retain as recitative or embellish as airs had already been set to music with great regularity, such as the Morning Song:

> These are thy glorious works, parent of good,
> Almightie, thine this universal frame,
> Thus wondrous fair; thy self how wondrous then!
> Unspeakable, who sitst above these heavens
> To us invisible or dimly seen
> In these thy lowest works, yet these declare
> Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine. (5:153-59)

One of the most popular passages for musicians and librettists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the song certainly illustrates the "liturgical" purposes of Milton. But there is something peculiar in Stillingfleet's version of the hymn because it smoothes over of Milton's thought. In Act 2, Stillingfleet renders the above as follows:

> Parent of good! These glorious works are thine,
> Thine, mighty Lord, wherever eye can see;
> When things created with such lustre shine
> What must we, wondrous being, think of thee?
> [But thou! involv'd as in a veil of light,
> Art hid for ever from created sight]. (24, bracketed lines omitted for performance)

Such a succinct redaction of a long passage deserves applause, for Stillingfleet retains the sense of God's power and conveys Milton's concept of a deity "dark with excessive bright" who remains largely inaccessible to the human senses. Interestingly, the last two lines of the song were

omitted from performance, so in performances the song does not dwell on God's ultimate inaccessibility but on the observable presence of the divine in the natural world. To Stillingfleet's credit, he attempted to keep Milton's contemplation of divine nature—"What must we, wondrous being, think if thee?"—but later excision cuts the meditation short.

As the above omission indicates, the exigencies of performance influenced the finished product, for there are other sections left out of performance that are nevertheless included in the libretto. Perhaps Stillingfleet had little say in the redactions to his redactions. However, this does not appear have been the case with the oratorio's conclusion, and the changes most exemplify the tendency to remove the angst from Milton's mature poetry in order to send audiences home "calm of mind all passion spent" (*SA* 1758). Stillingfleet's final act does its best to retain tragic tone of Books 9-12. He largely succeeds. The oratorio, however, ends on a far more comforting note than Milton's epic. In Act 5, Stillingfleet borrows from Books 11 and 12 as Michael gives Adam a view of the disease and corruption he and Eve's sin allows into the world, but the oratorio stops short of their expulsion from Paradise. In the penultimate recitative, Michael foretells "the promised seed, ordain'd to bruise / The serpent's head; and shall from woman spring," and he soon beholds (in a choral arrangement) an angel, "Obedient to [God's] mighty word" descending who in "His right hand grasps a flaming sword" (34). On the cusp of Adam and Eve's exile, the oratorio diverts from Milton's script and closes on a note more indicative of the hopefulness of "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" than of the bittersweet conclusion to *Paradise Lost*. After seeing the descending archangel, Michael shifts to a new sight: "Behold the dragon vanquish'd, cast / Into the flames that ever last" (34). Left at that, the oratorio would surpass the original in gravity as the final vision calls to mind the final triumph of Christ while furtively warning the audiences what fate awaits the disobedient.

As a Lenten entertainment, however, the oratorio looks more happily towards the end of the season and Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday. Stillingfleet craftily mines earlier sections of Book 12 to provide an appropriate ending. At the sight of the vanquished dragon, Adam

happily dubs Michael a "prophet of glad tidings" as the former finally comprehends "What oft my stedfast thoughts have search'd in vain / Why our great expectation shou'd be call'd / The seed of woman" (35). Michael's final recitative foretells the birth of Christ with lines taken directly from *Paradise Lost*:

> His place of birth a solemn angel tells
> To simple shepherds, keeping watch by night;
> They gladly thither haste, and by a quire
> Of squadrond angels hear his carol sung. (12:364-67)

The oratorio then concludes with a chorus of Luke 2:14: "Glory to God on high, / Peace on earth, / Good will towards men. / Halleluja" (35). Clearly, this is not the tone Milton sets at the end of *Paradise Lost*. It is, however, quite similar to Hamilton's more affirmative ending to the story of Samson.

In contrast, Milton's habitual method was to defer consummation and leave work to be done beyond the purview of his poems. The infant Jesus of "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" frightens away the pagan gods, but the rest of his work remains years away. Accordingly, Milton leaves him slumbering in the manger. The adult Jesus of *Paradise Regained* triumphs over temptation and Satan, but the poem ends with him returning to his mother's house, his triumph over death to come another day, again, years in the future. Finally, in *Paradise Lost*, Michael gives Adam and Eve a vision of the end of days, but the joyous, hopeful vision subsides and the poem ends on a bittersweet note. The flaming sword of God descends, and Michael "In either hand" takes the human pair and leads them out of Eden:

> They looking back, all th' eastern side beheld
> Of Paradise, so late thir happie seat,
> Wav'd over by that flaming brand, the gate
> With dreadful faces throng'd and fierie armes:
> Som natural tears they drop'd, but wip'd them soon;

The world was all before them, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow,
Through Eden took thir solitarie way. (12:636-49)

The birth of Christ and a Hallelujah chorus comprise a more uplifting ending, and it is doubtlessly preferable musically to ending with Adam and Eve exiled from Eden. Since musical tastes favored Milton's joyous hymns, it was probably a superior ending in the eyes of contemporary audiences. Ideology and aesthetic preferences mixed with the exigencies of adaptation and led to a departure from the source. Yet Stillingfleet does not betray any sense that his and Smith's work is anything other than a condensation of Milton's text to its essential themes and sentiments. Stillingfleet's revisions of Miltonic religion and his vision of the state of bliss cater to his audience by recreating Milton is the image of the pious poet of an industrious middle class. Eighteenth-century audiences were already familiar with such a treatment of his mature poetry from *Samson* seventeen years ago. Unlike Hamilton, however, Stillingfleet had an imposing bulk of criticism on which to draw for ideas on his source, and his libretto reflects the prevailing critical and popular perceptions of Milton's epic.

To make Adam a cavalier and Eve a coquette, Dryden effectively erases Milton from *State of Innocence*; he praises *Paradise Lost* as one of the greatest poems in the world and acknowledges his debts but implies no attempt to remain absolutely faithful to Milton. Indeed, even as Dryden builds Milton up in the apology with his praise, he paradoxically reduces his overall importance, naming him as one of the great heroic poets of the age but placing him on equal footing with Cowley. Add to these names those of the ancients whom Dryden names and quotes liberally in the apology, and we see Milton's name reduced figuratively and literally to one of many, an apt complement to Dryden's best attempts to push those parts of Milton's identity deemed most troublesome to Restoration society out of his vision of the fall. *The State of Innocence* is as much a rewriting of *Paradise Lost* as it is a redaction or adaptation.

Not so for Stillingfleet, his fellow librettists, and their audiences. Milton could not be banished so easily for them, and there was no desire to do so. For the eighteenth-century, Milton was too much of an actual and cultural commodity to be erased. The rough maiden that Lee envisions *Paradise Lost* to be may not have been at home at court, and neither would Milton himself have been welcome. But if she was a rough and rustic girl, she was also a pugnacious one made in the image of her creator. What goes for Samson goes for Milton and his poetry: "My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free" (*SA* 1235). And so Stillingfleet and his ilk undertook their own "redressing" of this maiden as a more sociable companion. For Lee, Dryden completely overcomes Milton's, as day chases night away:

> Thou from his source of thoughts even souls dost bring,
> As smiling gods from sullen Saturn spring.
> When night's dull mask the face of heaven does wear,
> 'Tis doubtful light, but here and there a star,
> Which serves the dreadful shadows to display,
> That vanish at the rising of the day;
> But then bright robes the meadows all adorn,
> And the world looks as it were newly born.

Lee saw clearly what *The State of Innocence* does. But, at heart, all adaptations do this. The vision of (usually) one poet or author becomes that of another and many more (a librettist and composer, actors and actresses, or in modern times screenwriters, producers, directors, and the many others whose hands make a film). Eighteenth-century adaptations had too much invested in Milton to admit this. The ownership of and the identity of Milton were the things. And so the prefaces and the librettos assert that the altered Milton of the adaptations was, of course, Milton all along. As Dalton implies, Milton and his poetry (his "page") were scorned and unwanted in his own age, and so the poet by default belongs to the next age. Lee's "dead bard" became "Our

steadfast bard." "This is our Milton," said these men of the eighteenth century, "and this is *the* Milton."

CHAPTER VI

THE LIKLIEST MEANS TO REMOVE WOLVES FROM AN ELEGY: WILLIAM JACKSON'S *LYCIDAS*

Stillingfleet's appropriation of *Paradise Lost* to his georgic agenda encapsulates the adaptability of Milton's verse and illustrates the appropriation of the dead poet as a mouthpiece for eighteenth-century needs and concerns. Much the same can be said of *Comus*, *Samson*, and even *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*. Moreover, that Hamilton could dedicate his efforts to a royal patron shows just how much Milton's reputation had recovered since Dryden, writing to his own royal patron, thought it prudent to distance himself ideologically from Milton in *The State of Innocence*. Dryden did the ideological distancing, and Lee, the aesthetic distancing, boldly claiming that Dryden owed Milton only "a little" and implying that the "dead bard," perhaps, owed *Dryden* for "refining" his rough, melancholy poem. In the next century, however, it was Milton who lent his refinement and vision to a librettist, and such was his cultural prestige that following the untimely death of Prince Edward, Duke of York and Albany, William Jackson turned to Milton's pastoral-elegy, "Lycidas," for an expression of national grief and consolation.

Jackson's *Lycidas* (1767), the century's last vernacular transformation of Milton for the musical stage, is a fitting postscript to Milton adaptations in the era. Indeed, "postscript" well describes the work for more reasons than one. It was first performed at Covent Garden on 4 November 1767 as an afterpiece to Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane* (1701) and was intended to

honor King George III's brother, Prince Edward, who had died 17 September 1767. Whether Jackson (also known as Jackson of Exeter) hoped *Lycidas* would become more than an afterpiece is not known, but it is known that its life on the stage was short-lived—extremely so, in fact. November 4th is the only London performance on record, and it was performed only once more, in Bath, later the same month. If the work was a commercial flop, its critical success was mixed at best. Only two contemporary statements, one for each performance, have been found—one highly negative, the other highly positive. The extreme paucity of material related to *Lycidas* (two statements, two librettos, no extant musical composition, and no modern critical commentary) suggests the afterpiece is little more than a footnote in the history of eighteenth-century music and Milton adaptations.[1]

Yet, *Lycidas* is a significant "postscript" to Milton on the eighteenth-century stage, for this obscure piece contains in miniature many of the concerns of prior, more successful, longer adaptations. Like all of them, Jackson conscripts Milton for his own aesthetic and political agenda. Like Hamilton and Stillingfleet, he takes the pruning shears to Milton's politically-charged original and eliminates his budding anticlericalism. The trimming was selective, for, similar to *Samson*, *Lycidas* retains enough of its source's edginess to redirect Milton's polemical thrusts towards new targets. Jackson's libretto and the piece's original occasion illustrate the double maneuver of softening Milton's polemical stances yet preserving enough of their bite to fit a new time and place. *Lycidas*, furthermore, has one thing that makes it more than a mere footnote: two different contexts that inspire widely-divergent interpretations. A strictly political interpretation of *Lycidas* runs into difficulty when one considers that it was performed a second (and final) time in a different venue and apparently separate from its originary occasion, the death of Prince Edward. These two contexts illuminate, respectively, two common threads of eighteenth-century Milton criticism and adaptation: (1) co-opting Milton to causes he did not necessarily sympathize with and (2) presenting a mythologized picture of the national poet-divine (as in the prologues to the previous librettos). Jackson thus follows the patterns of his

predecessors, retuning Milton's religious and political pugnacity to producing notes more consonant with what the age deemed "Miltonic."

For its inaugural performance, *Lycidas* was a memorial piece to a prince who was at one time heir presumptive, and one must first consider Jackson's changes in this context. Given the genre of the original (pastoral elegy) and its immediate occasion (the untimely death of Milton's Cambridge classmate, Edward King, in 1637), Jackson's choice makes sense. A quick glance at the poem conveys the sense of a rather personal movement from the grief of sudden loss to the comfort gained from acknowledging Christ's gift of resurrection and eternal life. *Lycidas* thus preserves the outpouring of grief and the existential questions loss incites as well as the final consolation of Lycidas' apotheosis to Heaven. He also took advantage of his audience's foreknowledge of his source to enact a bit of solemn wordplay; Milton mourned Edward King, and Jackson mourns Prince Edward, who could have been king.

Convenient puns aside, Jackson generally takes a light touch to his task, preserving most of Milton's sentiments, wording, and prosody. Where he does not cut lines away, he tinkers only with meter, spelling, and punctuation, and his retentions preserve Milton's engagement with the grieving and with his agonized consideration of the poetic office. The recitatives, sung in a way that amounted to "musical speaking," preserve Milton's iambics, but the airs and choruses, where one might reasonably expect more musical virtuosity (vibratos, elongated notes, repeated words and syllables, etc.) are shortened to rhymed tetrameter. For instance, Jackson's recitatives retain almost wholly intact both the thought and the expression of the original, such as when Milton questions the meaning and worth of the poetic vocation (Milton's original spelling in brackets):

> Alas! What boots it with incessant [uncessant] care
> To tend the homely slighted shepherd's [Shepherds] 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 Neæra's hair?

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. (Jackson 5)

In the airs and choruses, he is slightly more hands-on. For instance, when the swain recalls his past happy days with Lycidas, Jackson changes plenty to make the passage more amendable to singing (omissions struck through, other alterations and additions in brackets):

Together ~~both,~~ ere the ~~high~~ Lawns appear'd

Under the ~~opening~~ eyelids of the morn,

We drove afield~~, and both~~ together heard

~~What time~~ [T]he Gray-fly wind~~s her~~ [his] sultry horn,

~~Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,~~

~~Oft till the Star that rose, at Ev'ning, bright~~

~~Toward Heav'ns descent had slop'd his westering wheel.~~

~~Mean while~~ [T]he Rural ditties were not mute,

[A]Temper'd to th[e] Oaten Flute,

~~Rough~~ Satyrs ~~danced,~~ and Fauns with clov'n heel,

~~From the glad sound would not be absent long,~~

~~And old Damœtas lov'd to hear our song.~~

[The influence of our strains would feel,

To the glad sound would listen long

And hang enraptured on our song!] (Jackson 2-3)

Jackson does erase words and even whole lines and phrases, but although he omits "old Damœtas," the general picture remains the same. One sees, as one would in Milton's original, a vision of past pastoral happiness as the two young shepherds sing to a circle of pleased auditors. Such represents Jackson's customary method where he feels slight alterations are necessary. Furthermore, these slight alterations have less to with changing the tone or substance of his source and more to do with making the passages used for airs and choruses more appropriate for singing—thus the shortened lines and altered meter.

There are, however, two points where Jackson slashes large tracts of text and changes the complexion of the elegy. He removes St. Peter from the funeral procession, and he leaves off the ending, with its curious shift from the shepherd-mourner to an unnamed speaker who narrates the departure of "the uncouth swain." By far, the more glaring and significant alteration is that of Milton "foretelling" the ruin of a corrupt clergy. In the original elegy, among those who mourn Lycidas/King, the last to come and the last to leave is St. Peter, whose "stern" speech castigates church prelates who neglect their shepherd's trade and leave the flock neglected, unfed, or, worse, corrupted and diseased. Peter articulates Milton's nascent hostility to the English clergy (discussed later), and the speech bears repeating in order to compare it with Jackson's changes:

> How well could I have spar'd for thee young swain,
> Anow of such as for their bellies sake,
> Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold?
> Of other care they little reck'ning make,
> Then how to scramble at the shearers feast,
> And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
> Blind mouthes! That scarce themselves know how to hold
> A Sheep-hook, or have learn'd ought els the least
> That to the faithfull herdman's art belongs!
> What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs

Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw,

The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,

But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,

Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:

Besides what the grim woolf with privy paw

Daily devours apace, and nothing sed,

But that two-handed engine at the door,

Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more. (108-31)

Not surprisingly, the Pilot of the Galilean Lake does not show up to mourn Prince Edward, and Jackson shifts what little he keeps of this complaint to Camus (the river Cam that represents Cambridge University mourning one of its promising scholars). In a space of twenty-three lines, Milton savages the English Church, indignantly mentions the Catholic "woolf," and threatens reprisal on both. Jackson condenses this polemical tour-de-force into eight lines in which the River Cam bemoans the death of Lycidas/Prince Edward:

How well could I have spar'd thee [for?]

The swains who [whose?] lean and flashy songs

Grate on their pipes of wretched straw?

The sheep look up and are not fed,

But swoln with the rank mist they draw,

Rot and foul contagion spread—

Not so thy flocks, O shepherd dear;

Not so thy songs, O muse most rare! (8)

There is still a complaint, but Jackson removes the most virulent and polemical element. Instead of self-serving, neglectful shepherds, there are merely incompetent ones.

Through omission, Jackson prudently sidesteps Milton's stance on religious politics and the trouble it often presented to later generations. However, a buried subtext is detectable to those familiar with Hamilton's treatment of *Samson.* Ruth Smith observes that Milton was a useful figurehead for musicians and librettists sympathetic to "opposition" politics (*Handel's Oratorios* 292-93), and Jackson was apparently relying on this association to mourn the passing of a would-be leader gone before his time. On 22 May 1767, Edward had addressed the House of Lords in a speech "hostile to the government," and from early 1766 until his fatal departure from England in June of the next year he became involved with the "King's Friends" in opposing his brother George III's ministers (Kilburn, "Edward Augustus, Prince"). Edward's actions suggest he was starting down the path of his father, Prince Frederick, who in the 1730s and early 1740s marched at the vanguard of opposition to his father, George II, and Robert Walpole. Be that as it may, whatever intentions the prince had, his aims met an abrupt end. The complaint of Camus thus veils a barb targeting George III and his ministry, suggesting Jackson hoped to follow the pattern of *Samson,* which Hamilton dedicated to Prince Frederick as a condemnation of Walpole and George II. Finally, Prince Edward was still a young man (28) when he died, and his budding political career is analogous to the promising but all-too-short life of Lycidas/King.

One experiences vertigo when faced with the implications of this maneuver. Milton—a stout supporter of regicide, vocal antimonarchist, and religious independent who sought thorough-going reform in church structure and discipline—is made the voice of opposition, a familiar one for him, but in an elegy lamenting the death of a potential king. (Edward was heir presumptive from the time his brother acceded to the throne in late 1760 until May 1762, when George III and Queen Charlotte's first child, the future George IV, was born.) Additionally, considering Milton's intense frustration with the factions that crippled England's interregnum governments, one might wonder how he would have felt about being drafted into the partisan contentions of the next century. At the distance of more than 200 years and faced with a paucity of evidence, it is difficult to know if audience members at the first performance felt any such

cognitive dissonance. *The Monthly Review* thought it an "absurd" piece of "impertinence," but what exactly the reviewer found ridiculous and inappropriate he does not deign to specify. The review does hint that the Covent Garden audience did not receive the piece warmly: "Milton's *Lycidas* is here applied to the late breach made in the Royal Family, by the death of the Duke of York. The design was absurd, and the performance was treated as such a piece of impertinence deserved" (37 [November 1767], 393). Attending the Bath performance later in November, minor poet Thomas Underwood clearly felt differently. Underwood penned "The Grateful Tribute" to Jackson "upon hearing the Lycidas of Milton perform'd . . . in Bath, Thursday, Nov. 26, 1767" (139). He proclaims the soul of Handel revived in Jackson and fervently praises the singers of the performance, but he does not refer at all to the original occasion for the piece. Underwood's poem, however, does allude to the work's poor reception, glossing the phrase "Roast-Beef Ears" by explaining that "This piece was but indifferently receiv'd at Covent-Garden" (139).

Underwood's defense and the review's mention of an absurd "design" imply negative reactions to *Lycidas* may have had more to do with an inferior composition, a poor performance, or an ill-conceived libretto than with any offence or impropriety related to the source (i.e., Milton or "Lycidas"). Indeed, considering the libretto in its original context exposes some carelessness in design. Jackson may have quieted St. Peter and diverted Milton's discontent to other channels, but he left inconsistencies that make the piece "impertinent" for the occasion. For instance, if Jackson wished to fit *Lycidas* to the circumstance, he would have done well to omit such lines as "Ah me! Whilst thee the shores and founding seas / Wash far away; where e'er thy bones or hurled" (Jackson 11).[2] The inclusion is especially ill-conceived as the prince was buried at Westminster on 3 November 1767, the day before *Lycidas* was performed. Edward may have died abroad like King/Lycidas, but unlike the case of the latter, those mourning the duke knew exactly where his body lay.

Moreover, from Jackson's point-of-view, the prince's actions emulated his much-beloved father's, but, in a twist of bitter irony, Edward shared little in common with Frederick. The

latter's convictions were sincere, and his death was sincerely mourned. The former's role in government in the 1760s, in contrast, stemmed less from his father's keen sense of civic and more from self-serving motives:

> York involved himself more in politics in the mid-1760s, partly through his desire to increase his income. He had been awarded £12,000 p.a. and a £16,000 grant towards a house in 1760, and £3000 from the Irish revenues in 1764, but this was not enough to maintain his establishment as he wished. It had been decided in principle that the duke of Cumberland's income could be used to benefit George III's brothers on his death, and York's burst of activity in early 1766 may well have been intended to bring in an administration that would give greater priority to his financial settlement than the beleaguered Rockingham ministry. (Kilburn, "Edward Augustus, Prince")

Jackson apparently did not see this side of Edward. And how could he? As a young man, Jackson had moved to England to study under John Travers, organist of the Chapel Royal, but a lack of funds compelled him to return home to Exeter around 1748 (Williamson, "Jackson of Exeter"). He remained there the rest of his life. It is thus highly unlikely that he would have attained royal patronage or recognition providing him intimate knowledge of the deceased's personal motives for his political maneuvers. From Jackson's outsider perspective, no doubt Edward appeared in a more favorable light. The fact that others saw the prince's actions more clearly may account for the work's lackluster reception.

Jackson's sloppiness left plenty room for criticism, but nowhere does the "impertinence" of adapting the work of a regicide supporter to mourn a one-time heir apparent register. Adapting "Lycidas" for this occasion is doubly problematic since it was one of Milton's most celebrated poems but one in which his political discontent bursts out with such violence that his controversial career becomes hard to ignore. Yet more than Jackson's carelessness is evident in this odd affair; his choice of Milton also suggests how well the various controversies of the poet's

life could be kept separate from his poetry, even when the poetry itself broke out in rebellion against the status quo. It also speaks to a peculiar political utility of Milton, for his continued relevance often relied upon acknowledging his checkered political stances to celebrate him as a political figurehead. Those familiar with "Lycidas" must have still heard something of that dissent for which he was known, and an afterpiece on the death of a prince with "Words altered from Milton" may have raised a scornful chortle from any Tory-leaning audience member who shared Samuel Johnson's view of the poet.

Moreover, whether the progression from grief to consolation actually occurs in the original is debatable, which makes it, upon closer investigation, not a wise choice. To explain, "Lycidas" contains an awful lot of discord requiring a heavy hand on Jackson's part. St. Peter's thunderous condemnation of hirelings and papists quite literally interrupts the song, for the "uncouth swain" must coax back mourners fled in terror of Peter's voice: "Return Alpheus, the dread voice is past, / That shrunk thy streams; / Return Sicilian muse" (132-33). Predictably and wisely, Jackson cuts most of this. But there was only so much he could slash away, and what remains preserves other discords. In what would be Johnson's central critique of the poem in *Life of Milton* (1779) a dozen years later, the swain often loses focus on Lycidas and turns towards his own anxieties rather than his sadness over the death of a friend. Were this poem by Byron instead of Milton, one would be tempted to detect humorous discord of apocalyptic proportions in this rather awkward and tumultuous funeral procession. In spite of Jackson's changes, erasing the swain's off-topic outbursts would erase the poem altogether. He did his best, but the finished product results in a somewhat awkward memorial.

To Jackson's credit, he turns some of these challenges into assets. The multiplicity of voices who speak at Lycidas's funeral allows for a dramatic presentation shifting from solo recitative to choruses as additional "mourners" appear.[3] Unlike Milton, Jackson has no intentions of composing a "monody," and the multiple characters and the "progression" from grief to consolation ostensibly made the pastoral-elegy fit for an occasion of national mourning. Yet the

most obvious arguments against its appropriateness are the concerns actually voiced in the elegy—the swain's contemplation of his own life and career choices, rather than the life and death of Lycidas, and St. Peter's "dread voice" and apocalyptic threat. The second-most obvious argument against "Lycidas" relates not to the poem itself but to Milton's reputation: he was no friend to English royalty. The lattermost concern did not stop Hamilton from dedicating his libretto for *Samson* to Prince Frederick, and it did not stop Jackson from adapting the elegy in memory of Edward.

As for the other concerns, Jackson had solid precedents and patterns to rely upon when exploiting Milton's cultural capital and diverting his political discontents to a new agenda. Dalton and Hamilton displayed wonderful timing and enterprising pluck in pulling Milton into the contentions of opposition politics, and in the latter's case, he emphasizes the strong ideological resemblance between Milton and Prince Frederick. Both were known for clean and temperate living, and both had a strong sense of civic duty and called for constant vigilance against government corruption and cultural degeneration. Frederick's bellicosity may have conflicted with Milton's customary preference for "deeds of peace," but the other similarities made them bedrocks of eighteenth-century patriot ideology. For Jackson, the timing may have been right, but the subject was all wrong. He tried to emulate Hamilton and mold his piece to honor a royal patriot, but he sorely misread his prince.

He also apparently meant to follow Dalton, who first exploited Milton's reputation as a national literary hero and representative of "British" values to make a political/aesthetic statement on art and "Britishness." Jackson once again misread—this time, misunderstanding both the prince he honored and the poet he appropriated. Jackson's 1755 preface to *12 Songs Op.4*, "an important statement of the composer's aims," emphasizes his "aspiration of setting only the highest quality verse in a musical style based upon the traditions of a national melody which owed little to the fashionable excesses of Italian opera" and is "fiercely critical of descriptive word-painting which seeks to express the sound of the text, rather than its inherent sentiment"

(Williamson, "Jackson of Exeter"). It was none other than Handel who made word-painting popular, but it would be almost fifteen years before Jackson fully voiced his objections to Handelian composition. According to Richard McGrady, Jackson's

> most significant musical commentary is the essay *Observations on the Present State of Music in London* (1791). This rather pessimistic account of fashions of the age, regretting the inhibiting influence on English music of the cult of Handel and the triviality of Italian Opera, also includes the comment that the 'present SYMPHONY bears the same relation to Good Music, as the ravings of a Bedlamite do to sober sense.' ("Jackson of Exeter")

Although not yet fully developed by 1767, Jackson's hostility towards Handelian composition was established by the time he composed *Lycidas*, and his choice of Milton as a source appropriates the poet into a cultural-aesthetic battle over what constituted "native" British art. Jackson's choice implicitly invokes Milton's self-proclaimed role as liberator to imply that the composition casts off the oppressive yoke of the erstwhile deliverer, Handel. It is thus quite tempting to say that the "lean and flashy songs" of Jackson's adaptation are not a matter of politics plain and simple but of a culturally-significant conflict over aesthetics and that having read Milton's poems on music, he saw Milton as kindred spirit, a fellow—and British—proponent of clear words in music in defiance of "foreign" musical influences, such as the obscuring sonic effects of Italian opera and Handel's "Germanic" word-paintings. One would never call Handel's compositions "lean," but "flashy" is certainly a proper adjective, and Jackson thus presses Milton into supporting his enterprise of "plain," British music.

In *Comus*, Dalton and Arne implicitly celebrate Milton supposed Britishness and his (erroneously) supposed hostility to Italian music. Librettos of *Comus* often used an excerpt from *Ad Patrem* as an epigram. In this poem, Milton asks his father, a conservative musician in his own time, "And now, to sum it all up, what pleasure is there in the inane modulation of the voice without words and meaning and rhythmic eloquence?" (84, translation by Merritt Hughes). The

epigram and *Comus* itself—an *English* opera—reveal the deliberate use of Milton's status as national hero and a representative of "British values" in the opera wars of the 1730s. In actuality, Milton's distaste for "inane modulations" had nothing to do with a disdain for Italian music, nor, obviously, could it relate to the musical practices of Handel a century later. However, his actual musical tastes and the meaning of his statements in *Ad Patrem* mattered little to a later generation of composers and librettists; what mattered was the utility of the statement itself. Milton's staunch republicanism became for a later generation an expression of patriot principles, and "John Milton, Englishman" transformed into "John Milton, True Briton." In similar fashion, the conservative (but not necessary anti-Italian) musical tastes Milton inherited from his father and that he praises in *Ad Patrem* later came to be an expression of solidarity with those attempting to supplant Italian opera with English opera. Ironically, once Handel fully abandoned Italian opera in favor of vernacular compositions (odes and oratorios often based on the works of Dryden and Milton), he was seen as an innovator in native, "British" art. Nevertheless, Handel had his detractors in his lifetime, and Jackson's choice of a "native" Englishman (or Briton) to denigrate his "flashy songs" renews those old hostilities to the German-born composer. As is the case in political history, so in this section of English musical history: the erstwhile liberator becomes the new oppressor. From Jackson's point-of-view, Handel's innovations initiated a new era of foreign dominance over English music.

If Jackson intended a jab at Handel, one of his biggest fans missed the joke. Underwood's "The Grateful Tribute," the only known appraisal of *Lycidas* at Bath, exclaims that "'Twas rapture all! Strains so divine, / 'A nervous soul in every line'" (139), and the poem praises Jackson for his genius and enrolls the performers, "in the lists of fame" (140). Underwood acknowledges the work as Milton's, claiming he wrote his tribute "upon hearing the Lycidas of Milton." He also compares Jackson favorably to Handel, alluding to the late composer's famous success in marrying the sister arts of music and verse. In the preface to *Samson*, Hamilton had credited Handel, "that great Master," for "having already added new life and spirit to some of the

finest things in the English language," and as Handel composed the music for *Samson* and earlier for the ode based upon the twin poems, the comparison seems a natural one. Unfortunately, Jackson would not have found Underwood's comparison flattering.

Underwood did not get the joke; it is probable others did not either. First, Jackson was not a very well-known composer, so it is doubtful that many audience members, especially at Covent Garden, would have been aware of his antipathy towards Handel. Second, it is unclear how a satire against Handelian composition connects in any way to the original occasion for the piece, for if Jackson misread Prince Edward's political maneuvers, he was equally poor-sighted regarding the prince's relationship to the arts. Prince Edward "had always been fascinated by the performing arts" (Kilburn, "Edward Augustus"), but this fascination does not appear to have extended to patronage for musicians antithetical to Handelian composition. Edward has been credited with some unsigned minuets, but the performance art he was most interested in was conventional theatre, if his relationships with actors David Garrick and Samuel Foote are any indication. And when the prince toured Italy between November 1763 and August 1764, "His intentions seem to have been primarily social, and many of his cultivated hosts among British diplomatic representatives were unimpressed by his lack of appreciation of art" (Kilburn, "Edward Augustus"). This was not a man musicians would look to as a defender of the arts. But, perhaps Jackson understood Edward's indifference to art in Italy as an implicit endorsement of British art. Whatever the case, Jackson's long stay in Exeter after leaving London in 1748 makes it highly unlikely that he had an intimate knowledge of Edward's musical tastes. If *Lycidas* makes a jest at Handel's expense, it was an extremely private one.

Jackson plucked all the wrong strings in appropriating Milton to his political and aesthetic concerns, but there is evidence of an apolitical interpretation of the poem and of the adaptation that redeem Jackson somewhat—and that makes the adaptation even more fascinating. *The Monthly Review* clearly related the afterpiece to "the late breach in the Royal Family," but the Covent Garden libretto does not mention this "breach" as the occasion: "Lycidas / A / Musical

Entertainment. / As it is performed at the / Theatre Royal / in / Covent Garden/ The Words altered form Milton."[4] Likely, the afterpiece was announced as a memorial composition for the recently deceased, probably by one the performers, much like the prologue and epilogue for *Comus*. If such an announcement prefaced the Bath performance, Underwood must not have been listening. Furthermore, evidence suggests there was no such announcement in the first place because at Bath the composition no longer honored Edward. The title of the Bath libretto sheds light onto the differing presentation of the entertainment there: "The Lycidas of Milton; / and, Wharton's Ode to Fancy / Altered and set to music by William Jackson." The first thing to note is that the Bath occasion was a mixed performance, like *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* when coupled with Dryden's "St. Cecilia's Day Ode." This time, however, Jackson's compositions were the feature pieces instead of the afterpiece. Second, the title again does not mention the death of Prince Edward, and *Lycidas* is here coupled with an "Ode to Fancy." At Bath Jackson intended his musical elegy to be an entertainment in its own right, wholly untethered from its original context at Covent Garden.

Not surprisingly, then, Underwood's tribute betrays no recognition of the prince's death as an inspiration for *Lycidas*. Nor does he mention "Ode to Fancy," which apparently failed to impress compared to Jackson's work with Milton's poem. To Underwood, the piece is the "Lycidas of Milton" set to music by the next Handel and sung by performers worthy of everlasting fame. For him, and no doubt for many others in attendance, *Lycidas* at Bath was a cultural event and an aesthetic experience, not a national or political matter. In other words, audiences were treated to a different entertainment than at Covent Garden and received it accordingly—that is, as a contemplation of death and mourning, perhaps related to the Duke of York, perhaps to Milton's Lycidas/King, perhaps merely to a generic shepherd-poet.

In its apolitical context, *Lycidas* at Bath presents a staged "biography" of the poet that reveals Milton's continued viability and attraction for the musical stage. Jackson may elide the final shift in perspective (which will be discussed shortly), but he retains Milton's contemplation

of "the homely slighted shepherd's trade" (Jackson 11), a section that includes Milton's description of the divine poet whose "clear spirit" must "scorn delights, and live laborious days." Jackson also preserves Apollo's reply to the wavering swain in which the god assures him divine poetry has its rewards (Jackson's omissions struck through):

> Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
>
> ~~Nor in the glistering foil~~
>
> ~~Set off to th' world, nor in broad rumour lies~~,
>
> Nor yet set off in glist'ring foil,
>
> Nor in broad busy rumor lies;
>
> But ~~lives and~~ spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
>
> And ~~perfet~~ witnes of all-judging Jove;
>
> As he pronounces ~~lastly~~ on each deed,
>
> Of so much fame ~~in Heav'n~~ expect thy meed. (Jackson 11-12)

For an audience of the late eighteenth century, it would have been difficult to disassociate Apollo's promise from Milton's later achievement in divine poetry. Indeed, like Spenser before him, Milton ostentatiously and deliberately followed Virgil's famous career arc from pastoral to epic poetry, so to read Milton's (and Spenser's) pastoral works with an eye towards their epics would have been a reflex. Furthermore, by 1767, audiences had ample reason to approach *Lycidas* (both the poem and the musical entertainment) as autobiographical pieces. There had already been four full-length vernacular adaptations of Milton's poetry, three of them (*Comus*, *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*, and *Samson*) quite successful and three (*Comus*, *Samson*, and *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio*) with prefatory material praising the poet and building up his aura and authority. It would have therefore been quite difficult to erase him to the extent Dryden did in *The State of Innocence*. Carter Revard has noted that "In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century it became possible for English poets to amplify their voices by using Milton's lion-skin as an echo chamber" (205). Throughout the eighteenth century, librettists and musicians amplified

Milton's own voice as well as their own by giving Milton the lion's share of the credit, such as Dalton did with *Comus* and Stillingfleet with *Paradise Lost: An Oratorio*. If these librettists asserted their fidelity to Milton's texts—which implied that what audiences heard was "Milton"—then how much more so would they have heard "Milton" in *Lycidas*, which rehearses the poet's contemplation of his office?

Indeed, by 1767, readers and critics had spilled plenty of ink thinking about Milton the poet. The picture of him as the *vates*, developed by the poet himself and nurtured by the early lives, was avidly seized upon by Whigs and later by Patriots. Dalton and Hamilton grabbed hold of this picture of the vatic poet as a temperate man and fastened it securely to Milton the man. And with good reason. Milton himself speaks of the importance of temperance to the divine poet in both prose and poetry. In addition to his remarks in *Apology Against a Pamphlet*, he explains the tasks of the divine or heroic poet to Charles Diodati in *Elegia Sexta*:

> But he whose theme is wars and heaven under Jupiter in his prime, and pious heroes and chieftains half-divine, and he who sings now of the sacred council of gods in high, and now the infernal realms where the fierce dogs howl, let him live sparingly like the Samian teacher, and let herbs furnish his innocuous diet. Let the purest water stand beside him in a bowl of beech, and let him drink sober draughts from pure the spring. Beyond this, his youth must innocent of crime and chaste, his conduct irreproachable and his hand without blemish. . . . For truly the bard is sacred to the gods and is their priest. His hidden heart and his lips alike breathe out Jove. (52, translation by Merritt Hughes)

Milton's highest type of poet is an artistic Nazarene set apart unto God to live the cleanliest of lives. Readers in the eighteenth century did not have to work very hard to see autobiography in this, for the biographies of Milton regularly peddled the (not wholly fallacious) myth of Milton as a man apart—he who styled himself as fallen on "evil dayes . . . and evil tongues; / In darkness, and with dangers compast round, / And solitude" (*PL* 7:26-28). A myth that also includes not

only the "clear spirit" in "Lycidas," *Elegia sexta*, and prose but also Milton's praise of "th' upright heart and pure" (1:18) in *Paradise Lost*, arguably the most famous and widely-read poem of the era.

Even if Milton overstated his solitude and reclusiveness, eighteenth-century readers would not have been wrong to read an autobiographical angle into "Lycidas." Some autobiography is already there and cannot be denied. Indeed, Johnson's central complaint about "Lycidas" works to Jackson's favor at Bath, for like the swain/Milton who loses focus on Lycidas/King, Jackson's whole elegy "forgets" Prince Edward in its move from London to Bath. Freed from its originary occasion, *Lycidas* presents, instead, young "Milton" at this crucial moment in his career, when he doubts but ultimately affirms his decision to become a poet.

Jackson's second substantial omission, however, would seem to preclude *Lycidas* from echoing the autobiographical resonances of "Lycidas." To condense the resolution, Jackson shortens the penultimate section of his source ("Weep no more, woful shepherds weep no more") from twenty-one lines to fifteen distributed between a seven-line air and an eight-line chorus. Together, they comprise the conclusion for his composition:

> *Air.*
>
> Weep no more, woful shepherds weep no more,
>
> For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
>
> Sunk tho' he be beneath the wat'ry floor,
>
> So sinks the Day-Star in his ocean-bed,
>
> And yet anon repairs his drooping head
>
> And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
>
> Flames in the forehead of the morning sky!
>
> *Chorus.*
>
> Woeful shepherds weep no more,
>
> He is the genius of the shore,

He is ascended from the waves,

With nectar pure his locks he laves,

And hears the song of joy and love

From solemn troops amid the skies,

Who singing in their glory move,

And wipe the tears forever from his eyes. (Jackson 11-13)

These lines do not stray far from Milton's, but Jacksons' next move does. He slashes completely the eight lines that conclude the original elegy:

Thus sang the uncouth swain to th' okes and rills,

While the still morn went out with sandals gray,

He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,

With eager thought warbling his Dorick lay:

And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,

And now was dropt into the western bay;

At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blew:

To morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new. (186-93)

The omission changes the complexion of the grief expressed in the elegy. In Milton's "Lycidas," the swain completes his lamentation and moves on; in Jackson's *Lycidas*, the audience may literally move on after the piece is over, but the piece itself closes with Lycidas's resurrection and ascent to Heaven. As with many things, Jackson was following the pattern of those before him. In *Samson*, Hamilton leaves audiences with a paean to Samson's heroic death and "memorializes" his actions by speaking of the tomb Manoa will build for his son. Stillingfleet also changes the ending of his oratorio so that it ends with a prophecy of Christ's birth rather than with Adam and Eve leaving Eden. Eighteenth-century adaptation clearly had a preference for more positive endings that focused on redemption and "the good news."

Milton had his own pattern. In the original, he moves from the *sturm und drang* of the swain and from St. Peter's ire to hopeful assurance and consolation as focus shifts to the baroque apotheosis of Lycidas. The dead shepherd is lifted from the watery ocean floor and transported to Heaven where all the saints and angels comfort him with song. Clearly, the content and the tone of "Lycidas" changes as the elegy approaches its end. But Lycidas's apotheosis is not the end—at least, not for the swain/Milton. In an autobiographical interpretation of the poem, the swain is Milton, who has recently finished his formal education at Cambridge and has decided (or is very close to deciding) to reject a living in the Church and devote his life and energies to poetry. The "fresh woods, pastures new" signify verse, but they could also symbolize Milton's pending trip to the Continent and even his entry into prose controversy in 1641. However one chooses to interpret the conclusion, the swain has soothed the doubts and anxieties his friend's death incited, and with his grief past him, life and the swain go on.

Milton follows here a consistent pattern of pulling the rug from beneath his readers. Ten years earlier, in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (comp. 1629), the poet rises to an apocalyptic fervor, depicting the infant savoir entering the world and anticipating the end of days and the return of justice and universal harmony—almost as if the end were coming with the birth of Christ—but he curbs his enthusiasm and the verse in mid-sprint: "But wisest Fate sayes no" (149). This is a hallmark in much of Milton's best poetry; he always leaves work to be done. He anticipates the rout of the Antichrist in "The Nativity Ode," but leaves the infant Jesus slumbering in his crib, the bulk of his father's business to be tended to later: "The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy, / That on the bitter cross / Must redeem our loss" (151-53). In *Paradise Regained*, the mature Christ earns a significant victory over Satan in the wilderness only to retire to his mother's house. The final, heroic act that will "redeem our loss" remains years in the future. In *Samson Agonistes*, the eponymous hero lays the Philistines low, but Israel, as Manoa reminds them, has its own task ahead if it to finish their liberator's work and fully free themselves from bondage. And in *Paradise Lost*, Michael tells Adam of the final victory of the Son over Satan (the dragon),

but Milton does not take Spenser's route in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and narrate an apocalyptic (albeit merely typological) battle. Instead, he leaves readers with the bittersweet vision of Adam and Eve leaving Eden hand in hand, with all the world before them and all of human history to come.

Similarly, in "Lycidas," Milton cuts the celebration of Lycidas' ascension short with one of the most famous perspective shifts in all of English poetry. Jackson removes this conclusion from his elegy, and the omission is a wise one as the piece was originally dedicated to Prince Edward and not merely another Milton poem adapted to music. It would have been disrespectful to the memory of the late prince for the entertainment to depict the poet (or the performers) walking away from his symbolic funeral procession. Combined with Jackson's alteration of St. Peter's speech, which made the complaint's original nature nearly unrecognizable, what is left is a more sedate composition. The ending of Milton's original does not seem to end so much as it simply forgets its original "purpose." Perhaps it quiets the swain's agonizing doubts concerning "the homely slighted shepherd's trade," but for the swain (and for Milton), there remain those fresh woods and pastures new. Unlike Milton, but like Hamilton and Stillingfleet, Jackson "closes" Milton's ending and offers the far more assured—and more orthodox—conclusion. The apotheosis of Lycidas (and of Edward) reminds the audience that God is in Heaven and that Christ resurrects the righteous, for Lycidas/Edward "is ascended from the waves" and "hears the song of joy and love / From solemn troops amid the skies, / Who singing in their glory move, / And wipe the tears forever from his eyes" (11-13).

Although Jackson removes the autobiographical reference at the end, the title page to the Covent Garden libretto takes it epigram from it: "Thus sings the uncouth swain— / With eager thought warbling his Doric lay!" Its inclusion restores the self-reflexive nature of Milton's original to Jackson's adaptation. It is also safe to assume audience members with libretto in hand who were familiar with the original "Lycidas" would, upon spotting the epigram, know full well the identity of the swain. Assuming a similar design for the Bath libretto only reinforces an

autobiographical approach to *Lycidas* once Jackson took the work away from Covent Garden. The epigram, additional performances, Underwood's reaction to the piece, and the libretto's lack of reference to Edward make it plausible that many audience members perceived Jackson's *Lycidas* separate from its originary context and as simply a musical entertainment serving as staged biography. Indeed, retaining the conclusion of his source would have proved a disastrous choice in the original context, and even when performed in Bath, retaining it would have jarred horribly with the whole. After all, the shift would create an awkward break in perspective and presentation. It might very well be that the epigram was meant to restore the autobiographical self-reflexivity that simply would not have worked in the musical performance.

As with his redactions, Jackson had precedents for framing the Bath performance as staged autobiography. Readers and critics observed a strong connection between Milton the man with his poetry, and "Lycidas" presents one of Milton's most extensive contemplations of the poetic office. *Lycidas* at Bath thus returns to its source, Milton, to act out the autobiographical questions voiced in the original elegy. On the one hand, the truly "Miltonic" element of the poet's life, work, and thought was his championing of liberty, implied in Jackson's choice of Milton to honor his "patriot" prince. On the other, "Miltonic" also denoted divine poetry, a central topic in "Lycidas." For eighteenth-century readers, both ideas of what exactly constituted the Miltonic spirit involved (in criticism) turning a blind eye or (in adaptation) lopping off what was deemed unsavory in Milton's writing and thought, including a complete refusal to acknowledge his differences with the Church of England.

Jackson's precedents for such elision extend well beyond musical theatre. Given Milton's stature as the sublime poet-divine of Great Britain, eighteenth-century readers were greatly concerned with his career, as evidenced by the lives that often accompanied his works. For instance, Elijah Fenton's *Life of Milton* (1725), which drew upon and largely repeated prior biographers, often prefaced editions of *Paradise Lost* and larger collections of Milton's poetry. However, the lives seem ill-inclined to accept how his disillusionment with the Church drove him

to serve God through poetry instead. The connection is one of intense fascination for modern criticism, but exposes a blind spot of earlier criticism and biography that parallels redactions of Milton's poetry that suppress his religious independence.[5] The lives often point to Milton's education, precocity, and early verse as proof that he was, as Edward Philips contends, "destin'd the be ornament and glory of his countrey" (53), but only the Richardsons make the connection between his disgust with the Church and his decision to become a poet. When Phillips praises "Lycidas," he ignores its antiprelatism altogether: "Never was the loss of friend so elegantly lamented; and among the rest of his juvenile poems, some which he wrote at the age of 15, which contain a poetical scarce to paralleled by any English writer" (55). The Richardsons state that Milton's father early on destined his eldest son for the Church, which the younger Milton "avoided, upon account of the subscription, which he scrupled. (See his Introduction to the second part of *Church Government*.)" (255). A huge step forward in Milton biography, it is the last that the Richardsons would take on that topic. They dub Milton "a dissenter from our Church as by law established" (232), and believe it "very probable that he was always very anti-Episcopal, and no lover of our established Church" (237). They also engage with Milton's controversial opinions and prose more than any other eighteenth-century critic or biographer. But, like the rest, they do not dwell on the topic. They describe Milton's antiprelatism and religious dissent as "rather political than religious, such as relate to the circumstantial rather than to the essentials or substance of religion" but claim "it is not necessary to enlarge [on these essentials], and I am glad it is not" (240). They were not the only ones to discuss Milton's dissent who wished that they did not have to.

Excluding the Richardsons, there seems to have been a general avoidance (a willed ignorance, even) of how Milton's antiprelatism contributed directly to his choice of poetry, something which shows up in Jackson's treatment of *Lycidas*. Furthermore, little substantial commentary on "Lycidas" existed for Jackson to draw on in 1767. Even that which does acknowledge the polemical bent of the elegy rarely connects Milton's antiprelatism with his

devotion to poetry. Fenton praises it and some of the other short poems in his *Life* and Newton's notes on *Paradise Lost* (1749) compare Michael's two-handed sword with the two-handed engine Peter alludes to and explains that Milton imitates Italians satire's use of St. Peter as a mouthpiece of vengeance against corruptions in the church (Newton 449). The Richardsons, the most innovative and clear-sighted early biographers of Milton, do not touch upon the poem's politics or its potential connections to Milton's aversion to a church living. In 1754, William Shenstone discouraged poets from imitating the prosody of "Lycidas" (Shawcross 2.231). Besides these few mentions, it would be more than a decade before Johnson savaged "Lycidas" in his *Life of Milton* (1779) for insincerity and more still before Thomas Warton's extensive commentary in his edition of the shorter poems (1785).

One can attribute this blindness to reluctance to engage with Milton's controversial prose. Those who read the second book to *The Reason of Church-Government* (1642) would have found Milton's account of how he was "Church-outed by prelats," an event which led directly to his choice to write something "aftertimes . . . should not willingly let . . . die" (668). The Richardsons and Warton did not share such reluctance, but between Toland in 1698, the Richardsons in 1734, and Warton in 1785, precious little was said on the antiprelatical prose. Second only to the Richardsons, Warton actively engages Milton's troubled history with the English Church, and although his work appears too late to have a bearing on Jackson's adaptation, his treatment of the poem helps illustrates a broad-spanning and long-running attitude towards Milton's antiprelatism that one sees in Jackson's choices.

It is difficult to discern Warton's attitude towards Milton in his annotations; however, as Warton's father and his grandfather on his mother's side were church ministers, one can guess (Reid). Warton traces the consistency of Milton's hostility towards church "endowments" (Warton's choice of words) from "Lycidas" through the rest of his career, referring to *Paradise Lost*, Sonnet 15 (to Cromwell), and most frequently to Milton's "puritanical tracts" (21). His word choice (puritanical) describing Milton's prose no doubt says something of his view of those

tracts. In annotating "Lycidas," Warton's last words on St. Peter's rant indicate very little sympathy for Milton's perspective. He alludes to Milton's disgust with the Church and finds him "rather unhappy in his comparison, which follows, of episcopacy to a large wen growing on the head: for allowing such a wen, on his own principles, to be an excrency and a deformity, to cut it off may prove a dangerous operation; and perhaps it had better remained untouched." Lastly, Warton expresses surprise

> that this violent invective against the church of England and the hierarchy . . . should have been published under sanction and from the press of one of the universities; or that is should afterwards have escaped the severest animadversions, at a period, when the proscriptions of Star-chamber, and the power of Laud, were at their height. Milton, under pretense of exposing the faults or abuses of the episcopal clergy, attacks their establishment, and strikes at their existence. (23)

To Warton's credit, he does not shy away from explaining and contextualizing this "wen" on the face of Milton's poetic corpus. He even links St. Peter's fury with Milton's antiprelatical flare ups in *Paradise Lost* as he asks readers to consider Peter's complaint and Milton's prose stance to 4:193-94 in the epic: "So clomb this first grand thief into God's fould: / So since into his church lewd hirelings climbe" (Warton 20).

Yet Warton's disgust with this passage and with Milton's controversial tracts rides just below the surface. Perhaps the clearest indication of how he felt about St. Peter's speech manifests in this last remark on the passage. Because the passage is there, Warton cannot deny it. But he wishes something had been done (by the Star Chamber or Laud) to prevent this sore from marring the beauty of an otherwise a remarkable elegy. His last word on Milton's castigation of the church betrays a desire to suppress this element of Milton's poetry beneath a grudging acceptance than he cannot. This is not far off from the Richardsons' acknowledgement of Milton's political opinions on matters of religion, which they call attention to before refusing to

expand upon these "circumstantial" matters. Even when eighteenth-century readers could not ignore Milton's politics, they wish they could.[6]

In staging Milton's contemplation of the poetic office, Jackson proves just as ill-inclined to countenance these disconcerting aspects of Milton career that often "intrude" upon his art. This is no doubt largely because a screed against the church would jar with a memorial for the death of a royal family member. In its second and apolitical context, however, Jackson choice is a testament to the era's tendency to view Milton's poetry apart from his politics and to simply not see where they intersect, and Underwood's reaction indicates that for later performances, the work was more connected with Jackson, the performers, and the poet and seen rather as "a musical entertainment" based on "the Lycidas of Milton."

Milton's vatic poet devoted to temperance and to God fused with aftertime's perception of him. Even for more "sincere" biographers like the Richardsons, Milton's upright living and godliness were unquestionable in spite of his lifelong antiprelatism and his often "embarrassing" opinions. The tendency trickled into adaptations of his poems to the stage. The more difficult part of adapting his poetry was reconciling his views on religion and politics, not necessarily exclusive arenas, to the broadest possible British audience. This alerts us to the paradox that Milton—the century's figurehead of English greatness for his moral, religion, and poetic achievement authority—was often so combative and independent on matters of faith and politics as to render him an unfit representative of national character.

In *Lycidas*, Jackson tries to assimilate Milton as a mouthpiece of opposition to foreign influences (Handel) and domestic corruptions (inept government). His attempt was awkward and unsuccessful, but his imperfect work perfectly illustrates how the eighteenth century often appropriated the poet and his poetry. "Dissident Milton," always present but often pushed beyond the margins of consciousness, was not considered the "real" Milton, even for those who saw him as a proponent of liberty against governmental misrule or as a national poet-patron of virtue, temperance, and obedience—or as both. Both are the Milton of the eighteenth century in general,

and eighteenth-century musical/dramatic adaptation surgically removed the heretical or blasphemous Milton of Clarke, Leslie, and Theophilus and the politically "rebellious," religiously over-independent Milton of Johnson to make way for "the divine poet" whom the nation could admire as one of its own. For Jackson, Milton was the great native poet-prophet and champion of "British" virtue and liberty, as he was for many others. But for him to stand as such, criticism and adaptations had to hew from the rough stone of Milton's writings and his seventeenth-century reputation a smoother bust more befitting what the age wanted and needed "Milton" to be. One may wish Jackson had been finer with the hammer and chisel, but his work nevertheless deserves a careful glance, warts and all.

CONCLUSION

MILTON DISTILLED

Milton took pride in the fame his role as national defender gave him, and even if he exaggerated the spectrum of his influence, as G.W. Sensabaugh claims (1-2), his boasts bespeak a sincere desire to reach an extremely wide audience with his program of liberty of conscience and religious toleration. Yet even in his earlier works, directed at a broader readership than "the fit audience . . . though few" he desired for *Paradise Lost*, Milton nevertheless claims an exclusive, discerning audience. In *Areopagitica*, he "spoke" to the "high court of Parlament"; in the Latin defenses, to the discerning, scholarly fraternity of European humanists. Never in his career did he consider himself "a man speaking to men" in the far-reaching sense William Wordsworth later envisioned as the poet's office. In the prefaces to the mature poetry, this exclusivity resurfaces along with new, aggressive drive to frighten off many readers. In his late poetic career, Milton seems to relish the role of a man apart, a role he did not simply adopt but that was foisted upon him by the sociopolitical climate of the Restoration. He envisions himself as "On evil dayes . . . fall'n, and evil tongues, / In darkness, with dangers compast round, / And solitude" (*PL* 7:26-28), and the prefaces to *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* ooze with curmudgeonly (one would almost say regal) disdain for the approval of the masses. Perhaps this posture disguised Milton's disappointment with "the good old cause" and with the English people who failed to commit to a free republic. Perhaps it was the cool assessment of a man who understood the limited appeal of his poetry and of himself in the 1660s and '70s.

One wonders, then, how Milton would have reacted to the astronomical rise in his reputation and readership from 1688 on. Or what he would have thought concerning the evolving perceptions of his works, his thought, and him as a man and author that attended his rise in popularity in the eighteenth century. In particular, one wonders whether he would have been pleased or shocked by cruel irony that later generations of critics and poets, such as T.S. Eliot and Harold Bloom, held him up as a poet-tyrant whose imposing achievements in verse and perceived religious and moral orthodoxy produced a constricting influence on poetry and thought.[1] On the one hand, one cannot fault Milton for the fact that time swept many of his religious, philosophical, and scientific views into dusty obsolescence. Nor could he anticipate that the eighteenth-century—with its sundry editions, critical essays, "translations," imitations, paintings, and musical adaptations—would take his insistence on obedience to God to an extreme and thereby make him more orthodox and "tyrannical" than he was. On the other hand, if one looks only at *A Maske* and Thomas Arne and John Dalton's adaptation of it, *Comus*, the irony of Milton's fate appears less striking. Milton wrote the masque before he had begun to question his intention to join the clergy and before his gradual break with the Caroline/Laudian Church began. As such, the masque is his most theologically and intellectually conservative work. It is also the only lengthy, narrative poem he wrote prior to the disruptions of the Interregnum. *A Maske* precedes not only the elations and disappointments of the Commonwealth and Protectorate but also those of Milton's personal life—marriages, children, and early career successes, which were followed by the losses of his sight, his only son, and his first two wives. Experience is a powerful teacher, and its tutelage shows when comparing Milton's youthful labors to the works of his maturity.

True, there are many continuities between the works of the 1630s and those of the '50s and thereafter. In his poetic works, from "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and "Lycidas" through *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained,* and *Samson Agonistes*, Milton maintains a preference for assured but nevertheless open endings, and the nascent anticlericalism of "Lycidas" reemerges

in *Samson Agonistes*. And as Neil Forsyth notes, Milton carries over not only attitudes and themes but also tropes, such as the wolf, from his early poems to his mature ones (696-97). Moreover, despite some modern intimations that Milton was a thoroughgoing skeptic, perhaps even an "atheist," his late poems indicate he never stopped believing that the Messiah would return at the end of days and that the faithful would be resurrected to enjoy everlasting life in heaven.[2] He may have questioned many things in Scripture and in doctrine—including what happens in between the present and the Second Coming—but there seems little doubt that he believed there would be a Second Coming.

However, the hopefulness of "the good news" in the mature poems betrays a brand of optimism that comes to one who has faced the buffets of age and experience. These works also display the workings of a far-reaching intellect open to changes of opinions, beliefs, and assumptions. Furthermore, Milton's lone prose work in theology, *De Doctrina Christiana*, begun in the 1650s but left unpublished and unknown until the nineteenth century, reveals a man whose religious beliefs placed him well beyond the pale of orthodoxy. Indeed, by the definitions of the time, he was a heretic and even, as Michael Bryson states, an "atheist" (19-21). Milton never published this tract, written in Latin, and someone seems to have hid it well after it left Milton's hands. It was found "safely tucked amongst Latin correspondences in the Old State Papers Office, inside an envelope marked To Mr. Skinner (in all likelihood, Milton's pupil Cyriack Skinner)" (Bryson 54). Nevertheless, the heterodox mind that produced *De Doctrina Christiana* is apparent in *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained,* and *Samson Agonistes*.[3]

Thus, for all resemblances one finds between Milton's early poems and his later ones, when compared to the poems of the 1660s and '70s, *A Maske* remains his least inquisitive and most morally optimistic long narrative work. To hang upon the masque a sign of his orthodoxy is easy, and, in *Comus*, one apprehends the continued evolution of Milton's into eighteenth-century Britain's sublime poet of discipline. The masque's conventional message on the importance and the power of temperance merely gestures towards the internalized discipline Foucault believes

arose in the eighteenth century and that Blake creatively envisioned as the "mind-forg'd manacles" of religion and morality ("London" 8). But Dalton and Arne's *Comus* imposes a number of elements onto the masque's dichotomy of temperance and sensuality. In the 1630s, when Milton composed *A Maske*, it could be compared to precious little in Milton's then rather slim body of work. By the late 1730s, however, it was difficult to hear his name or encounter any of his works and not think of *Paradise Lost*, widely recognized as his greatest achievement and his most frequently printed and discussed poem. Moreover, esteem for Milton had risen exponentially since the Glorious Revolution, during and after which Whig (and, later, opposition) thinkers latched on to him as a champion of their principles of liberty and English Protestantism. Dalton and Arne could have done nothing to the masque and simply presented it as it is, and the work would have had cultural and political resonances it could never have expressed in the mid-1630s.

They most certainly did not present the text as it was, and so the dichotomy between temperance and sensuality takes on even greater significance. First, Dalton and Arne imposed onto Milton's text a patriot ideology based on a love of liberty and virtue. Their changes, in conjunction with broader changes in Milton's reputation and readership, also brought to their adaptation of the masque an understanding of his works that linked (dis)obedience with the dichotomies of temperance and sensuality, mirth and melancholy, liberty and license. The Lady survives her encounter with Comus with her life and virginity intact because she is a good girl, obedient to God's laws and to the social mores of her time. According to the allegory of *Comus*, so too would the free people of Great Britain, figured forth in the Lady, survive their own encounters with foreign vice and luxury if they remained obedient and in control of themselves.

The binaries of temperance and sensuality, liberty and license are far older than Milton, and he was by no stretch of the imagination the only early modern poet to build his fictions around them. But, for better or worse, in the eighteenth century, the poet of *Paradise Lost* was seen as one of the most powerful proponents of such conventional dichotomies. Dalton and Arne

read the theme of (dis)obedience back into their adaptation of *A Maske*, and by a paradox perhaps never apprehended by them, the native virtue of temperance that they saw as freeing Great Britain from the chains of modern corruption would become, as the century wore on and in later adaptations of Milton, a tyrannical force in its own right. Audience members of *Comus* familiar, even only slightly, with *Paradise Lost* could connect self-control not only to the consequence depicted in the sad spectacle of Comus's beastly rout but also to the far sadder sight of fallen Adam and Eve and the degeneration of humankind after the Fall.

Later adaptations continue turning interpretation of Milton's works away from the open-endedness he stresses and from the constant vigilance, inquiry, and growth he saw as necessary both for an individual's salvation and for that of humankind. The symbolic triumph of melancholy over mirth in *Comus* carried over into the various permutations of Charles Jennens and Frederick Handel's *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*, and in the musical ode, despite its multiple forms, "Georgian" (or "Augustan") balance imposes upon the twin poems' playful strife—a potent gesture implying that the self-control of melancholy must always trump the "pleasures free" of mirth. Thus, in the final version of the ode, Handel's new configuration conveys the sense that the happy person, though still addressing the goddess Mirth, hopes for pleasures akin to the religious experience of melancholy.

The closure foisted on the companion poems' jocular and never settled disputations has its analogue in the more rigorous redactions of Newburgh Hamilton and Benjamin Stillingfleet, who appropriate the poet for their respective national causes—for Hamilton, British patriotism, for Stillingfleet, British georgics and agrarianism. The treatment also resembles William Jackson's less thoroughgoing changes to "Lycidas," which he used to mourn a death in the royal family and to voice his own concerns over foreign influences on British music. Bernard Sharratt points to Joseph Addison as one of the strongest and earliest driving forces of Milton's "assimilation" to causes and views for which he would not have necessarily have had much sympathy. "Milton himself transposed his political dilemma [i.e., the failure of "the good old

cause"] into a theological form," yet "Addison's essays transformed *Paradise Lost* from a theological inquiry into a 'literary' narrative, to be read primarily for its 'literary' qualities and, secondarily, perhaps, as suitable devotional (not theological) matter for Sundays." The elision "of any substantially theological or political significance of the poem . . . encapsulates, concentrates, and bequeaths to subsequent readers a notion of 'literature' as, precisely, defined by its distinction from 'non-literary' considerations which Milton himself would not have wholeheartedly endorsed" (42). Recent scholarship and this study of Milton adaptations complicate Sharratt's vision of a purely "literary" approach to Milton's poems, but he nevertheless quite accurately observes an elision of inquiry in Milton criticism—an erasure also encapsulated in the oratorios redacted from *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost*.

Hamilton and Handel's *Samson* was no mere "artistic" piece separated from the hurly-burly of politics and the anxieties of the British people in the 1740s, for the entertainment presents Samson as a patriot hero and Israel as a type of Great Britain. Yoking Milton's poem to a national narrative of Protestant resistance to Catholic enemies, Hamilton and Handel exploit Milton's reputation a champion of liberty even as they curb the religious inquiries and doubts he believed were requisite to personal and national salvation. In *Samson Agonistes*, doubt and questioning lead Samson back to God, much like Milton in *Areopagitica* believes the constant vigilance of the restless intellect would lead to Truth, and ultimately to salvation. In *Samson*, the hero and his people free themselves from Philistine captivity, but the interpretive quandaries and theological queries that would "free" the reader disappear. In plainer terms than in Milton's closet drama, Samson of the oratorio is disobedient and once he acknowledges this and reaffirms his obedience to God, his path to righteousness and to the fulfillment of his duty as deliverer follow with inevitable regularity.

Similarly, Stillingfleet and John Christopher Smith's *Paradise Lost* offers not inquisitive theology and theodicy, but "liturgical" articulation of God's greatness and of the grave importance of duty and obedience. Gone from the adaptation are Satan's accounts of his fall and

of God and Adam and Eve's postlapsarian debates with each other and with themselves. The result is a streamlined religious viewpoint that focuses on the sin of disobedience without the numerous explanations of how one can disobey despite his or her best efforts and intentions not to. The removal of Satan's rhetorically awe-inspiring temptation of Eve has the effect of making the message of the oratorio (and the epic) similar to C. S. Lewis's perspective of the Fall. "The Fall," Lewis proclaims, "is simply and solely Disobedience—doing what you have been told not to do," and "Eve's arguments in favor of eating the Apple are, in themselves, reasonable enough, but "the answer to them consists simply in the reminder, 'You mustn't. You were told not to'" (70-71).

Stillingfleet's redactions also implicitly link the vision of a georgic Paradise to his own belief that closer ties to the soil would exalt the nation, whereas as a disconnect from the land would lead to the nation's defilement. He thus continues to attach "Milton" to an important eighteenth-century British concern with national virtue and national prosperity. Indeed, the need for a strong Protestant "British" faith is reflected in Stillingfleet's altered conclusion to Milton's narrative. The end of oratorio removes the Miltonic "optimism" that reminds readers of the good news (Christ's ultimate victory over Satan, sin, and death) at the same time emphasizing that "Long is the way, and hard, that out of darkness leads up to the light." Similarly, William Jackson's *Lycidas* omits the "restlessness" of Milton's conclusion that provides readers with the comforting realization of everlasting life for the dead before the swain's exits reminds them that life and strife must go on for the living. Such reminders recede in the adaptations (particularly in those of *Samson Agonistes*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Lycidas*), which dispatch the grim acknowledgments of life's struggles and focus on hymns to God's greatness and beneficence.

Although he did less to the text than those preceding him, Jackson attempted to do quite a bit with the relatively short poem, "Lycidas." He predictably erases the poet's antiprelatism and diverts the swain's ire towards newer and apparently more acceptable targets: incompetent government officials and lamentable musical fashions. Seeing a kindred spirit in Milton, Jackson

co-opted the poet as a representative of native British art against the enervating influences of Italian and Germanic musical practices. Much like Arne before him, Jackson took his role as a consummately British musician very seriously, and his marriage of voice and verse in *Lycidas* craftily appropriates Milton's anger in the elegy is possibly one of the best illustrations of Milton's cultural cachè and utility in the century and more after his death.

In explaining the changes to Milton's text for adaptation—changes that reaffirmed his role as the poet of discipline—one must not neglect the theatre and the socioeconomics and the politics of the theatre. English drama returned with the monarchy at the Restoration, and for some time thereafter, largely reflected the views and attitudes of the late Stuart aristocracy. In time, the stage gradually came to reflect less the ideology of the court and more that of the gentry and the rising middle classes. This is one way of explaining why Stillingfleet's Adam and Eve are not the playful lovers of Dryden's opera. Other changes, such as the georgic bent he lends to prelapsarian existence, also make sense for an eighteenth-century audience of oratorio. The audience was made up not of idle aristocrats but the gentry—whom Stillingfleet hoped would take a hands-on interest in the land they owned—and the affluent middle classes—men and woman who, though wealthy, still had to work to earn a living. That duty and obedience become the representative themes, the essence that Stillingfleet claims he has merely extracted from the larger original, is not a surprise. More startling is that he implies these things *are* the essence of "Milton." Indeed, Stillingfleet, Hamilton and Dalton all alter their sources, yet all believe they remain predominantly true to the originals. All re-envision the poet to fit their own and their culture's understanding of him only to state at very start that they have done little more than provide a condensed version of what made Milton "Milton" in the first place.

Re-imaging the poet and presenting shortened versions of his works on stage, eighteenth-century librettists, especially those working with the mature poems, encountered the difficulty that Milton's poetry often defies distillation. In adapting Milton's works, especially the late ones, librettists faced the challenge of condensing and extracting something that resists condensation

and extraction: Milton's epistemology. *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* illustrate the trouble of adhering to conventional morality in the postlapsarian world. Fish's theory of "how Milton works" accords with the poet's soteriology, which privileges faith but does not dismiss works entirely. For Fish, faith is a leap taken without absolute knowledge, so faith-professing action must be ultimately unreasonable. However, Fish believes these faith-professing actions negate the late poems' sententiae, rationalizations, and pronouncements that supposedly guide moral action. This is partially true. Ultimately, God's ways remain unknowable, for God's "goodness . . . is free / To act or not, necessitie and chance approach [him] not" (*PL* 7:170-73). Or as the Chorus of *Samson Agonistes* acknowledges: "with his own Laws he can best dispence" (314). Rather than rendering moral sententiae and pronouncements moot, God's ineffableness makes them secondary to faith based on limited knowledge. Wary of moral exempla and laws when they become the end-all and be-all of living well and faithfully, Milton never submits to unchecked antinomianism and dismisses such moral pronouncements in total.

His skeptical stance towards the efficacy of moral pronouncement did not stop eighteenth-century librettists from attempting to make the theological concerns of his poems more practical and appropriate for the stage and—above all—less intellectually challenging and more religiously orthodox. Thanks in part to such insightful commentators as Fish, most modern readers consider the challenge essential to the experience of reading Milton. To the eighteenth-century reader, he was surely a challenge (if abridgements, translations, and the bulk of commentary and annotations are any indication); however, their view of Milton as a teacher—both what his poetry could teach and how it taught it—creatively and furtively challenges the schoolmaster.

The signal irony of these adaptations is they do retain, as Stella Revard says of Stillingfleet's oratorio, many things "Miltonic," yet they also elide his signature emphasis on the importance of ceaseless inquiry and unorthodoxy to an upright life and a thriving nation. In a sense, one can say the eighteenth century out-Miltoned Milton. Their heavy and not wholly un-

Miltonic stress on self-control and obedience promised liberation in many forms: the ancient liberty found in restoring British values, the freedom ("the paradise within") from external, modern corruptions, and the ultimate deliverance from sin and death found in Christ's sacrifice and God's love. Paradoxically, the road to liberation blazed trails to bondage. Criticism and adaption contributed to a discourse of unquestioning orthodox morality and religion, and Milton was its poet-prophet. From the streamlined readings of his poetry, not only critics but also librettists and musicians stitched together the motley proto-Urizen that was Milton, the poet of discipline.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Introduction

1. All quotes from Milton's poetry are from *The Complete Poetry of John Milton*, edited by John Shawcross, unless otherwise noted, and all prose citations from *The Yale Edition of the Complete Prose Works of John Milton*. This project also relies on many primary publications from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and throughout, I have retained original spelling but silently emended capitalization, italicized titles, and corrected obvious aberrations in punctuation (such as missing apostrophes). The rationale is that adherence to the original spelling retains the "feel" of the original printings of the work, whereas deviations from modern punctuation and capitalization can prove distracting.

2. The coinages "true Milton" and "false Milton" are mine, not Blake's. Also, although the history of Milton criticism begins well before Blake and is far more complex, the division provides a convenient topography of Milton studies over the centuries. For instance, the dichotomy recently returned to attention with the advent of the self-proclaimed New Milton Critics and the flare-up between them and David Urban in the *Milton Quarterly*. The debate focuses on how to read Milton and what we understand as his worldview, but those embroiled in the controversy also question the history of Milton reception and criticism, especially as summarized in C.S. Lewis's *Preface to Paradise Lost* (1961). According to Lewis, Milton's most famous poem "was accepted as orthodox by many generations of acute readers well grounded in orthodoxy" (82) until Blake founded the "adverse criticism of Milton" that dominated the nineteenth-century and that culminated in the works of Denis Saurat in the early 1900s. Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-93) threw Milton criticism into a mire of "misunderstanding," Lewis states, and it is only around the middle of the twentieth century that we once again find the "true line" of Milton criticism (133). For the entire critical forum on this issuer, see Urban's "Speaking for the Dead" (95-106) and "The Acolyte's Rejoinder" (174-81); Peter Herman's "C.S. Lewis and the New Milton Criticism" (258-66); Richard Strier's "How Not to Praise C.S. Lewis" (271-72); and Joseph Wittreich's "Speaking for Myself" (267-70).

3. See Seares and Stevenson (47-89).

4. See also Thorpe (1-17).

5. See especially "The Body of the Condemned" (1-31), in which Foucault describes the internalization of punishment and discipline, stating that the modern soul, "unlike the soul represented by Christian theology . . . is born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint" (29).

6. See *Soliloquy: or, Advice to an Author* (359-610). Twenty years after Shaftesbury, Clarke's *An Essay upon Study* (1731) would take the opportunity to question Milton's authority on religious and theological questions more rigorously than Leslie or Shaftesbury. Clarke does not mention them by name but his criticism responds to Dennis and Addison's defenses of Milton's portrayal of the blaspheming fallen angels. Clarke concedes that the impieties are just and natural to their characters and necessary to incite terror in the religious mind, but, he replies, Milton allows his

devils to voice blasphemy after blasphemy without direct consequences. The poem thus has "a tendency to take off very much from the abhorrence the mind naturally has of blasphemy" (205-06). Unlike more forgiving readers, Clarke does not allow the notion of a greater design discourage him from attacking Milton for blasphemies, which defile his invention and his readers (200). The battle in Heaven also comes in for some abuse for its absurdities, but what most raises Clarke's hackles is the "unpardonable boldness" of depicting God in a poem (209). A poet may put human characters in his fiction because human thoughts do not surpass the writer's judgment. And even if the poet "may trip [in] his judgment, no harm is done" (209), but it is a danger beyond compare to figure forth God, "whose judgments are as great and deep and whose ways are past finding out," and to do so is "blasphemy" (209). For Clarke, the risk of error was simply too much for a human poet to take on, and unlike Shaftesbury, Clarke does not excuse Milton from this ban. Neither, however, would have Milton. He was well aware of the potential for error in divine poetry, but influential readers like Addison and Dennis appear less inclined to acknowledge it, even when Addison is more sure-sighted about aesthetic "blemishes."

The last considerable eighteenth-century debate on Milton's heterodoxy also illustrates the importance of Milton and the fervid defenses that perceived "violence" against him could inspire. The concerns broached by Leslie in the last decade of the seventeenth century and Clarke in 1731 reappeared later in the 1730s, and once again, the dissenter against Milton's authority met with heavy resistance. The controversy centered on Milton's possible subordination of the Son to the Father in *Paradise Lost*, in other words, on his potential Arian heresy. In his first letter to *Gentleman's Magazine* (March 1738), one "Theophilus" proclaims that a "zeal for the truth" urges him to offer some criticism of Milton. Although he finds Milton's poem a wonderful achievement, he cannot think well of the poet's religion and the dishonor done to religion in *Paradise* Lost. That Theophilus deems is necessary to begin with a concession to the poet's achievement shows that the time when men like Butler and Leigh could abuse Milton with impunity had passed. Nevertheless, Theophilus charges ahead boldly and implies, via his pseudonym, that if one is a lover of God, one cannot be a very great admirer of Milton. It is hard to determine whether Milton is a proper Christian, says Theophilus, and argues that the poet seems to have adopted certain beliefs purely to fit his fiction. Theophilus also asserts that Milton adhered to "Arian principle" in his epic (124). This argument earned two responses from one "Philo-Spec." and a challenge from a contributor to the *Daily Gazetteer* in August 1738. The indignant replies reveal, first, the influence of Addison on readers, and, second, the significant national pride at stake in reading Milton a certain way. By and large, Philo-Spec.'s first letter refers Theophilus to the "learned gentleman" (i.e., Addison) to help him out of his errors, and in the close of his second letter and in the challenge to Theophilus thrown down by the *Daily Gazetteer*, one sees the importance of Milton as a national treasure—something Dalton, Hamilton, and Stillingfleet all insist upon in the prefatory matter to their librettos. "I hope," says Philo-Spec., "this is sufficient *to clear our nation* of the aspersions cast on him [Milton] by Theophilus" (202, emphasis mine). Clearly, Philo-Spec. views a slight against Milton as a slight against all of Great Britain. Theophilus's other opponent was far more strident. Reporting on the contributor to the *Daily Gazetteer*, *Gentleman's Magazine* repeats the challenge that Theophilus cite examples of Milton's supposed Arianism, and if he cannot, "Theophilus must pass for some popish tool, whose aim was to deter well-meaning people from reading a poem wherein idolatry and superstition of the Heathens and the Papists are exposed with all possible strength and beauty, by branding the author with the odious mark of heretic" (417).

7. Herman describes the prevailing critical school of Milton studies in *Destabilizing Milton* (2005): "The paradigm that has largely governed Milton studies until very recently, and which continues to hold great sway, consists of three propositions:

- Milton is a poet of absolute, unqualified certainty;

- *Paradise Lost* coheres;
- The critic's task is to make the poem cohere" (7).

Herman, with some justice, points to Fish as the prime representative of this paradigm. For evidence of this fact, one may consult *How Milton Works*, in which Fish boils Milton's poetry down to a single message: "We must discern the will of God and do it" (57). Herman, however, oversteps when criticizing Fish. It may be true that Fish is the most prevalent critic of making Milton "cohere," but there is ample evidence in *How Milton Works* to refute any claim that he believes "Milton is a poet of absolute, unqualified certainty."

8. The prefatory matter to Dalton's *Comus* and Hamilton's *Samson* lack page numbers, which begin only when the librettos themselves do; as such, no page numbers are cited when quoting from them.

9. In "Milton's Contract" (1992), Peter Lindenbaum challenges the belief that Milton, an isolated poet-genius ignorant of the world, allowed himself to be taken advantage of by Samuel Simmons. This is the myth that influential eighteenth-century biographer Elijah Fenton peddled in holding up Milton's contract as an example of the naïve poet selling his talents cheap ("The Life of Mr. Milton" xxiii). Lindenbaum does not attempt to say whether Milton's remuneration was less or more than other contracts of the time, but he does reinterpret the details; most importantly, he concludes that the 1500-copy limit for each impression of *Paradise Lost* ensured "that Simmons' profits would not increase inordinately in relation to the amounts Milton would receive" (443). "This is not," says Lindenbaum, "the off-hand agreement of someone affecting to be an amateur or a gentleman-poet, anxious to avoid the stigma of print, or a figure using poetry for advancement in some other, non-literary, realm" (444). Building on Lindenbaum's work, Kerry MacLennan (2010) proposes "that Milton was the architect, indeed, the author, of the contract for *Paradise Lost*, as much as he was the creator of its poetry" and believes the contract shows evidence "that the inheritance of Milton's father's professional skills as a scrivener may have directed him how to anticipate, and circumvent, contractual loopholes and trapdoors" (227). Furthermore, Edward Jones' contribution to *The Oxford Handbook of Milton* (2009) reminds us that the early lives of Milton contain little evidence that can be verified and corroborated (3), and his "'Church-outed by the Prelats': Milton and the 1637 Inspection of the Horton Parish Church" (2003) questions how retired and peaceful Milton really was during his sojourn in Horton (48). Finally, Thomas Corns and Gordon Campbell's *John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought* (2008) offers a discerning view of Milton's life that refuses to take the poet at his word, especially rone may look to Fenton as a dominant eighteenth-century voice of this view, for when he addresses Milton's support of the Parliamentary forces, he does not excuse Milton's "engaging with a Party combin'd in the destruction of our Church and Monarchy" nor his "misguid'd sincerity," but he does assert "in [Milton's] favor, that his zeal, distemper'd and furious as it was, does not appear to have been inspirited by self-interested views" (xiv).

10. This outlook of Milton as belonging to the world is relatively new, for it is only about thirty years since the traditional view of Milton, especially aged Milton, as a man apart from the world guided such important studies as Richard Helgerson's *Self-Crowned Laureates* ("Introduction" 6-11; "Milton and the Sons of Orpheus" 187-89) and Louis Martz's *Milton: Poet of Exile* ("Introduction" xiv-xv).

11. For denizens of the self-styled New Milton Criticism, the recognition of Milton's contradictions and uncertainties constitutes the driving tenant of Milton criticism. To their chagrin, it is often recognized only to be quickly stifled or refuted:

> In Milton criticism . . . the spirit of contradiction that marked Milton's poetry from the beginning . . . and that is remarked upon in the eighteenth century . . . by critics who tabulate the inconsistencies in Milton's poetry even as they attempt to resolve them—this spirit of contradiction is subdued and silenced within Milton's supposedly harmonious vision or within such subsuming strategies as the temptation or harassment of the reader [i.e., Fish's notion of the reader surprised by sin]. (*Why Milton Matters* xxi)

Similarly, in *Destabilizing Milton* (2005), Herman asserts, "Milton is, in fact, a poet of deep incertitude, and this condition . . . results in large part from the failure of the English Revolution. *Paradise Lost* is thus analogous to Shakespeare's *King Lear* in that Milton's poem . . . confronts the author's and his culture's deepest anxieties *without* ultimately confirming that the principles guiding the past remain valid" (21, emphasis Herman's). Herman further believes that "in the aftermath of the Revolution, the critical sensibility that Milton championed throughout his career led him to engage in a wholesale questioning of just about everything he had argued for in his earlier prose works, and *he does not come to a conclusion*" (21, emphasis his again).

Chapter I

1. Samuel Johnson abhorred Milton's support of regicide and his anti-monarchism, but even he was able to find religious wisdom in Milton around which the British people could rally. He does not address the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of *Paradise Lost*, but one can sense relieved approval in Johnson's summary of Milton's *Treatise of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best Means to prevents the growth of Popery* (1673):

> But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the Church of England and an appeal to the thirty-nine articles. His principle of toleration is agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the sacred books. The papists appeal to other testimonies, and are therefore in his opinion not to be permitted the liberty of either publick or private worship; for though they plead conscience, "we have no warrant," he says, "to regard conscience which is not grounded in Scripture."
>
> Those who are not convinced by his reasons may be perhaps delighted with his wit: the term "Roman catholick" is, he says, "one of the Pope's bulls; it is particular universal, or catholick schismatick."
>
> He has, however, something better. As the best preservative against Popery he recommends the diligent perusal of the Scriptures; a duty, from which he warns the busy part of mankind not to think themselves excused. (272-73)

2. Growing dissatisfaction with the rambunctious court of Charles II and the Exclusion Crisis (1678-81) arising from the heir-apparent's undisguised Catholicism were portents of things to come. Indeed, at the end of his life, in 1674, Milton could have looked at the goings-on in England with a sense of grave vindication, for his warnings in *The Readie and Easie Way* (1660) about the dangers of returning to monarchy had come true. Charles II and his courtiers proved every bit as wasteful and dissolute as he predicted. Charles soon took a Catholic bride, Katherine of Braganza, and his talent for siring bastards is now legendary. Perhaps more disturbingly for religious dissenters, the conciliatory tone of the Restoration's early years came to an end with the election of the "Cavalier Parliament," which first convened in May 1661. As Milton ominously foretold in *The Readie and Easie Way*, the "tigers of Bacchus" indeed descended upon London to draw the nation swiftly towards "the establishing of church discipline" (1146), and whatever hopes for religious toleration under Charles II men like Milton clung to quickly died at the hands of this vengeful Parliament. In May 1662, The Act for the Uniformity of Publique Prayers and

Administrations passed; preaching of any kind not prescribed in *The Book of Common Prayer* became a criminal trespass. The Act to Prevent and Suppress Seditious Conventicles (1664) and The Act for Restraining Non-Conformists from Inhabiting in Corporations (1665), as their titles indicate, made things no easier. The aging Milton, however, would not live to see the consummation of all these troubles, nor would Charles II. The match to the powder keg came during the next reign with the birth of James II and Mary's first son in June 1688. The prospect of a Catholic dynasty in England pushed a desperate nation to belatedly complete the work of the good old cause as they permanently cast off the Stuarts and established a government much closer to the ideals of Milton and other Interregnum republicans.

3. See Campbell and Corns (305-20).

4. One could reasonably make the case that Marvell inherits his anxieties from Milton, for with his hallmark self-assurance and panache but with a mixture of humility and foreboding, Milton often claims divine inspiration in *Paradise Lost* as a signal of his authority while never canceling the possibility that he may err. Sure-sighted as a bird-of-prey when spotting the falsities and errors of the past, he is humble when claiming how much of the truth he himself possesses. The first invocation contains a qualification pertaining to the location of the divine muse (Oreb or Sinai?). In Book 3, Milton cannot establish by what name he must call "holy light," and although he reasons out its sources, he arrives at some sure conclusions amidst an inconclusive determination. Milton knows "God is light" and knows that, since light "Dwelt from eternitie," it was not created (i.e., it is "increate"), and so he asks if he may deem the holy light "coeternal" instead of the "first-born" offspring. Milton ends the first part of this invocation seemingly having it both ways as he dubs the holy light the "Bright effluence of bright essence increate," that is, an uncreated and eternal offshoot (effluence) and seeable image of that which has always been. Wrestling gamely with the paradox of divine ontology, Milton reaches the limits of human language and understanding, and he prefers not to say if this light springs from some intermediary "fountain." Instead, he only says quizzically, "who shall tell?" Apparently, not him.

The most touching invocation, Book 7's, also balances Milton's cocksure demarcations of error from truth with his acknowledgment that, as a human vessel, he has incomplete access to truth. His assured comparison of himself to Orpheus does not cancel the anxieties preceding it. He is certain Urania, the meaning not the name (showing again his difficulty and humility when naming on the divine), can protect him in a way Calliope could not shield her son because the former is "Heav'nlie," and the latter (Calliope) "an empty dreame" (7:39). After once again doubting the name by which he calls his muse—"Urania, by that name / If rightly thou art call'd"—he asks for continued aid lest his work fall into the errors he elsewhere dispels. Having "presum'd" to enter "the Heav'n of Heav'ns" with Urania's guidance, Milton now asks that she "with like safetie guided down / Return me to my native element / Least from this flying steed unrein'd . . . Dismounted, on th' Aleian Field I fall / Erroneous there to wander and forlorne" (7:14-19). To take on such a task, Milton had need of boldness and confidence, but he also acknowledges the need for help, and his calls for Urania not to desert him halfway through his adventurous song (though partaking of the self-dramatization of all epic poets) betrays a sincere fear that a Christian epic is a worthy but a perilous endeavor. The gravest danger is slipping into error and dizzily running through "wandring mazes lost" (2:561). It was certainly not lost on the poet that the fallen angels with "thoughts more elevate" wander lost and perplexed through questions "Of Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate, / Fixt fate, free will, foreknowledg absolute . . .Of good and evil . . . Of happiness and final misery" (2:559-63)—the same questions he hopes to negotiate with surer footing and better guides.

Milton yet once more tackles the issue of divine aid in Book 9 when he alerts readers of his change to "tragic" notes. The poet presents himself as totally confident that his song will surpass all those who came before him in the epic tradition, for his is a "Sad task, yet argument /

Not less but more heroic" than other poets of the epic, heroic, and chivalric traditions (9:14). Of the lattermost, Milton claims with deceiving humility that he is "nor skilled nor studious," and claims a "higher argument . . . sufficient of it self to raise / That name" of heroic poem (9:43-43). Yet his boast that his song will surpass the epics of the ancient past and chivalric poems of more recent times comes with further doubt and qualification. He will achieve the truly heroic poem "If answerable style I can obtaine / Of my celestial patroness" (9:19-20) and unlike the previous invocations, which express uncertainty but end on surer notes, Milton's last word on poetic inspiration voices a rather gloomy stipulation:

> unless an age too late, or cold
> Climat, or years damp my intended wing
> Deprest, and much they may, if all be mine,
> Not hers who brings it nightly to my ear. (9:44-47)

"If" all of the work is Milton's, then his attempt might fail. Yet he never says if all is his. Moreover, it appears that even with divine assistance, he admits he remains an imperfect vessel for heavenly revelation. Much may age and climate mar his enterprise "if" his heavenly muse deserts him, and even with her help, the infirmities of age and climate still might interfere.

That Milton oscillates between poised vatic authority and humble acknowledgment that human access to truth remains flawed and subject to error does not necessarily imply that Milton was some timid spirit ever fearful and uncertain of himself or his poem. Any reading of his poetry or prose would give even the greenest reader a sense of his awe-inspiring self-assurance and boldness—and of Milton's awareness of these qualities in himself. However, being well aware of the folly, vanity, and imperfection of human existence, he dilutes his self-assurance with a hearty dose of self-knowledge on his limitations as a human being. Ironically, many early commentators on *Paradise Lost* seem to share Milton's doubts, but rather than entertain the possibility that he indeed erred, they generally assuage their doubts by asserting his immortal achievement and invulnerability to error. By the eighteenth century, even the expression of doubts had largely faded, and most commentators were quite ready to accept Milton's prophetic vision and authority without reservations.

5. It may be indicative of Dryden's true thoughts (or more benignly, his change of heart) that he later sought to banish Milton from the ranks of heroic poetry. In *Origin and Progress of Satire* (1693), Dryden defends Milton against other criticism but concedes that Milton's "subject is not that of an heroic poem" (qtd. in Shawcross 1:101).

Chapter II

1. Don-John Dugas credits James Ogden with the phrase "the operatic wars of the 1730s" (156). Also, *A Maske* has long been referred to as *Comus*, but for the sake of clarity, I call it by its original title, *A Maske*, and refer to Dalton and Arne's adaptation as *Comus*. As for the popularity of *A Maske* and *Comus*, the former appears to have been Milton's most popular work next to *Paradise Lost* in the eighteenth century. Dugas's search of the ESTC reveals that from 1738 to 1800, there were at least forty-nine editions of *A Maske* in Great Britain and Ireland, compared to thirty-nine separate editions of *Samson Agonistes* between 1743 and 1800 and five of *Paradise Regained* from 1752 to 1800. As for *Comus*, it success on stage and off is staggering. Dugas notes 387 performances between 1738 and 1800, and the libretto went through four editions in 1738 alone (154). Both Dalton's adaptation and George Colman's shortened version of 1772 appeared regularly in print in England and in Ireland for the rest of the century.

2. Early Milton biographers effected a reinterpretation of the poet's life to counter the view of his various adversaries from the 1640s through the 1670s. As a result, Milton's radicalism appears less radical as the lives insistently profess his stout *English* Protestantism over his differences

with his coreligionists and spin his hostility to monarchy and prelatical hierarchy as defenses of liberty. Skinner, for instance, begins his life with a justification of the work by stating the aims of history to "celebrate . . . persons eminent thir generation" and comparing the *Life* to the Book of Common Prayer "when they added to the collect of the Church militant, a clause commemorating the saints and servants of God departed this life in his fear" (17). Aligning his biography with moral historiography and Protestant hagiography, Skinner indicates the "John Milton" of the *Life* will not be the notorious Puritan who supported regicide and full-scale dissolution of church hierarchy but, more positively and broadly, an English Protestant who worked tirelessly for the liberty of his Protestant countrymen. The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but given that Milton's antiprelatism was one side of the same coin with his antimonarchism, how one spun the fact mattered a great deal. Milton was an English Protestant, but his Protestantism was often his own rather than that of a nation's. *The Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings* (1659), with its broad take on religious toleration and its agreement with the Quakers that the clergy need not be formally learned or even professionalized is evidence of this: "he who disdained not to be laid in a manger, disdains not to be preached in a barn," for "such meetings are most apostolical and primitive" (845). As Johnson would later bemoan in his *Life of Milton* (1779), "He has not associated himself with any denomination of Protestants: we know rather what he was not, than what he was. He was not of the church of Rome; he was not of the church of England" (275).

Such independence was a hallmark of Milton's life and thought but could hardly be a boon for those who wished to mold the poet into a national hero and a champion of English or British piety, and biographers after Skinner take the same approach he does in branding Milton's Protestantism. In his account of Milton's life, Wood also accommodates Milton as an English hero ready to defend the Protestant cause at all turns. For instance, Wood's relation of John Milton Sr.'s differences with his father gathers Milton under the aegis of an English Protestantism without calling attention to his religious independence. Wood dubs the poet's grandfather "a zealous Papist," who "did put away, or, as some say, disinherit, his son because he was a Protestant" (35). Taking the *Second Defense* at face value, Wood sticks closely to Milton's account of his doings while in Italy and calls attention to Milton's defiant Protestantism. For instance, discussing the young poet's encounter with Tasso's patron, Giovanni Battista Manso, he follows Milton's lead, explaining that Manso "excus'd himself at parting for not having been able to do him more honour, by reason of his resolute owning of his (Protestant) religion" (36). It was for these impolitic resolutions, explains Wood, that "the English priests at Rome were highly disgusted, and it was questioned whether the Jesuits his countrymen there, did not design to do him mischief" (38).

Edward Phillips's *The Life of Mr. John Milton* (1694) takes up the strands of Skinner's biography and presents a hagiography of the poet as a man "destin'd the be ornament and glory of his countrey" (53). Toland's *The Life of John Milton* (1698) would repeat this—and much more (83-95). First, Toland's *Life* was no mere stand-alone biography. It comprised the prefatory matter to his volume of Milton's prose, including all three Latin defenses. According to Toland, Milton's prose is as worthy of preserving as his poetry, for the pamphleteer wrote "those excellent volumes . . . on the behalf of civil, religious, and domestic liberty" (83). Yet once more, the disinheriting of Milton's father is mentioned, but according to Toland, John Milton the elder was not put out by his father alone but by "his bigotted parents for embracing the Protestant religion, and abjuring the Popish idolatry" (86). In what by 1698 must have been an established bit of Milton hagiography, Toland also explains the danger Milton risked in returning to Rome on his way home from is travels, stating that the young Milton did not shy away from "openly" defending "the truth under the Pope's nose, when any thought fit to attack him" (95).

3. The title page of the first edition contains only the epigram from *Ad Patrem* and omits the Prologue, which had to wait for the second edition. By the fourth edition, the title page also included the epigram from "Il Penseroso." As for the fifth edition in 1740, the title page contains

neither epigram, nor does these the sixth edition of the next year. They are also absent from the seventh edition of 1744. However, in later editions—such as the third Dublin edition of 1764 and a 1777 London edition—they would reappear. Although Joncus and Dugas acknowledge the patriotic utility of Milton and the nationalistic discourse into which theatre companies assimilated him, neither mentions the possible significance of these epigrams to how Drury Lane producers saw, or hoped audiences would see, *Comus* as fitting into the aesthetic, nationalistic, and commercial "wars" between Italian and English opera in the 1730s.

4. See Buhler (33-53). Also, three contributors to *Milton in Italy* imply the poet had knowledge of Italian *secunda practica*, an avant-garde practice in the early seventeenth century. See M.N.K. Mander (281-92), P.G. Stanwood (293-304), and Margaret Byard (305-28).

5. Worst of all, says Ascham, are the vain books of Italy: "when the busy and open papists abroad could not by their contentious books turn men in England fast enough from truth and right judgment in doctrine, then the subtle and secret papists at home procured bawdy books to be translated out of the Italian tongue" (79). It is hard to say what exactly Ascham has in mind by "bawdy books." He could mean actual ribald tomes like the erotic poems of Aretino, or he could envision more broadly any book seeming in any way "popish." He might also intend Italian heroic poems like Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516) that, in a twist of irony, both Spenser and Milton read. Whatever he meant, it is clear that Ascham's hostility to Italy spanned many areas, from Italian literature and political thought to Italian dress and manners.

Chapter III

1. With this piece, one again encounters titular issues. Handel's revisions to the ode led to two forms: *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato* from 1740 to roughly 1742 and *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso* from 1743 on. For the sake of clarity, I refer to the work in its latter form or refer to the years of specific performances and printings of the libretto when necessary. Also, I alternate credit for the composition between Handel and Jennens even though the work can be said to be largely Handel's after 1743.

2. Advertisements and playbills for earlier decades have thus far eluded careful search.

3. Throughout this chapter, the poems themselves and the eponymous "characters" of each poem are both referred to; therefore, when L'Allegro or Il Penseroso appear without quotations marks, the reader is to understand that the characters of "the happy person" and the "melancholy person" whereas references with quotation marks refer to the actual poems.

4. Some later librettos contain "Il Moderato" even when they are titled *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*. For instance, a 1750 libretto printed for "B. Collins on the New Canal" has the later title but includes a one page addendum of "Il Moderato," which was apparently retained for a performance around that time but not as a sung part but as "A Concerto on the Organ." Finally, the same letter in which Jennens acknowledges the third part's poor reception also states that some have praised the addition in private and that Handel reported that it met with some approval in Ireland (qtd. in Burrows, *Handel* 316). Nonetheless, "Il Moderato" was generally disliked, and after 1743, it was rarely performed. Modern performances and recordings of the ode also rarely include it.

5. They also point out that the changes in the ode from 1740 to 1743 anticipate later critical discussion of the twin poems. Leslie Brisman believes the arrangement of the poems—"L'Allegro" first and "Il Penseroso" second—implies that the understanding and maturity the

latter supersedes the youthful mirth of the former (226-40). Rosemand Tuve's synthetic reading of the twin poems challenges this "progressive" interpretation (24).

6. In like manner, the bulk of modern scholarship on eighteenth-century georgics attests to its importance. See, for example, Pellicer ("The Case of Dodsley's 'Agriculture'" 67-93).

7. Similarly, for Colburn and many contributors to *The English Malady: Enabling and Disabling Fictions* (2008), the ambiguities surrounding melancholy made it a blessing and a curse: "At times, writers lamented the disorder as the disabling affliction of a self-indulgent social elite obsessed with the consumption of luxuries; at other times they embraced (or at least tolerated) it as an unfortunate side-effect of a delicate constitution that enables aesthetic and intellectual refinement" (Colburn 2).

Chapter IV

1. *Samson* was one the hits of the Lenten months at the latter end of the 1742-43 season, with seven performances between its debut on 18 February 1743 and 16 March 1743. Moreover, the royal family attended the fourth performance of that season (2 March 1743), at which it was remarked that the oratorio "has been performed four times to more crouded audiences than ever were seen" (qtd. in Scouten 1038).

2. For the sake of clarity, *Samson* refers to the oratorio only. I will use the whole title, *Samson Agonistes*, when referring to Milton's poem.

3. See also Joncus ("Handel at Drury Lane" 179-226).

4. See Streatfield ("The Later Oratorios" 256-82) and Young's *The Oratorios of Handel*.

5. Milton's utility for oppositional politics has also been discussed by Dustin Griffin (11-21) and by G. F. Sensabaugh (127-28, 134-62, 179-80, 188-94).

6. Admittedly, *Samson* by no means represents the utmost extreme of opposition propaganda. Around the same time *Samson* debuted, another oratorio, *Alfred*, far outstripped Handel and Hamilton in touting the warmongering desires of patriots and their royal mouthpiece, the Prince of Wales: "Hamilton's libretto is—by comparison with *Alfred* and with its Miltonic source—conspicuously unencumbered with political discussion: debate is distilled to religious-political confrontation" (Smith, *Handel's Oratorios* 295). Nonetheless, Drury Lane had milked the commercial potential of Patriot Milton with *Comus*, and it made sense for their competitors at Covent Garden to do the same with *Samson*, a far more belligerent piece than *Comus* and so one that lent itself the craving for a religious war with potential imperial and economic benefits.

7. Milton holds to the common seventeenth- and eighteenth-century understanding of literary decorum in which nothing gross or comic encroaches upon the seriousness and solemnity of tragedy. Addressing the genre of *Samson Agonistes*, he comments rather peevishly on contemporary English drama's breaches of decorum when claims his purpose is "to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day . . . through the poets [sic] error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity; or introducing trivial and vulgar persons, which by all judicious hath bin counted absurd; and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratifie the people" (800). Excepting some hints of humor (Manoa's understated disapproval of his son's "marriage choices," the Chorus's description of Dalila, Harapha's craven oscillations), Milton treats his sacred subject with the

utmost seriousness. Such gravitas towards biblical content has a long history, for the Blasphemy Act of 1605 made "staged biblical drama" illegal, although "unstaged religious drama for private, 'closet,' reading was permissible, providing the holy narrative was not altered, the characters were simple, exalted, and edifying, and the language respected the style of the original" (Smith 113). For the first half of the eighteenth century, the subjects deemed most acceptable for literary treatment were also used frequently for oratorios, the method prescribed for the former largely being the same of the latter (Smith, *Handel's Oratorios* 114).

8. The point that Milton's poetry is didactic but not in the same way as, say, the *speculum princeps*, such as *A Mirror for Magistrates* or even *The Faerie Queene*. The Mirror provides fearful examples that one is meant to avoid, and Spenser's epic (to oversimplify matters), figures one can often imitate. One, however, cannot imitate Samson but only learn from him.

Chapter V

1. Early nineteenth-century musical settings of *Paradise Lost* share this focus on the human aspects of the epic, for attempts to include more sections of *Paradise Lost* and to broaden the intellectual scope came in the latter nineteenth century at the hands of Continental composers and librettists (Revard, "Fortunes" 110-17). In 1862, John Ellerton became the first English librettist to include Satan and the fallen angels as characters, and Ellerton's "heroic treatment" of Satan "as well as of the Fallen Angels who support him" signal "the change in the times and the taste." Continental adaptations also reveal a shift from oratorio to "semi-opera," with librettists and musicians attempting to equal Milton's epic and cosmic scope even when their librettos only faintly echo of Milton's language and prosody (Revard, "Fortunes" 117-18).

2. There was no necessity to address these questions, but that does not mean there was absolutely no attempts to engage the religious questions Milton broached. Christopher Smart's Miltonic blank verse in his Seatonian prize poems are an example of one eighteenth-century poet for whom Milton's monist worldview had not lapsed into obsolescence.

3. Sara Ruth Watson has discussed the influence of *Georgics* on the twin poems ("Milton's Ideal Day: Its Development as a Pastoral Theme" 404-20), and Louis Martz discusses *Georgics* and Milton (*The Paradise Within* 175; *Milton: Poet of Exile* 293-304).

4. Stillingfleet was by no means alone in spotting echoes of *Georgics* in Milton's poetry. Newton remarks upon such allusions and echoes in *Paradise Lost*. However, his annotations rarely go any further than "reference hunting" and do not go as far as Stillingfleet's efforts in presenting "georgic Milton" to the eyes of the eighteenth-century public.

5. See also John R. Knott, who remarks upon Virgil's influences on *Paradise Lost* (*Milton's Pastoral Vision* 47, 89). Revard's, however, is the most extensive treatment not only of Virgil's influence on Milton's epic but also on how that influence "provides a more basic relationship in the intellectual, moral, and symbolic design of the two works" (259).

6. That said, the sensuality is to some extent hemmed in; Adam and Eve perform some labor to keep their pleasant life pleasant, and the human pair (out of necessity, perhaps) confine their sexual desires to the marital unit even though Eve curiously fears a rival. Writing to an amorous court (and maybe trying to send them a bit of a message), Dryden equates regulation with control over the libido. A man and a woman could spend an eternity together with no flag in their desire for each other or their satisfaction of those desires. Clearly, this speaks to the high premium placed on sexual monogamy in Charles II's court.

7. See Chapter 3, page 112 for a short list of georgic poems in the century.

8. I am indebted to Revard for first calling attention to Newton's comment ("Vergil's *Georgics* and *Paradise Lost*" 279). In the same note, she states that Newton also compares *PL* 4:983-5 reference to "the careful Plowman doubting stands / Least on the threshing floore his hopeful sheaves / Prove chaff" to "with Vergil's careful farmer [of *Georgics* 1:225-26] who fears that instead of fruit he may find his hoped-for crop empty ears." Perhaps I have missed this note in some other edition, but in the 1757 *Paradise Lost*, Newton likens this passage to Homer (*Iliad* 2:147), commenting that "It is familiar with the poets to compare an army with their spears and swords to a field of standing corn" (Note 980, p. 336).

Chapter VI

1. After Jackson's death in 1803, Thomas Busby hinted at a more positive reception for *Lycidas*: "A piece called the 'Fairy Fantasies,' Milton's 'May Morning,' 'Lycidas,' an elegy, and other vocal works of Mr. Jackson's in manuscript, are spoken of with such high commendation, that it is to be hoped they will ere long find their way to the public ear; and add to that praise which every real judge of fine composition cannot but allow him" (*Monthly Magazine* 16 [September 1803] 141). Other than Underwood's dedication to Jackson, where else and by whom *Lycidas* was spoken of "with such high commendation" has eluded investigation. Also, a search of the ESTC nets entries for only two librettos in 1767: one for the Covent Garden performance in London (available through Eighteenth-Century Collections Online [ECCO]), the other for the Bath performance. The Bath libretto resides in the archives at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

2. For greater clarity, I have specified in parenthetical documentation exactly whose Lycidas (Milton's "Lycidas" or Jackson's *Lycidas*) is cited, except when the text itself makes this clear.

3. Although there is much that is ham-fisted in Jackson's libretto, it ought to be acknowledged that Jackson was in his late thirties and at the start of his career as professional librettist when he turned to *Lycidas* (McGrady).

4. The phrase "as it is performed" indicates that *Lycidas* enjoyed more than one performance at Covent Garden. There is no evidence of this. The extremely thorough *The London Stage, 1660-1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments, and Afterpieces* attempts to record all performances, including repeat performances, on the London stage from the Restoration to 1800 and compiles its data from playbills, newspapers, and theatrical diaries from the period. It records only the one performance of *Lycidas* as an afterpiece to *Tamerlane* on 4 November 1767. Careful searching on ECCO, which often contains multiple copies of librettos of the same work to correspond to different performances, has found only the one libretto dated 1767. A search of the ESTC renders only copies of the 1767 Covent Garden libretto and the one copy of the Bath libretto housed in the archives at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

5. Of Milton's decision not to pursue a position in the church, John Shawcross says, "Milton's determination to be a great poet, the date of the decision, and, the date of his rejection of a clerical living are clearly significant" (*John Milton: The Self and the World* 61). A number of scholars date this decision to the "Horton period" of Milton's scholarly retirement after graduating from Cambridge, during which period he also wrote "Lycidas." See A. S. P. Woodhouse's "Notes in Milton's Early Development" (66-101); Shawcross's "Milton's Decision to Become a Poet" (21-

30); and Jones's "'Church-outed by Prelats': Milton and the 1637 Inspection of the Horton Parish Church" (42-58).

6. Because Addison and others focused on the much longer and more complex *Paradise Lost*, perhaps it was easier to overlook Milton's outbreaks against the church and most of the references that would indicate his hostility to the status quo. For instance, Patrick Hume does not connect the archangel Michael's narration of wolves creeping into godly service with Milton's lifelong disdain of church corruption. Once the apostles die, "Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous Wolves," who

> To thir own vile advantages shall turne
> Of lucre and ambition, and the truth
> With superstitions and traditions taint,
> Left onely in those written Records pure,
> Though not but by the Spirit understood.
> Then shall they seek to avail themselves of names,
> Places and titles, and with these to joine
> Secular power, though feigning still to act
> By spiritual, to themselves appropriating
> The Spirit of God, promisd alike and giv'n
> To all Beleevers; and from that pretense,
> Spiritual Lawes by carnal power shall force
> On every conscience; Laws which none shall finde
> Left them inrould, or what the Spirit within
> Shall on the heart engrave. (12:509-24)

As is normally his method, Hume provides extremely helpful and considered glosses and notes on the biblical analogues and echoes. The glosses on this passage are of particular interest. Concerning "of names," Hume refers to "Christ's Vicar General, Universal Bishop, Successor of St. Peter" (all metonyms for the pope) and for "Of places" refers to the "Bishop of Rome" (319). To be sure, most English readers would have been quick to understand "wolves" as papists, and Milton certainly intended to include the Catholic Church in this charge. But "Lycidas" makes it clear that for Milton, the wolves in the church were not simply bishops in other countries. Hume does not, however, show any sign that he believes this speech links to Milton's anti-prelacy, and his rhetorical shift, of which he may not have been conscious, anticipates Johnson's attempt to bring Milton as much in line with *English* religion as possible.

Conclusion

1. See Eliot's "Milton I" (1936) and Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973).

2. In his compelling new book, *The Atheist Milton* (2013), Michael Bryson argues that by the definitions of the seventeenth century Milton was an "atheist." "In contemporary terms," says Bryson,

> Milton was closer both to Spinoza and Hobbes than to Richard Baxter or William Laud or even the Presbyterian ministers of his day. In modern terms, Milton—the poet of heaven and hell—would be closer, much closer, to such figures as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens than to Pat Robertson and Frank Graham, or even . . . the Alistair McGraths of Hans Kungs of our time. (17-18)

Although Bryson's contention of a continuity between Milton's early poetry and the mature ones is unsuccessful, he is much more convincing in his depiction of Milton's late poetry as conveying a move from an "apophatic, or negative approach to knowledge of God, raising doubt in the place

of certainty" in *Paradise Lost* to one of denial and negation of being "without God" in *Samson Agonistes* (77).

2. As Bryson points out, of the four views that would earn one the name of heretic or atheist in the eighteenth century—complete denial of God's existence, mortalism, materialism, and Arianism—Milton expressed some form of belief in three of them: mortalism, materialism, and Arianism (54).

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VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: REWRITTEN TO AFTERTIMES: ADAPTATIONS OF JOHN MILTON'S POETRY, 1674-1767

Major Field: English Literature

Biographical:

Born: September 8, 1981 in Morgan City, Louisiana
Hometown: Pierre Part, Louisiana

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in English at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2013.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in English at Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas in 2007.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in English at Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, Louisiana in 2004.

Experience:

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Oklahoma State University, 2007-2011
English 2413 (Introduction to Literature)
English 1213 (Freshman Composition II)
English 1113 (Freshmen Composition II)
Distance Learning Instructor, Oklahoma State University, 2008-present
English 4723-A (Shakespeare)
Graduate Teaching Assistant, Pittsburg State University, 2005-2007
English 299 (Introduction to Research Writing)
English 101 (Introduction to Composition)
Adjunct Instructor, Nicholls State University, 2004-2005
English 002 (Developmental English II)
English 003 (Developmental English I)

Professional Memberships:

American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS)
Milton Society of America
Modern Language Association (MLA)