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Curb'd Enthusiasms: Critical Interventions in the Reception of *Paradise Lost*, 1667-1732

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Curb'd Enthusiasms: Critical Interventions in the Reception of *Paradise Lost*, 1667-1732

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Curb'd Enthusiasms: Critical Interventions in the Reception of *Paradise Lost*, 1667-1732

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Although recent critics have attempted to push the canonization of *Paradise Lost* ever further into the past, the early reception of Milton's great poem should be treated as a process rather than as an event inaugurated by the pronouncement of a poet laureate or lord. Inevitably linked to Milton's Restoration reputation as spokesman for the Protectorate and regicides, *Paradise Lost's* reception in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is marked by a series of approaches and retreats, repressions and recoveries. This dissertation examines the critical interventions made by P.H. (traditionally identified as Patrick Hume), John Dennis, Joseph Addison, and Richard Bentley into the reception history of a poem burdened by political and religious baggage. It seeks to illuminate the manner in which these earliest commentators sought to separate Milton's politics from his poem, rendering the poem "safe" by removing it from contemporary political discourse. Constituting the earliest sustained criticism of any English poem, the efforts of P.H., Dennis, and Addison contribute to our understanding of the development of English literary criticism as a genre. Within the more narrow bounds of Milton scholarship, this dissertation highlights the relationship between the work of the often-neglected critic John Dennis and Addison's popular *Spectator* essays. Although Addison and his *Spectator* essays are often credited with having rediscovered

or popularized *Paradise Lost*, Addison's suppression of Dennis's groundbreaking criticism set the tone for much of the later eighteenth-century criticism on Milton. This first critical conflict between a vision of Milton as heterodox and exceptional and one that cast him as orthodox and conservative provides insight into ongoing debates within the field. Addison's retreat from Dennis's theory of the enthusiastic sublime into the safer havens of neoclassicism, viewed in concert with newly discovered annotations by Richard Bentley in copies of *Paradise Lost* and the *Spectator* essays, helps contextualize Bentley's infamous 1732 edition of *Paradise Lost* as more than an aberration in editing history and Milton criticism. While recent criticism has tried to put Bentley's edition in context as a response to John Toland and an attempt to wrest Milton from the hands of radical Whigs, Joseph Addison had already made that move by neutralizing Dennis's more radical theories decades prior to Bentley's edition. Despite attempts by the wits of the day to lump Dennis and Bentley together as common members of a species of dull pedants, it is Addison who stands behind Bentley's most outrageous interventions in *Paradise Lost*. In recovering the relationship between Milton's earliest commentators this dissertation sheds new light upon long and deep-seated currents within Milton criticism.

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Introduction

> We should be wary… how we spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom; and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at that ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself, slays an immortality rather than a life.
>
> - John Milton, *Areopagitica*[1]

In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton offers us two distinct birth narratives for Eve. The first, told by Eve herself to Adam (Book IV.449-91), traces Eve's faltering first steps in the world as she seeks self-knowledge. Throughout these lines there are multiple moments of attraction and repulsion following Eve's initial Narcissus-like infatuation with her reflection. The verse enacts the theme of approach and retreat as it is continually mirrored and modified until Eve finally nears Adam only to turn back once again. She finds Adam:

> less fair,
> Less winning soft, less amiably mild
> Than that smooth wat'ry image; back I turned
> Thou following cri'd'st aloud, Return fair Eve (IV.478-81)

Eve's desire to return to the pool and her own image is interrupted by Adam's plea that she stay and by the stay of his "gentle hand" as it "seiz'd" Eve's. To his later advantage, this is the narrative of Eve's creation that Satan overhears as he spies on the couple from his perch in the Tree of Life. In the second version, related by Adam to Raphael (VIII.452-539), Adam provides a different reason for Eve's initial recoil from him.

[1] John Milton, *Areopagitica.* In *John Milton Complete Poems and Major Prose*, Merritt Y. Hughes, ed. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1957), 720. References to Milton's poetry and prose will be from this edition unless otherwise cited.

Having seen Eve's creation in a fugue state, Adam already desires her and mourns their separation until she reappears, led by the divine voice. As she turns to fly back to the more attractive image in the pool, Adam interprets her reluctance as part of a courting ritual:

> Yet Innocence and Virgin Modesty,
> Her virtue and the conscience of her worth,
> That would be woo'd, and not unsought be won,
> Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retir'd,
> The more desirable, or to say all,
> Nature herself, though pure of sinful thought,
> Wrought in her so, that seeing me, she turn'd (VIII.501-7)

Even though Eve has recently told him the real reason for her turning away, Adam's preference for this revision is understandable. Having "hindsight" as it were and knowing that he and Eve had once been (quite literally) one flesh, and also knowing that the courtship had been successful, Adam revises her turn as he relates it to his angelic auditor.

Like Eve, *Paradise Lost* also has multiple birth and reception narratives that differ according to narrator and vantage point. In the less complicated narrative, one that recalls Adam's relation of Eve's birth, *Paradise Lost* was immediately loved, a classic from the outset. In this version, related by Jonathan Richardson in 1734, Sir John Denham "came into the House one Morning with a Sheet, Wet from the Press, in his Hand." Asked what he had, Denham replied, "Part of the Noblest Poem that ever was Wrote in Any Language, or in Any Age."[2] This, coupled with John Dryden's early praise to Lord

[2] Richardson, Jonathan. *Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost: With the Life of the Author and a Discourse on the Poem.* London, 1734. Available on Eighteenth Century Collections Online, and reproduced in Helen Darbishire, *The Early Lives of Milton*. (London: Constable & Co., 1932), 295.

Dorset that "this Man [Milton] cuts us all out and the ancients, too" set *Paradise Lost* on its way. In versions of this narrative, the poem would soon be appropriated to the Whig cause by Jacob Tonson's grand folio of 1688, and was "already a classic" by the time "P.H." provided the 1695 folio with 321 pages of commentary.

This dissertation explores a more complicated reception history of *Paradise Lost*, one that has more affinity with Eve's narrative of her creation. It is a story of approach and retreat, of suppression and recovery, and ultimately of critical interventions to save the poem from the reputation of its author and its own controversial content. In this version John Milton, pamphleteer, statesman, Protectorate apologist, and regicide casts a long shadow that complicates the enjoyment of his poem and its potential use by even the Whigs. Examined with Milton's reputation as one of the "infernal saints of the revolution" in mind, the task and achievements of the earliest commentators upon *Paradise Lost* are revealed in a different light than if they are considered with benefit of hindsight as simply the first among many to respond to the poem's greatness. P.H., John Dennis, and Joseph Addison were not commenting upon a poem that was already secure as a classic. Instead, in a series of critical interventions, they worked to make the poem palatable to readers who otherwise would feel obliged to shun it. In so doing, they began to outline the contours of Milton and English literary criticism for the centuries to follow.

These days, reception histories may seem somehow esoteric, quaint, or at the very least dry and technical. After all, why write about Milton at one remove from his work itself? Among multiple reasons why the reception of *Paradise Lost* is worth studying, two in particular bear mention. First, the narrative explaining how Milton's work was

reclaimed from partisan politics – or employed in them – would be no insignificant matter to Milton himself. For Milton, the reception of posterity mattered. That Milton was keenly interested in his literary reputation is evident at every turn in his autobiographical comments, particularly in *The Reason of Church Government* (1642), where he expressed his desire to "leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willing let it die," and in *Areopagitica* (1644), where he asserted that "a good book is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."[3] When Jonathan Swift portrayed the battle of the ancients versus the moderns as one in which authors were physically represented by their books waging war on the shelves of the Royal Library, he was only exaggerating a belief that authors lived on in their books though a sort of metempsychosis into print. And in 1660, when Charles II issued a proclamation ordering that *Pro Populo Defensio* and *Eikonoklastes* be "publickly burnt by the hand of the common hangman," the symbolism was quite clear.

Secondly, however variously it may be phrased, the question "why does Milton matter" stubbornly crops up again and again. There is no shortage of answers to that question, the most recent being Nigel Smith's assertion that Milton's works deserve more attention and credit for their influence on modern political theory. Examining the reception history of *Paradise Lost* anew provides yet another answer. *Paradise Lost* was the first English poem to garner, to demand, and to reward extensive commentary such as the monumental 1695 work of P.H. and the sustained 1712 critical engagement undertaken by Joseph Addison in the immensely popular *Spectator*. John Dennis, made

[3] Milton, *Reason of Church Government*, 668; *Areopagitica*, 720.

out to be a ridiculous figure through the scorn of wits such as Swift, may be thought of as among the first to attempt English literary criticism as a vocation rather than a hobby. *Paradise Lost* was central to Dennis's criticism, leading him to articulate a sophisticated theory of the sublime that remains one of the most significant advances of eighteenth-century criticism. Fully a decade before Pope and Theobald would square off over the textual corpus of Shakespeare, and well before Theobald would claim to produce "the first assay of literary Criticism upon any author in the English tongue," the complexities of *Paradise Lost* had already spurred developments in English literary criticism that would peak in the furor raised by Richard Bentley's 1732 edition of the poem.[4] It is no coincidence that these developments were initiated in response to the politics and heterodoxies of this poem and poet, bequeathing a legacy that continues to be worked out not only in Milton criticism, but in English literary criticism at large.

Milton's metaphor for toleration in *Areopagitica,* the building of the temple where "when every stone is laid artfully together" but "it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world," serves as an apt reminder that this project must stand in relationship to preceding and contemporary efforts alike.[5] In particular, this dissertation seeks to improve upon Ants Oras's 1964 *Milton's Editors and Commentators from Patrick Hume to Henry John Todd (1695-1801).* In addition to belonging to a much different critical era, Oras's decision to treat only *editions* of *Paradise Lost* leads to significant omissions despite his inclusive title. Oras apologizes for devoting so many as

[4] For Theobald's claim to invent English literary criticism, see Lewis Theobald, *Works*, 1733. Available on Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
[5] Milton, *Areopagitica*, 744.

twenty-seven pages to P.H. (usually assumed to be "Patrick Hume") and follows Newton's 1749 edition in being generally dismissive of the 1695 *Annotations*. In keeping with prevailing critical attitudes then (and even now) Oras often resorts to ridicule when dealing with Bentley. His characterization of one of Hume's annotations as "Bentleian" is no service to either man.[6] Worse, Oras's focus on editions means he largely ignores two of the most important commentators on the poem prior to Bentley: he barely mentions John Dennis and only briefly acknowledges Addison's *Spectator* essays. As will become evident in the following chapters, Bentley's edition is likely to appear an aberrant production of a great scholar's senility unless one recalls the context provided by Dennis and Addison's critiques of *Paradise Lost*. Dennis's forthright and thoughtful engagement with the poem, and its subsequent suppression by Addison's more popular neoclassical criticism, is essential context for Bentley and beyond.

John Shawcross's 1972 *Milton, 1628-1731: The Critical Heritage* provides a ready repository of early comment on Milton that remains a useful reference. However, to use Dennis as example once again, the extracts Shawcross chooses from Dennis's decades of scattered comments on *Paradise Lost* fail to convey the complicated development of his critical theory. In the age of electronic sources such as EEBO and ECCO, such a reference is still a convenient starting point for students interested in finding early reactions to Milton, but it lacks a substantial critical narrative of its own.

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[6] Ants Oras, *Milton's Editors and Commentators from Patrick Hume to Henry John Todd (1695-1801)*, (New York: Haskell House, 1964), 48.

Finally, John Leonard's forthcoming (expected no earlier than December 2012) reception history of *Paradise Lost* from 1667 to 1970 is likely to be a work of import for Milton scholars. However, given its impressive scope, it is unlikely to linger over a figure as elusive as Dennis, who has become the hero of this particular reception history. I hope our works will complement each other like those contiguous hewn stones. In the chapters that follow, I will attempt to justify (as early readers of *Paradise Lost* found themselves doing as well) my choice of "hero" as well as my choice of birth narrative.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

If, as William Kolbrener has asserted, Milton criticism may be envisioned as a battle between competing visions of the poet as orthodox or heterodox, one of the tactical objectives of the conflict requires characterizing Milton's Restoration reputation and the resulting earliest reception of *Paradise Lost*. Chapter one examines early responses to the poem and other contemporary documents attesting to Milton's reputation in the decades following the Restoration. Unlike the recent tendency to push the canonization of *Paradise Lost* further and further into the past, chapter one argues that Milton's identity as a "regicide" and the poem's controversial content required that its earliest admirers employ new methods of literary criticism in order to promote and preserve it. The chapter concludes with an examination of Joseph Addison's 1694 poem "An Account of the Greatest English Poets." This poem is not only a valuable starting-point for examining Addison's changing attitudes toward *Paradise Lost*, but it demonstrates that in 1694 Milton was still "too hot to handle," even for many Whigs. Examination of this poem and

other evidence should mitigate the commonly accepted view that Jacob Tonson's 1688 Folio appropriated Milton for the Whig cause, and reinforces my case that the poem still needed to be redeemed from its author even after 1688.

The first great commentary upon *Paradise Lost* was also a great stride toward the development of modern English literary scholarship. At 321 densely packed folio pages, the *Annotations* upon *Paradise Lost* printed in Tonson's 1695 folio is almost as long as the poem itself. Unfortunately, we still do not know the identity of "P.H," the "poet lover" who wrote the *Annotations*. Although he is traditionally identified as a "Patrick Hume," I prefer the more agnostic identification of "P.H." in chapter two and throughout this dissertation. Chapter two examines the 1695 edition and annotations against the background of the battle of the ancients versus the moderns and the formation of the Kit Cat Club by Jacob Tonson. Examining a 1695 elegy of Queen Mary by one "Mr. Hume," I seek to demonstrate through stylistic similarities and Miltonic references that the author is the same as the P.H. of the *Annotations.* Acceptance of this allows us a bit more insight into the annotator's worldview and political preoccupations. However, it is the *Annotations* themselves that deserve and receive the most attention in this chapter. The *Annotations* demonstrate that P.H. was not insensitive to political controversy in the poem and surrounding its author. His engagement with the problems of the poem's politics epitomizes the larger functions of suppression and recovery operating in the reception of the poem throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. By avoiding (and at one telling point *revising*) Milton's biography, by positioning the poem in the company of the ancients, and by locating its sublimity in Christian truth P.H. does

not "sanitize" *Paradise Lost*, but seeks to place it above politics and render it "safe" for a wider audience of readers.

"Mr. Hume" wasn't alone in writing an elegy for Mary that evinces Miltonic influence. John Dennis penned one as well. But, typical of Dennis, his elegy is prefaced by pages of pedantic justification and a spirited defense of his ode. Dennis's Milton criticism is scattered throughout a thirty-year career of controversy and false starts. The first to propose a by-subscription folio of English literary criticism, Dennis may well be the first to merit the professional identification as "English literary critic." Dennis has rarely been able to overcome being classed among the "dunces" in the eighteenth-century culture wars. Although Leslie Moore recently hailed Dennis as "by far the most important – and overlooked – of the early eighteenth-century Miltonists," John Shawcross's observation in 1972 that Dennis was largely unknown among Milton scholars remains quite accurate.[7] Chapter three explores Dennis's development of a psychologically grounded theory of the sublime in relationship to *Paradise Lost* and highlights his unflinching recognition of Milton's heterodoxy and originality. Dennis consistently employed the term "enthusiasm" to characterize the sublimity of *Paradise Lost* despite the term's contemporary connotations, which have been aptly described by Michael Heyd:

> The term itself became a standard label by which to designate individuals or groups who allegedly claimed to have direct divine inspiration, whether millenarians, radical sectarians or various prophesiers, as well as alchemists, 'empirics' and some contemplative philosophers…. Indeed, by

[7] Leslie Moore, *Beautiful Sublime: The Making of Paradise Lost, 1701-1734*. (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990), 14. John T. Shawcross, *Milton, 1628-1731:The Critical Heritage*, Vol 1. (London: Routledge, 1972), 99.

> the late seventeenth century, many of the Protestant intellectuals, scientists and theologians were fighting simultaneously on at least two fronts: against the spread of deistic and atheistic views on the one hand, and against "enthusiasm", prophesying, divinations and other "superstitions" on the other.[8]

Even though he was aware of these pejorative connotations surrounding "enthusiasm," Dennis's theory of poetics demanded that the best poetry have a religious subject enabling it to raise "enthusiastick" passions. Such a foundation required that Dennis not only acknowledge, but embrace some of the very features of *Paradise Lost* that made other contemporaries most uncomfortable. Unlike the *Annotations*, Dennis's Milton criticism attempts to redefine the debate rather than redefine the poem or poet.

It is not Dennis, but Addison who is most often credited with "rediscovering" or "popularizing" *Paradise Lost*. While the popularity of the 1712 *Spectator* essays critiquing *Paradise Lost* cannot be denied, we shouldn't overlook that Addison used Dennis's prior criticism while at the same time suppressing the critic's most thoughtful and honest engagement with the poem. The conclusion of chapter three, and part of chapter four, explores the manner in which Addison approaches Dennis's acknowledgments of the poem's complexity but ultimately retreats to the safer havens of neoclassical criticism. Addison's essays, reprinted alone and often included in editions of *Paradise Lost*, succeeded in eclipsing Dennis's efforts and setting the tone of Milton criticism for years to come. His turn away from Dennis's groundbreaking theory of the

[8] Michael Heyd, *'Be Sober and Reasonable': The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*. (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995) 2-3.

sublime, and his insistence upon neoclassical strictures would dominate Milton criticism until a Romantic backlash.

Despite the best efforts of the "wits" to lump Dennis and Richard Bentley together as common members of a pernicious pedantic species, the most monstrous features of Bentley's 1732 edition of *Paradise Lost* resemble Addison more than Dennis. Chapter four explores Bentley's edition in light of new evidence and attempts to contextualize his method within the editorial practice of his time. Examined against prior commentary by Addison and Dennis, and compared with Pope's 1723-25 edition of Shakespeare, Bentley's edition no longer appears as an aberration or "distorting shadow" in an otherwise smooth teleology of editing practice such as that proposed by Marcus Walsh. New evidence provided by the recent discovery of a second-edition *Paradise Lost* annotated by Bentley, in combination with his annotations on the *Spectator* essays printed with the 1720 edition, reveals Addison's considerable influence on Bentley. Bentley used his most outrageous device, the identification of spurious passages in *Paradise Lost* foisted upon us by Milton's "friend" and "editor," to expunge verses that offended Addison's neoclassical dictates. Although William Kolbrener has proposed that Bentley was intervening to correct a "Radical Whig" appropriation of *Paradise Lost* by John Toland and the free-thinkers, it was "Mr. Spectator's" conservative neoclassical critique that most defined Milton's poem in the years prior to Bentley's edition. Read as an engagement with Addison, Bentley's edition may be characterized as taking the neoclassicism of the *Spectator* essays to grotesque lengths.

Throughout this dissertation, there runs a continuous thread tracing the development of the "ancients versus moderns" debate that ebbed and flowed throughout the period of *Paradise Lost's* early reception. The so-called "battle of the books" provides the backdrop against which the "ingenious" and the "learned," the "wits" and the "dunces," the "Muse" and "pedantry," struggled over *Paradise Lost*. If Milton's poem wasn't used as a rallying cry for the moderns, with Dennis among the few who explicitly proclaimed it an example of modern excellence, it was because Milton remained a divisive figure throughout the period. Only with the vehement reactions to Bentley's edition do we find that Milton's status as poet had finally begun to eclipse his infamy as political pamphleteer and statesman. Even then, and even as late as the age of Eliot and F.R. Leavis, the battle would continue. This dissertation endeavors to show how the initial contributions of P.H., Dennis, Addison, and even Bentley, secured Milton's place and inaugurated modern approaches to textual and literary criticism.

Chapter 1: The Profan'd Pen

> More safe I Sing with mortal voice, unchang'd
> To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,
> On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;
> In darkness, and with dangers compast round
> - John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book VII

> Oh had the Poet ne'er profan'd his pen,
> To vernish o'er the guilt of faithless men;
> His other works might have deserv'd applause!
> - Joseph Addison, "An Account of the Greatest English Poets"

In 1695, those so inclined could pick up an impressive folio of John Milton's *Poetical Works* at a local bookseller's. Opposite the sculpture of Milton and Dryden's commendatory verses, these readers would find a title page advertising that the volume included *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regain'd*, *Sampson Agonistes*, and "his Poems on several Occasions." The title page also announced that this edition came "TOGETHER WITH Explanatory NOTES on each Book of the *PARADISE LOST* and a TABLE never before Printed."[1] Indeed, our prospective buyer might notice that the *Annotations* to *Paradise Lost*, providing 321 pages of tightly packed commentary, is almost as long as the poem itself, which takes 343 folio pages. Without the benefit of our historical hindsight, the buyer in the bookstall would be unlikely to realize that the volume in his hands comprised what may justifiably be called the first scholarly edition of any English literary work.

[1] Reference to the *Annotations* are from *Milton's Poetical Works*, (London: Jacob Tonson, 1695). For convenience I will reference the book and line number of annotations in question, as given in the *Annotations* themselves.

Ants Oras, in his examination of works that may be considered predecessors to the *Annotations*, included "E.K.'s" glosses on Spenser's 1579 *Shephearde's Calendar*, Thomas Speght's 1598 notes on Chaucer, Francis Thynne's "Animaduersions," correcting Speght, and Selden's voluminous 1613 annotations on Drayton's "Polyolbion." Oras notes that Selden's commentary differs from the others in that it deals mainly with non-literary concerns.[2] Since E.K.'s glosses were published with Spenser's work and the author may indeed have had a hand in them, they clearly differ from the *Annotations*. Speght and Thynne, then, may justly be considered predecessors in the genre of vernacular literary criticism, but the *Annotations* goes far beyond the simple explanation of obscure words and takes a large stride toward modern literary scholarship.

Of course, our prospective buyer in the book stall would realize none of this. And even with the contextualizing magic of hindsight, the *Annotations* raises many questions. The separate title page that prefaces the notes in some editions advises that they were authored by "P.H. Φιλοποιήτης." We have very little reliable evidence about who this "poet lover" may have been. But more pressing than questions of authorship are those about why the notes were composed and included in this sixth edition of *Paradise Lost.* Put another way, why did *Paradise Lost* merit (or require) 321 pages of commentary in 1695, before there is any such commentary for Spenser's *Faerie Queen* or for Shakespeare's plays? Why, seventeen years later, did Joseph Addison deem it necessary

[2] Ants Oras, *Milton's Editors and Commentators from Patrick Hume to Henry John Todd (1695-1801)*, (New York: Haskell House, 1964), 5-8.

or worthwhile to devote eighteen issues of the *Spectator* to sustained critical analysis of *Paradise Lost*?

There are two opposed explanations accounting for the development of critical analysis surrounding *Paradise Lost* relatively early in its history. One explanation suggests that P.H.'s annotations indicate *Paradise Lost* was a "classic" twenty-eight years after its first publication, already considered worthy of study and prolonged engagement. Another explanation suggests that *Paradise Lost* was in need of such treatments in order to rescue the poem from the reputation of its author and its own political and religious freight. This dissertation will explore how, in a series of uncoordinated and largely unconscious critical interventions, the earliest commentators and critics of *Paradise Lost*, including P.H., John Dennis, and Joseph Addison, endeavored to redeem the poem and make it palatable to readers who otherwise would feel morally obliged to shun it. Along the way, these commentators invented critical techniques and concepts instrumental in the development of modern literary criticism.

Milton criticism, perhaps more than that of other authors, is a history of competing narratives revising Milton's reputation in cyclical rhythms. He is orthodox, heretical, orthodox and heretical again by turns. He was forgiven and largely ignored or he was reviled at the Restoration, depending on which account one reads. Milton is of the devil's party or he isn't. And so the critical conversation goes. William Kolbrener has characterized Milton critics as "Milton's Warring Angels" in his book of that name, dividing critics into "satanic" and "angelic" camps from the time of Richard Bentley until

the era of John Rumrich.[3] This dissertation will wade once again into these narratives and attempt to fill in some gaps and correct a recent oscillation in the pendulum of Milton criticism. My focus is the critical treatment of *Paradise Lost* between the publication of the first edition in 1667 and the appearance of Richard Bentley's infamous 1732 edition. Examining the fraught historical and cultural context into which *Paradise Lost* was released following the Restoration, I reject claims that the poem's survival and appreciation was assured, instead suggesting that the threat of the epic's relegation to obscurity forced its earliest admirers to employ new methods of literary criticism to promote and preserve it. Against a tide of popular opinion and amidst turbulent political and cultural conflicts between 1695 and 1712, P.H., John Dennis, and Joseph Addison positioned *Paradise Lost* as a classic while employing the new critical language of the "sublime" to disarm the political-religious enthusiasm of the poem. "Enthusiasm" was a term under negotiation during this period. Abigail Williams has explained that the appellation, originally part of Royalist discourse directed against "religious enthusiasts," originally indicated "various Protestant groups, zealous sectarians, millenarians, prophesiers, and others who opposed the existing Church order… particularly… those who claimed that they received inner revelation." As Williams and Michael Heyd have observed, the word soon came to signify "any form of religious or political dissent."[4] Rescuing *Paradise Lost* from charges of its political-religious enthusiasm not only

[3] William Kolbrener, *Milton's Warring Angels*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), *passim*. Kolbrener's identification of critics as "satanic" or "angelic" is problematic due to the evaluative connotations these terms unavoidably carry.

[4] Abigail Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of Whig Literary Culture 1681-1714* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 23-4.

secured the epic's place in English literature, but also helped accomplish what may be termed a "secularization" of literature itself.

My study of the means by which these early commentators on *Paradise Lost* intervened in the reception history of the epic will also revise a received history of textual editing and criticism. The traditional history of editing practice and theory has been perhaps skewed by too-ready acceptance of Theobald's claim in 1733 to have produced "the first assay of literal Criticism upon any author in the English tongue."[5] Having been preceded by the works of P.H., Dennis, and Addison on Milton, Theobald's *Shakespeare* was not as pioneering as he claimed. Moreover, the problems posed by questions of authorship and textual instability in Shakespeare's canon are distinct from the problem of Milton's, which prompts not the anxious maintenance of a single author-figure and his accepted canon, but instead the mitigation of an all-too-real and unwelcome authorial presence. Gary Taylor has recently asked how the history of literary criticism would have been different if it had developed in response to the works of Middleton rather than Shakespeare. He suggests that focusing on Middleton would have nurtured editorial theory free of many of the paradigms that resulted from preoccupation with Shakespeare. Such an alternate development, he claims, might have changed our perception of limiting "problems" such as "revision," "authority," "good" vs. "bad texts," and "collaboration" vs. "individual authorship."[6] While unable to wish away how Shakespeare's textual history has become textual history, I propose an alternate history of editorial and critical

[5] Lewis Theobald, *Works*, 1733. Available from Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
[6] Gary Taylor "The Renaissance and the End of Editing," in *Palimpsest*, George Bornstein and Ralph G. Williams, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993) 121-49.

theory. It is a history in which the earliest practitioners had to employ and articulate new methods of criticism in direct response to the politics of Milton's poem.

This dissertation hopes to fill in some conspicuous gaps in Milton scholarship. Since the earliest commentators on *Paradise Lost* produce what are the earliest critical works on any piece of English literature, these gaps are lacunae in the history of literary scholarship itself. The means by which the earliest commentators on Milton's poem employed innovative critical techniques to free *Paradise Lost* or its readers from the contamination of enthusiasm and republicanism has never been coherently explored. P.H., a mysterious figure at best, has rarely been studied comprehensively, and his commentary has been too readily dismissed as simply clarifying Milton's meaning for those who found the poem "difficult."[7] John Dennis, as Shawcross noted while compiling excerpts for his *Critical Heritage* edition, is often completely ignored by Milton scholars.[8] Having been targeted by the sharp pens of early eighteenth-century wits, Dennis himself is in need of (and merits) rescuing. Joseph Addison is often acknowledged for his role in popularizing *Paradise Lost*, but his *Spectator* essays haven't been adequately examined, in part because (like Dennis to whom he was indebted) Addison was not associated with an edition of the epic.[9] Richard Bentley, not completely undeservedly, has been often ridiculed as an aberration not only in the history of

[7] See Earl Miner, William Moeck and Steven Jablonski, *Paradise Lost, 1668-1968 : Three Centuries of Commentary*, (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), 25. While acknowledging Hume's feat in producing the first sustained commentary on an English text, the editors of this variorum seem to accept Ants Oras's rather condescending treatment of Hume's efforts. See Oras, 22-49.

[8] See John T. Shawcross, *Milton, 1628-1731:The Critical Heritage*, Vol 1. (London: Routledge, 1972), 99.

[9] Oras relegates Addison's treatise to a special category and only "touches upon it" as he discusses others. Oras, 9.

Paradise Lost, but in the history of editing practice.[10] The tendency to chuckle at Bentley's follies has obscured, for many, his contribution to those histories.

Bentley's 1732 edition of *Paradise Lost* is an appropriate terminal point for my study of the epic's early reception and recuperation. Even though it was encumbered with Bentley's disingenuous claim that the poem had been corrupted by unscrupulous editors and printers, the edition ironically secured the epic's preservation and status as a classic. Newly discovered marginalia entered by Bentley into a 1674 edition of the poem, in conjunction with that in a 1720 edition, give us insight into Bentley's methods while illuminating as never before his genuine concern with Milton's language and meaning. Bentley's editorial procedures have been often treated as an anomalous outlier, disconnected from developments in criticism and the developing practices of editing in his time. Instead, heavily influenced by Addison, Bentley's edition is very much a product of the critical effort preceding him. Reactions to Bentley demonstrated the success of the earlier commentators, as both Milton and *Paradise Lost* were vigorously defended from Bentley's rough treatment.

P.H., Dennis, and Addison deserve renewed examination to highlight their shared (although neither coordinated nor perhaps fully conscious) effort to redeem *Paradise Lost* through the employment of innovative critical techniques. Put in context with these predecessors, Bentley's edition may be appreciated as end-product and testament of their success, signaling the inauguration of a modern approach to textual and literary criticism.

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[10] On Bentley as an aberration in editing history, see Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing: The Beginnings of Interpretative Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), *passim*.

MILTON'S REPUTATION: RE-EXAMINING CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Although it may put me at odds with recent characterizations of the poem's reception, revisiting the cultural milieu *Paradise Lost* encountered at its publication recalls the risk it ran of receiving a hostile reception in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. It is all too easy to downplay Milton's infamy and the resulting challenges facing *Paradise Lost* in the first fifty years of its existence. In a move analogous to mid-twentieth-century attempts to portray Milton as orthodox in religion, the reception history of *Paradise Lost* has also been recast to assert that the poem was an early classic. The competing versions of the reception history of *Paradise Lost* enact part of Kolbrener's cyclic "war" between "angelic" and "satanic" critiques of Milton. While Kolbrener focuses on the extreme poles of the critical conflict (pitting Fish against Rumrich, for instance) in recent practice opposing views of Milton are often active at the same time, creating a palimpsest providing a rich, if confusing and sometimes contradictory, critical field in which to play. In a side-skirmish to this larger war, critics have created competing reception histories for *Paradise Lost*. In their modern manifestations, both narratives are somewhat "heroic," in that either *Paradise Lost* was an instant classic due to its inherent virtue, or *Paradise Lost* overcame years of neglect and slowly gained deserved fame.

The "neglect and redemption" narrative has its genesis in the early lives of Milton that emphasize the author's political isolation at the Restoration. These traditions are diligently gathered and aptly summarized by Jonathan Richardson, who famously describes Milton after the Restoration as "in Perpetual Terror of being Assassinated,

though he had escap'd the Talons of the Law, he knew he had Made Himself Enemies in Abundance."[11] Accordingly, Richardson sketches the history of the poem's composition and publishing as a series of harrowing escapes from "danger of losing this poem," whether through the licensing process or the business concerns of a publisher confronted with Milton's dubious reputation. Richardson assures us, however, that its rise to fame was inevitable:

> Thus, what by One means, what by Another, and Those Complicated and Manag'd as Providence well Can, This Poem, this *Waste Paper*, (like an Acorn Hid and Lost) has, by its Inherent Life, and a Little Cultivation, Sprung Out of the Earth, Lifted up its Head and Spread its Branches, a Noble Oak.[12]

Without endorsing Richardson's heroic narrative detailing the poem's survival with the aid of "providence," this dissertation is most concerned with what "cultivation" or critical interventions were necessary to redeem the poem from its politics.

In contrast to Richardson's description of a perilous and tenuous process, narratives that portray *Paradise Lost* as an "instant classic" or popular in its time, tend to downplay any process required to separate the poem from Milton's political liabilities, and claim the poem was esteemed either despite the infamy of its author or because its author's politics were now irrelevant. Samuel Johnson provides an example of this technique as he dismisses Milton's political identity by scoffing at the suggestion Milton was in fear of his life after the Restoration, arguing that the poem was in fact popular in its time. Johnson refutes Milton's Book VII description of his post-Restoration danger where he

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[11] Jonathan Richardson, "Life of the Author," (1734) in Darbishire, *The Early Lives of Milton* (London: Constable and Co., 1932). 276.
[12] Ibid., 297.

describes himself "fall'n on evil days, / On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues; / In darkness, and with dangers compast round."[13] Unmoved by this passage that had touched Richardson, Johnson says for the poet to complain of danger was "ungrateful and unjust," and follows up with his famous retort that Milton -- of all people -- should not complain about "evil tongues."

> The charge itself [of danger] seems to be false; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him, either serious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life…. They who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of the King.[14]

Johnson's approach is paradoxical considering that his "Life" is itself marked by his obvious inability to forget or forgive Milton as a "reviler of the King." Continuing his narrative downplaying the dangers and risk surrounding Milton upon the Retoration, Johnson also claims that *Paradise Lost* was popular in its time:

> The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and the uncertainty of literary fame…. But has the case been truly stated? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt? The sale, if it be considered, will justify the publick. Those who have no power to judge of past times but by their own, should always doubt their conclusions. The call for books was not in Milton's age what it is in the present.[15]

Johnson's bias against Milton's politics oozes from his "Life" in almost every sentence and motivates his revision of the poem's reception. It is as if he has to deny Milton any adversity in order to avoid granting the poem even the quasi-heroic ascent from obscurity that Richardson sketched out.

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[13] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 7.24-7.
[14] Samuel Johnson. "Milton," in *The Lives of the Poets*. vol. 1. Edited by Roger Lonsdale. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 268-9.
[15] Ibid., 270.

The modern variation on Johnson's take portrays *Paradise Lost* as an almost instant classic because it was so masterful. These accounts don't dismiss Milton's political reputation and relevance as Johnson did, but instead celebrate the poem's ability to quickly transcend them. Driven by a motivation quite different from Johnson's ill-concealed hostility, these critics continually seek to push back the date of Milton's literary canonization. The most recent representation of this view is a terse statement in the preface to Earl Miner's volume of collected commentary on the poem:

> Understood in context, the response to the poem on publication explodes the myth of its unpopularity. Adjusted for the literate population, it was in fact popular among royalists as well as republicans. Poets and critics led by Marvell, Dryden, John Dennis, and Addison lauded the poem. One threatening voice was heard, that of Thomas Rymer, who proposed to demolish the poem with the assumptions of the latest French theory. (The more *some* things change…) But Dryden out-maneuvered him.[16]

In this birth narrative "one threatening voice" (only one!) was easily "out-maneuvered" by John Dryden. In its hagiographic impulse and with some defensiveness obtruding in the parenthetical interjection, this brief history cancels the earliest accounts of the poem's reception, accounts that often highlight the poem's early unpopularity and neglect. The narrative in Miner's volume blithely suggests these earlier witnesses created a "myth" that has since been supplanted by the "true" story of the poem's ready reception.

Reducing *Paradise Lost's* reception history to heroic single combat between the "one threatening voice" of Rymer and the deft maneuvers of Dryden is its own sort of myth-making. It certainly oversimplifies Dryden's complicated engagement with Milton's poetry, a very unsettled affair from when the poet laureate "tagged" Milton's "points"

[16] Miner et.al., 17.

and put the epic into rhyme (by 1673), to as late as 1697 when Dryden criticized *Paradise Lost* in the preface to his own translation of the *Aeneid*. Finally, this view casts P.H.'s commentary, Dennis's criticism, Addison's essays, and the furor surrounding Bentley's edition not as critical innovations contributing to the poem's reception and reputation, but instead as simply evidence that *Paradise Lost* had already achieved classic status. Ants Oras, although writing long before Miner, demonstrates the consequences of this view as he introduces his discussion of P.H.:

> What is too often absent in Hume is a direct interest in the poet himself. He gives no biographical information about Milton, but confines himself to a study of the work considered quite apart from the writer's personality. Milton is already a classic, and *Paradise Lost* an engine of edification and instruction.[17]

Inviting a return to an earlier, more complicated, understanding of the poem's reception requires turning our view from *Paradise Lost* as masterpiece to *Paradise Lost* as product of a profoundly controversial author in an unsettled time. In a sense I must temporarily undo the diligent work of P.H., Dennis, and Addison so that we can appreciate their accomplishments.

We will never know for sure how nearly John Milton came to being drawn and quartered upon the Restoration. From our perspective, we tend to underestimate the impact Milton's actions during the Civil Wars and Interregnum had upon his reputation throughout the Restoration and beyond. On the very eve of the Restoration, Milton made his infamy sure. Defiantly "unchanged" by the shifting political landscape around him, the blind statesman made no secret of his continued republicanism and opposition to any

[17] Oras, 24.

return of the Stuart monarchy. His final attempt to persuade his countrymen to hold fast against the return of monarchy has been described as Milton's nailing his colors to the mast of the sinking ship of state even as the water closed over the decks.[18] Considering that it was published when the return of the monarchy was all but assured, one must acknowledge even the title daring: *The Ready and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth, and the Excellence Thereof Compared with the Inconveniences and Dangers of Readmitting Kingship in this Nation.* The first edition of this pamphlet, published in February 1659/60, and its companion *Brief Notes Upon a Late Sermon,* did not escape notice by Milton's enemies. Milton was immediately attacked in answering pamphlets such as the anonymous *The Censure of the Rota upon Mr. Milton's Book, entituled 'The Ready and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth'* published 30 March 1660, Roger L'Estrange's *No Blinde Guides: in answer to a seditious pamphlet of J. Milton's entitled 'Brief Notes on a late Sermon, &c.' Addressed to the Author*, and *The Dignity of Kingship Asserted: in Answer to Mr. Milton's 'Ready and Easie Way…by G.S. a Lover of Loyalty.* The author of a pamphlet entitled *The Character of the Rump*, published 17 March 1659/60, seems to enjoy imagining Milton's violent death:

> John Milton is their goose-quill champion; who had need of a help-meet to establish anything, for he has a ram's head and is good only at batteries, -- an old heretic both in religion and manners, that by his will would shake off governors as he doth wives, four in a fortnight…. His scandalous papers against the late King's Book is the parent that begot his late *New Commonwealth*…. He is so much an enemy to usual practices that I believe, when he is condemned to travel to Tyburn in a cart, he will petition for the favour to be the first man that ever was driven thither in a

[18] See David Masson, *The life of John Milton: Narrated in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of His Time*, Vol. V., (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), 652.

> wheelbarrow. And now, John, you must stand close and draw in your elbows, that Needham, the Commonwealth didapper, may have room to stand beside you.[19]

The author reviles Milton for not only his *Ready and Easie Way*, but also for long-festering crimes including his divorce tracts and his assault upon the "King's Book" in *Eikonoklastes*. But the vision of Milton on his way to be hanged wasn't simply the inflated rhetoric of pamphleteering. The danger to Milton had been made palpable when the parliament, constituted of the Rump and formerly Secluded Members readmitted by Monck, considered a motion for a vote of execration on the Regicides. Milton must have considered it likely that he would indeed find himself at Tyburn, sentenced to hang until partly dead and to await, in the darkness that constantly compassed him round, the unseen stroke of the hangman disemboweling him while yet alive.

Nevertheless, Milton pressed on bravely. Receiving no favorable response to the first edition of *The Ready and Easie Way* or to his letter to Monck summarizing the same argument, Milton published a second edition of the pamphlet in April 1660. Far from backing down in the face of monarchy's imminent return, the second edition retains the defiance of the first while incorporating some changes indicating Milton's familiarity with the pamphlets directed against the first edition.[20] He recognizes that he stands almost alone but cannot forbear to speak on behalf of the "good old cause."

> Thus much I should perhaps have said though I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones…. Nay, though what I have spoke should happen (which Thou suffer not, who didst create mankind free, nor Thou

[19] Anonymous, quoted in Masson, Vol. V, 659.

[20] In particular, Milton softens his stance on having a permanent parliamentary body and indicates at least a willingness to accept the Harringtonian model of limited rotation of members.

> next, who didst redeem us from being servants of men!) to be the last words of expiring liberty.

His words were indeed among the last published on behalf of that "expiring liberty." Within weeks, Milton was in hiding and Charles II *en route* to reclaim his father's throne.

Milton's performance in the weeks before the Restoration certainly did little to avert Parliament's attention from him as the author of *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), *Eikonoklastes* (1649), *A Defense of the English People* (1651), and *Second Defense of the English People* (1654). Milton's name was thus bandied about in Parliament as they considered exclusions from the Bill of Oblivion.[21] Perhaps due to diligent and delicate work by Milton's friends, parliament did not exclude Milton from amnesty. This strange clemency puzzled both contemporaries and later generations as they grappled with his legacy. In his 1725 memoir, Gilbert Burnett expressed the view of many:

> Milton had appeared so boldly, tho' with much wit and great purity and elegancy of style, against Salmasius and others, upon the argument of putting the King to death, and had discovered such violence against the late King and all the Royal family, and against Monarchy, that it was thought a strange omission if he was forgot, and an odd strain of clemency, if it was intended he should be forgiven. He was not excepted out of the act of indemnity.[22]

Despite his amnesty, Milton's politics dominated his reception through the early eighteenth century and well beyond, as demonstrated by Johnson's passive-aggressive

[21] We know that Milton's fate was deliberated in mid-June by evidence of the bill calling for Milton and Goodwin's books to be burnt by the common hangman and resolving that Milton and Goodwin be brought before the House. See Masson, VI, 174.

[22] Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time*, 1725. Quoted in Shawcross, 247.

critiques. Efforts to separate the poetry from the politics were thus integral to the epic's reception history.

It is too easy to consider the Restoration as an event delimited by some months in 1660. Skewed by the perspective of time and by a history of successful revolutions against absolute monarchy, we are perhaps unable to fully appreciate the depth of the emotional responses to the revolutionaries and the Regicides, among whom Milton was indelibly numbered. There is also a healthy tendency among literary scholars to downplay Milton's significance in the post-restoration political milieu, lest our literary obsessions lead us to overemphasize the importance of our subject. But it is not inappropriate to recall that Milton became for many a vestigial symbol of rebellion. "Blinde Milton" was, in a very real sense, the last "regicide," the one who got away but who, in the opinion of some, had been punished by God for his role in the affairs of the Commonwealth and his writings against Charles I.

For those separated not only by time but by a national history that enshrines republican, anti-monarchical revolution, an interesting parallel might be provided by the fortunes of Benedict Arnold following the American Revolutionary War. After his attempt to sell the plans of West Point to the British, Arnold's name itself became a pejorative that remains synonymous with treachery to this day. So deep ran the animosity against this former war hero that the Saratoga battlefield is home to a monument honoring only Arnold's left leg, wounded in battle there and considered thus free of the ignominy of its master. His name was summarily omitted or literally scratched out from monuments at West Point. It is not difficult to imagine that Milton's reputation in the

decades following the Restoration would have been comparable to Arnold's, if not worse for his crimes against Charles I and his memory.

As has recently been demonstrated by controversies over the popularity of Shakespeare and the sale of playbooks, discussing a "popular culture" or trying to gauge an author's "popularity" in the early-modern period is a risky endeavor.[23] But in Milton's case, beyond the evidence provided by the pamphlet wars discussed above, there are several indications of his presence and continuing infamy in what may be considered Restoration "popular culture." "Popularizations" of Milton's epic by Dryden and others will be discussed below. For the present, it is enough to look at Milton's portrayal as one of the "infernal saints" of the revolution.

Appearing annually from 1664 until 1777, *Poor Robin an Almanack* maintained sustained vehemence against "Fanaticks and Regicides" both dead and alive. Although it was a parody of more serious almanacs and unrelenting in its mockery of astrologers, the publication remains a testament to the long-lasting and deep-seated emotions that remained active in the memory of the revolution. As Joseph Wittreich notes, Milton's appearance in *Poor Robin* as one of the "mock-saints" of the Revolution "reveals how profoundly early representations of Milton tainted the reception of *Paradise Lost*."[24] The full title of the almanac bears attention here (this one from 1665):

> Poor Robin, an ALMANACK After a New Fashion. Being the first after *Bissextile*, or Leap-year, WHEREIN The Reader may see (if he be not

[23] I am thinking of the critical conversation between Peter Blaney, Alan Farmer, and Zachary Lesser over the "popularity" of playbooks.

[24] Joseph Wittreich, "'Under The Seal Of Silence': Repressions, Receptions, And The Politics Of *Paradise Lost*." In *Soundings of Things Done: Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of S. K. Heninger Jr*. 293-323. (Newark, DE: U of Delaware P, 1997), 302.

> blind) many remarkable things worthy of Observation. Containing a two-fold Kalender, Viz The Julian or English; and the Round-heads or Fanaticks: with their several Saints daies, and Observations, upon every month.[25]

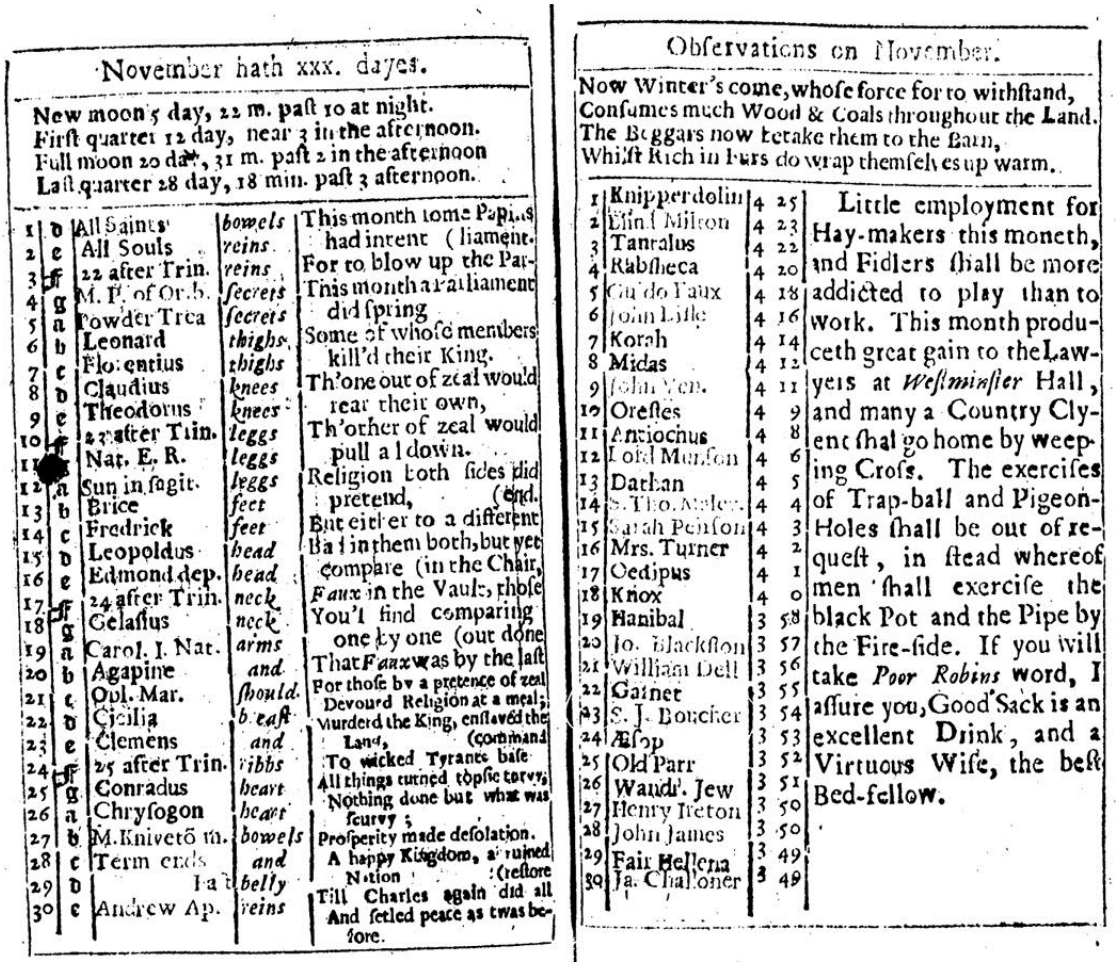
The title page undergoes subtle variations each year, but it continually maintains its mockery of "Round-heads or Fanaticks." And "Blind Milton" is named among the "Fanatick" saints every year from 1664 until 1670. After a three-year hiatus, he appears again in 1674 – 1677. It is a good indicator of the cultural relevance of the revolution that the feature of a "Fanaticks" calendar of saints is maintained even until the 1777 issue which proclaims itself the "one hundred fifteenth edition." The invective modulates as years pass. For instance, in 1695, the year in which P.H.'s commentary on *Paradise Lost* was published, the title proclaims that its "twofold Kalendar" contains the Julian and that of the "Round-heads, Whimzey-heads, Magot-heads, Paper-scull'd, Slender-witted, Mugletonian, or Fanatick Account; with their several Saints-days." The dual calendar is arranged with the month in columns across facing pages. In the third column (following the days of the month) the almanac promises to give "all the principal and observable Saints days, with the most remarkable *Hero's*, murthered for their loyalty, during these late times of Rebellion." This is mirrored by the list of "mock saints" in the seventh column on the facing page, which the author explains is "the Roundheads or Fanaticks Kalender, with the Names of their Chief Ringleaders, most eminent for villany."[26] As long as Milton is named among those "eminent for villany," he is always listed in

[25] *Poor Robin an Almanack*, 1665. Available from Early English Books Online and Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
[26] *Poor Robin*, 1667. In the 1671 edition, William Winstanley is revealed as the author "Poor Robin."

November, a month in which the almanac is usually particularly concerned with both the Gunpowder plot and the revolution, sometimes conflating and comparing the two in memorable ways. For instance, the 1667 almanac prints verses for November which compare the plot with the revolution and identifies "zeal" as the common factor of the two (see Figure 1).

> This month some Papists had intent
> For to blow up the Parliament.
> This month a Parliament did spring
> Some of whose members kill'd their King.
> Th'one out of zeal would rear their own,
> Th'other of zeal would pull al down.
> Religion both sides did pretend,
> But either to a different end.
> Bad in them both, but yet compare
> *Faux* in the Vault, those in the Chair,
> You'l find comparing one by one
> That *Faux* was by the last out done
> For those by a pretence of zeal
> Devourd Religion at a meal;
> Murderd the King, enslaved the Land,
> To wicked Tyrants base command
> All things turned topsie turvy;
> Nothing done but what was scurvy;
> Prosperity made desolation.
> A happy Kingdom, a ruined Nation
> Till Charles again did all restore
> And setled peace as twas before.

As we'll see in the chapters to follow, "zeal" is a loaded term during this period, often identified with enthusiasts and with Milton. It serves as a sort of shorthand to identify political and religious enthusiasts or nonconformists, particularly when the brand of zeal is characterized as "pretended." True zeal, presumably, aligns with loyalty and conformity.



November hath xxx. dayes.

New moon 5 day, 22 m. past 10 at night.
First quarter 12 day, near 3 in the afternoon.
Full moon 20 day, 31 m. past 2 in the afternoon
Last quarter 28 day, 18 min. past 3 afternoon.

1	D	All Saints	bowels	This month some Papists
2	E	All Souls	reins	had intent (Parliament.
3	F	22 after Trin.	reins	For to blow up the Par-
4	G	M. P. of Or. b.	secrets	This month a rat liament
5	A	Powder Trea	secrets	did spring
6	B	Leonard	thighs	Some of whose members
7	C	Florentius	thighs	kill'd their King.
8	D	Claudius	knees	Th'one out of zeal would
9	E	Theodorus	knees	rear their own,
10	F	23 after Trin.	leggs	Th'other of zeal would
11	G	Nat. E. R.	leggs	pull all down.
12	A	Sun in sagit.	leggs	Religion both sides did
13	B	Brice	feet	pretend, (end.
14	C	Fredrick	feet	But either to a different
15	D	Leopoldus	head	Had in them both, but yet
16	E	Edmond dep.	head	compare (in the Chair,
17	F	24 after Trin.	neck	*Fauxes* in the Vaults, those
18	G	Gelasius	neck	You'l find comparing
19	A	Carol. I. Nat.	arms	one by one (out done
20	B	Agapine	and	That *Faux* was by the last
21	C	Ord. Mar.	should	For those by a pretence of zeal
22	D	Cecilia	b. east	Devoured Religion at a meal;
23	E	Clemens	and	Murderd the King, enslaved the
24	F	25 after Trin.	ribbs	Land, (command
25	G	Conradus	heart	To wicked Tyrants base
26	A	Chrysogon	heart	All things turned topsie turvy;
27	B	M. Knivetõ m.	bowels	Nothing done but what was
28	C	Term ends	and	scurvy;
29	D	Hat	belly	Prosperity made desolation.
30	E	Andrew Ap.	veins	A happy Kingdom, a ruined
				Nation (restore
				Till Charles again did all
				And setled peace as twas be-
				fore.

Observations on November.

Now Winter's come, whose force for to withstand,
Consumes much Wood & Coals throughout the Land.
The Beggars now betake them to the Barn,
Whilst Rich in furs do wrap themselves up warm.

1	Knipperdolin	4	25	Little employment for
2	Elin. Milton	4	23	Hay-makers this moneth,
3	Tantalus	4	22	and Fidlers shall be more
4	Rabsheca	4	20	addicted to play than to
5	Guido Faux	4	18	work. This month produ-
6	John Lilly	4	16	ceth great gain to the Law-
7	Korah	4	14	yers at *Westminster* Hall,
8	Midas	4	12	and many a Country Cly-
9	John Ven.	4	11	ent shal go home by weep-
10	Oresles	4	9	ing Cross. The exercises
11	Antiochus	4	8	of Trap-ball and Pigeon-
12	Lord Munson	4	6	Holes shall be out of re-
13	Dathan	4	5	queſt, in stead whereof
14	S. Theo. Mailer.	4	4	men shall exercise the
15	Sarah Penson	4	3	black Pot and the Pipe by
16	Mrs. Turner	4	2	the Fire-side. If you will
17	Oedipus	4	1	take *Poor Robins* word, I
18	Knox	4	0	assure you, Good Sack is an
19	Hanibal	3	58	excellent Drink, and a
20	Jo. Blackston	3	57	Virtuous Wife, the best
21	William Dell	3	56	Bed-fellow.
22	Garnet	3	55	
23	S. J. Boucher	3	54	
24	Æsop	3	53	
25	Old Parr	3	52	
26	Wandr. Jew	3	51	
27	Henry Ireton	3	50	
28	John James	3	50	
29	Fair Hellena	3	49	
30	Ja. Challoner	3	49	

Figure 1: Poor Robin an Almanack, November 1667.

After disappearing from the almanac for three years, Milton's 1674 readmission to the company of plotters such as "Guido Faux," Tantalus, and Henry Ireton might be a result of his stirring abroad again in print in 1673 with the publication of his *Poems &c. On Several Occasions* and *On True Religion*, the last taking direct aim at the court's Catholic leanings. Regardless of the motivation to variously remove or reinstate Milton in the rolls of the "infernal saints," his presence there indicates that the 1667 publication of *Paradise Lost*, followed by that of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, had not yet

effaced the public's perception of a "fanatical" and political Milton. Indeed, we find Milton once again enshrined as a sort of "infernal saint" much later in a collection of brief lives that appeared between 1719 and 1720, entitled "The HISTORY of King-Killers; or the *Fanatick* Martyrology," which claims to contain "Three Hundred Sixty Five Hellish Saints of that Crew, Infamous for *Treason*, *Rebellion*, *Perjury*, *Rapine*, *Murder*, *&c*. being one for every Day in the Year." The anonymous author congenially claims that his volumes were "Publish'd for the Consolation of the Sanctify'd Tribe of BLOOD-THIRSTY REPUBLICANS; and for the Information of true Christians, and sincere Lovers of Monarchy."[27] The *King-Killers'* life of Milton, headed "John Milton *Poetical pernicious Rebel*. November 9th," spans three and a quarter pages. If Helen Darbishire was outraged at how Anthony à Wood "began the evil work of twisting facts and misinterpreting motives" in his 1691 biographical entry on Milton, one wonders how she would have reacted to the life found here. Where Wood's bias was largely detected when he omitted praise provided by Aubrey and the "anonymous biographer," the author of the life in *King-Killers* actively inserts pejorative political commentary. Wood wrote of Milton's visit to Paris that "the manners and genius of that place being not agreeable to his mind, he soon left it [and] that thence by Geneva and other places of note, he went into Italy."[28] The author of *King-Killers* darkly expands the significance of the stop in Geneva, asserting that Milton "was at *Paris*, but not liking that Place, he went to *Geneva*,

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[27] Anonymous, *The History of King-Killers; or, the Fanatick Martyrology*, vol 2. Printed for S. Redmayne, T. Jauncy at the Angle with Temple-bar, etc. (1720). Available from Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

[28] Wood, *Fasti Oxonienses* (1691), reprinted in Darbishire, *Early Lives*, 37.

perhaps to improve himself in Calvinistical Notions of Rebellion."[29] As would be expected, this biased life takes almost verbatim Wood's note that "the Rebellion…breaking forth, Milton sided with the Faction, and being a man of parts, was therefore more capable than another of doing mischief, especially by his pen."[30] Wood sketches Milton's political trajectory in less-than-neutral terms, saying that Milton "arrived to that monstrous and unparallel'd height of profligate impudence, as in print to justify the most execrable Murder of him the best of Kings" and then reports that "we find him a Commonwealths man, a hater of all things that looked toward a single person, a great reproacher of the Universities, scholastical degrees, decency and uniformity in the Church." Wood then tersely says that "when Oliver ascended the Throne, he [Milton] became Latin Secretary, and proved to him very serviceable… and did great matters to obtain a name and wealth."[31] This last clause is condemned by Darbishire who indignantly replies that "no falser word has been said of Milton."[32] But Wood's anonymous reviser in *King-Killers* goes much farther. After following Wood almost verbatim, the author charges Milton not with a desire for worldly advancement, but with hypocrisy: "When *Oliver Cromwel* ascended the Throne, he forgot all his Common-wealth Principles, and Aversion to a single Person, for he only hated the Right, and became *Latin* Secretary to that Usurper, where he prov'd very servicable to him."[33]

[29] *King-Killers*, 29.
[30] Wood, 38. Compare to *King-Killers*, 29.
[31] Ibid., 39.
[32] Darbishire, *Early Lives*, x.
[33] *King-Killers*, 30.

Furthermore, in a departure from Wood, the author treats *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and *Eikonoklastes* as murders committed in print.

> Such an hellish Author was this to assert in Print the Rights of Subjects to murder their Sovereigns. Having committed that murder on his Person, he also endeavour'd to destroy that Prince's Reputation by writing another virulent Libel entitul'd *Iconaclastes*, being an Answer to his Majesty's Book call'd *Eikon Basilike*.[34]

Unlike Wood's, this brief life dismisses Milton's poetical writings with a terse statement that they "are not to our Purpose," alluding to their subsequent success as having a negative effect on some people, and bemoaning the fact that "this applauded Poet, and most infamous Traytor, and on that Account the more cry'd up by his wicked Brethren, was suffered to dye undisturb'd in his House…." This is coupled with his assertion that after it "pleas'd God to strike him [Milton] blind," the poet continued "blind… in his Soul as Body, for he never repented of all his Villaines."[35] The charge that Milton was blind in spirit as well as in body is one with significant implications for the reception of his great poem, for it is here that Milton's politics and poetics meet. That entanglement of his political reputation with his great poem is the subject to which we now turn.

Following the logic of Johnson, Earl Miner claims that "adjusted for the literate population" *Paradise Lost* was "in fact popular among royalists as well as republicans" soon after its publication.[36] We've already discussed Johnson's motives for downplaying

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[34] Ibid., 31.Wood is more even-handed about *Eikonoklastes*, saying it was "published to the horror of all sober men, nay even to the Presbyterians themselves, yet by the then dominant party it was esteemed an excellent piece, and perform'd answerably to the expectation of his Wit and Pen." Wood, 43.

[35] *King-Killers,* 31.

[36] Miner et.al., 17. The author of the essay "Early Comment" in this volume recognizes that estimates of the literate population in England at the time of publication are "not specific or restricted to Milton." Amongst this population, however, they claim the poem "uniquely attracted distinguished commentary at

the adverse circumstances that attended Milton's later years and the publication of *Paradise Lost.* In Miner, Moeck, and Jablonski, we see the same argument proposed to emphasize that *Paradise Lost* was almost immediately recognized as a masterpiece. While I do not mean to ignore the poem's initial appeal to an educated readership, assessing its actual "popularity" requires examining an accurate context accounting for the fraught history of its acceptance. The initial printing of thirteen hundred copies was sold under several title pages, perhaps reflecting attempts to downplay Milton's authorship by reducing the size of his name on the title page and in some cases using only his initials. As Joseph Wittreich puts it, the relegation of the author to near anonymity on some title pages may have been an early attempt to "save the poem by saving its reputation from that of its author."[37] In late 1668, the first edition was still available, now with the author's and printer's names on the title page, and with prefatory material providing arguments for the books and the defense of blank verse. Based on Samuel Simmon's payment to Milton for his second "five pounds of lawful English money," it is evident that the first edition finally sold out by April 1669. The second edition appeared in 1674, and the third in 1678. This fulfilled Simmons's contract with Milton, and indicates that approximately four thousand copies of the poem were in circulation at this time. In 1680 Jacob Tonson acquired a partial share in the poem and brought out his

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an unparalleled rate" (31). This, perhaps, is true. However, far from "exploding the myth of the poem's unpopularity," the early commentary is better seen as necessary because of Milton's unpopularity and the resulting ambiguous responses to the poem.

[37] Wittreich, 301. This interpretation of the title pages is also found earlier in Masson and in Hugh Amory's "Things Unattempted Yet: A Bibliography of the First Edition of *Paradise Lost*." *The Book Collector* 32 (1983). 41-66.

impressive fourth-edition folio in 1688.[38] The edition containing P.H.'s extensive *Annotations,* produced by Tonson in 1695, was the sixth edition of *Paradise Lost.*[39]

In order to put this publication history in context, it is instructive to compare it with John Dryden's *The State of Innocence*, the operatic adaptation of *Paradise Lost* in which he famously "tagged" Milton's "points." *The State of Innocence* was first published by Henry Herringman in 1677. It apparently sold well. By the time Tonson published *Paradise Lost's* sixth edition in 1695, Dryden's adaptation was in its ninth edition as an individual piece, and was also available in five editions of Dryden's *Works.*[40] While it may be argued that Dryden's operatic rendition catered to a different audience than Milton's epic, its sales drew upon the same literate population referred to by first Johnson and later by Miner, Moeck, and Jablonski. Dryden's is clearly an attempt to "popularize" Milton's topic by adapting it to prevalent tastes and, as we will see emphasized by Nathaniel Lee, to court culture. Even without engaging in an analysis of the political ramifications of Dryden's effort here, the comparison requires we re-examine what it means for a work to be deemed "popular," and carefully assess any claim that *Paradise Lost* was already a "classic" by the time P.H.'s annotations were published. Like Ants Oras, William Poole construes P.H.'s commentary as evidence that "Milton…

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[38] His partner in this endeavor was the publisher Richard Bently (not to be confused with Dr. Bentley of the 1732 edition). Tonson acquired sole rights to *Paradise Lost* in 1691 when he produced the fifth-edition folio.

[39] The most detailed discussion of *Paradise Lost's* textual transmission is found in R. G. Moyles, *The Text of Paradise Lost : a Study in Editorial Procedure*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

[40] These numbers follow Macdonald. Even if one discounts copies of the play advertised as part of collected *Works*, it is clear that Dryden's adaptation was more "popular" than the original. Indeed, Dryden's claim to have initially published it in response to "many hundred copies of it being dispersed" seems validated by the survival of several manuscripts. See Hugh Macdonald. *John Dryden: A Bibliography of Early Editions and Drydeniana*. (London: Dawson's, 1966).

had arrived," and received "canonical blessing." Instead, the publication of P.H.'s *Annotations* indicates the poem had arrived at the beginning, not the culmination, of an effort to make Milton's epic palatable to a wider range of readers.[41]

EARLY UNPUBLISHED RESPONSES TO *PARADISE LOST*

The earliest known written response to *Paradise Lost* is found in two letters composed between January and February 1667/8 by Sir John Hobart, Presbyterian, Member of Parliament, and former Commonwealth man. Hobart's first letter sings Milton's praises to his cousin in Norwich (also John Hobart). He admits to having been "strangely pleased in a deliberate & repeated reading of him." The second letter seems to have been sent before he received a response to the first, and is thus perhaps a correction as well as an amplification of the earlier. Reflecting on the previous letter, Hobart may have felt it important that he indicate his awareness of Milton's political unacceptability. Whatever his motivation for writing it, that second letter demonstrates the problems Milton's politics posed for even those who appreciated the poem. Keeping in mind that this tortured attempt to deal with Milton is in *private* correspondence to a cousin (one known to be a Commonwealth man who had sat for Norwich in the Interregnum), one is struck by how much Hobart wrestles with the task of reconciling Milton's political status with the poetic accomplishment that has so affected him. Nicholas Von Maltzahn, in a thorough and insightful reading of Hobart's letters, does Hobart a disservice by

[41] Poole, William, "The Early Reception of *Paradise Lost*," *Literature Compass* 1 (2004): 1-13. Poole recognizes more than most that the epic was a "dangerous" project and "unacceptable" to many readers before the 1695 edition.

characterizing him as "laudatory Sir John Hobart" in order to contrast him with "conflicted John Beale."[42] Although Hobart suppresses overt political worries in his response, their continual eruption into his comment on the poem is instructive as an early example of the conflicting responses that dominate the epic's early reception history.

> I have yet so great a confirmation of my former opinion of the poem I sent you, that if I could well add any thing to what I said before I think I should still enlarge, & yet not injure the author by too advantageous a preoccupation… The author a criminal and obsolete person, & many of his words being of the last some modern creticks will condemn him for being guilty (in this book as well as others) of the first too, but perhaps he may think this continued (and sure extraordinary) piece may purchase him so high a place among our eminent poets, that he may use the liberty of Homer and Virgil, who resuscitated many words (as I have heard) from obscurity, and incorporated them with the Greek and Latin (then in use): if the book be not come down into your Norwich shops… pray Sir be guided by enquiring for lost Paradise…. Mr. Milton the author, who has been so of several pieces, good, & bad, but none the last for want of wit or learning.[43]

Hobart is quick to acknowledge here, as he failed to do in his first letter, that Milton is a political pariah, asserting plainly that the blind poet is a "criminal." Furthermore, Hobart explicitly notes that Milton is "guilty in this book [*Paradise Lost*] as well as others," articulating a positive refusal to exempt *Paradise Lost* (however "extraordinary" it may be) from Milton's political criminality. Contrary to Von Maltzahn's claim that "Hobart was eager to make the common Restoration distinction between Milton's politics and his poetry," Hobart here clearly implicates *Paradise Lost* as participating in Milton's

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[42] Nicholas Von Maltzahn, "The First Reception of *Paradise Lost* (1667)." *Review of English Studies: A Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language* 47, no. 188 (November 1996): 480.
[43] Hobart's letters are maintained at the Bodleian, MS Tanner 45, fo. 258 and MS Tanner 45*, fo.271. Relevant passages are transcribed in James Rosenheim, "An Early Appreciation of Paradise Lost" *Journal of Modern Philology* 75 (1978): 280.

political and regicidal criminality and obsolescence.[44] Any separation of the poetry from the politics would not occur before the end of the seventeenth century, and only after the work of P.H., Dennis, and Addison. Instead, Hobart's convoluted syntax submerges Milton's criminality and politics beneath ostensible concerns about style. Milton is both "criminal and obsolete," and many of Milton's obsolete words will incite "modern creticks" to condemn him of being criminal. The link between the aesthetic and the political is undeniable. Von Maltzahn notes that Hobart elsewhere associates the word "obsolete" with the cause of Buckingham and meant it to "signify rebellious independency, or any alliance with the sects."[45] Despite that, Von Maltzahn claims Hobart's response to the poem's versification "shows no apparent ideological interest" and "instead indicates the ready recognition of classical precedent."[46] Yet style and political content become intricately conflated as Hobart reflects upon the poem.

As would become a commonplace of early response to *Paradise Lost*, for Hobart aesthetic concerns (whether about obscure words or blank verse) serve as shorthand for anxiety about political meaning. Specifically, Milton's linguistic license in "resuscitating" words from obscurity is conflated with the political charge of being a "criminal." Hobart wonders if Milton's use of "obsolete" words is evidence of the poet's intent to gain fame and reputation through his epic. According to Hobart, Milton hopes

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[44] See Von Maltzahn, 492. Von Maltzahn puts much weight on Hobart's claim that "some modern creticks" will condemn the poem as criminal, claiming that Hobart himself "was not put off by such doubts." This may be. But he recognized the precarious situation of the poem and felt a need to acknowledge such in his letter to his cousin. Indeed, the concern seems to permeate this letter as an ill-contained subtext.

[45] Ibid., 491-2.

[46] Ibid., 492.

to "purchase so high a place" in poetry that he will be permitted to use obsolete words in the same way that Homer and Virgil were granted similar linguistic freedom. However, the stylistic freedom identified by Hobart threatens at every turn to collapse into the political freedom he has characterized as "criminal and obsolete." Hobart's comparison of Milton to Homer and Virgil in this context raises the specter of ancient liberty in more pressing (and threatening) ways than in the free use of vocabulary. The implication is that Milton may seek a high place to justify not linguistic, but political license.

Hobart's blurring of the boundaries between political and poetic freedoms suggests he suspects that Milton is attempting to claim not only the privilege to revive old words, but also to justify by poetry the "criminality" he had formerly exhibited in his prose. The linkage of Milton's obscure words with criminality, and his comparison to ancient authors, suggests that the poet, aspiring to be numbered among the classical authors, may also be safely classed with classical republicans. As Dustin Griffin notes, later writers such as John Toland and Richardson would explicitly place Milton among classical republicans in an attempt to extract him from the context of recent English political conflict. Thus Richardson would claim: "'tis Certain he was a Republican: So was *Cato*, So was *Brutus,* So was *Phocion, Aristides*. – Such were by Much the Most of the Greatest Names of Roman and Greek Antiquity."[47] Griffin asserts that Toland and Richardson attempt a sleight of hand so that "in Milton's case classical precedent serves not to adorn abstract argument about 'liberty' or civic virtue but to remove the opprobrium of 1649."[48]

[47] Richardson, 214.
[48] Dustin Griffin, *Regaining Paradise*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986). 14.

The complex and condensed content of Hobart's letter provides a compelling example of how even the earliest readers of *Paradise Lost* recognized and wrestled with the presence of the political Milton.

Another, unfortunately undated, example of how an early reader naturally associated Milton's politics with his *Paradise Lost* is found in early-modern marginalia upon free papers bound with a first-edition *Eikonoklastes* (see Figure 2).

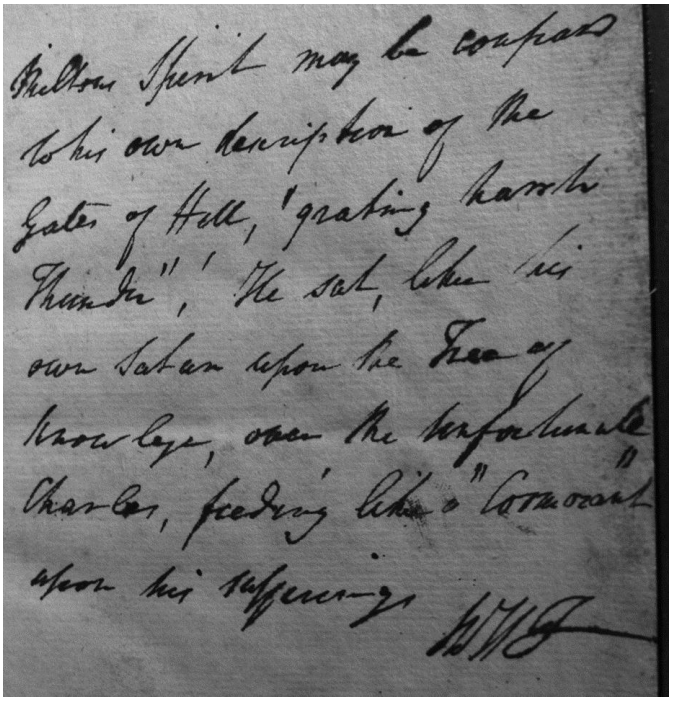

Figure 2: *Eikonoklastes* Marginalia Referring to *Paradise Lost*

In this note, the reader identifies Milton with Satan as he yokes Milton's most controversial and hated work to Milton's epic. He complains, "Milton's spirit may be compared to his own description of the Gates of Hell, 'grating harsh Thunder' : He sat, like his own Satan upon the Tree of knowledge, over the unfortunate Charles, feeding

like a 'Cormorant' upon his suffering."[49] As we'll see, identification of Milton with Satan would occur throughout the late seventeenth century, often pressed into service as negative comment upon Milton's politics. Here, the unidentified annotator enriches the identification by placing Milton/Satan in the tree of *knowledge* as a cormorant, whereas in the poem Satan perches in the Tree of Life plotting his assault on mankind. The use of the tree of knowledge, although possibly an unintentional slip, intensifies the association of Milton/Satan with temptation, the Fall, and with the dangers of excessive or unseemly knowledge. *Eikonoklastes*, Milton's work inspiring the most venom among his contemporaries despite being grudgingly admired for its wit, is thus inscribed into *Paradise Lost* as the epic illuminates the tract. As in Hobart's private correspondence, the annotator of this copy was clearly unable or unwilling to separate Milton's politics from his poetry.[50] This dissertation will argue that the artificial separation of the politics and poetry remained a necessary and difficult task for later public commentators.

EARLY PUBLISHED RESPONSES TO *PARADISE LOST*

The continued specter of Milton's politics was not only acknowledged in unpublished commentary. Early published responses to Milton and *Paradise Lost* also illustrate the continuing threat of contamination by Milton's political reputation. The playwright Nathaniel Lee, in his 1674 poem in praise of Dryden's *State of Innocence*,

[49] This copy of *Eikonoklastes* is maintained in the Wrenn Library Collection of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin. Call number Wj M642 649e WRE.

[50] Other examples of unpublished correspondence where Milton's poetry is shown to be continually associated with his status as political outcast include letters by John Beale and Abraham Hill. Von Maltzahn discusses Beale in "The First Reception of *Paradise Lost* (1667)" For Beale and Hill, see Poole, "Two Early Readers of Milton: John Beale and Abraham Hill," *Milton Quarterly* 38 (2004): 76-99.

acknowledges Milton's influence while at the same time he insists that the blind poet provided only imperfect (even chaotic) raw material for Dryden's genius to make use of in his act of superior and politically orthodox creation.[51] Lee tells Dryden:

> To the dead Bard your Fame a little owes,
> For *Milton* did the wealthy Mine disclose,
> And rudely cast what you could well dispose:
> He roughly drew on an old Fashion'd Ground,
> A Chaos; for no perfect World was found,
> Till through the Heap your mighty Genius shin'd;
> His was the Golden Ore which you refin'd.
> He first beheld the Beauteous rustick Maid,
> And to a Place of Strength the Prize convey'd;
> You took her thence, to Court this Virgin brought,
> Drest her with Gems, new weav'd her hard spun thought,
> And softest Language, sweetest Manners taught.
> Till from a Comet she a Star did rise,
> Not to affright, but please our wond'ring Eyes.
> Betwixt ye both is framed a Nobler Piece,
> Than e're was drawn in *Italy* or *Greece*.[52]

Paradise Lost, in the very year in which the second edition would appear, is characterized by Lee as an "old Fashion'd Ground." But is it only the poem which Lee considers "old fashioned," or is it also Milton, a vestigial reminder of the Interregnum and regicide? Was he a symbol of troubled times who, unlike the younger Dryden, hadn't made amends for his actions during the revolution? The statement recalls Hobart's description of Milton and his words as "obsolete," while invoking the same curious palimpsest of aesthetic and political concern. Lee's implicit critique of Milton shows how rhyming verse had quickly become a hallmark of Royalist sentiment. As Wittreich has said, "If

[51] Shawcross tentatively dates Lee's verses to 1674. If so, Lee must have been among those who saw Dryden's adaptation in manuscript.
[52] Nathaniel Lee, "To Mr. Dryden on his Poem of Paradise," (1674). Available in Shawcross, 83.

Nathaniel Lee's comments are relevant, both aesthetics and ideology came into play – or more exactly, supposed aesthetic faults were used to mask objections to ideology."[53] What makes Lee's account particularly relevant is the degree to which his ideological objections to Milton's epic are spelled out. The mask is quite thin as Lee explains how Dryden brought Milton's "rustick Maid" to Court. An inattentive reader might at first mistake "Court" as a verb and rest secure in the image of Dryden respectfully courting Milton's superior muse or accomplishment. But that is not what is happening here. "Court" is a noun, and Dryden is praised for making Milton's creation acceptable to the restored Stuart court. In what would surely be even more offensive to Milton, Dryden's adaptation is said to ornament Milton's creation "in Gems" appropriate for her reception there, while she is taught "sweetest manners" and how to speak "softest language" opposed to Milton's rigorous blank verse. Not only does Lee praise Dryden's reinstating what Milton considered the "Norman Yoke" of rhyme, but one is struck by his image of Milton's poem being dressed and taken to court like a promiscuous Restoration actress resembling "pretty, little" Nell Gwyn.[54] According to Lee, raw material that in Milton's hands was a "comet," attendant with all manner of anti-monarchical implications, becomes in Dryden's opera a benign "star." Lee's characterization of Milton's poem as a "comet" recalls Toland's account that the licenser of *Paradise Lost,* Thomas Tompkins, had objected to Book I, 594 – 9 because of the political ramifications of one of Milton's astrological allusions. Toland reports that Tompkins, "by Ignorance or Malice,"

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[53] Wittreich, 297.

[54] For insight into the appeal of the actress Nell Gwyn, longtime mistress of Charles II, see numerous entries in Samuel Pepys' *Diary* between December 1666 and January 1669.

would needs suppress the whole Poem for imaginary Treason in the following lines.

> -- As, when the Sun new risen
> Looks thro the Horizontal misty Air
> Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon
> In dim Eclipse disastrous Twilight sheds
> On half the Nations, and with fear of change
> Perplexes Monarchs.[55]

As Von Maltzhan notes, "the comets earlier in the 1660s and the more recent solar eclipse (22 June 1666) had occasioned contended claims about such phenomena, in which much might be made of 'a Planet fatall unto Monarchy.'"[56] One of the reasons that Dryden's adaptation is superior, according to Lee, is that Dryden has purged Milton's poem of such political implications. Where Milton's comet-like blank verse causes "affright," Dryden's stellar rhymes only "please." Lee's verses praise Dryden for accomplishing an act of translation (or transversal) necessary to render the admirable but flawed content of *Paradise Lost* wholly inoffensive and politically palatable.

Early readings such as Lee's, which identify Milton's politics as a problem for the reception of *Paradise Lost,* confirm a fear expressed by Andrew Marvell in his poem prefacing the second edition:

> When I beheld the Poet blind, yet bold,
> In slender Book his vast Design unfold
> …
> … the Argument
> held me a while misdoubting his Intent,
> That he would ruine (for I saw him strong)
> The sacred Truths to Fable and old Song

[55] John Toland, "The Life of John Milton," (1698), in Helen Darbishire, *Early Lives of Milton* (London: Constable and Co., 1932). 180. See also Masson's account of the licensing in his *The Life of John Milton* vol. 6, 506-8.
[56] Maltzhan, "The First Reception of *Paradise Lost* (1667)," 483.

(So Sampson groap'd the Temples Posts in spight)
The World o'rewhelming to revenge his sight.

While on the surface Marvell's poem expresses concern that Milton's poetic treatment of a biblical subject may demean "sacred truths," Marvell's anxiety may also stem from fear that Milton's lost paradise would turn out to be, after all, the Commonwealth and good old cause. Having worked with Milton under Cromwell, and likely one of those who secured Milton's safety following the Restoration, Marvell may have feared that his old friend would once again draw the ire of the government with his poem. Marvell's reference to blind Sampson's "spite" supports this less overt reading of his tribute to Milton. In addition, Marvell's seemingly unprovoked attack on Dryden at the close of his poem introduces the politicized debate over verse into the argument and cleverly asserts the superiority of Milton's blank verse. As Howard Erskine-Hill has noted, the first lines of Marvell's poem "show how readers probably responded to Milton at this time, and the words 'blind, yet bold' say it all."[57] Marvell was certainly not the only one to fear Milton's intent and to breathe a sigh of relief on seeing how complex Milton's handling of his subject finally was.

Finally, William Winstanley's entry on Milton in his 1687 *Lives of the Most Famous English Poets* summarizes how, for some at least, Milton's politics would forever overwhelm their ability to appreciate his late poetry:

> John Milton was one, whose nature parts might deservedly give him a place amongst the principal of our English Poets, having written two Heroic Poems and a Tragedy; namely, *Paradice Lost*, *Paradice Regain'd*, and

[57] Howard Erskine-Hill, "On historical commentary: the example of Milton and Dryden," in *Presenting Poetry: Composition, Publication, Reception*, Howard Erskine-Hill, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 60

> *Sampson Agonista*; But his Fame is gone out like a Candle in a Snuff, and his Memory will always stink, which might have ever lived in honourable Repute, had not he been a notorious Traytor, and most impiously and villainously bely'd that blessed King *Charles* the First.[58]

There are, of course, many more examples, to include Dryden's various comments which show he was rather conflicted about his relation to the poem and poet.[59] To demonstrate that opposition to Milton's politics continued to influence the reception of his poem throughout the eighteenth century and beyond, I want to briefly sketch out the long afterlife of these responses before turning to a key case study.

As I'll discuss in chapter four, for Richard Bentley, preparing his infamous 1732 edition of *Paradise Lost*, Milton's position as outcast was yet more reason to marvel that he wrote the epic during these years. In his edition, Bentley made tactical use of an exaggerated image of the poet as friendless and persecuted. We've already discussed how Milton's politics provides motivation for much of the hostility in Johnson's 1779 *Lives of the Poets*. Even in the twentieth century, T.S. Eliot would sympathize with the manner in which Milton's politics intruded on his ability to appreciate the poetry. Eliot explains:

> There is one prejudice against Milton, apparent on almost every page of Johnson's *Life of Milton*, which I imagine is still general: we, however, with a longer historical perspective, are in a better position than was Johnson to recognize it and to make allowance for it. This is a prejudice which I share myself: an antipathy towards Milton the man…. The fact is

[58] William Winstanly, "Milton," in *The Lives of the Most Famous English Poets* (1687). From Shawcross, 97.

[59] Further examples include Dryden's irritated comments in his 1685 "Preface to the Second Miscellany," collected in Shawcross, 94. Also see Gerard Langbaine's 1691 *Account of the English Dramatick Poets* where he continues in Winstanley's vein on Milton, saying, "had his Principles been as good as his Parts he had been an Excellent Person; but his demerits towards his Sovereign, has very much sullied his reputation."

> simply that the Civil War of the seventeenth century, in which Milton is a symbolic figure, has never concluded.[60]

In 1947 Eliot imagined the political bias against Milton was still "general." In an odd way, the twentieth-century poet reenacts and exemplifies the challenge facing the earliest readers of Milton's epic. Eliot, born an American, later became a subject of the British crown and converted to High-Anglicanism. He not only subjected himself to the monarchial and religious rule explicitly rejected by Milton, but also joined the society of Charles the Martyr. It is difficult to imagine a movement more contrary to Milton's spirit than Eliot's trajectory from citizen to subject, from republic to monarchy, and from citizen of a secular state to voluntary member of a society idealizing a monarch-as-martyr.[61]

The remainder of this dissertation is concerned with a movement even more remarkable than Eliot's. How much harder is it to imagine moving from anathema to appreciation of Milton in the years following the cataclysm of revolution? In a nation so traumatized that annual almanacs continually renewed attacks against long-dead regicides, it had to be difficult to move against the resistant current of popular culture toward appreciation of one of these "infernal saints" of the revolution. It is this politically charged resistance that is all too easily dismissed in reception histories such as the one in Miner's *Commentary*. The difficulty for near-contemporaries may be most clearly

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[60] T. S. Eliot, "Milton II," in *On Poetry and Poet*, (New York,: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), 167-8. This was Eliot's Henrietta Hertz Lecture, delivered to the British Academy in 1947.

[61] I am indebted to John Rumrich for bringing the extent of Eliot's counter-Miltonic trajectory to my attention in his lecture "Milton's Satanic Verses," given at The University of Texas Thomas Jefferson Center for the Study of Core Texts and Ideas, 16 September, 2011.

demonstrated by the changing public attitudes of Joseph Addison, to whom we turn briefly before treating him more fully in chapters three and four.

ADDISON'S EARLY COMMENT ON *PARADISE LOST:* A CASE STUDY

Joseph Addison's 1712 *Spectator* essays on *Paradise Lost* have traditionally (and with some exaggeration) been given credit for bringing the virtues of Milton's poem to light and making it acceptable and even fashionable to enjoy. Yet Addison's earlier (1694) verses on Milton demonstrate how fraught even his early engagement with *Paradise Lost* was. His early comment on *Paradise Lost* provides not only an interesting starting point for investigating his important relationship with the poem, but also a good baseline from which to launch an inquiry into the critical "interventions" of P.H. and John Dennis as well. Appearing a year before P.H.'s commentary would accompany the third Tonson folio of the epic, Addison's earliest comment on Milton demonstrates that *Paradise Lost* was neither free from controversy nor wholeheartedly appropriated by Whigs even after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the publication of Tonson's folios. Addison's complex engagement with the poem and Milton's political reputation challenges the teleology of Milton's reputation presented by even as careful a scholar as R.G. Moyles, who introduces his discussion of Tonson's 1691 edition with the claim that "By the last decade of the seventeenth century Milton's notoriety as an anti-royalist

pamphleteer had largely faded from memory; his reputation as England's foremost poet was growing steadily."[62]

Addison's "Account of the Greatest English Poets" is a poem in the "senate of poets" tradition that offers brief commentary on each poet included by the young poet, then a scholar at Magdalen College, Oxford. Abigail Williams has examined the "Account" to interrogate the formation of a "Whig" literary tradition that has largely become invisible to later generations. Her focus is thus on the last author that Addison treats, Charles Montagu, author of the *Epistle to Dorset* celebrating the battle at the River Boyne and the promise of William III's reign. Williams' characterization of the poets preceding Montagu in Addison's procession is of note. She writes, "Addison's 'greatest English poets' are the same as those found in countless other canonical histories of English poetry, until we reach the last named author."[63] Indeed, Addison includes Chaucer, Spenser, Cowley, Milton, Waller, Dryden, and Congreve before getting to Montagu. However, Williams resists Richard Terry's impulse to frame Addison's "Account" as a milestone in the establishment of an English canon. Terry writes, "the 'Account' traces a trajectory of refinement in English poetry from its uncouth beginnings with Chaucer through to an apex of correctness and limpidity represented by Dryden."[64] Demonstrating just how flexible a concept canonization can be, Williams disagrees with Terry's contention that Dryden is at Addison's "apex" of poetic achievement, instead

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[62] R.G. Moyles, *The Text of Paradise Lost: A Study in Editorial Procedure*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 37

[63] Abigail Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture 1681-1714*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.

[64] Richard Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past 1660-1781*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 50.

highlighting his praise of Montagu as a locus where Addison's aesthetic and political aims coincide.

> As Addison tells it, the excellence of Montagu's verse is inseparable from the excellence of its subject matter: moreover, the praise of the literary merits of the poem displays Addison's own commitment to the Williamite regime. Aesthetic and evaluative judgements cannot be separated here from political concerns, since the appraisal of Montagu's *Epistle* conflates literary form and political content.[65]

What then, are we to make of Milton's appearance in Addison's "Account"? Naturally, political and aesthetic concerns coalesce here as well. Addison does not hesitate to critique the poets he includes as among those "Muse-possest." He introduces Chaucer at the head of his list only to dismiss his relevance to the age, claiming that "Age has rusted what the Poet writ, / Worn out his language, and obscur'd his wit." Spenser, who wrote for a "barb'rous age," is pleasing only when viewed from afar. Addison says that upon closer inspection by those of a more "understanding age," Spenser's "pleasing landscapes fade away." And Cowley, although a "mighty genius," is blamed for providing a surfeit of wit which prompts Addison to exclaim paradoxically, "He more had pleas'd us, had he pleas'd us less." Perhaps an even more complicated case for Addison, Milton is included in this procession of "greatest English poets" only to be finally expelled from it. While Chaucer and Spenser are obsolete because of changes in language and taste, Milton's fault is purely his own and purely political.

> But Milton next, with high and haughty stalks,
> Unfetter'd in majestick numbers walks;
> No vulgar heroe can his Muse ingage;
> Nor earth's wide scene confine his hallow'd rage,

[65] Williams, 6.

See! see, he upward springs, and tow'ring high
Spurns the dull province of mortality,
Shakes heav'ns eternal throne with dire alarms,
And sets th' Almighty thunderer in arms.
What-e'er his pen describes I more than see,
Whilst ev'ry verse, array'd in majesty,
Bold, and sublime, my whole attention draws,
And seems above the critick's nicer laws.
How are you struck with terror and delight,
When angel with arch-angel copes in fight!
When great Messiah's out-spread banner shines,
How does the chariot rattle in his lines!
What sounds of brazen wheels, what thunder, scare,
And stun the reader with the din of war!
With fear my spirits and my blood retire,
To see the Seraphs sunk in clouds of fire;
But when, with eager step, from hence I rise,
And view the first gay scenes of Paradise;
What tongue, what words of rapture can express
A vision so profuse of pleasantness.
Oh had the Poet ne'er profan'd his pen,
To vernish o'er the guilt of faithless men;
His other works might have deserv'd applause!
But now the language can't support the cause;
While the clean current, tho' serene and bright,
Betrays a bottom odious to the sight.[66]

Addison's portrayal and dismissal of Milton seems more emotionally invested and reluctant than his criticism of Chaucer, Spenser, or Cowley. The most peculiar feature of these lines is the manner in which the virtues of Milton's epic are first presented and lauded (even imitated), and then retrospectively contaminated by Addison's sudden lament, "Oh had the Poet ne'er profan'd his pen." Addison's descriptive and imitative treatment of Milton is notably more invested than his discussion of the other poets. On first reading Addison's lines, readers are allowed to enjoy the sometimes impassioned

[66] Joseph Addison, "An Account of the Greatest English Poets," *Annual Miscellany.* (Jacob Tonson: London, 1694). Available from Early English Books Online. The Milton excerpt is reprinted in Shawcross, 105-6.

descriptions of Milton's poem, only to have those very beauties abruptly rebuked and denied. The effect is such that readers find themselves suddenly expelled from Eden once again. Even a "vision so profuse of pleasantness" can't withstand the taint of Milton's politics. The critic who will later claim that our language "sunk beneath" Milton's greatness now claims that Milton's (presumably grand) language can't support the "cause," or excuse Milton's former crimes. Accordingly, as Addison complains that if Milton had not "vernish'd" the actions of the Regicides "his other works might have deserv'd applause," he rejects Milton's *entire* body of work, including the epic he has just highly praised. Although the ambiguous phrase "other works" may allude to works other than *Paradise Lost*, it more likely indicates that the prose has contaminated all Milton's "other works." No matter how "clean, serene, or bright" the poetry itself may appear, it is not permissible to enjoy it. In fact, the very clarity of the poetry allows readers to see through to the ever-present muddied bottom of Milton's politics. Addison's final words on Milton here, his image of a "bottom odious to the sight," grotesquely emphasize the indelible corruption that has seemingly ruined Milton forever.

That *Paradise Lost* is not only guilty by association, but is itself unacceptably complicit in Milton's regrettable politics is supported by a closer reading of Addison's earlier lines of apparent praise. Describing Milton and his muse, Addison recalls Milton's Satan. In his first line, Milton's approach with "high and haughty stalks" evokes Satan striding to battle in Book VI as well as Roscommon's more recent paraphrase of that line in his 1685 "Essay on Blanc Verse." In words that remind us of how Satan "springs upward like a Pyramid of fire / Into the wild expanse" as he leaves Chaos (2.1013-14), or

perhaps the combustible way the fiend "started up in his own shape" when discovered squat like a toad at the ear of Eve, Addison tells us that Milton in his "hallow'd rage / … upward springs and tow'ring high / Spurns the dull province of mortality."[67] Not only that, but it is Milton and his muse who "Shakes heav'ns eternal throne with dire alarms, / And sets th' Almighty thunderer in arms." Milton and his muse enact rebellion as the blind poet is identified with his Satan well before Romantic readers made the association almost unavoidable. By conflating Milton and Satan, Addison reminds readers that this poet was the bold and defiant rebel who challenged the very throne with his prose works. Addison highlights the most republican and anti-monarchical aspects of the epic as he shows that even in his poetic robes, Milton is a subtle seducer working the sleeper/reader's organs of fancy to induce dreams of disobedience. This depiction prepares us to accept Addison's disdain for Milton the regicide and his eventual (even if reluctant and wistful) rejection of the poem.

As we've seen, Addison isn't alone in his conflicted reaction to Milton and his poetry. Other commentators writing around the turn of the century relish contemplation of Milton in hell after his death.[68] In his 1697 *Dictionary Historical and Critical*, Peter Bayle's entry for "Milton" reports that *Paradise Regained* "is not near so good [as *Paradise Lost*], which made some wags say, that Milton is easily found in Paradise lost, but not in Paradise regained."[69] Yalden and Oldys play with this witticism in their verses

[67] The lines also evoke how Satan "stood like a tow'r," a comparison Addison marked out for greatness in his *Spectator* essays.
[68] See for example, Thomas Yalden, "On the Reprinting of Milton's Prose Works," 1698, or Alexander Oldys, "An Ode By Way of Elegy on… Mr. Dryden," 1700. Both are reprinted in Shawcross, 122-24.
[69] Bayle, quoted in Shawcross, 116.

on Milton, exposing the manner in which the quip comments both on the perceived value of the poems in comparison and Milton's supposed damnation for his political views.[70]

Addison's ambivalence toward Milton in 1694, his professed inability to read *Paradise Lost* without being obstructed by Milton's politics (that "bottom odious"), contrasts with his later treatment of the poem in the popular and influential 1712 *Spectator* essays. If, as Williams has proposed, Addison's "Account" reflects and participates in an evolution of "Whig" literary culture, it is clear that Addison deems Milton unsuitable for this purpose in 1694. Chapter three will explore the means Addison later employed as he sought to cleanse *Paradise Lost* of the contamination that seemed insurmountable to him when he wrote the "Account," a process of purification that required he suppress the critic John Dennis's more daring and honest engagement with the poem.

Addison's personal reconciliation with the poem is part of a larger critical quest for means by which to value *Paradise Lost* while avoiding or neutralizing its contaminating politics. Milton's political reputation was a very present, very real obstacle to appreciation of his poetry, even as late as 1694 on the eve of Tonson's sixth edition containing P.H.'s extensive commentary. The mechanism of recovery and repression we see in Addison's "Account," where the poem is imitated and praised at the same time it is dismissed, dominates comment on the poem throughout this period. In order to move from repression to appreciation, P.H., Dennis, and a more mature Addison needed to

[70] Although Milton's religious heresies (in particular his Arianism) were noted by his earliest readers, it is without doubt his *political* nonconformity that most often consigns him to damnation in early commentary.

intervene in the critical history of *Paradise Lost* in a manner then unprecedented for a piece of English literature. Their methods and success would establish paradigms still active in English literary scholarship.

Chapter 2: "The Merit of Being the First:" Jacob Tonson's 1695 *Paradise Lost* and P.H.'s *Annotations*

> P.H. or Patrick Hume, as he was the first, so is the most copious annotator. He laid the foundation, but he laid it among infinite heaps of rubbish.
>
> - Thomas Newton, "Preface" to *Paradise Lost*, 1749.

The 1694 volume of poetry that includes Addison's "Account of the Greatest English Poets" provides a vivid snapshot of the London literary scene in the middle of the century's last decade. The fourth *Annual Miscellany* opens with a sculpture of a seated muse spilling fruits from a cornucopia held beneath her naked breasts. Lest there be any doubt as to what the cornucopia represents, it is labeled "The Annual Miscellany." The title promises that this fourth installment of the series contains a "Great Variety of New Translations and Original Copies, by the Most Eminent Hands."[1] And who were deemed "the most eminent hands" for 1694? Thomas Yalden contributes the greatest number of poems to the volume, a total of seven relatively short pieces. Addison ties for second place with four poems, and provides some of the longest selections. According to Peter Smithers, this was Addison's "serious bid for fame in English verse… [his] part in this volume was so considerable that it could not fail to make his name known immediately in literary and fashionable society."[2] John Dryden, although he contributes only two poems, is a presence that seems to dominate the volume. The first (and at fifty-four pages by far the longest) poem in the collection is his "Third Book of Virgil's Georgicks, English'd by

[1] *The Annual Miscellany : For the Year 1694*. London, Printed by R.E. for Jacob Tonson. 1694. Available on Early English Books Online.
[2] Peter Smithers, *The Life of Joseph Addison*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 22.

Mr. Dryden." His second poem is a short tribute to the portrait painter Sir Godfrey Kneller. But Dryden is himself addressed in no less than three of the remaining poems, including John Dennis's ode "To Mr. Dryden upon his Translation of the Third Book of Virgil's Georgick's" and Addison's "Account," which closes the volume with Addison's declaration that he will now leave poetry behind:

> I leave the Arts of Poetry and Verse
> To them that practise 'em with more success,
> Of greater Truths I'll now prepare to tell,
> And so at once, Dear Friend and Muse, Farewell.[3]

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Addison's ceremonial farewell to poetry is an odd ending to both his "Account of the Greatest English Poets" and to the *Annual Miscellany*. Smithers calls these final lines "the strangest feature of the poem," pointing out that some have interpreted them as signaling Addison's intent to quit poetry for a career in the Church.[4] As Smithers admits, this seems an unlikely explanation. A promising young poet who had by this time come to the notice of Dryden and Tonson, Addison implies that poetry cannot bear the weight of "greater Truths." While Smithers gestures toward Addison's commitment to a Roman version of active citizenship and service to the state, it may be that Addison instead meant to shift modes from verse to prose. Regardless of Addison's intent, he did not long stay away from poetry. His verse played a key role in his gaining the patronage of Lord Somers, and his most acclaimed poetry in Latin and English was yet to come.

Within the context of the *Annual Miscellany* and the literary culture of the 1690's, Addison's declaration, and its implied judgment upon the weightiness of verse, amounts

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[3] *Miscellany*, 1694, 327.
[4] Smithers, 27-8.

to his choosing sides in an intensifying culture war only glimpsed in the *Miscellany*. Alongside the translations and imitations of the classics, several poems take on Grubstreet "dunces" and critics. In "An Epistle to Mr. B --," Francis Knapp complains facetiously:

> I hear that you, of late, are grown
> One of those squeamish Criticks of the Town,
> That think they have a License to abuse
> Each honest Author, that pretends to Muse.
> …
> What is't to you? Why shou'd you take't amiss
> If *Grubstreet's* stock'd with Tenants, if the Press
> Is hugely ply'd, and labours to produce
> Some mighty Folio, for the Chandler's use?
> Let Grubstreet scribble on, nor need you care
> Tho' ev'ry Garret held a Poet there.[5]

Knapp's "Epistle" runs its course to lampoon Wesley, Higden, Settle, D'Urfey, Rymer, Crown and Edgar. Later in the volume, three anonymous poems skewer Edward Howard for his poem "The British Princes."

> Thou damn'd *Antipodes* to Common Sense,
> Thou foil to *Fleckno*, prithee tell from whence
> Does all this mighty Stock of dullness spring?
> …
> …Curst be he that gives thee Pen and Ink.
> Such dangerous Weapons shou'd be kept from Fools,
> As Nurses from their Children keep edge-Tools.[6]

The inclusion of these poems in the *Annual Miscellany* should remind us that at the close of the seventeenth century, battle lines were being drawn and sides were being chosen. The battle of the ancients versus the moderns, or the "battle of the books," was

[5] *Miscellany*, 1694, 266.
[6] Ibid., 301-2. The three anonymous poems on Howard seem to consist of verses taken from "To a Person of Honour Upon his Incomparable, Incomprehensible Poem Called 'The British Princes,'" which has been attributed to the Earl of Dorset.

simmering. Sir William Temple had kicked off the conflict in England when he published *Of Ancient and Modern Learning* in 1690 to champion ancient learning. William Wotton's reply on behalf of the moderns, *Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning*, would make its first appearance in 1694, the same year as this *Annual Miscellany*. And the battle would break out in earnest with Richard Bentley's contribution to Wotton's second edition of 1697. The 1694 *Annual Miscellany* lives up to its name by presenting a contiguous, but not continuous, collection of authors. As tempting as it may be to envision an ordered literary court presided over by the aged Dryden, closer inspection reveals that any apparent uniformity in the volume is challenged by the difference signaled by the symbolic cornucopia of the sculpture. Authors who will be arrayed on different sides of the battle of the books, critics and poets, hacks and dunces, Whigs and Tories are all in the mix here. Old Dryden, author of *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Hind and the Panther*, rubs shoulders with Dennis, Addison, and others who will come to represent and promote a new "Whiggish" aesthetic.

If the *discordia concors* of the contributions qualifies Dryden's domination of the *Annual Miscellany*, it can still be said that a one presence yet haunts the volume:

> With leering looks, bull-faced, and freckled fair;
> With two left legs, and Judas-coloured hair,
> And frowzy pores, that taint the ambient air.[7]

So Dryden described Jacob Tonson the elder, his own long-time publisher, and the publisher of the *Annual Miscellany*. Tonson was the undisputed king of the English

[7] John Dryden, "Fragment on the Character of Jacob Tonson," later published as the character of "Bibliopolo" in *Faction Displayed* 1704/5.

literary scene, not only in the 1690s, but for decades to come. Having made his name by publishing Dryden's works, Tonson was also by 1690 the sole owner of Milton's poetry and had produced the handsome Milton folios of 1688 and 1691. His presence permeates the *Miscellany* in a manner that goes beyond simply being the printer. The 1694 *Miscellany* contains contributions from at least five prominent Kit-Cats, a club presided over by Tonson and likely coalescing at this time.[8] Perhaps originally conceived by Tonson as a clever way to create a ready pool of authors and potential patrons, the Kit-Cat Club can with little exaggeration be said to have attempted to reengineer England's culture over the next three decades. Ophelia Field asserts as much in her popular history of the club:

> For over twenty years – from the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution in 1688, through two long and expensive wars against Catholic France, into the reign of George I after 1714 – nearly all roads in British politics and culture led through the Kit-Cat Club, or took their direction in opposition to it.[9]

While there is much remarkable about the club and its considerable influence upon English culture, one of the most unusual aspects is the role of Tonson. The publisher from lowly origins sat weekly with the most influential Lords of the Realm, feeding them Christopher ("Kit") Catling's meat pies and introducing them to the promising young authors under his wing. Edward Ward summed up Tonson's unique position jealously in 1709, writing that Tonson, "Tho' he look'd but like a Bookseller seated among Lords, yet

[8] The *Miscellany* contributors who were later Kit-Cats are Tonson, Addison, Congreve, Matthew Prior, and the Earl of Dorset.
[9] Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Cat Club: Friends Who Imagined a Nation*. (London: Harper Press, 2008), xv.

vice versa, he behav'd himself like a Lord when he came among Booksellers."[10] Sir Richard Blackmore, no friend to the Kit Kats, alluded to Tonson's central role as founder and secretary in his poem, *The Kit-Cats*.

> One Night in Seven at this convenient Seat,
> Indulgent *BOCAJ* did the Muses treat,
> Their Drink was gen'rous Wine,
> And *Kit-Cat's* pyes their Meat.
> Here he assembled his Poetic Tribe,
> Past Labours to Reward, and new ones to prescribe.[11]

By the time he published the 1694 *Annual Miscellany* containing Addison's conflicted treatment of Milton, explored above in chapter one, Tonson was likely at work on the sixth edition of Milton, the 1695 folio of Milton's *Poetical Works*. Tonson's publication of Milton was to prove the most lucrative of his ventures. Accordingly, his Kit-Cat portrait painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller shows him cradling a volume of *Paradise Lost*. It is thus tempting to connect the Kit-Cat Club and its avowedly "Whiggish" aims to Tonson's 1695 folio and the *Annotations* printed with it.

As R.G. Moyles points out, Tonson's 1695 *Paradise Lost* differs from the previous folios in two key respects. The first is that the text of the poem provides evidence that some care was taken to improve it by consulting not only the 1688 edition (used as the copy-text), but also the 1674 second edition. The second difference is that the 1695 edition was distinguished by the addition of P.H.'s *Annotations.* According to Moyles, the consultation of the 1674 edition "supports the view that Jacob Tonson,

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[10] Edward Ward, *The Secret History of Clubs: particularly the Kit-Cat, Beef-Stake, Uertuosos, Quacks, Knights of the Golden-Fleece, Florists, Beaus, &c*. London, 1709. 370. Available on Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

[11] Richard Blackmore, *The Kit-Cats, A Poem*. London, 1708. 5. Available on Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

though not over-zealous in this regard, was concerned to remain as faithful as possible to Milton's original intentions," while the addition of the *Annotations* "testifies to the scholarly interest which *Paradise Lost* was beginning to arouse."[12] The term "scholarly interest" seems an anachronism. For a twenty-first century audience, the term suggests systematized study in university classrooms devoted to discussing vernacular literature. Instead, the inclusion of P.H.'s *Annotations* ought to be considered in relation to Tonson's business concerns and his role in the formation of the Kit-Cat Club. The volume attempts to increase the poem's cultural standing and popularity, while also shaping its reception as politically acceptable and even useful.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to discuss the origin of the *Annotations*. Almost nothing is known of the author. As readers familiar with Milton criticism and the *Annotations* will have noted, I've avoided using the traditional identification of "P.H." as "Patrick Hume." No records of Tonson's correspondence with P.H. seem to have survived the scattering of the publisher's papers over the years and the wholesale pulping of them in the 1940s. We are left with no record attesting to his procurement of the *Annotations*. While some internal evidence suggests that the notes were prepared for or keyed to the volume they were published in, it is also clear that P.H. did not edit the edition. Was he approached by Tonson and asked to prepare the notes? Were the notes known to one of Tonson's Kit-Cat acquaintances? We may never know. The only way to get some idea of who P.H. was is to examine his *Annotations* along with what has been said about the author throughout the years.

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[12] Moyles, 40.

"HIS NAME MAY LEAD US TO SOME KNOWLEDGE:" FINDING P.H.

The dismissive characterizations of the *Annotations* dished by Newton in his 1749 edition of *Paradise Lost*, quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, have done them a great disservice ever since. Newton continues:

> The greater part of his work is a dull dictionary of the most common words, a tedious fardel of the most trivial observations, explaining what requires no explanation: but take away what is superfluous, and there will still remain a great deal that is useful; there is gold among his dross, and I have been careful to separate the one from the other.[13]

In light of this, it is ironic that Newton downplayed his own reliance on the *Annotations*, particularly as he explicated Milton's scriptural references. Ants Oras barely softened Newton's judgment, and has since been relied upon as the definitive word on the *Annotations*. R.G. Moyles thus dismisses P.H. by quoting Oras quoting Newton:

> Hume's… "Annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost," though they were important in their context and laid the groundwork for such later commentators as Newton and Todd, are on the whole superficial and simplistic, the bulk consisting of straightforward explication and "explanation of obsolete words." Their nature and significance have been adequately explored by Ants Oras….[14]

On the author's identity, Newton wrote only:

> The first person who wrote annotations upon *Paradise Lost* was P.H. or Patrick Hume, of whom we know nothing, unless his name may lead us to some knowledge of his country, but he has the merit of being the first…[15]

Although he laments receiving it too late, while preparing his edition Newton had use of Jonathan Richardson (the younger's) copy of the *Annotations*, which apparently

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[13] Thomas Newton, *Paradise Lost. A New Edition with Notes from Various Authors in Two Volumes*. Vol. 1 (1749). "Preface," A2v. Available on Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

[14] R. G. Moyles, *The Text of Paradise Lost: A Study in Editorial Procedure* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 40.

[15] Newton, "The Life of Milton," xii.

contained copious marginalia from Richardson between the lines and in the margins of the densely printed notes. The Richardsons had been kinder to P.H. as they prepared their 1734 *Remarks on Paradise Lost*.

> After all, we Thankfully Acknowledge ourselves to have Profited Much by what Other Commentators have done, whether in English or French, for there are Several Extant in Both Languages; the Principal of Which is That I mention'd, p. cxvii, [P.H.'s *Annotations*] but That Edition is very Difficult to be had…[16]

However, despite their appreciation and use of his *Annotations*, the Richardsons seem to know little about the author, declaring only that "In 95 Mr. *Tonson* gave us All our Author's Poetical Works, with the same Cuts as to the Former Folio Edition, together with Copious Notes by P.H. (I have been told, This was *Philip Humes*) on *Paradise Lost*."[17] As we trace references to the *Annotations* backward in time toward their publication, information about their authorship becomes less, not more assured. Two years prior to the Richardson's reference to "Philip Humes," Richard Bentley, in his 1732 edition characteristically doesn't mention any debt to Hume, although some of his emendations suggest he was familiar with the work.

Only later nineteenth-century sources provide the sort of detail that accounts for claims made by various twentieth-century critics and the current *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for the "Patrick Hume, literary scholar and poet" who is "affirmed" to have been a Scottish schoolmaster in London and conjectured to be "connected to the

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[16] Jonathan Richardson, Father and Son. *Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost. With the Life of the Author and a Discourse on the Poem*. London, 1734. clxx – clxxi. Available on Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
[17] Ibid., cxvii.

Polwarth branch of the family."[18] Robert Chambers' 1835 *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen* informs us that it is "only probable, from the regularity with which certain first names appear in genealogies in connexion with surnames, that he belonged to the Polwarth branch of the family… as in that branch there were six or seven successive barons bearing the name of Patrick."[19] It is Hugh Rose in his 1857 *New General Biographical Dictionary*, who provides the "affirmation" that Patrick Hume "kept a school in London."[20] However, perhaps (like Chambers) once again relying his name alone to "lead us to some knowledge," some later critics (R.G. Moyles among them) assume Hume "lived in Scotland."[21] Among such certainties and assumptions built upon "first names" and "surnames," we've come a long way from Richardson's early and tentative identification of a "Philip Humes" as author of the *Annotations*.

If Hume was indeed related to the Polwarth branch of the Hume family, he would have been related to Sir Patrick Hume (1641-1724), First Earl of Marchmont, Scottish patriot, Presbyterian, and vigorous supporter of William.[22] Certainly, the last of these traits are consistent with the 1695 annotations. The few traces of personality allowed into the notes breathe anti-Catholicism and hint at a "Whiggish" concept of monarchy. Of Scottish nationalism, however, there is no sign. The *Annotations* are written from a

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[18] Paul Baines, "Hume, Patrick (*fl.* 1695)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/view/article/14149, accessed 23 Jan 2012]. The nineteenth-century sources are frustratingly mute about their own sources of information on Hume.

[19] Robert Chambers, *A Biography of Eminent Scotsmen*, (Edinburgh 1835), 143.

[20] Hugh James Rose, *A New General Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 8. (London, 1853).

[21] Moyles, 41. Moyles uses this "fact" as evidence limiting Hume's role in the production of the 1695 edition, saying that Tonson "did not employ Hume (who, incidentally, lived in Scotland) as an editor or even corrector of the Folio text."

[22] His son, also Patrick Hume (1664-1709) is reported by Chambers to have been a colonel in the cavalry after having served in William's bodyguard and then served throughout his campaigns and Marlborough's.

perspective that seems quite English. Milton is "our Author" or "our Poet" throughout, of course. But Edmund Spenser is also often granted the epithet of "another of our country-men."[23] P.H.'s etymologies are wide ranging and often ingenious, drawing upon Latin, Greek, Dutch, German, Italian, "Saxon," and Belgian sources. At least four times he traces a word to an origin in "Lincolnshire." Only once, throughout all 321 folio pages, does he mention Scotland. In his explication of the word "clans" at 2.87, there is no sign of any particular familiarity with the word: "*Clan* is a Word among the Highland Scots, signifying a Tribe, perhaps of the British *Llann Area,* to denote those that live in the same Spot, or on Lands belonging to one of their great Leading Chiefs."[24] It is a capable definition, but it doesn't bespeak any particular familiarity with the Scottish language.

The best evidence that the *Annotations* were indeed written by a "Hume" comes not from extant biographical information, but instead from another poem published by Tonson in 1695. "A Poem Dedicated to the Immortal Memory of Her Late Majesty The Most Incomparable Q. Mary" is one of several elegies Tonson published on the occasion of Mary's death. Marcus Walsh has previously suggested the poem may have been authored by the "P.H." of the *Annotations*.[25] However, nobody has yet made the case that this is so. By establishing that these two works share authorship, I hope to legitimate the

[23] See the annotations on 1.6, 4.151, 4.703 and 8.152, for examples of the epithet applied to Spenser.

[24] See the *Annotations*, 2.87. The one word of undeniably Scottish origin that I've found in the *Annotations* seems, unfortunately, to be a misprint. At 2.665 P.H. writes that "those that are converted to the Christian faith [in Lapland] can hardly be brought to Church but for the sake of a good Soop of Brandy." "Soop," a word of Scottish origin referring to "sweeping," particularly as in curling, seems a simple misprint for "sop."

[25] Marcus Walsh, "Literary Annotation and Biblical Commentary: The Case of Patrick Hume's *Annotations* on *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 22 (4) 1988. See fn1, page 113. Walsh says that if P.H. is the same author who wrote "To the Immortal Memory," it "at least confirms Hume's Protestantism."

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poem as source of more evidence to shed light upon the character (although not the identity) of P.H.

The poem's title page, surrounded by a solemn, black "mourning border," proclaims the poem to be by "Mr. *HUME*." Unremarkable in most aspects, the piece laments Mary's loss as exemplary Queen and wife, using the "paradox" of her dual role as the main organizing theme of the poem. Mary is also compared to Elizabeth I and found to surpass her. The author provides little information about himself aside from his claim not to have written before.

> I, who the various Tides and Turns of State,
> All-unconcern'd in silence bore,
> When I beheld untimely Fate,
> Lay his cold, o'erhasty hand,
> Upon the Royal Mother of our Land,
> Could not forbear to burst and rore,
> And write dismay'd, who wrote not heretofore.[26]

In the first of several allusions to *Paradise Lost*, the poet defends his use of rhymed verse because he requires the restraint it enforces, unwelcome otherwise, but useful here to control his grief.

> As Lunatics, untractable and fierce,
> Are bound in Chains, in order to their Cure;
> Ungovern'd Grief, must fetter'd be in Verse,
> And Rhime, the Shackles Sence does worst endure.[27]

In P.H.'s *Annotations*, we find Milton's defense of blank verse referred to with a similar assertion that rhyme "shackles sense."

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[26] "To the Immortal Memory of Her Late Majesty Q. Mary," Section XIV.4-11.
[27] Ibid., II.21-24.

> Poetry (of which Rhime is a Modern part) is tied up to certain Measures and Quantities, which, among the *Greek* and *Latin* poets, (till the times of Monkish Ignorance) consisted in an Harmonious Modulation of Numbers, that implied nothing less than the inconvenient gingle and chime at the ends of Verses, which we falsly call Rhime; so deservedly disdained by our Author, for the shackles it puts upon Sense; no Comparison better suiting such Poetasters than that of Tagging of Points in a Garret.[28]

While there are Miltonic allusions and echoes throughout the poem, the most extended is Hume's use of the device of the scales in heaven that weigh the outcome of conflict between Satan and Gabriel in Book IV. In "To Her Immortal Majesty," the scales are used by Mary to weigh her duty as daughter of James II against her duty to her nation and the Protestant religion.

> Conscience, the Righteous Balance of her Breast,
> Hung up the golden Scales, in this was laid
> Her filial Duty, and unsullied Fame,
> Heap'd with the precious Odors of her Name,
> In opposite Circumference were weigh'd,
> Duty to God, and to her Native Land,
> All Christendom, that did her aid demand;
> *Europe* with adamantine Chains opprest!
> With Heav'n's she counterpois'd the erring World's Esteem;
> The first Scale went aloft, and kick'd the oblique Beam.[29]

The allusion is remarkable in its completeness. Where the author of the *Annotations* noted that in Homer and Virgil "the heaviest weight was unlucky and fatal," he observed that Milton, "keeping closer to the Simile, puts Satan, as the wicked and weakest, into the mounted Scale as unable to preponderate and prevail."[30] It seems that the author of "To

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[28] *Annotations*, 1.16. At 4.151, the author laments that as Spenser wrote about the Bower of Bliss, "Rhyme fetter'd his Fancy." Incidentally, the author associates "fierce" with "lunatic" in his note to 4.805, where he describes "the fierce, sparkling and wild disorders that manifestly discover themselves in the looks of Lunatics."

[29] "To Her Immortal Majesty," IX, 9-18.

[30] *Annotations*, 4.1002.

Her Immortal Majesty," was trying to remain true to all his sources. By inverting the options as he paraphrases them (Filial Duty vs. Christendom's aid becomes Heavn's vs. the "erring World's Esteem") he leaves it ambiguous as to which scale was indeed "unlucky." Does the "first scale" that goes aloft contain "Filial Duty" or "Heav'n's esteem"?

Finally, the most convincing parallel between "To Her Immortal Majesty" and the *Annotations* is in the poem's depiction of Mary vanquishing Vice in the same manner that dawn vanquishes night.

> Discount'nanc'd Vice stood of her Eyes in awe,
> Goodness sate there enthron'd, and forc'd her to withdraw:
> So amaz'd Chaos, and confounded Night
> Retir'd, shot through with beamy Darts of Light.[31] (X.7-10)

The author of the *Annotations* seems particularly enamored of the image of darkness shot through with "darts of light." He uses it in one of his longest paraphrases of Milton's verse, opening his commentary upon Book VI.

> …And now the Morn
> (Such as with us) went forth, adorn'd with Gold
> Refin'd by Heav'ns pure Fires, before her Night
> Fled vanquish'd, with the piercing Darts of Light
> Shot through and scatter'd.[32]

He repeats the image a few lines later in his note on Book VI.15: "*Vanish'd Night shot through, &c. Night fled away, wounded and shot quite through, with the piercing Rays of Light."* Milton, in the invocation to Book VI describes night "shot thro' with orient beams," while the "darts of light" seems to be Hume's own conceit. The annotator likes

[31] "To Her Immortal Majesty," X.7-10.
[32] *Annotations*, 6.1.

the image so much he quotes it in his earlier note on 5.310 where Milton describes Raphael's approach as resembling "another Morn Ris'n on mid-noon." He explains, "nothing is more Glorious than to see the beauteous blushing Morning with her Orient Beams, chase and disperse the diminish'd and decaying Darkness," before giving once again the "orient beams" lines from the invocation to Book VI.[33] Other parallels between the annotator of *Paradise Lost* and the poet of "To Her Immortal Majesty" include a description of the departed Mary finally understanding the mysteries of cosmology that wind men's minds in a "maze" and prompt them to create "giddy" systems, a passage echoed by P.H.'s commentary upon the philosophizing devils of Book II and Raphael's admonishment to be "lowly wise" in Book VIII.[34] While such resonances can never be conclusive, they provide the only evidence we have other than belated hearsay that a "Hume" wrote the *Annotations*. Moreover, confidently identifying the "Hume" of this poem with P.H. allows us to refine the sketchy impressions of P.H.'s political stances gleaned from the *Annotations*, in particular by revealing an author profoundly disconcerted by the threat of arbitrary power.

TEXTUAL MATTERS: HUME AND THE 1695 TEXT

Perhaps exacerbated by our lack of knowledge about the author, the reputation of the *Annotations* has seldom overcome the lackluster review given by Newton. Ants Oras, while admitting that Newton's "grudging acknowledgement" obscures his reliance on the *Annotations* for biblical scholarship, was himself similarly ambivalent toward the work.

[33] Ibid., 5.310.
[34] See especially *Annotations* 2.561.

> Much of it is superfluous. It lacks discipline. But some of its critical judgements are stimulating and unconventional despite the annotator's moralistic and classicist bias. Notwithstanding its accumulation of unnecessary information, acute observation will sometimes be found combined with solid erudition.[35]

Oras even seems compelled to apologize for spending so many pages (a mere twenty-seven) on Hume, declaring that the treatment is "at greater length than would have been advisable if Hume had not been the first commentator of Milton, and the first person who tried to deal with a great English poet in the thorough manner of classical philology."[36] With the notable exception of Howard Erskine-Hill, most modern critics appear to share Oras's quixotic view of the *Annotations*.

Among his other judgments upon the *Annotations*, Oras determined P.H.'s relationship to the text of the 1695 edition, concluding that P.H. did not edit the edition. Moyles supports this view, claiming that it "seems certain" that Tonson either purchased the *Annotations* or contracted to have them written for the 1695 edition, "but he did not employ Hume… as editor or even corrector of the Folio text."[37] That P.H. wrote the annotations for inclusion with a folio edition in mind is borne out by two comments he makes upon the illustrations of the folio. At 1.591-94, he scolds the "Designer of *Lucifer's* Picture, prefix'd to this first Book," for providing a grotesque satanic figure with horns and asses ears instead of a fallen angel retaining angelic features and traces of his former nobility. Similarly, he comments at 12.637 that the "Designer of the Copper Plate" depicting the expulsion has not "well expressed" the manner in which Milton's

[35] Oras, 8.
[36] Ibid., 24.
[37] Moyles, 41.

angel led Adam and Eve out of paradise by the hand, instead "representing him, *shoving them out,* as we say, *by Head and Shoulders.*" Although Estella Schoenberg has argued that Plates I and II were designed as political cartoons depicting James II and Charles II respectively, P.H.'s comment on Plate I suggests that such commentary was either lost on him or irrelevant to his critique. Given his Whiggish leanings (discussed below), his disdain for the plates probably doesn't reflect any disagreement with their potential politics, but only a desire to remain true to Milton's text.[38] He argues that Plate I's Satan should appear nobler to correspond to Milton's description of the newly-fallen angel, a revision that would likely increase the figure's resemblance to one of the Stuarts by removing the horns and "asses ears." Given his delicacy in dealing with the politics of the poem throughout, it would be counterproductive for the annotator to increase the political freight of the illustrations. Regardless of whether he was aware of the political potential of the plates, P.H.'s wording in his complaint about Plate I ("*this* first Book") lends credence to the theory that his commentary was written for inclusion in the Tonson folio. However, given that Tonson's 1688 and 1691 folios were the only illustrated versions available, the commentator could have rested secure that those using his *Annotations* would recognize the reference. Better evidence that the notes were intended for the 1695 folio (or at least signaling that the 1695 was prepared with an eye toward the notes) is that it was the first since the ten-book 1667 edition to print convenient line numbers in the margins of the poem.

[38] Estella Schoenberg, "Seventeenth-Century Propaganda in English Book Illustration," *Mosaic*, 24.2 (1992): 1-24.

Evidence that P.H. was not an "editor" of the 1695 text is amply provided where his textual references and corrections diverge from the text as it was printed. His spelling and punctuation seem to most closely follow the 1674 edition. Had he edited the 1695 text, these incidentals would likely have been more closely reflected in the text of the poem. Moyles goes further, however, and suggests that P.H. used the 1691 as copy-text for his notes while referring to a 1674 edition.

> Such emendations suggest that Hume, when preparing his annotations, relied not merely on an easily accessible 1691 edition but on the authoritative 1674. An examination of his notes, each preceded by a quoted word, partial line, or whole line from the poem, supports that view: each quotation, in terms of its substantives, spelling, and punctuation, accords with the 1674 text. That Hume did not use a 1667 text or think it necessary to collate is made clear by the perpetuation of 1674 errors and the adoption of every 1674 variant without comment.[39]

Unfortunately, this isn't quite supported by a close examination of P.H.'s text. Moyles claims that in the entire 321 pages of commentary, there are "only three textual notes."[40] However, there are at least seven textual comments, one of which at least suggests the possibility that P.H. referred to a 1667 text, while another indicates he was using the 1688, not the 1691, as his copy text.

The first of these emendations (noted neither by Oras nor Moyles) is at 9.922, where P.H.'s note reads, *"Who thus hath dar'd*; Misprinted for, *Hast dared*." The line is printed "Who thus *hast* dar'd" in the 1667 edition, but in all editions following (to include the 1695) the line reads "*hath* dar'd." P.H.'s correction may be a sign that he

[39] Moyles, 40-1.

[40] Ibid., 40. In this, again, Moyles may be following Oras, who says Hume makes only "a very few remarks" on the text. Oras identifies four, 9.923, 7.451, 10.989, and 3.48, but 7.451 is a concern over Milton's meaning where Hume does not suggest a correction to the text, so may have been discounted by Moyles (but not by Bentley in 1732). See Oras, 47-8.

collated with the 1667, or it may simply be a serendipitous correction. Modern editions seem to prefer "hath" (see Merritt Hughes's edition and the 2007 Modern Library) with the notable exception of Fowler, who prints "hast." The choice has been discussed in print more than once.[41]

The next emendation that seems to indicate both a break with the 1674 edition, and that P.H.'s copy text was the 1688 edition, is found at 9.1092-3. P.H.'s annotation reads, "*May from the present*; Misprinted, *for the present.*" This is a confusing moment. Using the previously discussed emendation as an example of P.H.'s methodology, I read this as "Misprinted for, *for the present*."[42] Even as early as 1695, these lines had had a rather complex textual history:

> What best may *for* the present serve to hide
> The Parts of each *from* other (1667, 1691-5)
>
> What best may *from* the present serve to hide
> The Parts of each *for* other (1674)
>
> What best may *from* the present serve to hide
> The Parts of each *from* other (1678, 1688)

If he was using a 1691 edition as his copy text, P.H.'s comment would only make sense if, reading the text "*for* the present," he was advocating a return to the faulty 1678-88 version, which read inelegantly, "*from* the present/each *from* other." Instead, it seems certain that P.H. is responding to the faulty 1688 version and restoring it to the correct 1667 version ("*for* the present"), a correction made both in 1691 and 95. P.H.'s use of the

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[41] See B.A. Wright, "A Note on Milton's Punctuation" *Review of English Studies*, 5 (1954), 170 and Robert M. Adams, *Ikon: John Milton and the Modern Critics* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1955) 92.

[42] It seems reasonable that a compositor may have omitted the "for" after "Misprinted" through eye-skip or by incorrectly assuming it was a mistaken repetition of the word.

1688 edition raises a question about when P.H. was working on the *Annotations*. He was definitely still working on them after 1690, since he often responds to and criticizes Hog's Latin translation of the epic, which appeared in that year. Beyond that, as with the frustrating lack of personal reference, there is no indication of the dates of composition, although his (at least occasional) use of the 1688 edition as copy text may indicate that the project was in progress before the 1691 was available.

Another emendation proposed by P.H. corrects a misprint introduced in 1688 at 9.925, where the Tree of Knowledge is described as having been "Under *bane* to touch." The annotation corrects it to "*Bann*," restoring the reading in the 1667-1678 editions that had printed it "*Banne*." The erroneous "*Bane*" is, however, printed in the 1695 edition. In fact, the only emendation proposed by P.H. and adopted uniquely in the 1695 edition (and ever since) is the correction of the metrically defective misprint at 10.989-90:

> Childless thou art, Childless remain;
> So Death shall be deceived his glut, and with us two (1667-1691)

In his note on this verse, P.H. undertakes a sensitive exploration of the possible *intentional* meanings of such a short line, even though he definitively determines it an unintentional misprint.

> *Childless thou art, Childless remain*; A mistake of the Printer has made our Author seem ambitious to have imitated *Virgil* in some of *incomplete Verses*; or that he had a mind to shew *Eve's* vehement desire to stop and prevent the miserable Being of Mankind, by breaking of his Verse abruptly; but the next Verse being too long by what this falls short, plainly shews that [*So Death*] is to be added to this. *Childless thou art, Childless remain; So Death.*

The annotator's suggestion that an incomplete line may have been construed as a conscious imitation of Virgil, like his exploration of the emotional or psychological meanings of such truncation, appears remarkably modern. Given the evidence of the other emendations and incidental differences *not* incorporated into the 1695 text, however, I must agree with Moyles that someone involved in producing the edition either noted the *Annotations* emendation and corrected the lines, or (having shown evidence of metrical sensitivity at other places) came upon the correction independently of the text of the *Annotations*.[43]

The final two textually focused emendations are P.H.'s original contributions, proposing alternatives to readings that had been consistent since 1667 (and were not adopted in 1695, either). The first is at 11.433, where confronted with the vision of Abel's altar as "Rustic, of Grassy *Sord*," P.H. wrestles valiantly with the word "sord," suggesting reasonably that it may have been "misprinted for Sod" before attempting an etymology:

> *Sord*, perhaps misprinted for *Sod*, Turf, of the Belg *Sode*, Ital. *Terra Soda*, of *Solidum* or *Solum*, Lat. But if there be any such word as *Sord*, for dried Earth, it must be a derivative of *Swart*, Belg. Black, from its colour, when fit for Fuel; whence our *Sword*, the Rind of Bacon, of its blackness.

Modern commentators, to include Miner, Moeck, and Jablonski, look to the OED definition of "sward" to explain the word in a manner recalling P.H.'s recourse to the Belgian "swart." Bentley spells it "swerd," and the modern editions (Fowler, Hughes, and The Modern Library) print "sward." The next (and final) of P.H.'s original textual

[43] For evidence that someone (not P.H.) corrected the text with an ear toward meter, see Moyle's discussion of 10.550 and 11.427. Moyles, 41-2.

emendations may in fact be tongue-in-cheek, the annotator sometimes displaying a capacity for humor in his notes.[44] At 11.820 he suggests emending the description of the flood to replace "rack" with "wrack":

> *Devote to Universal Rack*; The World design'd for universal Deluge, destin'd universally to be drown'd. *Rack*, should have been printed, *Wrack*, implying the general punishment by the Flood, wherein the whole World at once suffered *shipwrack*.[45]

Bentley's 1732 edition prints "wrack" at this point, without comment. Whether P.H.'s suggestion is meant to be humorous or not, modern editors also seem to split on the issue. Hughes prints "rack," The Modern Library "wrack," and Alastair Fowler "wreck." Not even Fowler acknowledges Hume's wry comment.

The final category of textual issues concerns two points at which P.H. engages with the meaning and sense of Milton's words. The first of these is at 3.48, where he suggests emending (perhaps needlessly, however brilliantly) Milton's description of blindness as a "universal blanc." I quote it at length, for it provides a good example of P.H.'s ingenuity.

> *Presented with a Universal Blanc*; I cannot perswade my self but it should have been a *Universal Blot*, and that it is a mistake of the Printer. *Blanc* is Fr. for White, and the Phrase, *Donner la carte Blanche á*, to send one a Blanc, is to submit absolutely to what Conditions the Conquerour shall set down: Now Blindness (as well described by Clouds and continual Darkness) does so fully import an entire Ignorance and Privation of Colour, that a Person born blind has doubtless no notion of any such thing; but for a Man that had for many years enjoyed his Eyes, to say, his

[44] For an example of P.H.'s wit (and his fervent anti-Catholic bias) see 11.679 where, after giving an earnest etymology of "*Massacher*" using French and Italian origins, he adds: "But I rather think, of *Missa Sacra, the Holy Mass*; for propagating of which, the most abominable *Massacres of Mankind* have been made.

[45] Mr. Hume, author of "To Her Immortal Majesty" describes the Dutch upon losing Mary as "Though parting with a Princess for a Queen, / Shipwrack'd between two mighty Tydes of Woe"(VIII, 16-17).

> Blindness had cut him off from the chearful ways of Men, and, instead of Nature's fair Book of Knowledge, had presented him with a Universal Blanc, like a piece of white Paper, unspotted and unstained with any Impression, his Memory retaining still the Idea's of all Things formerly seen, thô now as to his Eye-sight blotted out, seems absurd. The next Verse, *Of Natures Works to me expung'd and ras'd*, confirms, that it ought to be an *Universal Blot*; for *Expung'd* is of *Expungere*, Lat. to blot out a written Word, by covering it with little Pricks or Blots, and *Ras'd,* is of *Radere*, Lat. to shave; the Romans, (who writ on Waxed Tablets with Iron Stylus) when they struck out a Word, did *Tabulam radere*, rase it out.

Oras dismisses this annotation with some venom as "Bentleian," claiming that P.H. "does not understand Milton's emotional, slightly hyperbolical manner of speaking and requires pedantic accuracy…. Even Bentley's application of logic and philology was hardly more regardless of the style of poetry."[46] Moyles notes the suggested emendation, but remains mute on his estimation of its value. Bentley himself took issue not with the word "blanc," but instead with the phrase "blank of Nature's works." He suggests it may be better to terminate the sentence at "blank" and to emend the next sentence so that it reads "All Natures *Map* to me expung'd and ras'd." Modern editors have accepted the original text, although often including a gloss.

The final textual concern that P.H. raises is one that Bentley would seize upon and make his own by suggesting a correction (one of the few of his emendations that is considered probable to this day). P.H. describes the crux in the account of creation at 7.451:

> *Let the Earth bring forth Fowl living*. 'Tis unaccountable how our Author, who has hitherto kept so close to the sacred Text, should deviate from it here, and make mention of *Fowl*, when there is no such in *Gen* 1.24 where the Works of the Sixth Day are enumerated, having treated of 'em but just

[46] Oras, 48.

> before; unless he would insinuate (according to *Gen* 2.19 above cited) that Fowl, or at least some kinds of 'em, were nearer of kin, in their Original, to Earth, than Water, which their Agility seems to contrary, thô the Elements are no where so pure, at least these two inferior, but each has more or less some mixture of the other.

As with his attempt to explain the truncated line at 10.989-90, P.H.'s ingenuity becomes evident as he proposes reasons why Milton may have diverged from "sacred text." Unlike Bentley, who would propose confidently that Milton said "soul" instead of "fowl," P.H. is reluctant to suggest a change if there is no obvious misprint. And here we are confronted with one of the key differences between P.H. and Bentley. While Bentley parades his own interpretation of Milton's biography in his text, relying on it to characterize difficult or "faulty" passages as the fault of an amanuensis, P.H. cannot or will not do so. In fact, the absence of "Milton" in the *Annotations* is a feature of the text.

WHAT AUTHOR? REMOVING MILTON FROM *PARADISE LOST*

The absence of Milton-as-individual in P.H.'s *Annotations* was highlighted as a fault by Ants Oras. In his opinion, rooted in early twentieth-century critical methodology, the lack of a biographical perspective was a near-fatal flaw.

> What is too often absent in Hume is a direct interest in the poet himself. He gives no biographical information about Milton, but confines himself to a study of the work considered quite apart from the writer's personality. Milton is already a classic, and "Paradise Lost" an engine of edification.[47]

Of modern critics, only Howard Erskine-Hill has proposed that this aspect of P.H.'s technique is a conscious strategy employed in response to Milton's politics. Perhaps in answer to Oras, Erskine-Hill notes that P.H.'s definition of poetry (see above, page 13)

[47] Oras, 24.

demonstrates that "to Hume the concept of the author was alive and significant… [He] identifies learnedly and passionately with Milton's attitude to rhyme."[48] Yet, as Erskine-Hill points out, the passage is remarkable in that (aside from the barb at Dryden) it omits the political valence of the rhyme argument. P.H., in the *Annotations* and his poem commemorating Mary, recognizes the "shackles" and fetters of rhyme as purely poetic restraints, declining to relate rhymed verse to any "ancient bondage." After examining points at which P.H. had opportunity to comment on Milton's politics and chose not to, Erskine-Hill declares:

> Hume's strategy now seems clear. He is not unconcerned with Milton's life. He is very much concerned with political and historical matters, but not to the extent of featuring Milton's record or views on them…. Generally his aim is to detach 'our Author' and his poem from the historical events of the century's middle decades…. Hume's 'Annotations' is, perhaps, the first attempt to accommodate Milton to later times, and take the political sting out of his metaphysical epic.[49]

Rather than follow Oras and construe P.H.'s silence about Milton's biography as a fault, Erskine-Hill recognizes it as a deliberate strategy of "accommodation." Given that much of the literary commentary and criticism of the seventeenth century was author-centric, in the form of progresses of poets or brief lives, the omission of such context from P.H.'s work is unusual, and probably intentional. Where only a year prior Addison's "Account" had posited that readers couldn't enjoy *Paradise Lost* because of Milton's biography and prose writings, P.H. deliberately removes these obstacles.

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[48] Erskine-Hill, 65.
[49] Ibid., 67.

Even more conspicuous than the absence of Milton (as a historical figure) in the *Annotations* is the absence of P.H. himself, as we've already encountered in our attempt to identify the author. However, it is possible to piece together some of the annotator's world-view and personality from his more unguarded notes. In "To Her Immortal Majesty," Hume displayed a mistrust of "absolute" or "arbitrary" power, taking care to praise Mary's sharing of and voluntary relinquishing of her power when William would return from his campaigns. The fear of absolute power is so great that Hume compulsively repeats it in consecutive lines:

> In thee alone dispensing Pow'r appear'd
> Such as our jealous Isle could ne'er have fear'd:
> You could alone our slavish Fears confute,
> Who only ore your self were absolute. (5.24-6)

The "absolute" or "arbitrary" power that the "jealous Isle" fears is particularly associated with the threatened resurgence of Catholicism under James II:

> Now Clouds of Superstition 'gan lowr,
> And overcast the British Hemisphere;
> And Thunder-claps of Arbitrary Pow'r
> Foreshew'd the Tyrant Tempst near. (7.23-6)

But at Mary's approach, the fears of new "enslavement" were dispelled along with the "Hydra" of arbitrary power:

> Now Armies rais'd t'enslave their native Land,
> Amaz'd with their own guilty Fears disband;
> The monstrous Hydra of Arbitrary sway,
> Dismay'd, had scarce the pow'r to run away. (7.39-42)

The *Annotations* displays a similar, albeit muted, concern about arbitrary or absolute power, combined with the vehement anti-Catholicism observed before.[50] One such moment, revealing a decidedly "whiggish" desire for limited monarchy, is at 1.246, where P.H. glosses the line "Who now is Sovereign can dispose and bid," with a caveat that this describes "Arbitrary Power, harmless in no Hand, but His, who is as Just as He is Powerful and Almighty." The only absolute monarchy P.H. will allow is God's. Later, in Book II, P.H. defines "arbitrary punishment" as "according to the will of our angry conqueror," and explains that "arbitrary" is derived from "*arbitrarius*, Lat. Voluntary, left to the Will of another…*"* (2.335). The conquered thus are made complicit in their acceptance of arbitrary power. Annotating his *Paradise Lost* in the years following the Glorious Revolution, P.H., like the Hume of the elegy to Mary, seems a vigorous advocate of limited monarchy.

Other glimpses of the annotator's personal views are more restrained. He appears to argue against ambition in monarchs at 4.390, where he glosses "Honour and Empire" by linking it with "Revenge" and "Glory" and stating that "such like Reasons of State, are Arguments better becoming this Grand Destroyer [Satan], the Arch-Enemy of all Mankind, than any Earthly vain-glorious Monarch." In the same book, he comments on Restoration court culture when he asserts that "Mix'd Dance, or Wanton Mask, etc." are comparable to "court-addresses" and "balls at midnight," all "worthy of disdain" (4.768). Never one to approve of "faction" in any form, P.H. scorns the Solemn League and

[50] See footnote 41, above. Another instance is at 5.438, where P.H. glosses, "*Transubstantiate* and *Transubstantiation*, Barbarous Lat. Words that have much disturbed the World."

Covenant as an act of impious rebellion at 1.87, comparing it to the Holy League in France. He distrusts zeal, glossing "fanatick" as "a mad frantic votary, [derived] from… to shine. A misguided Zelot, led out of the right way by the Light within him" (1.480). And in what surely was a controversial subject to broach in 1695, soon after the death of the childless Mary, he comments unnecessarily on problems of succession while explicating the "adopted clusters" brought by the vine as dowry for the elm:

> 5.218 *Adopted*, of *adoptare*, Lat. to take into ones care as a Son: *Adoptati*, were such, who for their Courage, Virtuous Education, and promising Parts, were by the Childless Romans chosen out of other Families, to heir the Estates of those who did adopt 'em, and past into their Power as absolutely, as if begotten by 'em; better pleased, that Nature left them the choice of a Successor, than if she had imposed and entailed one on them, unworthy perhaps of their Famous *Ancestors*.

Perhaps P.H. was led to this digression by the associations evoked in the preceding "fruitless embraces" of the Edenic orchard. It appears, however, to comment on the succession woes facing England, and barely suppresses worry about the possibility of an "imposed or entailed" (Jacobite?) successor who might once again attempt to claim the crown upon William's death.

In a similarly prolix note, the annotator's explication of the ant's creation at 7.485-90 emphasizes the analogy to a commonwealth beyond what even Milton dared, finding that the ants in their community are "Thereby excelling the *industrious Bee*, who have their *Leaders*, and their *Kings*." And finally, despite his distrust of zealots and disdain for faction, P.H. glosses "*Truth bestruck with Slandrous Darts*" in a manner fitting for one who admired Milton's spirit if not his zeal: "Truth shall be hardly to be found on Earth, loaded with Lies and foul Aspersions, disgraced with the Reproaches of

Heretic and *Schismatic, Puritane,* &c." (12.536). It is difficult not to read this as a comment on Milton's popular reputation at the time P.H. was preparing the *Annotations* for publication.

Such overt eruptions of political concern are rare, but contribute to a picture of P.H. as politically engaged, vigorously Protestant, and leaning toward whiggish in his politics. Entailing the entire context available to us for this elusive author, these moments in the *Annotations* and elegy prepare us to better evaluate the one point where P.H. comes close to commenting on Milton's historical association with the regicides. It is a moment most remarkable for the manner in which the annotator *avoids* implicating Milton. The verse in *Paradise Lost* that occasions this is in Book II, where the fallen angels express their esteem for Satan:

> Nor fail'd they to express how much they prais'd,
> That for the general safety he despis'd
> His own: for neither do the Spirits damn'd
> Lose all their virtue: last bad Men should boast
> Their specious deeds on Earth; which Glory excites,
> Or close Ambition varnish'd o'er with Zeal. (2.481-6)

This seems to be the very verse that likely inspired Addison's charge that Milton "profan'd his pen, / To vernish o'er the guilt of faithless men."[51] P.H.'s annotation here demonstrates once again the dense associations that "zeal" brought with it, associations of religious enthusiasm and political radicalism often attached to Milton himself.

> *Or close Ambition varnish'd o're, &c*. A noble Verse, and highly expressive of those zealous Hypocrites our Author's Contemporaries, an Age so impiously Godly, and so zealously Wicked, that Prayer was the Prologue to the Murder of a Monarch at his own Gate: *Varnish'd o're*, of

[51] See the discussion of Addison's 1694 "Account" in chapter 1.

> the Fr. *Vernice*, a Composition of Gum of Juniper Trees and Lineseed Oyl, setting a Luster on what it is laid, admirably applied to Zeal, which so glares in the Eyes of the Weak *Populace*, that they are not able to discover the dark Designs that it too often hides: *Zeal*, of the Gr[eek]…. to be hot, as it is too often.

Howard Erskine-Hill remarks on this annotation that it seems "extraordinary that Hume should thus slide over the part played by 'our Author' in historical events which need not, perhaps have been mentioned."[52] As demonstrated by Addison's response to this point in the epic, the historical referent beneath these lines was active and readily recognizable for late-seventeenth century readers; it seemed to *demand* mention. What is most remarkable about this annotation isn't that Milton's notorious approval and vindication of the regicides is "slid" over. Instead, P.H. completely removes Milton from among the ranks of the regicides and has "our Author" portray them as hypocrites. The annotation quietly and craftily puts Milton in the unlikely position of denouncing what he was famous for defending. In this "noble verse," P.H. imagines Milton performing an admirable public service by exposing the dangers of zeal that may otherwise "glare in the eyes of the weak populace," while castigating the hypocrisy of his mere "contemporaries," the regicides. It is a critical sleight-of-hand that goes far beyond avoiding Milton's politics or detaching him from the controversies of his time and his prose; it revises him.

The *Annotations* are elsewhere more circumspect in their method of expunging Milton's political past. P.H.'s general approach is best demonstrated by his notes upon the invocation of Book VII. This, more than any other point in *Paradise Lost*, was a location read by later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century commentators as a moment of

[52] Erskine-Hill, 67.

Miltonic self-representation. Every early biographical sketch of Milton, to include Bentley's preface and the Richardsons' notes, construes these passages as Milton's description of himself heroically continuing his song, defiant despite being disenfranchised by the Restoration.

> More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
> To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,
> On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;
> In darkness, and with dangers compassed round. (7.24-7)

P.H.'s commentary on these personal lines is restrained. It almost seems to take an effort on his part to avoid the biographical reading so readily available in these verses. That the biographical content was obvious to this sensitive reader is clear as he exposes a rather obscure biographic allusion just before, at line 18. Here, he indicates that Milton's reference to Bellerophon alludes to the poet's blindness once again:

> *Bellerophon*…. Attempting vain-gloriously to mount up to Heaven on his Winged Steed, *Jupiter* made his unruly unrein'd Horse so ungovernable, that he threw his Rider on the *Alean Plain,* where being struck blind, he wandred, finding no Relief, till he died with Hunger.

Given that so many of Milton's critics claimed his blindness was a judgment upon him for his treatment of Charles I and the *Second Defense,* the relation to Bellerophon has great possibility for biographical resonance unremarked by P.H. But in the note immediately following this, where we expect to find traditional comment on Milton's situation after the Restoration, "with dangers compassed round," we find no biographical allusion at all. As with his treatment of Milton's apology for blank verse, P.H. focuses strictly on poetry itself as he paraphrases Milton's lines. As ventriloquist for Milton, P.H. has him say here, "*Half my work is still unfinish'd… but…firm standing on the Earth, not*

snatch'd above the Stars with daring flight, more safe, I sing with manly voice, not changed by straining it to hoarsness, or into dumbness wearied, &c." (7.22). P.H. has shown himself too learned and shrewd a commentator to be oblivious to the biographical and political implications of this invocation. Indeed, the lightness of P.H.'s biographical touch is such that throughout the invocation to light that opens Book III, he makes no mention of Milton's blindness for almost three complete folio pages, until his note on line 33; and even then the note is circumspect. The omission of such commentary where others were quick to note autobiography suggests it is intentional, another revision of Milton to make him more palatable for the public.

P.H. seems here and elsewhere in the notes to consciously avoid bringing Milton into the text as anything more than "our Author." It is clear that Milton the man and statesman, the famous "John Milton, Englishman," is not welcome in the text of his own poem and has to be carefully elided and sometimes even revised to avoid the poem's association with what Addison had termed the "bottom odious to the sight." Even for those of "whiggish" sensibilities such as Hume or Addison, Milton was still too hot to handle. Association with Milton potentially threatened rather than bolstered Whig agendas. As Addison had put it in 1694, as long as Milton continued to recall the false zeal of the regicides, even his most powerful language "can't support the cause." The *Annotations* thus separates the poetry from the politics and expunges Milton's biography from the poem. Having picked up on P.H.'s elisions, Erskine-Hill apparently worried that Hume would be accused of "sanitizing" Milton, and offered the justification that that Milton himself was cagey about politics (and religion) within the epic.

> Hume should not be utterly condemned as sanitizing *Paradise Lost* from its political taint. The poem itself makes a move, not to evade but to touch with delicacy the roots of recent, tragic, political argument. Milton himself had in his poem obvious opportunities to express what were, or had been, his openly expressed political views.[53]

This dissertation views P.H.'s treatment of Milton's authorship and political contamination as the first significant move of several toward rendering the poem more acceptable to a wider readership by detaching it from one of the "infernal saints" of the revolution. However, this exorcism of Milton as political entity is only part of P.H.'s strategy. He is also carefully positioning *Paradise Lost* as a work worthy of the same treatment accorded to classical and scriptural texts.

MAKING A CLASSIC: EXEGESIS, CLASSICAL SCHOLARSHIP, AND THE *ANNOTATIONS*

Newton's complaint that P.H.'s commentary was largely "a dull dictionary of the most common words, a tedious fardel of the most trivial observations, explaining what requires no explanation," neglects much that is happening in the *Annotations*. True, the notes resemble the most verbose of modern editorial apparatuses, as P.H. explores obscure etymologies or explicates numerous classical sources for each Miltonic allusion. While modern readers are used to such copious scholarly annotation relegating the text to a line or two at the top of a page of crowded commentary, as the first of its kind the *Annotations* must have seemed monstrous to many early readers. Read with an eye toward discovering P.H.'s interest in the epic, however, the *Annotations* reveal a learned and sensitive reader.

P.H.'s most laudatory notes demonstrate a keen ability to put his finger on the major cruxes of the poem. He signals the approach of one such moment in Book III. In a

[53] Erskine-Hill, 67.

comment uniquely set off from the surrounding text, he announces to his reader, "Here begins the excellent Discourse of Free-will, the Reasons of which are plainly and very convincingly laid down."[54] The next eight folio pages contain P.H.'s least etymological notes, as well as a concentration of those most heavily concerned with scriptural sources. At the conclusion of the section, which he marks as the moment at 3.342 where the Son offers himself to redeem mankind, the annotator explains his fascination with these particular verses:

> Our Author has been entertaining us for 264 Lines, with a Discourse of the highest Nature, as the Mysteries of God's Mercy and Justice to Mankind ; of Free-will, of the inconceivable Incarnation of his Son, and all the nicest Points of Faith: and has acquitted himself of this great Undertaking as well as is possible for Human Understanding to do, in things so much exceeding the compass of our Capacities. He has kept close to the Revelations of Holy Writ, as appears by the Quotations vouching each Verse.

In focusing on the debate concerning free will and Milton's attempt to extricate his God from blame for sin, P.H. deftly identifies the central concern of Milton's poem for his readers. He becomes, in essence, the first of the long line of critics who continue to engage Milton's theodicy. Throughout his commentary on these passages, P.H. is particularly vigilant to fulfill the title-page promise that his *Annotations* would be a text "wherein the texts of sacred writ, relating to the poem are quoted." The exegetical endeavor is accompanied by his commitment to reveal and compare the "parallel places and imitations" of Homer and Virgil. P.H.'s explanation of Milton's scriptural sources became the foundation of future efforts in the same vein, and is indeed the portion of his text most often used by later editors (frequently without acknowledgment).

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[54] *Annotations*, 102, following the note on 3.99.

As in his etymological explanations, P.H.'s scriptural sources reveal an annotator well-read and knowledgeable about a great variety of sources. Oras points out that in one note alone (on 1.17) P.H. refers to St. Augustine, the Cabbala, the Talmud, Moses Barcephas, John Malala, St. Jerome, St. Basil, Thodoret, Athanasius, Tertullian, St. Chrysostom, Hermogenes, Cajetan, Zoroaster, Heraclitus, Orpheus, the Platonists and Pythagoreans, and Virgil.[55] In a later note at 3.334, explicating the statement that "The world shall burn," P.H. refers seamlessly to 2 Peter, Lucretius, Ovid, Lucan, the Psalms, and Revelations. Marcus Walsh has ably demonstrated that P.H. drew upon a tradition of biblical exegesis in preparing such learned commentary. Despite the *Annotations* being the first of its kind to explicate a vernacular work of literature, Walsh recognized that the work contains "clear generic characteristics, of some significance both for the critical history of *Paradise Lost*, and for the theoretical history of literary annotation."[56] As Walsh points out, the exegetical "two-fold structure" of paraphrase and explication was one of the only models available for an ambitious work such as the *Annotations*. Oras and others have puzzled over P.H.'s use of paraphrase, renderings of Milton's verse that remain close to the original and appeared to Oras to be "meant for readers of very inconsiderable learning…. Hume no doubt was partly carried away by his enthusiasm, and could not resist the temptation to reshape Milton after his own fashion."[57] Walsh counters this by portraying the paraphrase as a feature of biblical exegesis, and claiming that as such, P.H.'s paraphrase "is generally more concerned with interpretation rather than criticism, with meaning rather than with significance."[58] The paraphrases are not

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[55] Oras, 24-5.
[56] Walsh, "Literary Annotation and Biblical Commentary," 109. Walsh also recognizes that the *Annotations* were also "to initiate and give shape to a new genre, the secular literary commentary on English works," 113.
[57] Oras, 23.
[58] Walsh, 111.

simply clarifications of Milton's text, or poetic exercises on the part of P.H., but are themselves modes of interpretation, as we've seen in his careful rephrasing of Milton's "dangers compassed round" lines, discussed above.

This seems a valuable reassessment of P.H.'s paraphrases, one that puts them squarely within the development of textual and literary criticism. Yet not enough attention has been given to what such a treatment signals about the text at hand. By applying techniques of biblical exegesis to the epic, P.H. was offering the poem a privileged position from which it could be both political and beyond controversy, much as scriptural texts themselves were employed in political controversy. The use of biblical texts to comment on the political controversies of the time was still a widespread practice. Prominent examples include Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, or earlier comparisons of Charles II with David returning from banishment. This is, in a sense, what Walsh is responding to when he claims that "Hume, using the same method [as biblical commentators] takes Milton's poem as a national scripture to be similarly made available."[59] But Walsh overshoots the mark when he summarizes the meaning of the *Annotations'* inclusion in the volume:

> By 1695 *Paradise Lost* was a classic, its status marked especially by the great folio fourth edition of 1688, and Dryden's famous epigram, printed in its frontispiece…. To Hume, *Paradise Lost* was, more than a classic, a scripture. It was, as Protestants thought the Bible, a work both requiring, and capable of, explication.[60]

Precisely because *Paradise Lost* is a politically controversial work in a politically turbulent time, P.H.'s treatment of it in a manner commensurate with scripture was an intervention. His exegesis is remarkable at times for its tendency to be more conservative

[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 113.

than even some scriptural sources, thus toning down Milton's political subtext. For example, at Milton's mention of Nimrod, a potentially politically charged moment, the annotations are remarkably neutral:

> 11.27. *Will arrogate Dominion*; Will take upon himself undeserv'd Power. Not deserv'd by him as more Worthy, Wise, or Virtuous, than his Brethren, over whom he shall usurp this unjust Authority.
>
> 11.30 *Hunting and Men not Beasts*; This proud, ambitious Man, is by Holy Scripture stiled, *A mighty hunter,* Gen.10.9. Hunting being a Preparatory Exercise, both as to the Fatigue, and Fury of the War, *a Preliminary* to the slaughter of Mankind, by that of Wild Beasts: As *Xenophon*…
>
> 11.34. *Before the Lord,* Gen.10.9. So famous for his Power that he became Proverbial. Most Interpreters take the words, *Before the Lord*, in the worst sense, as our Author does, *In despite of Heaven*; others expound 'em, *Under Heaven, from Heaven claiming second Sovereignty*, taking upon himself all Authority next under God. *Nimrod,* says St. *Hierom*, *arripuit insuetam primus in populous tyranduem*….

From the first note to the last, the question of proper authority and usurpation remains present but oddly muted. In the gloss on these verses in the Geneva Bible, Nimrod's status as the first tyrant and "cruel oppressor" is more pronounced. The issue of just patriarchy (a feature of the "Law of Nature" according to P.H.) versus the unlawful dominion of brethren over brethren remains present throughout P.H.'s notes, but is drained of dangerous political application.

Erskine-Hill asserts that P.H. "dehistoricises the poem, even using it as an occasion for expressing his own un-Miltonic views."[61] In particular he highlights passages in the *Annotations* that give a "patriarchal hypothesis on the origin of

[61] Erskine-Hill, 68.

government," clashing with Milton's politics.[62] But, although P.H. seems to welcome limited monarchy, his emphasis on the dangers of absolute power (further attested to by "To the Immortal Memory," discussed above) suggests that P.H.'s post-Glorious Revolution political views were not as inimical to Milton as might seem. The differences are more marked in his religious stances, particularly where he emphasizes the Trinity, and in his discomfort with angels having sexual intercourse.[63] Erskine-Hill concludes that "the general absence of historical allusions in Hume's commentary comes… less from his not seeing any in the poem than from his resolve not to mention any he saw."[64] Whether the poem's politics agreed or disagreed with his personal politics, P.H. recognizes and attempts to "quarantine" such content by treating *Paradise Lost* as vernacular scripture. This tactic is reinforced and amplified by the annotator's technique as he explores Milton's classical sources. It is here, perhaps, even more than in his use of exegetical methods, that P.H. makes a lasting contribution to the critical treatment of the poem (and to literary criticism in general) that would be further developed by John Dennis.

"TOWRING FANCY": P.H.'S DEPLOYMENT OF THE SUBLIME

The second method P.H. advertises on his title page, following the explication of sacred writ, is that readers will find "the parallel places and imitations of the most Excellent Homer and Virgil, cited and compared." But in reality, the annotator does much more than this in his use of classical sources. Beyond the promised Homer and Virgil, P.H. refers to Aristotle, Aeschylus, Cicero, Hesiod, Horace, Juvenal, Livy, Lucan,

[62] Ibid., 73.
[63] Hume, author of "To the Immortal Memory," ends the poem's treatment of Mary with a lament on her lack of children, exclaiming "Seraphic Angels never propagate!"
[64] Erskine-Hill, 73.

Lucretius, Martial, Ovid, Plato, and Plutarch. Among more recent sources, to include those in English, we find Tasso (always described as falling far short of Milton), Jean-Louis Balzac, Chaucer, and Spenser (usually qualified as "famous in his own time").[65]

Oras comments that the annotator "seems to take it for granted that in a general way nearly everything in the classics was excellent," and that it seemed P.H.'s method to defend any "questionable" point in the epic by finding its parallel in a classic, or as many classics as possible.[66] Yet, it would be wise to recall that the *Annotations* were published as the battle of the "ancients versus the moderns" was heating up in England. The version of this seemingly timeless and endless battle that was raging at the end of the seventeenth and into the first decades of the eighteenth century was ignited in France with debates about translating Homer. A great concern of the French *quarelle* was the probability of depicting the scenes described on Achilles' shield on a physical shield, a debate engagingly related in Joseph Levine's *Battle of the Books.* With this *quarelle* as background, P.H.'s comments about Satan's shield at 1.286 provide a frame for his treatment of Milton's classical models.

> They who will please themselves in reading *Homer's* Description of *Achilles's* Shield and that of *Aeneas* in *Virg*. … will find that Vulcan, who made 'em both, gave neither of 'em such a turn as our Poet has, to this of Satan; yet the first was large enough to be engraven with the Sun, Moon, and all the Stars, two Cities, Fields and Vineyards, Combats, Musick and Weddings, and so many things as employ 138 Verses, whom though *Virgil* imitates by Embossment of his *Hero's* Shield in 107 lines, yet he exceeds him by adorning it with all the Prowess and Praises of his Posterity, down to the famous Victory over Anthony and *Cleopatra*, and puts it on his Back with admirable Grace…. *Tasso* has follow'd both these, in *Rinaldo's* Shield…. Consisting of 128 Verses.

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[65] This is by no means a complete list of even the literary classics used by the annotator. He also refers to a wide variety of scientific writings to include Gessendi, Kepler, and Galileo. I find no reference to Shakespeare, even where one might expect it in a section explicating Venus and Adonis. Dryden is referred by name only once at 11.404, as the author who dramatized the moor Almansor.

[66] Oras, 30.

P.H. highlights the manner in which Milton's description of Satan's shield, although given in few lines, surpasses the shields of the ancients and their prior imitators. The annotator's method is even more evident in his comment on Satan's spear at 1.294: "Now if *Hector*, or *Polyphemus* himself, compared to their Superior Satan, were but a Pigmy, who can wonder at the Circumference of his Shield, or the Size of his Spear?" Where Oras may construe such a moment as using classic parallels to "defend" a "questionable" moment in Milton, it is instead a consistent part of P.H.'s strategy to demonstrate Milton's *superiority* to his predecessors.[67] According to the annotator, Milton excels the ancients in several respects in this particular example. First, his descriptions are much more concise and compact, as evidenced by the line-counts of the classic sources. Secondly, Satan and his arms dwarf the ancient heroes. And thirdly, implicit in all this is that Milton's characters and descriptions are more lofty and "sublime" because his subject is "true," in that it is based on Christian scripture. The annotator's desire to place Milton among the classics, and even to assert that the poet is himself a "modern" classic who surpasses his examples, is telegraphed in the Latin epigram upon the *Annotations'* title page: "Milton is only surpassed by Homer in that Homer preceded him by a thousand years." The specific manner in which P.H. proposes that Milton surpasses his ancient models is in the quality of the verse that he terms "sublime."

[67] In another annotation, P.H. exhibits a "modern" attitude, terming the ancients "unexperienced." See 7.374: "The *Pleiades*, so named of…to Sail, because they rise about the *Vernal Equinox*, (thence called *Vergiliae*,) the usual time of venturing to Sea among the unexperienced Ancients."

P.H.'s deployment of the "sublime" as a poetic concept is not illuminated by his own dry definition of the term at 1.235 as "high, lofty." Yet we are able to piece together a sense what he means by term from his use of it as he compares Milton's epic to classic parallels. He first employs it in a lengthy note on Milton's invocation of the Muse at 1.6.

> As our Author has attempted a greater Undertaking than that of either of those two Master Poets [Homer, Virgil], so he had need to Invoke this Heavenly Muse, who a little after he explains by God's Holy Spirit, to inspire and assist him: And well he might…. This argument might need a Divine Instructress, preferable to any of their Invoked Assistants, though styled… the Daughters of *Jove*. The Christian Poet, the famous *Torquato Tasso*, the Darling of discerning *Italy*, begins his Exordium [with a similar invocation, quoted here by P.H.] These are the choicest Lines that adorn his Invocation; in which, though he calls to his Assistance the same Heavenly Spirit, yet we shall find him fall short of our Poet, both as to the sublimity of his Thoughts and Argument, as much as *Helicon* is inferior to *Horeb*, and that he had but too just occasion to ask Pardon (as he does in the end of this *Stanza*) for mixing and intangling Truth with vain Fiction.

Milton's superiority rests securely on his choice of subject. He surpasses Homer and Virgil by his need (and ability) to call on the "Holy Spirit" for assistance. He surpasses even the Christian Tasso because he does not "intangle" his "Truth with vain Fiction." It is not only Milton's verse that contains in itself something "sublime," but the subject is a sublime one. This is expressed again and again. Even if Horace (and others) had claimed to produce "things unattempted yet," P.H. in his note on 1.16 assures us that only in Milton's case it is true, because of his subject:

> so *Hora*. *Non usitata nec tenui ferar penna*; but not on so sublime a Subject as this, not undertaken as yet by any Poet: As in the beginning of the Ninth Book, he says of himself, he was not sedulous by Nature to indite Wars, hitherto the only Argument, Heroic deem'd – *trita vatius orbita*. So *Virg*. On a Subject much inferiour makes his Brags.

Milton's sublimity is intricately related to his "subject," arising in particular from the religious truth of his poem. At 1.25, P.H. asserts that Adam is a superior hero to either Achilles, Ulysses, or Aeneas because they "must be allowed much inferior to the Protoplast, who, as the first, and finish'd by the great Creator, must needs be the most accomplish'd of his kind." Further, the battles in heaven, described by Milton in Book VI, are far superior to the battles described in the classics, because they are waged by "Immortal Spirits." Once again, it is the spiritual "truth" of Milton's account that enables him to surpass all previous epics:

> It must be acknowledged, a much harder Task, to form a right *Idea* of that Eternal Being, which made the Universe; and to observe with all due Veneration, and Awful Respect, the great *Decorum* requisite in speaking of the True God; and to offend in nothing against the Revelations he has been pleased to make of himself; and yet to manage all this under the Heats and Heights of Towring Fancy; than either *Homer* or *Virgil* undertook, a Task, by none, but himself, attempted, (as he may justly boast) and impossible to be, by any Undertaker, better.[68]

The "heats and heights of towring fancy" described here sound suspiciously like what could, by a critic less friendly to Milton, be termed "enthusiasm." The claim to divine inspiration that accompanies such "heats" surely opens the epic to such charges. Recall that P.H. himself defined "zeal" negatively and with a caveat that it is often too "hot." But here P.H. instead presents these characteristics as markers of a "sublime" associated with the "truth" of Christian narrative, opposed to the pure "fancy" of his classic sources. So superior is the "truth" of Milton's narrative that even Michael's review of human history, traditionally identified as the driest section of the poem, is said to surpass the

[68] *Annotations*, 1.25.

"tedious stories" and "vain-glorious boastings" of Homer and Virgil's heroes. Because it is "taken out of Sacred Story," Milton's relation "must excel any particular or *Humane History."*[69] P.H. seems to articulate a theory of the sublime which is yoked to subject over style, and which draws particular power from Christian topics.

While never explicitly articulated, this implicit concept of the literary sublime as a consequence of Milton's scriptural subject distances the sublime from its traditional associations with political radicalism. That the concept, as early as John Hall's 1652 translation of "Longinus," had been closely linked to political freedom is clear from that translation itself:

> Shall wee I beseech you believe that which hath been in many mens mouths, that a *Democracie* is the best *Nurse* of *high* Spirits, and under it so many great Oratours have in a manner not only *flourish'd*, but even *decay'd* with it? For just liberty *feeds* and *nourishes* the thoughts with great *notions*…. and that by the rewards propos'd to them in such *Republicks*: the faculties of their minds and all their skills are *whetted*, and in a manner *kindled* into a flame, which commonly *shines* freely and *brightly* as the things they deal with. But we… seem to be taught from children to endure *slavery*… so that we cannot possibly *taste* of that rich and *full fountain* of Eloquence, I mean… *Liberty*.[70]

Paradise Lost was called "sublime" early in its reception history, in sources discussed in chapter one as varied as Marvell's dedicatory poem to the 1674 edition, Hobart's letter, and Addison's ambivalent treatment of the epic in his "Account." All of these sources also expressed concern about Milton's political reputation and its potential contamination of the poem, Dryden going so far as to rewrite it in a manner more suitable to Restoration

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[69] *Annotations*, 11.433. This section was surely one of the "flats" identified by Dryden, and was later singled out by Dennis as being incapable of sublimity because a divine figure told of human actions. For discussion, see chapter 3, below.

[70] "Dionysius Longinus," *Of the Height of Eloquence*. J.H. Esq. (London, 1652). 78-9. Available on Early English Books Online.

court culture. P.H.'s deployment of the term differs in that he is continually relating the sublime to the poem's Christian topic and identifies it as the manner of Milton's surpassing the ancients. This association of the sublime with spiritual truth thus depoliticizes it and the poem while excusing and legitimating what may otherwise be termed religious enthusiasm. Recent scholarship on the rhetoric of enthusiasm, by Sharon Achinstein, Clement Hawes, and others, suggests that one factor at play in the late seventeenth century was the need to somehow accommodate and render "safe" otherwise suspect expressions of enthusiasm. As Achinstein claims, "By cordoning off a sphere of legitimate enthusiasm into the private or the aesthetic, early Whigs also did the political work of liberalism in cordoning off religion as an area outside the interest of the state."[71] P.H.'s linkage of sublimity to Christian truth in Milton's epic seems just such a move, one that would appeal to both the business and political concerns of that savvy Kit-Cat, Jacob Tonson.

If the *Annotations* is examined as more than a "dull dictionary" to be mined for biblical allusions and etymologies, we see its author follows a four-fold approach to secure *Paradise Lost's* acceptance despite the continued ambivalence created by Milton's political reputation. Although likely composed over a long period between 1688 and 1694, the *Annotations* answers concerns found in Addison's "Account," and attempts to find a proper place for the poem despite that "bottom odious to the sight." The annotator separates *Paradise Lost* from its controversial author by excising Milton's biography

[71] Sharon Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 255.

from the poem, even at moments in which it is most poignantly present. As he discovers classic parallels, he aligns the poem with the ancient authors and even claims its superiority to those models. By treating it as worthy of exegesis and study hitherto reserved for sacred texts and classics, he elevates the poem to the level of these texts. And, finally, his careful quarantining of political-religious enthusiasm into a "safe" version of a sublime aesthetic defuses the most controversial aspects of the poem that troubled early readers. These approaches were developed and amplified by the commentators following P.H. In particular, attempts to redefine the "sublime" and legitimate enthusiasm characterize John Dennis's work on *Paradise Lost*.

Chapter 3: "So Bold in the Design:" Dennis, Addison, and the Sublime *Paradise Lost*

> A Man need have a great deal of time upon his hands, who has leisure enough to Examine a Poet's Politicks, or a Physician's religion.
>
> John Dennis, *Remarks on Prince Arthur*, 1696

> And Addison that Milton shall explain,
> Point out the Beauties of each living Page,
> Reform the taste of a degenerate Age.
>
> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu[1]

The mysterious "Mr. Hume" was far from alone in publishing an elegy for Queen Mary. Several Kit-Cat authors also published such poems, including Charles Montagu, Congreve, Matthew Prior, George Stepney, and Richard Steele. The onslaught of elegies commemorating the Queen was so pronounced that an anonymous poem, "The Mourning Poets," complains that the realm is inundated in "bulky heaps" of the stuff:

> What bulky Heaps of doleful Rhyme I see!
> Sure all the World runs mad with Elegy;
> Lords, Ladies, Knights, Priests, Souldiers, Squires, Physicians,
> Beaux, Lawyers, Merchants, Prentices, Musicians,
> Play'rs, Footmen, Pedants, Scribes of all Conditions.[2]

The elegy composed by the poet and critic John Dennis did not escape the author's notice. The author of "The Mourning Poets" singles out Dennis for extended treatment, placing him after Congreve and Dryden, Peter Motteux, and Stepney, but before Tate and

[1] Montagu, "Her Palace placed beneath a muddy road," in *Essays*, 248, line 41-44.

[2] Anon. "The Mourning Poets: Or, An Account of the Poems on the Death of the Queen. In a Letter to a Friend." London: Printed for J. Whitlock, 1695, 11. Available on Early English Books Online. Unfortunately, the elegy by "Mr. Hume" is not singled out for praise or censure.

Westley, all of whom he praises, though perhaps with a healthy dose of satire. His verses on Dennis are marked by their caricature of Dennis's "sublime" style:

> Majestic *Dennis* next demands my Lays;
> Soar, Muse, and strive thy feeble Flight to raise,
> In Numbers, like his own, attempt his Praise.
> Like *Pindar*, he, unutterably bold,
> Burns like a raging Fire, and cannot be contrould.
> Gods! With what State his daring Thoughts arise,
> While with sonorous Wings he upwards flyes,
> Till he seems lost above his darling Skies!
> Some wondrous active Force informs the whole,
> Each Word has Life, ev'ry Line a Soul.
> Bold Pictures thus help of Shades disclaim,
> There all is Light, all Heat, all dazzles, all is Flame.
> How shall I show his vast commanding Force!
> His rapid Transports, and unequall'd Course!
> His tow'ring Muse which scorns a human Flight!
> But shines aloft, and blinds with too excessive Light!
> With him my Soul thro rapt'rous Regions flyes,
> And drinks at once a rowling Stream of Joys;
> *Convulsive Transports all my Vitals tear!*
> *Gods! 'tis too much, too much for Man to bear.*
> *Dennis*, thy Words alone thy Thoughts can right,
> As Fire is best discover'd by its Light.
> I cease, for tho my Blood with Fury boil,
> To mock the Thunder is a dang'rous Toil.[3]

As comically excessive as the praise seems to be, its placement in the poem suggests it could nevertheless be genuine. Whether satirical or in earnest, the author highlights a passage in which Dennis's elegy reaches for the "sublime" style Dennis himself emphasized in his criticism. Dennis's tribute to Mary provides an appropriate entry into Dennis's Milton criticism not only because it provides an early sampling of his critical opinions about Milton, but also because it is so revealing about Dennis. A quick look at

[3] Ibid., 6-7

the piece illustrates the outspoken pedantry that earned him the scorn of the wits, including Swift, Pope, Addison, and Steele.

Even the title page of Dennis's elegy illustrates his difference from Hume's or Addison's attempts in the genre. That the elegy was published by James Knapton rather than Jacob Tonson may be an early signal that Dennis would never be wholly accepted among the Kit Cats, or by any club of London wits. Also, Dennis's title page is quick to proclaim "The Court of Death" a "Pindarique POEM" in typeface and placement rivaling the announcement that the poem honors the late Queen. But most typical of Dennis is a feature found in very few elegies. Dennis provides six pages of "preface," including a postscript, justifying his methodology.[4] Even this early in his career, when he was known more as a poet and a wit than as a critic, the preface presages how the critic will come to overshadow the poet and suggests why Dennis would quickly gain a reputation as a dull pedant. Dennis begins his preface with the mixture of arrogance and defensiveness that distinguishes much of his writing:

> The following Verses seem so bold in the design, and so much bolder in the execution, that tho I have made use of all the little Judgment I had, to distinguish this boldness from such horrible extravagancies as have been lately so falsly and unreasonably laid to my charge, yet lest some people should conclude form a bare appearance that I have gone too far, it will not be amiss to shew what the Ode and its Character is in general, what *Pindar* and his manner was in particular, and how far it may be convenient to imitate him in our Age, and in our Language and Climate.[5]

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[4] In fact, no other elegy on Mary that I've examined features a preface explaining or defending itself. A few, such as Steele's or Cibber's, have typical epistles dedicated to a prospective patron. But Dennis's critical preface seems unique and awkward in an elegiac performance.

[5] "The Court of Death: A Pindaric POEM Dedicated to the MEMORY of Her Most Sacred Majesty, Queen Mary," by. Mr. DENNIS. London, 1695. Available on Early English Books Online. Italics reversed in quotes from the preface. The preface alone is reprinted in *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, Vol. 1, edited

Dennis's defense of his "boldness" and promise to explain the nature of the Pindaric ode is immediately followed by a lengthy quote from Rapin, in French and English, which establishes "sublimity" as a marker of the ode.

> The Ode (says Rapin) ought to have as much greatness, elevation and violence, as the Eglogue is obliged to have modesty, restraint and simplicity. It is not only great by the sublimeness of its Spirit, but by the greatness of its Subjects. For it is made use of to sing the praises of gods, and to celebrate the most glorious actions of men.[6]

This is one of Dennis's earliest characterizations of the sublime, and already he locates the source of sublimity in the subject rather than the "spirit" of the verse or sentiment. Employing terminology that would become central to his later criticism, Dennis claims passions in the ode should surpass even epic poetry by displaying more "vehemence, more transport and more enthusiasm." Due to its brevity and purpose to commemorate "great occasions," Dennis believes the ode must "fly into transport… and make use immediately of all its fury, and its most violent efforts."[7] Nonetheless, in the preface to his elegy Dennis warns that the English language is not suited to all aspects of the Pindaric. In particular, he claims English "is not capable of some of the most violent figures of Pindar; and in aiming at two of his principle qualities, which are his Sublimity and his Magnificence, he [the English author] ought carefully avoid… Fustian and superfluity of Epithetes."[8] Dennis goes on to indict Cowley for having imitated Pindar in

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by Edward Niles Hooker, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1939), 42. Further references to Dennis's critical writings will cite these two volumes.

[6] Rapin's French, which Dennis includes and translates as "sublimeness of Spirit," reads "Esprit qu'elle est grande."

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 43.

the "wildness of his frequent digressions."[9] It may be partly for this reason that Dennis chooses not Cowley, but Milton to serve as the model of his elegy.

> In the writing these Pindarick Verses, I had still *Milton* in my Eye, and was resolv'd to imitate him as far as it could be done without receeding from *Pindar's* manner. They have several great qualities common to both, and among the rest, vehemence, elevation, and a terrible Majesty; qualities which are far above me, but the violent desire I had to show, how I honour the Memory of the great Queen that is gone, made me insolently resolve to aspire to them.[10]

Since Dennis claims in the preface's "postscript" that his fable or "design" was suggested by the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, Milton's contribution would appear at first sight to be primarily stylistic, providing the poem's stylistic "vehemence, elevation, and terrible Majesty." However, "The Court of Death's" main action is a debate in Hell to determine the fate of Mary, a scene more reminiscent of Satan's council meeting in *Paradise Lost* than Aeneas's underworld experience in the *Aeneid*.

Dennis's opening stanzas describe the unexpected visit of the Muse and the ravishing impact of her song upon the poet:

> That Song might dead Indifference inspire.
> First in my Breast a pleasing Sorrow sprung,
> Then thro each Nerve there flew celestial fire;
> Convulsive Transports did my Vitals tear,
> *Gods 'twas too much, too much for Man to bear!*[11]

As seen above, these lines were among those singled out by the anonymous author of "The Mourning Poets" to demonstrate Dennis's "sublime" style. The lines (particularly when read against their treatment in "The Mourning Poets") invite speculation about how

[9] Ibid., 44.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Dennis, "The Court of Death," II.9-13.

to distinguish between "fustian" and "sublimity." Dennis's less-than-satisfactory solution to this is problem is to recommend that poets submit their poetry to the judgment of "sensible Friends." Dennis asserts that while the sublime can "warm and strike" such fit readers, false sublime or fustian never will. Deference to such an appropriate audience contrasts with the postscript to the preface where Dennis dismisses the opinion of a "Young Gentleman who is my Friend, and whose Wit and Learning are very well known in the World" who criticized *The Court of Death* for having "too much description."[12] Instead of modifying the poem in response to the critique of this sensible friend, Dennis submits his poem to a different test, claiming that "If these Verses are of Heav'n, they will be sure to stand, no Malice of Man can hurt or suppress them; but if they are human they will fall, no mortal aid can support them."[13] Dennis's resort to the divine source of the verse to uphold its worth echoes Milton's invocation to Book IX, where the poet declares that if his verse isn't divinely inspired it deserves to sink:

> Higher Argument
> Remaines, sufficient of it self to raise
> That name, 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. (IX.42-47)

Dennis's Miltonic appeal to divine inspiration as arbiter of the elegy's quality asserts that poems generating lasting esteem may be of divine origin or at least present divine truth. This move edges toward the theory that would become the hallmark of Dennis's more mature criticism: the theory of the religious sublime powered by "enthusiastick" passions.

[12] "Preface to the Court of Death," vol. 1, 45.
[13] Ibid., 44.

In submitting his elegy to a test of divine origin, Dennis entertains the possibility of genuine inspiration.

The Court of Death and its preface foreground much of what would characterize Dennis's aesthetic theory and his criticism of Milton as it developed over the next twenty years. As a Pindaric ode, Dennis's elegy was meant to reach and sustain the sublime. As a poem with a religious subject, it was best suited to incite what Dennis would term the "enthusiastick passions," so essential to his theory of the sublime. Finally, the elegy attempts to imitate the features of *Paradise Lost* that Dennis found so admirable. Dennis's career-long engagement with Milton's poem would refine his theory about its exceptionalism and its place as "the most lofty, but most irregular Poem, that has been produc'd by the Mind of Man."[14] The development of Dennis's theory would lead him to embrace the poem's enthusiasm in a manner quite different from other early commentators. Unlike P.H.'s careful navigation of Milton's politics and past, Dennis sought Milton's power in that past. As he casts Milton as a "famous Reformer" and identifies the enthusiasm of *Paradise Lost* as the source of its sublimity, Dennis's criticism is "so bold in the design" that it may have engendered a different brand of eighteenth-century Milton criticism had Addison not superseded it with Mr. Spectator's safer neoclassical critique privileging regularity over irregularity and the stylistic over subjectival sublimity.[15]

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[14] Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism*, vol. 1, 333.

[15] For Milton as "famous Reformer," see Dennis's *The Person of Quality's Answer to Mr. Collier's Letter, Being a Disswasive from the Play-House* (1704), vol.1, 302, discussed below.

"MILTON IN MY EYE": DENNIS'S THEORY OF THE SUBLIME

Although Dennis's criticism of Milton was spread over many years and multiple publications, his fascination with *Paradise Lost* was well known among his contemporaries. This is attested to by *The narrative of Dr. Robert Norris, concerning the strange and deplorable frenzy of Mr. John Denn--- an officer of the Custom-house: being an exact account of all that past betwixt the said patient and the doctor till this present day; and a full vindication of himself and his proceedings from the extravagant reports of the said Mr. John Denn--*, a scathing 1713 response to Dennis's critical treatment of Addison's *Cato*. Coming to examine the obviously mad Dennis, "Dr. Norris" surveys the critic's disheveled room and remarks that the only neat spot is a bookshelf containing books he had never heard of (Dennis's works, of course) and a copy of "*Paradise Lost*, interleav'd."[16] The satire depicts Dennis's critical theories as derived from (and causing) mental instability and madness, and reduces the critic's long engagement with *Paradise Lost* to a pathological symptom. Those familiar with Dennis's attempts to reform poetry on the model of Milton's great poem would understand that to mock his "obsession" with *Paradise Lost* as madness was to negate the critic's life work.

Dennis's public engagement with Milton's epic dates to at least as early as 1692, when he declared in his *Preface to the Passion of Byblis* that Milton

> is one of the most sublime of our English Poets. Nay, there is something so transcendently sublime in his first, second, and sixth Books, that were

[16] "The Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris," (London, 1713) 11. All references refer to the copy maintained by the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas. The satire has been variously attributed to Steele and Pope, with most scholars now ascribing it to Pope.

> the Language as pure as the Images are vast and daring, I do not believe it could be equall'd, no, not in all Antiquity.[17]

Dennis's qualification about Milton's language would drop away over time, allowing him to later assert more confidently that Milton had indeed surpassed the ancients. Even if Homer was known for his use of archaic language, Milton's similar freedoms with English seemed to demand notice and explanation. Dennis's concern about Milton's "impure" language thus reflects a common anxiety about *Paradise Lost*, noted as early as Hobart's 1667 letters, discussed in chapter one, and treated again by Addison in 1712.[18] Dennis's early claim that Milton could have potentially surpassed the ancients is a rare of example of someone explicitly using Milton's poem as evidence on behalf of the moderns in the moderns versus ancients debate. Classing Milton *among* the ancients was not unheard of, even at this date, as suggested by Dryden's dedicatory poem published under Milton's sculpture in the 1688 Tonson folio. The epigram preceding P.H.'s *Annotations* (1695) more provocatively suggested that the only benefit the ancients had was the merit of being first. Dennis, however, would move beyond bald statement to establish a theoretical foundation for Milton's superiority to the ancients. The key advantage Dennis felt Milton had over the ancients (and other moderns) was his sublimity.

Dennis was not first to associate the sublime with Milton's epic. As discussed in chapter one, Marvell had used the term in his poem prefacing the second edition (1674),

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[17] *Preface to the Passion of Byblis*, in Hooker, vol. 1, 3-4.

[18] See the discussion of Hobart's letters in chapter one. Addison's treatment of Milton's language will be touched upon below.

and Addison had employed the term even as he ultimately rejected Milton in his 1694 "Account." Dennis's remark in the *Preface to the Passion of Byblis,* however, goes beyond vague praise and initiates a critical endeavor that would become the first systematic theoretical exploration of how the sublime operates in Milton's poem (and in any English poem, for that matter). Dennis's most important contribution to criticism, and especially criticism of *Paradise Lost* was his analysis of the poem's sublimity. To fully appreciate Dennis's approach to *Paradise Lost*, one must understand the philosophical underpinnings of his criticism, a belief system that determines his definition of poetry as well as the meaning and importance of the sublime in his critical theory. Dennis's theories about poetry formed in opposition to the reform movement that threatened the English stage in the late seventeenth century. By demonstrating that poetry itself was an indispensible agent of reform, he attempted to redefine the very debate. Dennis's philosophy of ethics and aesthetics was first articulated in 1698's *The Usefulness of the Stage, to the Happiness of Mankind, to Government, and to Religion*, a response to Jeremy Collier's assault upon the theater. Dennis, in fact, became the foremost defender of the stage against Collier and his Society for the Reformation of Manners. He foregrounds his defense of the English stage with the Aristotelian claim that the end of life is happiness, further explaining that the means to happiness is pleasure, and pleasure is attained through the proper raising of the passions. This forms the foundation of Dennis's aesthetics throughout his career, for it leads to a syllogism that equates the Christian religion with the highest development of poetry. In *The Usefulness of the Stage*, Dennis explains the relationship of pleasure and the passions, asserting,

"when any Man is pleas'd, he may find by Reflection that at the same Time he is mov'd."[19] Dennis also insists that the role of art (and especially poetry) is not simply to raise passions, but to reconcile the passions with reason. While raising the passions provides the means to pleasure and therefore happiness, Dennis warns "the Passions must be rais'd after such a manner, as to take Reason along with them."[20] Because mankind is reasonable by nature, Dennis stipulates that pleasure must not be contrary to reason, but reason requires reconciliation to the passions because it was estranged from them upon the Fall. According to Dennis, the division between reason and the passions is the cause of mankind's misery in the postlapsarian world, and the province of religion and poetry to correct.

Responding to Collier's crusade against the stage, Dennis suggests that poetry, including dramatic poetry, is a force for good because of its power to reform manners by affecting the reconciliation between passions and reason. This formulation recalls traditional definitions of poetry as a means to "delight and instruct," and also Milton's note on tragedy prefacing *Samson Agonistes*, where he follows Aristotle in asserting that tragedy purges unruly passions, or at least can "temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirr'd up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated."[21] Dennis's claim that poetry reforms manners through raising passions is a departure from the age's leading theorist of epic, the French René Le Bossu. Le Bossu acknowledged that tragedy purged passions by raising them in the theater, but indicates that epic differs

[19] *The Usefulness of the Stage*, vol. 1, 149.
[20] Ibid., 150.
[21] Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, 549.

in that it reforms manners by imitating an action. Le Bossu stated the division early in his treatise, asserting that "the *Epopea's* business is with the *Morals* and *Habitudes* more than the *Passions*. These rise on a sudden, and their Heat is soon over; but the *Habitudes* are more calm, and come on, and go off more leisurely."[22] Comparing tragedy and epic once again, Le Bossu explicitly refers to the political functions of the theater as he contrasts the catharsis of tragedy with the more didactic instruction of epic:

> Sad *Conclusions* are proper for Tragedy…. Because in the Popular States of *Greece*, where Monarchy was Odious, nothing was heard with greater Pleasure and Ardency than the Misfortunes of Kings…. The *Tragical Scene* is the Throne of the Passions, where Terror and Compassion ought to rule over all the rest…. And the Spectators going from the Theater with their Minds full of the Misfortunes they were Eye witnesses of, do doubtlessly preserve their Tenderness a great deal longer…. But these Reasons will not serve for the *Epopéa*, since 'tis not so much for refining the Passions, as for making Men put off ill Habits, and put on good ones.[23]

The reforming function of poetry is more complicated in Dennis, where manners are reformed not through "curing" passions in some quasi-medical purgation of like by like, but by reconciling them with reason. As Dennis's theory of poetry developed, the role of the passions became ever more important. No less than Le Bossu, Dennis also invokes the political use of the stage as *The Usefulness of the Stage* laments the decline in "Sciences, Philosophy, History, and Mathematicks" that ensued when the theaters were closed during the Civil War. Dennis sketches out a history emphasizing how a vital stage, as in the Elizabethan period and at the Restoration, ushers in learning. In his own explicit

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[22] René Le Bossu, *Treatise of the Epick Poem*. W.J. Trans. London 1695. Available on Early English Books Online. This English translation of *Traité du poème épique* was published in a two-volume second edition in 1719.
[23] Ibid., 105.

linking of poetics and politics, Dennis claims that dramatic poetry is particularly useful to the *English* government:

> Drama… is proper to restrain a People from Rebellion and Disobedience…. For this Reason the Drama may be said to be instrumental in a peculiar manner to the Welfare of the *English* Government; because there is no People on the Face of the Earth, so prone to Rebellion as the English, or so apt to quarrel among themselves.[24]

For Dennis, poetry is the primary means to reform a particularly unruly people. In its assertion that poetry reforms by reconciling passions with reason, *The Usefulness of the Stage* establishes the groundwork for the development of Dennis's future critical theory, including a hint toward his concept of the religious sublime. Edging toward the subject, Dennis boasts, "let any Man shew me where Terror is mov'd to a Heighth, and I will shew him that that Place requires the Belief of a God, and a particular Providence."[25] Dennis's confidence in poetry's ability to reinforce Christian belief suffuses his treatments of *Paradise Lost*. Sublimity, derived from apt subject matter, provides the means to reform poetry and allow the moderns to surpass the ancients. Barely touching upon it in his first response to Collier, Dennis developed the idea more fully in his next major critical treatise, *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*, published in 1701.

Dennis's admits that his aim in *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* is ambitious, proclaiming: "the design… is no less than to set the Moderns upon

[24] Dennis, *Usefulness of the Stage*, 167.
[25] Ibid., 183.

an equal Foot, with even admir'd Antiquity."[26] Dennis takes aim in this treatise not only at Collier, but at Temple's 1690 claims about the ancients' superiority. Dennis refutes Temple nearly point by point, determining that the ancients did not surpass the moderns by any internal superiority (divine or daemonic inspiration, higher virtue, superior faculties) nor by external means (climate, encouragement, support).[27] Instead, Dennis finds that "the Ancient Poets deriv'd their Greatness from the Nature of their Subjects."[28] While P.H. had assumed that the ancients' pagan subjects were deficient compared to Milton's Christian fable, Dennis deems this inferiority only relative. Dennis claims that sacred subject matter, even if sacred only to pagans, elevated ancient poetry above the poetry of the moderns lacking a religious subject. Dennis seeks to provide the moderns with a theory of poetry that allow them to excel the ancients. Hitherto, in Dennis's opinion, only some writers of comedy and Milton had done so. His proposal for advancing English poetry may be simplistically reduced to a prescription to follow the example of the ancients (and Milton) by writing poetry on religious subjects. In his *Annotations*, discussed in chapter two, P.H. had also identified the source of Milton's sublimity as his subject, a subject that surpassed the ancients by being based upon the "true" Christian religion. Although we have no evidence that Dennis read P.H.'s commentary, it is almost unthinkable that the critic should have been ignorant of the only extensive commentary on the poem that loomed so large in his own work. However, all we can say with confidence is that P.H. anticipated Dennis in locating the source of

[26] Dennis, *The Advancement*, vol. 1, 200.
[27] Ibid., 207.
[28] Ibid., 214.

Milton's sublime in the subject rather than the style, and in emphasizing that subject's reliance on the sacred for its power. Writing a critical treatise rather than annotations upon a single work, Dennis is much more systematic than P.H. as he analyzes the supposed superiority of the ancients. Unlike P.H., Dennis determines that a unique Christian "truth" is not the source of the sublime, but that the ancient writings were sublime because they drew upon the power of the sacred.

Explaining the relationship between poetry and religion in more detail, Dennis argues that both have the happiness of mankind as their ultimate goal. Proposing a near identity between the aims of religion and poetry, Dennis says, "the very Thing that they both propose is to exalt the Reason, by exalting the Passions, and so make Happy the whole Man, by making Internal Discord cease."[29] Later, in *The Grounds of Criticism*, Dennis would phrase this dynamic in terms echoing Milton's claim in *Of Education* that knowledge can "repair the ruins of our first parents."[30] Dennis emphasized the shared aims of poetry and religion, naming the "Arts" the primary mechanism of repair and claiming that "The great Design of Arts is to restore the Decays that happen'd to human Nature by the Fall, by restoring Order."[31] His clearest statement of this in *The Grounds of Criticism* justifies Dennis's belief that the instruction of the epic is no less reliant upon passions than that of tragedy. Dennis asserts that *all* instruction depends upon passion:

> Poetry attains its final End, which is the reforming of the Minds of Men, by exciting of Passion. And here I dare be bold to affirm, that all Instruction whatever depends upon Passion… whereas Philosophy

[29] Ibid., 265.
[30] Milton, *Of Education*, 631.
[31] Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism*, vol. 1, 336.

> pretends to correct human Passions by human Reason, that is things that are strong and ungovernable, by something that is feeble and weak; Poetry by the force of the Passion, instructs and reforms the Reason: which is the Design of the True Religion.[32]

In Dennis's theory, religion is most effectively conveyed through poetry, and poetry is most effective when it treats religious subjects. Key to the entire edifice is raising passions reconciled with reason. Since Dennis recognizes that not all passions were created equal, and believes that the highest passions ("enthusiastic" or sublime passions) are accessible only through religious subjects, poets must write about sacred subjects to achieve the highest levels of poetic art and accomplish the reformation of manners advancing the aims of the Christian faith. In Dennis's theory the moderns could surpass the ancients if they wrote about Christian subjects, because these writings would not only be sacred, but would be "true" as well. Once we understand these foundations of Dennis's critical thought, it becomes almost inevitable that Milton and *Paradise Lost* should have preoccupied him throughout his career.

What remains as the task of the bulk of Dennis's critical work was the explication of how the passions (and especially sublime passions) operate in poetry. The presence of passion defines poetry for Dennis. So central is passion that he suggests even prose able to raise the passions should be considered a sort of "poetical prose." But since all poetry is defined by passion, but not all poetry is of the higher (sublime) sort, Dennis must make some distinction among the passions to account for what he considers the "sublime." In his attempt to define sublimity, Dennis desires to make up for what he saw as a

[32] Ibid., 337.

deficiency in "Longinus," whose treatise on the sublime had enjoyed renewed popularity after Bolieau's 1674 translation. Dennis complained that "Longinus" didn't "tell us what the Sublime is" but only "set before us the Effects which it produces in the Minds of Men."[33] Dennis's definition of the sublime as "a great Thought, express'd with the Enthusiasm that belongs to it" identifies "enthusiasm" as integral to the sublime. Explaining the nature of that "enthusiasm" would span the rest of his career and Milton criticism. It would also require that Dennis develop a psychological theory of the sublime anticipating much later developments in literary criticism.

[33] *The Advancement*, 223.

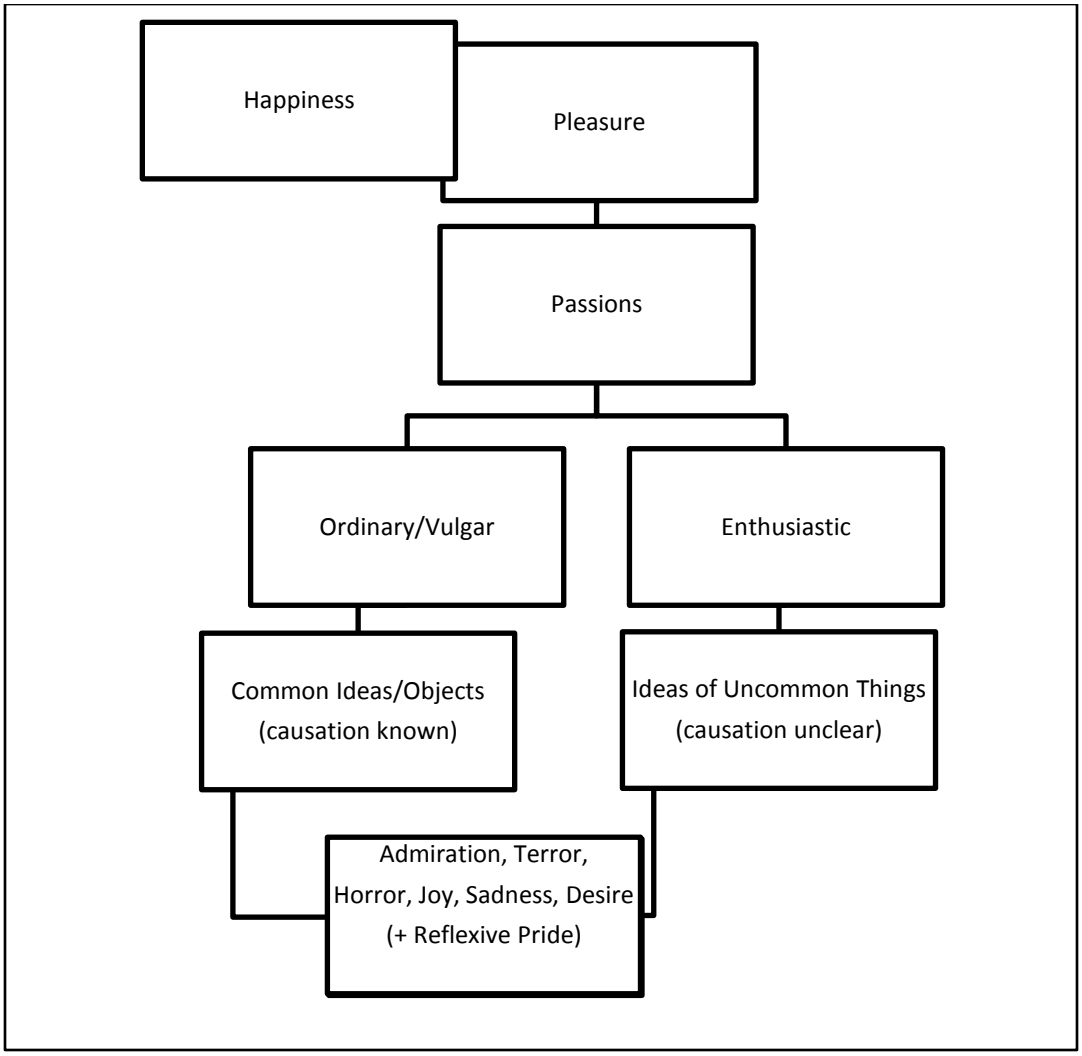

Figure 3: Dennis's Theory of the Passions

Dennis divides the passions into two categories, ordinary (or "vulgar") passions and "enthusiastick" or sublime passions (see Figure 3). He explains that "ordinary passions" are those where the cause of the passion (joy, terror, admiration) is understood. But he calls "the very same Passions Enthusiasms, when their cause is not clearly

comprehended by him who feels them."[34] This, then, is the psychological basis of Dennis's sublime. The mind is exalted to feel a great passion but is unable to fully identify the cause of that passion. Coincident with the apprehension of this passion, the mind also experiences pride at its ability to entertain thoughts (however unclearly) that evoke such transport. While sacred subjects may engender "ordinary" passion as easily as a profane subject, Dennis believes a sacred subject is "more susceptible of the Enthusiastick."[35] Thus, those poets striving for sublimity in their verse must use sacred subjects in order to tap into the power of these greater passions.[36]

Dennis's employment of the term "enthusiastick" to describe the varieties of passion evoking the sublime demands more attention than it has hitherto received. In one of his earliest published treatises, Dennis indicated in 1693 that he was aware the term carried considerable baggage. He circumvents this by claiming that "tho mear Enthusiasm is but Madness, nothing can be more noble than that which is rightly regulated."[37] Dennis's fear that enthusiasm would be equated with madness was warranted, as attested to by his portrayal as a madman in the *Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris*. Swift's *Tale of the Tub* (1704) would similarly link enthusiasm with madness. This seventeenth-century meaning of "enthusiasm" has almost been lost in our current use of the word. In Dennis's time, it was most often employed as a pejorative indicating

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[34] Ibid., 216.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Since sacred subjects can evoke ordinary passion, Dennis obviously cannot claim that a sacred subject alone is sufficient to incite sublimity. The burden of writing about the sacred cannot be borne by all poets, but only by those with enough strength. For example, see Dennis's "Epistle Dedicatory" to *The Advancement*, vol. 1, 201.
[37] Dennis, *Preface to Miscellanies in Verse and Prose* (1693). vol. 1, 6.

excessive religious zeal and false claims to divine inspiration. Michael Heyd has characterized the traditional seventeenth-century usage as an overtly political label:

> The term itself became a standard label by which to designate individuals or groups who allegedly claimed to have direct divine inspiration, whether millenarians, radical sectarians or various prophesiers, as well as alchemists, 'empirics' and some contemplative philosophers…. Indeed, by the late seventeenth century, many of the Protestant intellectuals, scientists and theologians were fighting simultaneously on at least two fronts: against the spread of deistic and atheistic views on the one hand, and against 'enthusiasm', prophesying, divinations and other 'superstitions' on the other.[38]

One of the "contemplative philosophers" entertaining enthusiasm as something other than pathology was Anthony Ashley Cooper, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury clarified the relationship between enthusiasm and inspiration in his 1708 *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, which claimed that "Inspiration is *a real* feeling of the Divine Presence, and Enthusiasm *a false one*. But the Passion they raise is much alike."[39] Shaftesbury works to redeem the term "enthusiasm" in a manner more organized and overt than Dennis. According to Shaftesbury, even if enthusiasm is *false* divine presence, it nevertheless is valuable in raising passions similar to those arising from genuine inspiration. The effect seems to be cathartic, as Shaftesbury admits that there are "certain Humours in Mankind, which of necessity must have vent."[40] Trying to simply suppress enthusiasms will have the opposite intended effect. The suppression itself may "instead

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[38] Michael Heyd, *'Be Sober and Reasonable': The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*. (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995) 2-3.

[39] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury. "A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm," in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, edited by Lawrence E. Klein. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 27. I have restored the emphasis from the original, available on Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

[40] Ibid., 9.

of making a Cure, bid fair perhaps to raise a Plague, and turn a Spring-Ague or an Autumn-Surfeit into an epidemical malignant Fever."[41] Shaftesbury's continued use of vocabulary associated with pathology and in particular madness ("humours," "plague," "ague," "surfeit," and "fever") retains the seventeenth-century negative connotations of "enthusiasms" even while suggesting it may be neither necessary nor advisable to eliminate them. Shaftesbury nods towards the political connotations of enthusiasms as he extends the analogy from a diseased individual to include the diseased "body-politick:"

> They are certainly as ill Physicians in the Body-Politick, who wou'd needs be tampering with these mental Eruptions; and under the specious pretence of healing this Itch of Superstition, and saving Souls from the Contagion of Enthusiasm, shou'd set all Nature in an uproar, and turn a few innocent Carbuncles into an Inflamation and mortal Gangrene.[42]

Whereas Shaftesbury is forward about his desire to redeem "enthusiasm" from the realm of the pathological and mad, he justifies its value by recalling the traditional cathartic operation of tragedy. Shaftesbury suggests that even if enthusiasm is "false," attempts to curb it are self-defeating since enthusiastic art may purge contagion from the body politic. In contrast, Dennis portrays enthusiasms as good in themselves because they allow access to the sublime and reconcile reason to passion. He simply employs the word as his term for passions which are "sublime," quietly re-appropriating it from the pejorative and polemical uses more prevalent in contemporary writings.

Despite these attempts to rehabilitate the term, throughout the seventeenth century "enthusiasm" remained first and foremost a "derogatory label" that "most frequently

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

referred to zealous sectarians."[43] Dennis's definition of the sublime as dependent upon "enthusiastick" passions was risky, especially when presenting as exemplar Milton's epic, a work already vulnerable to suspicions of political-religious enthusiasm. In responses such as Addison's 1694 "Account" and the more sympathetic *Annotations,* we've seen how readily this complex of associations (enthusiasm/zeal/rebellion) was activated in *Paradise Lost.*[44] Even when "enthusiasm" was not equated with madness or unacceptable zeal, the term carried with it an innate potential for fustian, as indicated in Shaftesbury's definition of it as inherently "false inspiration." Dennis, in the preface to his "Court of Death" was aware of this, asserting that a fit audience would be able to tell the difference between fustian and "true" sublimity, for "verses that seem warm to a man of sense can never contain any Fustian."[45] Dennis attempts to push the negative connotations of enthusiasm as false inspiration into the category of fustian, the false sublime, thus opening up space for enthusiasm to exist as *genuine* inspiration. By redefining "enthusiasm" as a positive literary term harkening back to the rhetorical theories of the ancients and authorized by Plato and "Longinus," Dennis sought to revise its connotations in Restoration discourse. As will be demonstrated by Addison's simultaneous use of Dennis even as he suppressed his central theory of the religious-sublime in *Paradise Lost*, Dennis's attempts were unsuccessful. Not only was he cast as a madman in *The Narrative of Dr. Norris,* but audiences in the know were apparently expected to recognize John Dennis in the character of "Sir Tremendous Longinus," a

[43] Heyd, 4.
[44] See chapter two on P.H.'s annotation at 2.481-6
[45] Dennis, Preface to *The Court of Death*, vol. 1, 43.

pedantic critic in Gay's 1717 play *Three Hours after Marriage*.[46] Dennis's assertion that enthusiasm was absolutely necessary to sublime poetry threatened to raise the specter of Milton's political-religious zeal, a haunting presence that everyone except Toland seemed committed to effacing. Dennis boldly claimed *Paradise Lost* was excellent for the very reasons the poem worried many of his contemporaries.

"SOMETHING LIKE AN EPICK": DENNIS'S CRITIQUE OF *PARADISE LOST*

It is unfortunate that *The Grounds of Criticism* printed in 1704 is only a fragment of the proposed work. The treatise was planned as the "first work of English criticism to be published by subscription," but was never completed because, as Edward Hooker tactfully put it, "only seventy-seven gentlemen in England were willing to pay a guinea for a folio volume of critical remarks."[47] Even with only a fragment to assess, Hooker recognized that *The Grounds of Criticism*, containing Dennis's most developed discussion of the sublime, "stands out as one of the most important and original critical treatises of its day."[48] Had the subscription scheme succeeded and the complete treatise been completed, we would have a more complete understanding of Dennis's critical theories in general and of his analysis of *Paradise Lost* in particular. Despite its fragmentary state, the work represents a significant moment in the development of English literary criticism as vocation and theory.

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[46] This was suggested by Hooker, in Dennis vol. 1., 508.
[47] Hooker, vol. 1, 507.
[48] Ibid.

Generally, Dennis comments only upon Milton's late poems. However, as he formulates his theory of poetic genius, the critic is willing to risk recalling the poet's career as prose pamphleteer by quoting at length from 1642's *The Reason of Church Government* to bolster his claim in *The Grounds of Criticism* that "true Poetical Genius is a great and sacred thing." The passage Dennis quotes places particular weight on the role of inspiration (or enthusiasm) in engendering this genius, which Milton claims

> is, wherever it is found, the inspir'd Gift of God, rarely bestow'd, but yet to some in ev'ry Nation, tho' most abuse it: and is of power, beside the Office of a Pulpit, to imbreed and cherish in a great People the Seeds of Virtue and publick Civility, to allay the Perturbations of the Mind, and set the Affections in a right Tune…. Whatever in Religion is holy and sublime, in Virtue amiable or grave, whatever hath Passion or Admiration in all the changes of that which is call'd Fortune… all these things with a solid and treatable Smoothness to point out and describe.[49]

In the extended passage Dennis includes at length, Milton goes on to claim that such true poetry would be of great benefit to the "Youth and Gentry" who are tainted by the "Corruption and Bane which they suck in daily form the Writings and Interludes of libidinous and ignorant Poetasters." Dennis thus enlists Milton as a confederate to defend against Collier's root-and-branch campaign against the theaters. While Milton recognized, Dennis said, that "Poetry was in the main miserably sunk among us," he also (like Dennis) was optimistic that "it might be restor'd to its Innocence, and its Greatness."[50] Inferior poetry may be a "Sweet Pill" masking some corrupting influence, but genuine poetical genius becomes a conduit to true religion when it is truly enthusiastic or inspired. In a move that seems almost foolhardy given Milton's Restoration reputation, Dennis seems eager to enlist the poet as a like-minded "reformer"

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[49] Milton, *The Reason of Church-Government*, as quoted in Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism*, vol. 1, 330.
[50] Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism*, vol. 1, 330.

of the stage, alongside Elizabeth I, James I, and George Buchanan. In *The Person of Quality's Answer to Mr. Collier's Letter, Being a Disswasive from the Play-House*, Dennis's tone is satirical throughout, couched as praise of Collier while actually pillorying the would-be reformer. The ironic manner of the satire makes it difficult to parse passages out of context; however, the gist of the extract below it is that even Milton the "famous Reformer" was not adverse to the stage. Dennis aligns himself with Milton and Collier with Prynne.

> To King James succeeded King Charles the First, and then rose another famous Reformer, John Milton by Name, who not only left a Tragedy behind him, the Story of which he impiously borrow'd from the Bible, written, to leave him without excuse, in his mature, nay declining Years, but has left a fine Encomium on Shakespear; has shown an extraordinary Esteem for Johnson; and among all the Things he thought fit to reform, so far had Prejudice laid hold of his Understanding, it never so much as came into his Head that the Stage was one of them.[51]

The statement that Milton "impiously" took the plot of *Samson Agonistes* from the Bible is part of the irony, as Dennis was adamant that the surest way to advance poetry was to base it upon religious subjects. Mentioning "Charles the First," "John Milton," and "Tragedy" in the same breath, Dennis dares characterize Milton as a "famous Reformer." Dennis's pamphlet adroitly associates Collierite reform with rebellious (perhaps Jacobite) movements, while somehow removing Milton from this milieu. The move recalls P.H.'s commentary on *Paradise Lost* at 2.486 presenting Milton as a critic of the hypocrisy of the regicides rather than numbered among them. Milton as poetic reformer must be separate from Milton the political reformer, because Milton's epic is of singular importance to Dennis's critical theories.

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[51] Dennis, *The Person of Quality's Answer to Mr. Collier's Letter, Being a Disswasive from the Play-House* (1704), vol.1, 302.

In Dennis's endeavor to "shew the mutual Dependance that the Greater Poetry has on Religion, and Religion on the Greater poetry," *Paradise Lost* is the exemplar. Dennis says that in *Paradise Lost*, "Milton… made his Country a glorious present of the most lofty, but most irregular Poem, that has been produc'd by the Mind of Man."[52] Furthermore, although Dennis uses Milton's tract *Of Education* to demonstrate that Milton knew the rules of Aristotle, he does so only to show that Milton *consciously* circumvented them. Dennis explains, "that great Man had a desire to give the World something like an Epick Poem; but he resolv'd at the same time to break thro' the Rules of *Aristotle*."[53] Combined with his demonstration that "no Man knew" the rules "better, or esteemed them more" than Milton, Dennis's use of the phrase "break thro'" indicates his belief that Milton did something more intentional and more significant than simply break the rules. By "breaking thro'" them, Milton arrives at a place beyond Aristotle. He creates something truly new in its irregularity. As Dennis explains, "Milton was the first, who in the space of almost 4000 Years, resolved, for his Country's Honour, and his own, to present the World with an Original Poem."[54] It would be easy to mistake this as a claim that Milton produced an original *epic* by constructing his fable from the Christian story. But Dennis instead asserts that Milton's innovation went beyond even that:

> 'Tis true, the Epick Poets who have liv'd since Homer, have most of them been Originals in their Fables, which are the very Souls of their Poems; but in their manner of treating those Fables, they have too frequently been Copyists.[55]

Dennis's defense of Milton as no "copyist" rebukes Dryden's backhanded compliment to Milton in his dedication to the *Translation of Juvenal* (1693) that "no Man has so happily

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[52] Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism*, vol. 1, 333.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

copy'd the Manner of *Homer*; or so copiously translated his *Grecisms*, and the *Latin Elegancies* of *Virgil*." While this quote of Dryden had been used in the translator's preface to Le Bossu's treatise on the epic to show that English poets fell far short of ancient examples, Dennis is certain that Milton is no "copyist."[56] Where Rymer had promised to show *Paradise Lost* was not an epic, and Dryden had said Milton's "Subject is not that of an Heroique Poem" because "the event is not prosperous," Dennis takes a different approach.[57] He claims *Paradise Lost* is only "something like an Epick poem," in that it has "broken thro'" or perhaps "broken free" of the rules of Aristotle. What seemed a fault in the hands of Rymer and Dryden is presented by Dennis as a triumph. The "irregular" *Paradise Lost* is not just a new epic, it is a new and sublime genre.

As he expounds upon the "heroick" or epic form in English, Dennis suggests that Dryden's translation of Virgil is the exemplar, while Spenser fell short of excellence by breaking the rules. He explains that the unique Milton, however, breaks "a little loose" from the rules "in some particulars" but keeps others even "better than the best of the Ancients."[58] As we've seen, Dennis proposes that Milton's conscious and judicious eschewing of the rules is what makes *Paradise Lost* truly original and most sublime. Breaking through the rules allows Milton to surpass the ancients, while by keeping some rules "better than the best" Milton demonstrates mastery. Dennis's unusual and often-overlooked opinion that Milton's poem isn't quite an epic assists in evaluating Dennis's

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[56] John Dryden, "Dedication" in *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis translated into English Verse*, Jacob Tonson: London, 1693, viii. Available from Early English Books Online. This passage was quoted in the translator's preface to Le Bossu's treatise in lieu of Rymer's (never published) critique on Milton in order to demonstrate "how far short" English poets "have fell of the Excellencies and Perfections of Homer and Virgil." M.J., *Preface* to Bossu's *Treatise of the Epick Poem* (1695).

[57] Dryden makes the claim about genre (and refers to Rymer's unfulfilled threat) in the same ambivalent passage quoted above.

[58] See Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism*, vol. 1, 331. Dennis goes so far to claim that Virgil, "by Mr. Dryden's translation" is "to be reckon'd among our own Poets." Here, where Dennis is giving a broad outline of his proposed treatise, his comments on *Paradise Lost* seem less daring than in the "Specimen" of criticism upon Milton itself.

complex theories about the sublime. While Leslie Moore recognizes that Dennis puts *Paradise Lost* in a category beyond Aristotle's rules, she contextualizes Dennis's move against the tensions arising between the sublime and the beautiful, whereas Dennis navigates Milton's restoration reputation by attempting to redeem "enthusiasm" itself and equate it with inspired religion. Thus, Milton's authority to break the rules comes from the same source as his poem's great sublimity – its sacred subject. In order to give the world an "original poem," Dennis claims Milton "resolved to write a Poem, that, by vertue of its extraordinary Subject, cannot so properly be said to be against the Rules, as it may be affirmed to be above them all."[59] When Aristotle wrote his "rules," Dennis says he had Homer in view, but in Homer "the Action lay chiefly between Man and Man," while Milton "was resolved… that his Principals should be the Devil on one side and Man on the other."[60] Milton's characters could not be "subjected to" the rules of Homer and Aristotle since "excepting two," they were supernatural. Therefore, Dennis emphasizes that "the choice of *Milton's* Subject as it set him free from the Obligation which he lay under to the Poetical Laws, so it necessarily threw him upon new Thoughts, new Images, and an Original Spirit." Not only are these thoughts and images "new" and "original," but Dennis claims that, when finished, *The Grounds of Criticism* would show them to "have vastly the Advantage of those of *Homer* and *Virgil*."[61] Where P.H. simply claimed that the "truth" of the Christian religion gave Milton the edge over the ancients, Dennis would support this contention with his psychological theory of the sublime. Milton's religious subject grants the poet freedoms from the understood rules of genre,

[59] Ibid., 333.
[60] Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism*, vol. 1, 334. Anticipating objections, Dennis holds that in the poetry of the ancients, the Gods were "but Seconds" to the human protagonists.
[61] Ibid.

and also frees him – requires him, in fact – to entertain the enthusiasms that others found perilous:

> Since the final End of Poetry is to reform the Manners, nothing can be according to the Art of it, which is against Religion, or which runs counter to moral Virtue, or to the true Politicks, and to the Liberty of Mankind: and every thing which is against the last, tends to the Corruption and Destruction of Mankind; and consequently every thing against the last, must be utterly inconsistent with the true Art of Poetry.[62]

Dennis's definition of "the true Politicks" remains forever obscure, even though his Whig leanings were well known. However, it is clear from this passage that poetry with the necessary freedom to be true to the "Art" is not only free from the rules of Aristotle, but must also embody a spirit of liberty that goes beyond mere rhetorical license.

In the "Specimen" of criticism on Milton within the fragmentary proposal that is all we have as *The Grounds of Criticism,* Dennis remains vague about exactly which of Aristotle's rules Milton transgressed. He is much more precise about moments where Milton has broken Dennis's own rules for generating sublime passion or for using religion to advance poetry. He claims nonetheless that some of Milton's "defects" as measured against Aristotle's rules are "so great, that they would be Insupportable in any one who had not his extraordinary Distinguishing Qualities."[63] If the entire treatise had been finished, it would have been enlightening to see Dennis discern between transgressions that demonstrate how *Paradise Lost* is "above" the rules and those which would be "insupportable" if not for Milton's original qualities. In what we have of *The Grounds of Criticism*, the only clear example Dennis gives of rule-breaking in *Paradise*

[62] Ibid., 336-7.
[63] Ibid., 334.

Lost is Milton's choice of a protagonist. Dennis follows Dryden in suggesting "the Devil is properly his [Milton's] Hero, because he gets the better."[64] Dennis would later clarify or even revise this stance as he responded to the neoclassicism of Addison's *Spectator* essays.

Dennis's "Specimen," subtitled "the Substance of what will be said in the Beginning of the Criticism upon Milton," is followed by brief chapters exploring the nature of the sublime in general, crystallizing much of what Dennis had written in the *Advancement of Poetry*. As expected, *Paradise Lost* provides the bulk of the examples of passages raising "enthusiastick" or sublime passion. Dennis again explains the difference between vulgar and enthusiastic passions, and between the greater and lesser poetry (see Figure 3, above). Greater poetry raises greater passions, and the greatest passions are enthusiastic. Furthermore, the greatest passions are those raised by religion. Dennis shows that while "vulgar" passions arise from common objects, enthusiastic passion is raised by "ideas" of these objects in contemplation or meditation. Dennis claims that ideas in mediation

> are often very different from what Ideas of the same Objects are, in the course of common Conversation. As for example, the Sun mention'd in ordinary Conversation, gives the Idea of a round flat shining Body, of about two foot diameter. But the Sun occurring to us in Meditation, gives the Idea of a vast and glorious Body, and the top of all visible Creation, and the brightest material Image of the Divinity.[65]

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., 339. Perhaps in this passage we find a source for William Blake's exclamation in the *Vision of the Last Judgment*, "When the Sun rises do you not see a round Disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea O no no I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty…" See *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake*, edited by David V. Erdman, (New York: Anchor, 1988), 565-6.

Dennis's explanation of the sublime thus emphasizes the psychological impact of contemplation that incites the same admiration that would be raised by the object if it were really present, joined with the reflexive admiration of the mind's own capacity to hold such great ideas. The largest portion of the *Grounds of Criticism* gives examples of the types of passages which raise the enthusiastic passion of "Admiration."

Dennis identifies several categories of ideas that incite enthusiastic admiration, providing examples from the ancients or from *Paradise Lost*. The examples from *Paradise Lost* are "ideas of God" (PL 1.1-26; 8.357-433; 3.383-96; 7.168-73), ideas of the glorious works of the creator and especially angels (PL 5.266-287), ideas of "great Phænomena of the Material World" such as the heavens, the immensity of creation, the motion of heavenly bodies, and some sublunary things (PL 3.571-84; 4.32-35; 7.94-103; 4.605-9; 8.100-6; 8.15-22), and ideas of "virtue" (Satan's unyielding fortitude at 1.105-8). As an example of Milton's ability to evoke the sublime through his praise of the works of God, Dennis examines Adam and Eve's prayer in Book V, which he identifies as a paraphrase of Psalm 148.[66] Dennis exclaims:

> what lofty, what glorious Ideas does a religious Mention of the Works of God afford to Man in his Primitive State, in that incomparable Hymn in the fifth Book of the same *Paradise Lost*? A Hymn, which tho it is intirely taken from Scripture… will always stand alone, the Phoenix of lofty Hymns; and nothing equal to it, no nor second to it, can ever be produc'd from the *Grecian* Writers of Hymns.[67]

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[66] P.H. identified this as well, terming it a "Noble Paraphrase" and "highly Poetical." Dennis's extended treatment of this passage as sublime contradicts Leslie Moore's concern that episodes involving Eve are given as examples of "beauty" while Book VI and VII are "sublime." In any case, Dennis recognized that "ordinary" passions were important to epic because these passions reach the largest number of people; not every audience could appreciate sublimity.

[67] Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism*, vol. 1, 351.

Dennis quotes the entire passage from Book 5.153-208, and returns to it at the conclusion of *The Grounds of Criticism*, using it as an example of a "trickle down" effect that poetry may have in reforming the manners of the nation. Dennis argues that poetry is the ideal vehicle for religious instruction because it appeals most to the upper class that will, by example, reform the other classes. Adapting Milton's claims in *The Reason of Church Government* once again, Dennis proposes that since those "of extraordinary Parts" are already "delighted with Poetry," if they were to find poetry upon religious subjects *most* delightful it would lead to their reform. As proof of this, Dennis relates the effect of Adam and Eve's prayer:

> That this [reformation] is by no means a Chimera, Experience may serve to convince us: For I know several Gentlemen of very good Sense, who are extremely mov'd by *Milton's* Hymn… and hardly at all stir'd with the Translation of the 148th Psalm, from whence that Hymn is taken. But if Men of very good Parts are more mov'd by the Hymn, it follows that they ought to be more mov'd by it; because Men of very good Sense are only mov'd to that degree by thing by which they ought to be mov'd. So that we may conclude, that the Passion or Enthusiasm in that Hymn is exactly in Nature; that is, that the Enthusiasm, or Passion, or Spirit, call it what you will, flows from the Ideas, and bears a just Proportion to them.[68]

Like Dennis's earlier claim that men of "sense" couldn't mistake fustian for sublimity, the men of sense here (who are paradoxically corrupted by current profane poetry) are moved only by what ought to move them. Because they are moved by Milton's hymn (and not by the psalm itself), that rendition must therefore have captured the "nature" or spirit of the psalm even better than current biblical versions.

> It follows, that since those Persons, who are so much mov'd by the Hymn, are not equally stir'd by the translated Psalm, the Passion or Spirit is less

[68] Ibid., 372.

> in the latter, and does not come up to the Ideas; and therefore we may conclude, that *Milton*, by his Genius and Harmony, has restor'd that Spirit in composing the Hymn, which had been lost by the Weakness of the Translation, and the Want of Poetical Numbers.[69]

Where Milton succeeds at his most sublime, he surpasses currently available vernacular scripture and demonstrates the power of religious poetry to reform the realm from the top down. It follows for Dennis that *Paradise Lost* has more power to reform than even the Psalms themselves as they were available in English translations of scripture. Far from setting *Paradise Lost* apart as another classic text, Dennis portrays Milton's poem as living work capable shaping English society.

Dennis also gives examples of places where Milton falls short or mismanages the use of religion in poetry. Most of the examples of mismanagement come from *Paradise Regained*. Dennis does identify a few moments where *Paradise Lost* fails in its attempts to be sublime. In particular, he joins Dryden in criticizing the final books of the poem while disagreeing with Dryden over the reason for their failure. Dennis explains, "The late Mr. Dryden, with a great deal of Injustice, us'd to attribute the Flatness of Milton in this [Book X] and some other Passages, to his getting into a Track of Scripture." However, Dennis, committed as he is to extolling the use of religious subjects, attributes the "flatness" instead to "the Poorness and Lowness of the Ideas" in these passages.[70] His discussion of these failings further illuminates the workings of the enthusiastic sublime in his theory, especially where it conflates the passions invoked in the reader with those that would be expected in the poetic persona or speaker.

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 351.

> *Milton* has done the most unartful thing that perhaps ever was done, in the two or three last Books of the greatest Poem that ever was written by Man. For whereas in the first eight Books, he had by the Mouth of God or Angels, or of Man the Companion of Angels, divinely entertain'd us with the wondrous Works of God; in the latter end of his Poem, and more particularly, in the last Book, he makes an Angel entertain us with the Works of corrupted Man.[71]

Not only are the works of fallen Man unfit to raise enthusiastic passion, but they are particularly unable to raise that passion in the speakers who relate them in these books. For, in retelling the "works of corrupted Man," "the Angel could draw no sort of Enthusiasm, and least of all that of Admiration and Terror, which give the principal Greatness and Elevation to Poetry."[72] Likewise, Dennis notes that wherever God speaks of anything other than himself, the poetry must fall flat, for "nothing is more impossible than that God should either fear or admire his own Creatures."[73] Examining the one moment in which he senses "Admiration" or "Terror" in the words of God, as the Father directs the Son to take the royal chariot out to crush the rebels, Dennis excuses this as a "Mistake" of Milton who "while he was rapt with Admiration, and moved with Terror by the Ideas which he had conceiv'd, shifts Persons insensibly, and forgetting who speaks, expresses himself with those Passions which are indeed proper enough in the Poet, but never can be so in the Deity."[74] Dennis seems to contend that God should speak simply and without passion unless describing himself. The enthusiastic sublimity in these examples requires not only that the reader be moved by the poet's description, but that

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 353.
[74] Ibid.

the poet and even the character/speaker be moved by the height of the concepts. Everyone – fictional, authorial, or reader – partakes of the transmission of enthusiastic passion when it works. This suggestion that the poetic characters themselves should "feel" the enthusiasm of their speech hints at an interiority for fictional characters that is as ahead of its time as Dennis's concern about the psychological workings of the sublime in readers. It also opens the door to the genuine inspiration or enthusiasm that Dennis hinted at in his preface to *The Court of Death*. Sublimity or enthusiasm flows from a genuine religious source and is transmitted from author to character to reader, moving them all.

Dennis became insistent that Milton surpassed the ancients through his creation of an "original" and irregular poem that harnessed the power of enthusiastic sublimity. Despite his methodical rebuke of Temple in the *Advancement*, Dennis tried to assert official neutrality in the battle of ancients versus the moderns, and in the political skirmishes between Tories and Whigs. In his virulent response to Pope's *Essay Upon Criticism*, Dennis castigates Pope for paying "servile Deference… to the Ancients." He accuses the younger poet of taking an opposite but as extreme stance as Perrault, who in his "insolent Stupidity contemn'd and blasphem'd" the ancients, and offers instead the example of Bolieau as "a reasonable Man [who] took the Path that lay in the middle of the two Extremes."[75] As demonstrated by his often churlish responses to Pope, Dennis was too irascible to remain long on the middle path himself, however much he wanted to

[75] Dennis, *Reflections Critical and Satyrical, Upon A Late Rhapsody, Call'd, An Essay Upon Criticism* (1711), vol. 1, 399.

portray himself as such a man of sense. His decades-long contentions with Pope and Steele are but two examples. He ranged himself squarely against the reigning arbiters of taste when he wrote against the fashion for Italian opera, associating it with "slavery" and arguing that it was an "effeminate Musick" that worked contrary to liberty.[76] He ruefully noted his status as party outsider when reflecting in 1704 that neither *The Court of Death* nor his ode on William's death had garnered any reward. Despite his longstanding connection with Charles Montagu, he couldn't resist bitterly reflecting, "He who after this could be induc'd to expect any thing from those whom they call the Whigs, must be of a more sanguine Temper than I am."[77] It would fall to another professed neutral, the fictional persona of "Mr. Spectator" created by the publically Whig and Kit-Cat Joseph Addison, to take up Milton's case once again. Dennis did not write at length about Milton after *The Grounds of Criticism*, except when roused to respond to Addison's popular *Spectator* essays, which he charged with not only appropriating some of his own criticisms, but with misusing them to undermine his theories about *Paradise Lost* and the sublime.

"ADDISON THAT MILTON SHALL EXPLAIN"

Addison's *Spectator* essays have been credited with making *Paradise Lost* "popular" almost since they were first published. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who had

[76] Dennis, *An Essay on the Opera's After the Italian Manner* (1706), vol. 1, 389-90.
[77] Dennis, *Preface to Liberty Asserted* (1704), vol. 1, 322.

been a toast of the Kit-Cat Club when she was but eight-years old, later praised Addison for reforming the age by explicating Milton:

> And Addison that Milton shall explain,
> Point out the Beauties of each living Page,
> Reform the taste of a degenerate Age.[78]

Despite "Mr. Spectator's" famous assertion in *Spectator* No. 1 that he "never espoused any Party with Violence, and [was] resolved to observe an exact Neutrality between the Whigs and Tories…," the *Spectator* was a remarkable vehicle for disseminating Addison and Steele's (and thus the Whig/Kit-Cat) values to the nation at large. Conservative estimates put the paper's average daily print run between three and four thousand copies, and Mr. Spectator boasted by "modest Computation" that each of these was read twenty times.[79] John Dennis himself, in one of several rather bitter letters he wrote to the *Spectator*, decried its popularity, lamenting that the author(s) "have got more Reputation in three Years time than *Milton* has done in fifty Years, or than *Shakespear* has in an hundred."[80] Stung by real and imagined affronts in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, Dennis was unable to appreciate the service done to Milton's reputation by the *Spectator* without reflecting upon the disservice done by Addison's eschewing of Dennis's more thoughtful theories about the role of the sublime and *Paradise Lost's* irregularity.

Appearing on eighteen consecutive Saturdays from 5 January until 3 May 1712, Addison's *Spectator* essays on *Paradise Lost* represent a remarkable change of opinion in the author who had claimed in 1694 that Milton's prose had "profan'd his pen" and made

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[78] Montagu, "Her Palace placed beneath a muddy road," in *Essays*, 248, lines 41-44.
[79] See Donald F. Bond's "Introduction" to *The Spectator*, vol.1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), xxvi-xxviii. See lxxxiii and *Spectator* No. 10 for Addison's speculation that each paper was read twenty times.
[80] Dennis, *To the Spectator on the 24th of April 1711/12*, vol. 2, 28.

even the best moments of *Paradise Lost* unsupportable.[81] He begins his discourse by abruptly dismissing "the discussion of that point which was started some Years since, Whether *Milton's Paradise Lost* may be called an *Heroic Poem*." In answer to this, or rather in evasion, Addison proposes that "Those who will not give it that Title, may call it (if they please) a *Divine Poem*."[82] Although probably meant as a response to Rymer and Dryden, this disclaimer may also respond to Dennis's contention that *Paradise Lost* was so "original" that it was only "something like an Epick." Addison, however, seems determined to treat Milton's poem as in the same class as the ancient epics, no matter how he may have to struggle to do so. He proposes to measure *Paradise Lost* against the Aristotelian "Rules of Epic Poetry" that Dennis had proclaimed Milton had "broken thro'." Addison is explicit in his intention at the outset to weigh Milton's poem against "the *Iliad* or *Æneid*" to see "whether it falls short… in the Beauties which are essential to that kind of Writing."[83] Later, in his sixth paper on *Paradise Lost*, Addison once again brings up the issue of genre, only to dismiss (again) the question in favor of continuing to use the classical rules and predecessors to arbitrate Milton's greatness.

> Paganism could not furnish out a real Action for a Fable greater than that of the *Iliad* or *Æneid*, and therefore an Heathen could not form a higher Notion of a Poem than one of that kind which they call an Heroic. Whether Milton's is not of a Sublimer nature I will not presume to determine: It is sufficient, that I shew there is in the *Paradise Lost* all the Greatness of Plan, Regularity of Design, and masterly Beauties which we discover in Homer and Virgil.[84]

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[81] See Chapter 1, above.
[82] *Spectator*, no. 267.
[83] Ibid.
[84] *Spectator*, no. 297.

Despite having some reservations, it is clear Addison considers Aristotle's rules, and the epics of Homer and Virgil, as the proper (or only available) criteria and precedents by which to determine the success of Milton's poem.

Dennis quickly responded to one of the earliest claims resulting from Addison's reliance on Aristotle, the assertion that *Paradise Lost* observes unity of action. Addison held that *Paradise Lost* had "no other Episodes than such as naturally arise from the Subject" and he specifically treated the Fall of the rebel host as an episode likened to Virgil's inclusion of the rise of Carthage in the *Aeneid*, "running parallel with the great Action of poem." This prompted Dennis's most adamant and clearly articulated claim that Milton had (successfully) broken free of Aristotle's rules. In his ill-advised yet often correct criticism of Addison's immensely popular *Cato*, Dennis cast doubt upon recent critical praise of the tragedy by aligning the *Guardian's* fictitious reviewer, Nestor Ironside, with "his father" Mr. Spectator. Asserting that Ironside's "Father, Mr. *Spectator*, had been so merrily in the wrong," Dennis takes the opportunity to issue his first public critique of Addison's *Paradise Lost* essays.

> Mr. *Spectator*… publish'd a certain Criticism upon *Milton,* in which the Reverse of almost everything that he has affirm'd is true; That he has had the Assurance to say in it, That *The Paradise Lost* of *Milton* has an Unity of Action, whereas in that Poem there are most apparently two Actions, the War of the Angels being an Action by it self, and having a just Beginning, a Middle and an End….[85]

Dennis goes on to impugn Mr. Spectator for having asserted that the *Iliad* has "duplicity of action" and citing Aristotle as authority for this, when in fact Dennis asserts that

[85] Dennis, *Remarks Upon Cato, A Tragedy* (1713), vol.2, 42.

Aristotle had praised the unity in the *Iliad*.[86] This isn't simply contrariety on Dennis's part, and the issue at stake is more than "Mr. Spectator's" accuracy. Instead, Dennis strikes at the heart of the matter. While the immediate target for Dennis may have been *Cato Examin'd,* an anonymous review finding Addison's play perfectly conforming to Aristotle's rules, Dennis's assault upon *Cato* also serves as a rebuttal of Addison's essays on *Paradise Lost*. Using the same techniques Addison employed in the *Spectator*, Dennis methodically compares Addison's tragedy to Aristotelian rules by examining *Cato's* fable, characters, sentiments, and expressions. The critic castigates Addison for breaking the rules by having a weak fable and improbable, inconsistent characters. Yet he also critiques Addison's slavish adherence to the "mechanick" rules of unity of time and place, charging that they lead to downright absurdity in *Cato*.[87] Having mentioned the *Spectator* essays in the introduction to highlight the impartial nature of *Cato's* reviews, Dennis's criticisms of the tragedy turn Addison's neoclassical critique of *Paradise Lost* against him. Unlike Addison, Dennis is willing to consider the excellence of a *Paradise Lost* that "breaks thro'" the rules and prospers because of it. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a gift to the nation precisely because it is "irregular," a theory that is lost as Addison struggles to put Milton's epic into Aristotle's boxes. Although Dennis doesn't go further with his critique of the *Spectator* essays until after Addison's death, those having read his *Grounds of Criticism* may infer that Dennis's reference to *Paradise Lost's* dual action his response to *Cato* signals what makes Milton's poem "something like an Epick," and a

[86] Addison's claim that Aristotle said the *Iliad* had duality of action is in No. 267, alongside his claim for the unity of *Paradise Lost*.
[87] Dennis, *Remarks Upon Cato*, vol 2., 70.

true "original" poem that moves beyond classical accomplishment and neoclassical analysis.

Contrary to Dennis, Addison's general critical essays (the first six *Spectator* essays on *Paradise Lost*) found Milton to have conformed to Aristotle's rules in almost every circumstance. Not only does *Paradise Lost* have unity of action, but Addison claims the poem excels the ancients in that action's being complete and "great." In a move reminiscent of P.H.'s discussion of Milton's sublimity, Addison hints that Milton's action is "greater" than Virgil or Homer and indeed "greater than could have been formed upon any Pagan System" because its Christian truth necessarily involves all "a whole Species" in its outcome.[88] As he explores Milton's characters, Addison has another opportunity to address the inadequacy of Aristotle to judge Milton. After asserting that Milton did all he could do (and more) with the characters he had to work with in his plot, he comments:

> In this, and some other very few Instances, Aristotle's Rules for Epic Poetry (which he had drawn from his Reflections upon Homer) cannot be supposed to square exactly with the heroic Poems which have been made since his Time; since it is evident to every impartial Judge his Rules would still have been more perfect, could he have perused the *Æneid* which was made some hundred Years after his Death.[89]

Addison's ambivalence about Aristotle's rules doesn't preclude his rather methodical following of them throughout his critique. He constantly approaches Aristotle's inadequacy and yet ultimately backs off to continue using Aristotelian rules to evaluate Milton's poem. In this instance he excuses Aristotle by suggesting that if he had been

[88] Ibid.
[89] *Spectator*, No. 273.

able to study Virgil's epic his rules would have been better accommodated to modern epics. Yet Addison doesn't go so far as Dennis to suggest that Milton's *Paradise Lost* itself is some new sort of epic.

As Addison moves from matters of structure to matters of style, he continues his neoclassical approach. Tackling the topic of Milton's "sentiments," Addison says they are "perfect when they are such as are adapted to the Subject," echoing the common assertion that poetic language must bear proportion to the ideas it conveys. Addison also addresses "propriety," claiming both Milton and Virgil best Homer in this aspect, because Homer often includes "mean or low thoughts." Broaching the sublime, Addison claims it is not "sufficient for an Epic Poem to be filled with such Thoughts as are *natural*, unless it abound also with such as are *sublime*."[90] Addison is adamant that Milton's poetry is sublime: "MILTON'S chief Talent, and indeed his distinguishing Excellence, lies in the Sublimity of his Thoughts." He is much less clear about what sublimity is, instead inviting the "judicious Reader" to "compare what *Longinus* has observed on several Passages in *Homer*, [where] he will find Parallels for most of them in *Paradise Lost*." Comparing his classical models, Addison claims Virgil falls short of Homer. Although he is less "mean" than Homer, he is also less "sublime," while Milton "in the Greatness of his Sentiments… triumphs over all the Poets both Modern and Ancient, Homer only excepted."[91] Addison singles out the first, second, sixth and (less so) seventh books as particularly sublime or "great." The definition of "sublimity" as a greatness of

[90] *Spectator*, No. 279.
[91] Ibid.

"sentiment" is one of Addison's divergences from Dennis's critical theory. Where Dennis had defined sublimity as essentially synonymous with passion and arising from the fable of the work, specifically "enthusiastick passion" evoked by ideas of religious things or concepts, Addison treats sublimity as a vague "greatness" of sentiment and expression. Exploring the evolution of Addison's concept of the sublime in *The Pleasures of the Imagination* and the *Paradise Lost* essays, Lee Andrew Elioseff has suggested that Addison intentionally avoided Dennis's formulation of the sublime.

> Addison, in order to avoid the more emotive overtones which the sublime had taken on in Dennis's *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704), may have selected "greatness" as a more appropriate term to convey the impression of sublimity in both nature and art.[92]

Dennis's linkage of the sublime with "enthusiasm" and the range of negative religious and political connotations of that word would be reason enough for a prudent Whig like Addison to avoid it. Locating Milton's sublimity in "enthusiastic passion" threatened to return Milton to the odious state in which Addison had found him in 1694, so beyond the pale of reformed taste that even the language of *Paradise Lost* couldn't "support the cause."

Attempting to ferret out Addison's concept of the sublime from the prefatory papers on *Paradise Lost*, readers are confronted with a chiasmus relating two categories of sentiment, the "Natural" and "Sublime," with their opposites, the "Affected and Unnatural" and "Mean and Vulgar" sentiments. Addison decrees Milton guilty sometimes of "affected and unnatural language," and more so of "mean and vulgar"

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[92] Lee Andrew Elioseff, *The Cultural Milieu of Addison's Literary Criticism*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 99.

sentiments, the opposite of the sublime in Addison's scheme. In one of his few statements placing biographical Milton within a temporal context, Addison excuses Milton's "affected and unnatural language" because it was "a characteristic of the age" in which the poet was writing:

> Milton, it must be confest, has sometimes erred in this respect… tho' considering all the Poets of the Age in which he writ, were infected with this wrong way of Thinking, he is rather to be admired that he did not give More into it, than that he did Sometimes comply with the vicious Taste which still prevails so much among modern Writers.[93]

Overtly aligning Milton with Homer, whom Addison also excuses for some foibles common to his age, this passage more covertly aligns Milton squarely with the "vicious Taste" of the Restoration era in which he wrote, which, it turns out, isn't so different from the age in which Addison himself is writing. Treated this way, Milton isn't the "famous Reformer" Dennis referred to when enlisting him in common cause against the Collierites.[94] Addison's Milton isn't even an outsider castigated by and critiquing Restoration court culture in his late works. Instead, Addison quietly paints Milton among the Restoration poets, indistinguishable from (and as unobjectionable as) all the other "Poets of the Age in which he writ." While he reserves his examples of "affected and unnatural" language for later papers, Addison closes his discussion of sentiment with examples of "vulgar" sentiments from all three epics. According to Addison, "sentiments which raise Laughter" are examples of low and vulgar thoughts and are inappropriate in

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[93] *The Spectator*, No. 279. Addison's argument here leaves some doubt as to whether he discussing "Affected and Unnatural" thoughts or "Mean and Vulgar" ones. Because he transitions to discuss "vulgar" thoughts in the next paragraph, I take this aspersion on Restoration-era poets to be directed at their affectation.

[94] See the discussion of *The Person of Quality's Answer,* above.

epic poetry. Addison's example from *Paradise Lost* is the "String of Puns, and those too very indifferent," that occurs when Satan's artillery successfully volleys against the Angels. If readers of the *Spectator* were left with only a vague idea of what constitutes the sublimity of Milton's thoughts, there was no doubt that these puns were the exact opposite.

Addison returns to the sublime when he examines Milton's language, a topic that he finds "the learned World is very much divided upon."[95] Differing from Dennis, who located the source of the sublime entirely in the subject, Addison identifies a quality of style that is "sublime," claiming "it is requisite that the Language of an Heroic Poem should be both Perspicuous and Sublime." As with his discussion of sublime sentiment, Addison's definition of sublime language lacks the psychological depth of Dennis's theory. Addison is certain that a sublime language or style should differ from everyday speech. A poet should show his genius in "shunning the common Roads of Expression, without falling into such ways of Speech as may seem stiff and unnatural; he must not swell into a false Sublime." Addison then enumerates the techniques Aristotle prescribes to accomplish this: use of metaphor, use of foreign words, lengthening and contracting words, coining new words, and using obsolete words. Addison claims that Milton, by employing all these methods "has carried our Language to a greater height than any of the English Poets have ever done before or after him, and made the Sublimity of his Stile equal to that of his Sentiments." Addison goes so far to assert that Milton is "most singular" in his "stile." But he also, later, points out as a fault that Milton overused some

[95] *Spectator*, No. 285.

of these techniques. Disassociating the sublime from subject and sentiment and treating it as style alone differs markedly from Dennis. Addison's sublime, separated from the passions, is far less liable to be contaminated by the lingering political-religious enthusiasms associated with Milton.

The last of Addison's prefatory essays identifies the "defects" of *Paradise Lost*. Chief among these is the "unhappy event" of the poem.[96] The movement of Adam and Eve from bliss and innocence to sin and banishment is, Addison claims, more appropriate for a tragedy than an epic. Milton, of course, had acknowledged in the invocation to Book IX that he must "change those notes to tragic" in order to relate the events of the Fall. But Addison is aware that earlier commentators on the poem had complained that Adam, the "hero" of the poem, is unsuccessful. He cleverly rebuts this objection, along with Dryden (and Dennis's) claim that Satan was the hero of the poem, by proposing instead that "'tis certainly the *Messiah* who is the Hero." The other defects identified by Addison are less consequential, being supposed affronts against "probability" caused by introducing allegorical figures into the action of the poem. One defect that puts Addison in conflict with Dennis's theory of the sublime once again, is his claim that Milton "admitted of too many Digressions" in the poem. Again relying on Aristotle and ignoring later theorists such as Tasso or Le Bossu, Addison asserts that the "author of an Heroic Poem should seldom speak himself." Dennis, on the other hand, had suggested in *The Advancement of Poetry* that "the Passages of the ancient Poets that were most Religous, were their

[96] *Spectator*, No. 297.

Invocations, Apostrophes, or the like."[97] And because Dennis's theory held that the most religious passages were also the most sublime, in *The Grounds of Criticism* he asserts that in "those parts of Epick Poetry, where the Poet speaks himself, or the eldest of the Muses for him, the Enthusiastick Passions are to prevail."[98] The passages deemed by Addison "digressions" (however beautiful he may admit them) were some of the most sublime moments identified by Dennis. The remaining defects identified by Addison are in the main explications of those identified under his separate treatments of the "fable," "characters," "sentiments," and "language" of the poem. While many of them will have bearing on chapter four's discussion of Richard Bentley's treatment of Milton, they are not directly relevant to Addison's development and departures from Dennis's critiques.

That Addison had read, and used, Dennis's criticisms was asserted by Dennis himself in his proposals for yet another work that never came to fruition. Perhaps prompted by the reprinting of Addison's *Spectator* essays in Tonson's 1720 edition of *Paradise Lost* (edited by Addison's literary protégé and executor, Thomas Tickell), Dennis struck out at the late Addison in his 1721/22 *Letters on Milton and Wycherley: From the Proposals For Printing By Subscription*. This work is invaluable because it represents Dennis at his most reflective, looking back over his criticism of Milton and restating some of its most salient points in direct response to Addison. He bitterly notes that he had devoted much of his career as a critic, "these last Thirty Years" to promoting Milton as "having carried away the Prize of Sublimity" from the best of the Moderns and

[97] Dennis, *Advancement of Poetry*, vol. 1, 231.
[98] Dennis, *Grounds of Criticism*, vol. 1, 339.

Ancients. It is with great bitterness that he notes Addison's use (and misuse) of his work, a hostility only exacerbated by the reputation Addison's essays had gained.

> Some Persons, who long since the Publication of the forementionʼd Treatises [*The Advancement of Poetry* and *The Grounds of Criticism*] began to write Notes on the *Paradise Lost*, have made particular mention of the same Beauties which I had markʼd out before, without making any mention of me.[99]

Dennis's use of the title "Notes," and his reference to page numbers in "the small Edition" supports the idea that Dennis was goaded by the *Spectator* essays' continued popularity.[100] Dennis further alleged certain knowledge that Addison was familiar with his work, but claims he is unconcerned with credit and only desires to correct where Addison has failed to do justice to Milton -- by failing to understand Dennis.

> Thoʼ… I can bring unquestionable Proof that those Persons had read the forementionʼd Treatises, and read them with Applause; but I should not be in the least concernʼd at the treating me so unfairly and ungenerously, if they had done Justice to Milton, throʼ the Course of their Criticisms, of which they have grossly failʼd in the following Respects.[101]

The old critic's renewed confrontation with Addison's essays forces him to crystallize the most consequential points of his Milton criticism. Although we again must make do with only a specimen attached to a proposal for a longer work never completed, Dennis's corrections of Addison highlight their differing theories about the source and use of the sublime. According to Dennis, the *Spectator* critique of *Paradise Lost* fails in several respects. In short, Dennis critiques Addison for failing to recognize that Milton surpassed ancients in "sublimity of thoughts" and properly highlighting "that Sublimity which is his

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[99] Dennis, *Letters Upon Wycherley and Milton*, vol. 2, 221.
[100] Dennis refers to the "small edition" at Ibid., 223.
[101] Ibid., 222.

[Milton's] distinguishing and Characteristick Quality, and which sets him above Mankind." Where Addison does cite sublime passages, Dennis complains that he fails to set them "in true light and advantage" and doesn't observe that the sublime passages are "Original to Milton." Finally, Dennis declares Addison's *Spectator* papers are flawed because he doesn't give Milton credit for surpassing "all other Poets," because "where he has excell'd all poets in what he has exprest, he has left ten times more to be understood than what he exprest, which is the surest and noblest Mark, and the most transporting Effect of Sublimity."[102] Dennis once again gestures toward the psychological nature of the sublime and its ineffable evocation of the sacred.

In the remainder of the *Letters*, Dennis explicates Addison's failure to properly identify and explain Milton's most sublime passages. Dennis complains that Addison stops short "within the very touch of one of the vastest and sublimest Beauties that ever was inspir'd by the God of Verse, or by *Milton's* Godlike Genius." The description of the combat between Satan and Michael in heaven, which Addison fails to highlight, is able to "lift up the Reader's Imagination to a thousand times a greater Heighth than either the Shout of Armies, or the Rattling of Brazen Chariots…."[103] Dennis's mention of the "Rattling of Brazen Chariots" may be meant to recall a particularly flat passage in Addison's 1694 "Account":

> How are you struck with terror and delight,
> When angel with arch-angel copes in fight!
> When great Messiah's out-spread banner shines,
> How does the chariot rattle in his lines!

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 224.

If so, Dennis mischievously rebuts the *Spectator* essays with Addison's own youthful work. The young Addison had noted how "bold, and sublime" and "above the critick's nicer laws" the battle between Michael and Satan was, even if in that same poem he was forced to turn aside, finally unable to recommend Milton because of his politics. In the *Spectator*, Addison evolved in his view of Milton, but again stopped short of appreciating the extent to which *Paradise Lost* "broke thro'" Aristotle's rules. Dennis spends the next three pages closely examining the battle between Satan and Michael, lingering particularly over the verse he deems most sublime:

> All Heav'n
> Resounded, and had Earth been then, all Earth
> Had to her Center shook: What Wonder? when
> Millions of fierce encountering Angels fought
> On either side, the least of whom could wield
> These Elements, and arm him with the force
> Of all their Regions.

Dennis seems transported himself as he explains his reaction to this passage, highlighting in particular the reader's inability to conceive of the greatness of the thought.

> Sir, if Millions of fierce encountering Angels fought on either Side, and the very least, the very weakest of so many Millions had Power to rend this Globe of Earth and Ocean from its Axle, and whirl it with its dependent Atmosphere thro' the Æthereal Regions, what must be the unutterable, the inconceivable Effect of so many Millions furiously contending against each other, and each of them exerting all his might for Victory?[104]

As he moves on to describe the meeting between Satan and Michael, he calculates using the power of these "millions" of angels as a baseline. If the reader has been following

[104] Dennis, *Letters Upon Milton and Wycherley*, vol. 2, 225.

Dennis, she will find "computing by just Proportion" that Michael and Satan are able to "confound and destroy in a Moment the whole Dominion of the Sun, to crush all the Planetary Worlds… to scatter and disperse them in empty infinite Space." But the reader's ability to compute such power is meant to be stymied. Dennis's arithmetic traces Milton to the point where he compares the arch-angelic combat to a battle between two planets, but even this magnitude, says Dennis, isn't enough, because Milton is attempting "to set forth Great things by Small." Finally, Dennis reveals that "what accounts for all this" is the passage describing Satan and Michael preparing their first blows:

> Together both with *next to Almighty Arm*
> Uplifted, imminent, one Stroke they aim'd
> That might determine, and not need repeat
> As not of Power at once.[105]

According to Dennis, Milton's description of the combatants preparing to strike "with next to Almighty Arm" exceeds the computational power of any reader. The passage, he exults, "includes more than the Thoughts of the greatest Reader can ever comprehend."[106] Dennis's sublime is about proportion, as is Addison's, but it is not the proportion of style, not the proportion of the language to the thoughts conveyed. Instead, Dennis's sublime relies upon the ability of the poet to exceed all potential proportions of human thought, to present a religious idea so laden with passion that the reader is unable to clearly identify the source of the awe or terror it inspires, yet is justly proud of his or her ability to even briefly comprehend it. Such sublimity is generated only by proper subjects well-handled by poetic genius.

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[105] Ibid., 103. Emphasis Dennis.
[106] Ibid., 227.

Dennis's assessment of Addison's *Spectator* essays evinces less bitterness toward Addison than disappointment. Dennis is disappointed that Addison wasn't able to break free of the Aristotelian mode of criticism and regrets Addison's reluctance to go beyond neoclassical critique, as well as his pulling back from a theory of the sublime that places enough reliance on "enthusiastic passion."

> Of all the commentators on the *Paradise Lost*, Mr. Addison was certainly the most ingenious, if he was not the most learned, but he has not given Milton his full Due, either thro' want of Discernment, or want of Impartiality.[107]

The "impartiality" that Dennis suspects in Addison may refer to any number of biases: bias against Dennis himself, a well-known party bias, or bias in favor of the ancients. Dennis condemns Addison's hesitation to name Milton more sublime than Homer, pointing out "at least two" seeming contradictions on this point in the *Spectator* essays. Such waffling would not do for Dennis, who had decided Milton was indeed more sublime than any other poet, ancient or modern.

Both Addison and Dennis align Milton with classical predecessors and, like P.H., treat *Paradise Lost* as worthy of the extended analysis which was otherwise reserved for those texts alone. Privileging *Paradise Lost* while carefully downplaying, excising, or revising Milton's authorship, both critics attempted to free the poem from prejudices arising from Milton's reputation as regicide. Addison, however, retreated from the lengths to which Dennis was willing to go, finding safer ground well away from the zeal and enthusiasm that had spooked him in 1694. Combined with a near-total obfuscation of

[107] Ibid., 223.

Milton's political life, the effect was to isolate the poetry from the poet and thus make it palatable as a poem that could "reform the age."

It is understandable that when later observers such as Johnson constructed narratives to account for *Paradise Lost's* survival and popularity they would credit Addison's *Spectator* essays for making the poem "popular." The series of Saturday essays encouraged the nation to read the poem with attention and reverence usually reserved for the Bible or classical texts. Unlike P.H.'s *Annotations*, never reprinted after 1695, and Dennis's obscure, scattered, and unfashionably pedantic criticism, Addison's essays enjoyed a substantial afterlife. The popularity of the *Spectator* itself continued unabated for at least a century as it went through multiple editions. Separately, the *Paradise Lost* essays were issued as stand-alone volumes and also bound with the poem in handsome Tonson editions. Suppressing Dennis's more radical claims about the poem's sublimity, Addison's critique surpassed Dennis's and attempted to establish *Paradise Lost* as a modern "classic" or even as secular scripture appealing to an ever broader audience. Given the popularity of the *Spectator* essays, it is tempting to accept the commonplace that Addison "rediscovered" *Paradise Lost* in 1712. This narrative of the poem's reception, however, is incomplete without explaining the impact of Addison's accomplishment on the next significant event in the poem's history: the 1732 edition of *Paradise Lost* by the preeminent classicist of his day.

Chapter 4: "Such Scorn of Enemies:" Bentley's *Paradise Lost*

> I profess to *Your Highness*, in the Integrity of my Heart, that what I am going to say is literally true this Minute I am writing…. There are… one Mr. *Rymer* and one Mr. *Dennis*, most profound Criticks. There is a Person styled Dr. B—tl--y, who has wrote near a thousand Pages of immense Erudition, *giving a full and true Account* of a certain *Squable* of wonderful Importance between himself and a Bookseller.
>
> - Swift, *A Tale of A Tub*

In the 1690 *Essay Upon Ancient and Modern Learning,* Sir William Temple claimed the moderns fell far below the ancients not only because the ancients had more knowledge and genius, but because the moderns were distracted by "inquiries and contests about Matters of Religion," suffered a lack of patronage from great princes, wrote for profit as opposed to honor, and (worst of all) inflicted "the last maim given to Learning… the scorn of Pedantry."[1] As discussed in chapter three, John Dennis, who would be counted among the worst of the pedants by those on the side of the ancients, joined the fray belatedly, directly refuting Temple's main contentions in his 1701 *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*. Dennis asserted that where the ancients surpass the moderns, they do so because of the subjects they chose to write about, and the moderns could surpass them if they too harnessed the sublime power of sacred subjects. This final point is Dennis's unique contribution to the moderns' argument. As would be expected by those familiar with Dennis's theory of the "enthusiastick" or sublime, discussed in chapter three, Dennis contended that where the ancients had "actual Pre-eminence" it was only because they had discovered the secret of "joining their Religion

[1] William Temple, "Upon Ancient and Modern Learning," in *Miscellanea, the Second Part*. London, 1690, 70-1. Available from Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

with their Poetry."[2] The moderns could match the ancients if they began "incorporating Poetry with the Religion reveal'd to us in Sacred Writ."[3] If the implication for Dennis's treatment of *Paradise Lost* was not already obvious, it became so when Dennis employed Milton's Book I description of Satan as an example of sublimity, explaining that "the Reader cannot but observe of himself, that the greatest of these noble Ideas, is taken from Religion."[4] Dennis proclaimed that Milton excelled Virgil "by the Advantage of his Religion" both "in the Greatness of his Thought, and his Spirit," despite receiving "no Encouragement" and having the "vast Disadvantage" of writing before Le Bossu's treatise on the epic form.[5] Although eclipsed by Wotton's earlier and more famous response to Temple, Dennis was the only modern to so explicitly and systematically enlist Milton in the moderns' cause.

Slovenly, eccentric, and notoriously combative, Dennis made an easy target for the wits championing Temple and the ancients. Swift, who would relentlessly lampoon enthusiasm throughout his career, may have had the critic at least partly in mind as he explored the relation between enthusiasm and madness, and when he described the fanatical Aeolists in *A Tale of Tub*. More explicitly, Swift lumped Dennis in with Richard Bentley as representative of a pedantic species of "True Criticks" descended from "Momus:"

> Every true critic is a hero born, descending in a direct line from a celestial stem, by Momus and Hybris, who begat Zoilus, who begat Tigellius, who

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[2] Dennis, 206-7. The comment that Milton received "no Encouragement" yet "often transcendently soar'd above both Ancients and Moderns" is at 211.
[3] Ibid., 207.
[4] Dennis, 220.
[5] Dennis, 271-2.

> begat Etcaetera the elder, who begat Bentley, and Rymer, and Wotton, and Perrault, and Dennis, who begat Etcaetera the younger.[6]

Similarly, in the Preface to *A Tale of a Tub* (see the epigraph, above), Swift had affected incredulity that two such characters as Bentley and Dennis could even exist in the realm at the same time. While Dennis likely was a target of Swift's scorn because of his defense of enthusiasm and his rebuttal of Swift's mentor and patron, Bentley was an easier and more significant target since he was a much more prominent symbol of the pedantry and professional scholarship represented by the "new philology." Bentley, Keeper of the King's Library at St. James Palace since 1693 and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge from 1700, had come to fame as the preeminent classicist of the age when he published his *Letter to the Illustrious John Mill* in 1691 and gave the Boyle Lectures for 1692. But it was his *Dissertation Upon the Epistles of Phalaris,* appended to the 1697 second-edition of Wooten's *Reflections,* that earned the ire of Swift. The *Dissertation* was a muscular refutation of Temple's *Essay*, laced with Bentley's domineering arrogance and biting sarcasm. In his 1690 essay, Temple had singled out *Aesop's Fables* and the *Epistles* of Phalaris as examples of ancient preeminence, declaring that the *Epistles* "have more Race, more Spirit, more Force of Wit and Genius, than any others I have ever seen, either antient or modern."[7] He acknowledged there was some debate about the authenticity of the *Epistles*, but bravely asserted its authenticity:

> Such diversity of Passions… such Freedom of Thought, such Boldness of Expression, such Bounty to his Friends, such Scorn of his Enemies, such Honor of Learned Men, Such Esteem of Good, such Knowledg of Life, such Contempt of Death, with such Fierceness of Nature and Cruelty of Revenge could never be represented, but by him that possessed them.[8]

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[6] Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*. Edited by Marcus Walsh. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 59.
[7] Temple, 61.
[8] Ibid.

Following Temple's praises, young Charles Boyle produced a new edition of Phalaris's letters in 1695, complaining there that Bentley had rudely, "out of his singular humanity," denied him access to a manuscript in the King's Library. In the 1697 *Dissertation* Bentley used his superior knowledge of Greek language and history to demonstrate that the *Epistles* was spurious. This initial edition of the *Dissertation* was but a taste of what Bentley and the evolving philology could do. After being maligned in an indignant response from Boyle's Christ Church colleagues, Bentley published a much-expanded edition of the *Dissertation* in 1699, including an explanation of the dispute between himself and Boyle over the King's Library manuscript. That explanation is likely the "full and true Account of a certain Squable of wonderful Importance between himself and a Bookseller" mocked by Swift in *A Tale of a Tub*.[9] The voluminous new edition of the *Dissertation* was a masterful demonstration that established how anachronistic references, dialect, and form precluded the *Epistles* from having been written by the original Phalaris. Moreover, the *Dissertation* featured Bentley in all his scholarly splendor, employing his trademark sarcasm and larger-than-life personality to crush his opponents. Having embarrassed Temple and the Christ Church wits, Bentley became a lightning rod of sorts to focus all the stray energy of the battle of the ancients and moderns. He was now the emblematic modern and quintessential pedant, the professional scholar to be opposed by the dilettante, gentlemanly, amateur scholarship epitomized by Temple and aspired to by the likes of Addison, Swift, and Pope. When John Dennis remarked that, "Of all the Commentators on the *Paradise Lost*, Mr. *Addison* was certainly the most ingenious, if he was not the most learned," he highlighted the growing gulf

[9] The 1698 response to Bentley's *Dissertation* was entitled *Dr Bentley's Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris, and the Fables of Aesop*, *Examin'd by the Honorable Charles Boyle, Esq.* and was penned by a group of Christ Church fellows headed by Francis Atterbury.

between the ingenious amateur and learned scholar.[10] If Addison defined the genteel end of the spectrum, Bentley was securely master of the opposing end.

Bentley's tumultuous career as the Master of Trinity, combined with the often acerbic tone of his scholarly work, hints that the man had what might be termed an abrasive personality. But what exacerbated this, even beyond his willful entry of himself as a "character" of sorts in his scholarly notes, was his choice of subject. Contrary to the practice of other classical philologists of the time, Bentley chose subjects certain to put him in the public eye. Producing a new and querulous edition of Horace (1712), for instance, was certain to attract attention. Kristine Haugen has characterized this as Bentley's "most daring experiment… in making scholarship matter to a wider group of literary readers."[11] Horace was poetry for schoolboys, familiar to most and dear to an ever-expanding audience of "genteel" readers. For Bentley to exercise his particular skill set on Horace was not only to dabble in an area little touched by serious scholars, but to do so under scornful gaze of those gentlemanly scholars who so resented him and the entire breed of "True Criticks." To make matters worse, his Horace was packed with "hectoring pronouncements about his own excellence" and featured Bentley "loudly… trumpeting his distaste for writing helpful commentary, his right to make conjectures, and his innate literary genius and taste."[12] Not only did Horace put Bentley's methods on display to a larger audience than could honestly appreciate and evaluate his Greek scholarship, but as Haugen so aptly puts it, the volume "signaled that the pedantic, ill-bred barbarians were now within the gates of genteel culture."[13] Having been stung by

[10] Dennis, *Letters Upon Milton and Wycherley*, 223.
[11] Kristine Louise Haugen. *Richard Bentley: Poetry and Enlightenment*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP. 2011), 130.
[12] Ibid., 124-5.
[13] Ibid., 132.

the wits' continued attacks on the *Dissertation* despite its mountainous piling on of evidence, Bentley's method in his Horace was to assault his readers with the evidence. If they disagreed with him, he promised he would

> Attack outright their prejudice and resistance. In my annotations, I have drawn out many points diffusely and at great length, contrary to my custom. Even if they grow angry and struggle, I will overwhelm them with the weight of my reasons and the number of my examples, until at last I drag them by the neck into agreement with me.[14]

He again employs this combative approach in his edition of *Paradise Lost*. Additionally, in his Horace, Bentley explains his reliance on conjectural emendation and the unreliability of textual witnesses. To properly restore a text

> You need what the ancients ascribed to Aristarchus, a certain faculty of divination and prophecy. These can be acquired by no quantity of labor or length of life, but they come purely as the gift of nature and by happiness of birth…. For all the readings that obviously and willingly offered themselves when a Manuscript was collated have already been captured and anticipated: there is virtually nothing left but what you can excavate from the force of the meaning and the form of the language, solely by means of your genius. Therefore, in these Horatian notes I will produce more emendations from conjecture than from the help of Manuscripts, and, unless I am totally wrong, the greater part of them more certain. For when there are variant readings, authority itself often makes a fool of us, soothing the mistaken itch of those who would emend. On the contrary, when we propose conjectures against the authority of all Books, timidity and shame pull us by the ear, and solely reason, and the light of the meaning, and necessity itself can get the upper hand…. Therefore, don't venerate Scribes alone, but dare to be wise for yourself; measure every word by the flow of the speech and the genius of the language, and so at last pronounce and render your verdict.

This is boiled down to its core in Bentley's claim that "reason, and the thing itself count for more than a hundred manuscripts, especially when the old Vatican manuscript agrees

[14] Bentley, ed. *Q Horatius Flaccus*, preface, sig. c2 ^{r}. Quoted and translated in Haugen, 133.

with me."[15] But, of course, no manuscript authority at all was necessary for a genius such as Bentley, the Aristarchus of his age. He would willingly work without such a safety net and "dare to be wise" (and certainly not "lowly wise") as he fearlessly proposed emendations for which no reading existed. In his Milton and his Horace, Bentley would thus proclaim that the author wrote it so, or *should* have.[16] Such moments in Horace could be ascribed to the ignorance or malice of centuries of anonymous copyists. Milton posed a different challenge.

Contextualizing Bentley's 1732 edition of *Paradise Lost* has proven difficult for modern commentators. Few critics have even bothered attempting to place Bentley within the mainstream history of editing and criticism. Empson praised Zachary Pearce as one of the only one of Bentley's contemporary opponents who did not "take refuge in being rude" while responding to Bentley.[17] I would expand Empson's observation to note that few scholars have treated Bentley's *Paradise Lost* with respect since. Often, references to Bentley's notes are included in the apparatus of modern Milton editions as mere specimens of absurdity to adorn the volume with a rare moment of levity. In his study of eighteenth-century editing, Walsh claims that Bentley's "giant figure casts a disproportionate and in many ways distorting shadow over our view of the period's

[15] Ibid., notes, 147. Quoted in Haugen, 134.
[16] See, for instance, his annotation justifying his emendation of *Ode* 1.3.17-20 in Horace. Bentley's very first emendation in *Paradise Lost*, at Book 1.6 demonstrates this. Defending his desire to change "the secret top of Horeb" to the *sacred* top," Bentley says, "I have such an Esteem for our Poet, that which of the two Words is better, That, I say, was dictated by *Milton*." This is, incidentally, one of the genuine emendations that was "leaked" by *The Grub Street Journal* before Bentley's publication.
[17] William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, (New York: New Directions, 1974), 149.

approach to Miltonic editing."[18] Bentley's *Paradise Lost* is "an aberration" in an otherwise smooth teleology of editing and critical practice. Among the reasons that Bentley resists easy assimilation into Walsh's history of editing is Walsh's perception that Bentley's reliance upon conjectural emendation is at odds with the practice of using "parallel places" in the manner of Pearce and later commentators.[19] Treated as a singular aberration, a product of the great scholar's dotage, or as bizarre and anachronous artifact on the cusp of the development of modern English criticism, Bentley's edition is most easily shunted aside.

This dismissal of Bentley's edition is encouraged by his own apparatus and the fictions he surrounds it with. Disingenuously, Bentley claims the edition was a command performance requested by Queen Caroline, and that he produced the notes "*extempore*, and put them to the Press as soon as made."[20] While such proclamations appear calibrated to mitigate Bentley's culpability for his emendations, annotations by Bentley in a second-edition *Paradise Lost* recently acquired by the Wren Library demonstrate that Bentley's thoughtful engagement with the poem extended at least from the mid-1720s.[21] In seeking the origins of Bentley's decision to edit *Paradise Lost*, critics have variously accepted Bentley's claim that he was acquiescing to the Queen, or proposed that Elijah Fenton's

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[18] Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing: The Beginnings of Interpretative Scholarship* (Cambridge, 1997), 63.

[19] Ibid., 74. I've demonstrated elsewhere that Bentley used parallel places extensively. See David Harper, "Bentley's Annotated 1674 Edition of *Paradise Lost*: Hidden Method and Peculiar Madness," R*eview of English Studies*, February 2012.

[20] Bentley, ed. The claim that the lines were "*extempore*" is found in the preface (unpaginated). The claim that this was a command performance is found in Bentley's final note proclaiming it so (*Non injussa cecini*).

[21] The second-edition *Paradise Lost* with Bentley's annotations is shelf mark Adv.c.2.13. I have discussed how these notes assist in dating Bentley's work in Harper, "Bentley's Annotated 1674 Edition of *Paradise Lost*."

1725 edition of Milton had given the scholar the idea that Milton's text had been corrupted by his amanuensis.[22] More recently, William Kolbrener has suggested that Bentley, a low-church "modern whig," was responding to John Toland's 1698 publication of Milton's prose. Kolbrener's claim comes within the context of his larger argument which posits that critical responses to Milton shift between two poles as Milton critics continually attempt to validate an image of Milton that is either "satanic" or "angelic," orthodox or heterodox, radical or conservative, depending on their own critical perspective and moment. Kolbrener identifies Stanley Fish's "angelic Milton" and John Rumrich's "satanic Milton" as the extremes of the contemporary phase of the battle.[23] He further identifies Bentley as the "Fish" of the early-eighteenth century, portraying Bentley's 1732 edition as a deliberate rebuke to radical interpretations of Milton (such as those of John Toland):

> [Bentley's] reading of Milton can be seen as an appropriation of Milton on behalf of a different, though equally Whig ideology, that of the emergent latitudinarian orthodoxy. Bentley's Milton elaborates the flip-side of immanentism (expounded later by the likes of Saurat and Empson), and it requires the re-instating of orthodox dualisms into Milton's works.[24]

Kolbrener goes on to claim that Bentley's supposed reinvention of Milton as "orthodox" is "a phenomenon… paralleled in the current century by Stanley's Fish's reading of *Areopagitica*."[25] While Kolbrener's analysis provides a cogent framework for examining much of Milton criticism from the Romantics onward, it seems a stretch to claim that

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[22] These theories date to Monk's 1880 biography of Bentley.
[23] These terms are unfortunate and, of course, oversimplifications. They have evaluative connotations that had perhaps better been avoided. William Kolbrener, *Milton's Warring Angels*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 109.
[24] Ibid., 111.
[25] Ibid.

Paradise Lost had already been marked as the property of radicals in the decades prior to Bentley. It is difficult to discern what predecessors Kolbrener has in mind for Bentley when he claims that "both Bentley and Fish come in the aftermath of the ascendancy of the 'Whig Milton,' and their readings of Milton come as *responses* to the readings of their predecessors."[26] As discussed in chapter three, in the decades prior to Bentley's edition, Addison's neoclassical and conservative treatment of the poem had successfully derailed Dennis's more thoughtful engagement with poem's political, religious, and literary heterodoxies. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to provide a context for Bentley's methodology and critique that is more in keeping with the realities of Milton criticism as it developed (hand-in-hand with the discipline of criticism itself) in the early eighteenth century. Despite Swift and Pope's continual association of Bentley with Dennis as two similar members of the pedantic (and fanatic) tribe of "true criticks" who championed the moderns, this chapter suggests that Bentley's most radical interventions in *Paradise Lost* owe more to Addison than Dennis. However, it is first necessary to examine one aspect in which Bentley differs from prior critics of Milton (especially "P.H." and Addison). Unlike these prior commentators, who seem to have consciously avoided Milton's biography, Bentley explicitly invokes the life of Milton as a framing device for his edition.

BENTLEY'S LIFE OF MILTON

[26] Ibid., emphasis mine.

As discussed in earlier chapters, commentators on Milton from P.H. onward had an aversion to linking Milton's life with his poem. Milton's absence as a personality, and certainly as a political figure, is striking in Addison's *Spectator* essays on *Paradise Lost* and presents a stark contrast to his own hostile, earlier treatment of Milton in the "Account." Ants Oras highlighted P.H.'s similar disinterest in Milton's biography as one of the quaint shortfalls of his *Annotations*.[27] Unlike the editions of Milton edited by Elijah Fenton and immediately preceding his, Bentley's 1732 *Paradise Lost* did not include a "Life of Milton." However, in his preface and throughout his notes, Bentley provides a biographical sketch that emphasizes Milton's status as political pariah. The second sentence of Bentley's preface paints a bleak picture of Milton's situation in the years in which he composed the poem:

> Our celebrated Author, when he compos'd this Poem, being obnoxious to the Government, poor, friendless, and what is worst of all, blind with a GUTTA SERENA, could only dictate his Verses to be writ by another.[28]

Bentley's depiction of Milton composing *Paradise Lost* while "poor," "friendless," and "obnoxious to the Government" sets the necessary conditions for Bentley to explain how the text of Milton's poem was corrupt *ab origine*. Not only was the blind poet misunderstood by his amanuensis, but in his oppressed condition he was easily taken advantage of by a "friend" who inserted spurious verses of his own into the poem:

> For, this suppos'd Friend, (called in these Notes *the Editor*) knowing Milton's bad Circumstances; who, VII. 26,
>
> Was faln on evil days and evil tongues,

[27] Oras, 24.
[28] Bentley, Preface, sig. a1[r]

> With *Darkness* and with *Dangers* compass'd round
> And *Solitude*;
>
> thought he had a fit Opportunity to foist into the Book several of his own Verses…. And poor Milton in that Condition, with Three-score Years weight upon his Shoulders, might be reckoned more than half Dead.[29]

While Bentley was certainly not the first to read the invocation of Book VII as Milton's autobiographical sketch, P.H.'s discussion is notably void of biographical implications beyond blindness (see above, chapter two). Later biographers, especially Richardson, would look to the Book VII invocation as a portrait of their author heroically enduring blindness and disillusionment. Bentley uses it, however, to imagine a Milton helpless to control the production of his great poem. Elsewhere in his preface, Bentley more directly confronts Milton's political anathema, describing Milton's condition when the first edition of the poem was printed as one of "Poverty, Infamy, and an universal Odium from the Royal and triumphant Party."[30] In his emendations to the text of the poem, Bentley continues elaborating upon this portrait of an isolated and outcast Milton. For instance, early in Book I, while identifying a passage as a spurious insertion by the "Editor," Bentley exclaims: "our Poet, blind, and then poor and friendless, had frequently foul Play."[31] This emphasis upon Milton's position as a "friendless" outcast is a singular feature of Bentley's edition, savoring more of Winstanley and other opponents of the poet than of the more delicate treatment accorded Milton's biography by former editors and

[29] Ibid., Sig.a2^{r}-a2^{v}
[30] Ibid., Sig.a3^{r} Bentley does, however, indicate that "the Poem and its Author had slowly grown to a vast Reputation" at the time of the second-edition's printing.
[31] Bentley, 1.197-200.

commentators. Unlike Bentley the earlier, sympathetic commentators preferred to separate the poetry from the poet.

Not only does his stark portrayal of Milton upon the Restoration help Bentley explain how the poem could have been corrupted, but it also leads Bentley to depict the poem's reputation as the more marvelous and unaccountable.

> What a wonderful Perfomance… was this Paradise Lost? that under all these Disadvantages could gradually arise and soar to a national Applause and Admiration? How many Thousands would depress and vilify the Poem, out of Hatred and Detestation of the Poet; who they thought deserv'd Hanging on a Gibbet? What native, unextinguishable Beauty must be impress'd and instincted through the Whole, which the Defoedation of so many Parts by a bad Printer and a worse Editor could not hinder from shining forth?[32]

But, in typical Bentley fashion, his admiration of the poem (and Milton) is mixed with a liberal dash of distaste. In Bentley's hands, the story of *Paradise Lost's* reception isn't a heroic tale of a great epic overcoming initial public resistance. Instead, the poem's rise to fame is testimony to the disproportionate sway of certain "best Pens" and the ignorant acquiescence of apparently "vulgar readers" to such popular opinion. Bentley is indignant that even with the "Defoedation" of the text, it has garnered a reputation that puts it almost beyond criticism:

> Nor can the Reader miss another Reflexion; How it could happen, that for above 60 Years time this Poem with such miserable Deformity by the Press, and not seldom flat Nonsense, could pass upon the whole Nation for a perfect, absolute, faultless Composition: the best Pens in the Kingdom contending in its Praises, as eclipsing all modern Essays whatever; and rivaling, if not excelling, both *Homer* and *Virgil*. And it's likely, he'll resolve it into This Cause; That is Readers first accede to it, possess'd by That from trusting to their Judgments… rather suspecting their own

[32] Bentley, Preface

> Capacity, than that any thing in the Book could possibly be amiss. Who durst oppose the universal Vogue?[33]

Who "durst oppose the universe vogue" indeed, but the modern Aristarchus who had counseled would-be critics to "dare to be wise" and to eschew the judgment of those who had come before? Gracing *Paradise Lost* with his attention, surely a signal of its value, Bentley at the same time denigrates not only the poem, but also those "best Pens" such as Dryden and Addison who had extolled its greatness and claimed it a place next to the classics. Bentley's hostile attitude toward Milton and the poem's reputation seems to have evoked the most indignant responses to his edition, exerting more power over readers than even the substantive content of the emendations themselves.

William Empson famously characterized Bentley as "the man who said the Tactless Thing."[34] Of all the tactless things Bentley said throughout his career, perhaps the most damning was to preface an edition of *Paradise Lost* by conjuring up the political Milton. A response "Addressed to Dr. Bentley, from Dean Swift," takes particular issue with Bentley's portrayal of Milton's situation upon the Restoration. Although it reads in places as though actually composed by Swift, it is most likely not from his hand. The author of *MILTON RESTOR'D AND BENTLEY DEPOS'D* admits that Milton's "having defended the King's Murder, and his being *Oliver's Latin* Secretary, were Things not likely to recommend him to Favour on the Restoration." However, in a manner that presages Johnson's *Life of Milton*, the author lightly dismisses any real danger or antipathy to Milton persisting after the Act of Oblivion:

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Empson, 149.

> But, to say Milton was friendless, Doctor, is, I venture to assert, against all Authority… A Pardon from a powerful Intercession, sure Protection, publickly appearing and marrying a Gentleman's Daughter… how suits this with being obnoxious to the Government, poor, and friendless? good Doctor, explain it.[35]

The pamphlet's title page declares it "Numb. I," and it contains responses to Bentley's notes only so far as Book I.72, suddenly breaking off to produce a specimen of thirty lines from *Paradise Lost* rendered in rhyme that "J. Swift" introduces as being composed by "a very ingenious Youth of Dublin." Although the final page promises another installment in "a few Days," there is none extant. It may have been preempted by Zachary Pearce's more complete response to Bentley.

BENTLEY & POPE

The title page of *MILTON RESTOR'D* bears the motto: "*Sing Heaven'ly Muse, from Pedantry be free.*" This frames the conflict over Bentley's *Paradise Lost* in the terms of the eighteenth-century culture wars once again. The motto sets pedantry and professional scholarship in binary opposition to art and the gentlemanly appreciation of art. Once again, the "wits" are rallied to defend the barricades against the "dunces." Dispelling any doubt about the champions of the respective sides in the conflict, the author closes his preface with an explicit comparison:

> Thus much I will say for your Edition; that, comparing it with that in Twelves with the Annotations annexed, Mankind may reasonably decide between the candid Critick and the petulant Carper, and thereby do justice to Dr. *Bentley* and Mr. *Addison*.[36]

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[35] Anonymous. *MILTON Restor'd and BENTLEY Depos'd*. London: E. Currl, 1732. Available on Eighteenth Century Collections Online. It should be kept in mind that Currl was infamous for fraudulent publications.
[36] Ibid., viii.

The conflict is between a "candid Critick" and a "petulant Carper," and between a "Doctor," representing the dull pedantry of professional scholarship, and a "Mr." who epitomized the elegantly witty "gentleman" amateur. In Dennis's terms, the conflict is yet again joined between the "ingenious" and the "learned."

Bentley had recognized that his treatment of Milton and *Paradise Lost* would be inflammatory.

> Who durst oppose the universal Vogue? and risqué his own Character, while he labour'd to exalt *Milton's*? I wonder rather, that it's done even now. Had these very Notes, been written forty Years ago; it would then have been Prudence to have suppress'd them, for fear of injuring one's rising Fortune.[37]

The ever-embattled Master of Trinity claims that only in his old age, at seventy, when he no longer had to fear "growing leaner by Censures," was he free to publish his edition. Why he felt it permissible even then is a question that has engaged numerous critics. Joseph Levine has gone so far as to suggest that "it is just possible that he [Bentley] really meant his preface and commentary satirically, tongue in cheek, like a very Scriblerian… if so, instead of laughing at Bentley for his evident fiction, we should perhaps be laughing with him!"[38] This gives Bentley's sense of humor too much credit. Evidence from the two surviving editions of *Paradise Lost* annotated by Bentley seems to indicate that his was an earnest and prolonged engagement with the poem. Bentley's edition is not the aberrant distorting shadow envisioned by Walsh and others. While there may be some truth in the theory that Felton's edition suggested Bentley's conceit that the poem was corrupted by the misunderstandings of Milton's amanuensis, the very form and tone of Bentley's apparatus suggests a nearer parallel in the 1723-25 edition of

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[37] Bentley, Preface

[38] Joseph Levine. *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991), 262-3.

Shakespear. In Six Volumes. Collated and Corrected by the former EDITIONS, by Mr. POPE.

Pope's edition of Shakespeare is a fascinating entry in the annals of editing history. He valiantly attempts to separate his work as editor from that of a critic, declaring in the very first line of his preface that "It is not my design to enter into a Criticism upon this Author."[39] Later, as he concludes the preface, he once again tries to justify his methodology by carefully delineating what he famously describes as the "dull duty of an Editor" from that of a critic:

> I have discharg'd the dull duty of an Editor, to the best of my judgement, with more labour than I expect thanks, and with a religious abhorrence of all Innovation, and without any indulgence to my private sense or conjecture.[40]

Pope's denial that he indulged his "private sense or conjecture" immediately evokes Bentley's indulgence in and reliance upon "Sagacity, and happy Conjecture" in his Greek and Latin scholarship.[41] Pope attempts to distance himself from the practices of classical scholarship, and is particularly anxious to avoid any charge that he has followed methodologies similar to Bentley's.

As Pope's preface progresses, however, he unavoidably falls into the role of critic, quite obviously when he declares Shakespeare

> with all these great excellencies, …has almost as great defects; and that as he has certainly written better, so he has perhaps written worse, than any other. But I think I can in some measure account for these defects, from several causes and accidents; without which it is hard to imagine that so

[39] Pope, ed. *Shakespear*. (1725). i. Available from Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Pope suggests that Shakespeare would be a valid author for commentary and criticism, but appears to defer to later attempts.
[40] Ibid., xxii.
[41] For Bentley's preference for conjecture, see the discussion of his Horace, above. The quote here is from the later preface of his *Paradise Lost*.

> large and so enlighten'd a mind could ever have been susceptible of them.[42]

But Pope's role of editor also forces him to become a "critic" in a less visible manner. While he himself seems content to fulfill that role of "critic" which was understood as the responsibility to point out passages of particular beauty or note, he is also quietly obliged to engage even in textual criticism. The state of Shakespeare's textual remains demanded his editor make hard choices. The "causes and accidents" Pope credits with Shakespeare's defects include those often used to excuse the ancients for their faults, and recall some of Pope's criticism of Homer in his 1715 translation of the *Iliad*. Pope claims that Shakespeare's faults are due to his writing for the stage and therefore the taste of the common folk. He points out that Shakespeare was unaware of the "rules of writing," and, most importantly for our purposes, claims the texts of the plays fell victim to the "ignorance" of their publishers:

> As I believe that what I have mentioned [partisan opinions by Jonson/Shakespeare adherents] gave rise to the opinion of *Shakespear's* want of learning; so what has continued it down to us may have been the many blunders and illiteracies of the first Publishers of his works. In these Editions their ignorance shines almost in every page; nothing is more common than *Actus tertia*. *Exit Omnes*. *Enter three Witches solus*. Their French is as bad as their Latin… Their very Welsh is false."[43]

This casting of the blame for egregious defects upon agencies other than the author should remind us of Milton's "friend" whom Bentley claimed interpolated verses into *Paradise Lost*. Here, the diverse corporate body of "the first Publishers" corresponds to Bentley's device of Milton's "editor." And of course, with Shakespeare, it is far easier to find the cause of such faults ultimately in the "players." Throughout his preface, Pope slowly but surely eliminates every textual authority that could testify to a definitive

[42] Pope, iv.
[43] Ibid., xiv.

Shakespeare. The quartos are clearly suspect, even those published during Shakespeare's lifetime. For, Pope writes, even in these

> we meet with two or more editions by different printers, each of which has whole heaps of trash different from the other: which I should fancy was occasion'd, by their being taken from different copies, belonging to different playhouses.[44]

If both quarto editions of a play, by different publishers, contain "whole heaps of trash different from the other," one is left at a loss to identify the standard by which the "trash" is to be separated from the genuine. As Pope goes on to explain, the First Folio is no help in this situation, for despite the claims of Heminge and Condell "that all other editions were stolen and surreptitious," and that theirs was "purged from the errors of the former," the Folio is gravely suspect. Pope dismisses the Folio editors' claim to correctness, saying this "is true as to the literal errors, and no other; for in all respects else it is far worse than the Quartos…." The source of this corruption in the Folio, as in the quartos, seems to have been the players, for in the Folio, Pope finds

> additions of trifling and bombast passages are… far more numerous. For whatever had been added, since those Quarto's, by the actors, or had stolen from their mouths into the written parts, were from thence conveyed into the written text, and all stand charged upon the Author.[45]

He concludes that the First Folio "as the Quarto's, was printed (at least partly) from no better copies than the Prompter's Book, or Piece-meal Parts written out for the use of the actors."[46] If all the Quartos are "bad," then the Folio is worse. Thus, this "editor" who insists he will not play the role of critic leaves himself no authoritative text upon which to

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[44] Ibid., xvi.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., xvii – xviii.

base his edition, a problem he never explicitly addresses. Instead, he bemoans the state of the texts and somewhat perversely wishes there were even *more* surviving early quartos, ultimately declaring that "there can be no question but had Shakespear published his works himself… we should not only be certain which are genuine, but should find in those that are, the errors lessened by some thousands."[47] Had Pope not anticipated Bentley's *Paradise Lost* by seven years, perhaps he would have been less certain on this last point.

Pope, apparently by that "private sense" he had sworn not to indulge, casts eight plays out of the Shakespeare canon (including *Pericles* and *Titus Andronicus*). He sounds remarkably like the Bentley we meet with in *Paradise Lost* as he asks:

> how many faults may have been unjustly laid to his [Shakespeare's] account from arbitrary Additions, Expunctions, Transpositions of scenes and lines, confusion of Speeches, corruptions of innumerable Passages by the Ignorance, and wrong Corrections of 'em again by Impertinence, of his first Editors? From one of other of these considerations, I am verily persuaded, that the greatest and the grossest part of what are thought his errors should vanish, and leave his character in a light very different from that disadvantageous one, in which it now appears to us.[48]

Inheriting such confusion sown by those "impertinent" first editors, Pope struggles to make sense of the textual history. Ultimately having left himself no textual recourse, Pope declares Shakespeare is beyond recovery and yet claims to have remained free of the urge to become a "critic" as represented by the likes of Bentley and Dennis.

> It is impossible to repair the Injuries already done him [Shakespeare]… In what I have done I have rather given a proof of my willingness and desire, than of my ability, to do him justice. I have discharg'd the dull duty of an Editor, to the best of my judgement, with more labour than I expect

[47] Ibid., xx.
[48] Ibid., xxi.

> thanks, and with a religious abhorrence of all Innovation, and without any indulgence to my private sense or conjecture.[49]

Lewis Theobald, responding to this in his 1726 *Shakespeare Restor'd*, noted Pope's claim to have followed some (unknowable) authority and retorted with a defense of judicious emendation:

> I cannot help thinking… that what he [Pope] is pleased to call a *religious Abhorrence* of *Innovation*, is downright *Superstition*: neither can I be of Opinion, that the Writings of SHAKESPEARE are so *venerable*, as that we should be excommunicated from good Sense, for daring to *innovate properly*.[50]

As is made clear by *Shakespeare Restor'd* and Theobald's later (1733) edition of Shakespeare, Theobald's notion of "proper" innovation resembles the conjectural emendation found in Bentley's classical work, in particular his Horace. Theobald's aim is to use the new philological methods to recover Shakespeare's meaning. Pope's method, on the other hand, resembles Bentley's in that he is often guided by his desire that his author had everywhere chosen the better of the options that lay before him. In fact, Walsh claims that Pope "overtly… adopted an aesthetic orientation."[51] I would argue, however, that Pope's entire preface is devoted to *obfuscating* his reliance on aesthetic choices. His avowal that he avoided "private sense or conjecture" suggests some external authority for his readings despite his having already eliminated all existing textual sources. In characterizing Pope's abhorrence of "innovation" as "superstition," Theobald responds to Pope's explicit *posture* of textual/authorial orientation, although he was absolutely aware of Pope's actual aesthetically oriented practice. If Pope's readings aren't based upon "private sense or conjecture," what then *is* their authority?

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[49] Ibid., xxii.
[50] Theobald, *Shakespeare Restor'd* (1726), iv.
[51] Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton, & Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing*. 114.

Even Pope's methodology represents a more radical intervention in the text of Shakespeare than Bentley is willing to make in his Milton.[52] Compare their explanations of how they handle the passages they identify as interpolations. Pope states that in his *Shakespear*

> The various Readings are fairly put in the margin, so that every one may compare 'em; and those I have prefer'd into the Text are constantly *ex fide Codicum*, upon authority. The Alterations or Additions which *Shakespear* himself made, are taken notice of as they occur. Some suspected passages which are excessively bad, (and which seem Interpolations by being so inserted that one can intirely omit them without any chasm, or deficience in the context) are degraded to the bottom of the page; with an Asterisk referring to the places of their insertion.[53]

Pope is understandably mute on how he separates the genuine (authorial) "Alterations or Additions" from the suspect interpolations. Further, by "degrading" passages deemed spurious to the bottom of the page, omitting them "without any chasm," he privileges his reading and imposes his will on the text.[54] One of Bentley's criteria for his proposed excisions is also that they leave no "chasm," but Bentley freely admits that he has silently corrected pointing, marked elisions, and given accents where necessary. Unlike Pope, however, Bentley insists on leaving Milton's text whole.

> These small Improvements will be found in the present Text, which challenges to be the Truest and Correctest that has yet appear'd: not one word being alter'd in it; but all the Conjectures, that attempt a Restoration of the genuine *Milton*, cast into the Margin, and explan'd in the Notes. So that every Reader has his free Choice, whether he will accept or reject

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[52] Theobald, in his 1733 edition follows Bentley's methodology (from his Horace) by explaining his emendations in footnotes. Such explanation is exceedingly sparse in Pope's edition of Shakespeare.

[53] Pope, xxii.

[54] R.B. McKerrow counts 1,560 lines that Pope degrades. I haven't confirmed this myself, and I would guess it is complicated by the scenes upon which Pope sets a "mark of reprobation" (see below) or moments when he disregards his stated methodology and leaves "interpolated" passages in the text (also below). R.B. McKerrow, "The Treatment of Shakespeare's Text by his Earlier Editors 1709-1768," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 19 (1933), 89-122: 108.

> what is here offer'd him; and this without the last Disgust or Discontent in the Offerer.[55]

Even those passages Bentley identifies as the "Editor's Interpolations" are "cured by printing them in the Italic Letter, and inclosing them between two Hooks."[56] Bentley is content to mark the alleged interpolations, but leaves them in the text of the poem, a less disruptive editorial practice than Pope's.

Bentley, from the *Letter to Mill* onward, was notorious for the arrogant and scolding tone of his notes. It is this feature that makes his edition simultaneously outrageous and entertaining to the modern ear. His booming pronouncements can be counted upon to raise a laugh when read aloud in the midst of an academic conference. Although Bentley needed no schooling in this department, he was not alone in adopting such a tone when editing an English text, as becomes evident when comparing Pope's first excision in his 1725 Shakespeare against one of Bentley's. In *The Tempest*, at 2.1, after the newly shipwrecked Alonso says "Pr'thee peace," Pope inserts his first note indicating lines as spurious:

> All this that follows after the words, *Pr'ythee peace* – to the words *You cram these words*, &c. seems to have been interpolated, (perhaps by the Players) the verses there beginning again; and all that is between in prose, not only being very impertinent stuff, but most improper and ill plac'd Drollery in the mouths of unhappy shipwreck'd people. There is more of the same sort interspers'd in the remaining part of the scene.[57]

Pope marks eighty-six lines as interpolated in this passage alone; however, contrary to his stated methodology in the preface, he has left them in the poem, marking them with a single apostrophe (which, confusingly, is how he also marks particular beauties throughout the edition). Although he claims "there is more of the same sort interspers'd

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[55] Bentley, Preface.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Pope ed., *The Tempest*, 2.1

in the remaining part of the scene," Pope indicates no more deletions in Act II at all, the next occurring in Act III, Scene 4. The diligent reader may not only wonder about Pope's designation of the marked lines as interpolated, but is certainly left in doubt as to which of the *following* lines in the scene he deems genuine. A similar moment occurs in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, where Pope marks scene 1.2 as "low" and "trifling," but leaves it in, unsure whether to call it an interpolation or an example of Shakespeare writing for the "gross taste of the age."

> This whole Scene, like many others in these plays, (some of which I believe were written by *Shakespear*, and others interpolated by the Players) is compos'd of the lowest and most trifling conceits, to be accounted for only from the gross taste of the age he liv'd in; *Populo ut placerent*. I wish I had authority to leave them out, but I have done all I could, set a mark of reprobation upon them; throughout this edition. †††

The sentiment may be one shared even by modern editors and readers of Shakespeare, but the editorial stance is thereby no less problematic for Pope, who had denied himself the role of "critic." Furthermore, those familiar with Bentley cannot but help hear the resemblance, particularly between these notes of Pope's and those in which Bentley is scolding Milton's "friend" and "editor." The first passage that Bentley determines spurious in *Paradise Lost* occurs at Book I, 197-200.

> Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
> Lay floating many a rood; in bulk as huge
> [*As whom the Fables name, of monstrous size,*
> Titanian*, or* Earth-born*, that warr'd on* Jove*,*
> Briareos*, or* Typhon *whom the Den*
> *By ancient* Tarsus *held, or that Seas-beast]*
> *Leviathan,* which God *of all his works*
> *Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream*:

Bentley's brackets, once termed by A.E. Housman as his "terrible hooks," enclose the lines he wishes to cast from the poem.[58] I quote the accompanying note at length here because it will serve as a sound example of Bentley's typical tone throughout his edition.

> These four Lines from the Fables I am unwilling to believe *Milton's*. He compares *Satan* here to a Whale, so big as to be mistaken for a Promontory of Land. What need then of these fabulous Monsters, vulgar and known to the lowest Schoolboys, which make the sentence to lag, and the sense to dwindle? To be in the *Den of Tarsus*, doth not make *Typhon* the bigger: and *Briareos* Four Syllables, for *Briareus* Three… Lastly, to call a Whale *the Sea-beast*, what stuff is it? I leave them therefore to the Reader, content to set a Mark upon them, as supposing them, and more hereafter of this sort, *spurious*; and as knowing by other Passages, that our Poet, blind, and then poor and friendless, had frequently foul Play.[59]

Bentley, while trusting the judgment of the reader to choose between the unadulterated text and his suggested excision, never leaves it solely to the reader to find "more hereafter of this sort," but diligently marks and justifies each "spurious" passage. Bentley's second excision demonstrates again how similar his treatment of the "editor" is to Pope's use of the "ignorant" editors and players. In his note to 1.306-11, Bentley writes, "Here again, I suspect his Friend's Courtesy bestow'd six Lines upon our Poet. They are in the Whole impertinent, and in Parts vicious."[60] The very wording recalls Pope's characterization of the "interpolated" *Tempest* lines as "not only being very impertinent stuff, but most improper and ill plac'd Drollery" (see above). Not surprisingly, Newton found that Pope had handwritten "*rectè, benè, pulchrè*" throughout the margins of his copy of Bentley's Milton.[61]

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[58] M. Manilii, *Astronomicon*, Recensvit et Enarravit A.E. Housman (Cambridge, 1937), xviii.
[59] Bentley, ed. 1.197-200.
[60] Ibid., 1.307-11.
[61] Newton reports in his Preface (1759) that Warburton lent him Pope's edition of Bentley's Milton "wherein Mr. Pope had all along with his own hand set some mark of approbation, rectè, benè, pulchrè &c, in the margin over-against such emendations of the Doctor's as seemed to him just and reasonable. It was a satisfaction to see what so great a genius thought particularly of that edition, and he appears throughout the

What made reaction to Bentley's edition so much more vehement than reactions to Pope was not that Bentley was any more arrogant in his treatment of Milton than Pope was with Shakespeare, but that Bentley employed a sort of scholarly transparency. Bentley's copious commentary and elaborate justifications of his readings put his methodology on display. Pope rarely bothered to explain, much less justify at length, his emendations of Shakespeare. Not far from Pope's *Shakespear* in its critical assumptions and methodology, Bentley's *Paradise Lost* actually seems to up the ante by responding to Pope's anxious desire for textual determinacy in Shakespeare. Bentley's edition provided a stark demonstration of how even works clearly authorized and published during an author's lifetime could be treated as indeterminate and unstable textual artifacts, subject to every reader's will. In fact, one frightening aspect of Bentley's edition for its first readers was the possibility that Bentley's performance wasn't unique – that texts could be manipulated even by wills less formidable than Bentley's. The anonymous author of *MILTON RESTOR'D And BENTLEY DEPOS'D* recognized this, with a touch of something that seems to anticipate post-modernist angst about the death of the author and centuries of discussion about Shakespeare's canon.

> The same Liberty may be assumed by every Reader, as by you Doctor; and so the whole of *Milton's* or any other Poem, extinguished by degrees, and a new one set forth by Editors, challenge the Title not of Notes, but of a Text *variorum*. To regulate the Work of a deceased Author from various Readings in Manuscripts or printed Copies is a laborious, but useful Undertaking: But this way of restoring, *i.e.* interpolating by Guess, is so sacrilegious an Intrusion that, as it had its Rise, so it is hoped it will have its Fall with you.[62]

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whole to have been a very candid reader, and to have approved of more than really merits approbation" A4r.

[62] Anonymous, *MILTON RESTOR'D*, viii.

The author of the pamphlet fears that if editors such as Bentley (and Pope?) have their way any poem may morph into a "new one" determined by critics, editors, and "every Reader."[63] This approaches the vision of textual rapine parodied by the recursive, self-effacing *Dunciad Variorum*. However, Bentley's edition participates not only in a general history of editing practice, but also operates within the more specific history of Milton criticism. As he is not without precedent in his practice, but only so bold as to actually display his methods and transgress Pope's delicately maintained façade of a strict divide between the duties of "editors" and "critics," Bentley is also certainly in dialog with prior commentators on *Paradise Lost*, and particularly "Mr. Addison."

THE CANDID CRITICK AND THE PETULANT CARPER : BENTLEY & ADDISON

Milton scholars have long suspected that Bentley didn't actually believe in his device of the false "friend" and "editor" responsible for interpolating spurious verses into *Paradise Lost*. Evidence from the recently discovered 1674 edition of *Paradise Lost* annotated by Bentley provides compelling evidence that the "editor" was a conscious fabrication. Yet, in his preface, Bentley defensively attested to the editor's existence, declaring:

> If any one fancy this *Persona* of an Editor to be a mere Fantom, a Fiction, an Artifice to skreen *Milton* himself; let him consider the four and sole Changes made in the second Edition…. These are prov'd here in the Notes, every one of them to be manifestly for the worse. And whoever allows them to be worse, and yet will contend they are the Poet's own, betrays his Ill Judgment, as well as Ill Nature. But now if the Editor durst insert his Forgeries, even in the Second Edition, when the Poem and its Author had slowly grown to a vast Reputation; what durst he not do in the

[63] This concern lends some irony to the pamphlet's concluding by offering readers an example of *Paradise Lost* set in heroic verse, held up as a more proper appreciation of the poem than Bentley's.

> First, under the Poet's Poverty, Infamy, and an universal Odium from the Royal and triumphant Party? Add to this a farther Confirmation; That when *Milton* afterwards publish'd his *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes*; that Edition is without Faults; because He was then in high Credit, and had chang'd his old Printer and Supervisor.[64]

Zachary Pearce, in his rapid and thorough response to Bentley's edition, immediately pointed out that Bentley's preface is in error about the publication dates, because *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* were published *prior* to the 1674 second edition of *Paradise Lost*. Further, Bentley's assertion that *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* are "without Faults" is called into question by his own marginalia in the 1674 volume. There, on the verso of the title page, Bentley lists references to fable and romance from *Paradise Regain'd*, copying out exactly the sort of verses he so determinedly avows must be interpolations in *Paradise Lost*.[65] In the face of this evidence he himself found in the supposedly "without fault" edition of *Paradise Regain'd*, Bentley could hardly have maintained his fiction of a Milton who wouldn't write such "romantic trash." The marginalia in the 1674 edition also shows conclusively that Bentley collated the first and second editions of the poem, as well as the manuscript to Book I, which he denies exists in the preface.[66] Additionally, the second-edition marginalia demonstrates that Bentley treated Milton's poem more gently in his earlier work on it, bracketing far fewer passages as spurious. If the "editor" is a fiction to justify

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[64] Bentley, Preface.

[65] The marginalia excerpts from *Paradise Regain'd* are reproduced in Harper, RES, 2012.

[66] For plausible dating of and more complete discussion of how Bentley's notes in the 1674 *Paradise Lost* demonstrate that Bentley himself didn't believe in his fiction of the "editor," see Harper, *ibid*. Bentley's use of the surviving manuscript was noted by Darbishire and Hale in their discussions of the 1720 edition's marginalia.. Darbishire, *Milton's Paradise Lost: The James Bryce Memorial Lecture* (London, 1951). Hale, "Paradise Purified: Dr. Bentley's Marginalia for His 1732 Edition of Paradise Lost," *Transactions of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 10 (1991), 58-74.

Bentley's more radical interventions, especially those "spurious" passages he encloses in his hooks to put his "mark of reprobation" upon, it is thus precisely a device to "skreen *Milton* himself" from Bentley's criticisms. Having discussed how the form and interventionist strategy of these emendations may be contextualized alongside Pope, and are even perhaps less disruptive to the text than Pope's "degrading" passages of Shakespeare, it remains to examine the criticisms themselves and the manner in which Bentley engaged previous commentators upon Milton.

William Kolbrener has suggested that Bentley's edition is best seen as a response to John Toland's appropriation of Milton for the cause of the free-thinkers. Kolbrener claims, "Bentley's 'Milton' emerges in response to the Milton bequeathed by what Sensabaugh called 'Whig Theory Triumphant'" and that "the strategies of both Bentley and Fish, then, are to reverse the appraisals of the generations that preceded them."[67] In the former case it is unclear exactly what preceding "generations" Kolbrener refers to. The image of the "Grand Old Whig" Milton, created by Sensabaugh and set up once again by Kolbrener as a strawman for Bentley to tilt against, is difficult to find in the actual "generations preceding" Bentley. Toland is the only concrete precedent that Kolbrener proposes as an opponent for Bentley. Kolbrener explains that while Toland and Bentley were both Whigs, that label is "misleading" without further clarification, because "Modern Whigs like Bentley identified freedom with 'wealth, enlightenment, and progress'" while "Old Whigs" like Toland identified freedom with a "particularly

[67] Kolbrener, 111.

republican 'virtue' and located it squarely in the past."[68] Even more bluntly, Kolbrener asserts:

> Bentley's sustained attack on Milton's Editor was thus a continuation of the project he had begun in the Boyle Lectures – an attack on all forms of radical Whiggism. Via *Paradise Lost*, the Grand Whig Bentley attacked the Radical Whig Toland.[69]

This pits Bentley against the religious-political "enthusiasm" of republicans such as Toland, and posits that Milton had been securely appropriated by "Radical Whigs" prior to Bentley's time, necessitating an intervention on behalf of the more conservative faction. Kolbrener elaborates, "In that struggle between Low Churchmen and free-thinkers, *Paradise Lost* is among the battlegrounds, and our perception of Bentley's infamous emendations becomes sharper when understood as a battle strategy."[70] The difficulty with this approach is that Kolbrener seems to put a bit too much stock in the religious-political content of Bentley's emendations, and also must revise the reception history of *Paradise Lost* in order to have the poem appropriated by the "satanic" critics of the day.

Bentley was devoutly orthodox when he needed to be -- for instance in his 1692 Boyle Lectures "Against Atheism," which should be always assessed in context as Bentley's audition for position and preferment in the church. However, once he was established as the Master of Trinity (1700) and Regius Professor of Divinity (1716), Bentley's orthodoxy seems a bit less strident. Not only did *The Grub-Street Journal* poke

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[68] Ibid., 112. Kolbrener quotes J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge:Cambridge UP, 1986).
[69] Ibid., 120.
[70] Ibid.

fun at his lack of attention in Church, but it was rumored that the door to his pew rusted shut due to his lack of attendance at services.[71] As early as the 1690's Bentley was bragging about hosting a club at the Royal Library attended by Locke and Newton, no champions of orthodoxy in their private belief.[72] His unfinished and unpublished work on the New Testament, recently examined by Kristine Haugen, also undermines any attempt to portray Bentley as a fiery defender of orthodoxy. One of his earlier conjecture books for that project demonstrates a marked inclination to use textual scholarship to at least defuse Trinitarian implications in key passages of scripture. The one textual emendation of the New Testament he shared in his lifetime was to declare the famously Trinitarian *comma Johanneum* (1 John 5:7-8) an interpolation.[73] This is a far cry from saying that Bentley himself was heterodox. But it does make him seem an unlikely self-appointed bulwark of orthodoxy against the likes of Toland.

Moreover, the choice of *Paradise Lost* as a "battleground" for a political-religious conflict between Bentley and Toland is itself suspect. In the generation preceding Bentley, *Paradise Lost* had already been wrested from the hands of one who would emphasize its enthusiasm and highlight the poem's unique features (or "irregularity") at the expense of its "orthodoxy." As discussed in chapter three, Addison's reinvention of Milton along neo-classical lines to make the otherwise "prophan'd pen" acceptable had already revised John Dennis's vision of the poet and poem. Dennis, with his scholarly

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[71] *The Grub-Street Journal*, no. 35 (3 September 1730) which includes a note supposedly from Bentley and composed "at Chappel time." Bertrand Goldgar, *The Grub-Street Journal, 1730-33*, vol. 1 (London, 2002).
[72] Haugen, 209.
[73] For a nuanced discussion of Bentley's work with the New Testament and his habit of silence about theological issues after the *Letter to Mill*, see Haugen, 187-210.

focus on the enthusiastic sublime and his frank recognition that *Paradise Lost* showed Milton was "a little tainted with Socinianism," receded into the background as Addison's elegant notes became the accepted entry into the poem.[74] If one searches for the generation of Milton critics preceding Bentley, it is clearly that studied neutral, "Mr. Spectator," who holds the field. Neither Dennis, Toland, nor any identifiable cabal of free-thinkers could match the influence of Addison's urbane observations on Milton's great poem. In any case, Toland seems to have had little interest in Milton's poetry, finding enough fodder for his political agenda in the prose. While Kolbrener argues that "Fish and Bentley provided what was perhaps a corrective to the liberal (or satanic) avatars of Milton who celebrated difference for its own sake," that "satanic" Milton, the Milton of Dennis's "true original" poem, had already been relegated to the background by Addison's safer, less-challenging version of the poet. While Dennis had claimed Milton surpassed the ancients by creating something irregular and new, Addison was determined to show that Milton's poem conformed to Aristotle's rules. Unlike Dennis, or for that matter P.H. before him, Addison resists claiming that Milton *exceeded* the ancients, writing:

> It is sufficient, that I shew there is in the *Paradise Lost* all the Greatness of Plan, Regularity of Design, and masterly Beauties which we discover in Homer and Virgil.[75]

In contrast, as seen in chapter three, Dennis's approach to *Paradise Lost* threatened to recall the political Milton, a figure safely kept at bay by earlier commentators. His

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[74] Dennis, 345. He makes this observation upon quoting the Angelic hymn to the Son in Book 3.
[75] *Spectator*, no. 297.

insistence that sublime poetry drew its power from sacred subjects and had the same aims of religion, to reform the age and repair the ruins of the fall, privileges the poem as something more than an artifact, positioning it instead as a living (and potentially dangerous) vehicle of reform. While the wits, to include Swift and Pope, continually tried to link Dennis and Bentley together as two members of a similar species of pedantic, dull "true critic," it not the learned Dennis who stands behind Bentley's treatment of Milton, but the ingenious Mr. Addison. Just as the textual instability Bentley foists upon *Paradise Lost* seems to parody Pope's wrestling with Shakespeare's very real textual indeterminacies, many of Bentley's most radical interventions appear to take Addison's neoclassicism to such lengths it becomes caricature.

Both surviving copies of *Paradise Lost* annotated by Bentley reveal that he was an attentive and restless reader. He couldn't lift his pen from the page, even while reading prefatory materials. In the 1720 edition, this habit extended even beyond the end of the poem, where the volume's editor, Thomas Tickell, had included his friend and mentor's *Spectator* essays. Although Bentley's markings in the *Spectator* essays are sparse, they reveal how he responded to the poem (in part) through a fraught dialog with Addison. Sophie Read has recently highlighted how Bentley's edition makes readers party to an imagined dialog between Bentley and Milton, and notes Bentley's habit of silently debating previous commentators, to include Addison.[76] However, what has remained

[76] Sophie Read, "Rhetoric and Rethinking in Bentley's *Paradise Lost*," *Cambridge Quarterly*, 41 (2012), 209-228. *Passim*.

unnoted is how, despite his carping at Addison in his notes, Bentley is deeply influenced by Addison's neoclassical critique of the poem.

Bentley's notes on Addison's *Spectator* essays range from simple underlines and marginal marks to jagged slashes through passages of *Paradise Lost* as they are quoted by Addison. Bentley more often annotates passages quoted from the poem rather than Addison's commentary itself. As he read Addison, it was *Paradise Lost* that held Bentley's attention, and the essays became in effect a lens focusing him on particular passages. Only once does Bentley address one of Addison's claims directly in his marginal notes, correcting Addison's assertion that Milton coined the term "miscreated," with a terse note to the contrary: "Miscreated is often in Spencer."[77] In his published edition, Bentley's note on this passage reads, "And we have been told, *Milton* first coin'd the Word *miscreated*, but *Spenser* used it before him."[78] Not naming Addison in print as the person he is correcting is typical Bentley, as is his failure to acknowledge that P.H. had already noted Spenser's use of "miscreated" in his 1695 *Annotations to Paradise Lost*. Bentley's habit of unacknowledged engagement not only with Addison or P.H., but with classical predecessors such as Joseph Scaliger has been noted by Haugen and Read. But the extent of Addison's influence upon Bentley becomes evident only when reading them side-by-side and with the assistance of Bentley's marginal notes in both volumes of *Paradise Lost*. An example of Bentley's more overt engagement with Addison is his published annotation to Book 1, Line 590 where Satan

[77] Marginalia in the 1720 "Tickell's Edition" of *Paradise Lost*. This copy is maintained at the Cambridge University Library, shelfmark Adv.b.52.12.

[78] Addison claims Milton coined "miscreated" in *Spectator* 285. Bentley's published correction of this is in his note to Book 2.683.

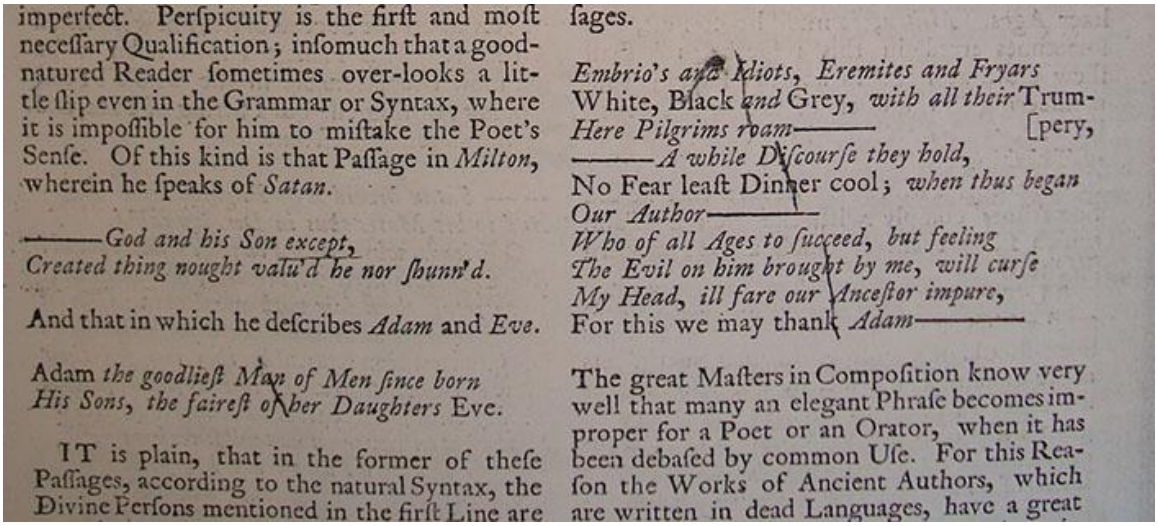
he, above the rest,
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a tow'r.

Bentley writes in his published edition, "I cannot comprehend, what's the *Gesture of a Tower*… and yet this has been represented as, *a celebrated line*."[79] One can almost hear a snort of derision. Of course, who had marked his passage as sublime but Addison, who declared in the *Spectator* that "there is no single passage of the poem worked up to a greater Sublimity"?[80] Reading this in the *Spectator* essays appended to the back of the Tickell's edition, Bentley had made one of his typical marginal marks and ominously underlined the word "Gesture" for special attention.

Bentley's notes in the *Spectator* essays sometimes have the appearance of a checklist. The slashes with which Bentley marks passages of the poem reproduced in Addison's notes often correspond to such slashes in the text of the poem, and eventually to significant emendations in Bentley's printed edition. Bentley's angry-looking slashes in the Tickell's text, and in the *Spectator* Notes, are marks unique to the 1720 edition; there are no such slashes in the 1674 notes. For example, of the five passages Bentley marked in *Spectator* 285 (Figure 4), he ultimately claimed four of them (the ones bearing slashes) were interpolations by Milton's devious editor.

[79] Bentley, ed. Book 1.589-91

[80] Addison, *Spectator*, #303. Dennis had highlighted this same passage containing Milton's description of Satan as an example of the poem's deriving sublimity from specifically religious ideas. See Dennis, 220.


imperfect. Perſpicuity is the firſt and moſt neceſſary Qualification; inſomuch that a good-natured Reader ſometimes over-looks a little ſlip even in the Grammar or Syntax, where it is impoſſible for him to miſtake the Poet's Senſe. Of this kind is that Paſſage in *Milton*, wherein he ſpeaks of *Satan*.

——*God and his Son except,*
Created thing nought valu'd he nor ſhunn'd.

And that in which he deſcribes *Adam* and *Eve*.

Adam *the goodlieſt Man of Men ſince born*
His Sons, the faireſt of her Daughters Eve.

IT is plain, that in the former of theſe Paſſages, according to the natural Syntax, the Divine Perſons mentioned in the firſt Line are

ſages.

Embrio's and Idiots, Eremites and Fryars
White, Black *and* Grey, *with all their* Trum-
Here Pilgrims roam—— [pery,
——*A while Diſcourſe they hold,*
No Fear leaſt Dinner cool; *when thus began*
Our Author——
Who of all Ages to ſucceed, but feeling
The Evil on him brought by me, will curſe
My Head, ill fare our Anceſtor impure,
For this we may thank *Adam*——

The great Maſters in Compoſition know very well that many an elegant Phraſe becomes improper for a Poet or an Orator, when it has been debaſed by common Uſe. For this Reaſon the Works of Ancient Authors, which are written in dead Languages, have a great

Figure 4: Bentley's Annotations of Addison's *Spectator* Essays

The first passage Bentley marked on this page was Addison's quote of 2.678-9:

> ------ God and his Son except,
> Created thing nought valu'd he nor shunn'd.

Addison highlighted this verse as one of the few points where "a good-natured Reader sometimes over-looks a little slip even in the Grammar or Syntax, where it is impossible for him to mistake the Poet's Sense."[81] The syntax of this passage would indeed seem to lump God and the Son among created things. Bentley, who underlined "except" in Addison's notes, deemed the line "faulty" and excused Milton's error even as he suggested an emendation in his edition to make it: "God and his Son EXEMPT, / No OTHER Thing OUGHT valued he…." Twice in his essays, Addison addressed the limbo of vanity section that Bentley slashed through on this page of the *Spectator*. In the first instance, shown in Figure 4, Addison used it as an example of Milton's rare use of "low" language.

[81] Addison, *Spectator,* 285.

In his essay on Book III, however, Addison classified the passage as one of Milton's "beautiful digressions:"

> I must not conclude my Reflections upon this third Book of *Paradise Lost*, without taking notice of that celebrated Complaint of Milton with which it opens, and which certainly deserves all the Praises that have been given to it; tho' as I have before hinted, it may rather be looked upon as an Excrescence, than as an Essential part of the Poem. The same Observation might be applied to that beautiful Digression upon Hypocrisie, in the same Book.[82]

This remarkable statement, with its reassertion of a vague aesthetic standard that may ultimately trump the Aristotelian, comes after Addison has taken "exception" to the limbo of vanity episode and the appearance of Sin and Death as being "Astonishing, but not Credible," and thus undermining the "Appearance of Probability…so absolutely requisite in the greater kinds of Poetry."[83] Determined that *Paradise Lost* must follow Aristotle's rules, Addison seemed obligated to lament Milton's digressions even as he ultimately admired and excused them. Even Milton's "excrescences" could be beautiful excrescences! Bentley would have no such thing. He seems to have decided that the only way to confirm *Paradise Lost* a classic was to lay such digressions at the feet of the fictitious "editor" and thus justify cutting them from the poem. Theobald, the admirer of Bentley who had been pilloried for his own 1726 answer to Pope's *Shakespear* and was doomed to continue throughout history as "Tibbald," saw Bentley's method clearly:

> The late Edition of *Milton* by the learned Dr. *Bentley* is, in the main, a Performance of another Species. It is plain, it is the Intention of that Great Man rather to correct and pare off the Excrescencies of the *Paradise Lost*… than to restore corrupted Passages.[84]

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[82] Addison, *Spectator*, 315.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Theobald, *The Works of Shakespeare* (1732). Quoted in Shawcross, *Critical Heritage*, ii. 66.

Accordingly, it should not surprise us that the limbo of vanity passage Addison called that "beautiful Digression upon Hypocrisie" is the longest passage that Bentley brackets for excision from *Paradise Lost*.

One might ask at this point whether Bentley's marks in the *Spectator* essays might simply be his affirming that he had already handled these verses – a checklist *after* the fact. But one of the striking differences between Bentley's earlier notes in the 1674 edition and his later notes in the 1720 edition is that the number of lines bracketed for exclusion is far greater in the 1720 notes. A quick look at Book 1, comparing Bentley's treatment of it in the 1674 edition with his notes in the 1720 edition and his final edition, illustrates Bentley's evolving view of the poem. Of nine substantial passages he deems spurious in 1732, he bracketed only three of these in the 1674 edition. This trend continues throughout the volumes, with brackets in the 1720 and published editions outnumbering those in the 1674 by a large margin. For instance, in the 1674 edition, Bentley busily emends the limbo of vanity lines but does not bracket them as spurious (see Figure 5).

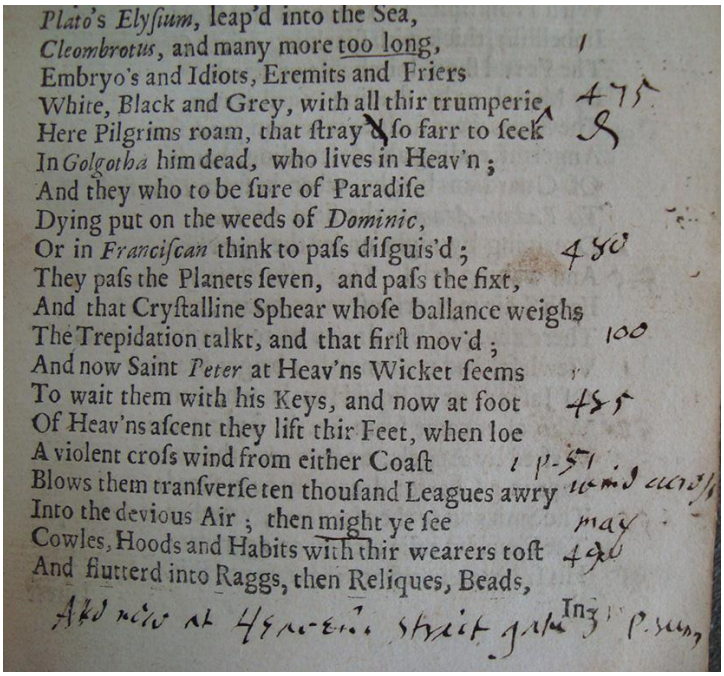
Plato's Elyſium, leap'd into the Sea,
Cleombrotus, and many more too long,
Embryo's and Idiots, Eremits and Friers
White, Black and Grey, with all thir trumperie
Here Pilgrims roam, that ſtray ſo farr to ſeek
In Golgotha him dead, who lives in Heav'n;
And they who to be ſure of Paradiſe
Dying put on the weeds of Dominic,
Or in Franciſcan think to paſs diſguis'd;
They paſs the Planets ſeven, and paſs the fixt,
And that Cryſtalline Sphear whoſe ballance weighs
The Trepidation talkt, and that firſt mov'd;
And now Saint Peter at Heav'ns Wicket ſeems
To wait them with his Keys, and now at foot
Of Heav'ns aſcent they lift thir Feet, when loe
A violent croſs wind from either Coaſt
Blows them tranſverſe ten thouſand Leagues awry
Into the devious Air; then might ye ſee
Cowles, Hoods and Habits with thir wearers toſt
And flutterd into Raggs, then Reliques, Beads,

Figure 5: Bentley's Annotations to the 1674 Edition, Sig. F6^{r}

Another instance that attests to Addison's continuing influence upon Bentley as he scanned the notes appended to the 1720 edition is reproduced in Figure 6, below. This annotated page from the 1674 edition demonstrates that even early in his work on the poem Bentley had a notion that some passages were spurious. He bracketed part of the "Uther's son" passage he will famously condemn as "Romantic Trash" in 1732. But we must also note what is *missing* in his annotations upon this page. The "small infantry" pun and the "Stood like a Towr" passages are both unmarked. Bentley marked both these passages as he read the *Spectator* Notes in the Tickell's edition, and in his published edition his annotations at these points make implicit references to Addison's commentary.

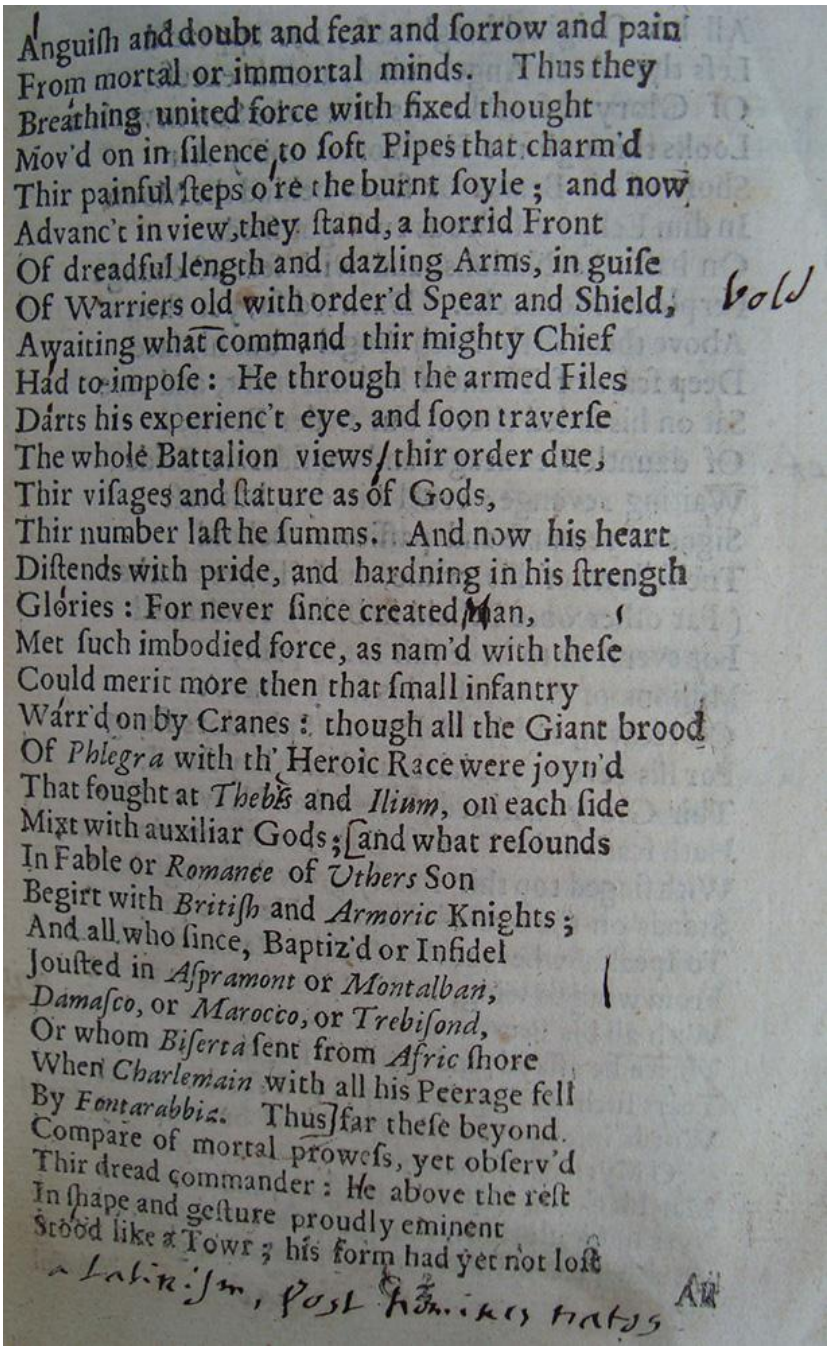
Anguiſh and doubt and fear and ſorrow and pain
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they
Breathing united force with fixed thought
Mov'd on in ſilence to ſoft Pipes that charm'd
Thir painful ſteps o're the burnt ſoyle; and now
Advanc't in view, they ſtand, a horrid Front
Of dreadful length and dazling Arms, in guiſe
Of Warriers old with order'd Spear and Shield,
Awaiting what command thir mighty Chief
Had to impoſe: He through the armed Files
Darts his experienc't eye, and ſoon traverſe
The whole Battalion views, thir order due,
Thir viſages and ſtature as of Gods,
Thir number laſt he ſumms. And now his heart
Diſtends with pride, and hardning in his ſtrength
Glories: For never ſince created Man,
Met ſuch imbodied force, as nam'd with theſe
Could merit more then that ſmall infantry
Warr'd on by Cranes: though all the Giant brood
Of *Phlegra* with th' Heroic Race were joyn'd
That fought at *Thebs* and *Ilium*, on each ſide
Mixt with auxiliar Gods; and what reſounds
In Fable or *Romance* of *Uthers* Son
Begirt with *Britiſh* and *Armoric* Knights;
And all who ſince, Baptiz'd or Infidel
Jouſted in *Aſpramont* or *Montalban*,
Damaſco, or *Marocco*, or *Trebiſond*,
Or whom *Biſerta* ſent from *Afric* ſhore
When *Charlemain* with all his Peerage fell
By *Fontarabbia*. Thus far theſe beyond
Compare of mortal proweſs, yet obſerv'd
Thir dread commander: He above the reſt
In ſhape and geſture proudly eminent
Stood like a Towr; his form had yet not loſt

Figure 6: Bentley Annotation to the 1674 Edition, sig. C2^{v}

While not conclusive, Bentley's notes in the 1674 edition seem to indicate that he revisited many passages and greatly expanded the number of his brackets after reading or

re-reading Addison's notes. Less quantifiable is the general influence of Addison's desire that the poem conform with classical rules, an approach to the poem that may have authorized many of the excisions Bentley later marked. Unlike Addison (or Theobald in his edition of *Shakespeare*), Bentley never provides a theoretical justification for his emendations, except to claim he is reversing the predations of the unscrupulous editor. But one way to make sense of Bentley is to consider his approach as taking Addison's neoclassicism to grotesque lengths. Like Addison, Bentley found that Milton's poem didn't conform to the standards put forth by Aristotle and exhibited by the classics. Where Addison uncomfortably dismissed such aberrations and chaffed a bit under the neoclassical strictures, ultimately resorting to an unarticulated aesthetic appreciation that could accommodate "beautiful excrescences," Bentley resolved to correct the poem to make it worthy of inclusion among the classics. When Milton digresses, Bentley excises the digression. When Milton alludes to a classical source, Bentley brings the allusion strictly into line with its classical referent, a habit that has caused numerous critics to note Bentley's rigid literalism when working with Milton's allusions.

Justifying his revision of the poem's final lines, Bentley refers to "an ingenious and celebrated Writer" who "would eject these two last Lines of the Book." That writer was, of course, Addison, who worried that the final lines "renew in the Mind of the Reader that Anguish which was pretty well laid by." P.H in 1695 hadn't identified a problem with the final lines, but objected to their illustration in the edition, writing, "The Angel led our Parents, loath to depart from the beloved Seat, in each hand, which the Designer of the Copper plate has not well exprest, representing him, *shoving them out*, as

we say, *by Head and Shoulders*."[85] The underlying problem that seems to concern P.H., Addison, and Bentley at the close of *Paradise Lost* is genre. The ending smacked too much of tragedy because the outcome was not favorable for the hero. Dryden and Dennis famously solved this conundrum by claiming Satan was in fact the hero of the poem, with Dennis eventually refining this to conclude that *Paradise Lost* was only "something like an epick" because the fall of the rebel angels constituted its own, separate, action. Addison cleverly asserted that the Messiah was the hero, but even this expedient didn't resolve his dissatisfaction with the ending. With Addison's worries in mind, Bentley asks, "Why… dismiss our first Parents in Anguish, and the Reader in Melancholy? ...Why *wand'ring*… And why *slow*?" Having left the lines alone in his 1674 copy, he rewrites them in the margins of the 1720. The revision endeavors to make the ending more hopeful as Adam and Eve depart the garden bravely, "sociably," and "with HEAVN'LY comfort CHEER'D."[86] This final move epitomizes not only Bentley's resolution to "correct" *Paradise Lost*, but his specific manner of doing so by out-Addisoning Addison.

Kolbrener, pursuing his argument that Toland stands behind Bentley's edition as the unnamed opponent, fails to recognize Addison as the more immediate influence and opponent. For instance, Kolbrener claims that "Bentley's attention to fables in *Paradise Lost* is of particular significance….[his] emendations (deletions usually) of Milton's fables suggest that he was undoubtedly conscious of, to use Empson's phrase, 'the wild

[85] P.H., *Annotations*, Book XII.637.
[86] Bentley, ed., Book XII.648.

gang of comparative anthropologists' who came ready to announce the equivalence between sacred and mythological history."[87] Thus, "we are not surprised" says Kolbrener, at Bentley's emendation of the description of Eden in Book 3:

> "…Not Enna says he, not Daphne, nor Fons, Castalus, nor Nysa, nor Mt. Amara, could compare with Paradise." Why, sir, who would suspect they could…?' Given the tendencies of Bentley's thought, we marvel not at his emendations, but at his restraint, wondering why he didn't find more of the poem unacceptable.[88]

Kolbrener's implication, as always, is that the "Editor" is an avatar for Toland and his ilk. But in his notes in the 1674 edition Bentley did not bracket these lines describing Paradise (3.268-85), while in the 1720 Tickell's they are bracketed and slashed through. Who might compare Paradise with Enna? Bentley's facetious query to the editor seems aimed not at Toland, or even at those comparative anthropologists or polyhistors, but at a far more immediate target: Addison. Commenting on Milton's description of Paradise, Addison had noted that Milton had once again skirted around a potential fault:

> the Poet has observed *Aristotle's* Rule of lavishing all the Ornaments of Diction on the weak unactive parts of the Fable…. The Expressions are more florid and elaborate in these Descriptions, than in most other parts of the Poem…. The Drawings of Gardens, Rivers, Rainbows, and the like dead pieces of Nature, are justly censured in an heroic Poem, when they run out into an unnecessary length; the Description of *Paradise* would have been faulty, had not the Poet been very particular in it, not only as it is the Scene of the Principal Action, but as it is requisite to give us an Idea of that Happiness from which our first Parents fell. The plan of it is wonderfully beautify, and formed upon the short Sketch which we have of it in Holy Writ. *Milton's* Exuberance of Imagination has poured forth such a Redundancy of Ornaments on this Seat of Happiness and Innocence, that it would be endless to point out each Particular.[89]

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[87] Kolbener, 123.
[88] Kolbrener, 126
[89] Addison, *Spectator*, 321.

Mr. Spectator's description of Milton's "exuberance of imagination" and "redundancy of ornaments" in describing paradise recalls Addison's early experience of reading Milton, as given in his 1694 "Account:"

> With fear my spirits and my blood retire,
> To see the Seraphs sunk in clouds of fire;
> But when, with eager steps from hence I rise,
> And view the first gay scenes of *Paradise*;
> What tongue, what words of rapture can express
> A vision so profuse of pleasantness. [90]

What Addison seems to have overcome in his *Spectator* essays is the turn that happens in his "Account." Immediately after the rapturous entry into Paradise, the "Account" re-enacts the Fall, expelling readers from a poem (and a paradise) suddenly "profan'd" by the poet's prose. In doing so, Addison also expels Milton from the procession of great English poets. Bentley's quarrel with Milton's intermingling of fable and a sacred subject seems to rebuke Addison for the leniency he gives Milton's digressions, reminding him that the improbabilities he licenses on vague aesthetic grounds authorize a sort of profanity. He, Bentley, will hold Milton to the standard Addison had so lackadaisically enforced.

Haugen, commenting on Bentley's rejection of the polyhistors' attempts to equate mythology and fable with sacred history, declares that Bentley

> utterly disregarded neoclassical poetic theory…. What Bentley practiced instead was a criticism that scrutinized every word and every line of a poem, asking many questions and often generating novel answers. In effect, Bentley and his fellow editors of poetry practiced close reading, the signature method of English study in the twentieth century.[91]

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[90] Addison, "Account of the Greatest English Poets" (1694).
[91] Haugen, 243.

However, in finding that many of Bentley's most provocative questions and answers were directly influenced by Addison's attempt to demonstrate the poem's conformity to neoclassical strictures, we may find reason to doubt Bentley's "utter disregard." While Bentley avoided any discussion of theory other than briefly and unsatisfactorily explaining his preference for conjectural emendation, his treatment of Milton's fables and classical allusions might well be explained within a tradition of neoclassical critique, epitomized by Addison. If we reject Levine's suggestion that the project was a jest on Bentley's part, we must consider that his textual decisions were strongly influenced by his understanding of the genre, an understanding informed by Addison's rejection of Dennis in favor of a distilled version of Aristotle and Le Bossu.

Haugen has suggested that Bentley's public performances, first in his *Horace* and then in his *Paradise Lost*, were "heroic efforts to create a new social and intellectual role" demonstrating "that an English philological scholar could be a highly public, highly controversial, and highly exciting figure."[92] In a sense, Bentley was inventing the public academic, that controversial figure courted by modern universities to star as a "game changer," and counted on to create controversy and thus publicity. However, Bentley's close attention to Milton's language and sense demanded that those who followed him, even those bent on ridiculing or refuting him, would need to closely engage the text. As Haugen notes, remarking specifically about his Horace, a significant aspect of Bentley's method (and fascination) was "the pure study of language itself, essentially untroubled by

[92] Ibid., 153.

textual history and driven by the simple urge to correct."[93] The unknown author of *MILTON RESTOR'D* suggested with unease that Bentley's edition might not only foster close reading that focused unwelcome attention on words and sense, but might also reveal the fundamental instability of all texts and their vulnerability to "conjectural emendation" by critics, editors, and readers of all sorts. But the reaction to Bentley's treatment of Milton and his poem also demonstrated that Milton and *Paradise Lost* had finally overcome the taint of his Interregnum activities and prose. While there would always remain those who would only grudgingly (if at all) accept Milton's continued place in the canon (from Johnson to F.R. Leavis), the indignant replies to Bentley demonstrated that *Paradise Lost* would continue to be a locus of critical debate. The work of P.H., Dennis, and Addison to redeem the poem from the poet's reputation had succeeded despite the threats posed by the Winstanleys, Tolands, and Bentleys. Even if Bentley lost the battle (only one of his emendations is regularly accepted by modern critics), he won the war. To counter Bentley's performance, critics such as Pearce responded within the terms of the debate that he had set, using Bentley's own techniques to justify the ways of Milton to men.

[93] Ibid., 149.

Conclusion: Surprised by Nothing

back I turned
Thou following cri'd'st aloud, Return fair Eve (IV.478-81)

The idea for this dissertation began to form in the "backs" of Cambridge in the spring of 2010 as I shuttled between the Wren Library, Trinity College and the Cambridge University Library. The Wren had only recently acquired the second-edition *Paradise Lost* annotated by Richard Bentley, but across the Cam the University Library holds the 1720 "Tickell's" edition annotated by Bentley. I recall my excitement upon finding Bentley's marks in the *Spectator* essays bound with the 1720 edition. At that point, nobody had published about Bentley's marginalia on Addison's essays (in the few short years that have followed, both Kristine Haugen and Sophie Read have mentioned them). I knew the 1674-edition annotations would help me to better contextualize Bentley's edition within the history of editorial practice. I hoped the evidence I had just seen of Addison's influence on Bentley would provide yet more unexamined context for Bentley's paradoxical work.

Tracing the lineage of Bentley's edition backward in my quest to portray him as other than a "distorting shadow" in the history of criticism, the project became ever more focused on the process by which Milton's epic was rehabilitated by critical interventions from P.H. onward. P.H. began the process by effacing Milton's authorship and setting *Paradise Lost* above politics as a sublime "classic" that draws power from Christian "truth." John Dennis built upon this to develop a psychological theory of the sublime that

was reliant upon religious subjects to raise "enthusiastick" passions. In developing his theory, Dennis went beyond neoclassical analysis of the poem and embraced the features of *Paradise Lost* that made his contemporaries most uncomfortable. Addison's trajectory from 1694 to 1712, in which he moved from deeming Milton's poetry irrevocably profaned by his prose to becoming the figure most credited with popularizing *Paradise Lost*, came to epitomize the necessary movement of the poem within eighteenth-century culture. As my work exploring the relationship between Dennis, Addison, and Bentley progressed, that movement resolved into something far more complicated than a linear teleology toward canonization, instead revealing the foundations for the cycle of repression and recovery that has become the hallmark of Milton criticism. Addison's uncomfortable retreat into neoclassicism to avoid the implications of Dennis's theory of the enthusiastic sublime was the first great enactment of the cycle. As in the larger culture wars of the eighteenth century, the "ingenious" won out over the "learned."

At the outset of this dissertation, I mentioned Gary Taylor's suggestion that literary criticism might have followed a different trajectory had it developed in response to Middleton rather than Shakespeare. While I hope that my argument demonstrates how responses to Milton's political-religious enthusiasm initiated significant developments in critical practice prior to the rise of Shakespeare scholarship, I am more intrigued by what might have happened within Milton criticism if Dennis, rather than Addison, had provided the model for engagement with *Paradise Lost*. Dennis's unflinching gaze at the poem's "irregular" and "original" nature, along with his refusal to shy away from enthusiasm as the source of the poem's power, may have opened the way to more robust,

honest engagement with the poem. It remains possible, however, that even if Addison's safer neoclassical critique had not unseated Dennis, the oscillation between the two poles of criticism identified by William Kolbrener would have continued unabated. The mechanisms of repression and recovery seem deep seated, indeed. David Urban only recently tagged Jonathan Richardson's 1734 *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost* as a key influence anticipating Stanley Fish in the "angelic" pedigree of criticism devoted to upholding Milton's orthodoxy, while Kolbrener had earlier identified Bentley as Fish's precursor.[1] This project proposes that Addison stands near the head of this critical tradition as an influence behind Bentley, authorizing a slash-and-burn brand of neoclassicism. Dennis and his criticisms were relegated to obscurity until Romantic frustrations with neoclassicism erupted in a return of the repressed.

The vehement rejections of Bentley's 1732 edition did not entail a rejection of Addison's neoclassical dictates. Richardson promises to correct Bentley's interventions and methodology "by Dispelling Mistakes which have Injur'd the Memory of a Deserving Man, Debas'd a Work Worthy of the Highest Estimation, and Robb'd the World of the Pleasure and Advantage it Might have Receiv'd."[2] Writing three years prior to Milton's 1737 installation in Westminster Abbey, Richardson's assertion that both Milton the man and his work deserve rescue from Bentley's depredations indicates of how far the poet had been distanced from the regicide. Richardson's familiarity with Dennis's criticism of *Paradise Lost* is suggested by his employment of extracts from

[1] David V. Urban. "Surprised by Richardson." *Appositions*, July 2012.
[2] Richardson. *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost*, i.

Milton's *Reason of Church Government* and *On Education* in a manner similar to Dennis's. At a couple key moments Richardson directly engages Dennis and Addison at once, clearly favoring the latter:

> Now 'tis of no great Importance whether this be call'd an Heroic or a Divine Poem, or only, as the Author himself has call'd it in his Title-page, a Poem. What if it were a Composition Intirely new, and not reducible under any Known Denomination? But 'tis Properly and Strictly Heroic, and Such Milton intended it…[3]

Richardson weighs Dennis and Addison on the question of genre, ultimately rejecting even Addison's tentative suggestion to class *Paradise Lost* as a "divine poem."[4] Instead, Richardson determines (as Addison does in practice) that the poem is "Properly and Strictly Heroic." Further expounding on this, and again seeming to pit Dennis against Addison without naming either, Richardson claims:

> If the Sublimity and Peculiarity of the Matter of this Poem, if its Superiority in That Respect has rais'd it above Some of the Rules given by Aristotle, or Whatever Other criticks… it has Distinguish'd it to its greater Glory; 'tis not only an Heroic Poem, but the Most So that Ever was Wrote.[5]

Richardson will entertain the idea that Milton broke with Aristotelian rules, but only in so far that Milton's poem becomes even more "heroic," the exemplar rather than something truly "original." In Richardson's hands, Milton becomes more classic than the classics themselves, and "all He [Milton] touches becomes as if 'twas Pure Gold of the Best Antiquity."[6] The classic authors far surpassed the moderns in Richardson's estimation,

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[3] Ibid., clxv-vi.
[4] As discussed in chapter 3, Addison suggests this compromise on genre in the opening of the *Spectator* series.
[5] Richardson, cxlvii
[6] Ibid., cli.

but Milton is the most classic of them all. Far from being original or revolutionary, Milton is safely enshrined as the head of the pantheon of ancients.

Richardson's determination of the contest in favor of Addison was no aberration. Newton's two-volume variorum edition of *Paradise Lost* containing the "Notes of various Authors" was published in 1749.[7] Like Richardson and Pearce before him, Newton quickly contrasts his methodology with Bentley's, pointing out that (unlike Shakespeare) Milton's works exist in "authentic copy," and "we who undertake to publish Milton's Paradise Lost… we are not left floting in the wide ocean of conjecture, but have a chart and compass to steer by…."[8] After establishing his commitment to stay as close to the "authentic copy" as possible, Newton acknowledges the influence of Addison's essays:

> It was recommended to me indeed to print entire Mr. Addison's Spectators upon the Paradise Lost, as ingenious essays which had contributed greatly to the reputation of the poem, and having been added to several editions they could not well be omitted in this edition: and accordingly those papers, which treat of the poem in general, are prefixed… and those, which are written upon each book separately, are inserted under each book, and interwoven in their proper places.[9]

Newton suggests it was nearly unthinkable to publish an edition of *Paradise Lost* at this point without including Addison's "ingenious essays" as preface and woven throughout

[7] Newton claims in his Preface (1749) that his "design in the present edition is to publish the Paradise Lost, as the work of a classic author cum notis variorum" a2^{r}.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., a2v – a3r.

his annotations. In contrast, the "learned" Dennis is not cited in Newton's variorum.[10] The time was not yet ripe for the return of Dennis's strain of criticism.

William Blake's description of Milton entering into his cottage garden is remarkable for its repetitive characterization of the poet's arrival as a "descent."

> And Milton, collecting all his fibres into impregnable strength,
> Descended down a Paved work of all kinds of precious stones
> Out from the eastern sky: descending down into my Cottage
> Garden: clothed in black, severe & silent he descended.[11]

To continue the discussion utilizing those imperfect terms of "angelic" versus "satanic" criticism, it is tempting to read Milton's descent in Blake's lines as a return from the angelic heights upon which he had been stranded since the suppression of Dennis's criticism. As Joseph Wittreich claims, the Romantics reinvigorated Milton by "making him whole again."[12] Part of that process required regaining the ability to again read Milton in all his complexity and in "future tense" (Wittreich's term again) to make his vatic voice applicable to unfolding events. While Dennis's criticisms would never become popular enough to overcome his reputation as "dunce" that had been secured forever by Swift and Pope, Milton criticism itself would veer in his direction until the pendulum shifted again and the Romantic readings of Milton fell from favor in their turn. As David Fairer has written, "in the Miltonic Civil War, God and Satan repeatedly contend for mastery, whether the combatants are C.S. Lewis and William Empson, or

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[10] Searching Newton's text on Eighteenth Century Collections Online using moderately fuzzy search parameters yields no reference to "Dennis" other than an unrelated Dennis in the subscriber list. The same parameters searching for "Addison" result in multiple hits in Newton's notes.

[11] William Blake, *Milton*, 38:5-8.

[12] Joseph Wittreich, *Why Milton Matters: A New Preface to His Writings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 142

Stanley Fish and Harold Bloom."[13] Unearthing the struggle between Dennis and Addison extends this conflict toward its origin, even as it may forever extend into the future. As Eliot said, "the fact is simply that the Civil War of the seventeenth century, in which Milton is a symbolic figure, has never concluded."[14] We continually disassemble and reassemble Milton to make him whole again. That we have to do so, and are able to do so, is thanks to the earliest interventions by those who would not willingly let Milton's great poem die.

[13] David Fairer, "Milton and the Romantics." In *John Milton: Life ~ Writing ~ Reputation*. Edited by Paul Hammond and Blair Worden. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151.
[14] T. S. Eliot, "Milton II," in *On Poetry and Poet*s (New York,: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), 167-8. This was Eliot's Henrietta Hertz Lecture, delivered to the British Academy in 1947.

Appendix A: Timeline

1667 Milton: *Paradise Lost* (1st Ed.)

1674 Milton: *Paradise Lost* (2d Ed.)

Dryden: "The State of Innocence"

Milton dies, 8 November.

1688 Jacob Tonson publishes first Folio edition of *Paradise Lost*

Glorious Revolution

1690 Sir William Temple: *Essay Upon Ancient and Modern Learning*

Tonson's second folio edition of *Paradise Lost*

1691 Bentley: *Letter to the Illustrious John Mill*

1692 Bentley: Boyle Lectures *Against Atheism*

1693 Bentley appointed Keeper of the King's Library at St. James

1694 Wotton: *Reflections Upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1st Ed)

Addison: "An Account of the Greatest English Poets"

Bentley: Boyle Lectures II (lost)

1695 P.H.: *Annotations Upon Paradise Lost* (in Tonson's 3d folio edition)

Charles Boyle: *Epistles of Phalaris*

Dennis: *The Court of Death: An Pindarick Ode*

1697 Bentley: *Dissertation Upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1st Ed. in Wotton's 2d Ed.)

1698 Toland: *Prose and Life of Milton*

1699 Bentley: *Dissertation Upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (2d Ed.)

1700 Bentley: Appointed Master of Trinity College, Cambridge

1701 Dennis: *Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*

1704 Dennis: *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*

Swift: *A Tale of a Tub & Battel of the Books*

1708 Cooper: *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*

1712 Bentley: *Horace*

Addison: *Spectator* Essays on *Paradise Lost*

1713 Dennis: *Remarks Upon Cato*

Pope(?) *The Strange Case of Dr. Robert Norris*

1715 Pope: *The Iliad of Homer*

1716 Bentley appointed Regius Professor of Divinity

1719 Addison dies, 17 June.

1720 Tonson publishes Thomas Tickell's Folio Edition of *Paradise Lost*

(incl. Addison's *Spectator* Notes)

1721 Dennis: *Letters on Milton and Wycherley*

1723-5 Pope: *The Works of Shakespear*, 6 vols.

1726 Bentley: *Terence*

Theobald: *Shakespeare Restored*

1729 Pope: *Dunciad Variorum: With the Prolegomena of Scriblerus*

1732 Bentley: *Paradise Lost*

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