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**Meditating the Muse:**  
**Milton and the Metamorphoses of Urania**

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**Meditating the Muse:  
Milton and the Metamorphoses of Urania**

by

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**Meditating the Muse:**  
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In the grand invocation at the beginning of Book VII of his epic *Paradise Lost*, John Milton selects as his muse Urania, who is traditionally the Muse of Astronomy in classical texts. He immediately excludes that possible identification, however, when he writes that she is “Nor of the Muses nine.” By calling on her “meaning” rather than her “Name,” Milton relies on a multitude of precedents and traditions, repackaged for his own times and his own idiosyncratic purposes, that critics have consistently failed to recognize or investigate sufficiently. This dissertation looks diachronically at various

occurrences of Uranian discourse in literature, historically both before and after Milton, to locate thematic similarities to his works and to help define his Urania accordingly. In spite of her explicit exclusion, the search begins with Urania as Muse of Astronomy because from her mythopoetic genesis in Ancient Greece, other myths are engrafted onto her, most notably Plato's Uranian Aphrodite as defined in his *Symposium*. This transformed Urania appears in ancient and medieval cosmic journey and dream narratives and evolves by the Renaissance into an oddly Christianized muse. She becomes a vehicle for heavenly, divine truths that each devout Christian rightly senses in his conscience. In this capacity she promotes friendship and chastity, while she also opposes licentiousness, particularly the lusts of tyrants. In early myths, the Muses are victims of tyranny; but in later appearances, they often sell their patronage of the arts unscrupulously to wicked kings and the flattering poets who are paid by them. Urania's patronage manages to distance itself from her sisters' misallocations of inspiration, and parts of the Book VII invocation are clearly an indictment of royal excess. In conclusion, a small group of late-Victorian English poets, mainly from Oxford, call themselves the "Uranians." Although they too draw from the same traditions as Milton and from Milton himself, they appropriate Urania to satisfy their own political and sexual agendas in a conscious and deliberate revision.

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## List of Abbreviations

- Apology – John Milton, *An Apology against a Pamphlet Called ‘A modest confutation of the Animadversions upon the Remonstrant’s Defense against Smectymnuus’*
- CE – Columbia Edition of *The Works of John Milton* (1931-1942)
- CPW – Yale Edition of *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (1953-1982)
- DLB – Dictionary of Literary Biography
- DNB – Dictionary of National Biography
- DRN – Lucretius, *De rerum natura (On the Nature of Things)*
- EEBO - Early English Books Online
- FQ – Edmund Spenser, *The Fairie Queene*
- GL – Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata (Jerusalem Delivered)*
- Hamilton – Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton (1961)
- Hughes – John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Hughes (1957)
- OED – Oxford English Dictionary
- PL – John Milton, *Paradise Lost*
- PR – John Milton, *Paradise Regained*
- Symposium* – Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Christopher Gill (London: Penguin, 1999),  
unless otherwise indicated in the text

## This Little Academic Bicker

Dignum laude virum Musa vetat mori,

Caelo Musa beat. – Horace, Ode, Book 4, Number 8<sup>1</sup>

“Urania,” the designation for Milton’s peculiar muse of *Paradise Lost*, appears only twice in his published works, both in the grand invocation at the beginning of Book VII. Yet perhaps no single word or name in all of Milton’s works encapsulates such a broader or more sweeping set of meanings; and Milton is surely aware of this. He performs his famous sleight of hand by declaring, “Descend from heav’n Urania, by that name if rightly thou art called” (PL, 7.1-2), followed closely by, “The meaning [of Urania] not the name I call” (PL, 7.5). Some critics have taken this as a license to dismiss “Urania” as some kind of quirky afterthought or inadequate substitute for a Christian muse of epic poetry. One nineteenth-century commentator pronounces, “She is introduced, though an imaginary being, to give variety to the narrative.”<sup>2</sup> “Milton called her Urania for want of a more appropriate or lovelier word,” more recently declares another<sup>3</sup>, while still another,

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<sup>1</sup> “That man worthy of praise will not the Muse let die/ But in heaven enshrines.”

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. James Robert Boyd, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Boyd (Philadelphia: Baker and Scribner, 1851). What characters are or are not imaginary in *Paradise Lost*?

<sup>3</sup> Scott Elledge, *Norton Critical Edition of Paradise Lost*, ed. Elledge (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975). He does not revise this claim between the 1975 and 1992 editions.



with some justification, claims, “Milton has no name for her.”<sup>4</sup> The last is plausible because Milton probably does not have a positive identification or clear precedent for his new and unique project in epic, namely the justification of God’s ways to men (PL, 1.26). But Milton’s choice cannot be random, and it is incumbent upon us to meditate his muse and explore the possibilities of her genealogy, or genealogies, in earnest. Milton must understand that he has introduced an elephant into the room, even though he politely asks us to ignore it. He has set up a conundrum and begs readers to solve it, and that task is the main purpose of this dissertation.

One perverse fact about historical usages of “Urania” is that they are consistently abstruse. She experiences numerous protean transformations and seems subject to the vicissitudes of ever-changing times and tastes and the idiosyncrasies of individual authors and readers. After summarizing several inadequate attempts to identify her, Christopher Hill writes, “the only importance of this little academic bicker is to show how successfully Milton concealed what he was up to, by deliberately leaving several meanings open” (p. 409). On this point, Milton seems aligned with Philip Sidney, another poet who employs Urania, who theorizes, “[The poets’] matter is *quodlibet*<sup>5</sup> indeed...never marshalling it into an assured rank, that almost the readers cannot tell where to find themselves” (cited in Adams, p. 159). But the difference between Hill and Sidney, perhaps, is that while Hill belittles the investigation into the name (or at least

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<sup>4</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> “Any question in philosophy or theology proposed as an exercise in argument or disputation” (OED).

others' attempts), Sidney would treat it as a puzzle that cannot, or should not be solvable, yet a puzzle that strikes at the heart of poetry and heuristics. The meaning of Urania begins with the name.

### A Brief History of "Urania" in Commentary on *Paradise Lost*

It seems fair to surmise that Milton wants us to identify Urania with the Muse of Astronomy, introduced as far back as Hesiod or beyond. Few editors of *Paradise Lost* fail to footnote this connection. But he explicitly excludes this identification: "nor of the muses nine" (PL, 7.6) forcing us to backtrack from our first impressions. In two stages of negation, Milton seems to say, "I invoke Urania, although that's probably not her real name; but even if it were, she wouldn't be the Muse of Astronomy as you're likely thinking." Critics have struggled to find a positive identification. On Urania, Patrick Hume (1695) writes, "So Pindar styles his muse, Daughter of Heav'n" and he then goes on to say she is "one of the nine Muses." In his own inimical style, Richard Bentley (1732) emends Milton's "Nor of the Muses nine" to "Nor of the Muses ONE" and changes "Olympus" to "Parnassus," before he defines Urania as simply the "Divine Afflatus." Thomas Newton (1770) comments, "The word Urania in Greek signifies Heav'nly," to which Raymond de St. Maur (1779) adds, "She teaches the way to heaven." Jonathan Richardson (1734) provides the following analysis:

Urania was one of the Muses, but 'tis the Holy Spirit he Invokes, the Meaning (Urania in Greek Signifies Heavenly) 'tis That, the Celestial Muse, not the Name,

not Her Usually meant by that Name, 'tis the Heav'nly Muse he had Before  
Invok'd I. 6. the Spirit v. 17. The Celestial Light III 51. The Celestial Patroness,  
IX. 21. 47. he Invokes This Muse, this True Urania; but with a little Diffidence  
upon account of his making Use of a Name often Apply'd to One who is but an  
Empty Dream v. 39. (p. 286)

Although most of this quotation is synopsis, Richardson does reveal a couple of interesting ideas. First, it is clear that he treats all four invocations in *Paradise Lost* as if they were to or from Urania and that he considers the opening of Book IX to be a genuine invocation. These facts will become important for later discussion. Secondly, Richardson is comfortable in believing that Urania could be some representative of the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> Once Milton's *De doctrina christiana* is discovered and then published in 1825, we will see that Milton precludes the possibility that the Holy Spirit can be a voice of poetic inspiration. Nevertheless, these early commentators will be the major heuristic voices in editions of *Paradise Lost* even after 1825, which will simply reiterate them without much embellishment, including claims that Urania is an aspect of the Holy Spirit. For example, the American editions of Boyd (1851) and Cleveland (1873) do just that, in addition to referring readers to Proverbs 8 to clarify Wisdom, Urania's Sister (PL, 7. 10). Twentieth century editors make a stronger effort. Hughes (1957) rightly points us to the now generally acknowledged precedents, Du Bartas' *The Divine Weekes* (which I treat at length in chapter three) and Spencer's *The Tears of the Muses*, from which he deduces,

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<sup>6</sup> It is apparent from his commentary on Book I that by "Spirit" in this quotation, he means Holy Spirit.

“Urania is invoked both to inspire the coming account of creation and to lift the poet up to the heavens where it mainly takes place” (p. 345). This statement seems to suggest that the four invocations are not equivalent because if Urania draws the poet only upward, then someone else must have taken him to Hell in Book I. Finally, Hughes concedes, “we can only agree with Dr. Tillyard [1930] that the mystery of his Muse is inscrutable” (p. 199). More recent editions are often just as lackluster as this final resignation: John Leonard (1999) merely restates her traditional identification as the Muse of Astronomy; the Oxford Authors series (Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg, 1991) adds, “here used in a more literal sense: the name means ‘heavenly’, from Greek *ouranos*, the sky” (p. 894); and the Norton Anthology (1993), oddly more informative than their critical edition of *Paradise Lost* (Scott Elledge), offers, “Milton has only the names of the classical Muses with which to invoke the spiritual principles of Christian theology” (p. 1556). David Aers (1974) dryly claims that she is “patron of divine poetry,” without explanation or embellishment. The thorough Alastair Fowler (1998) sees Urania preside over the macrocosmos (a fact I address in the next chapter) and belong to “the divine poetry movement” (p. 388). As precedent to the latter, he produces the now obscure *Urania* of Pontano (1505) but no one else.<sup>7</sup> Recent book-length criticisms, such as those of E. R. Gregory (1989) and Lee Johnson (1989), acknowledge the Christianizing of Urania, but fail to analyze “her new context” (Johnson, p. 75). Similarly, concerning the meaning of “Urania,” Mindele Anne Treip (1985) cautions that

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<sup>7</sup> Pontano writes, *Dic Dea, quae nomen coelo deducis ab ipso/ Uraniae, dic Musa Iovis clarissima proles*, or roughly “Tell goddess, whose name you take from heaven itself, Urania, tell Muse the clearest words of Jove.”

“scholars have been impeded by their tendency to look either to Scripture and Milton’s theology on the one hand, or to classical literary antecedents on the other. It is in the middle ground where both of those meet in the Renaissance” (p. 66). She does not, however, explain exactly what she means by “middle ground.”

In all of these cases, critics for the most part have failed to investigate just what a reader from the English seventeenth century would also have in mind beyond Spencer and Du Bartas, and it is difficult to guess since Urania is so much more than the Muse of Astronomy. By the middle of that century, “Urania” has already become a somewhat popular, if vague, poetic proper noun. For example, William Drummond’s (1585-1649) *Urania, Or Spiritual Poems*, Samuel Sheppard’s *The Loves of Amandus and Sophronia* (1650), and Thomas Shipman’s *The Red Canary* (1677) all refer to her in various guises, ranging from virtuous woman to divine goddess. Long before, she is an aspect of Aphrodite as defined in Plato’s *Symposium*, a crucial link that I have seen accounted for only once in relation to *Paradise Lost*.<sup>8</sup> She is an agent of generation in authors such as Macrobius and Bernardus Silvestris from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. She is an inspiration to the poet in Dante’s *Purgatorio*, a protector of chastity in Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*, as well as in *Urania* by Sidney’s niece Lady Mary Wroth’s (1621), and a Christian muse in Guillaume Du Bartas’ *Divine Weekes and Workes*. After Milton, she is occasionally found in Neo-classical allusions of the eighteenth century, such as those in the works of Samuel Boyse and John Langhorne. Beginning with the Romantic

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<sup>8</sup> William Hunter mentions her in his *A Milton Encyclopedia* but makes nothing of the possible relationship.

revisions, she is again cited as a poet's muse, as in Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814); but after *Paradise Lost* she is less commonly invoked in this capacity in deference, one suspects, to Milton's ingenious precedent, and on account of a shift in genre away from classically styled and toned epic towards satire, mock epic, and the novel. Nevertheless, she reappears transformed in the nineteenth century as a consoler to the forlorn in Tennyson, a defender of homosexuals in Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, and astonishingly in Joris-Karl Huysmans, a hermaphroditic American circus acrobat.

Having discovered a multitude of identities or aspects of Urania across the ages, I have had to ask if Milton's Urania was in fact unique and isolated, or if she somehow fit into continuums ranging from earliest recorded Western history through the Renaissance to the late Victorian period and even into the twentieth century. There are at least three distinct traditions that pertain to Milton in some way or another, and these form the organizing principles for the following chapters.

### Outcroppings of Uranian Discourse

In the first chapter, I begin with Urania as the Muse of Astronomy, in spite of Milton's explicit exclusion of her, because from her mythopoetic genesis in ancient Greece, other myths are engrafted onto her until by the Middle Ages she has become a greatly transformed and somewhat Christianized Muse. The major epics, including those from Homer, Lucretius, Virgil and Dante, are important sources of Uranian lore. In addition, Plato consistently plays a central role in the history of Urania. Cosmic journey

and dream narratives, which helped sustain the philosophy of Plato even though for the most part he was lost to the Middle Ages, will be investigated at length. They not only define the framework of the universe, they also depict how certain characters traverse the heavenly spheres in order to perform various acts including the creation of the world and man, the installation of a soul in man, and the generation of poetry. Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, Martianus Capella's *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, and especially Bernardus Silvestris' *Cosmographia* have been largely overlooked by Milton critics even though these works carry on and enhance a Neoplatonic tradition that is evident in *Paradise Lost* and other of Milton's poetry. Moreover, these narratives are essentially political in nature: the first appears as the "Dream of Er" at the end of Plato's *Republic* and another as Cicero's "Dream of Scipio" (on which Macrobius comments) at the end of his own *Republic*. For Milton, Urania is emblematic of the order and harmony that should exist between the cosmic and political forces.

Thus, the second chapter will focus on politics; and we will see that the Muses, though not themselves always the most reliable of sources according to Hesiod, consistently stand in opposition to tyranny. Ovid supplies an important myth along these lines taken from early in the Muses' history. On the one hand, Urania is especially equipped to counter the inevitable corollary to tyranny that is the general and indiscriminate licentiousness of kings. A careful revisiting of English historical texts that Milton certainly knew, since they were sources for his own *History of Britain*, will unearth relevant examples of the specific qualities that Urania opposes. On the other

hand, Urania, as a mediator of divine truths, is the perfect candidate as symbol of the freedom of conscience necessary to maintain a healthy commonwealth. If we read the invocation in Book VII as both poetical and political, given the textual cues relevant to Milton's own historical situation following the Restoration, then Urania must be emblematic of both.

The seminal ideas for this dissertation were planted as I researched a small, relatively obscure group of English poets of the late Victorian period who called themselves the "Uranians." These young men were mostly Oxford undergraduates and their tutors and admirers who tried to revive and actually live a Platonic ideal of beauty, art, and love. The most famous of these was Alfred Lord Douglas, Oscar Wilde's young consort, as well as other notorieties. An increasing scholarly attention to the study of Hellenism starting in the earlier nineteenth century with Benjamin Jowett and Walter Pater laid the foundation for what would become the great scandal of college life in the 1890's, ending in the trial and conviction of Oscar Wilde for sodomy. Remembering that Milton had invoked Urania in *Paradise Lost*, I began to investigate if these poets and Milton were drawing on the same diachronic philosophical affinities, in the same way, and I believe that in certain respects they were. After all, some of the imagery and themes of Milton's works, especially the luxurious and voluptuous visions of Eden as well as the panegyric to friendship in "Lycidas," greatly influenced the Uranians' highly aestheticized writing. As a political, sexual, and poetic muse, Urania suited these Victorians' temperaments. However, whereas in the second chapter I intend to prove that Urania stands in stark contrast to licentiousness because of her Platonic definition as the



patroness of chaste, manly, non-procreative love, the Uranians unironically, consciously, and conspiratorially choose her to justify a lifestyle that to Milton, perhaps with some regret, would have been anathema. Some Uranians will practice in life what in Milton remains ethical and poetic theory. This inquiry provides the main content of the third chapter.

The common denominator in all these chapters is Plato, whose idiosyncratic version of Urania is uniquely Athenian. He apparently introduces her to counter prevailing paradigms and dangerous influences, and reformation in the name of heavenly truth has been her role ever since. There have been at least four distinct outcroppings in which she figures prominently – ancient Greece, late medieval Europe, the English Renaissance, and Victorian England. And oddly, there are also four correlating occurrences that signal her decline. For Plato, she symbolized the philadelphic love and sexual continence necessary for democracy to counter threatening Eastern religious influences. This subsided with Aristotle's new philosophical approach and with the decline of Greece and democracy as well as the rise of Rome and the gradual shift to Empire and the Church. After her appearances in the late middle ages, essentially homoerotic Uranian love will be heterosexualized by the Italian Renaissance. In the English Renaissance, she is revived to resist the unethical trappings of tyranny and to renew the special bonds, both between men and between men and God, necessary for a successful commonwealth and a healthy Protestant culture. Aside from *Paradise Lost*, which was arguably begun during the Interregnum, this Urania virtually disappears from English literature for some time after the Restoration. For the aforementioned group of Victorian poets, she opposes

heterosexist tyranny and epitomizes the Hellenistic ethos and aesthetic that would come to a sudden halt with the trial of Oscar Wilde and the rise of modern Europe. Moreover, her sudden disappearances coincide with structural shifts in genre. After Plato comes a proliferation of philosophical approaches and the guiding force of Judeo-Christianity; after Milton's classical epic come satire, mock epic and novel; and after Wilde's aestheticism and symbolism come naturalism, realism, and modernism. As interest in Hellenism historically waxes and wanes, predictably Urania also appears and disappears according to fashion and political and religious expediencies.<sup>9</sup>

### The Invocations: Structure and Genre

So comprehensive are the aspects of this divine figure, Urania, this single signifier, that it is no wonder that critics have failed to pursue the myriad possibilities at length. Instead they have chosen to discuss Milton's invocations in other ways: what the structure and forms of the invocations are; how Milton construes his relationship between

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<sup>9</sup> I feel permitted to make large generalizations because I spent many days one summer reading and contextualizing literally hundreds of occurrences of the word "Urania" that the search engine of the Chadwyck-Healey/EEBO databases found in English poetry from the fifteenth century to the twentieth. My analysis can only be as comprehensive and correct as those databases, combined with my own readings and recommendations from friends, colleagues, and advisors. The last two of what I call the three "outcroppings" of Uranian discourse correlate to increased numbers of "hits" during those periods and to significantly decreased numbers after. If you remove the specific identification of Urania with the Muse of Astronomy, the "outcroppings" are even more pronounced. I confess that I searched for "Urania" only as proper noun, not as adjective ("Uranian").

himself and his muse; indeed, what the value of them is at all. While Urania is the main focus here, for the remainder of this introduction, I will review and critique recent discussions of the four invocations in *Paradise Lost*. The most innovative, or perhaps revisionist, studies have been issued by Stevie Davies and William Hunter (1988), A. D. Nuttall (1992), and Stanley Fish (1995). Responding to these critics will in fact help us understand the context in which Urania is invoked in terms of both history and genre.

Just about every reader of *Paradise Lost* since Milton's death has known the second and final edition of 1674, which he oversaw; but the first edition was published in 1667 in ten books instead of twelve for unknown reasons.<sup>10</sup> The second edition is clearly the preferred, especially in discussions of the placement of the four invocations, which occur at the beginnings of Books I, III, VII, and IX. (These appear in their entirety in Appendix A.) Samuel Johnson questions the relevancy of the latter three invocations in his *Lives*: "The short digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh, and ninth books, might doubtless be spared; but superfluities so beautiful, who would take away?" (*Lives* I, p. 175).<sup>11</sup> Beyond this aesthetic evaluation, E. M. W. Tillyard (1930) notices that if you divide the epic into two halves, Books I – VI and Books VII – XII (a natural numerical division signaled by the two profound invocations in I and VII), then, in the 1674 edition,

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<sup>10</sup> One of the more interesting theories I've read comes from Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), p. 72: "Virgil hath given us his Poem in twelve Books, an argument of his Modesty; for by that doubtless he would insinuate that he pretends to no more than half the Merit of the Greek; for the same Reason, our *Milton* went originally no farther than ten; 'till being puffed up by the Praise of his Friends, he put himself on the same footing with the *Roman* Poet."

<sup>11</sup> Apparently the objection is to solipsism - too much of the poet's self in these invocations; yet Johnson goes on to wish Homer had done the same.

Books I and VII correspond, as do III and IX. Thus he argues that the invocations are “organic” to the text as a whole and provide a sort of skeleton or architecture to the poem.

In a close reading of the first invocation, A. W. Verity (1929) astutely observes that there appear to be two different Muses. In the first sixteen lines, the Muse seems to be an older, Hebrew one, given the numerous references to Old Testament locales and other clues; while lines seventeen through twenty-six enlist the service of a fully Christianized Muse of the New Dispensation. Apparently taking a cue from Verity, William Hunter and Stevie Davies (1988) push this division one step farther. In lines six to ten, they see the Father, from ten to sixteen, the Son, and from seventeen through twenty-two, the Holy Ghost. This introduction of the Holy Trinity might be surprising enough, had they not also taken the extraordinary measure of applying the same formula to the four invocations as wholes. In order to pull this off, they must first dismiss the fourth invocation as “properly speaking, of a different kind” (p. 36). I would argue that the invocation in Book IX is different because the object of the poet’s speech switches from second person (“Sing Heav’nly Muse” [PL, 1.6]; “thee I revisit safe” [PL, 3.21 – although here he speaks to holy Light, not Urania]; “Descend from Heav’n Urania” [PL, 7.1]) to the third person (“Her nightly visitation unimplored” (PL, 9.22)). Davies and Hunter’s explanation is more descriptive than grammatical. The problem is that these critics want to rescue Milton for orthodox Christianity, from by now well-proven charges of Milton’s own iconoclastic and heterodox beliefs, by shoehorning Milton’s epic into a Trinitarian system with the following correlations to the invocations: Book I to Father, Book III to Son, and Book VII to Holy Ghost. As if the elimination of the fourth

invocation were not egregious enough, in a retrograde critical maneuver their schematic prefers the 1667 first edition because it upsets the symmetries that others have painstakingly pointed out. Noting that in the ten-book format, the invocations occur at Books I, III, VII, (and apparently not VIII), they argue that, “the 1667 edition of *Paradise Lost* indicates that this pattern of symmetries was not intrinsic to the original design” (36). Even worse for them is Milton’s prohibition against invoking the Holy Ghost: Milton writes in *De Doctrina Christiana*, “the Holy Spirit [is] nowhere said to have any mediatorial functions” (Hughes 968). Other critics, including Christopher Hill (1997), have already dismissed the possibility of this function as a possibility: “In the *De Doctrina* [Milton] specifically rejects invocation of the Holy Ghost, to whom he denies divinity, so he is hardly likely to have invoked him himself in *Paradise Lost*” (p. 409). John Rumrich, among others, has virtually silenced the debate about Milton’s apparent Arianism, the ancient belief system that denies the Trinity; and those still arguing for Milton’s orthodoxy must also refuse to believe that the *De doctrina christiana* is his. Discovered in 1825, the work immediately called into question the understandable yet already knee-jerk interpretive association of the Holy Spirit with Urania beginning with the earliest commentators on *Paradise Lost*. Oddly enough, the usually circumspect A. D. Nuttall (1992) asks us to “set aside for the moment the technical question of Milton’s Arianism” for being a quibble of “logic-choppers” (p. 101); and he therefore still sees the Davies-Hunter argument in many ways viable. This whole approach is both untenable and deliberately contrary.

Not only will Stanley Fish (1995) see the “persons of the Trinity” in the first invocation, but he will also provide one interesting insight regarding interpretations of Urania. He claims that “the obfuscation is not casual, for when Milton says ‘The meaning not the Name I call’ he avoids what would be in effect a heresy, identifying the source of his inspiration as female” (p. 513). These heuristic contortions are beginning to sound like a double conspiracy, the one to interpret Milton’s theology as orthodox Trinitarian, the other to refuse to believe that Milton’s muse can be female, even though Milton explicitly makes her gender so, like her sister Wisdom. In tandem, these lines of thought complement one another, for equating Urania to the Holy Ghost accomplishes both. Given my attachment to Beatrice and Laura, perhaps my own thought is too medieval to understand why having a female muse amounts to heresy; but Fish wants to separate Urania from “the parade of women who seduce or abandon” (p. 521) who pervade the Book VII invocation (the Bacchantes, Antea, Calliope, etc.). It is a fine observation that most of the women in this passage have behaved wretchedly; but suggesting, as Fish does, that “blurring” Urania’s identity “allows the issue of her gender, and with it the threat of female aggression, to remain unfronted” flies wide of the mark (p. 516). Rather than trans-sexualize her by making her a masculine member of the Trinity, or neuter her through some sort of rhetorical trick, there is no reason why we cannot see her simply as an example or representative of chaste women or female chastity in general, as she is in many other works from Milton’s day. Moreover, we will see in chapter two that Uranian love opposes exactly the kinds of wicked love alluded to in this invocation.

Fish's objective is to steer toward a Freudian reading of the relationship between Milton and his muse; and, to do that, he must portray Urania as "pursuer and seducer" who must be "*re* imagined in a benign form as the gracious patroness." In this way, presumably, the poet can turn the tables on Urania and pretend that she is not in fact emasculating him by dictating his thoughts, literally. But the bizarre soon becomes the downright cruel: "that disability [Milton's blindness] is yet one more emblem of the psychological wound the poet is experiencing even as he denies it; for as Freud observes in 'The Uncanny,' 'anxiety connected with the eyes and with going blind is often...a substitute for the dread of castration'" (p. 516). Milton is not going blind - he is blind. Nor is there any benefit to heaping more accusations onto Milton and his relationships with women. We will see that Urania, historically, is always gendered female in texts both Christian and Pagan, some of which demonstrate perhaps more problematic anxieties over gender than Milton's.

While these critics have wandered far from Tillyard's level-headed and textually based structural hypotheses, I want not just to propose a return to that balanced, four invocation analysis reliant on the second edition, but also to take a new direction - applying another organizing principle based on genre. A previous revision meant to link the invocations thematically has already been attempted by Walter Schindler (1984). He tries to define concisely the correlations among them based partly on Isabel Gamble MacCaffrey's observation (1959) that the first two invocations feature the "verbal texture" of ascent, the latter two of descent (Schindler, pp. 56-7). Accordingly, Book I's prayer for poetic ascent, comparable to Moses's ascent of Sinai, pairs with Book III's

announcement of reascent, coupled with a prologue to Satan's ascent to Mount Niphates and to God's defense of man's freedom to fall. But this analysis seems specious, for these critics' altimeters are off. Granted, there are many words that hint at ascent; but first of all, Satan does not ascend to "Niphates' top;" rather, he descends "Down from th' ecliptic" (PL, 3.740). Moreover, one of the summits that Milton thinks might best appeal to his Muse in Book I, "Sion Hill," is precisely where Milton ends up after he has "Escaped the Stygian pool" (PL, 3.14). As the argument continues, Book VII's prayer safely to be let down, with fear of falling as Bellerophon did, corresponds to Book IX's announcement of man's tragic descent, coupled with the prologue to man's descent to the "subjected Plaine" and to man's fall, with doubts about God's wisdom. Although the general sense of the argument seems plausible, Milton's imagination keeps the reader's directional awareness too unsettled for this kind of analysis.

After meditating on the "verbal texture" of the invocations, where genre seems a more fruitful thematic organizing principle, I have noticed that the first two come across as epic, and the latter two as satiric. Somewhat counter-intuitively, these two genres are more mutually implicit than mutually exclusive: the epic's grand totality and integrity are punctuated by episodes that are often construed as satiric. *The Odyssey* immediately comes to mind with its trickster main character; but perhaps even more so the *Iliad*, where the reader is treated to Thersites the comic buffoon and a few odd laps around Troy wall that have been criticized as improper in magnitude. This commingling of genre occurs in the Bible as well. Northrop Frye writes:



From one point of view, the Bible presents an epic structure of unsurpassed range, consistency, and completeness; from another, it presents a seamy side of bits and pieces which makes the *Tale of the Tub*, *Tristram Shandy*, and *Sartor Resartus* look as homogeneous as a cloudless sky. (p. 325)

At first glance, those references to satire are shocking as analogues to the sacred word, but they indicate the tone of what Frye calls the interior “contrast-epic,” the microcosmic epic-within-the-epic, such as his example of “The Book of Job” in the Bible. In his analysis of *Paradise Lost*, David Quint similarly remarks:

The shift in the poem’s focus from the divine superplot that pits Satan against the Son down to the level of its human protagonists seems a virtual shift in literary genre. For it is in the actions of the devil and the deity that *Paradise Lost* includes, often in parodic form, the conventional plots of epic. (pp. 281-2)

The War in Heaven provides a case study. Arnold Stein writes that the “dominating spirit” of Book VI is “scornful ridicule” (p. 203) and that the main physical events (the donning of the armor, for example) amount to “a kind of epic farce” (p. 206) complete with slapstick and flyting. Whereas, Quint argues, “What is at issue in the war is the very possibility of narrative meaning” (p. 43), because an endless war would subject the universe to continual and arbitrary Fate.<sup>12</sup> While Stein explores the comedic elements in the nuts and bolts of the narrative machinery, Quint heads straight to the moral of the epic struggle – and both are essentially correct to do so. If we are right to assume that

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<sup>12</sup> “Fate” is Quint’s choice; “chance” seems a better alternative.

Milton's Muse remains the same throughout *Paradise Lost*, in all four invocations, then she must bear the markings of both genres. She must have a dual literary aspect.

This discussion of genre will begin with the corresponding pair of invocations, Book III and Book IX, and save Book I and Book VII for later. The Book III invocation is epic in content and allusion. With the help of Urania, Milton, like Aeneas and Odysseus and Dante before him, has returned from the underworld. In this instance, Urania acts like the Cumaean Sibyl ("Taught by the Heav'nly Muse to venture down"). Milton compares himself to Maeonides, that is, Homer, and Thamyris, two poets who wrote on warfare and also suffered blindness, but who, like the blind prophets Tiresias and Phineus, have turned their sight inward and found inspiration. The scene that we are immediately given after the invocation is essentially epic in nature, although critical lenses have been focused on one of Homer's epics, but not the other. God is sitting "high thron'd above all highth" surrounded by "all the Sanctities" or angels, in the presence of his Son, looking down at Adam and Eve, "Our two first parents," and watching Satan "Coasting the wall of Heav'n" and planning his revenge, when he says to his Son:

Only begotten Son, seest thou what rage  
Transports our adversary, whom no bounds  
Prescrib'd, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains  
Heaped on him there, nor yet the main Abyss  
Wide interrupt can hold; so bent he seems  
On desperate revenge, that shall redound  
Upon his own rebellious head. And now

Through all restraint broke loose he wings his way  
Nor far off heav'n, in the Precincts of Light,  
Directly towards the new created World,  
And man there plac'd...

Ingrate, he had of me

All he could have; I made him [man] just and right,  
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

(PL, 3.80-90; 97-9)

Following Johnson's lead, C. S. Lewis and William Empson have paid close attention to the tone of God's voice and the creepiness of what Empson calls "the first of God's grisly jokes" (119). His speech imitates that of Zeus at the beginning of *The Odyssey*.

My word, how mortals take the gods to task!  
All their afflictions come from us, we hear.  
And what of their own failings? Greed and folly  
Double the suffering in the lot of man.

(*Odyssey*, 1.48-51)

In addition to that discussion, I want to point out that this scenario from Book III parallels the one in Book III of the *Iliad* known as the *teichoskopia*, or "view from the wall." This point seems obvious enough. Perhaps the content, where God holds man accountable for his own actions, is so theologically intriguing that we forget there must be a plot as well;

and it is difficult to imagine how else Milton would lay his scene. For precedent, Patrick Hume, editor of the 1695 edition, refers us to Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, Canto IX.

But the sublime

Monarch of heaven meanwhile from His throne

Turned His eyes toward the battle. He alone,

There seated, deals to all the universe

Good and just Law, creates the orders bright

Over the limits of the narrow world.

Reason and sense cannot attain that height;

And from august eternity He shines

In three illuminations of one light,

His servants Fate and Nature at His feet,

And Motion too, and Time which measures it...

To the great chorus of the joyful hymns

Resound the happy realms of heavenly light.

He summons Michael, he whose warlike arms

Are all of burning adamant flashing bright,

"See how that evil crew of Hades arms

Against my faithful flock and my delight,

Rising out of deepest pit of hell

To vex the world, to kill my people!

GL, Stanzas 55-58 (skipping 57)<sup>13</sup>

In addition to references to light and the action of the plot, this passage is another instance of a *teichoskpoia* like the one in the *Iliad*. In that epic, Priam, King of Troy, has gathered around him his old war cronies to a place on the wall overlooking the plains where the Greek troops are exercising and preparing for revenge for Paris's having stolen away Helen from her husband Menelaus. Priam, whom Helen refers to as "dear father," says,

Come over here, dear child. Sit in front of me,

So you can see your husband of long ago,

Your kinsmen and your people.

I don't blame you. I hold the gods to blame.

They are the ones who brought this war upon me.

(*Iliad*, 3.196-200)

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<sup>13</sup> Oddly, Richard Bentley (*Paradise Lost*, ed. Bentley (London: Jacob Tonson, 1732) points us to a different passage in Tasso:

The end of that rainy winter would soon come  
that forced the interrupting in the war,  
when the eternal Father from his throne  
high in the realm of heaven that is most pure  
(and as far as from the stars to the depths of hell,  
so far is he above the starry sphere)  
looked down, and in one instant, in one glance,  
surveyed the world in His omnipotence.

(GL, 1.7)

In both texts, we are invited to join in watching the spectacle unfold with astonishingly calm and objective nonchalance – from on high - on the part of the players, even as war is imminent. It is astonishing that Hume would cite the Tasso and not the Homer, as both Homer and Milton place their *teichoskopia* at the beginning of their book three's. In a sense, then, this controversial scene in *Paradise Lost* is mere epic trope, even if Milton's God is not especially likeable because of what could be heard as a satiric, or grisly, tone.

In comparison, the Book IX invocation, which precedes the Fall of Man, does explicitly mention "Troy Wall," but in a satiric or ironic context:

Sad task, yet argument

Not less, but more Heroic than the wrath

Of stern *Achilles* on his Foe pursu'd

Thrice Fugitive about *Troy* Wall; or rage

Of *Turnus* for *Lavinia* disespous'd,

Or *Neptune's* ire or *Juno's*, that so long

Perplex'd the *Greek* and *Cytherea's* Son

(PL, 9.13-19)

Here Milton is arguing that the eating of fruit is more heroic subject matter than warfare and the various wraths that are the subject matter of the great preceding epics. But the situation is different too, for we find ourselves in more of a tragedy ("I now must change/ Those Notes to Tragic" [PL, 9.5-6]) than an epic, complete with exposition, rising action,

climax and Fall. Moreover, in a famous passage from *An Apology*, Milton determines that satire and tragedy are familial relations:

For a Satyr as it was borne out of a *Tragedy*, so ought to resemble his parentage, to strike high, and adventure dangerously at the most eminent of vices among the greatest persons, and not creepe into every Taphouse that fears a Constable more than a Satyr” (*Apology* 33).

Although the tongue-in-cheeks possibilities of this passage, embedded as it is in a long satiric diatribe, have been downplayed or ignored, it pertains unironically to Book IX. For there is a certain satiric or ironic feel to the temptation, even at epic’s expense. For example, Tasso claims that the purpose of epic is to incite a sense of *meraviglia* or “wonder”; and yet “wonder” is the first word of Milton’s temptation as one of a pair of wonders in a rhetorical *ploce*; “Wonder not, Sovran Mistress, if perhaps/ Thou canst, who art sole wonder” (PL, 9.532-3). The action of the plot is at least dramatic irony; and whether or not this passage incites pity and fear, as all good tragedy should, depends on how the reader interprets it, as either tragedy or satire. This discussion of genre and invocation now turns to Books I and VII.

The Book I invocation is a confident, upward, and fertile assertion of a poet’s epic inheritance, echoing Homer, Virgil, Hesiod and others, and symbolized by the pair of opening genitives, grammatically indicative of this genealogy: “Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit/ Of that forbidden tree...Sing Heav’nly Muse.”<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> This claim has raised some concern because the first “Of” doesn’t act like a true genitive. First, “genitive” as a term for what we call the possessive in English was in use

fertility is apparent in the allusions to Genesis and the creation of the heavens and earth out of chaos and the pregnant abyss. It is an astonishing mosaic of small tiles gleaned from epic. Some allusions are obvious, such as “In the beginning” from Genesis and “Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme” from *Orlando Furioso*.<sup>15</sup> Others are more thematically obscure or oblique, such as Ariosto’s source, Lucretius’ ““What joy to pluck/ New flowers, to weave a garland for my temples/ Which the Muses have never veiled anyone with before” (DRN, 1.927-9). Or his description of Venus at the beginning of the *De rerum natura* that we will see in chapter two sounds remarkably like Milton’s Spirit. On the other hand, the Book VII invocation is downward, tentative, haunted by bareness, and nuanced by the early conditional “if”: “Descend from heav’n Urania, by that name/ If rightly thou art called.” The references to Orpheus and Bellerophon, whose sex lives are truncated by disastrous demises, signal the infertility; and we will soon learn that Urania herself is procreative of spirit, but not of body. Epic, at least in the case of Virgil, celebrates the birth of a nation, if retrospectively and nostalgically, while satire is often an ironic reflection on a recent state of affairs, in Milton’s case, the commonwealth

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in the seventeenth century for both “of” and “s” (OED citation: A. Hume, *Brit Tongue* 1620). Milton probably has in mind the “arma virumque cano” of Virgil: “I sing of warfare and a man at war” (Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Vintage Books, 1990)). The Latin has accusatives, which do not translate properly into English, since “sing” is a quirky transitive that allows only direct objects with musical senses (e.g. to sing a jingle); hence Fitzgerald’s (and Milton’s) use of “of.” To me, the translation looks like the pattern of an “objective genitive,” where *amor laudis* (love of praise) is semantically equivalent to *amat laudem* (he loves praise). Hume says the genitive “is noated with of,” just as Milton says in his Latin Grammar (CE) that the “genitive is Englisht with ‘of.’” Throughout that work, Milton acknowledges the commonplaceness of slippages between the cases – ex. Cicero: *negavit moris esse greacorum*.

<sup>15</sup> “Cosa non detta in prosa mai, ne in rima” (1.2.2).



and the transition to the English court after the return of Charles II. If Milton wrote Book I during the Interregnum and Book VII after the Restoration, then history would seem to support my argument.<sup>16</sup>

Authoring these two invocations, Milton oddly changes his intended audience to suit each genre. In Book I, he desires to “justify the ways of God to men,” presumably all men. On the other hand, in Book VII he asks Urania to help him “fit audience find, though few.” The former’s inclusive scope seems consistent with epic, since neither Homer nor Virgil sees the need to include a dative or indirect object except for themselves. Homer’s “Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed/ Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles” (*Iliad*, 1.7-8) and Virgil’s “I sing of warfare and a man” (*Aeneid*, 1.1) do not address any particular audience; and Homer’s “Sing to me now, you Muses who hold the halls of Olympus” (*Iliad*, 2.573) and Virgil’s “Tell me the reason, Muse” (*Aeneid*, 1.13) make the poets themselves the audience. Milton, like Ariosto, does a little of both, but he is also more preoccupied with his own audience. Revisiting Milton’s explicit statements about his audience will help determine specific categories or a typology of unfit readers.

The Book VII invocation’s sudden exclusion of unfit readers comes not from epic, but from satire, specifically Horace. Milton knew the *contentus paucis lectoribus* (“be

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1977) writes, “According to Aubrey, the composition of *Paradise Lost* dates from about 1658 to about 1663, and this has been generally accepted, though earlier passages were no doubt incorporated from the abortive drama on the Fall of Man. *Paradise Lost* was thus probably written after Milton had defined most of his heresies in the *De Doctrina Christiana*” (p. 355).

content with few readers”) of the 10<sup>th</sup> Satire of Book I.<sup>17</sup> With the First Prolusion’s *a quibus etiam quantumvis paucis*, he imitates this, as well as Persius’ Satire I:

Truly, however, my soul cannot wholly despair, for I see here and there, unless I am deluded, those who signify, not at all secretly, by the very quietness of their countenances, that they wish me well. By these indeed, however few, for my part, I would prefer to be approved, than by innumerable companies of the ignorant, who have no brains and no power to reason correctly, no sound judgment, men who betray themselves by a certain boasting and quite laughable froth of words, from whom if you take away the medley begged from modern authors, immortal God! you will find them even more empty than a bean pod, and when they have exhausted their meager supply of words and little maxims, they utter not even a grunt, being just as speechless as little Seriphian frogs. (CE, p. 119)

In his youth, it is mediocre and/or perhaps a few bullying students (Milton reveals in Prolusion VI that he was sometimes called the “Lady” of Christ’s College at Cambridge) who feel the scorpion sting of his satiric wit. But at the composition of the historical allegory in the invocation in Book VII, the Royalists have won, Charles II has been restored, some of Milton’s colleagues have been executed, and the great defender of the English people lives as an outcast. Meanwhile the Cavaliers are fast reinterpreting genre and taste. A *Davideis* becomes a *Hudibras* and an *Areopagitica* a *Satyr Against*

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<sup>17</sup> Bentley also cites this line from Horace in his commentary, but does not elaborate on it.

*Mankind*. In his *An Allusion to Horace. The 10<sup>th</sup> Satire of the 1<sup>st</sup> Book*, the Earl of Rochester translates Horace:

To write what may securely stand the test  
Of being well read over, thrice at least,  
Compare each phrase, examine every line,  
Weigh every word, and every thought refine,  
Scorn all applause the vile rout can bestow  
And be content to please those few who know.  
Canst thou be such a vain, mistaken thing  
To wish thy works might make a playhouse ring  
With the unthinking laughter and poor praise  
Of fops and ladies, factious for thy plays?

(pp. 100-1)

Of course Rochester is a fop, complete with his wretched venereal diseases and tawdry rhymed couplets, and he would in Milton's mind be one of the vile rout, along with all of Charles II's court jesters who can approve of a "Cunticula," a "Fuckadilla," and a "Clytoris."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps Milton already could guess that his epic would mark the end of an era and that few sane and sympathetic ears even cared.

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<sup>18</sup> Characters in Rochester, *Sodom, Or the Quintessence of Debauchery* (North Hollywood, CA: Brandon House, 1966).

A close review of Milton's works shows that this type of exclusion of unfit audience is his usual *modus operandi* and that there appear to be three types whom he singles out: the dim-witted or tasteless, those close-minded to theological debate (often on account of slavery to custom), and citizens unwilling to defend their own liberty. Alongside the example of the Prolusion cited above can be placed Sonnet XI, which berates the poorly pronouncing "stall-reader." In Sonnet XIII, Mr. Henry Lawes is exempted "from the throng" who "scan with Midas' ears." In these instances, he is much less generous than Tasso, who opens *Gerusalemme liberata*:

You know the world delights in lovely things,  
For men have hearts sweet poetry will win,  
And when the truth is seasoned in soft rhyme  
It lures and leads the most reluctant in,  
As we brush with honey the brim of a cup, to fool  
A feverish child to take his medicine:  
He drinks the bitter juice and cannot tell –  
But it is a mistake that makes him well.

(GL, 1.3)

There'll be no honey in Milton's assertion of Eternal Providence.

The *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* illustrates the second type by warning that he who champions truth, especially theological truth, "shall be boarded presently by the ruder sort." Along these lines, in his *Commonplace Book*, he enters:

Constantine, in his letter to Alexander and Arius, very wisely urges that fundamental questions about God which the human reason finds it difficult to interpret or to solve should either not be considered at all or should be buried in silence lest they become known to the common people and thus afford material for schisms in the church. (CE, p. 138)

If we follow the logic of his *De doctrina christiana*, presumably the common people would suffer “from those two detestable curses, slavery and superstition” that oppose reason. Thus Milton writes his doctrine in the hopes of improving not just himself, but fit readers who wish to “scrutinize and ascertain” their religious beliefs (Hughes 900). In this, he sounds like Lucretius in his fascinating opening of Book II of the *De rerum natura*:

How sweet, to watch from the shore the wind-whipped ocean  
Toss someone else’s ship in a mighty struggle;  
Not that the man’s distress is cause for mirth –  
Your freedom from those troubles is what’s sweet;  
And sweet, to see great lines of soldiers marshaled  
In the plains of war, when you are free from peril;  
But nothing is sweeter then to dwell in the calm  
Temples of truth, the strongholds of the wise.

(DRN, 2.1-8)

The point is not just to criticize those who flounder in superstition, but also to find comfort in a confidence in yourself and a brotherhood of those who know the right

philosophy, in this case Epicureanism. In this sense then, the *De Rerum Natura*, as a philosophical treatise, differs from true epics.

Of the third type of exclusion, political, there are numerous examples, one being the opening of “The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.” “For, indeed, none can love freedom heartily but good men; the rest love not freedom but license,” he opines as he condemns the “naturally servile” (cited in Hughes, p. 750). In “Sonnet XII” Milton impugns those who “still revolt when truth would set them free./ License they mean when they cry out liberty.” One also wonders why Milton bothers to offer his countrymen a *History of Britain* when in the “Digression” he speaks so disparagingly of them:

For Britain (to speak a truth not oft spok’n) as it is a land fruitful enough of men stout and courageous in warr, so is it naturallie not over fertile of men able to govern justlie & prudently in peace...[they are] too impolitic and too crude, if not headstrong and intractable to the industry and vertue either of executing or understanding true civil government. (CE, pp. 324-5)

In general tone, this sounds like Dante who fought against Papists and anti-republicans:

“He goes in search of liberty – so precious/ as he who gives his life for it must know”

(*Purgatorio*, 1.71-2). Here the “he” is Cato, who committed suicide after the Republican defeat so as not to surrender his liberty to Caesar. From the heights of Republican endeavor in Britain and the defenses of the English people, there seems to be an inevitable decline in Milton’s estimation of his countrymen through the tracts and the epics. In his elaborate invocations, he appears to add on to the basic, inclusive invocations of Homer and Virgil the accretions of other epics and satires; and the three

exclusionary precedents cited here – from Tasso<sup>19</sup>, Lucretius, and Dante - all occur in invocatory passages. If, as Aubrey tells us, Book I was written before the Restoration, and as indicated by cues in the text, we know that Book VII was written after, then the shift in audience makes perfect sense.<sup>20</sup> Thomas Macaulay, the nineteenth-century author of a *History of England*, describes Milton's "evil days" as "the days of servitude without loyalty, and sensuality without love – of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices" (cited in Boyd, 1851). From the "Prolusions" of his college years to the final scene of *Samson Agonistes*, where Samson, or Milton, can take his revenge on the audience of gawking Philistines, Milton seems to make only one significant exception to his satiric view of audience – the epic invocation of Book I of *Paradise Lost*. But even this generosity is mitigated in the second printing of the first edition, which only one year later includes the introductory note on "The Verse," berating those who wish for barbarous rhyming that to Milton represents addiction to custom and contradiction to liberty. Something peculiarly similar occurs in Richard Fanshawe's translation of the great Portuguese epic *The Lusiads* by Luis de Camoes, who is mentioned in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*. Camoes writes open-endedly, "My song shall spread where ever there are *Men*,/ If *Wit* and *Art* will so much guide my pen" (*Lusiads*, 1.2.7-8). But Fanshawe affixes to his translation a passage, critical of vulgar readers, from the *Satiricon* of Petronius that he calls the "Rapture" because it is "the *Rule* and *Model*, which (*indubitably*) guided our

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<sup>19</sup> Tasso is exclusive in his understanding of unfit readers, though inclusive in the manner of reaching them nonetheless.

<sup>20</sup> Aubrey: "He [Milton] began [*Paradise Lost*] about 2 years before the K. [Charles II] came in, and finished about 3 years after the K.'s restoration," quoted in Hughes, p. 1024.

Camoens in the raising his Great Building” (Camoens, 22). “We must flee from all cut-rate words, so to speak, and take up expressions quite apart from those the mob uses. We must bring to life those noble words: ‘I hate the unholy crowd and keep it far away’” (Petronius, 98).<sup>21</sup> Having been imprisoned by the Protectorate shortly before the publication of the *Lusiad* in 1655, the Royalist Fanshawe, with his own set of dangers compassed round, changes the relationship between author and audience to suit his own historical circumstances. Just so, Milton, having written his liberal invocation to all men during the Interregnum, adds his own criticism of barbarous readers after the Restoration.

Since I’ve provided a typology of the unfit audiences that Milton does exclude, I should at least venture a guess as to whom he does have in mind for a fit audience besides merely the opposites of those. The answer may lie in the adjective “fit.” Stephen Dobranski notes the linguistic relationship between “fit” and “feat” and indicates that a “fit audience” “would thus signify a well-suited group of readers, as well as one that was adroit and intelligent” (p. 193). But perhaps the solution is simpler: in six of the seven times it appears in the poem immediately following “fit audience,” it pertains to Eve; and in the one exception, to the “wily snake.” Eve is Adam’s audience in many ways, but she is also his conception. Thus, just as Zeus births his wise brainchild Athena, and Sin springs out of Satan’s head, and Adam dreams up Eve, so Milton pines for a fit audience; and as Satan and Adam end up copulating with their own creations, then we fit readers

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<sup>21</sup> Since Fanshawe’s diction is loosely fashioned and difficult to apprehend, I’ve chosen a modern translation from Petronius, *Satyricon*, trans. Sarah Ruden (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishers, 2000). The Latin expression is *odi profanum vulgus et arceo*.



are also Milton's imagined consorts. Athena, Sin, Eve and we are motherless intellectual children; and to ask Urania to find us is yet another instance of her spiritual, but not procreative, love. In this case, the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, in which the word "fit" so often pertains to a proper mate and union, provides a sufficient answer: Milton seeks an "apt and cheerful" audience "to comfort and refresh him against the evil of solitary life."

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In terms of the main project of these pages, the identity of Urania, one question is whether Urania, as she is named at the beginning of, and appears only in, the Book VII invocation, is a satiric muse since I've argued that the last two invocations are satiric in nature. I certainly do not intend to say that she is some kind of patroness of satire; but as stated before, she seems to have a dual nature, especially if we read her to be the same muse throughout the four invocations of *Paradise Lost*. If the essence of irony or satire is to say one thing and mean another, then I think she qualifies as ironic in a strange way. When Milton writes, "The meaning, not the Name I call," does he not acknowledge that he says one thing while he means another? Our own sense of irony is usually literary; but in Milton's day, people educated in Aristotle and Aquinas as Milton was, would have known that irony was sometimes construed as a sin. When Aristotle talks about irony, it is not in his *Poetics* but rather in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. And in his commentary on that work, Aquinas calls irony a *fictio falsi*, essentially a lie. Milton avoids irony in the case of Urania because he shows his hand by telling exactly what he is doing. It is a post-modern technique: an author denies the worth of a signifier even as he employs it.

Nevertheless, if you listen closely to the tenor of the Book VII invocation, there is a certain emotional honesty to it. At its composition Milton, unlike during his heyday as Cromwell's Latin Secretary in the Commonwealth years, was ostracized and unemployed in addition to being blind and gouty - merry enough when visitors called, but deeply troubled inwardly, with "dangers compassed round." Critical analysis, such as mine so far, often undercuts the full value of pathos; and reading Milton aloud, it's often difficult not to intone gravely with timpani for metronome and fists for gesticulation. Viewed emotionally, unsatirically, that initial conditional and the ensuing pleas are incredibly poignant. Milton seems to be saying, "Help me Urania, if that's even who you are. My life is in such turmoil, I can't be certain anymore. Keep me safe from dangers and let me find a sympathetic ear. Help me figure out why there is so much evil in the world and assure me that my dreams have not been empty." The ambiguities surrounding the figure of Urania are a reflection of uncertainties in Milton's own life at the time of the composition of her invocation.

## Meditating the Muse

*The spitefulness of language*: once reassembled, in order to *utter* itself, the total body must revert to the dust of words, to the listing of details, to a monotonous inventory of parts, to crumbling – Barthes “The Blazon”<sup>22</sup>

By the seventeenth century, Milton’s Urania had become a sum of her components from ancient and medieval sources, and the purpose of this chapter is to unpack them in a heuristic blazon. It envisions and describes a philological history of Urania up to the publication of *Paradise Lost* in 1667. While the expanse of time and the variety of sources are great, it is possible to trace thematic consistencies in Urania’s ever-evolving persona. Before discussing the specific metamorphoses of Urania, I will discuss Milton’s employment of the Muses in his earlier poems to get some idea of the profound difference between them and *Paradise Lost* and to review classical treatments of the Muses. Focusing then on Urania, I hope to prove that in addition to the traditional Muse of Astronomy, she combines with Uranian Aphrodite from Plato’s *Symposium* to become a representative of heavenly love. Many cues in the invocations will suggest that Milton consciously had Venus in mind as he composed them. This Uranian Aphrodite stands opposite to Dionian Aphrodite, who is a transformed eastern goddess that is patron (in Plato’s imagination) of earthly, carnal love. With the rise of Roman literature, the distinction between these two disappears and the myths are blurred – Dionian Venus

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<sup>22</sup> In Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Milller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 113.

becomes simply “Dione” and Uranian Venus simply “Urania.” Thus Urania is freed of her evil twin and her explicit association with Venus to become a figure in allegories of cosmogenesis. Through Late Antiquity and the Medieval period, she will come to play a significant role in the ordering of the world out of chaos, the creating of mankind, and the immortalizing of men’s souls. An amalgamation of the positive connotations about Urania may have led Dante to invoke her in his *Purgatorio*, perhaps the first instance of her employment in this capacity. Once Greek learning has been revived in Europe during the Renaissance, it appears that scholars would revisit Venus in the contexts that she had over the centuries already shed. It becomes a literary topos, for example, to figure out if the Venus a particular poet describes is the Platonically chaste or wanton one. But Milton, unlike some of his contemporaries, does not seem preoccupied with this debate; and in good faith he retains the best from Urania for his epic. From when she first appears in literature in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, she is ultimately transformed by the time of the Renaissance into an ersatz, synthesized Christian Muse.

#### Primary Sources, Dates, Editions

The logical starting point is Hesiod’s nine muses and their assignations: Calliope (epic), Clio (history), Euterpe (flute-playing), Terpsichore (lyric poetry and dancing), Erato (lyric poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Thalia (comedy), Polyhymnia (hymns and pantomime), and Urania (astronomy). Hesiod, one of the oldest known Greek poets, lived sometime around 700 BCE, and his influence remained significant through the

Renaissance and for Milton. The edition of his *Theogony* that I cite was translated in verse for Penguin Books in 1973 by Dorothea Wender. Plato (circa 429-347 BCE) is the next major figure to write about Urania at length, as Uranian Aphrodite. She appears in the dialogues *Phaedrus* (translated by R. Hackforth, 1952) and *Symposium* (translated by Michael Joyce, 1935), which I cite from Edith Hamilton's Princeton University Press edition of 1961; however, where appropriate, I also refer to Benjamin Jowett's still excellent 1871 translation or to the modern Christopher Gill (Penguin, 1999).

In later incarnations, Urania participates in a tradition of cosmic journey/dream narratives, a tradition that allows her a multiplicity of assignments and duties. These are Platonic or Neo-Platonic imaginative and allegorical works in which at least one character travels through the cosmos and the heavens are described in detail. Some form of Urania figures in most of them. Satan, the Son, Raphael, and even Adam in his dream make such journeys in *Paradise Lost* as arguably does Urania as she descends from heaven to inspire Milton on earth. This genre more or less begins with "The Dream of Er" at the end of Plato's *Republic*. Again, I use a translation from the Hamilton edition by Paul Shorey (1930-5); however, in the final chapter, I will refer to a volume (once owned by Edgar Lee Masters), Thomas Taylor's translation (1804), revised and edited by Theodore Wratishaw in 1894. Cicero's analogue to Plato's dream is "The Dream of Scipio" at the end of his own *Republic*, written in 51 BCE. Although the larger part of this work was lost until the nineteenth century, the dream itself, in isolation, was rescued in Late Antiquity by Macrobius in his highly influential *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, written sometime in the early fifth century CE. I refer to William Harris Stahl's

Columbia University Press translation (1952). Another near-contemporary of Macrobius was Martianus Capella, whose *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, another example of the genre containing a Urania figure, was also studied deeply by medieval scholars. Again, I utilize an edition by Stahl, the Columbia University Press (1971-1977). Although Urania does not appear specifically in his *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius (480-524) reiterates certain relevant themes; I cite S. J. Tester's translation for the Loeb Classical edition from Harvard University Press (1973).

In France in the late middle ages, authors such as Bernardus Silvestris of Chartres and Alan of Lille (Alanus ab Insulis), both of whom Dante read, would revisit the texts of Late Antiquity and incorporate certain ideas from them into their own works. Chaucer immortalizes Macrobius and Alan in English literature by mentioning them by name in "The Parliament of Fowls." Bernardus' *Cosmographia* (mid-twelfth century) and Alan's *Anticlaudianus* and *De Planctu Naturae* (after Bernardus in the twelfth century) are three of the first "epics" since ancient times, and there are striking affinities between Milton and Bernardus especially.<sup>23</sup> Winthrop Weatherbee's translation of Bernardus for Columbia University Press (1990) is my source. James Sheridan translated both of Alan's texts I cite for the Ponifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, *Anticlaudianus* (1987) and *De Planctu naturae* (1990). Surprisingly, this tradition has been largely overlooked by Milton critics in spite of Urania's numerous appearances within it. When James Turner, for example, writes about the Neo-Platonic tradition, he skips from Augustine's times to

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<sup>23</sup> Although Ernst Curtius *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1953) argues that Bernardus is a Pagan Humanist, there are Judeo-Christian elements, and allegory is always subject to its reception.

the Italian Renaissance with only a few references to Aquinas and the Middle Ages, and never mentions Urania. An investigation into the relevance of these texts to Milton's Urania is long overdue.

### Milton, the Muses, and the Poems of 1645

The numerous references to the Muses in the early poems of 1645 and the enhanced edition of 1673 can sound as if they are in a way mechanical or even forced. Clio appears three times in the early poems, in "Elegia Quarta," "Mansus," and "Ad Patrem;" while "Elegia VI" contains both Erato and Thalia. In none of these cases does Milton write a true invocation; instead, the Muses are more like pertinent, yet oblique, references meant to allude to Milton's own sense of poetry or history. Moreover, Milton cites them by name only in the Latin poems, which are imitations of classical works. Nowhere does he name any of the classical Muses explicitly in his English poetry, except of course Urania;<sup>24</sup> but even she is excluded from their company: "Nor of the Muses nine." Clearly the invocation to Urania is another species altogether. Hence these early instances largely come across as the academic exercises of a poet standing and waiting for the overarching unifying principles of a *Paradise Lost*. This may be overstated, but they are certainly not equivalent to the massive and profound invocations of *Paradise Lost*;

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<sup>24</sup> Milton refers to Calliope, mother of Orpheus, but not by name, in *Lycidas*: "What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore," (cited in Hughes, 58).

nevertheless, from them we can glean some idea of the evolution of Milton's relationship to the Muses as he heads toward a more idiosyncratic ideal.

A common trope for identifying the Muses is to refer to their place of origin or residence, or their family name in a trope known as *antonomasia*. Milton has an encyclopedic knowledge of the classical Muses, and he seems to prefer the purest and oldest Greek versions to later, Latin accretions. In *De Natura Deorum* (*The Nature of the Gods*), Cicero outlines three genealogies, two more than Hesiod:

As for the Muses, the first group numbers four, and they are daughters of Jupiter mark two<sup>25</sup>; their names are Thelxinoe, Aode, Arche and Melete. The second set are nine in number, and are the daughters of Jupiter mark three and of Mnemosyne [Memory]. The third gathering, the offspring of Pierus and Antiope, are usually named by poets as Pierides and Pieriae; they are identical in number and in names with the previous set. (p. 127)

The first group never appears anywhere in Milton's poems, but the Pierides crop up in "Elegia Quarta" ("I drank the Pierian waters"<sup>26</sup>) and "Mansus" ("These verses also, Manso, the Pierides are meditating in your praise"). In the first example, Pieria must be a place name, not a personal name; and this follows Hesiod's *Theogony*, in which Cicero's last two groups are in fact identical. Pieria is just north of Olympus. In another source that Milton ignores, Ovid has the Pierides (daughters of Pierus and Euippe) challenge the

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<sup>25</sup> Cicero has already defined several different Jupiters.

<sup>26</sup> All translations of the early poems are by Merritt Hughes in Milton, John *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Hughes (Indianapolis, IN: Odyssey, 1957).



“real” Muses in a contest; they lose and are turned into magpies, “the chatterboxes of the woodlands,” at the end of Book V of the *Metamorphoses*.

A second place name that is synonymous with the Muses is Aonia. In “Ad Ioannem Rousium” the “Aonides” (Muses) appear, as they do in “Ad Patrem” (“the Aonian Stream”). Mount Helicon, the Muses’ traditional home, is located in Aonia, and it is above this same mount that Milton seeks his Muse in the opening exordium of *Paradise Lost* to indicate that his Heavenly Muse is truer than the Pagans’. In a similar fashion he also eliminates Mount Olympus, usually the home of the Gods, but occasionally also of the Muses. “Sing to me now, you Muses, who hold the halls of Olympus” (*Iliad*, 2.573). To describe Urania, Milton writes, “Nor on the top/ Of Old Olympus dwell’st” (PL, 7.6-7). So Milton moves from the somewhat mechanical, all-inclusive iterations in the 1645 *Poems* to a more thoughtful but in a literal sense less grounded approach in *Paradise Lost*. Having dismissed Aonia, Milton struggles to find an appropriate geographical locale: “Of Oreb, or of Sinai” contains the uneasy conjunction “or,” as does “or if Sion hill/ Delight thee more, and Siloa’s brook,” with the added conditional “if.” There is precedent in Horace for multiple or’s and various geographical locations in an invocation:

Yours, Muses, I am borne up steep Sabine hills,  
Yours, whether cool Praeneste be my retreat,  
Or whether Tibur’s gentle slopes, or  
Whether the waters of Baiae please me.

(Ode 3.4)

But this passage seems different in kind, as Horace seems simply to say, “You Muses are with me wherever I go.” Milton’s conjunctions already foreshadow the passage in the Book VII invocation and suggest that Milton’s Muse is not truly of this world.

Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top  
Of old Olympus dwell’st, but heav’nly born,  
Before the hills appeared, or fountain flowed

(PL, 7. 6-8)

So for his great epic, Milton explicitly abandons not just the names of the classical Muses, but also their place names.

This anxiety on the part of the poet, the bizarre grasping after place in the opening lines of the poem, is strange because he has just implored his Muse to sing; and we might ask why she provides several options, especially when the poet finally decides on Sion in the Book III invocation:

but chief  
Thee Sion and the flow’ry brooks beneath  
That wash thy hallowed feet, and warbling flow,  
Nightly I visit

(PL, 3.29-32)

This strangeness seems more complicated than simply wondering if and where a geographical epicenter of Judeo-Christianity might be, or if the Biblical locations are an

adequate or better substitute for Parnassus and Delphi.<sup>27</sup> The proliferation of “or” in this invocation resonates with the uncertainties that exist only a couple hundred lines later when Milton compares Satan’s shield to the moon.

whose orb

Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views

At evening from the top of Fesole,

Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,

Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.

(PL, 1.287-91)

Here the “Tuscan artist” is of course Galileo, whose own location, as well as his observations, is oddly open to conjecture. Presumably, as Muse of Astronomy, Urania would be Galileo’s muse too, and again she appears to falter in this instance. When Milton claims that Galileo’s “glass” is “less assured” (PL, 5.260-1) than Raphael’s eye-witness testimony on the nature of the cosmos, he implies that faith and belief are often preferable to scientific observation. With a similar agenda, Tethys, the Muse in the

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<sup>27</sup> A similar mixing of twenty-four Pagan and Biblical mountains occurs in Bernardus Silvestris *Cosmographia*, trans. Winthrop Weatherbee (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 79. “Atlas supports the firmament and all the stars. At the very threshold of the ethereal region renowned Olympus beholds the dense clouds of a lowering sky. Parnassus with its twin peaks seeks to behold the gods disposing the affairs of men and the seven planets. Lebanon bristles with cedars; Sinai, where the blessed Law was given into the charge of blessed Moses, lies open. Athos rises, together with Eryx and lofty Cythera [home of Venus], Aracyntheus, and the peak of Aganippe.” The passage goes on a bit more.

*Lusiads* tells de Gama, the great explorer, that strength, constancy, and wisdom are more trustworthy than the senses.

The Supreme Wisdome hath vouchsaf'd thee, Knight,  
The grace to see with thy corporeall Eyes  
What the vain Science, what erring Light,  
Of miserable Man cannot comprize.  
Thou, with the rest, up this dark Cops forth-right  
Follow me, strong and constant, stout and wise.

This having been said, shee hands him through a Wood,  
Steep, thick with Thorns, and hard to flesh and blood.

(*Lusiads*, 10.76)

So much of the epic apparatus in *Paradise Lost* depends on and/or critiques traditional observations that are fast becoming obsolete, such as geo-centricity, perfect circles (versus elliptical orbits), and an unchanging number of celestial bodies – all necessary elements for the cosmic journey narratives that I will discuss in this chapter. In addition, by introducing new paradigms, early modern science is upsetting the medieval theory of microcosm/macrocosm that is fundamental to those texts. If Urania is emblematic of these changes, she must reflect the uncertainties that Milton must grapple with as both poet and student of astronomy, Christian and Humanist, at a time when those appear to conflict and when he has gone completely blind just as Galileo had.

Beyond the problem of place, Milton will occasionally invoke a more generic, unnamed Muse in the early poems, as for instance, in “Ad Salsillum”: “Oh my Muse –

fond as you are of moving with halting step” (cited in Hughes, p. 125). When Milton personalizes his Muse as he does here, he approaches the intensely personal invocations of *Paradise Lost*. A telling example can be found in “Lycidas”:

Alas! What boots it with uncessant care  
To tend the homely slighted Shepherd’s trade,  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?

(“Lycidas,” ll. 64-6)

Virgil provides the template here in his First Eclogue: *Tityre, tu patulae recumbans sub tegime fagi/ silvestrem tenui Musam meditaris avena* (“Tityrus, lying back beneath wide beechen cover,/ You meditate the woodland Muse on slender oat”) (p. 30). Even to Milton, this is already formulaic – we saw in “Mansus” the Pierides meditating; and then *Comus* has “’Tis most true/ That musing meditation most affects/ The pensive secrecy of desert cell” (ll. 385-7). Nevertheless in “Lycidas,” he changes the tone beautifully to suit the purpose, a tribute to a lost young colleague. If in *Paradise Lost* Milton seeks to supersede the pagans, it would seem likely that he would continue to employ a strictly anonymous Muse; yet he does not. He returns to the name “Urania” in a poetic tactic that is strategically regressive and ironic; and he will not return to her by name in *Paradise Regained*.

#### Urania and the Nature of Heavenly Inspiration

In addition to problems with the mechanical nature of these usages, some modern critics have trouble with Milton's seemingly aggressive relationship to his Muse, when he seems to grab her by the lapels even as he begs for her assistance. For instance, Stanley Fish writes, "what Milton does [in the invocation in Book VII] is recognize the Goddess from the podium, grant her a turn at saying, give her leave to speak, to play in *his* presence; it is he who says who has the say and thus it is he who says even when she is doing the saying" (p. 520). But this is classical and modern commonplace. Virgil's verb *meditaris*, "you meditate," is a deponent; that is, its form is passive, but its meaning is active. By transference, it would appear that actual meditation is both active and passive too. Martianus Capella writes a complicated allegory in *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury* in which Philology, having been nurtured by Philosophy, Immortality, Phronesis (Wisdom), and the Muses, among others, regurgitates all types of books and writings. The tale acknowledges the fact that books come from within and must only be coaxed out; hence, a poet merely needs guidance to utter what is already inside, written on his soul. After all, memory [Mnemosyne] is the mother of the Muses; and as the Cambridge Platonists say, true divinity *e nobis nascitur*.<sup>28</sup> The senses of both the Eclogue and Martianus come through in the very beginning of Spencer's *The Faerie Queene*.

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,  
 As time her taught in lowly Shepheards weeds.  
 Am now enforst a far vnfitter taske,  
 For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,

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<sup>28</sup> Horace writes, *orator fit, poeta nascitur*.

And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;  
Whose praises hauing slept in silence long,  
Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds  
To blazon broad emongst her learned throng:  
Fierce warres and faithfull loues shall moralize my song.

(FQ, 1.1)<sup>29</sup>

In Martianus' story, Urania gathers up many of the books, and it is amusing to think of *Paradise Lost* as Philology's vomit delivered to Milton's bed nightly. Urania sings, "You [Philology] formerly studied what cause whirled the interdependent spheres, now as their leader you shall assign causes to their sweeping motions" (p. 41). Hence *Paradise Lost*, like Adam and Eve's prayers before the fall, is "unpremeditated" (PL, 9.24).

Etymologically, Urania derives from the Greek *ouranos* or heaven, and so it is appropriate that Urania knows astronomy and that in the unfortunate<sup>30</sup> frontispiece to Milton's 1645 *Poems*, she holds an astrolabe. She is conventionally identified with astronomy well into the twentieth century. For example, Charles Montagu Doughty's *Mansoul* (1923) makes astronomers the "sons of Urania." Because she represents the harmony of the universe, not surprisingly she is sometimes the mother of Linos the mythical musician, as Samuel Boyse verifies in "To Serena" (1738). Boyse has her play the "celestial lyre" as Milton has her sing the "celestial song." Milton's musical heavens

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<sup>29</sup> It appears Spencer's fit audience is the Muse's "learned throng."

<sup>30</sup> The sculpture of Milton is thoroughly unflattering.

must reflect this characteristic of Urania; moreover, C. S. Lewis reminds us that just as Hephaestus depicts a boy playing the lyre and singing a sweet song called “Linos” on the shield of Achilles (*Iliad* Book XVIII), such popular music is essential to “oral poetry of the heroic age” (p. 14). Perhaps more significantly for the author of “Lycidas,” Linos supposedly invented the *threnos*, from which English derives threnody (Heraclides Ponticus).

Even though Milton excludes his Urania of Book VII from Hesiod’s company of Muses, variations of Urania following Hesiod keep vestigial qualities of this Muse and she is more transformed than cut off. Beginning with the earliest commentators on *Paradise Lost*, “Urania” more or less drops out of the discussion. For example, Richardson and Newton plausibly claim that Milton is invoking a Judeo-Christian spirit, higher and better than the Pagan Muses. Thus Richardson comfortably claims that the initial invocation “conveys the idea of Sacredness, Holiness, being Set apart and Consecrated to God” (p. 3). But it is too easy to dismiss her so, for the word Urania is essentially pagan, and we must determine how she becomes Christian.

Although it is not itself a dialog containing a dream or cosmic journey, a good place to continue an investigation into the meaning of Urania is Plato’s *Symposium*.

Now you will all agree, gentlemen, that without Love there would be no such goddess as Aphrodite. If, then, there were only one goddess of that name, we might suppose that there was only one kind of Love, but since in fact there are two such goddesses there must be two kinds of Love. No one, I think, will deny that there are two goddesses of that name – one, the elder, sprung from no



mother's womb but from the heavens themselves, we call the Uranian, the heavenly Aphrodite, while the younger, daughter of Zeus and Dione, we call Pandemus, the earthly Aphrodite. It follows, then, that Love should be known as earthly or as heavenly according to the goddess in whose company his work is done. (180d-e)

The Uranian Aphrodite was born when Chronos severed the testicles of his father Ouranos ("Heaven"), which then fell into the sea near the island of Cyprus. This "Cyprian Queen," Botticelli's famous Venus who sprang from them, thus came into being without any female agency (no womb except the sea itself) and so became the patron of non-procreative, same-sex, and "Platonic" relationships. Milton echoes this creation myth in "Elegia Quinta": "Venus herself is making her annual renewal of her aging form and appears to have sprung afresh out of the warm sea." This sentence contains the senses of two false etymologies, one that "Aphrodite" and "April" are related to *apertus* or opening (of spring) (Macrobius), the other that "Venus" and *venire*, or the coming (of spring) are (Cicero); and both dispute her link to the Greek *aphros* or (sea) foam.

How Venus arrives at this role of springtime renewal might best be explained by Macrobius' elaboration on the allegory behind the birth of Uranian Aphrodite. In his other great work, the *Saturnalia*, Macrobius reminds us that in this myth, Saturn, as Chronos or "Time,"

having cut off the privy parts of his father, Heaven [ouranos], threw them into the sea and that from them Venus was born and received the name Aphrodite from

the foam [aphros] out of which she was formed – a myth from which we are meant to understand that, while chaos lasted, times and seasons did not exist, since time has fixed measurements and those are determined by the revolution of the heavens.<sup>31</sup> [...] the seeds of all things which were to be created after the heavens flowed from the heavens [...] However, the power of generating an everlasting succession of living creatures passed from the heavenly fluid to Venus (pp. 64-5).

Presumably chaos, constantly in flux, exists outside of time. Time forces himself on Heaven and removes his procreative parts, and throws them into the world of time and space. According to Hesiod, Earth and Heaven beget several children besides Chronos, including Mnemosyne and Tethys, who would then all be Urania's half siblings. Urania is Milton's muse, Tethys is Camoes' muse, and Mnemosyne is the mother of the traditional Muses. This Uranian Aphrodite over time combines with the Muse of Astronomy and is transformed in the Christian era into a new personality equipped to inspire the composition of an epic.

It may seem improbable that Milton would invoke a variation of Venus in his great Christian epic *Paradise Lost*. But from his very birth, Milton associates himself with her. Inscribed in his family Bible is "John Milton was born the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1608 die Veneris half an howr after 6 in the morning." Granted that date was a Friday, which in a Romance language would be Venus's Day, as in the Italian *venerdi*; but then why would

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<sup>31</sup> An inscription I once spotted on a former navigation building in Barcelona read: *Uranie coeli motus scrutatur et astra*.

the next entry read, “Christofer Milton was born on Friday...”? I am being a tad facetious, but still there is a recurring connection between love and poetry, as in “Mansus,” where “Paphian myrtle and Parnassian laurel” are juxtaposed side-by-side. Venus is always associated with myrtle, and she hails from Paphos in some myths; meanwhile, the poets receive their laurels if blessed by the Muses of Parnassus. Myrtles and laurels also appear in the opening two lines of “Lycidas”; and they form a natural foil in the sexually charged Garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost* too:

The roof  
Of thickest covert was inwoven shade  
Laurel and Myrtle, and what higher grew  
Of firm and fragrant leaf.

(PL, 4.692-5)

The relationship is made clear in “Sonnet I” where Milton writes, “Whether the Muse, or Love, call thee his mate,/ Both them I serve and of their train am I.” Furthermore, while some have heard echoes of the Epicurean philosophy of Lucretius in the first invocation, they have missed the fact that one passage in particular looks similar to Lucretius’ invocation to Venus.

Thou from the first  
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dove-like sat’st brooding on the vast abyss  
And mad’st it pregnant: what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support

(PL, 1.19-23)

Mother of Romans, delight of gods and men,  
Sweet Venus, who under the wheeling lines of heaven  
Rouse the ship-shouldering sea and the fruitful earth  
And make them teem – for through you all that breathe  
Are begotten, and rise to see the light of the sun

(DRN, 1.1-5)

The similarities are striking, especially if you remember that doves pertain not just to the Holy Ghost, but also to Venus. Milton writes in “Elegia Prima”: “Venus, the giver of life (it is believed) has come hither, drawn by her twin doves and escorted by her quiver-bearing soldiery.” Moreover, in the Book IX invocation, Milton mentions “Cythera’s son,” who is Aeneas, just as he segues to “my celestial patroness.” Cytherea is, according to Hesiod, the birthplace of Aphrodite. An invocation to Venus is not unheard of in the English tradition:

Cytherea, thow blysfyl lady swete,  
That with thy fyrbrond daunttest whom the lest  
And madest me this sweven for to mete,  
Be thow myn helpe in this, for thow mayst best!  
As wisly as I sey the north-north-west,

Whan I began my sweven for to write,

So yif me myght to ryme, and endyte!

(Chaucer, "Parliament of Fowls," ll. 113-9)

A "sweven" is a dream and there are distinct echoes from this passage in Milton's invocations – dreams and Venus.

That some form of desire should mold the universe is an idea as old as Hesiod; and it is a Neo-Platonic commonplace that Eros serves as intermediary between the world of ideas and the world of appearances. For the Cambridge Platonists, Ernst Cassirer writes, "between the two worlds there can be no direct ontological community...but some relation must, nevertheless, obtain between these two essentially distinct worlds....Eros is the spirit intermediate between the divine and the human" (p. 94). Moreover, Plato allegorizes this situation in the *Symposium*, in which Resource and Need beget Love. "So Love [Eros] became the follower of Aphrodite because he was begotten on the same day that she was born, and further, he was born to love the beautiful since Aphrodite is beautiful herself" (202e). Only a couple of steps are necessary to transfer this role to Urania.

A lot has been written about the Cambridge Platonists, many of whom were near-contemporaries of Milton, and so they are part of the Renaissance "outcropping" of Platonism I describe in the introduction. While this dissertation will not treat them in too much depth because they do not extensively participate in Uranian discourse, in poetry at any rate, their ideas about instrumentalism, to apply a term anachronistically, can help explain why Milton performs his sleight of hand in naming Urania and why he does so

when he does. Christian Platonists of the seventeenth century, like their Italian Renaissance predecessors, were preoccupied with the relationships between the Plotinian One and the cosmos. Oxford Platonist and Arminian Thomas Jackson writes in 1628 that the deity is “an excellency too transcendent to be comprehended under the name of something, or of anything, for this were to make him a numerable part of being” (cited in Dockrill, p. 57). Yet Michael Dockrill warns, “The danger of a high transcendence for theism is that it not only tends to erode the positive claims about God which are essential to theistic faith, it also threatens to sever or render opaque the link between the creator and the goodness and rationality of the created order” (p. 57). Paul addresses that danger in Romans (1:20): “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” In his own *de doctrina Christiana* Augustine glosses Paul, “so that by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and the spiritual” (p. 10). As Book VII “relates how and wherefore this world was first created” (Argument), naming Urania is Milton’s concession to the project at hand, a poetic iteration of the unknown, however uncertain and faith-based that project must be.

### The Dual Nature of the Two Aphrodites

The *Pervigilium veneris*, a fascinating anonymous text from Late Antiquity that is briefly quoted at the end of T. S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland,” was rescued in a manuscript, the Codex Salmasianus, obtained by Milton’s political soon-to-be arch-rival Salmasius.

It acknowledges Plato's two Aphrodites, the Uranian and the Dionian. According to the critical apparatus attached to Cecil Clementi's translation, the ancient Greeks invented Dionian Aphrodite as a way to subdue sexual religious cults such as that of Astarte, the Phoenician Aphrodite, and Thammuz, the Phoenician Adonis, that were filtering in from the east and competing with the local religions. Milton recalls "the loves of the Assyrian gods" from the Italian writer Marini (in "Mansus") and then writes his own account of "Astarte, Queen of Heav'n" in *Paradise Lost*:

With these in troop  
Came Astoreth, whom the Phoenicians called  
Astarte, queen of heav'n. with crescent horns;  
To whose bright image nightly by the moon  
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs, in Sion also not unsung, where stood  
her temple on th'offensive mountain, built  
By that uxorious king, whose heart though large,  
Beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell  
To idols foul.

(PL, 1.437-446)

Again, the odd link is the place name "Sion," where Urania might choose to inspire the poet in the opening invocation. Coming as it does between the first two invocations, this passage further complicates Milton's choice of Sion in the Book III invocation. Sion is a crux, a place where an erring king such as Solomon, "that uxorious king," might go astray and a thoughtful poet might not. It seems to depend on which Aphrodite he is

willing to follow. If the Venus on Sion is the Uranian, then the poet is confident; if she is the Dionian (by equating her with Astarte), then civil society and religion are disrupted.

In the Platonic revision in the *Symposium*, this eastern Astarte becomes Dione, whom the Greeks marry to Zeus; and both their names are etymologically related to “shine” in the Sanskrit and “heaven” in the Greek, both therefore “personifications of the brightness of Heaven” (Anonymous, ed. Clementi, p. 208). These exotic and dangerous female cult figures were thereby domesticated in the Olympian pantheon, though they still seemed to pose a threat in Plato’s imagination. Dione and Zeus then beget the so-called “Dionian Aphrodite.” This family unit also appears in the *Iliad*, where having been wounded by Diomedes, “The deathless Aphrodite sank in Dione’s lap/ And her mother, folding her daughter in her arms,/ Stroked her gently” (*Iliad*, 5.417-9). Since Dione (of Dodona in Epirus, site of a famous oracle to Zeus) and Zeus parented Dionian Aphrodite, she became the patron of procreative, heterosexual, carnal and common love, which in the Platonic system was clearly inferior to Uranian, heavenly, immaculately conceived love.

Herein lies one early manifestation of the unfortunate dichotomy that has plagued women for millennia – that a woman is either a whore or a virgin, and Venus herself is no exception. In 1616, William Drummond, whose extensive personal library held most of the texts discussed in this chapter (DLB), included in his collection of poems the “Urania, or Spiritual Poems.” The first of these longs for the Golden Age, a time before



wickedness, feuds or war, when Astraea, daughter of Zeus and Themis,<sup>32</sup> was goddess of justice to mankind. After wickedness overwhelmed the world, she fled to the heavens to become Virgo and took her place next to the scales of Libra, as Milton well knew.

Th'Eternal to prevent such horrid fray  
Hung forth in heav'n his golden scales, yet seen  
Betwixt Astraea and the Scorpion sign,  
Wherein all things created first he weighed,  
The pendulous round earth with balanced air  
In counterpoise, now ponders all events,  
Battles and realms.

(PL, 4.996-1002)

What is at stake here is the fate of the universe as the warring factions in heaven are about to clash, but not for now. Another scale emerges in Book VIII, when Raphael and Adam are dissertating on love.

Love refines

The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat  
In reason, and is judicious, is the scale  
By which to heav'nly love thou may'st ascend,  
Not sunk in carnal pleasure, for which cause  
Among the beasts no mate for thee was found

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<sup>32</sup> Themis [Law] is also one of the children of Earth and Heaven and so Chronos' sister and Urania's half-sister according to Hesiod, *Theogony*, trans. N.O. Brown (New York: Macmillan Press, 1953).

(PL, 8.589-594)

The opposition between Uranian and Dionian love is implicit in Raphael's Platonic rhetoric. Drummond's mini-theodicy similarly portrays the dual nature of Venus and Astraea:

Astraea in this Time  
Now doth not live, but is fled up to Heaven,  
Or if she live, it is not without Crime,  
That she doth use her Power,  
And she is no more Virgin, but a Whore,  
Whore prostitute for Gold:  
For she doth never hold her Ballance even,  
And when her Sword is roll'd,  
The Bad, Injurious, False, she not o'rethrows,  
But on the Innocent lets fall her Blows.

(p. 15)

Thus Milton and Drummond summon a cluster of meanings together between Urania and Astraea, scales and balances, licit and illicit love – all in cosmic dilemmas with dire consequences.

As late as John Evelyn's translation of and commentary on Lucretius' first book of the *De Rerum Natura* (1656), it was a heuristic topos to distinguish which Venus (Aphrodite) an ancient author referred to, the good or the bad. Even Bernardus Silvestris in his *Commentary on Book Six of the Aeneid*, if the attribution is correct, felt the need to

state that Aeneas' mother was the wanton Venus, just as Evelyn concluded Lucretius had invoked the same, logically enough. She is the "Aeneadum genetrix" in Lucretius, through Aeneas, Mother of all Romans and therefore of all British too, through Brutus (cf. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Milton's own *History of Britain*). Thomas Shipman's *The Red Canary* (1677) in which he worries that poets are too much inspired by the "malignant influence" of "Venus or Bacchus," is addressed to "To the right honorable Katherine Lady Roos." In lines 37-9 he writes, "*Venus* may prove *Urania*./ She may enjoy that happy fate,/ If she your virtues imitate." In other myths, on the one hand, she, presumably as the earthly Aphrodite, gives birth by Dionysus, to the outrageous Priapus according to Strabo and Pausanias; on the other hand, she, presumably as the heavenly Aphrodite, gives birth again by Dionysus, to the beloved Hymen/Hymenaeus according to Euripides. John Langhorne's (1735-1779) "Hymeneal" makes Hymen "Urania's favoured child," corroborating Samuel Sheppard's "Epithalamion" from *The Loves of Amandus and Sophronia* (1650 - a title that also links love and wisdom) that gives the same genealogy.

In the *De planctu naturae* (*The Complaint of Nature*, ca. 1170), Alan of Lille changes this myth to suit his own agenda. In that work, Venus is always Dione's Daughter, the "lawless and solecistic" Venus (p. 131). She is "solecistic" because she, like "a fault in the grammar of a sentence, especially a lack of concord" (Quintilian, cited by James Sheridan in Alan, p. 131), therefore stands outside grammatical and sexual propriety. Allegorized Nature educates her in the proper forms of love that exclude specifically same-sex love. And since that love might be associated with Uranian love, Urania

nowhere appears in this work. When she is ready, this improved Venus marries Hymenaeus and they give birth to Desire. This is a church-centered revision meant to consolidate heterosexual, marital chastity, and as we will see, to rewrite his main source, Bernardus, whose religious and literary attitude toward sexuality is inclusive. Like Milton, Alan argues that proper, domesticated, procreative love can be as chaste as Uranian. However, Alan concedes that the dual nature of Venus could still at any time reappear. Venus has an extra-marital affair with Antigenius (Antigamus in some manuscripts, Sheridan notes) and delivers a child, Jocus (Joke or Sport). Alan complains, “Two sons [Desire and Joke] were given, then, to Dione’s daughter, different by discrepancy of origin, dissimilar by law of birth, unlike in their moral reputations, different by diversity of skill” (p. 164-5).

### The Interchangeability of the Aphrodites

In his commentary on the *Pervigilium veneris*, Clementi further notes that with the fall of Attic Greece, the Uranian Aphrodite myth began to lose credibility in favor of the Dionian. But even in the *Pervigilium Veneris* itself, as well as other later texts, the two Venuses are often conflated. In Roman times and Late Antiquity, the Platonic distinction between the two Aphrodites disappears in favor of a conglomeration of myths where Venus, Apohrodite, and Dione become interchangeable. Thomas Stanley’s 1649 translation of the *Pervigilium veneris* (ca. 307 CE), which was commented on by Salmasius himself, shows Dione appropriating the myth of Urania’s birth:

Loves Queen to morrow, in the shade;  
Which by these verdant trees is made,  
Their sprouting tops in wreaths shall bind,  
And Myrtles into Arbours wind;  
To morrow rais'd on a high throne,  
*Dione* shall her laws make known [...]  
Then the round Oceans foaming flood,  
Immingled with Celestial blood,  
'Mongst the blew people of the main,  
And Horses whom two feet sustain,  
Rising *Dione* did beget,  
With fruitful waters dropping wet.

(ll. 9-21, Stanley, p. 136)

Certainly an extraordinary “immingling” of myths.

An example of this interchangeability occurs at the beginning of another cosmic journey narrative, the “Cupid and Psyche” digression in *The Golden Ass* (mid-second century CE), where Apuleius writes,

Meanwhile the news had spread through the nearby cities and adjoining towns that the goddess [Venus] born of the blue depths of the sea and fostered by its foaming waves had made public the grace of her godhead by mingling with mortal men (4.28).

Clearly this refers to Uranian Venus. But later in the same story, Apuleius continues,

Then turning to Venus, 'Daughter,' [Jupiter] said, 'do not be downcast or fear for your great lineage or social standing because of this marriage with a mortal [i.e. between Cupid and Psyche]' (6.23).

Just as clearly, this is Dionian Venus because she is Jove's daughter. In addition to this fusing of Venuses, Venus acquires another role in which she becomes intimately involved in the process by which the human soul (represented by Psyche) becomes immortal, even if here Venus is opposed to it, while her son Cupid is not. Moreover, in order to come to terms with this change, Venus must take a cosmic journey in a chariot to visit her father Jupiter, spokesman for justice.

Venus, however, had given up earthbound expedients in her search, and set off for heaven. She ordered to be prepared the car that Vulcan the goldsmith had lovingly perfected...Of the many doves quartered round their mistress's chamber there came forth four all white...they submitted to the jeweled yoke, then with their mistress on board they gaily took the air. The car was attended by a retinue of sportive sparrows...The clouds parted, heaven opened for his daughter... (6.6)

But Jupiter acquiesces to Cupid's demands: he grants immortality to Psyche and allows Cupid to marry her, even though Cupid's arrows had often "wounded this breast of mine [Jupiter's] by which the behavior of the elements and the movements of the heavenly bodies are regulated" (6.22). This appears to be another poetic reiteration of what Hesiod had written long before, that Desire is a primal cosmic force that helps make organized matter out of chaos. Certainly, Apuleius' Venus is petty and vain; but perhaps the mirror

she carries (4.31), as in Diego Velasquez' "The Toilet of Venus," will become the mirror of the heavens in later depictions of the cosmos.

Echoes of the themes in Apuleius and the interchangeability of Urania and Venus become apparent in Martianus Capella's *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury* (composed sometime between 410 and 429): "Urania with gentle kindness gave [Psyche] a gleaming mirror which Wisdom had hung in Urania's rooms amongst her gifts – a mirror in which Psyche could recognize herself and learn her origins" (p. 7). In the Book VII invocation of *Paradise Lost*, Wisdom is Urania's sister, while in Martianus their relationship is unclear, although they are both goddesses. Perhaps we can add this tradition to the criticism, beginning with Hume, of the invocation in Book VII that usually refers us to Proverbs 8 to interpret "Wisdom." Furthermore, the opening of this extraordinary work and Milton's invocations share many features: Martianus invokes a muse who "makes the world fertile"; he mentions "the Thracian lyre [Orpheus] and the blind Maeonian [Homer]"; and Venus, Wisdom, and Urania all appear. Beyond these similarities in content, the linguistic transformation I want to point out is that "Urania" alone begins to displace "Uranian Venus." The adjective becomes the noun, and Milton may have had any combination of meanings in his head as he chose the name "Urania" for his muse.

#### Calliope and Urania

A similar morphing appears to occur between “Urania” and the traditional Muse of Astronomy. Although the name “Urania” is derived from the Greek for “heaven,” her place among the Muses in the ancient concentric cosmic hierarchy varies according to the source. In his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (410 CE or earlier), Macrobius, following Hesiod’s lead, places her in the eighth sphere just below Calliope because Calliope means “best voice” (p. 194). Plato has already imagined the same relationship in the *Phaedrus*:

To the eldest, Calliope, and her next sister Urania, tell of those who live a life of philosophy and so do honor to the music of those twain whose theme is the heavens and all the story of gods and men, and whose song is the noblest of them all. (259d)

So with Urania’s help, Milton will do what the *Phaedrus* says cannot be done: “Of that place beyond the heavens none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and none shall sing worthily” (247c).<sup>33</sup> In *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, however, Martianus Capella locates Urania in the highest station because she is “attuned to the outermost sphere of the starry universe” (p. 16). Each of the nine muses sits on one of the celestial spheres and they are sometimes referred to as the Sirens of the spheres. In Plato’s *Republic* Er dreams,

The spindle [of the rotating spheres] turned on the knees of Necessity, and up above on each of the rims of the circles a Siren stood, borne around in its

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<sup>33</sup> It might be objected that Milton names Urania only in Book VII, where he is specifically concerned with the sphere below the highest heavens; but I have argued that Milton’s Muse remains consistent throughout the epic.



revolution and uttering one sound, one note, and from all the eight<sup>34</sup> there was the concord of a single harmony (Hamilton, p. 841).

Milton writes in “Arcades,” “To the celestial *Sirens*’ harmony,/ That sit upon the nine infolded spheres” (63-4). And in “At Solemn Music,” a “Blest pair of *Sirens*,” probably Urania and Calliope, “wed [their] divine sounds.”

This rivalry between Calliope and Urania persists at least until the Renaissance. Milton may have rewritten Horace Ode 3.4 to begin Book VII: “Descend from Heaven, come now and sing a song,/ A long song, Queen Calliope” (p. 125). While many critics accept the tradition that Calliope is Spenser’s unnamed muse in *The Faerie Queen*, she could just as easily be Urania; for Calliope is always the mother of Orpheus, but Urania is most often a virgin – and Spenser invokes the “holy Virgin chiefe of nine” in the prologue to the first book. In his Book VII invocation to Urania, as in “Lycidas,” Milton dismisses Calliope since she has failed to protect her son Orpheus from being dismembered by the Maenads (PL, 7.32 ff.). In addition, Milton may have preferred Urania because, according to Hesiod, Calliope “is the most exalted of them all [Muses], since it is she who attends on the majesty of kings” (p. 55). This helps explain Virgil’s employment of her in the *Aeneid*, but the glorification of kings is clearly not a part of Milton’s agenda. In his *Purgatorio*, Dante covers both bases by invoking Calliope (canto 1, the famously understated “may Calliope rise somewhat here”) and Urania (canto 29); Virgil had invoked Calliope and Erato. As far as I can tell, Urania’s first appearance as a

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<sup>34</sup> It would appear that equating the Muses with the Sirens, as later writers did, would take some creative arithmetic.

distinct muse of poetry, where she is directly asked by a human being to help compose, occurs in that passage from Dante's *Purgatorio*.

Now Helicon must pour its fountains for me,

Urania must help me with her choir

to put in verses things hard to conceive

(29.40-42).

So Milton's Urania helps him, like Dante and Ariosto, record "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme" (PL, 1.16).

In any event, Urania is always situated very near the firmament, and as such, she is the perfect candidate for conveying divine, permanent, heavenly truths. But with the Christian era comes a distinct distaste for certain pagan myths, including the Muses, until later poets attempt to invent what Curtius calls "harmonistics" between the pagan and the Christian. Curtius writes:

An apologetic tradition of the early Church, which the patristic studies of the sixteenth century had revived, taught that pagan mythology contained a proto-revelation – in more or less distorted form – and that it told of many things which were also related in the Bible. (p. 244)

But the two traditions may not have been too far apart to begin with. In a charming stanza from Camoes' sixteenth century Portuguese epic *Lusiads*, the Muse Tethys explains to De Gama how the transition from Pagan to Christian inspiration requires but a simple shift in perception.

There is no *true*, no glorious God, but *There*:

For Saturn, Janus, Juno, Jove, and I,  
Vain *Creatures* only, and blind *Figments* were  
Betwixt *Mans* pride, and *Mans Idolatry*,  
To stick as *Stars* in the *Poetick Sphere*:  
From whence again w'are borrow'd, by and by,  
For to distinguish the *true Stars* in *Heav'n*,  
To which Astronomers our Names have giv'n

(*Lusiads*, 10.82)

The pagan gods act like an astrolabe by simply defining and giving name to the locations of celestial bodies stars, and constellations.

### Separating Christian from Pagan Inspiration

In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius deliberately changes the guard of divine inspiration.

Now when [Lady Philosophy] saw the Muses of poetry standing by my [his own] bed, helping me to find words for my grief, she was disturbed for a moment, and then cried out with fiercely blazing eyes: “Who let these theatrical tarts in with this sick man? Not only have they no cures for his pain, but with their sweet poison they make it worse.

(p. 135)

Perhaps Milton has a similar agenda in mind when he excludes Urania from the company of the nine muses. And both probably recall Hesiod's warning: "We [the Muses] know enough to make up lies/ Which are convincing, but we also have/ The skill, when we've a mind, to speak the truth" (ll. 27-9). The Muses are not entirely trustworthy and can be downright dangerous; and it was Thamyras, whom Milton mentions in his Book III invocation, who was maimed by the Muses in the *Iliad*.

Dorion where the Muses met  
the Thracian Thamyras, stopped the minstrel's song.  
From Oechalia he came, from Oecalia's King Eurytus,  
Boasting to high heaven that he could outsing the very Muses,  
The daughters of Zeus whose shield resounds with thunder.  
They were enraged, they maimed him, they ripped away  
His voice, he rousing immortal wonder of his song  
And wiped all arts of harping from his mind.

(*Iliad*, 2.686-93)

It's a hard-knock life being a Thracian bard. Interestingly, when Er sees the dead choosing new and appropriate souls for themselves, Orpheus becomes a swan and Thamyras a nightingale, the bird that Milton chooses as his own. Fast on the heels of mentioning Thamyras in the Book III invocation, Milton compares himself to the "wakeful bird," which we take to be the nightingale, given Milton's description of that bird in Book IV: "these to their nests/ Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;/ She alone all night long her amorous descant sung" (PL, 4.601-3). Unlike Satan as a

cormorant, Milton presides over Eden as a nightingale. Tradition also makes Thamyris the inventor of the Dorian mood (the “Dorion” above – noted in the Charles Dexter Cleveland edition of 1873); and in this mood Milton warbles in “Lycidas”: “He [Milton] touch’d the tender stops of various Quills,/ With eager thought warbling his *Doric* lay” (ll. 188-9).

In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Lady Philosophy presents a higher and safer wisdom than the pagan Muses, just as Milton’s Urania lifts him “above the Olympian hill” (PL, 7.3). She wears a dress on which the letters *theta* and *pi* are woven. According to translator S. J. Tester, these stand for the two aspects of philosophy, the theoretical and the practical (Boethius, p. 132). These are also the highest attributes of Macrobius’ cosmos. As the soul descends from heaven through the spheres, it acquires the attributes of each. “In the sphere of Saturn [the highest] it obtains reason and understanding, called *logistikon* or *theoretikon*; in Jupiter’s sphere [second highest] the power to act, called *praktikon*” (Boethius, p. 136). These are, of course, the realms nearest to Urania (and Calliope, although Martianus relegates her to the sphere of Mercury). Moreover, Boethius describes Lady Philosophy as physically bridging the cosmos:

It was difficult to know how tall she might be, for at one time she seemed to confine herself to the ordinary measure of man, and at another the crown of her head touched the heavens; and when she lifted her head higher yet, she penetrated the heavens themselves (p. 133).

So even though Boethius seems to replace the Muses with a new sort of Philosophy, in fact he merely reiterates the worth of Urania under a different guise.<sup>35</sup>

A medieval text that reinforces the connection between Theory, Practice, and Urania, is the *Cosmographia* of Bernardus Silvestris (early twelfth century), in which Theory awakens her sister Practice and her mother Physis in order to greet her aunt, Physis's sister Urania, "Queen of the Stars" (p. 66).

Physis sat dreaming, and was absorbed in deducing, from the potentiality of Nature, and in a highly imaginary way, the composition of man, when a ray of light gave notice of the approach of Urania, and by reflection in the nearby spring revealed the countenance of the still absent goddess. (p. 112)<sup>36</sup>

Bernardus' Urania, who as in Martianus bestows upon the Soul of man the gift of self-knowledge, is an amalgamation of various traditions, most notably Heavenly Love as one aspect of Venus in Plato's *Symposium* and the traditional Muse of Astronomy repackaged as Celestial Wisdom for Christian purposes. Translator of the *Cosmographia*, Winthrop Wetherbee, sums up:

Through [Urania] man's soul will be aligned with the principles of celestial order and harmony, revealing its intrinsic affinity with the divine *ratio* of creation. The implications of this affinity are conveyed by the image of the Mirror of

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<sup>35</sup> To help clarify the passage in *Paradise Lost* that describes Satan as stretching from the earth into the heavens (4.985 ff), John Rumrich refers his readers to the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon* as a precedent: "night in her swift course was half spent, when thy almighty Word leapt from thy royal throne in heaven into the midst of that doomed land like a relentless warrior...and stood and filled it all with death, his head touching the heavens, his feet on the earth."

<sup>36</sup> In Book IV, a reflecting pool is Eve's mirror too.

Providence which Noys [Wisdom in Martianus] presents to Urania for guidance in the task of ‘the composition of a soul [for man] from Endelechia and the edifying power of the virtues. (p. 42)

Urania becomes the perfect Muse for a book on the creation of man.

Milton probably had some sense of these traditions in mind as he wrote *Paradise Lost*. Although the *Cosmographia* was not printed until a couple of centuries after Milton, Archbishop Laud acquired one of the manuscripts for the Bodleian Library at Oxford while it was under his tenure. It is quite possible, then, that Milton would have at least heard about this manuscript if not another, from his friend the librarian John Rouse, or seen it in person during his visit there in 1635<sup>37</sup>. On the *Cosmographia* Curtius remarks, “This singular work is worthy of thorough study. It is a link in the ‘golden chain’ which connects late Paganism with the Renaissance of the twelfth century” (p. 111). He points out that Boccaccio cites Bernardus in his commentary on Dante. In the *Cosmographia*, Bernardus has Nature ascend into the heavens to find her sister Urania so that they can descend to earth and create the first man. It is no coincidence that Milton finally names his Muse “Urania” and has her descend from heaven in the book that recounts the origins of man. He was clearly familiar with the genre because *Paradise Lost* is littered with echoes of images and ideas that pervade earlier cosmic journey/dream narratives: descriptions of the cosmos and chaos; genesis myths; gardens and bowers; mirrors and reflecting pools – references to Narcissus; the angelic hierarchy;

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<sup>37</sup> See David Rogers, *The Bodleian Library and its Treasures* (Henley-on-Thames; Aidan Ellis, 1991) for detailed acquisition dates.

astronomy and astrology; cultivation and waste; that man stands upright and is therefore better than beasts; that man faces the heavens; that the earth is a *punctus*; that the earth hangs by a chain; that different parts of the cosmos can be connected by bridges or ladders; visions of heaven and hell, and, of course, cosmic journeys. Both Satan and the Son ride cosmic chariots, as does Milton himself in “In Obitum Praesulis Eliensis”:

“Among the winged warriors I was carried aloft, clear to the stars, like the venerable prophet of old, charioteer of a fiery chariot, who was caught up to heaven” (Hughes, p. 25). The number seven is significant as well: Macrobius makes it the number of man; in chapter seven of the Alan of Lille’s *Anticlaudianus* man is created, just as the story of man’s creation is recounted in Book VII of *Paradise Lost*. And, of course, Urania is a common personality in these texts in one form or another. Although some of these elements also appear in other works, such as visions of hell in the epics, the language of cosmogenesis that pervades these texts seems fairly unique to the cosmic journey genres.

Moreover, I believe the *Cosmographia* suits Milton’s cosmic philosophy because both authors envision a universe filled with desire and sexual imagery. Both describe the primal chaos as a womb at the beginnings of their works. The final image in Bernardus is “the shining sperm” which Nature fashions into new men; and Milton’s God infuses “vital virtue” and “vital warmth” (PL, 7.236) into the cosmos whereby ocean is “fermented” and the land “conceived” (PL, 7.281). Thus Urania is invoked in Book VII to recount how heavenly love generates the cosmos. And the sexing of the universe is all encompassing. It is in Venus’s sphere, to return to Macrobius, that the soul picks up “the impulse of passion, *epithymetikon*” (p. 136), and it is here that hermaphrodites exist in the



spheres, as the planets Mercury and Venus share some space. Bernardus explains that Mercury engenders hermaphrodites because he “rises at times above the sun, and sometimes lurks beneath him”(103). Martianus also accounts for Hermaphroditus (pp. 18 and 274); and in Plato’s *Timaeus* (42b), the fact that bad souls become females in the next incarnation suggests that all souls are potentially hermaphroditic. In *Paradise Lost*, spirits “Can either sex assume, or both” (PL, 1.423) and Eve’s birth from Adam’s rib reveals a feminine potential in man. Moreover, Milton’s angels have sex “soul with soul” (8.629), an idea already in Bernardus: “[Angels] share the nature of man in that they are impelled by the effects of passion” (p. 106). Milton’s materialism which makes his angels have some sort of corporeal body can also be found in Bernardus: “The divinity of these beings is not wholly simple or pure, for it is enclosed in a body, albeit an ethereal one” (p. 107). On this point, James Turner’s otherwise exhaustive account of eroticism in *One Flesh* misses the mark. His claim that of the theologians after Augustine “none believed that angels enjoyed angelic sexual delight (a heresy generally associated with Islam)” (p. 55) is contradicted by Bernardus. But the danger of falling into the wrong sorts of love is always a danger for fallible man; and so he, like Alan’s Venus, needs laws to correct him. As Curtius explains, “Only a fluid boundary separates [hermaphroditism] from male homosexuality,” a practice condemned by the Church and by Milton (p. 113). Urania will be invoked for her sexual ethics to combat misapplied desire.

## Urania, Antidote to Tyranny

Again, if the liberty of a man consist in the empire of his reason, the absence whereof would betray him unto the bondage of his passions; then the liberty of a commonwealth consisteth in the empire of her laws, the absence whereof would betray her unto the lusts of tyrants. Harrington, *Oceana*<sup>38</sup>

When in the grand invocation to Book VII of *Paradise Lost* Milton invokes Urania, he must imagine her in a dual aspect, one poetical, one political. Beginning with his famous chiasmus, “though fallen on evil days,/ On evil days though fall’n” (PL, 7.25-6), we are permitted the brief biographical sketch of the author at the time of composition that has troubled some readers for its solipsism, and fascinated others for its humanism. Like the chiasmus, Milton’s life has experienced a reversal, a reversal of fortune from his glory days as defender of the English people under Cromwell to the dangerous days after the Restoration of the king. The “barbarous dissonance of Bacchus and his revelers,” even though it alludes to those who killed Orpheus and silenced his music, here seems by juxtaposition also to refer to citizens who have failed to uphold the English

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<sup>38</sup> Harrington, James, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 19-20.

Commonwealth against tyranny, or to the King and court, or both.<sup>39</sup> Thus, “govern” in “govern thou my song” is a pun in its parallel functions of ordering and protecting both the “ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem” (note on The Verse) and to the “true liberty...which always with right reason dwells twinned” (PL, 12.83-5). In this chapter, I will show that Urania is qualified to support a reason-based commonwealth and to oppose lustful tyranny, even as she remains the vehicle for relating heavenly truths and divinely inspired poetry.

#### Urania and Conscience as Political Arbiters

The tradition of cosmic journey narratives we looked at in the last chapter is from the earliest examples essentially political in nature. The ordering of the cosmos must be intimately connected to the ordering of society, organized as they are by laws based on firm, unchanging precepts. “The Dream of Er” and “The Dream of Scipio” come at the end of Plato and Cicero’s *Republic*’s, respectively. The main concern of the dream in Plato is what happens to human souls after death. When Macrobius introduces his commentary on Cicero’s dream with a discussion of both dreams, he explains why the placement of souls is so important to the state.

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<sup>39</sup> Commentator Cleveland in John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Charles Dexter Cleveland (Chicago: A. S. Barnes and company, 1873) notes that the lines “intend to satirize the dissoluteness of Charles the Second and his court.”

With a deep understanding of all human affairs, Plato advises throughout his discussion of the establishment of a republic that a love of justice must be instilled in men's minds, without which it is impossible to maintain not only the state, but human fellowship and family as well. He realized that in order to implant this fondness for justice in an individual nothing was quite so effective as the assurance that one's enjoyments did not terminate with death. But how could Plato show that these continued after death except by demonstrating the immortality of the soul? (pp. 81-2)

The love of justice is necessary at all levels – individual, family, friends, society, and government. In harmony with Plato's philosophy, Cicero writes in his dream:

All those who have saved, aided, or enlarged the commonwealth have a definite place marked off in the heavens where they may enjoy a blessed existence forever. Nothing that occurs on earth, indeed, is more gratifying to that supreme God who rules the whole universe than the establishment of...commonwealths. (Macrobius, p. 71)

I have already shown in the previous chapter that Urania is involved not just in the creation of man, but also in the immortalizing of men's souls. With her mirror, she causes the soul to recognize itself and shows it that it is part of the divine *ratio* of creation and instills in it the knowledge of theory and practice necessary for the virtuous life. In addition, she becomes a Greek synonym for Christian conscience. Her frequent appearances in these republican narratives in support of commonwealths, from Macrobius to Dante to Milton, cannot be coincidental.

Urania guides both the individual and the national conscience, which Hobbes and Harrington describe albeit from different political directions. Hobbes writes in the *Leviathan*,

The same Law, that dictateth to men that have no Civil Government, what they ought to do, and what to avoyd in regard of one another, dictateth the same to Common-wealths, that is, to the Consciences of Sovereign Princes, and Sovereign Assemblies; there being no Court of Naturall Justice, but in the Conscience onely; where not Man, but God raigneth... (p. 244)

The citation makes clear that something essential to man's relationship with God is necessary beyond positive law to maintain a state's wellbeing. Urania symbolizes natural law in theory and practice. Hobbes defines the distinction,

*Naturall* are those which have been Lawes from all Eternity; and are called not onely *Naturall*, but also *Morall* Lawes; consisting in the Morall Vertues, as Justice, Equity, and all the habits of the mind that conduce to Peace, and Charity [...] *Positive*, are those which have not been from Eternity; but have been made Lawes by the Will of those that have had the Sovereign Power over others; and are either written, or made known to men, by some other argument of the Will of their Legislator. (p. 197)

The danger is that an evil king like Nimrod might

Quite dispossess

Concord and law of nature from the earth;

Hunting (and men not beasts shall be his game)

With war and hostile snare such as refuse

Subjection to his empire tyrannous

(PL, 12.28-32)

Given undue and exorbitant power, a Nimrod replaces natural law with his own disturbed sense of ethics not based in right reason. In his *Divine Weekes and Workes*, Du Bartas writes a poem on Nimrod and Babylon. His Muse is Urania when he prays,

Print (O Heav'ns King) in our Kings hart's a zeale,

First, of thy lawes; then, of their publike weale:

And if our Courtiers now po-poysoned phrase;

Or now-contagion of corrupted dayes,

Leave any tract of Nimrodizing there;

O cancel it, that they may every where

In stead of Babel, build Ierusalem:

That lowd my Muse may echo under them.

(p. 412)

A harmony exists between Urania's strains and the laws of heaven, reflected in a just kingdom on earth. Not only must a king recognized what God has written on his heart, but it is also incumbent upon each citizen to be attuned to these laws and to live a chaste and saintly life.

Accordingly, where Hobbes is concerned with Princes, Harrington and the theorists of the English Commonwealth apply conscience to the citizens:

But as a government pretending unto liberty, and suppressing the liberty of conscience, which (because religion not according to a man's conscience can as to him be none at all) is the main, must be a contradiction; so a man that, pleading for the liberty of private conscience, refuseth liberty unto the national conscience, must be absurd. A commonwealth is nothing else but the national conscience.

(p. 39)

Milton pleads for "liberty of conscience" throughout his tracts and makes clear in *Paradise Lost* that conscience is God's arbiter.

And I will place within them as a guide  
My umpire conscience, whom if they will hear,  
Light after light well used they shall attain,  
And to the end persisting, safe arrive. (PL, 3.194-7)

And it is neither God nor Satan, but Conscience who is Adam's real oppressor after he comes to understand that he has sinned.

O Conscience, into what abyss of fears  
And horrors hast thou driv'n me; out of which  
I find no way, from deep to deeper plunged! (PL, 10.842-4)

This apostrophe seems a moment of clarity in Adam's otherwise wrongly reasoned cant against his fate. For the English Commonwealth of "saints" that has disburdened itself of the vicarage of both priest and divine right monarch, conscience implanted by God must guide action. But this ethics can, and did in the seventeenth century, also lead to bizarre behaviors and ideas, from overconfidence in one's own election to presumed license to

rant or blaspheme. Conscience, God's "Secretary" in *The Reason of Church Government* (CPW, p. 822), needs a Uranian figure to personify and channel its guiding principles, like the one that keeps Milton himself "More safe...though fall'n on evil days."

Just this kind of protestant vicarage appears before Milton in the writings of Sir Philip Sidney and his family. His fascination with the nature of kingship and the administration of justice comes through in his Menippean *Arcadia(s)*, not just for rulers, but also for commoners. Near the beginning, Sidney's shepherds Claius and Strephon opine:

Hath not [Urania] thrown reason upon our desires, and, as it were given eyes unto Cupid? Hath in any, but in her, love-fellowship maintained friendship between rivals, and beauty taught the beholders chastity? (pp. 7-8)

Friendship and chastity starkly oppose the lust of kings and tyrants, and it is for good shepherds as good citizens to follow their divine directives and enjoy heavenly love. When Sidney's niece Lady Mary Wroth pens her own version of an *Arcadia*, the romance *The Countesse of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), she envisions a fictional royal family that includes a character named Urania. According to editor J. A. Roberts,<sup>40</sup> his fiction, however, was a thinly veiled expose against certain noblemen that led to a storm of controversy, and almost to the volume's recall. The chief allusions refer to the so-called Overbury Affair and its related scandals – adultery, cruelty, despotism, and murder. In short, Frances Howard, Countess of Essex wished to annul her marriage to Robert

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<sup>40</sup> Wroth, Lady Mary, *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, ed. J.A. Roberts (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 35-6.



Devereux, Earl of Essex, to marry Robert Carr, the King's favorite. According to the DNB, it is quite possible that Sir Thomas Overbury and Carr enjoyed a sexual relationship, the kind of which we will see Urania opposes. In any event, Overbury was displeased by the new arrangements and was imprisoned in the Tower to remove him from the proceedings, when the Countess concocted an elaborate scheme to poison Overbury in prison. There he died a broken, sick man in 1613, and trials against the countess proved inconclusive.

Milton must have dreaded the return of such intrigues after the restoration of the same Stuart line in 1660. He had already come to know such aristocratic scandals in his adult lifetime because of the Castlehaven affair. It was in part as response to this scandal that Milton wrote his only masque, *Comus*, to affirm that the Earl of Bridgewater and his family were indeed both aristocratic and virtuous. The Earl of Bridgewater's children played parts in the original production, scored by composer Henry Lawes. Barbara Breasted recounts the lurid details.

In the winter of 1630-1631, the Earl of Bridgewater's brother-in-law, the Earl of Castlehaven, was indicted and imprisoned for raping his own wife and committing sodomy with one of his servants. [...He] was beheaded for these sexual crimes in may 1631 [...] Two of the Earl of Castlehaven's male servants were hung at Tyburn in July 1631 for their participation in his orgies. Before the crowd of onlookers, these two men confirmed the tales of the earl's homosexuality and of his efforts to persuade his favorite servant to beget upon his twelve-year-old daughter-in-law and stepdaughter. (pp. 204-5)

Although Milton does not employ Urania explicitly as a divine example in *Comus*, Wroth's work, which also contains an initial descent from heaven of "bright Venus Queene of love" in her "Chariot drawn by wing'd desire" (p. 85), clearly pits the two kinds of love against each other: the lustful of certain courtiers and the chaste of other courtiers and commoners. To demonstrate how Urania comes to acquire a role as opposer of tyranny and its behavioral corollaries, I will return to her mythopoetic past and again describe her evolution in this vein.

In order to clarify, rather than re-cite Plato and his discussion of the two Venuses in the *Symposium*, I offer exegesis from John Evelyn's commentary on the first book of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (1656):

Plato in his *Banquet* reckons up two [Venuses]; the one very ancient, daughter of the Heavens, Urania, or Caelestis, intimating the brightness and refulgency of the Divinity, together with a most secret affection<sup>41</sup> which she produceth, endeavoring to attract our souls, and unite them to the essence of God. But the second and younger, daughter of Jupiter and Dione, whom he names Pandemia,<sup>42</sup> [is] popular, carnal and voluptuous. (pp. 98-9)

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<sup>41</sup> Evelyn does not define this affection, but the expression does seem slightly bowdlerized or altered from its original homosexual sense.

<sup>42</sup> On an interesting aside, Milton's "Pandemonium" seems to be a triple pun. Etymologically, it could mean "pan-daemon," or "demons everywhere." "Pandemia" is patroness of the wrong sort of love because it is common among the people, or "pan-demos." And "pandemic," the first written appearance of which the OED cites from Harvey's *Morbus Anglicus* 1666, is similarly a disease that affects or infects all people. Thus you might get in *Paradise Lost*: "a plague of lusty demons."

Beyond her patronage of proper love, it is clear from his commentary that Evelyn understands Urania to be a mirror to the essence of God and that she performs the important function of drawing souls to heaven that is imperative in Plato and Cicero's *Republics*. If this mediation is Urania's special function, then a Caesar or divine-right monarch, who believes himself to be the mediator between the divine and the earthly, is an imposter. So it was with Nimrod, the first tyrant to "arrogate dominion undeserved/ Over his brethren," (PL, 12.27-8), who falsely claimed "second sovranty" from heaven. This self-quickenning autocrat's Tower of Babel vainly attempts to bridge physically the distance that Urania has made irrelevant spiritually.

### Unruly Consumption

In her role as Muse too, Urania opposes tyranny; for from their earliest days, the Muses were the unwarranted victims of wicked kings. In Book V of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Minerva visits Helicon, where, having been greeted by Urania, one of the muses relates to her their sad history.

We are happy, or would be, were we only safe. So far, it seems, no outrage ever is forbidden, our maiden souls are frightened; we remember, too well, the look of that fierce king Pyreneus. His Thracian soldiery had captured Daulis, he ruled that land, unfairly won, and saw us, once, on our way to Parnassus (p. 115).

Then, with false obeisance, the king tricked them into his house to avoid a rainstorm, whereupon he tried to rape them. They fled up to a cliff; he pursued, jumped, and fell to his death – quite literally a “salacious” demise.<sup>43</sup>

A tyrant is the epitome of gluttony and moral dissipation. Milton’s own definition in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* bears this out.

A tyrant, whether by wrong or by right coming to the crown, is he who, regarding neither law nor the common good, reigns for himself and his faction: thus St. Basil, among others, defines him. And because his power is great, his will boundless and exorbitant, the fulfilling whereof is for the most part accompanied with innumerable wrongs and oppressions of the people, murders, massacres, rapes, adulteries, desolation and subversion of cities and whole provinces  
(CPW 3.212)

“The Dream of Er” describes just such a person: “Now this Ardiaeus had been a tyrant in a certain city of Pamphylia<sup>44</sup> just a thousand years before that time and had put to death his old father and his elder brother, and had done many other unholy deeds” (Hamilton, p. 840). In good *contrapasso* fashion, he is flayed and then and dragged through the thorns in the afterlife. But what appalled the Muses in Ovid was not just the king’s political tyranny, but also his sexual incontinence, which is symbolic of that tyranny.

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<sup>43</sup> I mean for this to be a pun based on an etymological transference noted in the *Cassell’s Latin Dictionary* under the entry for “salio, salire...”: to spring, leap, or jump. According to the editors, “sal or mica (salis) saliens, *sacrificial salt, which* (as a good omen) *leapt up when thrown into the fire: farre pio et saliente mica, Hor.*”

<sup>44</sup> Oddly, this is the name of one of the brace of lovers in Lady Mary Wroth’s sonnet cycle *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*.

Simply put, the tyrant wishes to possess and consume everything – material goods as well as others’ bodies and sexualities. As Caligula says, “*Omnia mihi, & in omnes licere*” (Suetonius, p. 217), or roughly, “All things belong to me and in all things I am allowed.”<sup>45</sup>

But it seems that by the time of Caligula’s Roman Empire, the Muses had forgotten their troubled past, at least all but Urania. Consider this passage from a poem often cited as one of Milton’s sources, DuBartas’ “*Urania, Or the Heavenly Muse*,” translated by Joshua Sylvester (1605).

I [Uraina] cannot (grieffless) see my Sisters’ wrongs  
Made Bawds to Lovers, in deceitfull sayings  
In forged sighs, false tears, and filthy songs,  
Lascivious shows, and counterfeit complainings.

Alas, I cannot, with dry eyes, behold  
Our holy songs sold, and profaned thus  
To grace the graceless; praising (too too bold)  
Caligula, Nero, and Commodus.

(p. 531)

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<sup>45</sup> The Antwerpian commentators of Suetonius. *De vitae caesarum* (Antwerp: Plantiniana Antverpiae. 1591), where I found this quotation, reckoned that Caligula substituted “*mihi*” for “*homini*,” meaning that all things to be enjoyed by every man were now his – a clear affirmation of the shift from republic to empire (p. 217).

Here again we see not only the conventional pairing of harlotry and tyrants, but also the distancing of Urania from her sisters. This is another instance, similar to Milton's proclaiming Urania "nor of the muses nine" (PL, 7.6), that distinguishes her from her sisters in significance.

This passage from DuBartas and Milton's nominal exclusion of the Muse of Astronomy resemble an episode of the *Consolation of Philosophy* that I already cited in the previous chapter, in which lady Philosophy reprimands Boethius for allowing the Muses ("theatrical tarts") into his cell because they "will have no cures for his pain" (p. 135). This time, I want to point out that Boethius<sup>46</sup> was himself fallen on evil days - imprisoned, eventually to be executed, by the tyrant and Arian heretic Theodoric the Ostrogoth.<sup>47</sup> In this work, Lady Philosophy chastises the Muses in a tone not unlike DuBartas' Urania. It would appear that the traditional commodities of the Muses are somehow no longer sufficient to oppose, or even provide consolation against, tyranny, especially as history moves away from the classical towards the Christian. Or, poets have sold out to their tyrannical Kings and prostituted their poetry for cash. Admitting to the error of his ways, in "Urania" Du Bartas feels remorse for having praised bad rulers in the past.

Anon, I meant with fawning Pen to praise

Un-worthie Princes; and, with gold and glory

T'inrich my Fortunes, and my Fate to raise,

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<sup>46</sup> The argument over Boethius' Christianity is not relevant to my overall thesis.

<sup>47</sup> Milton's own Arianism, a Christian belief system that denies the existence of the Holy Trinity, has been well documented by John Rumrich and others.

Basely to make my *Muse* a mercenarie.

Then (gladly) thought I, the (VVagg) Sonne to sing

Of wanton *Venus*; and the bitter-sweet,

That *Too-much Love*, to the best Wits doth bring:

Theame, for my Nature and mine age too-meet.

(p. 529)

The poet switches from the wanton Venus to Urania and is thereby equipped to expound on proper themes. We saw in Hesiod that the Muses can be untrustworthy; here, they can also be unscrupulous and unprincipled in the patronage of the arts they purportedly inspire.

In *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, E. R. Curtius writes, “the rejection of the Muses by Christian poets is scarcely anything but a badge of conventionally correct ecclesiastical thought” (p. 240). Nevertheless, Robert Aylett ponders this transition from the Pagan Muses’ “golden times” to the Christian era in a section that resembles William Drummond’s on Astraea in his “Urania, or Spiritual Poems.” And like it, Robert Aylett’s “Urania, or the Heavenly Muse” (1654) has been largely overlooked as one of Milton’s possible sources. His Urania remarks:

But Satan since [the “golden times”] another pattern set,

Which he would have all his to imitate;

And like the Fowler draweth to his Net

Poor Birds with merry note and pleasing Bait.

But thou that seek'st God's Glory, not thine own,  
And striv'st to quench, not quicken lustful Flames;  
Chuse these divine ensamples I have shown,  
And guild not with fair words the foulest shame.

(p. 88)

Here Urania sounds like The Lady in *Comus* who chastises Comus for his deceitful and purple rhetoric.

Enjoy your dear Wit and gay Rhetoric  
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence,  
Thou art not fit<sup>48</sup> to hear thyself convince'd;  
Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth  
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits  
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,  
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,  
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,  
Till all thy magic structures rear'd so high,  
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.

(ll. 790-799)

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<sup>48</sup> Another fascinating use of “fit” to exclude a specific audience – here the author Comus is unfit to hear his own words!



His power-grab in heaven having been defeated, in *Paradise Lost*, it is the tyrant Satan himself who suffers most from unrelieved lust, especially when he sees the innocent bliss of Adam and Eve:

I to hell am thrust,  
Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,  
Among our other torments not the least,  
Still unfulfilled with pain of longing finds  
(PL, 4.508-11).

Therefore he is compelled to seduce them and all mankind thereafter and draw them to his net for his eternally unfulfilled pleasure. And this is essentially the tyrant's sin – gluttony, the unquenchable thirst for power, treasure, land, and sex that he will do anything to get.

While the other muses might appear reflexively in Renaissance texts, even in Milton's own early poems, they seem little more than curious vestigia; meanwhile, Urania somehow maintains viability as a distinct, if awkward, Christian muse in Du Bartas, Drummond, Aylett and Milton. Like Lady Philosophy, she is the bridge between heavenly truths and personal ethics; and those ethics are based on chastity, friendship and love – three qualities antithetical to tyrannical behavior. The Christianizing of Urania by means of what E. R. Curtius calls "harmonistics" (p. 244) or the attempt to fuse Christian and Pagan influences in the Renaissance, is apparent in Aylett, although more so in DuBartas' poem. To Urania, DuBartas pleads, "Let Christ (as Man-God) be your double mountaine,/ Whereon to muse" (p. 538). Formerly Pagan Urania now serves as heaven's

ambassador and promotes Christian chastity and sexual continence, often in a political context.

But aside from general lasciviousness, Urania is prepared to oppose an important subset of lewd behavior that is causally linked to tyrannical behavior. Perhaps the worst sexual crime among the wretchedly dissolute tyrants in classical and medieval texts is sodomy. This astonishingly commonplace evil underscores the tyrant's belief in his right to possess all bodies and sexualities, regardless of gender, and serves to remind readers of philosophy and history that nothing is beneath a tyrant who believes he is above all. For example, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, on which Aquinas comments, Aristotle discusses the viciousness of the tyrant Phalaris, who had sex with boys - if he didn't eat them first (Aristotle, p. 186). Aquinas reduces the choice to "food or unnatural Pleasure," or two different ways to consume men (p. 643). In the same vein, Nimrod hunts men as his "game" in *Paradise Lost* and is described by Du Bartas as a "Caniball" (p. 412). Gildas writes of the supposed King of Cornwall, Constantine, who disguised himself as an abbot in order to slay two royal youths. Thereafter he abandoned his wife, and God implanted in his heart the "bitter scion of incredulity and folly, taken from the vine of Sodom" (p. 315). Geoffrey of Monmouth recounts the history of Mempricius, who, after killing his brother to obtain the crown, also deserted his wife "and abandoned himself to the vice of sodomy, preferring unnatural lust to normal passion" (p. 78). In all cases, these accusations of sodomy occur as the last stone in an avalanche of wicked behavior. John of Salisbury in his *Policraticus* blames this depravity on the court itself.

[I]t is a frequent occurrence that a court either receives or creates vicious men, among whom transgressions increase in audacity since their vices are indulged by reason of their intimacy with the powerful. [...] For this reason, the court has been compared to the infamous fountain of Salmacis, which is notorious for weakening virility. (p. 90)

Again, the source is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the waters of this "evil fountain [...] make men weak and feeble" and anyone who enters them is turned into a hermaphrodite (Ovid, p. 90).

Milton is of course aware of this tradition. Both Gildas and Geoffrey are sources for his own *History of Britain*, and it is with the very phrase "unnatural lust" that Milton describes Mempricius (CE, p. 16). Moreover, at the very end of Milton's history, the great men of the court were given over to gluttony and "spent all they had in Drunk'ness, attended with other Vices which effeminate mens minds" (CE, p. 316). Reflecting on the poor judgment of those who support a tyrant, Milton in *Eikonoklastes* writes, "they live and dye in such a strook'n blindness, as next to that of *Sodom* hath not happ'ned to any sort of men more gross, or more misleading" (CE, p. 67). It is no coincidence that when Milton resorts to ad hominem in calling Salmasius a hermaphrodite in the "Second Defense," he situates Salmasius in the court of Christina, Queen of Sweden (Hughes, p. 820). Salmasius' Latinized name is of course a near homophone of the infamous fountain.

This type of name-calling perhaps also appears in *Paradise Lost*. In Book 6, Satan baits Abdiel by suggesting that those who continue to serve God are lazy sycophants:

I see that most through sloth had rather serve,  
Minist'ring Spirits, trained up in feast and song;  
Such hast thou armed the minstrelsy of heav'n,  
Servility with freedom to contend,  
As both their deeds this day shall prove

(PL, 6.166-70)

Milton plays on the similarity between “minstrel” and “minister,” a pun noted in the OED. However, “minstrel” could have another meaning related to a passage from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*:

Tybalt: Mercutio, thou consortest with Romeo –

Mercutio: Consort! What, dost thou make us minstrels?

And thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing

But discords...Zounds, consort!

(3.1.45-9)

Inasmuch as this exchange has been interpreted as Mercutio’s sexual joke, founded on Tybalt’s suspicions about the close friendship between Romeo and Mercutio<sup>49</sup>, Milton’s Satan may be following suit. Abdiel’s angry response bolsters this definitional nuance: “Thyself not free, but to thyself enthralled;/ Yet lewdly dar’st thou our minist’ring upbraid” (PL, 6.182). “Lewdly” is often glossed in accordance with the OED with a

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<sup>49</sup> Mercutio’s bisexuality is more apparent in the DaPorto original; and in cosmic journey texts, the sphere of Mercury (Hermes) is the realm of hermaphrodites, justified astronomically by the fact that the planet Mercury sometimes appears above the sun and sometimes below, and always near Venus (Aphrodite).

word like “ignorantly” or “foolishly,” but it could equally mean “lasciviously.” This linguistic game continues in *Paradise Regained* after Satan tempts the Son with two youths “of fairer hue/ Than *Ganymede* or *Hylas*” (PR, 2.351-2), the former cupbearer to Zeus, the latter water fetcher for Heracles. Including those two youths in the “these” of the following passage, Satan says.

All these gentle Ministers, who come to pay  
Thee homage, and acknowledge thee thir Lord:  
What doub'st thou Son of God? sit down and eat.

(PR, 2.374-6)

To chide Satan, the son replies,

I can at will, doubt not, as soon as thou,  
Command a Table in this Wilderness,  
And call swift flights of Angels ministrant  
Array'd in Glory on my cup to attend.

(PR, 2.383-6)

It certainly seems as if Milton is comparing the cup-bearing Ganymede to the cup-bearing ministrant Angels. While it is not necessarily the case in *Paradise Lost*, Terry Eagleton reminds us that, unlike the Angels' case, there is a “long tradition of Satan as hermaphrodite” (p. 63), and Foucault that in Milton's day, “hermaphrodites were criminals, or crime's offspring” (p. 38), as were the Sons of Belial. Thus Satan, overcome by his own insatiable lust, hypocritically impugns the only court in the cosmos

that is not lascivious, where courtiers are not drunken louts or murderers, let alone Sodomites.

Therefore Urania, as an aspect of Aphrodite defined by Plato in his *Symposium* and others, ensures the sanctity of the angels' consorts, as well as Adam and Eve's before the fall, and any chaste person's thereafter. In the Socratic scheme, Dionian love, though blessedly hopeful of attaining immortality, is heterosexual, fertile, fleshly, and therefore inferior to Uranian male, homosocial, intellectual and spiritual love. The former is pregnant in body and produces children, the latter pregnant in soul and produces poetry and all the arts (209a, I am paraphrasing Benjamin Jowett in Hamilton). Of course, in Milton's imagination the angels in heaven do have sex, but theirs is heavenly love by definition, unencumbered by lust or reproduction. That the angels could be hermaphrodites is allowed not only in the cosmographies of Late Antiquity, but also in medieval Christian revisions such as Bernardus Silvestris'. Interestingly, the passage where Milton claims that angels "can either sex assume, or both" (PL, 1.424) is followed closely by an indictment against Astarte and the Sidonian Virgins as if to ask why they would ever choose to be female. Moreover, as I demonstrated in the last chapter, Astarte is the eastern proto-Aphrodite, whom Macrobius names "Venus Architis" in the *Saturnalia* since she was historically the first, and who represents Dionian, Pandemic love.

But Urania has her revenge against tyranny also as a muse of poetry. At the beginning of *Eikonoklastes*, Milton provides an epigraph from Sallust: *Quidlibet impune facere, hoc scilicet regnum est*. Roughly, "to do what you will with impunity, that

apparently is what a king is.” Borrowing from Shakespeare<sup>50</sup> I have translated *quidlibet* with the phrase “what you will”; and another declension of this word, “quodlibet,” was understood in Milton’s day as an issue posed for formal disputation, typically scholastic and often theological, and later as a musical medley (OED). Philip Sidney appropriates quodlibet for his own purposes. In his “An Apology for Poesy,” he declares that the “[poets’] matter is quodlibet indeed...never marshalling [poetry] into an assured rank, that almost the readers cannot tell where to find themselves” (cited in Adams, p. 159). It is the poet’s prerogative to do what he will, not a king’s; and “of all sciences,” says Sidney, “is our poet the monarch” (cited in Adams, p. 150). The meaning of Urania will probably never be marshaled into an assured rank, but in many respects, and aspects, Urania embodies what Caligula’s own family desperately pleads for in Suetonius’ passage on Caligula – an “antidotum adversus caesarem” (p. 217).

### The Temple of Venus Urania

At the beginning of this dissertation, I claimed that Milton published the word “Urania” only twice; but he did write it sometime before the publication of *Paradise Lost* in one of his potential outlines for tragedy. Although it is doubtful his version would be as prurient as the Earl of Rochester’s, Milton at least considered a tragedy entitled

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<sup>50</sup> And my advisor Douglass Parker.

“Sodom.” Volume eighteen of the Columbia edition, which contains Milton’s

“Uncollected Writings,” gives

Sodom.

the Scene before Lots gate

the title Cupids funeral pile. Sodom Burning.

(CE, p. 233)

If a potential reader were not already astounded by Cupid’s presence in this Biblical tragedy, then he would be when “the Gallantry of the town passe by in Procession with musick and song to the Temple of Venus Urania or Peor” (CE, p. 233). In meditating on what god or goddess might be worshiped by the bad people of Sodom, Milton conjures up a striking pair.

Peor is the obvious, viable choice, for, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, he is a hermaphroditic false god from the general vicinity of the wicked city, which is traditionally located near Sion, the ambivalent mountain in *Paradise Lost*. Peor is actually also a place name – it too is a mountain. The god Peor makes an appearance in “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” as one of the pagan gods whose Temples are hushed at Christ’s coming, Stanza XXII.

*Peor and Baalim*<sup>51</sup>

Forsake their Temples dim,

With that twice-batter’d god of *Palestine*,<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> These are usually combined, e.g. Baal-peor.

<sup>52</sup> Dagon.



And mooned *Ashtaroth*,  
Heav'n's Queen and Mother both  
Now sits not girt with Tapers' holy shine,  
The Libyc *Hammon* shrinks his horn,  
In vain the *Tyrian* Maids their wounded *Thammuz* mourn.

In light of the arguments in this dissertation so far, this is an extraordinary passage. *Ashtaroth* is the Phoenician Aphrodite, *Thammuz*, as we saw in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, the Phoenician Adonis. *Ashtaroth* here is also "Heav'n's Queen," even though this is meant to be ironic in the sense that the epithet is what her worshippers would call her, not a worshipper of the true God. Yet Heaven's Queen should pertain to Uranian, not Dionian, Aphrodite; and we've seen that *Ashtaroth* is an early version of Dionian Aphrodite. Further complicating matters is Milton's description of Peace earlier in the poem, Stanza III.

She crown'd with Olive green, came softly sliding  
Down through the turning sphere,  
His ready Harbinger,  
With Turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing,  
And waving wide her myrtle wand,  
She strikes a universal Peace through Sea and Land.

Clearly this good agent of God is meant to resemble some form of Venus, given the verbal clues "myrtle," "turtle," and "amorous," not to mention her cosmic journey and

descent from heaven. This poem in conjunction with the outline for Sodom seems to indicate that Milton's early notions about the various Venuses are all a jumble. He clearly has some idea about the distinction between the good and the bad variants; but, perhaps reflecting his own personal sexual ambiguities early in his life<sup>53</sup>, he is having trouble sorting them out.

If anything, Dionian Venus seems a better choice for the goddess of Sodom, given according to Plato her carnal nature and her commonness among the ruder sort of people. Moreover, she is historically linked to an actual goddess from the area of Sodom. Nevertheless, Milton chooses "Venus Urania," and one can only assume that that choice is based on her patronage of male-male love, which is the root of Sodom's evil. But that solution is not absolutely correct either, for later in the proposed outline Milton writes,

at the priests inviting the Angels to the Solemnity the Angels pittying thir beauty  
may dispute of love & how it differs from lust seeking to win them in the last  
scene

(CE, p. 234)

The angels are going to have Sodom's *Symposium* to try to persuade the citizens to follow Uranian love! Because of their natural, Platonic attraction to Beauty, they will attempt to turn the sinners away from lust and the worship of Venus Urania, goddess of Sodom, with the rhetoric of Venus Urania.

At least the connection between kings and Sodom is consistent. Embellishing the Biblical version in Genesis 19, Milton introduces the royal court, which becomes the scene of final destruction.

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<sup>53</sup> E.g. circumstances surrounding his relationship with Charles Diodati.

To the king & nobles when the fierce thunders begin aloft the angel appears all  
girt with flames which he saith are the flames of true love & tells the K[ing] who  
falls down with terror his just suffering (CE, p. 234)

Presumably, this “true love” would be the kind of love the Angels preach in the final  
scene before the destruction – Uranian love – but here a punitive force expressed with  
morbid irony. Milton was wise, I think, to reject this proposal. But as Hobbes tells us,  
the story of Sodom provides a template for later versions of hell and destruction. In the  
*Leviathan* he writes,

Because the Cities of Sodom, and Gomorrah, by the extraordinary wrath of God,  
were consumed for their wickednesse with Fire and Brimstone, and together with  
them the countrey about made a stinking bituminous lake: the place of the  
Damned is sometimes expressed by Fire, and Fiery Lake: as in the *Apocalypse*  
ch.21.8. [He cites.] So that it is manifest, that Hell Fire which is here expressed  
by Metaphor, from the reall Fire, of Sodome, signifieth not any certain kind, or  
place, of Torment; but is to be taken indefinitely, for Destruction (p. 313)

The real fires of Sodom become a metaphor that enables writers like Milton to imagine  
Hell, which is where his Muse Urania takes him at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*.

One wonders what kinds of debauched actions would take place in Milton’s Sodom  
and how he would describe them, or presumably have them enacted. Would there be  
hand-wringing over the “quintessence of an excrement,” as he calls seminal fluid in the  
*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (CPE, 2.248)? My point is that some modern critics  
seem to have misapplied their research when it comes to Milton by using sexual

terminology outside of Platonic discourse. That is, to rely on the rhetoric of “heavenly love,” “common love,” “Eros,” and “beauty” (etc.) is politely to seek a discourse of sex outside the biological. So Oscar Wilde returns to Plato in his own defense at his trial, and current homosexual activists keep discourse focused on rights and family rather than the events of the bedroom. For example, James Turner’s luridly detailed, *One Flesh*, descends into biological curiosities such as tumescence, excrement, secretions and excretions, smells, saltiness, the nature of pleasure, the mechanics of intercourse, and the physical problems of conception and delivery. But these are the things Milton is so careful to avoid explicitly, and compared to Milton, Turner seems rather pornographic. Another well-known investigator into Renaissance sexualities, Jonathan Goldberg, in his *Sodometries* does very much the same when he defines sodomy:

Sodomy is, as a sexual act, anything that threatens alliance – any sexual act, that is, that does not promote the aim of married procreative sex [...] these acts – or accusations of their performance – emerge into visibility only when those who were said to have done them also can be called traitors, heretics, or the like, at the very least, disturbers of the social order that alliance – marriage arrangements – maintained. (p. 19)

Goldberg is trying to define a negative, that Sodomy is not married, procreative sex in an acceptable social context. He does, in fact, list some possibilities, such as bestiality; but one of the modern and radical moves Milton makes in his divorce tracts is to suggest that procreation is not the purpose of marriage so much as fit companionship, Uranian friendship. By rejecting his proposed tragedy, Milton avoids a descent into Sodom and

chooses instead Athens, the source of Uranian discourse. Milton would in no way see his sexual politics as a threat to any state that was not itself already descended into lust and tyranny, let alone slavery to custom.

Critics like Turner and Goldberg seem to rely on a more general notion of the reception of Plato in the Renaissance; but in the long history of Platonic philosophy, especially in the critical interpretation of Platonic love, Milton stands out as an anomaly. Over the centuries, Plato's homoeroticism has generated volumes of commentary and has been a persistent and serious obstacle to mainstream heterosexual readers. One diachronic attempt to make his proclivities palatable has been to convert the homoeroticism into heterosexuality. This conversion begins at least as early as Plutarch. Frederick Brenk writes that although Plutarch advocates heterosexual married love as the ideal, his "greatest achievement, then, was not the glorification of heterosexual – and especially married – love over homosexual or pederastic love, but rather the introduction of heterosexual love into the Platonist's study" (p. 463). This interpretive tendency continued through Plotinus to Petrarch, and eventually to the Italian Renaissance. According to Jill Kraye's concise essay "The Transformation of Platonic Love in the Italian Renaissance," early Italian translators of ancient Greek such as Bruni either bowdlerized the texts, or, like the Aristotelian George of Trebizond, modified them to suit their own, Christian and heterosexist, agenda. By the time of Castiglione and Bruno, Platonic love existed almost exclusively in a heterosexual context. Bruno, in fact, substitutes Diana for Urania and forces an analogy between the lover's aspiration for a knowledge of beauty and the Actaeon myth. "She is Diana, she who is the being and

truth of intelligible nature, in which is infused the sun and the splendor of a superior nature” (Bruno, p. 226). The lover sees in Diana both the spiritual and corporeal elements that hold the cosmos together.

Even epic is not immune to this agenda. Milton’s beloved Tasso heterosexualizes one of Virgil’s most endearing scenes, the death of Nisus and Euryalus.

Then, pierced, he [Nisus] cast himself upon his lifeless  
Friend; there, at last, he found his rest in death.

(*Aeneid*, 9.590-1)

Tasso substitutes for them Edward and Gildippe in Book XX of the *Gerusalemme liberata*.

So he falls, and he grieves for her alone,  
Companion in eternity. They try  
To form a word or two, but have no breath,  
No more than will suffice to form a sigh.  
They look upon each other and embrace  
In a few moments left before they die.  
One moment for them both shrouded the day,  
And wedded thus, the good souls took their way.

(GL, stanza 100)

Although I want to commend Tasso for the addition of a viable female warrior character, the manipulation of the original typifies the agenda I have been describing. Urania herself is not immune. In an obscure and short-lived literary refashioning, a character

named “Urania” falls for a warrior in both Aphra Behn’s “Song to Ceres” and Phineas Fletcher’s *The Purple Island*.

Meanwhile, others such as Ficino and Pico della Mirandola allegorized homoerotic Platonic love in order that it might be used to demonstrate metaphorically how an esthete (lover) was supposed to attain an idea of true beauty. Similarly, in his *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie* (1666), Milton’s contemporary Samuel Parker explains that “some have taken *Plato* himself (together with his incomparable master *Socrates*) as guilty of that unnatural beastliness of the lustful Sodomites” (p. 19); but “it was their expressing the offices of Friendship and Good-nature (by way of Allusion) in amorous terms, that gave too much ground for the forementioned slander” (p. 22-3). Parker traces the development of this slander from its originator, Aristophanes<sup>54</sup>, to Lucian and the early satirists, and to the Christian founding fathers whose purpose was to denigrate certain aspects of Pagan philosophy. Milton stands apart from these methods because he neither allegorizes nor heterosexualizes Platonic love, since the masculine angels are allowed to consummate all the potentialities of love. Although it may be argued than Adam’s relationship with Eve, and her general interest in learning, resemble a Platonic relationship, Raphael is quick to point out the dangers of “attributing overmuch to things less excellent” (PL, 8.565-6), meaning, of course, Eve. And although Milton waxes nostalgic at the “love and mutual honor” (PL, 8.58) between the first couple now lost since the Fall, he does not presume to equate them to angelic love.

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<sup>54</sup> According to tradition, Socrates’ accuser Meletus was an actor in Aristophanes’ troop.

Of course, Milton never suggests that physically consummated homosexual love between human beings is a legitimate behavior. His disparagement of the “sons of Belial” (PL, 1.497 ff.) should be sufficient caveat against such lustful fornication.<sup>55</sup> William Kerrigan goes so far as to say, “Had Milton found himself primarily and continuously attracted to men, he would have acted on this attraction at some point in his life, and if he had, sodomy would not have been routinely listed among the acts ‘opposed to chastity’ in the *Christian Doctrine*” (p. 49). Although the exact nature of Milton’s sexuality remains a matter of speculation, I would like to propose that Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is one of the last examples of a Platonic, Uranian sexual ethics unadulterated by medieval or renaissance prohibitions. In his description of homosexuality in the English renaissance, Alan Bray writes, “Homosexuality was not part of the chain of being, or the harmony of the created world or its universal dance” (p. 25). But Milton is conspicuously absent from his discussion because, I believe, that by allowing his angels to be hermaphrodites and to have sex with each other and feel men’s passion, as Bernardus does, Milton makes “homosexuality” a part of the created world and thus a tolerable fact of existence. His vision is astonishingly modern in this respect. Luce Irigaray will write, “A sexual ethics would require that both angel and body be found together. This is a world that must be constructed or reconstructed...A world that must be created or re-created so that man and woman may once again or at last love together, meet, and sometimes inhabit the same place” (p. 17). Later English authors will see the

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<sup>55</sup> But I suggest that the lesson of the story in “Judges” 19 has at least as much to do with guest/host relations, the cowardice of heterosexual men, and the licentiousness of women as with the wickedness of homosexuals (who in fact have sex only with the woman).



beauty in this ethos and revive Urania in their own times and works – and for their own agenda that Milton may or may not have approved of. They are the focus of the next chapter.

## Uranian Ontology: Victorian Revisions

In dealing with an open-secret structure, it's only by being shameless about risking the obvious that we happen into the vicinity of the transformative.  
Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*<sup>56</sup>

I have argued that Urania begins her first incarnation as the Muse of Astronomy, a role she maintains into the twentieth-century, and that over time writers have not been able to resist dressing her to suit their own needs and agendas. Ironically, these periodic revisions have kept her alive and vital, while the other muses have for the most part retained their original meanings and remained stagnant.<sup>57</sup> We have seen how early on she combines with Plato's Uranian Aphrodite through Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages and fuses heavenly love with astrological knowledge to become an allegorical participant in cosmic journey and dream narratives. Partly because in that capacity she becomes involved in the creation of man and the immortalizing of his soul, she is adopted by later writers as a strangely Christianized muse. And since it is God's plan to foment liberty and establish justice through commonwealths, she acquires a political aspect that proposes brotherly love guided by conscience and opposes lustful tyranny. These accretions do not occur willy-nilly; it is possible to find traces of older imaginings of Urania in newer works and to figure out how those works recast the older. The fourth

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<sup>56</sup> Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 22.

<sup>57</sup> There are exceptions. For example, the steam-fueled musical calliope was invented by A.S. Denny and patented in 1855.

flourishing of Uranian employment that I treat, England during the late nineteenth century, is no exception.

Perhaps the most effective genre for testing and expanding new meanings is satire, and it is clear that Joris-Karl Huysmans understood a multi-faceted Urania who embodied numerous potentialities. In the brilliantly bizarre *A rebours* (*Against Nature*, 1884), his anti-hero Des Esseintes falls for a mistress named Miss Urania, an American circus acrobat.

He began to discern an unnatural change of sex taking place in her [...] in a word, after first having been a woman, she then, after wavering, after toying with androgyny, seemed to make up her mind, to define herself, to become a man completely [...] This exchange of sex between Miss Urania and himself greatly excited him [...] But as soon as his desires were fulfilled, he experienced the most inordinate disappointment. He had imagined the American woman to be as stupid and brutish as a wrestler at a fair, yet her stupidity, unfortunately, was entirely feminine [...] Furthermore, in bed she displayed a puritanical restraint [...] Miss Urania was an ordinary mistress, who did not in any way justify the intellectual curiosity she had inspired. (pp. 85-7)

In a relatively brief passage, Huysmans has managed satirically to condense into this one character much about Urania and the texts in which she has already appeared - love, androgyny (hermaphroditism), misogyny, trans-sexuality (e.g. Tiresias), intellectualism, Puritanism (or Puritanical chastity), and even a mini-cosmic journey in the form of a trapeze jump. One senses the ephemeral nuances here of Plato, Macrobius, and Ovid.

But this satirizing of Urania is new, as is the consummation of love in a casual sexual act.<sup>58</sup>

Huysmans influenced English authors and thinkers and kept friendships with Arthur Symonds and Havelock Ellis. It is a near certainty that the infamous “little yellow book” in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is in fact *Against Nature*. The self-deprecating, intellectual humor of Huysmans must have appealed to the classically trained wits of the English *fin-de-siecle*, especially a young group of Oxford students who called themselves the Uranians. Among the Uranians were Lord Alfred Douglas, Oscar Wilde’s consort, and a handful of now obscure writers such as C. M. Fox, Gleason White, Charles Kains-Jackson, and Theodore Wratislaw, the last of whom I have somewhat arbitrarily selected as representative of this group. Wratislaw (1871 – 1933), a student at Oxford and a minor poet of Czech extraction, published slim collections of poetry in the

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<sup>58</sup> In this same spirit of comic frustration with Uranian love, Francis Thompson, *Complete Poetical Works of Francis Thompson* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918) complains in “Against Urania” (1897),

And first of her embrace  
She was not coy, and gracious were her ways,  
That I forgot all virgins to adore;  
Nor did I greatly grieve  
To bear through arid days  
The pretty foil of her divine delays;  
And one by one to cast  
Life, love, and health,  
Content, and wealth,  
Before her, thinking ever on her praise,  
Until at last  
Nought had I left she would be gracious for.

early 1890s before the Wilde scandal occurred.<sup>59</sup> Side from the Uranians, he maintained a friendship with Algernon Swinburne (1837 – 1909), and in the last year of his life, he wrote a brief memoir depicting a weekend visit to Wilde’s cottage at Goring-on-Thames in the spring of 1894. Though now mostly forgotten (or neglected), the Uranians included luminaries such as Aubrey Beardsley; echoes of Uranian aesthetics, or at least the language engendered by Uranian thought, can later be heard in Auden and Housman.<sup>60</sup> These “sexual heretics,” as critic Brian Reade calls them, would use the *Symposium* of Plato and its christening of Uranian Love to justify their own homosocial, and in probably most instances, homosexual, personalities.<sup>61</sup> They possibly also drew on more recent, avant-garde sexological studies emanating from Germany.

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<sup>59</sup> It is pleasant for me to see that since I first became acquainted with Wratishlaw in 2001, his books of poetry, originally published in only five hundred copies each with the support of his father, have since been uploaded on the Chadwyck online poetry database.

<sup>60</sup> I love his anacreontic lines from “Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff:

Oh many a peer of England brews  
Livelier liquor than the Muse,  
And malt does more than Milton can  
To justify God’s ways to man.

<sup>61</sup> By “homosocial” I mean a “Platonic” and intimate fraternity of men in an academic or otherwise intellectual setting, versus “homosexual,” which indicates physical, sexual relations. And I qualify my claim with “probably” because it cannot be known if all Uranians in fact practiced “homosexuality.” For example, in the case of Theodore Wratishlaw, charges that he may have been an “insincere Uranian” are well documented. In the forward to a memoir Wratishlaw, *Oscar Wilde: A Memoir* (London: The Eighteen Nineties Society, 1979) wrote about a weekend visit to Wilde’s cottage at Goring-on-Thames, John Betjeman surmises, “I doubt whether Wratishlaw committed any of the purple sins he liked to hint at in his lyrics” (p. 2). D’Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest* (London: Routledge, 1970) cites a marginal note in a copy of *Caprices* made by an acquaintance of Wratishlaw, probably George Cecil Ives, to the same effect.

If the debate between the constructionist and the essentialist camps of sexual identity is reduced to action and being, or ethics and ontology, respectively, then the Platonic rhetoric of Uranian love sublimates that discourse in the chemical or alchemical sense. That is, it transfers the solid into the gas, the physical into the ethereal, and thereby transforms the vocabulary of biology into the metaphor of spirit. As Milton detours away from Sodom and turns instead towards Athens, so Karl Heinrich Ulrichs adjusts his language when in late nineteenth-century Germany he argues precociously for the sexual rights of all people, including the right of same-sex couples to marry. Self-fashioned with the now famous apposition, *anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa*, “the soul of a woman trapped in the body of a man,” Ulrichs apparently saw himself as a spiritual, if not physical, hermaphrodite. Naturally attracted to other men, in order to persuade the government to his side, he turned to the *Symposium* to generate a typology of sexualities. Although his friend Karl Maria Kertbeny had coined the word “homosexuality” sometime around 1871, Ulrichs preferred “Urning” for a homosexual man, “Urningin” for a Lesbian, and “Dioning” for a heterosexual. The first two stem etymologically from Plato’s Uranian Aphrodite, while the last comes from Dionian Aphrodite. He thus gives names to the three types of beings that appear in Aristophanes’ speech (*Symposium*, 190b, ff.), in which Zeus severs male-male, female-female, and male-female creatures into individual human beings who then seek out their original partner. Plato writes,

The happiness of the whole human race, women no less than men,<sup>62</sup> is to be found in the consummation of our love, and in the healing of our dissevered nature by finding each his proper mate. And if this be a counsel of perfection, then we must do what, in our present circumstances, is next best, and bestow our love upon the natures most congenial to our own. (193c)

Ulrichs' reworking of this terminology in a politico-scientific context allows him to combine both the ethics of sexual object choice and the ontology of sexual identity in the revival of an innocuous mythopoetic genesis story that valorizes both. For Milton, Urania is a way of imagining a chaste ethics and politics, while for Ulrichs, she encodes an erotic subculture or lifestyle.<sup>63</sup> When he does approach the biological, he punctuates his innuendoes with esoteric words and phrases such as "magnetic current," "ecstasy," and "amorous rapture," interspersed with quotations from classical or philosophical authors such as Plato, Martial, Schiller, Celsus, and the like.<sup>64</sup> Although his ingenuity and perseverance led to no immediate reform,<sup>65</sup> his writings were influential and participated

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<sup>62</sup> A moment in the *Symposium* unique for its generous attitude toward women.

<sup>63</sup> I am not sure that Milton's ideas about divorce and polygamy would have been in his day any less subcultural than Ulrich's on same-sex relationships were in his own, but Milton does not mention Urania specifically in his divorce tracts.

<sup>64</sup> In a similar vein, the act of sex seemed a mystery to Milton, since the word "mystery" appears three times in the context of "connubial love" (PL, 4.313, 743, and 750).

<sup>65</sup> Ulrichs, a lawyer sometimes writing under the pseudonym Numa Numantius, had tried to rescue the Napoleonic Code, which had decriminalized homosexuality, for all of Germany, which instead adopted repressive Prussian law.

in a new industry of sexological studies including the now famous ones of Englishman Havelock Ellis.<sup>66</sup> Freud cites Ulrichs in his *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*.

Ulrichs' passion transcended the psychological journals; and according to critic Timothy d'Arch Smith (*Love in Earnest*), the group of 1890's Victorian students at Oxford appropriated his terminology and thus called themselves the "Uranians." He continues, "The word 'Uranian' was chosen<sup>67</sup> because it was free from the nuances of 'homosexual,' 'pederast,' and 'catamite.' [...] [Uranian] and its parallel, 'Urning,' [were] much in use not only to denote adult homosexuality but also boy-love" (xx). However sincere Ulrichs' original civil rights agenda may have been, if d'Arch Smith is correct, it would appear that the Uranian poets adopted the terminology as a consciously counter-culture code for their own sexual behaviors. The Uranians were no strangers to controversy; they and their immediate Oxford predecessors were responsible for several scandals that called into question the very structure of university education, in both its emphasis on ancient Greek and its Platonic tutor-pupil arrangement. The fine distinction

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<sup>66</sup> In his introduction to the writings of Ulrichs *The Riddle of Man-Manly Love*, trans. Lombardi-Nash (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1994), Vern Bullough concedes that "few English speakers have ever read Ulrichs," and the translation I use here from 1994 is the first in English. But he also notes that "Richard von Kraft-Ebbing (1840-1902), whose *Psychopathia Sexualis* was the starting point for discussion and treatment of 'abnormal' sexuality by Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, was greatly influenced by Ulrichs' writing in his own search for answers. So were the sex researchers Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) and Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935), who popularized many of Ulrichs' ideas" (p. 21). It seems to me that if anyone in England were motivated and equipped to read Ulrichs in his original Latin, it would have been sexually curious Oxford intellectuals; however, there is little or no direct evidence of Ulrichs in Uranian writings as far as I can tell.

<sup>67</sup> A strategic use of the passive voice perhaps to avoid saying who exactly chose the name.



between homosociality and homosexuality would inevitably be blurred, as several real crises - including J. A. Symonds' peculiar romantic relations at Harrow, complicated by the indiscretions of its headmaster Vaughan, Symonds' subsequent friendship with Jowett at Baliol<sup>68</sup> College Oxford and "Arcadian Love"<sup>69</sup> attachment to a chorister, Walter Pater's erotic involvement with the nineteen-year-old student William Money Hardinge, and, of course, Oscar Wilde's friendship with Lord Alfred Douglas - can attest. Pater, probably for this or similar infractions, would be sanctioned in 1877, and celibacy remained a requirement for Oxford fellows up to 1884.

But d'Arch Smith's direct attribution of the name "Uranian" to Ulrichs seems in itself too simplistic, for there was already underway in England a revival of Hellenism at university and an exhumation of Urania in significant poetry, in addition to Huysmans. Of course Milton authors the most significant instance of "Urania" in English poetry. While it might seem improbable, Milton held great sway over the creative imaginations of the artists of this decadent generation. Wilde writes a panegyric sonnet to his poetic forefathers:

Oft have we trod the vales of Castaly  
And heard sweet notes of sylvan music blown  
From antique reeds to common folk unknown:  
And oft launched our bark upon that sea  
Which the nine Muses hold in empery,

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<sup>68</sup> Curiously homophonic with "Belial."

<sup>69</sup> Symonds' version of "Uranian love."

And ploughed free furrows through the wave and foam,  
Nor spread reluctant sail for more safe home  
Till we had freighted well our argosy.  
Of which despoiled treasures these remain,  
Sordello's passion, and the honied line  
Of young Endymion, lordly Tamburlain  
Driving his pampered jades, and, more than these,  
The seven-fold vision of the Florentine,  
And the grave-browed Milton's solemn harmonies.

(Wilde, p. 762)

Whereas Milton in the Book VII invocation of *Paradise Lost* is “more safe” with Urania in tow, Wilde and his cohorts (“we”) are “more safe” with a hull-full of preceding poets; and the greatest of these are Dante and Milton. The title of the poem is “Amor Intellectualis,” which could very well be an epithet to Urania, since she represents intellectual love. We saw that Dante also invokes her in his *Divine Comedy*. The Uranians could not have overlooked Milton's mention of her in *Paradise Lost* and conceivably might have thought of him as a Uranian poet as well. Similar not just in borrowed phraseology but also style, Wilde, the aesthetic poet (along with the Uranians), produced the kind of imagery reminiscent of Milton's Paradise. Compare, for example, the catalogs of flowers in *Paradise Lost* and Wilde's “Humanitad”:

Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew  
Of firm and fragrant leaf; on each odorous bushy shrub  
Fenced up the verdant wall; each beauteous flow'r,  
Iris all hues, roses, and jessamine  
Reared high their flourished heads between, and wrought  
Mosaic; underfoot the violet,  
Crocus, and hyacinth with rich inlay

(PL, 4.694-701)

And on the grass the creamy blossom falls  
In odorous excess, and faint half-whispered madrigals  
Steal from the bluebells' nodding carillons  
Each breezy morn, and then white jessamine  
That star of its own heaven, snap-dragons  
With lolling crimson tongues, and eglantine...

(Wilde, p. 780)

Milton's "aesthetic" vision of Paradise is less like the quotidian natural world and more like the baroque pastorals that fascinated Wilde and the aesthetes. It was the progression from the natural to the artificial, from the "steep wilderness, whose hairy sides/ With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild" (4.135-6) to the "enclosure green" of "delicious Paradise" (4.132-3) that may have prompted Wratislaw, Huysmans, and others to extend

the conceit even farther into the walls of their highly stylized, redolent hothouses.

Moreover, in “Humanitad,” Wilde affirms his admiration for Milton:

O we are wretched men  
Unworthy of our great inheritance! where is the pen  
Of austere Milton? where the mighty sword  
Which slew its master righteously?

(Wilde, pp. 786-7)

The two poets juxtapose the sensuality of paradise or garden with their dystopic political assessments.

In addition to invoking Urania, these poets would have learned about Milton’s Uranian friendship with a college friend from David Masson’s recent (1881) encyclopedic biography of the poet. In the last couple of decades, his Platonic relationship with Charles Diodati has been a compelling subject of Milton criticism. John Rumrich writes, “Milton’s intimacy with Diodati revolved around a Platonically inspired pursuit of intellectual and ethical clarity” (p. 133). Certainly, Diodati’s first letter to Milton bears this out:

so much do I long for your society that, in my longing, I am dreaming, and all but prophesying, fine weather, and calm, and all things golden, for to-morrow, that we may regale ourselves mutually with philosophical and learned discourse.

(Masson, p. 162)

And in the second, he pines for a companion, “an educated one and initiated in the mysteries” (Masson, p. 163). Theirs was, apparently, a Uranian friendship. What is

missing in the few studies covering the Uranian poets and their generation is an investigation into how they appropriate and transform diachronic themes, beyond Plato and including Milton, pertinent to Uranian discourse.

A good example is politics. Beginning with Plato, we have seen how Urania is occasionally transformed to suit a given agenda, in his case, not only resistance to eastern religious influences, but also justification of a male dominated democratic society. So too, Milton names her in a political invocation that echoes his prose vilifications of the king's restoration after a failed attempt at commonwealth. And again, Ulrichs exhumes her to resist state sanctioned heterosexist tyranny. In all cases, the underlying theme is not subversion but the return to a proper ethical system in a loving and free, but not libertine, society. Wilde's animated sonnet "To Milton" seems too angry for the unofficial spokesman of "art for art's sake," who wore green carnations and lilac perfume.

Milton! I think thy spirit hath passed away  
From these white cliffs and high-embattled towers;  
This gorgeous fiery-coloured world of ours  
Seems fallen into ashes dull and grey,  
And the age changed unto a mimic play  
Wherein we waste our else too-crowded hours:  
For all our pomp and pageantry and powers

We are but fit<sup>70</sup> to delve the common clay,  
Seeing this little isle on which we stand,  
This England, this sea-lion of the sea,  
By ignorant demagogues is held in fee,  
Who love her not: Dear God! is this the land  
Which bare a triple empire in her hand  
When Cromwell<sup>71</sup> spake the word Democracy!

(Wilde, p. 700)

But given his ultimate fate, conviction and imprisonment for sodomy, the poem is prescient. Socrates, Milton (ejected from politics and living in virtual exile), and Wilde all were forced to drink their own brand of hemlock for promoting the Uranian ideal, although Milton escaped a trial, if narrowly.<sup>72</sup>

After Milton, English scholarship and politics tended to prefer the Roman neo-classical model fundamental to the Enlightenment, until Benjamin Jowett returned the dialogues of Plato to the curriculum at Oxford University in the early-mid nineteenth century. In *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (1994), Linda Dowling claims that this correction to the curriculum infused new life into a scholastic system that many liberals, such as J. S. Mill, believed had grown stale. The imperialistic, might-

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<sup>70</sup> Another use of “fit” that imitates Milton.

<sup>71</sup> This idea about Cromwell and democracy is an odd revision, given his position as Protectorate.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (New York: Noonday Press, 1997) will say that it was Diotima herself who forced Socrates to drink the poison because “ideal homosexuality [...] was the male intellect trying to make itself spiritually self-sufficient” (p. 12).

makes-right attitude that allowed England to conquer the world, Dowling argues, had been justified philosophically during the Enlightenment by invoking the Roman Republic. Thus, relatively forgotten works today, such as Addison's *Cato*, enjoyed unusual popularity; and Dr. Thomas Arnold's vigorous Rugby School set the standard of scholastic and physical hardiness. However, for some, what was perceived to be the gentler, intellectual society of the ancient Greeks provided an appealing alternative to this outlook.

The solution of Mill, Grote, [Matthew] Arnold, and other liberals would be precisely to counterpose to the Graeco-Roman model of classical republicanism its own image of a far different Greece, to challenge the authority of the classical republican model of the recurrent rise and fall of polities by insisting on Attic or Athenian Greece as the earliest embodiment of an enlightened rational progressiveness, the very engine of all subsequent Western advance. (p. 59)

This Hellenism focused mainly on Plato and a nostalgic vision of democracy in Athens and society in the Academy. But one of the philosophical stowaways of this movement, the acceptance of homoerotic relationships between men, especially tutors and their pupils, would ultimately be condemned.

This political and academic redirection lagged behind the arts, however, for Urania had already appeared, logically enough, in the poetry of the Romantics who mimicked the Miltonic sublime. In his *prospectus* to the long philosophical poem *The Excursion* (1813), William Wordsworth recasts Milton's Muse.

Urania, I shall need

Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such  
Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven!  
For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink  
Deep – and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds  
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.  
All strength – all terror, single or in bands,  
That ever was put forth in personal form,  
Jehovah – with his thunder, and the choir  
Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones,  
I pass them, unalarmed.

(ll. 25-35)

Although it is clearly derivative, even naming Urania almost as synecdoche for Milton, this passage comes across sincerely; but Wordsworth's high Uranian/Miltonic tone would prove unsustainable. The peculiar transition of Urania from this vaulted diction to the virtual farce in Huysmans might be explained in the works of Tennyson, who appears historically in between them.

Tennyson includes Urania in two of his major poems written at about the same time, the epic threnody to a lost male friend, *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1833-1849; 1850), and the enigmatic romance, *The Princess* (1847), in starkly different contexts – the former serious and the later comical. He astutely sensed a bifurcation in potential interpretive meanings inherent in Uranian rhetoric. On the one hand, Urania oversees the serious life-and-death struggle that accompanies political intrigue, as in Milton's invocation in Book



VII, but of which Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* is perhaps the best example. Socrates' execution, analyzed in the dialogue *Apology*, and Wilde's imprisonment and suffering depicted in *De Profundis*, were as much political as sexual, as Socrates corrupted the youth against the state and Wilde's real crime was to cross class boundaries by befriending the son of the Marquess of Queensberry.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Uranian friendship and consolation for its loss are consistent themes of high seriousness from at least Augustine onward.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, as inheritor of the mythic associations of Venus/Aphrodite, Urania is susceptible to all the vanities and sexual peccadilloes of the Goddess of Love. In addition, her frequent appearances in texts depicting hermaphroditism and transexuality combine with the fact that she maintains an all-male retinue that, like Des Esseintes and Milton, leans toward misogyny and intellectual self-righteousness.<sup>75</sup> The comic possibilities are manifold.

In *The Princess*, a group of young men dress in "maiden plumes" in order to sneak into an all-girls school and to offer a letter sealed with

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<sup>73</sup> This illicit crossing of class boundaries was also perhaps the greater crime in both the Overbury and Castlehaven affairs described in the previous chapter.

<sup>74</sup> Augustine *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961) writes, "I lived in misery, like every man whose soul is tethered by the love of things that cannot last and then is agonized to lose them [...] This was the misery in which I lived, and yet my own wretched life was dearer to me than the friend I had lost [...] Still more I wondered that he should die and I remain alive, for I was his second self [...] I felt that our two souls had been as one" (pp. 77-8).

<sup>75</sup> Although I tend to agree with Joseph Wittreich's assessment in *Feminist Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell university Press, 1987) that Milton was received by Enlightenment female readers as progressive for his day, clearly he reserves his best rhetorical shtick for women. I cannot imagine him describing an unfit husband in the way he does an unfit wife, as "an image of earth and fleam" (CPW, 2.254).

Cupid bent above a scroll,  
And over his head Uranian Venus hung,  
And raised the blinding bandage from his eyes

(2.238-40)

That Uranian Venus should appear in a scene of cross-dressing is a comic reiteration of the hermaphroditic tradition, and Tennyson's all-girl school is another imaginative sexual inversion. In the mid-eighteenth century, Charles Dickens will support "Urania Cottage," a house for fallen women. I suspect the name comes from the fact that she oversees friendship and chastity; but in the Tennyson, the object of the plot is for a boy to attract a chaste girl. This is another instance of Uranian ambivalence concerning chastity and sexual attraction.

The transvestisism is another example of ambivalence. Although it has been proven that Richard Ellman was wrong to suggest that a photograph of an opera singer dressed as Salome was Oscar Wilde, he must have premised this mistake on a Uranian fascination with gender bending. For example, in the short introduction to his reissuing of Taylor's translation of the *Republic* (1894), Theodore Wratishlaw does not mention the philosopher king, the ejection of the poets, the guardians, or the cave metaphor; instead, of all things, he highlights the eugenics and transvestisism of the Spartan citizens. He informs us that,

the bride lived with her family, and only visited her husband in his barrack in male attire, and on short and stolen occasions; the uniting of the finest couples was regarded by the citizens as desirable, and by the lawgiver as a duty: jealousy on the husband's part found no sympathy, and he had to permit and encourage

compliances on the part of his wife consistent with this generally acknowledged object.<sup>76</sup>

Here, cross-dressing is a serious matter – the survival of the state itself.

Urania seems to have a dual nature on just about any topic. For another example, finding himself the victim of gender stereotyping as a student at Cambridge, Milton felt the need to address accusations about his own perceived hermaphroditism by referring to Tiresias, who in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and elsewhere changes sex, twice, by thwacking a pair of snakes with his walking stick. In Prolusion VI, responding to students who have labeled him "Lady," he asks, "Have I done violence to some snake and suffered the fate of Tiresias?" (Hughes, p. 620). Here he chooses to invoke Tiresias light-heartedly to rebuke his tormentors; whereas, in Urania-inspired *Paradise Lost*, he genuinely identifies with Tiresias, the blind prophet in the Book III invocation.

In Stanza 37 of *In Memoriam A.H.H.*, Tennyson employs Urania in different way from *The Princess*, to prod the poet into his native element in order to find the words for his grief at the loss of a close male friend.

Urania speaks with darkened brow:

"Thou pratest here where thou art least;

This faith has many a purer priest,

And many an abler voice than thou.

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<sup>76</sup> He probably has in mind section 459d and following.

Go down beside thy native rill,  
On thy Parnassus set thy feet,  
And hear thy laurel whisper sweet  
About the ledges of the hill.

(Tennyson, p. 227)

Outside the long tradition, beginning with Achilles and Patroclus, of lamenting the loss of a warrior friend, Tennyson, like Milton in “Lycidas” before him and Wratishlaw in “Lady Jenny” after, mourns over a college friend. As patron of everything from cross-dressing to encomium, by the mid-nineteenth century Urania has become almost grotesque.

That from her purest incarnation as simply the Muse of Astronomy she should accrete so many meanings seems a natural consequence of both authorial intention and reader response. De Esseintes’ disparagement of women’s intelligence (“her stupidity, unfortunately, was entirely feminine”) is a part of Uranian discourse beginning with Plato himself.<sup>77</sup> Comparing Uranian and Dionian love, Diotima states,

The heavenly Love springs from a goddess whose attributes have nothing of the female, but are altogether male, and who is the elder of the two, and innocent of any hint of lewdness. And so those who are inspired by this love turn to the male, preferring the more vigorous and intellectual bent. (*Symposium*, 181c)

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<sup>77</sup> My representative Uranian poet, Theodore Wratishlaw, will compliment a female character in his one short story “Mutability,” which appeared in the handsomely illustrated Uranian magazine *The Savoy*, by claiming that she “was possessed of an intelligence not very common among women.”

Since Urania was immaculately conceived without female agency, she is preferred because she is essentially masculine and hence intellectual. Diotima continues, those whose procreancy is of the body turn to woman as the object of their love, and raise a family, in the blessed hope that by doing so they will keep their memory green, through time and all eternity. But those whose procreancy is of the spirit rather than of the flesh...conceive and bear the things of the spirit. And what are they, you ask? Wisdom and all her sister virtues<sup>78</sup> (*Symposium*, 209a).

This attitude was a commonplace in the seventeenth century as well. In his *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie* (1666), Samuel Parker notes the Platonists' "valuing good nature,"

whence resulted that exceeding delight they took in the Society of ingenious and sweet-natured young Gentlemen, upon which score they profest themselves as great *Votaries* to the *Celestial Venus*, as common Mortals are to the *Earthly one*, for their Amours were not kindled by lust and petulancy (they being professedly the most generous contemnners of Women in the world) but were pure and cleanly enough to become Angels and separated souls, *Plato's* Love-laws forbidding to court any other objects then abstracted and intellectual Beauties. (p. 18)

In this remarkable passage, Parker, while censuring most of Platonic philosophy in his book, here equates, though with admittedly a slight sarcasm, the practitioners of Platonic

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<sup>78</sup> Again, a juxtaposing of Urania and Wisdom in a sisterhood.

love to angels and separated souls. Angels must naturally be misogynistic. During his seminar on love, Raphael informs Adam in Book V of *Paradise Lost*,

Freely we serve,  
Because we freely love, as in our will  
To love or not.

(PL, 5.538-40)

And again later in Book VI,

Strange to us it seemed  
At first, that angel should with angel war,  
And in fierce hosting meet, who wont to meet  
So oft in festivals of joy and love  
Unanimous.

(PL, 6.91-5)

But once Urania has been introduced in Book VII, the tone of the discussion changes from general statements about angelic love to the kind of binary of love described in Plato.

In loving thou dost well, in passion not,  
Wherein true love consists not; love refines  
The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat  
In reason, and is judicious

(PL, 8.588-91)

Here Raphael clearly distinguishes between “loving” and “passion,” the former Uranian, the latter Dionian, and expressly promotes the spiritual (homoerotic) over the physical (heterosexual) kind of love. If God has sent Raphael to earth “to render man inexcusable” (Argument Book V), then a training in misogyny seems part of that rendering. Like a stern father steeped in the patriarchy, Raphael cautions Adam like a pubescent child to maintain the proper relationship with Eve.

Weigh with her thyself;  
Then value: oftentimes nothing profits more  
Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right  
Well managed; of that skill the more thou know'st,  
The more she will acknowledge thee her head.

(PL, 8.570-4)

Does Raphael plant the false seed of male superiority in Adam's mind simply to ensure the Fall, or does he reveal his own misogynistic, Platonic disposition? Probably both.

In the movement from human, chaste, Uranian love in Book IV<sup>79</sup> to the Dionian lust of Book IX, Adam tries to assess blame for his actions on Eve. Again the sense is ambivalent. Milton probably wants fit readers to see these recriminations as examples of wrong reason; or perhaps he tricks unfit readers into a sympathetic chuckle at Eve's

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<sup>79</sup> Greg Chaplin, “‘One Flesh, One Heart, One Soul’: Renaissance Friendship and Miltonic Marriage.” *Modern Philology*. Vol. 99, Number 2 (November 2001): 266-292, has shown that Milton's ideas about marriage are more concerned with the rhetoric of (Uranian) friendship and character compatibility than sexual compatibility. Chaste heterosexual relationships are Uranian in ethic.

expense – something the early Church Fathers might well have done. In any event, I think the Platonic education Adam has received from Raphael is to blame for the amplitude of his pure expression of misogyny.

Oh why did God,  
Creator wise, that peopled highest heav'n  
With Spirits masculine, create at last  
This novelty on earth, this fair defect  
Of Nature, and not fill the world at once  
With men as angels without the feminine,  
Or find some other way to generate  
Mankind?

(PL, 10.888-895)

When Urania became an allegorical figure in Late Antiquity, this misogynistic aspect fell by the wayside; and it took the disposition of Renaissance and Victorian authors to revive what had been lost from Plato's original texts. Disrupting the paradigm, Milton brilliantly encourages us to ponder the nature of love in the setting of the first genuine instance of ugliness and hatred in human history.

While Milton allows his angels to have sex "soul with soul" (PL, 8.629), he nowhere deduces from Plato that homosexuality is acceptable for mortal man. With respect to Urania, this issue is the great Victorian departure from the Miltonic example. According to Linda Dowling, Walter Pater's *The Renaissance* (1874) "marks a turning point in Oxford Hellenism and homosociality" because in it, "the erotic diversity, the spiritual



procreancy, and now so provocatively, the sensuous pulsation itself of the paiderastic eros surge forward into view” (Dowling, p. 99). Pater’s carpe diem philosophy of life and art, “to burn always with this hard, gemlike flame,” implies that we have only one chance to capture youth’s fleeting beauty, the contemplation of which is one rung on the ladder to understanding heavenly beauty. After all, the catalog of homoerotic friendships in ancient Greek myth, and indeed history, is extensive to say the least.<sup>80</sup> Pater’s justification for his physical relationship with a fellow stems from *Symposium* 210b:

For he who would proceed aright in this matter<sup>81</sup> would begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only – out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognise that the beauty in every form is one and the same! (Jowett’s translation)

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<sup>80</sup> There are several English texts that list exempla, one being Marlowe’s *Edward the Second* in *The Complete Plays* (London: Penguin, 1969):

The mightiest kings have their minions;  
Great Alexander lov’d Hephaestion,  
The conquering Hercules for Hylas wept,  
And for Patroclus stern Achilles droop’d.  
The Roman Tully lov’d Octavius,  
Grave Socrates wild Alcibiades.  
(1.4.303-9)

<sup>81</sup> The process of knowing true Beauty.

Close attention to the beauty of one individual irresistibly progresses to a general understanding of Beauty<sup>82</sup>; and just as Socrates had his Alcibiades, Tennyson his Hallam, and Wilde his Douglas, so Milton had his Diodati and Raphael his Adam. But did David have his Jonathan and Jesus have his John in the same way?

In his famous study, Pater will acknowledge a now obscure specific instance of the Renaissance harmonizing of religious traditions. If Platonic love could be reconciled to Christian love, then Uranian love might not seem so prohibited. During the time Milton was composing *Paradise Lost*, Plato was sometimes referred to as the “Attic Moses,” the “Greek sage whose wisdom echoed the teachings of the Bible” (Hutton, p. 67). So persistent was this idea that in 1666, Samuel Parker felt compelled to include an entire chapter “disproving” the Moses-Plato “agreement” because it is based on apocryphal texts, which Parker called the “Vocal Cabala,” and which he dismissed as a “late and silly invention of the *Jewish Rabbins*.” The theory is that in addition to the written tablets, Moses also received on Mount Sinai a spoken message from God, which subsequently filtered back to Egypt where it somehow meandered to Greece for Plato eventually to learn. Thus some early Church Fathers felt permitted to reconcile the two different cultural sources. Although the legitimacy of cabalistic texts fell out of favor during the Enlightenment, Pater reconfirms, “Plato and Homer must be made to speak agreeably to Moses” (p. 26). Milton studied in Florence and was familiar with the

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<sup>82</sup> Because, as Plotinus, *The Essential Plotinus*, trans. Elmer O’Brien (New York: Mentor Books, 1964) remarks, the individual and the formal beauties “are sharers of the same Idea” (p. 36).

translation of the Cabala by Pico della Mirandola, who is one of the personalities Pater profiles for a chapter in *The Renaissance*; and he would probably not have dismissed the vocal Cabala so readily. The specific question for this discussion, though, is, if Plato partook of the word of God, then to what extent can his form of Platonic love, in all its variants, be promoted alongside Christian chastity? Apparently, the debate had been reopened in Victorian Oxford, where a line seems to have been crossed that did not.

I suspect that, by the 1890's, these kinds of discussions already seemed antiquated. The university culture was unwilling to censor adequately the Uranians, who had by then already to a certain degree become the intellectual establishment, for they produced their own plays, magazines, and books. But they would overreach, and their hubris proved their downfall. To grasp a specific instance of indiscretion, I refer to an incident involving the Uranian poet I have selected as representative, Wratishlaw. His most famous and controversial poem contained the most explicit reference to Uranian love to date. First published in the *Artist* in August of 1893, "To a Sicilian Boy" was to appear in Wratishlaw's first significant collection of poems, *Caprices* (1894), but caused such a scandal that it ultimately was expurgated from the book.

*Love*, I adore the contours of thy shape,  
Thine exquisite breasts and arms adorable;  
The wonders of thy heavenly throat compel  
Such fire of love as even my dreams escape:  
I love thee as the sea-foam loves the cape,  
Or as the shore the sea's enchanting spell:

In sweets the blossoms of thy mouth excel  
The tenderest bloom of peach or purple grape.

I love thee, sweet! Kiss me, again, again!  
Thy kisses soothe me as tired earth the rain;  
Between thine arms I find mine only bliss:  
Ah let me in thy bosom still enjoy  
Oblivion of the past, divinest boy,  
And the dull ennui of a woman's kiss!

That Wratishlaw is remembered at all today is based on this one sensational poem. Mild by today's standards, but, for its place in history, the content was too extreme. The critic Cyril Drew would write, "Mr. Wratishlaw is an apostle of 'the new cult' i.e., a small body of unimportant and self-opinionated young gentlemen<sup>83</sup> who fancy they can invert Nature and the human passions...a positively repellant idea" (quoted in d'Arch Smith, p. 86). No doubt the verb "invert" refers to Havelock Ellis's theory of sexual inversion, which defines homosexuality. Dowling observes, "the *Artist* was an Aestheticist magazine that in 1888 had been transformed by its editor, Charles Kains-Jackson, into a covert vehicle for homosexualist writing" (Dowling, p. 27). Although such vehicles in the early 1890's anticipated a more accepting era, they were premature, as the tragedy of the Wilde trial

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<sup>83</sup> Poems in *Caprices, with Orchids* (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1994) are dedicated to Arthur Bartleet, Charles Hiatt, Selwyn Image, Lord Alfred Douglas, Charles Kains-Jackson, Norman Gale, Oscar Wilde, Gleeson White, Arthur Symons, and George Ellwanger.

would soon make apparent. What Brian Reade calls the “Wratislaw rumpus” was a small but significant element in the evidence used against homosexual liberty.

By the time “To a Sicilian Boy” appeared in book form, before it was expurgated in the second edition, Wratislaw apparently could see the writing on the wall. “L’Eternel Feminin,” was conveniently located on the same leaf as “To a Sicilian Boy” and therefore it was also easily removed.

Lilith or Eve, I was before the flood,  
And Eden grew the palace of my sin  
Wherewith I stirred the lust that slumbered in  
The then unquickened furnace of man’s blood;  
Kissing my mouth he saw that ill was good,  
Lust was Love’s brother, Vice to Virtue kin;  
God gave into my hand all things to win;  
Between him and man’s captive soul I stood.

So still I reign, for still I weave a snare  
With the hot snakes of my lascivious hair,  
Chain with my arms his body and fulfill  
His soul with poison that my lips distil;  
For God is with me, God who for my right

Of old took arms against the Sodomite!

Wratislaw's Medusa/Eve plies Adam with the Satanic goal of making evil good; she snatches unwary men away from the heavenly, Uranian love of men, and binds them to the earthly, lustful love of women. But the Judeo-Christian God is on her side and she seems to gloat about her self-righteousness, recalling that God rains devastation on the city of Sodom for not obeying her. Oscar Wilde would go to trial the next year.

Appendix: The Four Invocations in *Paradise Lost*

Invocation to Book I

Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit 1  
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of *Eden*, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat, 5  
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of *Oreb*, or of *Sinai*, didst inspire  
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,  
In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth  
Rose out of *Chaos*: Or if *Sion* Hill 10  
Delight thee more, and *Siloa's* Brook that flow'd  
Fast by the Oracle of God;; I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous Song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above the *Aonian* Mount, while it pursues 15  
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme.  
And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer

Before all Temples th'upright heart and pure,  
 Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first  
 Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread 20  
 Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss  
 And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark  
 Illumine, and what is low raise and support;  
 That to the highth of this great argument  
 I may assert Eternal Providence, 25  
 And justify the ways of God to men.  
 Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view...

### Invocation Book III

Hail holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born, 1  
 Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam  
 May I express thee unblam'd? since God is Light,  
 And never but in unapproached Light  
 Dwelt from Eternity, dwelt then in thee, 5  
 Bright effluence of bright essence increate.



Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal stream,  
 Whose Fountain who shall tell? before the Sun,  
 Before the Heav'ns thou wert, and at the voice  
 Of God, as with a mantle didst invest 10  
 The rising world of waters dark and deep,  
 Won from the void and formless infinite.  
 Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,  
 Escap't the *Stygian* Pool, though long detain'd  
 In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight 15  
 Through utter and through middle darkness bourne  
 With other notes than to th' *Orphean* Lyre  
 I sung of *Chaos* and *Eternal Night*,  
 Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down  
 The dark descent, and up to reascend, 20  
 Though hard and rare: thee I revisit safe,  
 And feel thy sovran vital Lamp; but thou  
 Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain  
 To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;  
 So thick a drop serene hath quenched thir Orbs, 25  
 Or dim suffusion veil'd. Yet not the more  
 Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt  
 Clear Spring, or shady Grove, or Sunny Hill,

Smit with the love of sacred Song; but chief  
 Thee *Sion* and the flow'ry Brooks beneath 30  
 That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,  
 Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget  
 Those other two equall'd with me in Fate,  
 So were I equall'd with them in renown,  
 Blind *Thamyris* and blind *Maeonides*, 35  
 And *Tiresias* and *Phineas* Prophets old.  
 Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move  
 Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful Bird  
 Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid  
 Tunes her nocturnal Note. Thus with the Year 40  
 Seasons return, but not to me returns  
 Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,  
 Or sight of vernal bloom, or Summer's Rose,  
 Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;  
 But clouds instead, and ever-during dark 45  
 Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men  
 Cut off, and for the Book of knowledge fair  
 Presented with a Universal blanc  
 Of Nature's works to me expung'd and ras'd,  
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out. 50

So much the rather thou, Celestial Light  
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers  
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence  
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell  
Of things invisible to mortal sight. 55

#### Invocation Book VII

Descend from Heav'n *Urania*, by that name 1  
If rightly thou art call'd, whose Voice divine  
Following, above th' *Olympian* Hill I soar,  
Above the flight of *Pegasean* wing.  
The meaning, not the Name I call: for thou 5  
Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top  
Of old *Olympus* dwell'st, but Heav'nly born,  
Before the Hills appear'd, or Fountain flow'd,  
Thou with Eternal Wisdom didst converse,  
Wisdom thy Sister, and with her didst play 10  
In presence of th' Almighty Father, pleas'd  
With thy Celestial Song. Up led by thee

Into the Heav'n of Heav'ns I have presume'd,  
 An Earthly Guest, and drawn Empyreal Air,  
 Thy temp'ring; with like safety guided down 15  
 Return me to my Native Element:  
 Lest from thy flying Steed unreign'd, (as once  
*Bellerophon*, though from a lower Clime)  
 Dismounted, on th' *Aleian* Field I fall  
 Erroneous there to wander and forlorn. 20  
 Half yet remains unsung, but narrower bound  
 Within the visible Diurnal Sphere;  
 Standing on Earth, not rapt above the Pole,  
 More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchang'd  
 To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days, 25  
 On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;  
 In darkness, and with dangers compast round,  
 And solitude; yet not alone, while thou  
 Visit'st my slumbers Nightly, or when Morn  
 Purples the East: still govern thou my Song, 30  
*Urania*, and fit audience find, though few.  
 But drive off the barbarous dissonance  
 Of *Bacchus* and his Revellers, the Race  
 Of that wild Rout that tore the *Thracian* Bard

In *Rhodope*, where Woods and Rocks had Ears 35

To rapture, till the savage clamor drown'd

Both Harp and Voice; nor could the Muse defend

Her Son. So fail not thou, who thee implores:

Fot thou art Heav'nly, shee an empty dream.

Say Goddess, what ensu'd when *Raphael*... 40

#### Invocation Book IX

No more of talk where God or Angel Guest 1

With man, as with his Friend, familiar us'd

To sit indulgent, and with him partake

Rural repast, permitting him the while

Venial discourse unblam'd: I now must change 5

Those Notes to Tragic; foul distrust, and breach

Disloyal on the part of Man, revolt,

And disobedience: On the part of Heav'n

Now alienated, distance and distaste,

Anger and just rebuke, and judgment giv'n, 10

That brought into this World and world of woe,

Sin and her shadow Death, and Misery

Death's Harbinger: Sad task, yet argument  
 Not less but more Heroic than the wrath  
 Of stern *Achilles* on his Foe pursu'd 15  
 Thrice Fugitive about *Troy* Wall; or rage  
 Of *Turnus* for *Lavinia* disespous'd,  
 Or *neptune's* ire or *Juno's*, that so long  
 Perplex'd the *Greek* and *Cytherea's* Son;  
 If answerable style I can obtain 20  
 Of my Celestial Patroness, who deigns  
 Her nightly visitation unimplor'd,  
 And dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires  
 Easy my unpremeditated Verse:  
 Since first this Subject for Heroic Song 25  
 Pleas'd me long choosing, and beginning late;  
 Not sedulous by nature to indite  
 Wars, hitherto the only Argument  
 Heroic deem'd, chief maistry to dissect  
 With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights 30  
 In Battles feign'd; the better fortitude  
 Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom  
 Unsung; or to describe Races and Games,  
 Or tilting Furniture, emblazon'd Shields,

Impreses quaint, Caparisons and Steeds;	35
Bases and tinsel Trappings, gorgeous Knights	
At Joust and Tournament; then mashall'd Feast	
Serv'd up in Hall with Sewers, and Seneschals;	
The skill of Artifice or Office mean,	
Not that which justly gives Heroic name	40
To Person or to Poem. Mee of these	
Nor skill'd nor studious, higher Argument	
Remains, sufficient of itself to raise	
That name, unless an age too late, or cold	
Climate, or Years damp my intended wing	45
Deprest; and much they may, if all be mine,	
Not Hers who brings it nightly to my Ear.	

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