

Milton and the Fit Reader

PARADISE LOST AND THE PARLIAMENT OF HELL

But now the Mystic Tale, that pleas'd of Yore,
Can charm an understanding Age no more;
The long-spun Allegories fulsom grow,
While the dull Moral lyes too plain below.

Joseph Addison, *An Account of the Greatest English Poets* (1694)

THE ANONYMOUS ROYALIST AUTHOR OF *We have fish'd and caught a Frog; or, The History of Several new Fishermen* (1649) indirectly condemned Cromwell's printing orders and urged a restoration of the rightful king after the execution of Charles: "although every lie be an untruth, yet every seeming untruth is not a lie," this author admitted, revealing a surprising candor about his use of the mode of fiction. The explanation continues: "There are in History and Poetry many allegories, tropes, types, figures, comparisons, similitudes and fables; which though they seem to be false, yet (if they be rightly interpreted) they carry in their Morals truth, sense, and reason."¹ Partisan poetic practice seemed to revel in allegory during the Interregnum, as authors protected themselves from persecution by casting their political ideas in fiction. Because of the increasing effectiveness of Cromwell's censors, many writers willingly threw veils over their true meanings in order to escape detection for politically dangerous views. Before 1644, all newsbooks were subjected to the gaze of a clerk of the Stationers' Company; in 1644, the job fell to a clerk assistant to the House of Commons; in 1647, when the army threatened mutiny, Parliament and its committees renewed their censorship efforts, passing a new ordinance in 1647. With the execution of the king, Parliament took even stricter control over the press in the Treason Act of 14 May 1649, specifying that writing against the government or the army was to be considered treason. The act was to be enforced by the military; authors were liable to execution. During the Protectorate, the Council of State rather than the Stationers' Company acted as the chief regulatory body of the press, and in 1655, Cromwell himself ordered the most effective measures yet: no other journal but Marchamont Nedham's *Mercurius Britannicus* was licensed to appear.² As Annabel

Patterson has argued in her brilliant *Censorship and Interpretation*, allegory had been a means for writers to evade censorship since the Tudors. During the Interregnum, those supporting Parliament made less frequent use of allegory, perhaps on the ideological grounds of iconoclasm, but also because they did not have to cower under the same kinds of press restrictions.

I see the aesthetic principle of a limited readership underlying much revolutionary allegorical practice, not solely because of censorship, however. There is another reason for the ubiquity of this literary royalist mode, irrespective of censorship conditions. Allegories require that readers do something when they read, and only properly equipped readers can do what is required.³ In using allegory as a political mode, partisan writers required distinctions to be made by their audiences. Their readers had to, in some sense, come to share the particular vision of the author, who divided the audience into those who read and understood and those who did not—either because they lacked the reading skills or because they disputed the raw premise. In this chapter, we shall see how in using allegory, partisan writers embodied certain assumptions about a coterie readership, as had the anonymous author in *We have Fish'd*, who insisted that his work is to be “rightly interpreted.” In his book *The Veil of Allegory*, Michael Murrin traces this theme of a select audience in Renaissance allegorical theories of Harrington, Boccaccio, Spenser, and others. As Murrin sees it, the allegorist is like “the hierophant of the mysteries [who] habitually classified people into the categories of the sacred and the profane, the initiate and the uninitiate, those who knew the secrets of salvation and those who do not.”⁴ In the charged political context of the English Revolution, such categories took on the particular colors of the respective parties, and thus it is not surprising that Royalists should devote themselves to a marked set of royalist tropes: the martyr king, Babel, women on top. Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism* shows disdain for allegory precisely because of the kind of authorial control it exerts over readers (as Samuel Johnson had before him): a “continuous allegory prescribes the direction of [the reader’s] commentary, and so restricts its freedom.”⁵ Allegory, consequently, serves political propaganda well. During the English Revolution, writers sought to effect political persuasion, to consolidate support from a select audience, and thus to limit the “freedom” of their readers to come to any conclusion. Maureen Quilligan adds to Frye’s conclusion that “what the reader loses in freedom, he makes up in significance,” insisting that readers themselves become part of the process of understanding the allegory.⁶ In a way, the readers of allegories become unwitting participants in political discussion as they flesh out the author’s vision.

Allegory, as I see it, becomes the hinge on which rest the issues of interpretation, polemical practice, and audiences we have been dealing with in the previous chapters. In the Interregnum, while Royalists wore the bridle of censorship, allegory seemed to be the only way for these writers, now underground, to express opinions.⁷ But Royalists persisted in using their

allegories even after the Restoration, when presumably there was no incentive for writing indirectly. This curious persistence leads me to seek for what else Royalists found advantageous in allegory. In a highly divided political climate, writers could use allegory to exclude readers, not solely because of censorship, but because they wished to distinguish the members of their audience from a general reading public, and they distinguished their audience by appeals to recognizable literary habits. The fit reader of allegory in this political context was to become a partisan reader, one who became bonded to a writer through shared, recognizable political opinions, and also by the shared hermeneutic customs.

John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* may now be trotted out as an important counterexample to this royalist practice of allegory, since *Pilgrim's Progress* is no royalist work, though it is most clearly an allegory. There could be Puritan allegories that relied, rather than on the royalist Neoplatonic representational scheme, instead upon Christian providentialist, apocalyptic, or millenarian schemes.⁸ At the time it was published in 1678, moreover, it was underground literature, and Bunyan may have chosen his mode for this secondary reason. But there is a difference between Bunyan's aim and that of the Royalists with respect to their audiences. Bunyan aimed to educate his everyman Christian in proper habits of reading, and his own readers, of course, would practice these by reading Bunyan's own allegory. *Pilgrim's Progress* is its own hornbook, inviting any soul to become qualified; Bunyan supplies marginal notes, repetition, and a plain style to insure that all do. Bunyan, through allegory, appealed to an audience of dissenting souls, writing in code that would be understood by them. The book, however, begs for a wide audience to become part of that distinct group; its message is restricted only by interpretive means, not by social, economic, or political allegiances.

Royalist allegory, like divine right theory in politics, was based on a vision of hierarchy in which there was not only proper order in the political realm, but also in the representational realm, a scheme described by Angus Fletcher as constitutive of allegory in general as a fixed, essential relation between metaphysical truth and earthly representations.⁹ Thus, when they compared Charles to the sun, for instance, Royalists asserted a cosmically significant order.¹⁰ One of the Royalists' favorite fictions was the "Parliament of hell," in which parliamentary figures were lampooned as devils meeting in the underworld. This particular allegory was a means by which royalist writers could evade censorship; by holding fictional figures responsible for political ills, authors were relieved from the full responsibility for their opinions or actions. As the American comedian Flip Wilson, in his transvestite character "Geraldine," used to snap, "The Devil made me buy this dress!" In the climate of the Interregnum, this Parliament of hell genre was not only a favored mode for Royalists to evade censors and still to write opposition literature, however; substantively, the genre also presented a cosmic justification for their political position. By representing the struggle

between Charles and Parliament as a contest between God and the Devil, Royalists assimilated earthly political events into a cosmic scheme. These writers relied upon their readers' commitment to this cosmically ordered view to sustain other analogies, such as could be found in the social order, the family, gender hierarchy, and in the church. With the Parliament of hell genre, which we shall be examining here, Royalists placed human events in a cosmic scheme, providing a reading of contemporary events through supernatural characters. This allegory also required that its readers agree that the natural order was equated to political order; both could then be equated to representational order. John Cleveland, as we saw in a chapter 2, made such a demand upon his audience.

Is it mere coincidence that Milton writes a Parliament of hell scene into his first books of *Paradise Lost*? Milton dallies with forms of allegorical representation that became conventional during the English Revolution in representing Satan in *Paradise Lost*, especially in the first two books. Milton's task, to "assert Eternal Providence / And justify the ways of God to men" (1.25-26), would seem to echo the royalist belief that contemporary events might represent a cosmic narrative of order. When we place Milton's *Paradise Lost* in contact with the royalist Parliament of hell tradition, we find many specific allegorical resonances. Milton's crossing with the genre has bizarre political consequences: Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* most closely resembles the Royalists' post-Restoration view of Cromwell.¹¹

In considering Satan as an allegorical figure—and the Parliament of hell pamphlets demand that we do so—I may seem to run against the current of Milton scholarship, which has just about given up on the "Satan controversy," which entranced readers of *Paradise Lost* for the centuries from Dryden on down. Several earlier generations of critics had waged war on the Blakean topic, *whether Mr. Milton was of the Devil's party without knowing it*, a debate that was finally drawn to a silent close by Stanley Fish, who turned critical attention away from Milton's coded messages and toward the reader's making of meaning. After Fish's masterful analysis, somehow Milton's purported sympathy with the Devil seemed to be a mere projection of readers' fallible wills, a psychological crutch, or a heuristic tool; we—the readers—were made to feel ashamed for our naïve affection for the father of lies. Our mea culpas rang round the library: "In *Paradise Lost*, the reader is repeatedly forced to acknowledge the unworthiness of values and ideals he had previously admired."¹²

Yet the Satan-hero as a politician has returned as an object of inquiry in Milton studies with the return of historicist approaches. Though without explicitly positing Satan as Milton's champion, or presenting an allegorical reading of Satan as a revolutionary radical, scholars have seen Milton fighting for liberty and against tyranny in general with the figure of Satan. With their current interest in history, some critics have brought back a kind of authorial intention as a fit object of study in their look into Milton's political commitments, and Satan consequently has been aligned to Charles I,

representative of the "false heroic image" that must crumble before the strength of Christian liberty and right reason, freely and properly applied.¹³ If Satan is to be read allegorically at all nowadays, goes this line of thinking, then he must be seen as a representation of a general type, and not specifically as a stand-in for King Charles (or for Milton).¹⁴

The move in modern Milton scholarship has been to resist reading Satan as an allegory, whether for Milton or for Charles—or for any other figure, for that matter. Merritt Y. Hughes seized the bull by the horns in his important essay, "Satan and the 'Myth' of the Tyrant," where he argued that "Milton's Satan is 'the false image' of the true orator Milton wanted to become," and thus is not reducible to any particular figure in history. Hughes saw the "attribution of any topical political intention to Milton's epic plan" as involving "irreconcilable hypotheses" about the nature of Milton's political commitments, especially given Milton's other writings.¹⁵ Even Stella Purce Revard, who in *The War in Heaven: "Paradise Lost" and the Tradition of Satan's Rebellion* assessed "how the seventeenth-century political scene might have affected Milton's presentation of Satan's conspiracy in books Five and Six of *Paradise Lost*," nevertheless shrank from seeing precise topical references in his image of the fallen angel. Revard argued that that "while theological, political, and social traditions exerted considerable influence on *Paradise Lost*"—the 1605 Gunpowder Plot is one instance—nevertheless, "the literary tradition exerted still more," that literary tradition being one of representing Satan as a figure for general evil.¹⁶ Stevie Davies would "utterly reject any attempt to allegorize the poem," and roundly pressed for silence on the whole question of Satan's roman-à-clef identity: "Any suggestion of a one-to-one ratio between Milton's creation of the king of Hell and the by-gone king of England is not only fruitlessly reductive but ridiculous."¹⁷

If we take into account the literature of the English Revolution, and especially the political genre of the Parliament of hell, we might subsequently reconsider Milton's approach toward this material, however. During the English revolutionary period, we find that allegories of Satan were used to express a variety of political positions, aside from the common designation of Satan as a general principle of evil, held responsible for all the social ills of the day: Satan was, variously, the Catholic church, the sects, Parliament, Cromwell, or an assortment of other historical figures. In all these roles, writers adapted the medieval notion of Satan either as God's rebel or as the Antichrist.¹⁸

Milton's political intent may be impossible to pin down by reading the image of Satan allegorically, yet by examining the tradition from which Milton drew, we might set Milton's poem into the literary culture of his own day, a literary culture that was intensely interested in political analysis. In my view, this setting includes the literature of the street, where Milton's quasi-allegorical representation of Satan in *Paradise Lost* would have resonated with contemporary polemical uses of the character of Satan and other quasi-allegories. The result, I think, enriches our understanding of

Milton's poetry as engaged with contemporary polemic, both in theme and in style. I shall argue that, in wielding a recognizably royalist trope in his epic, Milton commented on the current uses of allegory in political expression. The relation between literary representation, allegory, and polemical—or political—intent is at the heart of Milton's task; and secondary accounts that attempt to disentangle these, or to purge Milton's *Paradise Lost* of its contemporary political resonances are, in my opinion, guilty of suppressing one of the poem's essential meanings, that is, of training fit readers within this context.

THE GENRE OF THE PARLIAMENT OF HELL

The 1647 pamphlet *The Devil in his Dumps* is exemplary of the Parliament of hell genre since it sets out its story so succinctly. The pamphlet takes up the issue of toleration for the sects, a debate that came to a head with the army's consolidation of a political program and the Agitators' mutiny in the army in 1647. At the beginning of the summer of 1647, the lawyer and general Henry Ireton had assembled army regiments and had drafted the *Solemn Engagement of the Army*, outlining a political program, which, among other things, fixed the duration of Parliaments, pressed for religious toleration, and opposed arbitrary rule. These demands were presented to the king on 2 August as the *Heads of Proposals*. The Presbyterians in Parliament opposed the Army radicals' demands, specifically on the issue of toleration for the sects. The Presbyterian author sees the demands for toleration as a consequence of Satan's work. The author of *The Devil in his Dumps* opposes toleration, tracing the origin of sectarianism to a meeting of underworld characters:

Know, that about the beginning of this present *Summer* the Prince of darkness, called a general Assembly of all the infernal *spirits*, who with winged host attended his summons, and being met and the grand *Diabolo* mounted on a throne of *sulphur*, accompanied with his Cabinet Council the *seven deadly sins*, he began a very passionate complaint of the great decay and imminent ruin of his Kingdom, if some speedy course were not taken to prevent it, for which he had called them together requiring their devilish advice. He recounted unto them, how they were altogether cast out of heaven by the Almighty Power, for which common wrong although their confederate malice did oblige them all to seek revenge, yet himself had done it by a most subtle insinuation, withdrawing the *first man* that ever was from's obedience to his *Maker*.

The author explains the current political and religious crisis as Satan's plan to avenge his ejection from heaven, and gives the Devil a political backdrop. The "general Assembly" of devils is called a "Cabinet Council," for example; the Devil sits on a throne as he meets or holds a council of infernal spirits; oral arguments are made; the temptation of Adam is recalled;

and there is a warning to readers that the Devil is yet at work. Further, there is a contrast and comparison between the Devil's kingdom and England, as Pluto brags that though the glory of his empire was ended by Luther, it gains strength in England nevertheless: "At that very instant hatcht another brood of Crocodiles"—Anabaptists and other sectaries, the author notes in the margin—"who by their fained tears, counterfeit humility and shews of holiness, inticed thousands to run after them, and by new lights . . . of their own giddy heads, lead them about such vagaries, that they brought 'em at last to a grosser darkness than that they escaped." According to the author, those advocating toleration specifically do the work of the Devil in weakening the English Protestant church, thus making England easy prey to the tyranny of popery: "We are warned hereby . . . what black ends their fair pretences so suriously drive at, that are so zealous for toleration. . . . Rub your eyes, be wise, and see in time whom you trust."¹⁹ In *The Devil in His Dumps*, we observe the essential features of the Parliament of hell genre: there is a topical political aim, as the conventional story of the Devil is applied to a current historical situation. Here we have an instance of what Northrop Frye would call "simple" allegory, where there is an easy one-to-one correspondence between the signifier and thing signified; the grand Diabolo, perhaps, is Ireton. The devils "stand for" the sectaries.²⁰

We find a similar scene in the first two books of Milton's poem. Satan, "Hell's dread Emperor with pomp Supreme" (2.510), sits "High on a Throne of Royal State" (2.1), presiding over a "great consult" (1.798) in an "infernal Court" (1.792) of his fallen underlings. He considers "once more / With rallied Arms to try what may be yet / Regain'd in Heav'n" (1.268–70), speaking with "high words, that bore / Semblance of worth, not substance, gently rais'd / Thir fainting courage, and dispell'd thir fears" (1.528–30), persistent in his prideful pursuit, revenge, a "Vain War with Heav'n" (2.9). Even from the start of *Paradise Lost*, then, Milton seems to embrace this conventional representation of Satan as the cause of all "our woe," as he asks, "Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt? / Th'infernal Serpent; hee it was" (1.33–34), and the poet reels off a political narrative in form very like the one found in the Parliament of hell representation:

... what time his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host
Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equall'd the most High
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battle proud
With vain attempt.

(1.36–44)

In this passage, Milton expresses cosmic events through explicitly political language: God's rule is represented as a "monarchy," as Milton seems to press the royalist equation between monarchy and divine right. This equation was severed by radicals in the English Revolution, however. Strangely enough, in his first books of *Paradise Lost*, Milton's representation of the "devilish Counsel" (2.379) resembles the worldview of the antitolerantist pamphlet *The Devil in his Dumps*.

Although it would be premature or fallacious at this point to set *Paradise Lost* alongside of *The Devil in his Dumps* and to construct a precise link between these two texts, the Devil's appearance in the first two books of *Paradise Lost* now can be seen to resonate with possible topical meanings. Before I explore whether such precise links may be drawn, there is the history of this genre of the Parliament of hell during the English Revolution to consider, a history that will complicate our understanding of Milton's representation of Satan. For during the English Revolution, the image of Satan was, regardless of the party using it, one central way writers could understand and represent current political and historical events.

There was a worldview implied by these stories of the Devil acting in England. As Keith Thomas has colorfully documented in his exhaustive study of the beliefs in witchcraft and magic in Renaissance English culture, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, the Devil was a "literal reality for most devout Englishmen," well into the seventeenth century in England. Such a belief coexisted with more orthodox church doctrine, and indeed, Thomas argues, complemented it. The Devil's evil, for example, was opposed to the Christian God's good. Sectaries were quite literally thought to be "possessed" by the Devil, and the prevalence of exorcisms of such "possessions" is evidence of this belief.²¹ The images of the Devil literally at work within England's shores, as were found in a pamphlet like *The Devil in his Dumps*, then, were not far from the common views of ordinary English citizens.

Still, we should explain the popularity of these images not solely in terms of this set of beliefs. The Devil imagery could also be used rhetorically to mask possibly dangerous political positions. In the early years of the civil war period, the parliamentary side, along with the Royalists, had represented the Devil as the source of schism. By blaming the Devil—often a stand-in for the pope—those who opposed the king could find a secure metaphor through which to express their potentially treasonous opinions. Thus the allegory of the Devil in hell was one response to a political climate where it was as yet unacceptable to express criticism of the king or his favorites outright. Relying upon the safety and conventionality of this image, the pro-Parliament author of a 1644 pamphlet, *The Devils White Boyes*, for example, explained that in England, it was not papists themselves but "Malignants [who] are the Devil's Agents still." Railing against ecclesiastical innovations, the author suggested that the king was being led astray by devilish, Catholic, "Malignant," counselors: "this Religion would serve the Malignants, who are half Epicures, half Papists, and half Atheist, and a medly of

mad wickedness, they and the Devil have been in Counsell a great while, to devise a plot how to destroy all the honest Religious Protestants in *England*." This author makes use of the traditional English link between the Devil and Catholicism as he connects the current court to popish subversion, including evidence of the Gunpowder Plot, and the Irish uprising. At the end of the pamphlet, the author issues a warning about future evils to be wrought by these devils' men: "what a number of black malignants are there now in this Land, being a kind of smooth-faced Machiavellian Devils, some with flattering bellows blowing the coals of dissention between the King and Parliament; then there be horned malignant Devils that will roar, swear, domineer. . . but these Malignants are not Dormant Devils, but active and stirring to do mischief."²² All England is festering with their evil effects, specifically, political unrest and dissension.

In a clearly propagandistic act, however, alluding to a Popish plot, this pro-Parliament author names one of the "devils": "the Earl of *Strafford*, he sits in Counsell every day about it with *Pluto*, *Ashteroth*, and the other Infernall Counsellors." England, quite literally, has become hell. As the Devil's henchmen, *Strafford* and others corrupt the king; they are at once "Machiavellian" and satanic figures, sowing discord and disorder wherever they go:

like those pictures which have a double aspect, one like a man, the other like a Devil, when they are to do mischief by flattering the King, or making the country people rise in the Kings behalf, then they put on smooth faces, and tell them of the Kings power and Prerogative, and that the Parliament is no Parliament, and therefore they may fight against it, that the King is wronged, when indeed no body wrongs him but his malignant Counsellors, that they fight for the Protestant Religion, that is for Popery, and to defend the Laws, that is the Law of tyrannical slavery, which the King would impose upon his subjects.

The author applies conventional motifs of devilishness—the "smooth face," flattery, the love of inversion—all to the current scene, where "Parliament is no Parliament," and where there is surreptitious popery. Though the author notes that he is fashioning a literary "conceit," still his direct explanation of his allegory is surprising, as it sets his accusation against *Strafford*, the king's former counselor, in full view.²³

The Parliament of hell was not a stable genre between the years 1640 and 1660, however. Over the course of the English revolutionary period, the images of Satan went through an evolution. In the early 1640s, Satan represented an assortment of evil figures and was held responsible for the sects; Satan in 1648–49 (around the time of the king's execution) stood for Parliament itself; and Satan after the Restoration was identified with Oliver Cromwell or John Bradshaw, the chief justice of the court that had tried and condemned Charles I. The genre of the Parliament of hell itself was thus the product of cultural change, both in literary and in political terms. In political terms, we see the genre used more exclusively by Royalists than by anti-Royalists over the course of the period. In literary terms, the writers

grew bolder and bolder in naming their targets of satire outright, making fewer and fewer demands on readers to interpret, and also denoting the decreasing risks of writing political allegory. Before turning to *Paradise Lost*, then, we shall examine these various angles.

In some pamphlets in the revolutionary period particular figures were imagined as devils, not because they had led the king astray, as they were seen to have done in the 1640s, but simply because they were creating serious political unrest. For example, in *Mercurius Poeticus* (1648), the author promises to "Turn Treasons darker inside out / Unto the view of All," accusing parliamentary leaders John Pym and Viscount Saye and Sele—outspoken critics of the king—of being lured by Alecto and Megara, "snake-haired sisters," and "inspired with hellish ire / Against their Sovereign and the Church conspire."²⁴ These authors wished their readers to perform the task of filling in the gaps in their analogies, to continue the process of seeing the Devil at work by viewing the actions of living politicians according to their scheme. Thus, the authors ask the readers to read a cosmic allegory as a key to current politics. Allegory then is a means to provoke such political interpretations of current history.

Used both by those opposing and those supporting Parliament, the image of Satan as the fomenter of political intrigue and rebellion accords with medieval and Renaissance accounts of Satan as the prototypical traitor. Milton condemned political treachery in general by drawing upon this tradition as he portrayed Satan.²⁵ The evidence from the pamphlet literature suggests, however, that this is only part of the story. Satan was not just a general political type but was also a representation of specific historical beings, as we saw above, for example, in the case of Strafford, Pym, and the Viscount, where the devils quite literally *were* the political opposition. In these cases, the representation of Satan was deployed specifically in order to delegitimize and quite literally, to "demonize" particular political or religious figures, and to prompt readers to fill in the blanks. There were frequent casual references—"The depth of their Designe, was hatch'd in hell" and "Shall such Imposters be Obeyed, when / They Act like Devils, and cease for to be Men?"—and full-blown representations of Parliaments in hell in their pamphlet dramas.²⁶ Through these tropes, writers found the figure of Satan, and allegory in general, useful to promote their causes within this climate of political conflict, training their readers to interpret in this frame.

Whether they used it as a ploy to shore up support among an underground readership or were expressing a literal belief in the Devil, by the years 1648–49, Royalists had taken over the exclusive rights to the genre in their attacks on the parliamentary leaders and on Parliament itself. By then, political events had unraveled to lead those loyal to the king to question whether the world had indeed been turned upside down, and in their pamphlets of this period, they seem to believe the Devil was actually at work in England. Charles was in custody, awaiting a trial for treason by a political

body that considered its own sovereignty superior to the king's; the royal family had been spirited away to the Continent; all lords had been removed from Parliament; preachers, including women, from unheard-of sects, had emerged from unknown quarters of the land. Defeated royalist soldiers rambled over the countryside, beaten down by two successive civil wars; an archbishop and a highly placed earl, the king's right-hand men, had suffered deposition and execution, according to the will of the people. As the king purportedly penned his meditations in the Tower that was to be his final home, the chaos outside the prison walls seemed almost inexplicable except by appeal to some cosmic interference, the Devil's work.

Bewildered Royalists explained recent events by reference to Satan's hold. Especially as the king's cause appeared more and more in danger, they represented Parliament with devil imagery. In these representations, they held Satan responsible for the general condition of anarchy, but also, more specifically, saw Parliament itself as driven by satanic forces. Especially as options for the king seemed to narrow to nil, Royalists found no other explanation for his fall but that the Devil's hand was in it. For example, a 1648 royalist pamphlet taunts Parliament for being "a combined medley of Traitors and Rebels, and far different from the Nature of a Parliament (by reason of their Luciferian Pride, to be flung down to hell) and to be deserted by Loyal Subjects, as disjointed, severed and mangled in its members [was] . . . incapable of any just Act, but wading in blood"²⁷ According to this view, Parliament was an anti-Parliament, as Satan was the Antichrist, in a topsy-turvy universe.

In 1648–49, there appeared a number of royalist pamphlets representing Satan as in Parliament. These exemplify a literal belief in the Devil, as writers offered readers a way of understanding contemporary history as a Manichaean struggle between good and evil. On the eve of the king's trial, one Royalist wrote a poem on his magazine's title page:

The Rebels rage like mad, their greedy minds
Remain unsatisfied; like blustering winds
They roar for Blood; and with unwearied toil,
Pursue Destruction, Murder, Rapine, Spoil.
They've entered into Covenant with Hell;
Rebels beyond the line of parallel;
Who trampling on Allegiance, do defy
The Powers of earth, and scorn the Deity.

The pamphlet continues with a narration of the themes of cosmic chaos of this poem, denouncing the members of Parliament who "have lately with much Machiavelical [*sic*] policy, drawn up a form of Government, or rather a Chaos of disorder; the pattern whereof was certainly fetched from Hell, and the matter was contrived by the Devil, the Parliament and armies' grand Agent; for both matter, substance, and method, savor of his style."²⁸

God and the Devil have been translated into Charles and Parliament. The idea of a Faustian "covenant with hell" of course derives from the medieval tradition where Satan made a contract for human souls. But "covenant" also echoed the political language of Puritan theology. Many royalist pamphleteers played up this analogy between Puritan "covenanting" and the Devil's contract, as in the pamphlet *The Devill and the Parliament* (1648), where Satan insists that Parliament live up to the terms of its contract, saying, I "needs must have thy soul that is my own, by contract, and 'twas for that that all this while I aided thee." Satan's contract, however, turns the world upside down by reversal of proper social hierarchy, as in this pamphleteer's 1648 portrayal of the Devil singing a prideful tune: "Now topsy turvy, ring the knell, / Come Parliament with me to hell. / There thee and I will ever dwell; / Thus Rebels, must I pay you well." Speaking to Parliament, this Devil explains that "he that threw me down from Heaven for conspiring against him, permitted me to be the Patron, and Protector of your Rebellion" (1-2), boasting, "to thee have I given all my power, taught thee to lie, dissemble, & to cheat a Nation of their Birthright; to know Law, have I persuaded the deluded vulgar, to hearken to thy poisonous Rhetorick and to believe thou meanest to Reform, and building on that weak foundation, to bring their Plate, Coin, and all theair treasure, and throw it at thy feet; have I infus'd contentious spirits into them, which stirred them up to Faction, and Rebellion," explaining "that is my own, by contract." The Devil has contracted Parliament to oppose the king.²⁹

In viewing the world as a contest between God and the Devil, royalist writers justified conservative social hierarchy. As in the passage immediately above, the class issue comes up over and over in these royalist attacks on Parliament, and it seems to be part of the genre's thrust to reinstate social order. By these conventional attacks on the lower orders, writers also shored up support for their political positions among their elite readers. In *Mercurius Melancholicus* (1649) the author slurs the "Sanctified Council of Mechanicks at White-hall," members of an illegitimate Parliament, which has "voted the King to be Deposed." This royalist author fulminates: "what Diabolical Rascals they have cried up; but let them Vote themselves to the Devil, their Master."³⁰ Another example where the allegory of Satan was used to express an attitude toward the lower orders is *A Trance; or, News from Hell* (1649), whose speaker imagines himself visiting hell, where he witnesses the devil Megara boasting of her accomplishments: "To effect which our practice hath been to bring the *beggerliest* and *toughest* people upon the *richest* and *softest*," overturning the distinctions of rank. "In sum," Megara reports to Lucifer, her lord, "We have reduced that Kingdom to a new conformity with this of your Majesties', to a sweet Chaos of all confusion, we have brought thy sway solely into the common peoples' hands; And never did the common people more truly act the part, and discover the genius of a common people more lively, whose nature is still thirsting after novelties and Utopian reformations, though they fool themselves thereby into a

baser kind of slavery."³¹ Chaos here is quite literally seen in the overturning of proper social hierarchy; Satan's victory is the defeat of the aristocracy by the vulgar. By evoking these fears of the common folk, writers appealed to an elite audience.

The Parliament of hell genre explained that disarray in the social fabric was the result of the political disorder. The genre also called attention to the disorderly political conduct of Parliament itself. One pamphlet burlesques the Jacobean cry "no Bishop, no King" with the new slogan "no Devill, no Parliament, is a sure *maxime*."³² The royalist newspaper *Mercurius Elencticus* (May 1649) saw the Devil's love of inversion in Parliament's actions: "An Act (forsooth) was this day read and debated of, whereby they intend to make falsehood be called truth, Rebellion Loyalty, the Devil a Saint: Treason it must be for me or any man, to affirm their present Government to be Tyrannical, Usurped, or Unlawfull: Or that the Commons are not the Supreme authority of the Nation: Or for any one to endeavor the alteration of that Government."³³ These words mock the 1650 Engagement Oath, in which Parliament required all adult males to swear loyalty to the new Commonwealth. Westminster, wrote one author, "has become such a Den of Devils . . . there is not such a subtle deceiver in the world, as an Angel of light: a Devil in the shape of a Saint (especially at Westminster) hath done more mischief, than all the honest men there can ever do good."³⁴

Contemporary parliamentary practice also came under fire, as royalist writers drew upon class fears to delegitimize more "democratic" involvement in government. In the pamphlet *The Parliaments Petition to the Divell* (1648), for example, the author mocks parliamentary petitioning, a practice that surged during the tenure of the Long Parliament, where everyone—including the "ten thousand citizens of London," women, and apprentices—seemed to offer advice to Parliament. In this pamphlet, Parliament petitions the Devil himself. By implication, the petitioners of Parliament, too, seek the Devil's favor. This Parliament swears "that we (to serve you) have laid aside all service of God, all Loyalty towards our King, and all Christian love and charity towards men, we have robbed God of as much of his glory as we possibly could." The means they have used are sects, traitors, ignorance, the press—"the bellows of Sedition"—laws, the breaking of all trusts, and the demolition of the king. "Concerning the King," Parliament claims, "we have played our parts sufficiently with him, we have handled him to some tune, we have coursed him like a Partridge over the Mountains, we have robbed and divested him of all Royal dignities, and deprived him of all Regal Revenues and Possessions, insomuch, as we have not left him a house of his own to put his head in, except a jail." In repayment for its service of "more than 7 years," Parliament asks the Devil to "speedily bestir yourself," to act in its defense, reminding him of their contract: "though God made us men, yet you were ungraciously pleased to make us Rebels and Traitors, in which point we are your creatures." Parliament also

begs the Devil to continue in his work, to extend "your best assistance either by force or by fraud, power or policy, to free us from the inevitable dangers which threaten our destruction; it is feared greatly by us, that God and the King will get the upper hand over us. . . . destroy not therefore the works of your own hands." Parliament is figured as a tool of the Devil, the members of Parliament wholly loyal to their leader's commands.³⁵

By mocking the language of Parliament, royalist writers urged their readers to view Parliament's actions with skepticism. In *A Declaration of Great Lucifer, Prince of the Air, and of Devils, and of all the damned crew in Hell* (1648), the Devil responds to the petition, praising his "obedient servants," in Parliament for what they have done "to the advance of our Kingdom, and have countenanced treason, and rebellion, applauded Rebels, rewarded murders, fomented untruths, falsified Oaths, broken Covenants, robbed the people, and used that most excellent art of equivocating; for these Acts . . . we accept, affect, applaud, and approve . . . for what have we not power to command the whole earth? Yea we have, and it will obey." Lucifer praises specifically the "sundry Acts, Orders and Ordinances, by you commanded, and by the people in general performed to the great advance of our Kingdom." This language, which contains echoes of the language of the parliamentary thanksgiving prayers to God, confirms that those in Parliament are merely the Devil's lackeys. The Devil reassures his minions: "we are the great paymaster in the world, and if we set you on work be sure we will pay you your wages"; he congratulates his earthly workers: "we do approve of all and every act by you done, or shall do in this kind, for its done to the advancement of our Kingdom, and we are joyful to hear that we have such faithful and diligent servants, that are so willing to perform our will."³⁶ Lucifer praises Parliament, the "you" here—though this is a tacit address to the pamphlet's readers as well—for a job well done.

Not simply indicting a general topsy-turvy climate, the author of *A Declaration of Great Lucifer* attacks Parliament for its deeds, including, among other things, taxes, which the author accuses Parliament of worshipping as idols: "whether Parliament's Idols, Goldsmiths Hall Idols, or Excise Idols." This Parliament also is accused of condoning as lawful political conduct for its members to "satisfy our lusts"; to "live without order"; and to "back-bite, slander, revile, and betray any one, be they friend or foe." The author of the pamphlet continues with his ironic scheme by having Lucifer swear an oath of loyalty to his earthly servants: with the "approbation of our infernall privy Counsel," Lucifer swears that "I with the rest of my devilish Counsellours, will maintain, defend, preserve, and put in practice, set forward, and help these and the like designs."³⁷ The reader will notice the similarity between this Devil's oath and the coronation oath to be sworn by England's ruler—by implication, then, the Devil is indeed ruling in England instead of Charles. It seems that the new political conditions—where the "common people" have a say in government, with a newly powerful Parliament and

new governmental structures, committees, taxes, and public appeals—are all the effects of the Devil's involvement in English politics.

Proof of the Devil's activity was thus witnessed in the contemporary political scene. Publicity in the press especially was seen as the Devil's work, as writers adapted the traditional image of Satan as the "father of lies" to meet the current conditions of polemical writing: "Will these Sainted reprobates never leave their lying?" asks one royalist newswriter, in *Mercurius Fidelicus* (1648). The answer of course, is, "No, they are it seems resolved to continue their correspondence with the Father of their faction, Laurence Lucifer, author of their Rebellion, who for his pride was thrown down to hell, and they for their presumptuous insolence I fear, will never go to Heaven." Was this "Laurence" the figure for Henry Lawrence (1600–1664), lord president of the council under Cromwell? According to this writer, "Saints" are like Devils on account of their deceptive writing, and furthermore, the common people would be especially vulnerable to these satanic manipulations: "When they ["Sainted reprobates"] have invented what they think may make the Kings party odious, then they immediately send it abroad, and afterwards cause it to be intercepted and read at the house of mischief, and then ordered . . . forthwith to be printed, this is one of the Westminster Devils' chief projects, and they find it takes much with the weaker sort of people, but for those who have any ingenuity or common sense, being to smell out their Knavery, and will not be gulled by their fopperies any longer."³⁸ In this royalist account, the "Saints" imitate the Devil's delight in inverting the truth, with the help of the press. Likewise, in *A Trance; or, News from Hell* (1649), which we examined above, the Devil's servant boasts that "The most advantageous instruments we have used to bring all this [turmoil] about, have been the *Pulpit* and the *Press*; by these we diffus'd those surmises and suppositious fears formerly spoken of, to intoxicate the brains of the people."³⁹ A royalist sermon entitled *The Devilish Conspiracy*, appearing very soon after the regicide, inveighed against the "*Hypocrites, a Generation of Vipers, Sons of Belial, Children (indeed) of the Devil,*" charging that "Devils, Beasts, and such Jews as these degenerate in this from all mankind, and therefore are not alone content to murder *Ch.* their King, but that they will crucify him again when he is dead; and that not only in his Disciples and Servants, but in his never-dying name, which (like Flies) they endeavor to corrupt, and to blast."⁴⁰ The press is a kind of weapon, capable of hellish murder. In these examples, Parliament was likened to the Devil specifically in spreading "lies" in the press. What is surprising is the consistency of intention and the flexibility of technique of this royalist effort, the attempt to put the traditional image of the Devil to contemporary use, "upgrading" the Devil's falsifying media to include the modern technology of the printing press.

Especially after the execution of the king, this genre of the Parliament in hell came to full flower. It was one central way Royalists expressed their

view of historical events. One royalist newspaper condemned the act instituting a Commonwealth in terms of a cosmic struggle between heaven and hell:

Black as Hell it self: Lo! There it stands,
The Workmanship of the Imperious Hands.
Look down, (O Heav'n) & view their ugly Acts.
Vouchsafe to open all the Cataracts
Of thy just Wrath. . .⁴¹

In choosing the language of heaven and hell to condemn his enemies, the writer pleads to God to render judgment. The events he is witnessing seem truly acts in sacred time, and he allies his perspective with that of God: both view history truly, and that view of history is a providential struggle between forces of good and evil.

After the regicide, not only was Parliament in general represented as the satanic in the way it had overturned natural order, but specific members continued to be lampooned as devils. In *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I* (1649), a tract that appeared soon after the regicide, we have a drama that opens with Oliver Cromwell speaking to Hugh Peters, the fiery Independent preacher: "My fine facetious Devil," Cromwell addresses his cohort, "who wear'st the Livery of the Stygian God, as the white Emblem of thy innocence: Hast thou prepar'd a pithy formal speech against the essence and the power of Kings?" Cromwell urges his "fine facetious Devil" friend to spread lies among the populace: "That when tomorrow all my Myrmidons do meet on Onslow heath, like the Greek Exorcist, renowned Calthas, . . . by thy insinuating persuasive art, their hearts may move, like Reeds." Cromwell knows his mate has a special talent for such persuasion: "I know that nectar hangs upon thy lips, and that the most absurd Syllogism, or ear-deceiving paradox, maintained by thee, shall seem oraculous, more dangerous to question than the Sacred Writ."⁴² We have here, of course, an appropriation of the trope of the Devil as expert liar and falsifier. With this pamphlet, however, we see a precise allegory between members of the Commonwealth regime and the devils, a special case of the genre discussed above.

The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I is emblematic because it presents not only the hellish deeds but the men who were behind them, in no uncertain terms, as Cromwell is represented as Satan himself.⁴³ Likewise, in *Bradshaw's Ghost* (1659), the figure of John Bradshaw is named outright as satanic. Bradshaw meets King Charles in the afterworld, and explains that he is doomed to wander ceaselessly in a kind of purgatory, punished for his sin of chairing the regicide commission. It turns out that Pluto, king of hell, has denied Bradshaw entrance into his world, for fear he will usurp his throne. "For in hell I find no company," Bradshaw laments, "the fact that I did was so unparalleled, that it is with me as the *Preacher* said once it was with

the *Jesuites*, there was a *little Hell* prepared for them on purpose, lest they should breed *confusion* among all the rest: so I find there is not only a *little Hell*, but *peculiar torments*, for such heaven-daring *regicides*, for *Pluto* himself is afraid to be condemned and *unthroned*, if I might be admitted at large in a Hell."⁴⁴ The author played on deeply held beliefs that recent events in history could be understood as taking place on a cosmic plane of action. This story, and others like it, helped to fuel the animosity toward Cromwell, Bradshaw, and other opponents of Charles I, part of a campaign of vilification that burst like the fireworks that greeted the king's return in 1660.

"TO THE KNOWING READER": ROYALIST PRACTICE OF ALLEGORY

For royalist pamphleteers in the Interregnum, allegories were means through which the truth of historical events could be expressed and rendered apprehensible to informed readers. The royalist James Howell explained in the preface to his prose allegory, *Dodona's Grove, the second part* (1650), that his "knowing reader" was to be "impartiall, discreet, and no *blockhead*."⁴⁵ Howell, born in 1594, was an international businessman and a member of Ben Jonson's literary circle. He had previously published the first part of *Dodona's Grove* (1640) as an allegory covering the political events between 1603 and 1640. The work narrated the political troubles of the Jacobean reign through a conceit of a forest of trees, ruled by an oak, in which various other trees, from hemlock and yew to thistle, play a role. Siding with Charles in the civil war, Howell was imprisoned often, purportedly for debt, between 1643 and 1651. When he emerged, it was into a career of political pamphleteering; however, like Nedham, Howell sought patronage from Cromwell during the Rump, only to appeal to Charles II after the Restoration. He was granted employment as historiographer royal in his final years, dying in 1666. In *Dodona's Grove, the second part*, Howell, at this point in his career yet a Royalist, continued his arboreal allegory, with the oak as "the Tree-paramount of this *Forest*, and that not altogether improperly, for this *Iland* bears the best vegetable of that kind upon the Earth. . . . besides the *oak* above all other *vegetalls* deserves to have the predecency, for his strength, his durance and vigor, and those varieties of productions which nature hath assign'd to that Tree above all others" (5).

Though the vehicle might seem to us to be reductively crude, still Howell insisted that his meaning in 1650 would be understood by only a few. He explains his reason for shrouding his true meaning as both economy of length and something like decorum: "Let not that unpassionate, and well weighted Reader . . . that while he runs over this historical parley of *Trees*, he must not expect in so narrow a compass the whole thread of an exact story drawn out at full length, for that would fill up huge volumes, and this *arboricall* discourse aims only at the *pith* of things, yet without omission of

any important passage; No, he will find this *twist* of matter to be like a ball of cotton thread which may peradventure be drawn out hereafter to a larger work when the times are more proper" (7). The times will be "more proper," presumably, when clear royalist writing will not be prosecuted by the state, "When the King enjoys his owne again," as the ballad refrain would have it. Howell thus signals to an audience of readers who were persecuted but in secret alliance with one another.

In his remarks to this "Knowing Reader," Howell also expresses concern about a vulgar audience: "though [this method] may render the matter more difficult at first, yet, it will enhance the value thereof, and endear it more to the fancy of the knowing Reader afterwards by way of Recompence. . . . Those notions which at first sight stand obvious to every capacity, are as . . . plain and common ware, but that knowledge which requires a second or third indagation [*sic*], and puts the peruser to his quaeres and researches, to scratch his head, or bite his lips peradventure, that knowledge, I say, will prove far more pleasant and precious at last." The hiddenness of meaning makes the work more valuable, in a hermeneutic economy analogous to that of the market: "We find that the best commodities are kept in boxes under locks, when the coarsest of wares lies prostitute upon the stall, and exposed to every common view, and dirty fingers" (8-9). The "knowing reader," then, needs to read twice, having the leisure and the wit to understand.

Royalists, in expressing these ideas about a fit readership, and in their underlying worldview of a struggle between cosmic good and evil, give us an explanation of how the genre of the Parliament of hell survived in the Restoration, even after there was no motive of censorship to prohibit much royalist expression. Even after the Restoration, however, writers attempted to make sense of the previous period and to justify the return of the king by construing the Interregnum leaders as agents of the Devil. They held on to and amplified a preexisting genre, spelling out often what was only hinted at before. The pamphlet we saw above in 1649 called *The Famous Tragedie* appeared under a new title in 1660, for example, renamed so as to mark its meaning explicitly: *Cromwell's Conspiracy. A Tragicomedy, Relating to our latter Times. Beginning at the Death of King Charles the First, And ending with the happy Restauration of KING CHARLES the Second* (1660). Its author now professed himself a "Person of Quality."⁴⁶ The depiction of Cromwell and Peters, a "fine facetious Devil," now bears a politically orthodox meaning, as the king's cause is vindicated and the allegory proven prophetic. With the coming of the Restoration, Cromwell and his cohorts could be freely represented in the now-victorious royalist press as satanic; and they were, not just in offhand remarks or epithets—though there were plenty of these—but in elaborate and extended dramatic episodes that mapped Cromwell, or some other parliamentary figure's life and deeds, onto those of the Devil. The gates were opened for a flood of vicious writing to appear that had been

building up since the beginning of hostilities between king and Parliament. It was clear who was on top now.

These post-Restoration writers, newly liberated from suppression, smug and giddy with power, condemned the politicians of the Interregnum in the same literary manner as before. Though they were free from the bonds of censorship, they still used the Parliament of hell genre over and over to ramify their victory. The popularity of the genre seems to be based upon their royalist worldview, confirmed in hindsight, of a cosmic struggle where God was on the side of the king. When promonarchists continued the royalist tradition by fashioning Cromwell and the regicides as devils, they made a one-to-one relation between their allegorical literary representations and this cosmic view of history. The collection of royalist poetry called *The Rump; or, An Exact Collection of the Choycest poems and songs relating to the late times* (London, 1662) contains poems mocking the Interregnum's political figures; among these are several that play out the story of Cromwell or Bradshaw as the devil.⁴⁷ In the *Rump* song with the prolix title, "The Rump Ullant; or, Penitence per force. Being the Recantation of the Old Rusty-roguy-rebellious-rampant, and now ruinous rotten-roasted RUMP," we hear the rebels apologize: "Hell was our Text, though Heav'n were our Gloze / And Will our Reason, / Religion we made free of *Hocus* trade, / And voted Loyalty Treason."⁴⁸ Colonel Baker makes fun of Cromwell's nose, long a target for royalist sharp satire. The nose, along with the rest of him, newly unearthed in proceedings that exhumed Cromwell's body and laid it before all to see, presents an explanation for the civil unrest of the preceding twenty years in his poem:

Wherein is set down, the Acts of all those
In Pluto's Black Court, that guarded Noll's Nose,
As Harrison, Hewson, and Cook that curst Pigg,
With Cobbet, Vaine, Scot and Nurse Haslerig.
And next those Black Chaplains that preach'd up Nolls Nose,
Goodwin, Milton, and Peters i'th close.
Hells Counsel's agreed, and now do dispose
Of Nedham to write for Lucifer's Nose,
He being a Vagrant that always did live ill,
Is thought a fit Member to write for the Devil.

The squib is titled *The Blazing Star; or, Nolls Nose Newly Revived, and taken out of his TOMB*. Here, "Hell's Counsel" includes parliamentary actors, preachers, pamphleteers—even John Milton. We see the conjunction of false counselors, a hellish cabal, and deceptive writing—all jumbled together and condemned as satanic. In the poem's final lines, Baker comes out with his summary judgment: "The land of Darkness this we may call, / When the Devils Nose did govern all."⁴⁹ During the Interregnum, then, England had become a "land of Darkness," hell itself. Now that the Interregnum Parlia-

ment, the Rump, has been dissolved, the author of *The Downfall of Cerberus* (1660) supposes, "'tis like thou'lt be / In *Pluto's* Parliament a *Mercury*, / From whence perhaps thy friends may look to hear / From thee, what news, and the nocturnals there."⁵⁰ What was a "diurnal," a daily newspaper, before will be a "nocturnal," a nightly newspaper, more fitting the eternal darkness in hell. All the figures associated with the Commonwealth and Protectorate, from the politicians to the pamphleteers, are to be banished from England to find a home in hell. Thus Royalists after the Restoration could be vindicated; the cosmic scheme was now delivering divine retribution.

In naming their enemies outright and equating them to devils, those supporting the Restoration fashioned a perspective through which to view all history. In the 1660 broadside *Lucifer's Lifeguard: Containing a Schedule, List, Scroll, or Catalogue*, for example, the author offers a list that plays nonsense against sense, in a pile of names that includes not only devils, but all manner of evil men, drawn from history, again asserting a worldview based on timeless hierarchies:

1. *John Pontius Pilate Ravilac Belial Bradshaw,*
2. *Nimrod Herod Oliver Aceldama Cromwell,*
3. *Henry Caiphaz son of Perdition Ireton,*
4. *Fawkes Catiline Boutefeu L. Grub Gray,*
5. *Oliver Mountebank Achitophel John no St.*
6. *Sir Machiavel Bulstrode Amphibion Whitlock,*
7. *Judas Henry Iscariot Vane Father and Son,*⁵¹

By relating Bradshaw's sins to Pilate's, the writer insists that there is a correlation between the one who brought down Charles I and the one who brought down Christ, here expressed through the list's metonymic relations between the names. Cromwell is also compared to Nimrod, an example of archtyranny, and also to Achitophel, a type of treacherous political underling. By these lines, the author compresses all treasons into one name. By these analogies, which conflate classical, biblical, historical, and literary sources, the author reduces the sins of particular current historical figures into an alembic of every cosmic and historical sinner. This scheme, though not properly an allegory, represents a kind of cosmic thinking that underlay the genre of the Parliament of hell in the Restoration, where writers made sense of history by appealing to universal tropes of good and evil.

In Restoration mythopoetics, writers explained historical events of the previous twenty years as the result of an essential struggle between good and evil, God and Satan, which was translated into a struggle between King Charles and Cromwell. Dryden's poem, "Astrea Redux," subtitled "A Poem on the Happy Restoration and Return of His Sacred Majesty Charles the Second" (1660), sums up this thinking: "(What King, what Crown from Treasons reach is free, / If *Jove* and *Heaven* can violated be?)"⁵² In these analogies between English political events and cosmic history, royalist writ-

ers encouraged readers to view the drama of history in this frame. The Restoration Royalists insisted that cosmic order buttressed political order, and their view was seemingly vindicated by the restoration of monarchy in 1660. The pro-Restoration press was as merciless toward the reputations of the Interregnum Parliament-men as had been the leaders who ordered the exhumation and mutilation of the bodies of the regicides. In the single-page broadside entitled *The Arraignment of the Devil, for Stealing away President Bradshaw* (1660), the author justifies the exhumation by reminding readers that Bradshaw had "rais'd by spell / Last Parliament from Hell."⁵³ As Bradshaw put Charles on trial, now Bradshaw must be tried. The verdict, of course, is guilty: "Satan, y'are guilty found / by your Peers, by your Peers, / And must die above ground." The sentence is read: "You must die out of hand, / *Satanas, Satanas*, / This our Decree shall stand, / without control." The author here calls Bradshaw "Satan" and Satan "Bradshaw" interchangeably.

In their imaginative response to the Restoration, Royalists evoked the cosmic myth as a way to read history, not just the history of the past twenty years, but to read present and future history as well. The broadside *News from Hell* (1660) relates hell's reaction to the Restoration in political, not moral, terms. The story is told by "one of Pluto's band," come from hell to bring the "doleful news" of England's restored monarchy:

A great man lately to us came
And tidings thither brought
That treason 'gainst great *Pluto's* State
The *English* Nation wrought.
That very word of Treason did
Beelzebub so affright,
That of all courage for a while
He was bereaved quite.

The Restoration itself is deemed treason against Satan. Satan responds:

What? *England* my sweet darling dear
Against me Treason-plot!
England so late by us regain'd?
Tush I believe it not.

He recites the list of his successes in England over "these sixteen years"—1644 to 1660—including the "successful labours" of his "trusty sprites," Pride, Mammon, Lust, and others, and he asks, "Shall all this labour, care and pains / (My *England* to regain) / Which I, and all my Spirits have tane, / Prove fruitless and in vane,"—punning here on the parliamentary names "Pride" and "Vane." The Devil continues:

Will *England* now from me revolt,
And plot against my State?

Without whose help and council they
 Themselves will ruinate.
 'Tis true, they broke their Oaths and Vows
 Which they to heaven made,
 But yet with me to break their League
 I am sure they are afraid.

Satan recovers his optimism, and charges his messenger to "Make haste now to return again" to England:

I'll muster Legions of my Spirits,
 And with them council take,
 How 'mong the sottish Elves I may
 Greatest confusion make.⁵⁴

The author's representation that the Devil has been ruling in England for sixteen years by "pride, Mammon, lust, envy, and lies" is an indictment of the Interregnum leaders. Parliament's rule was the Devil's rule, and the language of contemporary political intrigue is applied to this supernatural scheme. By these examples we see that the Parliament of hell motif was a literary trope that carried specific political meanings, especially in the royalist press during the English revolutionary period. The story promoted a worldview of a fixed order and prompted a group of fit readers to identify themselves in it. When members of Parliament were repeatedly referred to as devils, both during the Interregnum period and especially after the Restoration, this was an expression of a cosmic order that had been upset, and an appeal to readers to retaliate.

The royalist practice of allegorical writing also reflected the polemical context of propaganda; it held up a worldview as well, one that translated into a hermeneutic practice. Royalist writers invoked an elite audience of believers—a hearty band of those who understood, and who were to remain committed to their cause through their shared practices of reading. On the epistemological level, further, these writers insisted that there was some essential correspondence between the signifier and the thing signified, and that that correspondence was immediate, as in the case of John Cleveland, who drew an analogy between anarchy in language and anarchy in politics, and who fastened on correct definition and proper grammar as a means to express his commitment to a stable system of royally authorized meaning. Though the signifiers in the royalist allegories we have been looking at in this chapter were not always the same one (either a tree *or* a planet could represent King Charles, for example), the allegories insisted upon unalterable connections between signs and the things they signified. It is the scheme described in Angus Fletcher's theory of allegory, where there is a fixed, essential relation between metaphysical truth and representations.⁵⁵

In their wildly inventive, and witty, uses of the genre of the Parliament of hell in the Restoration, the Royalists read the last age as a cosmic struggle

between good and evil, with good finally reigning supreme with the return of the king. Charles II triumphed over the Devil, Bradshaw or Cromwell. Determining whether these writers actually believed in the Devil or merely used the Devil as a safe way to express their concerns is beyond the scope of the treatment here. Yet their ascribing motives to supernatural beings is in keeping with the literary conventions of epic poetry, where the gods—or a supernatural figure like the Devil—are held responsible for human actions. The Devil imagery set up English political events as taking place on a cosmic plane. Thus Milton's *Paradise Lost* would have been entirely in keeping with revolutionary representations of current events as divinely motivated. How the losing side—Milton's—made sense of the same period would be another matter altogether, and this other perspective gives rise to a distinct attitude toward allegory, and toward the requirements such allegories made upon their audiences. We find this other attitude in Milton.

PARADISE LOST AND THE PARLIAMENT OF HELL

Paradise Lost is no squib nor a polemical barb in some pamphlet war; it is, rather, an extraordinary epic poem, encompassing far more than simply a topical political intention. Marvell summed it up best by listing the ingredients of *Paradise Lost* as an almost unimaginable heap: "Messiah Crown'd, God's Reconcil'd Decree, / Heav'n, Hell, Earth, Chaos, All."⁵⁶ In that frail "All" hangs the entire tale. However, in its mission to justify the ways of God to men, and also to find a "fit audience . . . though few," Milton's poem is consistent with the ethical concerns voiced in his prose. Soon after his *Interregnum* books were indexed, Milton's great poem appeared, with the approval of the licenser Thomas Tomkins, and was duly entered into the Stationers' Registers in 1667. Milton did not put his name on the title page of several of these 1667 editions, only his J.M., and he may have found some anonymity in that; he also sold the rights to the publishers so that any risks of scandal would involve the publisher rather than the author; he did name himself, however, on the title page of the 1674 edition.⁵⁷ Was Milton one of those adaptable loyalists, like Marchamont Nedham, or even Dryden, who was to be forgiven for the sins of his *Interregnum* politics?⁵⁸

Did Milton purge his magnificent poem of all political intention? It appears not, especially since in the first two books of his epic, Milton repeated certain words and situations that were constantly appearing in pamphlets of The Parliament of hell genre. In *Paradise Lost*, the Devil is the "author" of "woe"; devils appear as fallen angels or saints; they embark on a mission to retrieve former glory through deceit: "our own loss how repair, / How overcome this dire Calamity" (1.188–89); they take their revenge in the form of political seduction: "Seduce them to our Party"; they contrive to make "that thir God / May prove thir foe. . . . This would surpass / Common revenge"

(2.367-71); they use persuasion and false rhetoric as their tools, with Belial using "words cloth'd in reason's garb" (2.226) and Beelzebub speaking as the Devil's mouthpiece; they appeal to the multitude, "the popular vote" (2.313); the hellish crowd is "the hasty multitude" (1.730) or a "captive multitude" (2.323), over which skilled orators exert power. The poem even seems to share the very words of *Bradshaw's Ghost* (1660), for example, a pamphlet in which Bradshaw insists, "To drive black *Phuto's* Coach I'd rather dain, / Than to be Wagoner to *Charles' wain*," just as Satan in *Paradise Lost* refuses, "To bow and sue for grace / With suppliant knee, and deify his power" (1.111), insisting, "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven" (1.263). In *Bradshaw's Ghost*, Bradshaw boasted, "for where / So e're I am, Hell properly is there," just as Mephistopheles in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* remarked, "but where we are is hell. / And where hell is, There must we ever be" (2.1.122-23).⁵⁹ In these lines, we also hear Satan in *Paradise Lost* who has "The Hell within him, for within him Hell / He brings, and round about Him" (4.20-21). In the case of *Bradshaw's Ghost*, there is a precise analogy to current English history, as the "hell" described in that pamphlet is the chaos that resulted from the Interregnum period. In Milton's case, any analogy between the demons of *Paradise Lost* and the Interregnum political figures is imprecise, yet the language is similar.⁶⁰ The Miltonic representations of hell build force within the context of the other like references to particular political figures in the pamphlet literature of the English Revolution. To me, these similarities suggest that the author's involvement with this genre may be quite deep indeed.

There are several possible explanations for this resemblance. Though Milton does not allegorize particular figures in the manner conventional to Parliament of hell pamphlets, nevertheless, by drawing upon the same tropes, Milton might still raise fears about current popish or radical plots, and thus signal his continuing commitment to the Protestant cause. In picturing Satan in his *Paradise Lost*, Milton loads him with images from antipopery propaganda. And it is true, Milton remained a fierce enemy of all popery throughout his life. It would have been important for Milton, an advocate of religious toleration, to oppose Catholicism with virulence, especially in the Restoration, where defenders of religious toleration were accused of also defending Catholicism. However, Satan more closely resembles the parliamentary figures lampooned in the Parliament of hell genre of the Interregnum than he does the conventional papist.

Milton's use of this royalist convention could lead us to draw a surprising conclusion, that *Paradise Lost* expressed not only a general anti-Catholic sentiment, but specifically voiced an anti-Cromwellian, and even a royalist, message. Given the pervasiveness of the Parliament of hell conventions in the revolutionary period, we might infer that Milton's own readers would compare his Satan to the Royalists' accounts of the rebels during the English Revolution. There is much to compare. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan begins his second war campaign with a rally to his troops, using republican rheto-

ric (5.772-907) which recalled that of the Interregnum leaders: "what if better counsels might erect / Our minds and teach us to cast off this Yoke?" (5.785-86). Abdiel's response, that Satan "hast'n to appease / Th'incensed Father, and th'incensed Son, / While Pardon may be found in time besought" (5.846-48), is perhaps that of the post-Restoration parliamentarian, who hoped for mercy and an "act of oblivion" to be dispensed by the returning king. Could Milton have welcomed the second Charles, like Marvell, who in disavowing the "Good Old Cause," reported, "I think the Cause was too good to have been fought for"?⁶¹ Milton has been associated with Royalism before; this evidence of his condemnation of the revolution could be used to deliver a fatal blow to the recent Marxist-inspired image of Milton as a left-leaning radical even to the end of his days. If Milton adopted the royalist genre, then perhaps we ought to reconsider Milton's political allegiances in the Restoration.

Yet Milton just never gave in and supported Charles II. Just a little more than a month before the king returned, Milton brought out a second and enlarged edition of his *Readie and Easie Way*; "What I have spoken," he revealed in its introduction, "is the language of the good old cause."⁶² Though he might have come to disapprove of the Interregnum government's means, he never wavered in his commitment to the fundamental principles of "spiritual or civil libertie," as he described them in *The Readie and Easie Way*. His opposition to arbitrary power as a kind of self-enslavement keeps popping up in the poem, and so at many times his beliefs conflicted with the Restoration Royalists' scheme.

Or could Milton have presented this episode to throw Royalists off his scent? By evoking the royalist tradition in the first pages of his book, Milton could be steering potentially hostile readers toward a judgment that he had indeed changed his mind about the Interregnum, while covertly remaining loyal to the Good Old Cause. Any reader who picked up *Paradise Lost* in 1667 looking for political intent could have seen those fallen angels in hell in the first books as the convention dictated: as a condemnation of Cromwell and his crew. By opening with this recognizable genre, perhaps Milton evaded the Restoration censors. In his account of *Paradise Lost*, Christopher Hill suggests that vigilant readers will penetrate beyond the "deliberate mystification" of his poetry to get at Milton's true meaning, as, for example, in Milton's epithet "sons of Belial," which Hill argues "everyone would understand" to refer to Cavalier and new-Cavalier "bullies."⁶³ Yet if all we need is a "key," as Hill recommends, if Milton encodes his poem with things "everyone would understand," then we might imagine the censor's job to be quite easy. If this were the case, we would have no *Paradise Lost* in the seventeenth century.

Paradise Lost, of course, is a censored text, but not in the way that Hill sees it. *Paradise Lost* is not merely a stump for Milton's revolutionary political ideas, now unpopular in current political climate, ideas that under specific circumstances could not be voiced overtly. The very circumstances of Mil-

ton's work—the restoration of monarchy, the new literary milieu, the tempering of religious enthusiasm—are all integral to Milton's poem. We cannot merely remove such aspects in order to find the "real" meaning of the poem—for these constitute the meaning of the poem. I see *Paradise Lost* as a work that expresses anxieties about the status of indirect, allegorical, and censored writing, conditions specific to the Restoration literary milieu but ones that, as Milton sadly came to realize, were inherent in public writing.

I argue here that in *Paradise Lost*, Milton not only thwarted the expectations that might be raised by the Parliament of hell trope; he also rejected a simple ratio of literary representation to history and cleared the way for his revolutionary reader to perform interpretive acts in the future. Milton evoked this genre in order to convey his loyalty to the spirit of the revolution, though not to its agents. Milton shared with the Royalists a degree of contempt for actors on the Interregnum political stage. But he did not go so far as to condemn the revolution. With his representation of the devils in hell, Milton showed that a single set of signs could bear numerous interpretations; that political allegory—and allegory in general—required special skills in reading; and that, finally, the failure of the English Revolution was not a matter of God's decree, but of human weakness. Consequently, I focus on Milton's search for a "fit audience" in light of the demands of the mode of allegory on its readership. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton summons readers to become more keenly aware of their susceptibility to political deception. Milton aimed to promote readerly skills as a means for English citizens to regain the individual freedoms that had slipped through the revolutionary leaders' fingers.

MILTON AND THE PARLIAMENT OF HELL: POLITICAL INTENTION IN *PARADISE LOST*

Mixing bejeweled imagery of Oriental splendor with the mundane tropes of republican rhetoric, Milton creates an entirely original Satan in his first two books of his poem. But Milton begins *Paradise Lost* with a conventional Parliament of hell scene, as Satan greets his host and convenes his stygian council. Just as the Devil, who, represented in numerous pamphlets in the Restoration, plotted to regain England from his hellish headquarters, Milton's devils in *Paradise Lost* vowed to "reascend" and "repossess thir native seat" (1.633–4; 2.75–76). Moloch's plan of "open War" (2.51) mirrors the parliamentary strength, its New Model Army. Satan's throne, "of Royal State, which far / Outshone the wealth of *Ormus* or of *Ind*, / Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand / Show'rs on her Kings *Barbaric* Pearl and Gold" in *Paradise Lost* (2.1–4) resembles that of the illegitimate parliamentary leaders in the royalist pamphlet *Mercurius Elencticus* (1649): "They have murdered the King; Banished or Imprisoned his Consort, Children, seized upon his Palace, set his Crown on their heads; wear his Apparel, and Furni-

ture; and then they cry out—see in what splendor we sit.”⁶⁴ Much like Hugh Peters in *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I* (1649), whom the dramatic character Cromwell praises for his “insinuating persuasive art,” Milton’s Be-lial touts a “persuasive accent,” making “the worse appear / the better reason, to perplex and dash / Maturest Counsels” (2.118, 113–15).⁶⁵

Worst of all, Satan in *Paradise Lost* has become a tyrant. In hell, the obedient fallen angels “towards him they bend / With awful reverence prone; and as a God / Extol him equal to the highest in Heav’n” (2.477–79). Fawning and idolatrous, these minions have surrendered their liberty to their diabolical master. In the royalist Parliament of hell genre also, the devil’s sway over his underlings was envisioned as a tyranny. In *A Trance; or, News from Hell* (1649), one underling gleefully reports to Lucifer her lord: “We have reduced that Kingdom to a new conformity with this of your Majesties’.”⁶⁶ This royalist picture matches Milton’s estimation of Satan’s power over his fleet: “Devil with Devil damn’d / Firm concord holds” (2.496–97). Full obedience to Satan is also presented in *The Parliaments Petition to the Divell* (1648), in which Parliament swears “that we (to serve you) have laid aside all service of God, all Loyalty towards our King, and all Christian love and charity towards men, we have robbed God of as much of his glory as we possibly could”; later, Parliament grants, “we are your creatures,” wholly merging with their creator and owner, Satan.⁶⁷

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan’s tyranny consists partly in not allowing free debate. For the debate in hell is not really a free exchange of ideas; Satan wrote a script in which Beelzebub would propose his plan, and then Satan himself “prevented all reply” (2.467). This is not a true dialogue, such as that in which truth and “Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter” (*Areopagitica*, CPW2.561). Rather, Satan coerced his audience by his sole voice’s power: “But they / Dreaded not more th’adventure than his voice / Forbidding; and at once with him they rose” (2.473–75). The debate in hell is one example of falsified public speech, a context in which Truth may not “open herself faster” (*Areopagitica*, CPW2.521).

Yet the Royalists found the Devil’s reign politically unsatisfactory only in that it placed the wrong man on top. According to the royalist renditions of the Parliament of hell, once God reinstated Charles II in his proper spot at the top of the pyramid, all Satan’s evil effects would be reinverted. In the Restoration Parliament of hell genre, this is so. In *The Trial of Traytors; or, The Rump in the Round* (1660), for example, the Rump Parliament is represented as a coven of Devil’s minions who futilely attempt to stop “time’s wheel” from revolving, to stop the Restoration of monarchy. Too late. The figures in the illustration—half beast, sporting heads of animals like goats, cats, and foxes and cloven hoofs—all wear the dress of Puritans, stand upright, and are labeled with the names of Parliament-men and other Interregnum figures, including Judge Cook (ram), Hugh Peters (buck), Arthur Haselrig (fox), and Henry Vane (wolf). The “Rump’s Scout,” parodying the

name of the parliamentary newsbook, is represented as the Devil himself, with his wings, curled tail, horns, and staff prodding his men on. The author of the piece reveals that,

These Traitors all who had the World at will,
Have now their *Scout* continues with them still;
He pokes them forward with a Fork of steel,
Urging Sir *Arthur* [Haselrig] for to stop the Wheel
A while, but stay Time's Wheel is turned round,
All's for the *KING*, but traitors in the Pound.⁶⁸

In this Restoration Royalist's opinion, the return of the king was God's way of reasserting control over satanic forces; there was something inevitable, and surely providential, about the proper reinstating of cosmic hierarchy.

Yet in Milton's eyes, the hierarchy itself was part of the problem; in thinking that earthly politics mirrored celestial politics, Royalists were making a mistake. As Joan Bennett has persuasively argued, Satan's logic of analogy between his own realm and God's—and, by implication, the earthly arena and the divine—is completely flawed.⁶⁹ But a further argument against Satan's rule is that his hierarchy did not allow for the exercise of free reason. In spite of Satan's rhetoric of "mutual league," the outcome of Satan's regime was conformity. For Milton, forcing conformity is sin: "How goodly, and how to be wished, were such an obedient unanimity as this, what a fine conformity would it starch us all into!" (*Areopagitica*, CPW 2.545), Milton writes of censorship. Conformity not only bridled the human spirit, but it went against conscience, a view Milton expresses in his poem "On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament," where he railed against the tyranny of the Presbyterians:

Dare ye for this adjure the Civil Sword
To force our Consciences that Christ set free,
And ride us with a classic Hierarchy . . . ?

Those newly in power may be tyrants just like those whom they have evicted, as Milton asserts as he ends his poem: "*New Presbyter* is but *Old Priest* writ Large."⁷⁰ In *Paradise Lost*, tyranny in hell and on earth may be the same. Milton disavows the kind of tyranny Satan imposes—not because it is Satan's—but because it is tyranny. Milton raises the question of legitimate or coerced persuasion as a kind of satanic tyranny in his example of Abdiel, who refused to adhere to Satan's program. In fact, the kind of tyranny Satan projects is like any other kind of tyranny, including that of Charles I and even that of the parliamentary leaders.

In finding Interregnum leaders were satanic, Milton puts himself in the same camp as the Royalists. Royalists had also blamed individual figures for ambition: meeting in hell in the pamphlet *Bradshaw's Ghost* (1659), Charles asks John Bradshaw, What is the good old cause? "As for the thing called the *Good Old Cause*," Bradshaw answers, "it is no other than the *Quarrel* at first

begun with *you*, and now newnamed, nicknamed, or indeed rather *rebaptised*, but it was not long revered either for its *age*, or *goodness*, but like an old Almanack laid aside as useless, and this was it that broke my heart, the air of a *Common-wealth*, with the profit arising thereby, might have lengthened my life, but to see *Mars* triumphant, and yet *ourselves* cashiered, would it not even vex a *Saint*?"⁷¹ But Milton's resemblance to the royalist critique of the Interregnum leaders stops there. For Milton, the Interregnum leaders exerted tyranny over free conscience, and that was their sin. Even as early as the *Second Defense*, Milton expressed apprehensions about the ambitions of the leaders of the new government. When he praised Cromwell for refusing the crown, he also warned him that to have taken it would make it seem "as if, when you had subjugated some tribe of idolators with the help of the true God, you were to worship the gods you had conquered"; Milton also cheered Fairfax for having overcome "ambition . . . and the thirst for glory which conquers all the most eminent men" (*CPW* 4.672). But Milton's worst fears did come true; the leaders of the revolution did prefer their own ambitions to the country's interest. Milton, it has been argued, began to lose faith in the English rulers as early as February 1649.

We are treading on the dangerous terrain of analyzing *Paradise Lost* for topical political intention. Of course, *Paradise Lost* is no political pamphlet. But in his masterpiece of poetry, Milton expresses ethical concerns that arise out of his political moment, though they are not restricted to it. In a different manner, but not perhaps with a different intent, Milton also voices ethical aims in his prose writings; as we have seen in *Areopagitica*, Milton works to promote a reasoning, virtuous subject. In his *History of Britain*, Milton explicitly states his sour views about Parliament, and it is to these we shall turn in exploring the meanings of Milton's "Parliament of Hell" scenes in *Paradise Lost*. Because of its thorny publication history, it is not clear whether the views Milton expresses in the *History of Britain* are those of 1649, a warning to the Interregnum Parliament leaders, or of 1660, as an intervention in Restoration politics. The *History* itself was published in 1670, yet the section in which Milton comments directly on his political milieu, the *Character of the Long Parliament*, also called the "Digression," was not released until well after his death, withheld from print until 1681, and at that late date it was made to serve Tory political interests in the Exclusion crisis.⁷² Only in 1932 did the full text of Milton's Digression appear. It is not clear why the Digression was omitted from publication in 1670, whether it was Milton's decision or that of L'Estrange, the censor. Perhaps Milton struck the passage because it was terribly dark. Masson thinks the excision was Milton's decision, since the passage had become "irrelevant."⁷³ But the Digression is relevant to us, for in it, Milton gives not only his opinions about the Long Parliament—even if he withdrew them later—but also, and most importantly here, an image of a revolutionary reader.

Vociferously in the Digression, Milton voices dissatisfaction with Parliament. In his complaints, he sounds like the satirical Royalists who used the

Parliament of hell genre to demolish the Parliamentarians during the Interregnum. Milton refers to the committeemen as "Children of the Devil" (*History*, CPW 5.449). He reviles them and the Presbyterian divines for having "set up a spiritual [*sic*] tyrannie by a secular power to the advancing of thir owne authorit[ie]" (447). Rather than reforming the Commonwealth, the end for which they were raised to power, they acted "unfaithfully, unjustly, unmercifully, and where not corruptly, stupidly" (449). What is more, the people blindly followed them. "Thus they who but of late were extolld as great deliverers, and had a people wholly at thir devotion," Milton wails, "by so discharging thir trust as wee see, did not onely weak'n and unfitt themselves to be dispensers of what libertie they pretended [*sic*], but unfitted also the people, now growne worse & more disordinate, to receive or to digest any libertie at all" (449). Like the Royalists who mocked the giddy multitude, the people were rendered "unfit" for liberty by their traitorous leaders in Milton's view: "For libertie hath a sharp and double edge fitt onelie to be handl'd by just and virtuous men, to bad and dissolute it become[s] a mischief unweildie in thir own hands" (449). In like manner, Milton had chided the people of England for swallowing the king's book whole: "that people that should seek a King . . . would shew themselves to be by nature slaves, and arrant beasts; not fitt for that liberty which they cri'd out and bellow'd for, but fitter to be led back again into thir old servitude, like a sort of clamouring & fighting brutes, broke loos from thir copy-holds, that know not how to use or possess the liberty which they fought for" (*Eikonoklastes*, CPW 3.581). Milton concurs, then, with the royalist author of *A Trance; or, News from Hell* (1649): "And never did the common people more truly act the part, and discover the genius of a common people more lively, whose nature is still thirsting after novelties and Utopian reformation, though they fool themselves thereby into a baser kind of slavery."⁷⁴

Milton may agree with the Royalists in finding that the behavior of the common people in the Interregnum was wholly despicable, but he comes to a different conclusion about what is to be done in consequence. The royalist solution was to reinstate the king and restore the lower sorts to their lower places. In his *History of Britain*, however, Milton may have reviled his beloved English and their leaders, but he would not wish them to be placed under a leader's thumb. Rather, Milton thought that the common people must be prepared for freedom in the future better than they were in 1649. What was needed was a "fitter" people, able to withstand corrupt leaders. A fitter people would be hard to find in Britain, whose citizens succeeded at the arts of war rather than at those of peace: "For Britain (to speake a truth not oft spok'n) as it is a land fruitful enough of men stout and couragious in warr, so is it naturallie not over fertil of men able to govern justlie & prudently in peace; trusting onelie on thir Mother-witt, as most doo, & consider not that civilitie, prudence, love of the public more then of money or vaine honour are to this soile in a manner outlandish; grow not here but in minds well implanted with solid & elaborate breeding" (CPW 5.451). Mil-

ton urges that leaders, like farmers and husbandmen, implant "solid & elaborate breeding" in the people in the future. Writing poetry was a like task, as he remarked in the prologue to the second book of his *Reason of Church Government*: the aim of poetry was "to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility" (CPW 1.816).

The antidote to the miserable state of unfitness of the English people lay in their pursuit of that "strenuous liberty" Milton alludes to in *Areopagitica*, a liberty that is to be obtained through proper education, and their reading. He remarks in the Digression that virtue may be culled from the past by reading stories: "for stories teach us that libertie out of season in a corrupt and degenerate age brought Rome it self into further slavery" (CPW 5.449). In his *History*, Milton believes that the public and its leaders could withstand these temptations if they knew more history. Milton urges his public to become educated in "civilitie, prudence," and "love of the public." For the English do not know history, "bred up, as few of them were, in the knowledge of Antient and illustrious deeds" (451). Because of their lack of this kind of training, like their forbears, the Britons, "what in the eyes of man cou[ld] be expected but what befel those antient inhabita[nts] whome they so much resembl'd, confusion in the end" (451).

In writing the *History of Britain*, Milton wants to make sure that, should another opportunity present itself, the people of England will not be so ill-equipped to meet it. His own writing will help to prevent that unfortunate outcome, for the failure of the Long Parliament was its "ill husbanding of those faire opportunities" (CPW 5.443). The story of the fate of the Britons after the demise of Roman rule offers an enlightening analogy: "Considering especially that the late civil broils had cast us into a condition not much unlike to what the *Britans* then were in, when the imperial jurisdiction departing hence left them to the sway of thir own Councils" (129). Milton knows he makes an unappealing comparison, but it is one that offers lessons in England's current weaknesses. Milton writes in his opening paragraph to the third book:

Which times by comparing seriously with these later, and that confused Anarchy with this intereign, we may be able from two such remarkable turns of State, producing like events among us, to raise a knowledg of our selves both great and weighty, by judging hence what kind of men the *Britans* generally are in matters of so high enterprise, how by nature, industry, or custom fitted to attempt or undergoe matters of so main consequence: for if it be a high point of wisdom in every private man, much more is it in a Nation to know it self; rather than puffed up with vulgar flatteries and encomiums, for want of self knowledge, to enterprise rashly and come off miserably in great undertakings. (129-30)

In this extremely rich and promising paragraph, Milton urges self-knowledge on the part of the entire nation as a first step in political liberty. Milton's political vision is premised on a personal vision of the individual self-

scrutinizing soul, "a high point of wisdom in every private man," which is to be the model for an entire nation. If individuals are prideful, "puft up with vulgar flatteries and encomiums, for want of self knowledge," so much more are they a danger to the people over whom they are stewards. Milton presented another case of failed self-knowledge that led to a divine punishment in his account of David's taking the census in *Christian Doctrine*. There, Milton recollects language very like that of the passage from the *History of Britain*: "as a result of his power King David's spirit was so haughty and puffed up" (CPW 6.333). The lesson in *Christian Doctrine* of this failure in self-knowledge was that David suffered punishment for his sins, but also that "God always produces something good and just out of these" (333). In his *History of Britain*, Milton hopes to help English citizens gain knowledge from their sins, offering a remedy to his troubled times of renewal and giving the entire English people a task to complete. When Milton draws a connection between the nation and an individual reader of texts, he recommends that reading itself is a means to a political end, of which self-knowledge is to be the base. Thus Milton asks his readers to pay especially close attention to history, which "may deserve attention more than common, and repay it with like benefit to them who can judiciously read" (CPW 5.129). By appealing to those who can "judiciously read," Milton understands his political analogy to include an ethical mission, one in which he presses for citizens of his nation to become readers, educating themselves in spiritual matters and history. Such ethical training may resolve the question of responsibility for the failure of the English Revolution.

The royalist allegory of the Parliament of hell put the responsibility for the Restoration squarely in God's hands. Milton, on the other hand, blamed humans. By casting such blame, Milton finds that God's justice allows for free will: "So we must conclude that God made no absolute decrees about anything which he left in the power of men, for men have freedom of action" (*Christian Doctrine*, CPW 6.155). By encouraging humans to learn how to read as a first step toward ethical and political improvement, Milton vouches for the exercise of the will. By this logic, just as Adam and Eve's Fall in *Paradise Lost* was not proof that God foreordained it, the English Revolution was not divinely fated to fail. Rather, its current leaders, like their prototypes, Adam and Eve, freely fell by making bad political choices, by reading history badly or not at all.

Since humans, and not God, had failed England, what remained then was for humans to make themselves capable of succeeding in the future when another opportunity for liberation reared up. In the mean time, Milton believed, preparation was needed, to make "the people fittest to choose and the chosen fittest to govern" (CPW 4.615), through an education in "moulding the minds of men to virtue (whence arises true and internal liberty), in governing the state effectively, and preserving it for the longest possible space of time" (615).⁷⁵ These goals, while patently republican in their political vision of an "immortal commonwealth," as Harrington would

put it, also are ethical, as Milton expresses a continued optimism about human capacity for change and growth. Harrington, by contrast, never gave the people a chance, sneering in 1656,

A people, when they are reduced unto misery and despair, become their own politicians, as certain beasts when they are sick become their own physicians and are carried by a natural instinct unto the desire of such herbs as are their proper cure; but the people, for the greater part, are beneath the beasts in the use of them. Thus the people of Rome, though in their misery they had recourse, by instinct as it were, unto the two main fundamentals of a commonwealth, participation of magistracy and the agrarian, did but taste and spit at them, not (which is necessary in physic) drink down the potion and in that their healths. . . . But if you do not take the due dose of your medicines (as there be slight tastes which a man may have of philosophy that incline unto atheism), it may chance to be a poison; there being a like taste of the politics that inclines to confusion, as appears in the institution of the Roman tribunes, by which magistracy, and no more, the people were so far from attaining unto peace that they, in getting but so much, got but heads for eternal feud.

Milton, in opposing this shabby portait of the people, believes that individuals may be made fit to govern themselves effectively; he believes they may be made so by acquiring habits of reading. It is true that Milton had pictured the mob as "a herd confus'd / A miscellaneous rabble, who extol / Things vulgar, & well weigh'd scarce worth the praise" (*Paradise Regained* 3.49-51). But their leaders had been even worse. The people may be yet molded: "to guide Nations in the way of Truth / By saving Doctrine, and from error lead / To know" (*Paradise Regained* 2.473-75). Over the passage of time, Michael explains in *Paradise Lost*, humans will be brought "Up to a better Cov'nant, disciplin'd / From shadowie Types to Truth, from Flesh to Spirit" (12.302-3), finally able to convert their "works of Law to works of Faith" (12.306). Satan will not be destroyed until the Second Coming, but his ability to affect men will diminish before that time: "nor so is overcome / Satan, . . . but his works / In thee and in thy Seed" (12.390-95).⁷⁶

Thus in the first two books of *Paradise Lost*, Milton agreed with the royalist judgment on the leaders of the English Revolution; the leaders had become "thyself not free, but to thyself enthralled," as Abdiel had taunted Satan (6.181). But Milton disagreed with the Royalists about who was responsible for that fact. While the Royalists blamed Satan and praised God for his victory in 1660, Milton blamed the individual men who had failed so miserably in their pursuit of liberty. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton corrected the current notion that Providence had designed the Restoration from the start.⁷⁷ As he wrote on Providence in *Christian Doctrine*, "even in sin, then, we see God's providence at work, not only in permitting it or withdrawing its grace, but often in inciting sinners to commit sin, hardening their hearts and blinding them" (*CPW* 6.331). Evil does not come from God, "but he directs a will which is already evil" (332; Guns don't kill people; people kill

people). Milton's example showing God's leaving the human will free to sin is David's evil action of taking the census. In that case, Milton explains, God "was the instigator of the deed itself, but David alone was responsible for all the wickedness and pride which it involved" (333). The lesson in *Christian Doctrine* of this failure in self-knowledge was that David suffered punishment for his sins. The general lesson is this: "God always produces something good and just out of these and creates, as it were, light out of darkness" (333).⁷⁸ How would humans in Milton's own time attain the understanding of the light that comes out of darkness, the good that comes out of evil, when their own leaders, from David on down, had failed to understand this?

"DARKNESS VISIBLE": MILTON AND THE READER OF ALLEGORY

They would do so by reading. "Light out of darkness"; "From shadowie Types to Truth": Milton writes of the spiritual education of humans as if writing about reading allegory. Milton presents these inscrutable images to portray his process of educating readers to become virtuous, to become revolutionary readers. Learning how to read is no easy project, and Milton scatters hard-to-read passages all over his text as a means to test his own readers' strenuousness, and to prepare them for the more difficult task of reading history. Over and over in representing hell in *Paradise Lost*, for example, Milton presents scenes that challenge his readers to work, not only in the mirroring of the Parliament of hell genre, but also in those passages in which we find the motif of darkness visible, a literal paradox. When Satan is compared to the eclipse (1.595-600), he is "Dark'n'd so, yet shone" (1.600). Before Satan leaves the strange, indistinct geography of hell, he must pass through Chaos, but before that, he must exit the gates that are guarded by two figures who present the clearest instance of allegory in the poem; but its very clarity throws all the other semiallegories in dark relief.

Sin is a figure identified with the eclipse. Her hellhounds, repeatedly returning into the kennel of her womb, follow her as they follow "the Night-Hag, when call'd / In secret, riding through the Air she comes / Lur'd with the smell of infant blood, to dance / With Lapland Witches, while the laboring Moon / Eclipses at thir charms" (2.662-66). The eclipse metaphor, as we saw in the last chapter, appeared frequently as a royalist political allegory. It is significant that the eclipse image frequently served in a circuit of meanings during the English Revolution, specifically to do with the activity of interpreting political rhetoric. The author of *Mercurius Bellicus*, for example, used the eclipse metaphor to protest printing conditions: "Nothing but *Lyes* may bee now *Printed*: Truth hath received a *total Eclipse*. else sure, the last *Lyurnall* had never had so strict a charge, to *conceale* the *Coppy* of the *Kings* last *Letter*. . . . they will Print nothing that shall tend to the least *distur-*

bance of their own *Peace*, or *quiet*."⁷⁹ Truth, like the sun, is masked by Parliament's avid press corps, the diurnals, which this author derisively nicknames "Lyurnalls." If truth was often equated with King Charles, it was also likened as often to the sun in the civil war pamphlets. The Royalist Sir George Wharton, in his *Mercurio-Coelico-Mastix* (1644), opposed his accuser John Booker's almanac: "your opacious, dark, and unweildy stars at Westminster, who reject to be enlightened with the lively and wholesome rays of the Sun (I mean our Gracious King Charles)."⁸⁰ In a similar spirit, *The Downfall of Cerberus* (1660) cheered the return of monarchy and the demise of the Interregnum press. The three-headed "Cerberus" was explicitly taunted as the triumvirate of parliamentary mercuries, *Britannicus*, *Pragmaticus*, and *Politicus*: "'tis like thou'lt be / In *Pluto's* Parliament a *Mercury*, / From whence perhaps thy friends may look to hear / From thee, what news, and the nocturnals there."⁸¹ Rather than a "diurnal," these writers will produce business of the night, of darkness, "nocturnals."

Yet, as Joan S. Bennett has shown in her excellent analysis *Reviving Liberty*, Milton makes ample use of the image of an eclipse, or of the shadowed sun, fashioning a metaphoric structure in *Paradise Lost* to play against a very familiar royalist image. Though Bennett's account stops at the Restoration, the recurrence of this allegory even after 1660 takes on a significance like that of the Parliament of hell, vindicating the royalist perspective of a cosmic, natural hierarchy. Restoration Royalists used this eclipse image in their panegyrics to the returning monarch to justify a divine right theory of monarchy, as a theory that was not just a theory, but a natural reality. Among other poems greeting Charles II to the throne of England were Cowley's "Ode on the Blessed Restoration," Dryden's "Astrea Redux," Davenant's "Upon His Sacred Majesties Most Happy Return," and Waller's "To the King, Upon His Majesties Happy Return": all use the image to refer to Charles's recovery of his throne. Thomas Higgins, in "A Panegyrick to the King" (1660), writes: "As the sun, though he breake out but late, / Darkness dispells, and drives all Clouds away. / A gloomy Morn turn to a glorious day."⁸²

Milton's contribution, the antipanegyric to Satan, virtually echoes this Restoration royalist figure, both before and after his success (2.486-95).⁸³ But Milton uses the eclipse image to turn it on its head. After Satan's victory, we have:

At last as from a Cloud his fulgent head
And shape Star-bright appear'd, or brighter, clad
With what permissive glory since his fall
Was left to him, or false glitter: All amaz'd
At that so sudden blaze . . .

(10.449-53)

According to Bennett, Milton uses the sun imagery to mark instances of false rulers (Satan in *Paradise Lost* and Charles I in *Eikonoklastes*) who fail to

shine with the light given them, in contrast to the true ruler who keeps a proper balance of power and maintains God's law and spirit, and thus shines as a vehicle of those qualities. In his use of this image throughout the poem, then, Milton undermines the doctrine of the divine right of kings.⁸⁴ Yet in the passage above, Milton makes clear that the shadows that fall upon Satan's head come from the true light of God, who has dispensed "permissive glory." The passive mood, "with what permissive glory since his fall / Was left to him," makes clear that Satan shines from no light of his own, but purely from reflected light, which the reader views glancing off his fallen form. Milton forces the reader to coincide with his point of view: who, after all, finds Satan's glory "permissive" or "left," but Milton? By calling into question the purity of the image of Satan as the returning ruler in eclipse, by parodying the Restoration panegyric, Milton asks readers to call into question the whole scheme of representation.

As we saw in chapter 4, the eclipse was one sign of the problems of reading allegorically. Milton used the allegory of Charles or Satan as the sun not merely to evoke and to reject pervasive royalist imagery, but also to mark the difficulties of proper interpretation within an allegorical scheme of representation. In *Paradise Lost*, even for monarchs, the eclipse is something that "Perplexes"; the word *perplex* itself follows a chain of association denoting acts of failed or incomplete interpretation. For Milton, *perplexity* is a mark of interpretive challenge to make readers fit, as the first step to enlightenment. We recall Belial, who can make "the worse appear / The better reason, to *perplex* and dash / Maturest Counsels" (2.113-15, italics mine). Milton's own readers must push beyond Belial's words to discover their inner worthlessness. One of Milton's first readers, Andrew Marvell, also used the term *perplex* to denote the beginning of his readerly task. Marvell linked his poem to Milton's when he revealed the difficulty of the task of reading. As Marvell grew "less severe" in his reading, he grasped the success of Milton's "Project." Marvell describes his own readerly conduct rather in the same manner as does the royalist James Howell, writing that his "Knowing Reader" should read more than once to obtain the valuable truth hidden inside his text; in response to *Paradise Lost*, Marvell was first "misdoubting his Intent," but "growing less severe" as he read. When Marvell started to "fear" that project's success, he admitted,

Yet as I read, soon growing less severe,
I lik'd his Project, the success did fear;
Through that wide Field how he his way should find
O'er which lame Faith leads Understanding blind;
Lest he perplex'd the things he would explain,
And what was easy he should render vain.⁸⁵

Marvell applauds Milton for not making things too difficult. Marvell's use of the word *perplex* in his dedicatory poem might then reflect his understanding of the process of reading as a rocky path toward understanding. Sig-

nificantly, the word *perplex* features in the passage on which the censor allegedly choked. Marvell's term *perplex* directly links his own response and the passage in Milton's *Paradise Lost* that supposedly ran into trouble with the censor, and Marvell may be said to exonerate Milton from a dangerous kind of perplexity.

In Milton's poem too, "perplex" is both a physical and a mental condition, one involving the difficulties of finding one's way in a confusing field of signs. As a physical condition, it is associated with a difficult journey: Satan's tour of earth is "pensive and slow," because the thick "undergrowth / Of shrubs and tangling bushes had perplext / All path of Man or Beast that pass'd that way" (4.175-77). *Perplexed*, Satan finds his way obstructed by the rich foliage in Eden. Journeying in *Paradise Lost* is not something those in Eden generally want to do; the only human journey—the expulsion of Adam and Eve—is an unwanted one. However, of all the creatures in Eden, only Satan actually wants to go somewhere. For the beasts and the humans, this undergrowth is not an impediment, but "fram'd"—as are all things made by God—"to man's delightful use" (4.691-92). Satan's "wand'ring quest" (2.830) through Chaos and beyond, "alone, and without guide, half lost" (2.975), signifies not only his moral condition, but also his interpretive fallen state.

In the poem, *perplexity* in general is a satanic mode, both as a physical and a mental act, similar to Spenserian error but also to Milton's own concept of failed virtue.⁸⁶ After Satan's announcement to his hellish assembly, for instance, the angels bide time until their leader's return, "wand'ring, each his several way / Pursues, as inclination or sad choice / Leads him perplext, where he may likeliest find / Truce to his restless thoughts" (2.522-26). The fallen angels hope to ease the psychological torment of "restless thoughts" by physical wandering; we find them later "in wand'ring mazes lost" (2.561), mazes that are not material, do not resemble the Renaissance genre of romance and errantry, but that are intellectual, "vain wisdom all, and false Philosophie" (2.565). Their perplexity consists in the devils' failings in—or in their being prevented from—apprehending the simple truth of God's eminence. This satanic perplexity contrasts to Adam and Eve's manner, both before and after the Fall. The angels have free will in hell, but the direction of their wandering is a "sad choice"; it contrasts with the better choice of Adam, who, responding to Raphael's lesson, becomes "clear'd of doubt." Having been "freed from intricacies" by his lesson before the Fall, Adam is "taught to live / The easiest way, nor with perplexing thoughts / To interrupt the sweet of Life" (8.179, 182-84). The angels, in contrast, choose the physical directions that get them morally lost, erroneously searching for inner peace by exterior voyage.

After the Fall, Adam too loses this "easiest way" to the "sweet of Life." In the final book of *Paradise Lost*, however, Adam's condition may resemble in many ways that of the fallen angels in book 2, except that he rises above perplexity:

now first I find
 Mine eyes true op'ning, and my heart much eas'd,
 Erstwhile perplex with thoughts what would become
 Of mee and all Mankind; but now I see
 His day, in whom all Nations shall be blest,

(12.273-77)

The lessons of Adam in book 8 are different for the fallen man in book 12; that experienced man lives with perplexities he must himself solve.⁸⁷ In the passage from book 12, Adam relates a narrative, a before-and-after story. Yet unlike Satan's before-and-after, Adam recognizes the changes within himself.

Perplexity thus stands as a starting point for Milton's revolutionary reader. Michael Wilding has suggested that the Fall of the humans may be seen as a fall into a world of politics, that, "when both have eaten the apple, their plight is described in political terms. As a result of the fall they have become political beings. Political—Satanic—language enters," and thus, "part of the knowledge achieved by eating the fruit of the tree, then, is a political knowledge."⁸⁸ Wilding makes a mistake in equating political language with Satan or the Fall, however, by implying that there is another, preferable, kind of language. My point here is that Milton insists that humans have no access to this language, even if it existed. This is as much to say that books are inherently bad, an argument Milton opposed in *Areopagitica* when he wrote, "wholesome meats to a vitiated stomach differ little or nothing from unwholesome, and best books to a naughty mind are not unapplicable to occasions of evill" (CPW 2.512). The effects of books—evil or good—depend on the reader's state to begin with. The lesson there was, "to the pure all things are pure" (512). In the case of postlapsarian language, there can be no inherently "satanic" language either: Milton appears to agree with Hobbes that language does not form a natural connection to the signified. Fallen, political language is the only language to be had, Milton seems to say, and Adam and Eve had better get used to it. It is neither inherently "satanic" nor "angelic"; as the last two books of *Paradise Lost* show, Adam has as much difficulty conversing with the Angel as he might have with the Devil.

After the Fall, though, reading takes on a new role, because there is another kind of representation to deal with. There is first of all history, which offers the human pair new perspectives and occasions upon which to test their ability to discern truth. Understanding history and politics after the Fall are equivocal tasks, because there are multiple ways of seeing and of speaking. But these tasks are vital to Milton's intention voiced in his *History*: history teaches humans the lessons they so often fail to learn in life. Adam has to learn to interpret the equivocal signs so that he sees properly. His heart may be repentant after the Fall, but his eyes are yet clouded. In the final books of *Paradise Lost*, Adam undergoes a training in hermeneutics

under the tutelage of Michael. David Loewenstein has eloquently mapped Adam's education in *Milton and the Drama of History*, in which Adam learns that history will be "an essentially tragic process full of confusion and violence"; further, this is a vision Adam can perceive only by resisting false appearances. Loewenstein focuses on the content of this history, its dark, almost deterministic patchwork of repeated failures and its ambiguous relation to typological, progressive history. But after the Fall, there is something aside from the simple lessons of history; there is the fact of mediation for humans to cope with. Adam's current clear sight is the result of a vision of history that has been properly mediated, in this case, by Michael's narrative.⁸⁹

After the Fall, however, Adam and Eve are separated from God, and their understandings are shaded by that distance.⁹⁰ The heavens recede to a great height; the human pair must be removed from their birthplace. In the process is Adam's learning how to read, a process that, it has been argued, is the subject of the epic.⁹¹ Reading is explicitly and inherently a mediated process. After the Fall, Adam no longer stands in a direct relation with God. He fears the disunion, and it prompts his first query to Michael:

This most afflicts me, that departing hence,
As from his face I shall be hid, depriv'd
His blessed count'nance; here I could frequent,
With worship, place by place where he voutsaf'd
Presence Divine

(11.315-19)

Michael explains that though it appears there is a gap between Adam and the divine, God will be with him. When he reassures Adam, however, his language is vague: "Yet doubt not but in Valley and in Plain / God is as here, and will be found alike / Present" (11.349-50): the "is as here" presents a muddle: is God or is God not here? Michael insists that God may be felt by marks of his presence, though he may no longer be perceived directly:

... and of his presence many a sign
Still following thee, still compassing thee round
With goodness and paternal Love, his Face
Express, and of his steps the track Divine.

(11.351-54)

Adam will have to learn how to read those signs. We hear an echo of Milton's abject state, "In darkness, and with dangers compass round, / And solitude" (7.27-28).

Even before his history lesson, however, Adam has already felt abject on his own, and this condition requires some kind of practical response: reading. In his first deed of repentance, Adam feels the presence of God, but this presence is only surmised, and it involves interpretation: "Methought I

saw him placable and mild, / Bending his ear; persuasion in me grew / That I was heard with favor" (11.151-53). Adam's solution is based upon conjecture; "Methought" is an opinion, a "persuasion," not an unmediated fact. His first fallen act thus involves interpretating his station relative to God, which is now a state of abjectness. Unlike Satan, however, he fully accepts it. Adam's second interpretive action follows immediately on the first, and it involves reading the world around him. There is something new, animals hunting one another, in a glorious dance of airy predator and prey; and there is the figure of the eclipse:

Nature first gave Signs, imprest
On Bird, Beast, Air, Air suddenly eclips'd
After short blush of Morn; nigh in her sight
The Bird of *Jove*, stoop'd from his aery tow'r,
Two Birds of grayest plume before him drove:

(11.182-86)

Viewing nature's new way, Adam interprets, only gropingly:

O *Eve*, some further change awaits us nigh,
Which Heav'n by these mute signs in Nature shows
Forerunners of his purpose, or to warn
Us haply too secure of our discharge
From penalty . . .

(11.193-97)

His second lesson in reading is reading death. Though he does not know what these signs are, he knows they are bad. He is sure that they mean something. After the Fall, there are immediate changes in his perceptual powers: "doubt / And carnal fear that day dimm'd *Adam's* eye" (11.211-12).

But Adam also inhabits an unfamiliar world, and needs knowledge for new purposes. In his new world, he must do more than sing praises to God or chat with Eve. For Adam, there is now the knowledge of politics, of society, and of sin to contend with. This knowledge, further, is mediated through Michael's historical representations. Such clear sight, however, is not so readily available to the rest of humanity. Adam, presumably, will go out of Eden equipped with the ability to apply his lessons. How will Milton's own readers be so well supplied?

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton takes on Michael's mission, performing for his reader the intermediary acts that will justify the ways of God to men. Just as Adam's knowledge is received through the intercession of Michael, the reader's knowledge is received through Milton. But first, those readers must be made fit. How are they to be made so? Michael supplies the answer. Attending for the grace of the Lord's Second Coming, Adam in the meantime must be "disciplin'd / From shadowy Types to Truth, from Flesh to Spirit, / From imposition of strict Laws, to free / Acceptance of large Grace" (12.302-5).⁹² Until that time, there is an earthly rent in the repre-

sentational order. In his lesson in reading, Adam has begun to learn how to work through this disjunction, but it will take many more steps along the way. The problem is one and the same as the angel's "lik'ning spiritual to corporeal forms, / As may express them best" (5.573-74): that of understanding how meaning might from "corporeal to incorporeal turn" (5.413). It is the task of reading allegory. To return to the image of the eclipse, then, and to its "perplexity," we find Milton making an early signal by this image in the first book of *Paradise Lost*, that representational imagery, whether it is the holy image of the divine or the polemical use of allegory, is to be treated with suspicion.

The first book is spattered with epic similes and classical allusions, and critics have associated these with Milton's rejection of the classical epic. But these similes also perform a task of separating the reader from immediate experience of the events transpiring in hell. These call for the readers to make interpretations, to be prompted to apply readerly skills and power. Milton sometimes gives a poor guide for the reader's understanding, offering only qualification upon qualification through these difficult similes. When Satan alights on dry land, for example, Milton does not present a clear picture: "if it were Land that ever burn'd / With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire / And such appear'd in hue; as when the force / of subterranean wind transports a hill" (1.228-31). We can know this landscape only by comparison, but it is by comparison to things we have never seen.⁹³ It appears that Milton, and not just the sociable angel, must liken "spiritual to corporeal forms, / As may express them best" (5.573-74) in his representation of Satan in hell.

Similitude and conditionality both are forms of negation. And negation is the prime means by which Milton expresses the features of hell. Satan walks with "uneasy steps / Over the burning Marl, not like those steps / On Heaven's Azure" (1.295-97). Satan's hell is most unlike Lucifer's heaven, but only through a negative analogy can one know hell. When Satan's legions come awake, "Nor did they not perceive the evil plight / In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel" (1.335-36). Negative upon negative: Milton's language asserts that they did perceive their plight and feel their pain—or did they?

Simile offers another form of negation, because it asserts what exists in the form of what does not. Readers see the hellish figures summoned by Satan only indistinctly:

As when the potent Rod
Of Amram's Son in Egypt's evil day
Wav'd round the Coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud
Of locusts, warping on the Eastern Wind,
That o'er the Realm of impious Pharaoh hung
Like Night, and darken'd all the Land of Nile
So numberless were those bad Angels seen.

(1.338-44)

Satan wields his wand like Moses, now lord of the flies. Readers must make their way through this terrain by groping. Satan's crew hearkens to its leader as from the mists of sleep (1.332-34), much like the reader of these scenes who sees only as through a glass, darkly. The crowd throngs "numberless" (1.780), like "Faery Elves, / Whose midnight Revels, by a Forest side / Or Fountain some belated Peasant sees, / Or dreams he sees, while over-head the Moon / Sits Arbitress" (1.781-85). The reader's position is marked as that of the "belated Peasant"—perhaps the rustic shepherd of pastoral, perhaps Spenser's Colin Clout—but also as the poet, the ever-belated Milton. The way to understand hell is tenebrous indeed: does that peasant "see," or merely "dreams he sees"? With the hellish throng turning a stygian day into night by masking the sun, we have an image of "darkness visible," very much like that of the sun in eclipse.

Milton refused to allegorize in his representation of Satan and in the account of the war of the angels in *Paradise Lost*, and Michael Murrin has suggested that "this choice signals the end" of a literary tradition of allegory in epic. Milton's biblical poetics and his preference for typology were partly responsible for his choice, Murrin argues, but the poet's "iconoclastic theology" was what finally determined his literary mode. "Linguistically," Murrin writes, "iconoclasm cut Milton off from the traditional language of analogy. . . . The tradition of neither biblical nor secular allegory was available to Milton. He was a literalist in his scriptural interpretation."⁹⁴ The only instance of allegory—the brief Sin and Death scene—is strictly satanic, continues Murrin; allegory is itself rendered a satanic mode.⁹⁵ Though others have disputed Murrin's claims, explaining that with *Paradise Lost* we have not the end of a particular allegorical tradition, but rather an epistemological complication of it, it is generally agreed however, that, whether in the Spenserian high mode or in Bunyan's "mechanick Puritan mode," allegory as a literary kind died out in the seventeenth century. Stephen Fallon attributes this to a "decline in the status of universals."⁹⁶ I suggest that there is another factor to take into account: the crisis in hermeneutics that was the result of the writing of the English Revolution. *Paradise Lost* engages with contemporary allegorical representations of Satan in hell as a response to this crisis, and as a rejection of the royalist interpretation of cosmic hierarchy.

WHAT HAPPENS AT NIGHT: MAKING DARKNESS VISIBLE

What does Milton do to offset the political investment in allegory? He interprets perversely, like Abdiel in his opposition to Satan. God rewards Abdiel: "To stand approv'd in sight of God, though Worlds / Judg'd thee perverse" (6.35-36), and Milton offers the example of Abdiel as a mark that individuals may take actions against the forces of tyranny by performing seemingly perverse acts, which, when properly interpreted, are glorious. Abdiel's actions may be judged "perverse" by the world (6.29-37), but they are the

virtuous ones. Reading allegories may also be reading perversely. Until the Second Coming, all reading is somewhat perverse. Until that day, "so shall the World go on, / To good men malignant, to bad men benign" (12.537-38). Since humans, and not God, had failed the revolution, humans needed better preparation before they could reform the world, and part of their preparation was in learning how to read.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton uses the motif of darkness as a figure for this condition of hermeneutic struggle, inverting the common sense in which darkness connotes a spiritual condition of abjection from God. Like Abdiel's perversity, blindness itself can be a virtue, as we saw in chapter 4. The sun in *Paradise Lost* is not always preferable to the moon. Indeed, much happens under cover of darkness, starting with the creation of Milton's poem. As we know, Milton's muse assaults him at night. Urania, "who deigns / Her nightly visitation unimplor'd, / And dictates to me slumb'ring" (9.21-23; see also 7.29) is the patroness of astronomy and queen of the night. But the muse is also "Light" itself, whom Milton claims "Nightly I visit" (3.32). Thus when Milton invokes "The meaning, not the Name" of his muse (7.5), he presents a linguistic obfuscation, a mimetic paradox, light in the midst of darkness.

Adam and Eve, even before the Fall, have to explain the presence of darkness in their world as a necessary absence of light. In book 4, before Adam and Eve first consummate their marriage and share in God's creation, they have a little discussion about what happens at night. In this conversation, Adam reveals that he knows something about the universe, well before his celestial instruction. Eve asks, "But wherefore all night long shine these, for whom / This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?" (4.657-58); to which Adam answers:

Those have thir course to finish, round the Earth,
By morrow Ev'ning, and from Land to Land
In order, though to Nations yet unborn,
Minist'ring light prepar'd, they set and rise;

(4.661-64)

The stars first express a cosmic order, a cycle of nature in which the whole earth is held. But further, they express a spiritual order as well:

Lest total darkness should by Night regain
Her old possession, and extinguish life
In Nature and all things, which these soft fires
Not only enlighten, but with kindly heat
Of various influence foment and warm,
Temper or nourish, or in part shed down
Thir stellar virtue on all kinds that grow
On Earth, made hereby apter to receive
Perfection from the Sun's more potent Ray.

(4.665-73)

The stars keep night at bay, but they also prepare the human world for the light of the sun. Adam suggests that the sun is too powerful at times, and needs its way muted before the sensitive apprehension of humans. Adam stresses the limitations of human perception, knowing the frailty of human abilities: those on earth, too, need to be made "apter to receive" the sun's light. What happens at night, when the moon holds sway, is a planning, a "fomenting" and "nourishing."

Adam's account matches Milton's explanation of his own writing process, as Milton, too, uses nighttime to advantage. Adam continues, in one of the loveliest passages in the poem:

These then, though not unbeheld in deep of night,
Shine not in vain, nor think, though men were none,
That Heav'n would want spectators, God want praise;
Millions of spiritual Creatures walk the Earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep:
All these with ceaseless praise his works behold
Both day and night: how often from the steep
Of echoing Hill or Thicket have we heard
Celestial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive each to other's note
Singing thir great Creator: oft in bands
While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
With Heav'nly touch of instrumental sounds
In full harmonic number join'd, thir songs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to Heaven.

(4.674-88)

The stars have work to do. They "shine not in vain," and at night give the light by which the "millions of spiritual Creatures" may praise God. The stars illuminate the world for those who "keep watch," the faithful many who sing unheard songs. Milton echoes the Puritan language of preacher Francis Woodcock, who explained his mission as God's "people's Watchmen, and his own Remembrancers," an allusion to Isaiah's watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem.⁹⁷ Adam's unfallen description of what happens at night sounds like a benign version of Milton's description of his own condition. Rather than sweet succor, though, Milton finds the stars give him only intermittent comfort:

fall'n on evil days,
On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;
In darkness, and with dangers compass round,
And solitude . . .

(7.25-28)

Like those unseen millions of "Spiritual Creatures," singing while Adam sleeps, "Sole, or responsive each to other's note" (4.81), Milton is not alone,

but is joined by his muse. His nightly visions encourage him to "shine on" in his writing, "as the wakeful Bird / Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert his / Tunes her nocturnal Note" (3.38-40). With the failure of the English Revolution, with "*Bacchus* and his Revellers" (7.33) carousing until dawn, in *Paradise Lost* Milton urges his fellow countrymen not to give up faith in their cause; he seeks a fit audience, "though few" (7.31), to prepare and keep watch in the meantime.

With this concept of stellar virtue, Milton expresses his own spiritual hopes, and he also explains his literary impulses. In the nighttime of the earthly kingdom launched in the Restoration, these faithful few, keeping watch, await the true light of day, the true Kingdom of God. For Milton, the task ahead was to keep up the faith, either "Sole, or responsive each to other's note." In my reading, Milton never gave up on the people of England, and these passages in Eden explain the value of night, offering us a method for understanding how Milton thought the faithful ought to spend their time in the meanwhile. The period of darkness affords time to nourish "all kinds that grow" to become "apter to receive / Perfection from the Sun's more potent Ray," a time of heuristic growth. What follows this passage is the first lovemaking in Eden, an episode that seals the bond between husband and wife, and through which Milton links humanity to the order of God's Creation. Creation thus follows darkness, just as Milton's poem emerges after nightfall.

While they wait for a better future, however, there is night, the cover of darkness, in which both Satan and the poet take wing. Under that cover, however, the distinctions between good and evil are veiled. When Beelzebub speaks, for instance, the crowd is fixed, "still as Night / Or Summer's Noon-tide air" (2.308-9): either apogee will do.⁹⁸ Back in hell, Mammon fails to see the difference between the condition of true light and the light they might re-create in hell:

This deep world
Of darkness do we dread? How oft amidst
Thick clouds and dark doth Heav'n's all-ruling Sire
Choose to reside, his Glory unobscur'd,
And with the Majesty of darkness round
Covers his Throne; from whence deep thunders roar
Must'ring thir rage, and Heav'n resembles Hell?
As he our darkness, cannot we his Light
Imitate when we please?

(2.262-70)

When Mammon claims the devils can make a heaven out of hell, he reads the figure of the sun behind the clouds as a token of the commensurability of the two realms. But in this reading, he expresses a flawed theory of imitation: he believes since hell bears a physical resemblance to heaven at times, as when clouds cover the sun, hell may thus become a heaven to its inhabi-

tants. Erroneously thinking that the qualities of light and darkness are reversible, Mammon interprets the figure of the sun and clouds as encouragement that those in darkness may yet recover light. But Milton and his readers know that this can never be. The state of hell is evil in its imitation of God's true state in heaven. In thinking the fallen angels can "imitate" God, they are reading incorrectly, incorrectly transcribing the text of heaven in another text, the text of hell. Milton offers his own text as an authentic rewriting of heaven's text, though one that is aware of its status as thoroughly mediated.

Milton suggests there is a discrepancy between interpretations made in hell or on earth and those made in heaven. True interpretation comes from without, as God's word is rewritten in a man's heart. Abdiel in his "testimony of Truth" (6.33) rebukes Satan for his reading of matters, first on doctrinal grounds, and then on experiential ones: "by experience taught we know how good, / And of our good, and of our dignity / How provident he is" (5.826-28). Abdiel is commended by God, for withstanding the hellish ridicule; "though Worlds / judg'd thee perverse" (6.35-36), in God's perspective he is on the right path. Authentic signification is difficult to distinguish in the lower realms, and may indeed appear "perverse." Milton thus resists the satanic practice of allegory, in which there is a one-to-one relation between the political order, the cosmic order, and the representational order. In so doing, Milton resists the Royalists' appeal to an audience to read history along the fixed lines of those correspondences. Milton acknowledges the mediation required to understand the figures of history.⁹⁹ *Paradise Lost* is principally concerned with proper interpretation, given the human condition of contingency, both in spiritual and in political terms.

Milton's repeated strategy of provoking allegorical interpretations while refusing to supply unequivocal "keys" to the allegory is meant as a lesson, a challenge, and more importantly, as a warning to his revolutionary readers. He presses the stress points of a popular contemporary political allegory, and baffles readers' expectations of a clear meaning. Doing so, Milton, in two books of *Paradise Lost*, sets before the reader a subtext of the multiple political possibilities of literary genres, and the rest of the poem leads readers down a path toward spiritual enlightenment that involves learning how to read. Milton used what Annabel Patterson has called "the concept of functional, intentional ambiguity,"¹⁰⁰ not to encode a particular meaning, as if the fit reader could find the "key" to unlock Milton's cabinet. Rather, Milton exposes the dangers of such allegories for the unwary reader. This is not to say that Milton "gave up" on his public, or even on history, in playing indeterminately upon this allegory, or that he retreated into an unpolitical "Paradise within." The lessons of *Paradise Lost*, on the contrary, are activist and engaged. Milton urged his readers to become a fit audience, revolutionary readers, and they were to do this by reading between the lines, by becoming adept at detecting and resisting propaganda: not be-

cause rhetoric and propaganda were inherently evil or satanic; nor because a plain style was better (in fact, there was no such thing as a plain style, except in Eden and in heaven: the one irrevocably in the past, and the other presently always mediated through fallen language). Members of Milton's fit audience sit and wait in the darkness, but they read by the candlelight in the meantime.

ton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 55–56; Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in "Paradise Lost"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), reads this passage as Milton's aim to "provide for his audience a perspective that is beyond the field of its perception" (25), part of Milton's general assault on the reader's senses.

64. Annabel Patterson, "Imagining New Worlds: Milton, Galileo, and the Good Old Cause," in Katherine Z. Keller and Gerald J. Schiffhorst, eds., *The Witness of Times: Manifestations of Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1993), 238–60.

65. This is perhaps another way in which Milton achieves his "things unattempted." Milton's Satan has a shield that is explained by a metaphor not available to prior epic poets. Marjorie Hope Nicolson, "Milton and the Telescope," in *Science and Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), 80–110, explores the impact of astronomy on Milton's imagination, and sees Milton's use of many astronomical metaphors—the telescope, the abyss, the newly perceived vastness of "interstellar space"—in light of Milton's "cosmic" poetic vision.

66. Thomas Hobbes, *Autobiography* (London, 1680), 6.

67. *The Great Assizes Holden in Parnassus* (1645), 34.

68. Leo Strauss's phrase is "reading between the lines," in "Persecution and the Art of Writing," *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), 36, 22–37, an essay I have found highly stimulating; though see Annabel Patterson's critique of Strauss in her analysis of the "hermeneutics of censorship" in the new introduction to *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 24–48.

69. Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, 25; and Annabel Patterson, *Reading between the Lines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 7; Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, 26.

70. William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, 2 vols., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) 1:600–601.

71. Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, (New York: Viking, 1977), 405. Milton's sun imagery is treated in Joan S. Bennett, *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 37–38.

72. James Howell, *Dodona's Grove; or, The Vocal Forest, second part* (1650), 147–48.

73. John Tatham, *The Distracted State, A Tragedy* (1651), 4, 2.

74. Mercurius Acheronticus [James Howell], *A Trance; or, News from Hell* (1649), 12.

75. *The Great Eclipse of the Sun; or, Charles his Wain* (1644), 2.

CHAPTER FIVE

MILTON AND THE FIT READER: PARADISE LOST AND THE PARLIAMENT OF HELL

1. *We have fish'd and caught a Frog; or, The History of Several New Fishermen* (1649). The epigraph is Joseph Addison, *An Account of the Greatest English Poets* (1694), in R. M. Cummings, ed., *Spenser: The Critical Heritage* (New York, 1971), 224.

2. Frederick S. Siebert, *Freedom of the Press in England, 1476–1776* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952), 209–33. See also Blair Worden, "Literature and Censorship in Early Modern England," in *Too Mighty to Be Free: Censorship and the Press in Britain and the Netherlands* (Zutphen: De Walburg Press, 1988), 45–62.

3. Maureen Quilligan, in *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), talks about the process of "collusion" between the writer and the reader of an allegory (226).

4. Michael Murrin, *The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes toward a Theory of Allegorical Rhetoric in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969), 19. He explains that one chief function of allegory is to divide audiences into the knowing and the ignorant, iterating a prophetic model of utterance where there is a distinction in audience between the sacred and the profane (13).

5. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 90.

6. Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory*, 226.

7. Lois Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature, 1641-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), argues this necessary indirection gives a new spin to the idea of "subversive literature," since those who were subverting were the ones who wanted hierarchy reestablished (3, 34).

8. On the Puritan use of utopia, which I see as similar in aims to allegory, see James Holstun, *A Rational Millennium: Puritan Utopias of Seventeenth-Century England and America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 12; Stanley E. Fish has argued that in *Pilgrim's Progress*, though Bunyan attempts to present an allegory in a "plain style," he nonetheless creates a self-consuming artifact, vainly attempting to make a figural journey into a literal one. *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 224-25.

9. Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), 64-65.

10. As expressed in the neo-Platonism of the Caroline court masque, for example; see Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), chap. 5. For an indispensable discussion of the connections between neo-Platonism and English royal power, see Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); and "Platonic Politics," in Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, eds., *Inigo Jones: The Theater of the Stuart Court* 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 1: 49-75.

11. J. B. Broadbent, though not addressing this genre, finds that "Satan is the devils' Cromwell," and that Milton might even be satirizing Cromwell in his portrait of Satan, in *Some Graver Subject: An Essay on "Paradise Lost"* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960), 115.

12. Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in "Paradise Lost"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 12; Joseph Summers had argued similarly earlier, in *The Muse's Method* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962): "the readers as well as the characters have been involved in the evil and have been forced to recognize and to judge their involvement" (30-31).

13. Joan S. Bennett, *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 44.

14. The sole exception to this tendency against framing Satan in a political allegory is Christopher Kendrick, who gives us a Satan who is still the "symbolic expression or fulfillment of Milton's revolutionary desire." *Milton: A Study in Ideology and Form* (London: Methuen, 1986), 151.

15. Merritt Y. Hughes, "Satan and the 'Myth' of the Tyrant," in *Ten Perspectives on Milton* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 188. Hughes banishes imputations

that in the poem, Milton is interested in Satan's political effects: "it is questionable whether Milton was as much concerned as we are today about mob-psychology and its part in the evolution of dictatorships" (187).

16. Stella Purce Revard, in *The War in Heaven: "Paradise Lost" and the Tradition of Satan's Rebellion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 10, 23, 88, 116.

17. Stevie Davies, *Images of Kingship in "Paradise Lost"* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 11–12.

18. During the 1640s and 1650s, according to the historian Christopher Hill, "Antichrist . . . ceased to be exclusively ecclesiastical power and could be a symbol for any kind of political power—monarchy, the Lord Mayor of London, Parliament, the rule of the gentry, the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell." *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Verso, 1990), 130–31.

19. *The Devil in his Dumps; or, A sad Complaint of Malignant Spirits* (1647), 2, 3, 8.

20. Northrop Frye, "Allegory," in Alex Preminger, ed., *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, enl. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 12–15; called "topical allusion," by Angus Fletcher, *Allegory*, 26.

21. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner's, 1978), 472, 267, 486–87.

22. *The Devils White Boyes; or, A mixture of Malicious Malignants, with their much evil, and manifold practices against the Kingdom and Parliament* (1644), 3, 4–5.

23. *Ibid.*, 3, 4.

24. *Mercurius Poeticus* (5–13 May 1648), t.p.

25. Revard, *War in Heaven*, 87. See also Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

26. *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I* (1649), A2; *Mercurius Elencticus*, no. 4 (14–21 May 1649), 27.

27. *Mercurius Melancholicus, The Cuckoo's nest at Westminster* (1648).

28. *Mercurius Melancholicus*, no. 1 (25 December–1 January 1649), 1, 5.

29. *The Devill and the Parliament; or, The Parliament and the Devill: A Contestation between them for the precedencie* (1648), 5–6, 1, 1–2, 5, 6.

30. *Mercurius Melancholicus*, no. 1 (25 December–1 January 1649), 8.

31. *Mercurius Acheronticus* [James Howell], *A Trance; or, News from Hell* (1649), 6, 9.

32. *The Devill and the Parliament*, 3.

33. *Mercurius Elencticus: Communicating the unparallel'd Proceedings*, no. 2 (1–8 May 1648), 10.

34. *Westminster Projects; or, The Mystery of Iniquity, or Darby-house Discovered*, no. 5 (1648), 1.

35. *The Parliaments Petition to the Divell* (1648), 3, 4, 6, 7, 6–7.

36. *A Declaration of Great Lucifer, Prince of the Air; and of Devils, and of all the damned crew in Hell* (1648), 3–4.

37. *Ibid.*, 6–7, 5.

38. *Mercurius Fidelicus*, no. 1 (17–24 August 1648), 5. Whether this author considered his own pamphlet to be suspected of such devilishness is hinted in the title; by writing a *Mercurius Fidelicus*, a "Faithful Mercury," the author insists upon his innocence. Only the enemy's use of the press is deemed deceptive.

39. *A Trance*, 9.

40. [John Warner, bishop of Rochester], *The Devilish Conspiracy, Hellish Treason, Heathenish Condemnation, and Damnable Murder, Committed, and Executed by the Jewes,*

against the Anointed of the Lord, Christ their King (1649), 21, 40. The sermon was read on 4 February 1649, immediately following the regicide.

41. *Mercurius Elencticus*, no. 6 (28 May–4 June 1649), 45.

42. *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I* (1649), 1–2.

43. Those defending Parliament or its leaders did not take this sort of attack without fighting back. In *Respublica Anglicana; or, The Historie of the Parliament* (1650), George Wither wrote against those who accused Cromwell of being the Devil: "behold this wretch [Sir Henry Vane, Senior?] dares defile the very name of Saint, as if holiness were a crime. Take heed, O [B]eelzebub, lest he get the lordship of thy hell too, and be preferred to command in chief, as being the more daring Fiend" (28). Wither does see the Devil's hand in the affairs of state, claiming the Scots are "guilty of an Antichristian spirit now, when they arrogate that power to themselves, which none but the Pope (by all Protestants agreed to be the Antichrist, the man of Sin) usurped, except the Devil, whose carriage to our Saviour was not much unlike theirs to their King, both shewing the Kingdoms of the Earth, and the glory of them, and saying, 'all these will we give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship us' yet let them take heed" (45). Wither uses the conventional image of the pope as the Devil to castigate the Scots, and he counters a scurrilous attack on Cromwell, accusing his detractor of being "the more daring Fiend," but he does not come up with his own hellish allegory. Parliamentary writers generally did not make use of this trope during the Interregnum.

44. *Bradshaw's Ghost: Being a Dialogue between Said Ghost, and an Apparition of the Late King Charles . . . The third Edition, Corrected and Enlarg'd* (1659), 12.

45. James Howell, *Dodona's Grove; or, The Vocal Forest, second part* (1650), 4. Hereafter, page references appear parenthetically in the text.

46. *Cromwell's Conspiracy. A Tragicomedy, Relating to our latter Times. Beginning at the Death of King Charles the First, And ending with the happy Restauration of KING CHARLES the Second* (1660).

47. "The Arraignment of the Devil for stealing away President Bradshaw," in *The Rump; or, an Exact Collection of the Choycest poems and songs relating to the late times*, facs. ed., 2 vols. (1662; reprint London, 1874), 2:135–39. This poem also appeared as a single-sheet folio broadside; see note 48.

48. "The Rump Ululant; or, Penitence per force. Being the Recantation of the Old Rusty-roguy-rebellious-rampant, and now ruinous rotten-roasted RUMP," in *Rump*, 2.

49. Colonel Baker, in *The Blazing Star; or, Nolls Nose Newly Revived, and taken out of his TOMB* (1660), t.p., 4.

50. *The Downfall of Cerberus* (1660).

51. *Lucifer's Lifeguard: Containing a Schedule, List, Scroll, or Catalogue, of the first and following Names of the Antichristian, Anabaptistical, Atheistical, Anarchical and Infernal Imps . . .* (1660).

52. John Dryden, "Astrea Redux," in Edward Niles Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., eds. *The Works of John Dryden*, 20 vols. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956–89), 1:23, lines 39–40.

53. *The Arraignment of the Devil, for Stealing away President Bradshaw* (1660), 3.

54. *News from Hell; or, The Relation of a Vision* (1660).

55. Fletcher, *Allegory*, 64–65.

56. Andrew Marvell, "On *Paradise Lost*," in Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1984), 209–10.

57. William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), I:602.

58. After all, Milton, Marvell, and Dryden, as employees of the Protectorate, all walked in the procession at Oliver Cromwell's funeral in September 1658. Christopher Hill, "Milton and Marvell," in C. A. Patrides, ed., *Approaches to Marvell: The York Tercentenary Lectures* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 1.

59. *Bradshaw's Ghost* (1660), 1, 2. This is also an echo of Achilles in *Odyssey* 11.460. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, in Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin, eds., *Drama of the English Renaissance: The Tudor Period* (New York: Macmillan, 1976).

60. Of current scholars, Michael Wilding in *Dragon's Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), chap. 8, makes the closest concrete connection between the devils in *Paradise Lost* and midcentury political figures, though Wilding argues that Milton was critical of the Interregnum parliament, which, reflecting the tyranny of Satan, exemplified the dangers of democracy.

61. Andrew Marvell, *The Rehearsal Transpos'd*, ed., D.I.B. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 135.

62. Austin Woolrych, "Milton and the Good Old Cause," in Ronald G. Shafer, ed., *Ring the Bell Backward: The Proceedings of the First International Milton Symposium* (Indiana, PA: Indiana University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 135.

63. Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1977), 406-9.

64. *Mercurius Elencticus*, no. 6 (28 May-4 June 1649), 42.

65. *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I* (1649), 1. Barbara K. Lewalski, in "Paradise Lost" and the Rhetoric, discusses Milton's treatment of Satan's deliberative rhetoric as a "genre of the damned" (84-97); Michael Wilding urges that we see the first two books in *Paradise Lost* as an example of the dangers of politics, where Milton is warning the reader that beautiful rhetoric can waylay democratic processes. *Dragon's Teeth*, 229.

66. *Mercurius Acheronticus* [James Howell], *A Trance*, 6.

67. *The Parliaments Petition to the Divell* (1648), 3, 7.

68. *The Trial of Traytors; or, The Rump in the Round* (1660). The same illustration was used in *The Dragon's Forces totally Routed* (1660).

69. Bennett, *Reviving Liberty*, 50.

70. "On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament," *CP*, 144.

71. *Bradshaw's Ghost: Being a Dialogue between Said Ghost, and an Apparition of the Late King Charles . . . The third Edition, Corrected and Enlarg'd* (1659), 11.

72. Nicholas von Maltzahn dates the Digression in February 1649, in *Milton's "History of Britain": Republican Historiography in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 31; Hill takes these ominous statements as a sign of Milton's losing hope in 1654, in *Milton and the English Revolution*, 193; Austin Woolrych dates the Digression in 1660, finding that Milton retained optimism until 1659, in "The Date of the Digression in Milton's *History of Britain*," in Richard Ollard and Pamela Tudor-Craig, eds., *For Veronica Wedgwood These: Studies in Seventeenth-Century History* (London: Collins, 1986), 236-41. For the controversy over the dating of the Digression, see von Maltzahn, *Milton's History of Britain*, 22-48.

73. David Masson, *Life of Milton*, 7 vols. (Cambridge and London: Macmillan, 1859-94), 6: 811.

74. *A Trance*, 9.

75. In my argument here I concur with Mary Ann Radzinowicz's superlative account of Milton's late politics in *Toward "Samson Agonistes": The Growth of Milton's Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 145-49, though, as I will go on to show, my sense of Milton's educational program involves readers not just learning political truths but acquiring interpretive activities.

76. James Harrington, *Oceana*, in J.G.A. Pocock, ed., *The Political Works of James Harrington* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 277.

77. Thus I disagree with Don M. Wolfe, who, in *Milton in the Puritan Revolution* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1941), 342, found that Milton believed the Restoration was God's punishment to the people of England.

78. On the debate over whether Milton wrote *Christian Doctrine*, see William B. Hunter, who argues that he did not, in "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature* 32, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 129-42, 163-66; and, arguing that he did, Barbara Lewalski, "Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature* 32, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 143-54; and John T. Shawcross, "Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature* 32, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 155-62.

79. *Mercurius Bellicus*, no. 2 (22-29 November 1647), 10.

80. Sir George Wharton, *Mercurio-Coelico-Mastix* (1644), 13.

81. *The Downfall of Cerberus* (1660).

82. Joseph Frank, *Hobbled Pegasus: A Descriptive Bibliography of Minor English Poetry, 1641-1660* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), 456.

83. Lois Potter also examines the sun and clouds imagery in such civil war royalist writing, though she does not draw the connection to *Paradise Lost*'s use of this figure. *Secret Rites*, 65-71.

84. Bennett, *Reviving Liberty*, 37-38, 39.

85. Andrew Marvell, "On *Paradise Lost*," in Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1984), 209-10, lines 11-16.

86. Gordon Teskey, "From Allegory to Dialectic: Imagining Error in Spenser and Milton," *PMLA* 101, no. 1 (1986): 9-23, argues that Miltonic error is represented dialectically, through negation, in contrast to Spenserian error, which is represented diagetically, through narrative (9). In the concept of "perplexity" in *Paradise Lost*, however, I see creatures not only making the wrong choices, but lacking any clear sense of what to choose between: this is more similar to Spenserian error than Teskey's dichotomy would allow.

87. Many critics have seen the lesson in the final books as one in fortitude: George Williamson, in "The Education of Adam," in Arthur E. Barker, ed., *Milton: Modern Essays in Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) stresses the didactic content of the final books, where Adam is given information to keep up his hopes, learning by exemplary teaching, acquiring wisdom and love rather than rational knowledge (284-307); patience is also the lesson in Barbara K. Lewalski, "Structure and Symbolism of Vision in Michael's Prophecy, *Paradise Lost*, Books XI-XII," *Philological Quarterly* 42 (1963): 25-35; Gerald J. Schiffhorst reads patience and optimism in the last two books in "Patience and the Education of Adam in *Paradise Lost*," *South Atlantic Review* 49, no. 4 (1984): 55-63; Lawrence A. Sasek defends the last books by stressing the lesson of "Christian fortitude" (196) in "The Drama of *Paradise Lost*, Books XI and XII," in Waldo F. McNair, ed. *Studies in English Renaissance Literature* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1962), 181-96. But

others have detected a discreet revolutionary tone in these books, as, for example, David Loewenstein has done in *Milton and the Drama of History: Historical Vision, Iconoclasm and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Another option is for readers to "act now": Mary Ann Radzinowicz, "'To Make the People Fittest to Chuse': How Milton Personified His Program for Poetry," *CEA Critic* 48, no. 8 (1986): 3-23; and Wilding, *Dragon's Teeth*, 229.

88. Wilding, *Dragon's Teeth*, 229-30.

89. Arnold Stein, "The Paradise Within and the Paradise Without," *Modern Language Quarterly* 26 (1965): 586-600, sees in the last books Adam taking his "final intellectual step" (598); I would say it is his first intellectual step in the world that resembles Milton's own. I agree instead with Robert L. Enzinger, "Michael's Options and Milton's Poetry," *English Literary Renaissance* 8 (1978): "Accustomed to the purely referential language he has employed in Eden, Adam is not yet equipped to turn to effective use the ambiguities of diction and syntax Milton trusts his readers to appreciate through most of the epic. Adam must come, guided by Michael, to approximate the reader's sophistication" (208), though I disagree that the language in Eden was "purely referential." Rather, the uses of language seem to me to be different in Eden and after the Fall, with the application of the lessons of history. Loewenstein, *Milton and the Drama of History*, 100, 97-120.

90. As Maureen Quilligan has pointed out, Eve was always already in a mediate position, receiving truth only indirectly, even before the Fall. *Milton's Spenser: The Politics of Reading* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 224, 226.

91. Mary Ann Radzinowicz, "'Man as Probationer of Immortality': *Paradise Lost*, XI-XII," in C. A. Patrides, ed., *Approaches to "Paradise Lost"* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 31-51, 37.

92. William G. Madsen, *From Shadowy Types to Truth: Studies in Milton's Symbolism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); and Regina Schwartz, "From Shadowy Types to Shadowy Types: The Unendings of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 24 (1988): 123-39.

93. Stanley Fish's brilliant and indispensable *Surprised by Sin* analyzes these and other impossible metaphors (22-37).

94. Michael Murrin, *The Allegorical Epic: Essays in Its Rise and Decline* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 153, 167, 169.

95. See also Anne Davidson Ferry, *Milton's Epic Voice: The Narrator in "Paradise Lost"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 128-40.

96. Stephen M. Fallon, "Milton's Sin and Death: The Ontology of Allegory in *Paradise Lost*," *English Literary Renaissance* 17, no. 3 (1987): 338, 350.

97. Francis Woodcock, *Christ's Warning-Piece* (1644), A3.

98. Albert R. Cirillo, in "Noon-Midnight and the Temporal Structure of *Paradise Lost*," *English Literary History* 29 (1962): 210-33, addresses Milton's use of the structure of the "Platonic Great Year": in the poem, noon and midnight, sunlight and eclipse are not irresolvable opposites; rather, in God's viewpoint, they are resolved in the Crucifixion, "the symbol of the noon of eternal life" (230).

99. Maureen Quilligan has argued that, because of her inherently mediated status, "Eve's initial interpretive situation is closer to the fallen reader's corrected reading than any other perspective in the poem," in *Milton's Spenser*, 242.

100. Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 158.