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Douglas M. Lanier

University of New Hampshire, doug.lanier@unh.edu

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Recommended Citation

"Unmarkt, Unknown": The Return of the Expressed in Paradise Regained." *Criticism* 37.2 (Spring 1995): 187-212.

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Author(s): DOUGLAS LANIER

Source: *Criticism*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Spring, 1995), pp. 187-212

Published by: [Wayne State University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23116547>

Accessed: 22/11/2013 08:49

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“Unmarkt, Unknown”:
Paradise Regained
and the Return of the Expressed

He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.

(*Areopagitica*)¹

Who I am and whence I come is uncertain, you say; so once it was uncertain who Homer was, and who Demosthenes. But in fact, I had learned to hold my peace, I had mastered the art of not writing, a lesson that Salmasius could never learn. And I carried silently in my breast that which, if I had then wished to publish it, would long since have made me as famous as I am today.

(*Defensio Secunda*, CPW 4:607–608)

. . . for the very being of writing (the meaning of the labor that constitutes it) is to keep the question *Who is speaking?* from ever being answered.

(Roland Barthes, *S/Z*)²

In Book II of *Paradise Lost*, at the very threshold of Hell and Satan's epic narrative, the reader is presented with a deliberately grotesque representation of a primal scene of Miltonic authorship. It is a tableau, I hope to demonstrate, that serves to encapsulate and displace onto Satan one of Milton's own most potent anxieties of publication, a moment that finds its counterplot in *Paradise Regained*. Satan, fresh from his demonic counsels and filled “with thoughts inflam'd of highest design,”³ journeys to the bounds of Hell only to be stopped by two monsters, Sin, an avatar of Spenser's Error, and Death, “the other shape / If shape it might be call'd” (*PL* 2.666–67). The “heroic” taunts Satan and Death exchange turn, significantly enough, on questions of identity: Satan asks, “Whence, and what are thou, execrable

Criticism, Spring 1995, Vol. XXXVII, No. 2, pp. 187–212

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shape / That dar'st . . . advance / Thy miscreated Front athwart my way" (*PL* 2.681–83), to which Death returns, "Art thou that Traitor Angel, art thou hee . . ." (*PL* 2.689). As the two stand ready to annihilate one other, Sin intervenes by, in effect, answering both questions, though not quite as Satan or the reader expects:

O Father, what intends thy hand. . . .
 Against thy only Son? What fury O Son,
 Possesses thee to bend that mortal Dart
 Against thy Father's head?

(*PL* 2.727–30)

We discover with Satan that this is an encounter with his own grotesque progeny, a child he does not recognize. The "miscreated Front" that stands athwart his way is his own distorted (mis)creation.

Sin's ensuing tale of creation and incest is calculated to deepen our horror at this distorted return of the expressed. Not merely a parody of Athena's birth from Zeus's head in Hesiod's *Theogony*, Sin's cephalic birth grotesquely literalizes one of Ben Jonson's favorite conceits for the act of writing, one Milton adopts as early as *Areopagitica*: "Books were ever as freely admitted into the World as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stifl'd than the issue of the womb" (*CPW* 2:505).⁴ Indeed, the naming of sin generates a revealing pun: "call'd me *Sin*, and for a Sign / Portentous held me" (*PL* 2.760–61). Sin, it would seem, is Satan's first sign, one that involuntarily expresses his nature and ominously maps out his future. The tale of Death's conception and birth goes on to reveal in some detail Satan's authorial psychopathology. Viewing in Sin his "perfect image" (*PL* 2.764), Satan, we learn, "becam'st enamor'd" with his own self-representation.⁵ That moment of narcissistic identification (one thinks of Eve's post-natal fascination with her mirrored image in Book IV) sets in motion a cascade of horrors: the birth of Death that transforms Sin into a hideous half-woman "all dismay'd" (with puns on "dis-made" and "dis-maid"), and the rape of Sin by Death, an act that begets "wide Cerberean mouths" who endlessly generate noise, monsters who, hourly conceived, return to the mother's womb to devour and rape their source. Indeed, Death is named when Sin's cry of terror at her "inbred enemy" (*PL* 2.785) returns in an ominous, involuntary, mocking echo that inverts the affirmations of pastoral echo⁶:

I fled, and cri'd out *Death*;
 Hell trembl'd at the hideous Name, and sigh'd

From all her Caves, and back resounded *Death*.
(PL 2.787–89)

A pathetic tableau of imaginative progeny so ceaselessly fertile and self-immolating that they become unrecognizable to their creator, Sin and Death figure, as Maureen Quilligan has argued, Milton's visceral "revulsion from the stain of origin"⁷ and, I would add, they manifest his fear of how his public expressions might return to menace and obstruct their creator, his fear of the independent interpretive afterlife of the written word. Only when Satan can acknowledge and negotiate his relationship to his brainchildren can the epic narrative, both his and Milton's, begin again.

Though Milton's confrontation with his textual forebears has been widely explored, most recently from various Bloomian vantages, Milton's relation to the print culture of the late Renaissance has been less remarked. Certainly part of Milton's Humanist legacy is a faith in the power of the book to preserve its author's voice, to which this much quoted passage from *Areopagitica* testifies:

For Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet on the other hand unlesse warinesse be us'd, as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book; who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, Gods Image; but hee who destroyes a good booke, kills reason it selfe, kills the Image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great losse; and revolutions of ages doe not oft recover the losse of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole Nations fare the worse. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labors of publick men, how we spill that season'd life of man preserv'd and stor'd up in Books; since we see a kinde of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdome, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kinde of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that eth-

ereall and fift essence, the breath of reason it selfe, slaies an
immortality rather than a life. (CPW 2:492–3)

Milton's drive to publish springs from his secular ambition, announced in *The Reason of Church-Government*, to "leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die" (CPW 1:810), and from his spiritual duty to testify to "that one Talent which is death to hide." His recognition of the self-classicizing power of print, first fully exploited in British letters by Ben Jonson, is everywhere evident in, for example, Milton's 1645 *Poems* and, later, his editions of *Defensio Prima*, upon which the pre-Restoration Milton seemed to stake his international reputation, a work he characterized as "a memorial, I see, [that] will not easily perish" (CPW 4:536). Milton's confident link between the author and his text in *Areopagitica* has itself become a quintessence of the Humanist investment in print's special distilling, preserving power.

But with this investment in the printed word, indeed because of it, comes a peculiarly Miltonic unease about publication, as if the internal logic of radical Puritanism recast the aristocratic stigma of print he inherited from the Tudors⁸ into a far more profound ontological anxiety.⁹ For Milton, publication threatens to fix and distort, in ways not fully controllable, the living author's intent and the telos of his speech acts. Because publication situates Milton before more than his desired "fit audience, though few," and because it sets his voice within an unpredictable range of contexts present and future, publication runs the risk of opening Miltonic interiority—that locus of Christian liberty—to the vagaries of readerly reception. Precisely because it "preserves as in a violl" the writer's "purest efficacie and extraction," publication runs the risk of reducing moral character, what should be a never-ending process of choice, to an inert written character, a determinable thing that stands before the public fully (and often ironically) revealed, available for all manner of expropriation. It threatens, in short, the ideal of "disembodied knowledge" to which, Francis Barker has argued, Milton's writing so often aspires.¹⁰ Thus Milton's ambivalent image for the "productivity" of published books, "those fabulous Dragons teeth" of Cadmus, an image which captures not only a book's potential for a revolutionary afterlife but also, given Ovid's version of the tale of Cadmus, its equal potential for unpredictable metamorphosis and self-immolation (Ovid's "armed men" engage in bloody civil war, destroying themselves until only five remain to help Cadmus found Thebes).¹¹ The power of print to

give the author's voice an afterlife is both the promise upon which laureate ambitions are built and a potential self-inflicted curse.

Anxieties about public discourse and the written word have, of course, a long philosophical genealogy that stretches back in the West at least as far as Plato, and Milton certainly deserves a prominent place in that family tree. But to consider Milton's conception of publication requires us also to consider the particular material and cultural conditions within which Milton's texts were produced, circulated, and read.¹² Despite Arthur Barker's dictum that "a full and exact understanding of Milton's prose is essential to a complete understanding of his great poems,"¹³ it has become customary for critics to treat Milton's prose polemics as Milton himself characterized them, essentially divorced from and subordinated to his later poetic career, mere scribbles of the "left hand" to be mined for presages of images and ideas that will later appear in the verse.¹⁴ But it is of course in the realm of prose polemics that Milton first experienced the dynamics of publication. My interest here is in demonstrating that Milton's understanding of publication is forged not only in the pale fires of classical oratory or zealous glow of Puritan devotion to printed Scripture, but also in the white-hot crucible of mid-century English pamphleteering. That understanding in turn shapes how Milton imagines scenes of self-publication in his poetry, particularly the confrontation between Satan and Jesus in *Paradise Regained* where the dilemma of appearing in public becomes the very center of Milton's climactic epic.

Polemical pamphlets, we hardly need be reminded, issue into a public sphere very different from that imagined for poetry. Whereas poems often adopt the fiction that they are addressed to posterity or are written for their own sake, even when they are clearly engaged with micropolitics of the moment, pamphlets are directed at a relatively well-specified, contemporary audience and seek explicitly to egg on controversy or to reply to an earlier controversialist.¹⁵ In fact, the very volatility of pamphlet polemics was certainly a major target (if not the main target) of Parliament's reestablishment of licensing in 1643, much to Milton's objection. To publish a polemical tract was to enter a combative dialogue typically already in progress, to offer and invite almost immediate response, and often a response directed as much against the character of the author as against his argumentation or evidence. Certainly classical oratorical conventions licensed the *ethos* of the speaker as a fair target for attack, governed, of course, by standards of decorum. But what first strikes most modern readers

(and struck many Renaissance officials) is the extraordinary zeal with which pamphlet controversialists pursued arguments *ad hominem*. William Riley Parker reminds us that Milton

had a genuine talent (God-given, he sincerely believed) for the vigorous, vituperative give-and-take of controversy. His "bad manners" in debate were not, of course, unique; they were his heritage as a child of his age; but he took his heritage, unsheathed it, sharpened it, and wielded it so enthusiastically that his own contemporaries found his language unusual, and today his more squeamish admirers avert their eyes from the unpleasant spectacle.¹⁶

Little wonder, then, that in a discursive arena of such fierce intellectual cut and thrust, where religious propagandizing and warfare were typically bound together (nowhere more so than in Milton), one of the most potent weapons in the controversialist's arsenal was an opponent's own unwitting revelation of characterological flaw. This strategy was particularly effective in an age where courts depended upon self-indicting confession, free or compelled, to confirm legal sentences.¹⁷ A successful polemicist needed to adopt elaborate discursive postures of defense, anticipating how one's self-publications might be read aggressively or invasively, and exerting extraordinary control over what they might be made to reveal about the author. Thus one reason for pamphleteers' typically preferring anonymity (Milton's earliest self-presentational strategy) or adopting a persona (Martin Marprelate, Smectymnuus) that establishes a gap between the voice of the polemical text and its author. Whatever its veracity, John Dryden's offhand comment to John Aubrey about Milton's pronunciation suggests both the poet's reputation for polemical scrappiness and the extraordinarily close attention given to Milton's style as an unconscious revelation of his innate character: "He [Milton] pronounced the letter R (*littera canina*) very hard—a certaine sign of a Satyricall Witt."¹⁸ Without modern critical taxonomies of personae to legislate the relations between author and text, in a discursive arena where readers searched for unconscious exposures of character (see, for example, Ben Jonson's combative dictum, "Language most shewes a man: speake that I may see thee"), Milton might in *Areopagitica* justifiably characterize the reading process of his ideological opponents as "rak[ing] through the entralls of many an old good Author, with a violation wors then any could be offer'd to his tomb" (CPW 2:503). Milton's metaphor here, as Edward LeComte observes,

recalls the grotesque figure of Sin¹⁹ and stresses the physical defiling of the author's innermost recesses, but one can easily miss that it is print's ability to set the author within a immortal textual tomb or to "preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect," that makes such invasive close reading possible.²⁰

We can sense Milton's anxiety about publication by examining his encounter with the "productivity" of his own published image in the Smectymnuan controversy. Milton's anonymous pamphlet *Animadversions* (1641) prompted an anonymous reply entitled *A Modest Confutation*, a reply that purported to "discover" from the style of *Animadversion's* then-unknown author his licentious moral character. (Particularly damning in the pamphleteer's eyes was Milton's passing use of the image of a brothel and over-theatrical self-presentation.²¹) Against *A Modest Confutation* Milton issued his own anonymous reply, *An Apology* (1642), filled with a revealingly defensive outrage. Milton's *An Apology* seeks to limit the public damage with a strategy that was to become for Milton more and more typical. In *A Modest Confutation* Milton's own words had been rendered unwittingly self-damning by a clever misreader, threatening not only his own moral integrity but, more disturbingly, the spiritual truth itself for and in which he claims to speak. In fact, Milton's text seemingly so besmirched its author (and the truth of which, he tell us, he is a member incorporate) that he is forced to erase the blemish that he himself had occasioned by issuing, ironically enough, yet another publication. His line-by-line reply to *A Modest Confutation* is preceded by a brief (and anonymous) autobiography designed to correct the public record, but as the following passage makes clear, the relationship of this self-portrait to the author's character is not straightforward or, curiously enough, even particularly binding:

With me it fares now, as with him whose outward garment hath bin injur'd and ill bedighted; for having no other shift, what helpe but to turn the inside outwards, especially if the lining be the same, or, as it is sometimes, much better. So if my name and outward demeanour be not evident enough to defend me, I must make tryall, if the discovery of my inmost thoughts can. Wherein of two purposes both honest, and both sincere, the one perhaps I shall not misse; although I faile to gaine beliefe with others of being such as my perpetuall thoughts shall heere disclose me, I may yet not faile of successe in perswading some, to be such really themselves, as they cannot believe me more than what I fain. (CPW 1:889)

The presentational strategy of this passage (particularly the final sentence) is dazzling: Milton problematizes, without ever wholly discarding, the resemblance between his outer textual garment and the inner spiritual lining which he now considers disclosing. And, he claims, that disclosure would serve primarily not to reveal the author's character once and for all—he is perpetually outside his text, “more than what I fain.”²² Rather, it works to identify his detractors, for, so the final sentence runs, those who attack the author's character through his text, believing the author to be no more than what he fains to be, only reveal “to be such really themselves.”²³ Milton, in other words, turns the invasive rhetorical operation performed upon his text and himself back upon his detractors. Not only is the autobiography in *An Apology* designed, as John Guillory details,²⁴ to vindicate the author's “private name” without ever revealing it, it also, so Milton claims, serves to ferret out his opponents by turning their misreadings into ironically self-revealing, self-damning texts. By the time Milton defends his public name in his *Defensio secunda* (and in the tellingly titled *Pro se defensio*), his reply to *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* which replies to Milton's *Defensio prima* which replies to Salmasius's *Defensio Regia*, Milton is willing to offer a detailed autobiographical sketch of his life in print (one necessitated, so he claims, by his enemies' distortions). But his self-defense opens with a curious discussion of Milton's blindness. Adopting a calumnious strategy that would be renewed with a vengeance—literally—in the Restoration, Milton's interlocutors “read” his blindness as a mark of his monstrous status as a “bad omen or evil wish against our success and the cause of England” (CPW 4:592). In his self-defense, Milton at once acknowledges his public physical defect and strategically recasts it: “Today I possess the same spirit, the same strength, but not the same eyes. And yet they have as much the appearance of being uninjured, and are as clear and bright, without a cloud, as the eyes of men who see most keenly. In this respect alone, against my will, do I deceive.” (CPW 4:583). Striking here is Milton's insistence upon the fact that his blind condition cannot be determined from any public marks: Milton's eyes are indistinguishable from those of “men who see most keenly” and, what is more, he shares his blindness with such eminent prophets and patriarchs as Tiresias, Timoleon of Corinth, Dandolo of Venice, and even Isaac. And in another characteristic move, Milton goes on to divide blindness into two sorts, one merely an exterior blindness, the other an interior blindness and immediately attributed to Milton's interlocutor, implicitly on the basis of his attack-

ing Milton's afflicted condition: "Your blindness, deeply implanted in the inmost faculties, obscures the mind, so that you may see nothing whole or real" (CPW 4:589).

In the end, so Milton claims, he stands unrevealed by the public disclosure of his identity and defect of sight. When Milton addresses de Moulin's scornful identification in *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* of that "great hero," "a certain John Milton," Milton carefully recasts his own public self-revelation in the passage that forms the second epigraph to this essay. There Milton embraces the sarcastic tone of his opponent's term "certain"—certainty *is* exactly the issue—and makes his own "uncertain" identity a traditional "mark" (or perhaps non-"mark") of laureate status. The burden of the passage is that Miltonic "not writing" is an "art," not a deficiency or lack of nerve so much as a resistance to public discourse that must be "learned." Yet how is a reader to perceive that resistance, the (non)mark of the true author? Milton is forced by the competing logics of publication and interiority to point *publicly* to his private reserve when he announces that "I had mastered the art of not writing," and he must signal (without specifying) his interiorized, always potential discursive skill: "And I carried silently in my breast that which, if I had then wished to publish it, would long since have made me as famous as I am today." Even the mention of fame prompts Milton to deny any dependence upon public approval—"It made no difference to me even if others did not realize that I knew whatever I knew"—and by recognizing that the "gait" of fame "is slow" Milton can subtly suggest that the fame he has already garnered has not yet exhausted his potential for even greater stature. And even as Milton in effect publishes the extent to which he has resisted publication—"nor did I ever intend to publish even this, unless a fitting opportunity presented itself"—he claims that his opponent's own much more serious interior blindness reveals itself unwittingly in the course of his attacks. When his interlocutor asks "Is he a man or a worm?," Milton treats the question as another unwitting self-revelation of his opponent's pride, countering that he would prefer to be a worm than to "hide in my breast your worm that dieth not." Milton's consideration of publication in this passage is intended to show that he has understood (and has anticipated and resisted) the pitfalls of self-publication. Salmasius, proud of his fame, lacks such self-understanding, becoming "better known than the nag Andraemon," the pack-horse who, Martial wryly noted, was more (in)famous than he. Similarly, in his sonnets on the reception of his notorious *Tetrachordon*, Milton imagines his text walking

the streets of London, "Numb'ring good intellects" and bad. Though Milton declares that "he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought him selfe to be a true Poem" (CPW 1:890), that "true" and living "Poem" cannot be fully accessed through the poet's public marks.

The socio-psychology of pamphlet publication I have been describing undergirds the distinction Milton draws in *The Christian Doctrine* between the outer and the inner word, in Milton's terms, "the double scripture," "the external scripture of the written word and the internal scripture of the Holy Spirit . . . engraved upon the hearts of believers" (CPW 6:587). The material text of Scripture, he acknowledges, is vulnerable to the accidents of history and the bad faith of its fallen readers: "the external scripture, particularly the New Testament has often been liable to corruption, and is, in fact, corrupt" (CPW 6:587). But Scripture's very vulnerability to corruption provides Milton proof that the essence of divine revelation does not wholly inhere in the public word at all, but rather in the private inner word, written by the Holy Spirit on the heart of the believer. That is, the outer word of Scripture does not necessarily fully fix the intent or reveal the nature of its holy Author: "I do not know why God's providence should have committed the content of the New Testament to such wayward and uncertain guardians, unless it was so that this very fact might convince us that the Spirit which is given to us is a more certain guide than scripture, and that we ought to follow it" (CPW 6:589). Here Milton recognizes that even Scripture might serve to open divine revelation to corruption or perversion, and that recognition leads him to conclude that despite the "external authority for our faith, that is, the scriptures," the "pre-eminent and supreme authority . . . is the authority of the Spirit, which is internal, and the individual possession of each man" (CPW 6:587). Milton's radical version of the Puritan doctrine of the inner word here seems to spring from his worries about the vulnerability and, paradoxically, seeming monumentality of the material, public word. As Stanley Fish has argued, Milton commits himself to a program of "driving from the letter" in his Scriptural exegesis.²⁵ It is clear that Milton also adopts such a program, by extension, in mapping his relation to his own texts. He longs for a state of radical interiority free from public view, and he imagines that state typically in images of whiteness, blankness, and unmarked landscapes, what he pictures in *An Apology* as a blemishless inner lining or in Sonnet 23 as his "late espoused Saint," "vested all in white" yet "veil'd."

The problem is that Milton is also equally compelled to give signs of, to testify to that interiority, a testimony that, by being expressed, always runs the risk of becoming precisely the public si(g)n whose return he fears. Milton's anxiety of publication consists, in short, of two contradictory demands, exemplified by the epigraphs to this essay: publish or perish, publish and perish. He resolves that contradiction, paradoxically, by using his publications to evoke (but never to represent) their own "outside," an outside which is a prior and unembodied inner word. To his arsenal of older modes of defensive authorial self-presentation— anonymity, modified coterie publication—Milton adds a strategy of precisely managed presentational indeterminacy, a strategy he admittedly developed and deployed by fits and starts. Milton's change in practice, bound up with the interiorization of a bourgeois subjectivity (as Francis Barker has argued²⁶), is nonetheless concerned primarily with containment of the vulnerability of the public word. Milton attempts to regain through his own public texts the edenic moment of choice and self-possession—unsplit subjectivity—that, so he claims, precedes the act of "publication." When his blindness becomes a matter of public record, Milton is forthright enough to admit that he would prefer "to refute this brutish adversary on the subject of my blindness," but, he acknowledges, "it is not possible" (*Defensio secunda*, CPW 4:584). But Milton uses that occasion of determination to indicate unsuspected private reserves not exhausted or indicated by his publicly blind condition: "Let me bear it then. Not blindness but the inability to endure blindness is a source of misery" (CPW 4:584). It is Milton's mastery of the art of not being written, of remaining always "uncertain" in public despite his autobiographical revelations, that places him in the company of Homer and Demosthenes. The "uncertainty" that marked their careers is not an indication of obscurity but of superior self-presentational skill, the mark of a laureate; so it is, the implication runs, with Milton.

Paradise Regained, putatively Milton's favorite text, is profoundly shaped by his anxieties and strategies of publication. Indeed, in Milton's hands the founding moment of human salvation becomes the Son's triumph over the perils of the public word and his recovery of a paradise genuinely within. Milton highlights the difficulty of the epic's project—to reveal publicly a private identity without violating its interiorized nature—by flaunting the paradox of his intention "to tell of deeds / Above Heroic, though in secret done" (PR 1.14–15). If, as Goldberg has argued, Milton typically writes within a self-crafted

“space of prevention,” here the narrator represents himself as finally having arrived at his long-delayed epic moment. The poem opens with a self-assertive “I” (*Paradise Regained*’s first word) who promises to declare events “unrecorded left through many an Age, / Worthy t’have not remain’d so long unsung” (PR 1.15–17), a subject in which, for once, the poet has not been anticipated or preempted. Perhaps this uncharacteristic announcement of epic ambition and the promise of “proof” of Jesus’s “undoubted” divine status has led readers to be disappointed, for, famously, despite all the promises nothing much happens in *Paradise Regained*. The Son enters the narrative “unmarkt, unknown” (PR 1.25) and exits four books later “unobserv’d / Home to his Mother’s house private return’d” (PR 4.638–39), each phrase in this final line a pointed negation of epic convention or even narrative movement.

To a remarkable degree the poem focuses our attention not upon heroic deeds but upon presentational strategy, on *how* Jesus outmaneuvers Satan’s attempt to secure through the public declarations of the Son and Father a definite knowledge of the Son’s identity and vocation. By the middle of the first book, the reader’s interest is no longer in whether the Son will or won’t succumb to temptation. Early in the poem Jesus declares in soliloquy, before the temptation narrative proper even begins, that he has already encountered and already rejected the three temptations Satan will offer—the temptation of “public good” (PR 1.204), of “victorious acts” and “heroic deeds” (PR 1.215–16), and of “winning words” and “persuasion” (PR 1.222–23). We realize, in short, that when the Son encounters Satan he’ll just say no. Our interest, from that point on, is rather in *how* Christ will just say no, in the details of rhetorical thrust and parry between Christ and Satan where every public word threatens to open its speaker—here the Messiah, the Living Logos himself—to Satanic tactics of appropriation and demystificatory specification. The central issue is, so the narrator declares, the Son’s dilemma in making a public beginning, of determining “which way first / [to] Publish his Godlike of-fice now mature” (PR 1.187–88). For should Jesus commit himself publicly to any single course of action—that is, after all, what Satan repeatedly offers—he would render his identity and vocation a text Satan can determine (in all senses of the word). God’s public declaration of his Son’s identity—“This is my Son belov’d, in him am pleas’d” (PR 1.85)—thus sets in motion a test of presentational strategy, as the Son is forced to negotiate the problematic relation between, as he puts it, “What from within I feel myself, and . . . / What from

without comes often to my ears, / Ill sorting with my present state compar'd" (*PR* 1.198–200).

It is a battle, we might notice, waged largely with citations,²⁷ both Satan and the Son deploying prior texts in an attempt to circumscribe each other's subject-position. Many commentators have characterized the Satan of *Paradise Regained* as a sophist bent upon deconstructing the unitary meaning of God's and Christ's words.²⁸ In fact, Satan is precisely the opposite: he is anxious to specify the precise nature of Christ's identity, to get a fix on what the title "Son of God" means, a title, Satan acknowledges with frustration late in the poem, that "bears no single sense" (*PR* 4.517). Throughout *Paradise Regained* Satan's strategy is to force from the Son a public declaration that will give him a definitive purchase on the Son's elect interiority and thus on the nature of his mission of redemption. Satan seeks, he tells us, to "understand my Adversary, who and what he is; his wisdom, power, intent . . . to know what more thou art than man, / Worth naming Son of God by voice from Heav'n" (*PR* 4.527–28, 538–39). To achieve that understanding, Satan offers the Son a series of determinate heroic scripts, citing all manner of Renaissance master-texts (including Scripture itself) in an attempt to provide well-delineated coordinates for the Son's Messianic career. And in that regard even the Son's refusals are for Satan potentially illuminating. Throughout the poem Satan tends to fasten on the Son's denials, intent upon finding within them some unintended indication of who the Son really is. When Jesus rejects the temptation of charity and mercy, Satan interprets that rejection as an indication that he is attracted to justice in the form of military command or statecraft; when Jesus rejects that bait, Satan surmises that he is attracted to oratory or the contemplative life. Each temptation is a version of one central temptation: to fully reveal, even (or especially) in the act of denial, one's identity and to declare God's kingdom definitively "Real or Allegoric" (*PR* 4.390), to give an answer—witting or unwitting—to Satan's question, "What dost thou in this World?" (*PR* 4.372).

In the face of the ultimate hostile reader, the Son's presentational strategy is devilishly complex: he must unambiguously rebuke Satan's reductive readings of the phrase "Son of God" without betraying the secret of his identity. Those rebukes the Son must make publicly, but they are designed so as to leave the question of his identity strategically open. Note, for example, the conditionals and the masterful redefinitions of the issue that run throughout Christ's replies, or the amazingly controlled indeterminacy of an answer like "Think

not but that I know these things; or think / I know them not; not therefore am I short / Of knowing what I ought" (*PR* 4.286–88), an answer that leaves open the content of both what Satan should think and what Christ ought to know. As a result, Satan is progressively silenced, left without a determinate text he can parasitically fasten upon and exploit. What is more, the Son transforms Satan's temptations into self-revealing texts that expose the demonic intent hidden beneath his disguises and lies. Milton highlights this potential for self-exposure when, in Book II, Belial comically suggests tempting Jesus with a beautiful woman and Satan tellingly replies:

Belial, in much uneven scale thou weigh'st
 All others by thyself; because of old
 Thou thyself dot'st on womankind . . .
 None are, thou think'st, but taken with such toys.
 (*PR* 2.173–77)

As Satan with Belial, so the Son with Satan. To take one of many examples, when Christ rejects Satan's temptation to turn the stones to bread to alleviate his hunger, a temptation designed to test whether Christ is capable of such supernatural actions, Christ retorts that Satan's own words betray his limited understanding and wicked intent, and he rejects the temptation in such a way as not to *do* anything while suggesting, tauntingly, that Christ's identity has already been revealed:

Think'st thou such force in Bread? is it not written
 (For I discern thee other than thou seem'st)
 Man lives not by Bread only, but each Word
 Proceeding from the mouth of God. . . . ?
 Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust,
 Knowing who I am, as I know who thou art?
 (*PR* 1.347–50, 355–56)

Indeed, considering that Christ understands Satan to be "other than thou seem'st," his assertion that Satan "Know[s] who I am, as I know who thou art" is a marvel of rhetorical equivocation, suggesting on the one hand that both identities are utterly apparent and known to both parties (and therefore that Satan's attempt to force a self-revealing miracle is pointless), and, on the other hand, that Christ's identity is, like Satan's, tantalizingly other than it seems.²⁹ The poem insists upon an awareness of the difference between the unequivocal meaning of Scripture and the way in which Christ deploys it and stands

behind (pun intended) the texts he cites, that is, the difference between utterly revealed public text and the carefully managed authorial presentation that the text performs. The drama at this moment in the poem, and at every other, is not one of narrative event or heroic climax—the outcome of the plot is a foregone conclusion—but rather one of strategic self-presentation. It is the Son, not Satan, who is the triumphal practitioner of indeterminacy, performing a miracle “above heroic” by remaining, despite the revelation of his identity as the “Son of God” in the poem’s opening lines, always on the threshold of public discourse, balancing his duty to “publish” his “Godlike office” and his duty to protect God’s mystery from public view, all the while reducing the Tempter, in his own words, to “A spectacle of ruin or of scorn / To all the Host of Heaven” (*PR* 1.415–16).³⁰

Examples of Christ’s skillful negative capability are easy to multiply, but his presentational battle climaxes in the temptation of the pinnacle, a climax that in many ways epitomizes the difficulties I have been outlining.³¹ Stymied by the Son’s masterful evasions, Satan sets him upon a pinnacle, declaring:

There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright
Will ask thee skill; I to thy Father’s house
Have brought thee, and highest plac’d, highest is best,
Now show thy Progeny; if not to stand,
Cast thyself down; safely if Son of God:
For it is written, He will give command
Concerning thee to his Angels, in thir hands
They shall uplift thee, lest at any time
Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone.

(*PR* 4.551–59)

From Satan’s point of view, the Son is quite literally damned if he does and damned if he doesn’t. *That*, in fact, is the temptation Satan offers: to allow the outer word to force an unambiguous revelation of—to fix—the Son’s identity, even if that word is God’s Word of which Christ is the living expression and to which he seems bound. Satan’s curious phrase “Now show thy Progeny” points in at least two directions: first, toward the arena of publication (now show yourself to your progeny), and second, glancing back at the Sin and Death episode in *Paradise Lost*, toward the lasting, nearly textual effect produced by this revelation (now show your “progeny” to me). The Son’s terse reply—the brevity itself registers a resistance to public speaking—is the poem’s most notorious interpretive crux: “To

whom thus Jesus. Also it is written, / Tempt not the Lord thy God; he said and stood" (*PR* 4.560–61). The poem here prompts us to ask, as Catherine Belsey does, "What exactly is it that the event discloses? That Christ is God and can stand because he is God, and that Satan should recognize defeat and stop tempting him? Or that Christ as human being should risk the consequences of standing, rather than put God to the test of performing a miracle to save him?"³² These questions, if the history of criticism of *Paradise Regained* is any guide, resist any definitive answer, and *that is precisely the point*. Christ's citation of Scripture manages (miraculously) to render the text's relation to its speaker studiously unrevealed, while at the very same time Christ depends upon (and indeed demonstrates) Scripture's singular authority for that moment's power. The undecidability of this event, one Milton takes great pains to enhance, is not, as Belsey argues, a mark of Milton's inability to escape difference and textuality; it is, rather, an undecidability fully within Christ's (and Milton's) control, harnessed to defeat by word and by example Satan's textual determinism. By exploiting and redirecting the effects of Scriptural citation, Christ demonstrates decisively how in his hands the outer word need neither constrain nor fully disclose the speaking subject. Thus though Christ consistently evades any unambiguous or direct representation of his identity, his special nature is nonetheless evoked precisely through his uncanny mastery over the dynamics of public self-presentation and rhetorical effects. Little wonder Satan "smitten with amazement fell" (*PR* 4.562).

The marvel of *Paradise Regained* is the rigor of its attempt to regain through the public word—both Scripture and the poem—a sacrosanct interiority that nevertheless is not entirely silent. The glory of Christ (and of Milton, his singer) is their use of the outer word against itself, the deployment of public discourse to point toward, but not to fix, a private identity, an interiority that becomes present only through its studied absence, sensed through its resistances and its ability to remain ever *in potentia*. In Book I, Christ tells us that, prompted by his own thoughts and Mary's recitation of Biblical prophecy, he discovered his identity by:

. . . searching what was writ
Concerning the Messiah, to our Scribes
Known partly, and soon found of whom they spake
I am.

(*PR* 1.260–63)

What occasions this meditation is precisely Christ's recognition of a subjecthood split between public and private, a gap between "What from within I feel myself, and hear / What from without comes often to my ears, / Ill sorting with my present state compar'd" (*PR* 1.198–200). His "I am" alludes to the Tetragrammaton, the covenant name of Yahweh, "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14), a name God gives himself to specify that he does not inhere in any of his public words or appearances. Christ's words here—is his "I am" a statement, a name, or a citation?—self-consciously (re)enact the difficulty of divine self-declaration at the very moment and in the very phrase where Christ's identity seems most unambiguously announced. It is precisely that indeterminable mode of being that the angelic choir celebrates in Book IV, in terms that studiously preserve its indetermination:

True Image of the Father, whether thron'd
 In the bosom of bliss, and light of light
 Conceiving, or remote from Heaven, enshrin'd
 In fleshly Tabernacle, and human form,
 Wand'ring the Wilderness, whatever place,
 Habit, or state, or motion, still expressing
 The Son of God. . . .

(*PR* 4.596–602)

Of course, the verb "expressing" holds out the promise that Christ has accomplished in the event we have just (not) witnessed some determinate declaration of his nature. However, the phrase that immediately precedes, "whatever place, / Habit, or state, or motion," undermines each of the alternatives offered in the choir's opening lines; indeed, each new word in the series seems chosen for its ability to undermine the term that precedes it, "Habit" replacing "place," "state" replacing "Habit," "motion" replacing "state," the line reproducing in miniature the process or "motion" of rhetorical distanciation that, I am arguing, characterizes the poem as a whole. It is that process of presentational indetermination rather than any determinate content of the line itself—how, after all, *could* one paraphrase its content?—that has done the work of "still" (the word offers punning commentary on the perpetual interpretive restlessness enacted here) "expressing / The Son of God." Indeed, even though the angels offer a hymn of triumph, they go on to stress that the moment of triumph they are celebrating has not just been completed but rather remains yet to come. The angels first speak of Christ's having "aveng'd / Supplanted *Adam*, and by vanquishing / Temptation, hast

regain'd lost Paradise / and frustrated the conquest fraudulent" (*PR* 4.606–609), seemingly offering the final word on the confrontation between Christ and Satan. Here, we are tempted to think, is the determinate meaning of what has just happened. Yet in the next few lines that very same action is set in the future:

A fairer Paradise is founded now
 For *Adam* and his chosen Sons, who thou
 A Savior art come down to reinstall,
 Where they shall dwell secure, when time shall be
 Of Tempter and Temptation without fear.
(*PR* 4.613–17)

At the moment when the angels seem to make their most unambiguous claim about Christ's nature and action, their language nonetheless equivocates: Christ is *a*, not *the* Savior; his action is a *re*installation, a repetition of God's originary act (even though this paradise is "fairer"), and it remains still incomplete, as the repeated "shall"'s of line 616 stress. Christ's indeterminate "victory," we discover, is merely a foreshadowing—their word is "proof" (4.621)—of the real victory that remains yet to come:

. . . for proof, ere this thou [Satan] feel'st
 Thy wound, yet not thy last and deadliest wound
 By this repulse receiv'd, and hold'st in Hell
 No triumph; . . . hereafter learn with awe
 To dread the Son of God: hee all unarm'd
 Shall chase thee with the terror of his voice. . . .
(*PR* 4.621–27)

It is for that reason that, curiously enough, the angels can end their hymn by naming Christ the "Queller of Satan" and yet entreating him to "Now *enter*, and *begin* to save mankind" (4.635, emphasis added). Christ's extraordinary achievement lies in so adeptly signaling his puissant potentiality without engaging and exhausting it, in speaking without yet revealing the "terror of his voice." The terms of victory are not by accident: when that apocalyptic future arrives, we learn, this terrifying, disembodied voice, in a display so powerful as to need no defense ("all unarm'd"), will reenact in reverse Death's pursuit of Satan's brainchild and by so doing redeem the primal scene of publication.

Precisely what or where, we might ask, is the "fairer paradise" Christ and Milton have (re)established here? "Precisely" is, of course,

the wrong word to be using, for this paradise regained is emphatically *not* a fixed, determinable physical site, like the lovingly detailed garden of Milton's earlier epic. This poem is set in the most barren of landscapes which Milton sketches in only a few descriptive strokes, and Christ's last action in the poem is to turn his back entirely even on this "unmarked" scene. Rather this paradise regained is a radically interior, discursive site established by Christ's example, a site pointedly unspecified and therefore "secure" from satanic interpellations, a place where the faithful can dwell unmarked and unknown. Thus, in a curious way, in his final encounter with Satan, the Son does not quite accomplish his own disappearance, a return to a state of being "unmarkt, unknown." When the Son returns to his mother's house private and "unobserv'd" (*PR* 4.638–39), he returns having evoked a inner subjectivity capable of resisting and appropriating the power of the public word to imprison its enunciator.

Perhaps this is why the Miltonic narrator can assert, in the opening lines of *Paradise Regained*, that he has finally left behind the pastorals of his youth and delivered his long-promised, long-delayed epic to public view. Even more remarkably, Milton seems to have committed himself unambiguously to the epic's authorship:

I, who erewhile the happy Garden sung,
By one man's disobedience lost, not sing
Recover'd Paradise to all mankind,
By one man's firm obedience fully tried
Through all temptation, and the Tempter foil'd
In all his wiles, defeated and repuls't,
And *Eden* rais'd in the waste Wilderness.

(*PR* 1.1–7)³³

This self-assertion in the invocation to *Paradise Regained* is extraordinary for a poet who, as Goldberg observes, typically hedges by representing his utterances as already anticipated, prompted by outside forces or circumstances, written as mere beginnings for later projects, or otherwise not fully his own. Here, however, are none of the self-presentational feints of the pamphlets, and gone is the tortured struggle between authorial agency and abandonment to a threatening (and female) Muse that marks Milton's discussions of epic authorship in *Paradise Lost* (see, for example, *PL* 3.1–55, 7.1–39, and 9.20–45). In the invocation to *Paradise Lost*, for example, the "singer" claims that not he but the "Heav'nly Muse" speaks; "I" first asserts himself only in order to invoke the Muse's aid (*PL* 1.12). In *PL* 9, this oscillation be-

tween self-assertion and self-denial reaches a fever pitch, so that, by means of ambiguous modifiers, the epic narrator links his telling of the Fall with the entry of "Sin and her shadow Death" into the world (*PL* 9.5–12), as if the act of epic narration itself is a second kind of fall into the realm of public judgment of Milton's poetic skills, the showing of a "progeny" that points toward the author's debilitation or impending death:

. . . higher Argument
 Remains, sufficient of itself to raise
 That [heroic] name, unless an age too late, or cold
 Climate, or Years damp my intended wing
 Deprest; and much they may, if all be mine. . . .
 (*PL* 9.42–46)

Paradise Regained, by contrast, in language which pointedly links the trial of public authorship to the testing of Christ, exhibits a decidedly new confidence about venturing into publication:

Thou Spirit who led'st this glorious Eremite
 Into the Desert, his Victorious Field
 Against the Spiritual Foe, and brought'st him thence
 By proof th'undoubted Son of God, inspire,
 As thou art wont, my prompted Song, else mute,
 And bear through height or depth of nature's bounds
 With prosperous wing full summ'd to tell of deeds
 Above Heroic, though in secret done,
 And unrecorded left through many an Age,
 Worthy t' have not remain'd so long unsung.
 (*PR* 1.8–17)

The oscillation in this passage is not, as in *Paradise Lost*, between various sources of inspiration or between self-assertion and self-abnegation, but between unrecorded, private deeds "Above Heroic" and their public revelation in his song, and Milton stresses that in this work we will hear not the re-narration of a familiar Biblical episode but events never before revealed, a story that will mark its teller as an originator, an author, one anointed by the Spirit to reveal divine truth, a "Son of God."³⁴ And at the very same time this passage unequivocally asserts that nothing of the "I" who initiates the poem will be revealed: this song, though "mine," is "prompted . . . else mute," a product of inspiration. Throughout *Paradise Regained*, Milton presents the fantasy of a self heroically, miraculously in command of

publication and reception, freed from the prisonhouse of the public word. In his last portrait of Christ, Milton imagines the savior of mankind as, among other things, an ideal author.

University of New Hampshire

Notes

1. *Areopagitica*, in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vol 2, ed. Ernest Sirluck *et al.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 514–15. All subsequent references to Milton's prose will be to this edition, abbreviated as CPW, and will be cited parenthetically by volume and page number. Milton's own handwritten emendation of this passage makes the point of my essay in miniature. By emending the printed "wayfaring" as "warfaring" in four presentational copies, Milton suggests that once the wayfaring Christian sets forth in public, his status shifts to a warfarer, in defensive combat with aggressive or invading readers. The scene of publication is, in other words, a scene of combat.

2. Trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 140.

3. *Paradise Lost*, Book 2, line 630, in *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Odyssey, 1957). All references to Milton's poetry will be taken from this edition. Subsequent references to *Paradise Lost* (PL) and *Paradise Regained* (PR) will be cited parenthetically by book and line numbers.

4. Milton develops this image in two directions relevant for the present discussion. First, using a tale from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as his touchstone, he likens Parliamentarian licensers to the envious Juno who performs a cross-legged charm to prevent "the nativity of any mans intellectual offspring"—licensing becomes a modern type of pagan ritual magic. Second, he allows for the possibility that a published work might be "prov'd a Monster" but stresses that such an abomination can be destroyed. The sentence that follows, with its image of a Hellish scene of proleptic pre-judgment and damned signs, bears a remarkable family resemblance to Satan's encounter with Sin and Death in *Paradise Lost*: "But that a Book in wors condition then a peccant soul, should be to stand before a jury ere it be borne to the World, and undergo yet in darknesse the judgement of *Radamanth* and his Colleagues, ere it can passe the ferry backward into light, was never heard before, till that mysterious iniquity provokt and troubl'd at the first entrance of Reformation, sought out new limbo's and new hells wherein they might include our Books also within the number of their damned" (CPW 2:505–506). See Edward S. LeComte's suggestive discussion of this parallel in "Areopagitica as a Scenario for *Paradise Lost*," in *Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton*, ed. Michael Lieb and John T. Shawcross (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), 126–29.

5. Milton replays a version of this moment in *Paradise Lost* 4.453 ff., when Eve encounters her reflection. Eve avoids the disastrous consequences of the narcissistic misrecognition of one's reflected image because the inchoate

"murmuring sound" of the spreading "liquid plain" into which she looks, itself an image of dissemination, is replaced by a masculine, authoritative voice by the passage's end.

6. John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 42–43.

7. *Milton's Spenser: The Politics of Reading* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 90.

8. See J. W. Saunders, "The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry," *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951): 139–64.

9. Protestants typically also recognized and embraced the power of the press, particularly since printed Bibles made wide readerly access to Scripture affordable and practical. John Foxe, for example, devotes an entire chapter to praising "the divine and miraculous inventing of printing" in his *Acts and Monuments*, a work that owed its phenomenal popularity to print. Yet even in this early Protestant discussion of print, one can discern the seeds of the problematic Milton faced. According to Foxe, print advances militant Protestantism in two ways. First, it disseminates the Bible and Protestant doctrine to a wide reading audience and, more generally, encouraged literacy. Second, and more important, it makes the papacy's true nature visible to all, for "that hereby tongues are known, knowledge groweth, judgment increaseth, books are dispersed, the Scripture is seen, the doctors be read, stories be opened, times compared, truth discerned, falsehood detected, and with finger pointed . . . either the pope must abolish printing, or he must seek a new world to reign over" (*Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed. Stephen Reed Cattle [London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1837], 3:720). Print, in other words, subjects the pope's own words and institutions to careful, widespread scrutiny, undermines centralized interpretive authority, and, most importantly, reveals the episcopacy's long unseen hypocrisy and self-contradiction. Foxe's favorite metaphor throughout the passage is of the light of "discovery": through "the light of printing," he proclaims, the pope "cannot walk so invisible in a net, but he will be spied" (3:720). What Foxe does not anticipate, and what Milton encountered throughout his career as a pamphleteer, is that print's ability to expose authorities to detection and confutation might extend to Protestant authors themselves. For a general discussion of early Protestantism and print, see John N. Wall, Jr., "The Reformation in England and the Typographical Revolution: 'By this printing . . . the doctrine of the Gospel soundeth to all nations,'" in *Print and Culture in the Renaissance: Essays on the Advent of Printing in Europe*, eds. Gerald P. Tyson and Sylvia S. Wagonheim (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 208–20.

10. *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (New York: Methuen, 1984), 63.

11. Should we see in Milton's assertion that "I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those Dragons teeth" his personal experience of the unpredictable "productivity" of his own notorious polemical prose in the early 1640s? Noteworthy in this famous passage is Milton's strategic subjunctive—"may chance to spring up armed men."

12. This program of study has recently preoccupied a number of scholars. See, as examples, J. W. Saunders, "The Stigma of Print"; Richard C. Newton, "Ben Jonson and the (Re-)Invention of the Book," in *Classic and Cavalier: Es-*

says on Jonson and the Sons of Ben, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), 31–55; Arthur Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986) and his article “The Transmission of Lyric Poetry and the Institutionalizing of Literature in the English Renaissance,” in *Contending Kingdoms: Historical, Psychological and Feminist Approaches to the Literature of Sixteenth-Century England and France*, ed. Marie-Rose Logan and Peter L. Rudnytsky (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 21–41; Timothy Murray, *Theatrical Legitimation: Allegories of Genius in Seventeenth Century England and France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 23–104; Wendy Wall, “Disclosures in Print: The ‘Violent Enlargement’ of the Renaissance Voyeuristic Text,” *Studies in English Literature* 29 (1989): 35–59 and her book *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Margreta De Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Evelyn B. Tribble, *Margins and Marginality: The Printed Page in Early Modern England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993). Relatively little attention has been devoted to Milton and the development of the author-function within print culture, with the notable exceptions of Richard Helgerson, “Milton Reads the King’s Book: Print, Performance, and the Making of a Bourgeois Idol,” *Criticism* 29 (1987): 1–25; Abbe Blum, “The Author’s Authority: *Areopagitica* and the Labour of Licensing,” in *Re-Membering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions*, ed. Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson, 74–96; and Elisabeth M. Magnus, “Originality and Plagiarism in *Areopagitica* and *Eikonoklastes*,” *ELR* 21 (1991): 87–101. In “Milton’s Warning Voice: Considering Preventive Measures,” in *Voice Terminal Echo: Postmodernism and English Renaissance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 124–58, Jonathan Goldberg traces Milton’s crafting of a “space of prevention” within which the poet’s career is always already delayed and anticipated; see also his “Dating Milton,” in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Elizabeth Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 199–220, which appeared after this essay was first drafted. Goldberg is interested in Milton’s general theoretical conception of the scene of writing and its relationship to what one might call a transhistorical deconstructive problematic; though my account would accord with Goldberg’s, my interest in this essay is in the specific discursive preconditions that shape the scene of authorship Goldberg describes. Kevin Dunn’s elegant discussion of Milton’s self-presentational strategies in the anti-prelatical tracts appeared after I had completed this essay; see “Humanist Individualism and the Puritan Polity in Milton’s Antiprelatical Tracts,” in *Pretexts of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 51–75.

13. *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942), xi.

14. For a fuller discussion of this issue, with emphasis on how it has problematized the status of Milton’s prose, see David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner, “Introduction: ‘Labouring in the Word,’” in *Politics, Poet-*

ics and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose, ed. Loewenstein and Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1–7.

15. A superb discussion of the rhetorical strategies and contestatory discursive space of pamphleteering can be found in Jeffrey K. Sawyer's *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). See also the discussion of religious controversialists in Christopher Hill's "Radical Prose in Seventeenth Century England: From Marprelate to the Levellers," *Essays in Criticism* 32 (1982): 95–118, and Thomas N. Corns's introduction to *The Literature of Controversy: Polemical Strategy from Milton to Junius*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (London: Frank Cass, 1987), 1–45. For a discussion centered on Milton's polemical tactics, see David Loewenstein, "Milton and the Poetic of Defense," in *Politics, Poetic and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*, 171–92.

16. William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1:589.

17. See Margreta De Grazia's compelling discussion of the relationship of confession to the development of quotation marks and authorial property in "Sanctioning Voice: Quotation Marks, the Abolition of Torture, and the Fifth Amendment," *Cardozo Arts and Entertainment Law Journal* 10 (1992): esp. 558–60. England, De Grazia notes, prided itself on a jury system whose rules of evidence did not compel confession, yet torture (and hence coerced self-incrimination) was permitted in cases of sedition and heresy, both popular accusations in exchanges between pamphleteers. See also De Grazia's discussion of the oath *ex officio*, calculated to result in self-condemnation.

18. John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), 202.

19. "Areopagitica as Scenario," 126–29. LeComte also notes the links with the paganist practice of examining viscera for omens and with disemboweling as public punishment.

20. Milton voices concern about the dissipation of an author's "aura" in the face of posthumous (re)readings as early as his poem on Shakespeare, Milton's first published work—published anonymously—which appears in the prefatory materials to the Second Folio. It is fruitful to read this poem, with its antipathy to latter-day altars erected to an author's memory, as an allegory of Milton's own fantasies of reception. See my "Encryptions: Reading Milton Reading Jonson Reading Shakespeare," in *Reading and Writing in Shakespeare*, ed. David Bergeron (Newark: University of Delaware Press, forthcoming).

21. On Milton's theatricality, see Paul Stevens, "Discontinuities in Milton's Early Public Self-Representation," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 51 (1988): 271–72.

22. In her discussion of *Areopagitica*, Abbe Blum argues that Milton's formulation of an ideal of authorial autonomy "seems inseparable from the perception of threats to that ideal. . . . Milton in fact indicates the extent to which such intervention [by the state or any outside individual] is inevitable, is indeed a precondition of the subject's desire for discursive power" ("The Author's Authority," 74–75). She isolates in *Areopagitica* the paradox that, I argue, more typically structures Milton's understanding of publication:

"Milton reinforces an artificial construct of individual identity when he presents himself as one whose acts arise solely from a private integrity which does not initially recognize regulations of the state. His representation of private, individual identity depends, however, upon its dissemination in a published (hence public) and potentially volatile forum" (78).

23. Note the discussion of this and of other autobiographical prose passages in Jonathan Goldberg's provocative "Dating Milton," in Harvey and Maus, 211–19.

24. *Poetic Authority* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 98.

25. See, for example, Stanley Fish, "Driving from the Letter: Truth and Indeterminacy in Milton's *Areopagitica*," Nyquist and Ferguson, 234–54, or his "Wanting a Supplement: The Question of Interpretation in Milton's Early Prose," in Loewenstein and Turner, 41–68.

26. See, for example, Francis Barker's argument about *Areopagitica*: "A bourgeois text it is, and in its structure tends toward a post-revolutionary discursivity of apparently depoliticised private utterance. But it contains still—at least in the Truth-as-militant trope—a revolutionary figuration of true discourse not yet willing to surrender itself to private obscurity" ("In the Wars of Truth: Violence, True Knowledge and Power in Milton and Hobbes," in *Literature and the Civil War*, ed. Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 101).

27. On the question of Miltonic citation of Scripture and its relationship to the believer's subjectivity, see Regina M. Schwartz, "Citation, Authority, and *De Doctrina Christiana*," in Loewenstein and Turner, 227–40.

28. One of the crucial interpretive divides in *Paradise Regained* scholarship is whether or not the poem narrates a genuine set of temptations for Christ which is actively rejected, or a ritual of temptation and redemption which is foreordained and merely played out. For those who embrace the former, the notion of Satan as hermeneutic sophist has been particularly attractive. See, to take the most recent examples, Leonard Mustazza, "Language as Weapon in Milton's *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Studies* 18 (1983): 195–216; Mary Ann Radzinowicz, "Paradise Regained as Hermeneutic Combat," *University of Hartford Studies in Literature* 15–16 (1983–84): 99–107; Steven Goldsmith, "The Muting of Satan: Language and Redemption in *Paradise Regained*," *SEL* 27 (Winter 1987): 125–40; Charles A. Huttar, "Paradise Regained, the Hermeneutical Circle, and Christian Anticipations of Post-Modern Theory," *Religions and Literature* 19 (Autumn 1987): esp. 16–17; Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, "Of *Paradise Regained*: The Interpretation of Career," *Milton Studies* 24 (1988): esp. 270; and Mary Ann Radzinowicz, "How Milton Read the Bible: The Case of *Paradise Regained*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 207–33 *passim*.

29. The invocation of "I am" is, as we shall see, particularly tantalizing in its ambiguity, at once an innocent statement and a reference to the Tetragrammaton ("I am that I am," the name of God).

30. David Quint's marvelous discussion of Milton's covert criticism of Charles I's census project, a state-sponsored invasion of individual privacy, points toward the larger political dimensions of the reading I am here proposing ("David's Census: Milton's Politics and *Paradise Regained*," in Nyquist and Ferguson, 131–43).

31. It is not, as Satan claims, "Another method" (*PR* 4.540).

32. *John Milton: Language, Gender, Power* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 103.

33. Of course, the vocabulary in this opening passage features Miltonic puns whose meanings become clear only in the course of the poem. "Recover'd" means not only "reconstituted" but also "covered over again, made secret again," particularly when it is set against the Renaissance meaning of "discovered" ("revealed"); "rais'd," especially in the context of the "waste Wilderness," glances at "razed" and perhaps "erased," particularly since the poem functions to quell the epic expectation that a Paradise can be "rais'd" or "re-founded" in the external world (rather than in the heart).

34. See the discussion of the phrase "Son of God" within contemporary controversies over preacherly authority in Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (New York: Viking, 1984), 304 ff.