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“BETWIXT THE WORLD DESTROYED AND WORLD RESTORED”:
SUBJECTIVITY AND PARADISAL RECOVERY IN JOHN MILTON’S LATE POEMS

by

CHIHPING MA

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

“Betwixt the World Destroyed and World Restored”:
Subjectivity and Paradisal Recovery in John Milton’s Late Poems

by

Chihping Ma

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This study focuses on the discovery of subjectivity through the recovery of lost paradise in Milton’s late poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. This theme revolves around the tension between the affective and the empirical, which also configure the spheres of the sacred and the profane. I explore how the irresistibly emancipatory impulse of recovering lost paradise compels Miltonic subjects to seek ways to return to their originary state or the divine ensemble. During this process, the subject is engaged with his own incapacity or privation while reaching into the sphere of unknown potentiality. In particular, the ideas of Walter Benjamin, Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Freud, and Jacques Lacan among others, all greatly help scrutinize the impulses of returning and renewal at the key moments of the texts pregnant with potential of revelation with regard to the messianic time, sphere of indistinction, status of event, and the real of the subject.

These late poems also revolve around the existence of forms of life understood through the concept of the threshold or a limit point at which the subject is given an opportunity to reach into the infinite and the unknown. What Milton’s late works have shown is that the poet presents a powerful restoration scheme aimed at optimizing human potentiality

through myth and engaging in the critical stance of recovery of a lost paradise as the poet's act of radical politics. Thematizing the recovery of the lost paradise through awakening to the subject's own potentiality, these late poems accentuate their subjects' attempt at returning to the originary state, which has been rendered undecidable and indistinct and thus full of potentials.

This study therefore explores how the captivating moments of self-introspection or self-indulgence reveal the potentiality or impotentiality of attaining selfhood, while the Miltonic subjects lead themselves into or through the site of indistinction. Ultimately in these poems focused on renewal, the Miltonic subject grows appreciably to harness the restorative force, via affirmation or negation, in order to "found his temptation" or achieve enlightenment.

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Introduction

Between divine knowledge and individual sheer loss stands Milton's immense affective world. This study focuses on the discovery of subjectivity through the recovery of lost paradise in Milton's late poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. This theme revolves around the tension between the affective and the empirical, which also configure the spheres of the sacred and the profane. I explore how the irresistibly emancipatory impulse of recovering lost paradise compels Miltonic subjects to seek ways to return to their ordinary state or the divine ensemble. During this process, the subject is engaged with his own incapacity or privation while reaching into the sphere of unknown potentiality. This study therefore explores how these captivating moments of self-introspection or self-indulgence reveal the potentiality or impotentiality¹ of attaining selfhood, while the Miltonic subjects lead themselves into or through the site of indistinction. Ultimately in Milton's three late poems the Miltonic subject grows appreciably to harness the restorative force, via affirmation or negation, in order to "found his temptation"² or achieve enlightenment.

Milton's prophecy, as a most recent study has demonstrated, "opens, rather than forecloses, potentiality."³ The way the Miltonic subject preserves his impotentiality or realizes potentiality takes centrality in Milton's restoration project. Yet where do we find

¹ Giorgio Agamben, "On Potentiality," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 177–84.

² *Paradise Lost (PL)*, IV, "The Argument."

³ Patrick Fadely and Feisal G. Mohamed, "Introduction: Satan or Samson? The Question of Milton and Modernity," in *Milton's Modernities: Poetry, Philosophy, and History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, ed. Feisal G. Mohamed and Patrick Fadely (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 14. I received this book as the present study was nearly finished, so I was unable to incorporate more of its insights into my own work. This wonderful collection brings together essays whose concerns and methodology I strongly share. They "blend historical criticism with a strong interest in philosophical and anontological foundations of modernity" (4).

those moments of realization? Examples abound as the subject ponders why humankind brings destruction onto itself while he as one of the “authors to themselves” transgresses beyond bounds; when she indulges in the reflection of her newly created image; even as the baptismal bath contrarily betrays the preserve of the Messiah’s privation in the desert for knowing about deliverance; when a designated deliverer held in bondage rejects ransoming and servility while contriving his own eventual liberation. We see in epitome the discovery and formation of the self while the subject is encountering the unfamiliar, the fragmentary, the incomprehensible, or the impossible.

As these moments of engagement continue to evoke new relations, they meanwhile demand the subject and the reader to acquire novel knowledge of the self and construct new significations through the less attended connection between myth and emotions. I relate the meaning of the mythical in terms of Lacan’s concept of the real, the realm of impossibility, and of Agamben’s idea about threshold or passage to the indeterminate, both of which explore the site of potentiality of infinite or indefinite awakening.⁴ Instead of simply relegating the mythic elements to the divine, Freud and Lacan, according to Jean Hyppolite, focus their attention more on the “primordial affectivity play,” the progenitor of intelligence and self-knowledge in the early phase of self-formation.⁵ By tracing the trajectory of self-engaged relation, I here explore the mythic terrain of the impossible, the formless moments in which the Miltonic subjects are compelled to bring their selves to

⁴ See my last chapter, “Conclusion,” for more details.

⁵ Jean Hyppolite, “A Spoken Commentary on Freud’s *Verneinung*,” Appendix I to Lacan’s *Écrits*, 291-93. Engaging a conversation with Jacques Lacan, Hyppolite adopts Hegelian concepts to dwell on Freud’s ideas about the mystic emergence of intelligence.

their individual self. Ultimately the Miltonic subjects seek ways to distinguish their relations to God from the responsibilities the Biblical tradition exacts of them.

Agamben's idea of profanation⁶ can help us better understand the potentiality or impotentiality of created things in the sphere of indetermination or indistinction, the primordial state when there was a subject "for which nothing as yet was alien."⁷ The terms *consecration* and *profanation*, according to Agamben, when referring to Roman juristic and religious traditions, have been used to describe the fluid relation between worlds, the one of humans and the other of the celestial gods:

If "to consecrate" (*sacrare*) was the term that indicated the removal of things from the sphere of human law, "to profane" meant, conversely, to return them to the free use of men.

In other words, "profane is the term for something that was once sacred or religious and is returned to the use and property of men." In particular, "pure" was the place that was no longer allotted to the gods of the dead and was now "neither sacred, nor holy, nor religious, freed from all names of this sort."⁸ Similarly in Milton's indeterminate world, the fact that Satan quite compellingly hastens to name the Son as king and bestows other worldly titles may also be considered as the devil's way of profaning or reducing the Son for further use or manipulation. Furthermore, Agamben points out the connection between profaning and using:

The thing that is returned to the common use of men is pure, profane,

⁶ Agamben, "In Praise of Profanation," in *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 73-92.

⁷ Hyppolite, "A Spoken Commentary," 294.

⁸ Agamben, "In Praise of Profanation," 73.

free of sacred names. But use does not appear here as something natural: rather one arrives at it only by means of profanation.⁹

This study finds undecidable or indistinct elements in Milton's world legion; they contain potentiality that may turn into various possibilities. If the mythical is the collective term for those unactualized potentialities and possibilities, then empirical-rationalist operation is the major counterpart enterprise that intends to realize or profane the site of indistinction with possibilities for further use.

This study therefore investigates how Milton treats the enigmatic undecidables as the source of an invigorating force; they refigure layers of the Biblical myths in relation to creation and redemption while exploring how the poet complicates them by empirical reasoning ("cycle and epicycle, orb in orb,"¹⁰ for example). The enigmatic proves to be the poems' capacity to accommodate undecidable or profanable elements in the poet's eagerness to construct a myth of internal contradiction and combustion ready to found new worlds. The creation myth, for instance, while reconfigured with internal potentials undecidable and profanable, contains elements such as a "sense of new joy ineffable diffused" (*PL*, III. 137). Overall, Milton instructs us that, during the process of comprehending human potentiality that resides in the indeterminate and ineffable when the subjects' affective and empirical apparatuses are engaged, they begin also to form their subjectivity.

While creation and ongoing revelation come to be understood in the sphere of undecidability, the tensions are made more evident among the means that come to express

⁹ *Ibid.*, 73-4.

¹⁰ *PL* VIII, 84

the enigmatic: both the means of the scientific tropes and the affective, emotional, non-rationalist language. Milton's Chaos, the temporal-spatial potentiality which is "without end, and without measure" (142), once actualized, turns into heaven and earth, darkness and light. However, Milton's paradise, designed as the site of the undecidability, nevertheless carries mythical intentions of "shadowy types" (XII. 303) reducible to problematic elements and submitted to crisis. As early as in Book IV the epic narrator tells us that, when Satan reaches the Garden of Eden, he devises to "[pervert] best things / To worst abuse, or to their meanest use" (203-4). This is where the *ur*-narrative of the creative process resides, a domain of undecidables replete with potentiality. For better or for worse, the *ur*-narrative is intensely bound up with the formation of the subjects' originary state. Constantly urged to harken back to those potential undecidables through associations of affectivity, the Miltonic subjects nevertheless employ differential sense perceptions as a means to articulate the originary phenomenon, hence further complicating the forming, reforming, or repairing of the self.

In Milton's affective world, both pre- and postlapsarian, the tendency to form judgments and obtain knowledge is intimately connected to the subject's making direct connections with perceived objects. By making distinctions and separations, the empirical-rationalist impulse vows to offer an alternative, a more coherent and structured comprehension of the mysteries of the universe, historical contingencies, and human motivation. This intention, constantly reflected in Milton's use of rationalist discourse, continues to justify its means and ends in the hope that it may ultimately achieve the status of founding new grounds for enlightened subjects. The journeys that these late poems reflect, from Chaos to Paradise, from desert to community, from servitude to liberation, all

involve judgments destined for the recovery of lost paradise and pursuits intermixed insistently with the competing forces of sense perception and scientific reasoning. Just as Abraham Cowley declares in his prefatory ode to Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*, to receive "a Nourishment Divine" like "refreshing Wine" "prest" in "the Mechanic way,"

he before his sight must place

The Natural and Living Face;

The real Object must command

Each Judgment of his Eye, and Motion of his Hand.¹¹

The rationalist-empiricist instrumentation and experimentation, according to Sprat, can provide the right means to abolish falsehood, avoid undesirable ambiguity in the use of language, eliminate residual superstition from religion, and ultimately advance the divinity of man. Paradoxically claiming itself with an exodic status, the parallel empirical impulse represented in Sprat's ideas as they appear in *History*, is formulated to demystify and clarify the mythological intention: that God's "redemption" is "observable" as "he has commonly chosen the dark and ignorant Ages . . . to work Miracles."¹² Examples like Milton's Galilean tropes of the magnifying glass, constantly associated with Satan in both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, represent this line of empirical rationalization and the urgent sense of purpose.

Therefore, to rein in the impulse of expressing the indeterminate and unknown, the empirical alternative attempts to articulate and reduce the invariant elements of the Word

¹¹ *Sprat's History of the Royal Society*, ed. Jackson I. Cope and Harold Whitmore Jones (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1959). This passage is from Cowley's ode "To the Royal Society," IV.

¹² *Ibid.*, 350.

and convert them into points of reference with spatial-temporal certitude. Thus the epic narrator invokes Urania, clarifying that “The meaning, not the name I call” (VII. 5) whereas Satan imposes his will on the literal in the names, for example, Redeemer. Even Milton’s angel, Raphael, needs to adjust his approach by appealing to Adam’s sense perceptions in order “to bring the transcendent within the scope of human comprehension.”¹³ However, this ambitious scheme, as Sprat has demonstrated, is constantly rendered inoperative or put in suspension in Milton’s restoration project. Chiefly amplified in Satan’s negativity, for example, the reductionist resistance appears to excite strong expulsion that paradoxically leads towards inclusion into the totality of creation. In this regard, the empiricist capacity always already plays the role of reducing the abundant or the enigmatic into realms that the eyes can see.

As a central rationale this study seeks to repoliticize Milton’s restoration. That is, by removing the overarching, restricting framework of the historical, poetic discourse may receive reassessment of its valence of signification. We need to re-engage with the historicity and potentiality of those latent voices in a different way, treating historicity less through those voices’ connection to historical contingencies and more through their signifying valence. The Miltonic subjects’ remembering, while flowing freely beyond the rigidity of historical time frames, may signify its latent transformational power and contain the potentiality to found new spheres for regeneration. Within these poems when Miltonic subjects re-configure their relation to the divinity, they also yearn to reassess their originary creative process. It is this impulse or force of reassembling, in their initial move

¹³ Thomas N. Corns, *Milton’s Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 26.

to *re-member*, *re-collect*, or *re-pair* that compels the Miltonic subjects to reform or reformulate their subjectivity or selfhood. Only when we transport the poems out of their habitual temporal-historical freeze zone can they not only be relieved of their duty of serving only the corresponding historical relevance but also begin to find new relations and create new significations for generations to come. Only then will we be released from the constraints of historical contingencies and then be able to continue to find the liberating power in Milton's poetry. This is the true meaning of Milton's restoration.

Milton's grand scope of poetics that figure the new "relations" burgeoning "Betwixt the world destroyed and the world restored" (*PL*, XII. "Argument") sets up the ground of investigation for this study. If the "mortal sight" has failed and "objects divine / Must needs impair and weary human sense," then the re-pairing has now shifted from visions back to narrations, the speech the archangel Michael "will relate" (XII. 9-10, 11). To this dynamic relation of vision and narration, in step with Walter Benjamin, Giorgio Agamben and Alain Badiou, this study particularly investigates those fluid in-between spheres which the Miltonic subjects carve out for themselves in relation to the divine sovereign's command. The concepts that consider the threshold where the messianic potentials reside as impetus to bursting into new beginnings (Benjamin), or entering into "the sphere of indistinction" (Agamben) where the founding impulse of rebellion and the restraining force of prohibition coincide and collide, or experiencing the impactful event that initiates universality and constitutes its subject free of preconceived knowledge (Badiou), are insightful. These ideas can help us reevaluate the discourse pertaining to issues of vision and narration, creativity and prohibition, potentiality and actualization, memory and originality. These dimensions to which this study is devoted emerge within these in-

between spaces, the zone of undecidability or indiscernibility, and the rereading of the texts through these critical lenses will yield fresh results and a more in-depth understanding of Milton's restoration.

To be specific, this study argues that Milton considers how the pursuit of redeeming language, the reformation of the body politic, and the repair and reconstruction of a fragmented self and subjectivity may serve as prerequisites for a sustainable foundation on which to build an elect nation capable of ongoing revelation and elevation. These qualities that strongly affirm political potency will substantively animate and initiate the coming community of "man . . . from a second stock" (*PL*, XII. 7), to the formation of which all three major poems are dedicated. Therefore, the intermingling of rationalist (in discourses by God, Raphael, Adam, and Satan) and emotional or affective (in Eve's, Jesus's, Mary's, and Samson's) rhetoric appear to accentuate the different intentions of and paths to truth-claims. Further, it complicates the pursuit of personal reconstruction and recreation in connection with the overarching design of the divine. Milton's enmeshing of scientific tropes in particular with discourse of affectivity becomes the site of contention. That the further perplexity derived from the scientific tropes permeates "the sphere / With centric and eccentric scribbled over, / Cycle and epicycle, orb in orb" that only save the appearances poses an unexpected bearing on the future generation. This is revealed by the creator's messenger Raphael: "Already by thy [Adam's] reasoning this I guess, / Who art to lead thy offspring, and suppos'st / That bodies bright and greater should not serve / The less not bright" (*PL*, VIII. 82-4, 84-8). As the inner circle partakes of and performs the command of the outer circle, the outer and greater circle informs and infuses the inner one. This "orb in orb" relation, on the one hand, enhances the hopes and promises with which

the created things gain momentum in approaching the Apocalypse. On the other hand, it lays bare the uneasy relations between the acts of lowly creation and the larger framework of God's creation, as we witness the creation of the Garden of Eden as opposed to the rising of Pandemonium, and of Adam and Eve to that of Sin and Death among others. Ecology signifies relation,¹⁴ an uneasy relation as it seems, that molds the governance of human society and anticipates the conflict between man and nature.

More broadly, as these major poems demonstrate, Milton draws our attention to the complexities and problematics of the creative process by revealing its originary undecidability and, in particular, the challenges in the genesis of the subjects' selfhood, their interconnectedness in forming a salvific community, and the reconfiguration of a shattered subjectivity. The state in which awakening to the potential that the subject is encouraged to achieve thus contains an element of the indeterminate. The indeterminate finds its various embodiments in Milton's strategic maneuvering; for instance, in the creation of Adam and Eve, the narratives are split into fragments scattered throughout different books of *Paradise Lost*. To make the story a composite whole, the readers are engaged to make good judgments; they must re-member, re-collect, and re-pair the fragmentary parts of those discourses from multiple voices that crisscross and respond to one another.

In terms of the genesis of man and shaping of subjectivity during this undecidable originary process, we also witness the contradictions in the Miltonic subjects who encounter their primal impulses and desires while attempting to release themselves from the divine or traditional dictates in order to understand the parameters of their existence

¹⁴ Levi R. Bryant, "Thinking at the Edge of Apocalypse," *Larval Subjects* (blog), January 24, 2015, <https://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2015/01/24/thinking-at-the-edge-of-apocalypse/>

and boundary of their potentials. Be it Eve's running away from the calling of her alter ego, Abdiel's fleeting moments of indeterminate zeal to follow the defiant, Jesus's uncertain though unwavering will in submitting to and persevering through harsh trials, or even Samson's redeeming qualities clouded by contrary and misguided "rousing motions" (SA 1382), all of these are the moments when the subjects tend to grasp the depth of their interiority and feel emboldened with their own potentials. They are shaping their acts as "authors to themselves in all / Both what they judge and what they choose" (*PL*, III. 122-3) or even "Making them each his own Deliverer" (SA 1289). Milton has created such zones of indistinction throughout his project of the recovery of paradise where his subjects assume sovereignly aspirations, while the created yearning and divine prohibition coincide and collide. So how has the invisible turned into the visible? And how do the Miltonic subjects refashion indeterminate potentials into new use? Each following chapter that focuses on one major poem will address these questions.

Chapter I examines the overarching issue in varying levels of creation, their potentiality and problematics in which the genesis and challenges of selfhood and subjectivity take centrality. Here the scientific tropes of epicycles and motions and their corresponding significations in the realms of the divine and man will be explored. Creation not only involves God the arbiter and his angelic delegates but also subjects such as Adam and Eve and Satan with his rebel angels. Their relations in terms of economy and governance, negotiation and compliance, return and perversion all illuminate the inherent values of a complex originary process its signification rendering the pursuit of restoration and rejuvenation more problematic. To bring to light the divine intention, the mythical demands the cooperation of the empirical, while the sovereign prohibition brings forth the

mandate of separation from transgression. When the Edenic subjects are put in contact with themselves, their performative act of actualizing their own potentiality betrays both attachments and misconceptions of the empirical. The Fall means to the Edenic subjects and their descendants not only the formal separation from God but more excruciatingly, the separation of the self from itself.

Milton insistently provides engaging and conflicting visions to put his reader in direct contact with the manifestations of creation, compelling us to investigate various “shadowy types” prevailing “From centre to circumference” of the universe (V. 510). As the fragmentary accounts of Genesis and the creation of Adam and Eve demonstrate, the textual fragmentation announces in the subjects’ dreamtime and in their wakeful moments the potentials and promises of coexistence with the divine. The belated awakening that this produces generates a calling to life as well as to death. Only through separating, alienating, reducing and sublimating of blinding qualities will the subject be purged of fallen potentials and begin to activate the move toward the paradisaal return. Nevertheless, although the creation myth rooted in the filial godhead prevails in *Paradise Lost*, the restoration of the lost paradise lies chiefly in the efforts of man. If the return is to revert but not pervert while resuming but not consuming that originary energy, then this study identifies and scrutinizes Milton’s latent strategy of engaging with disparate potentials. It first of all lays bare facets of competing forces that require not only the Edenic subjects but also the reader to distinguish and discern and assemble and separate the promiscuous voices and intentions. I also explore the idea of *auctor* as author as well as authority among the Edenic subjects and how the formation of their authenticating power has come into being.

Therefore, the core of Milton's restorative project is to treat human potential as a driving force for paradisaic renewal. In this regard, *Paradise Lost* is an epic that centers upon this engendering force by exploring various dimensions of creation as both the ultimate source of life from God to man and the force of enlightenment that Milton's subjects recognize and seek to obtain. In light of renewal and recovery of lost paradise, Milton's intent in "justify[ing] the ways of God to men" (l. 26) is, in my opinion, to invite us to focus on how potentiality may distinguish itself from diversion and disruption and thus gain ascendancy in the power of regeneration and rejuvenation. In particular, *Paradise Lost* engages its readers with complex issues such as liberty and prohibition and potential and destruction, which continue to take centrality in Milton's subsequent poems, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. Both of these poems aim at reconfiguration of self-renewal.

To further substantially magnify the creator's work initiated in Eden and to sublimate from self-sustained potentiality the transforming material for the purpose of expressing the mythical and immeasurable, Jesus the Son of God reduces the divine into the worldly. Chapter II thus explores the Son's mission as one that transmits the genesis of life in dual but parallel tracks, his exploring the potentiality of his own restorative act to found his coming community. If Adam's naming of the created things demonstrates his ability to identify the divine qualities in them, then the Son's naming of his community is to give meaning and substance to the collective, latent power in the masses by calling upon their sovereign nature for deliverance. The mythical and the ineffable appear in undecidable space or moments of rejecting the sensual attachments insisted upon by the empirical urge. The reformation of the subject is manifested through the reformation of the body—the "mass of sinful flesh" (l. 162) of individuals as well as the body politic, the nation as a

whole. Purging in the water, another element of the mythical impulse, helps the subject to relinquish the corporeal, sensual bondage. The program of restoration begins with the reforming of vision in *Paradise Lost* and continues with the purification of the body in *Paradise Regained*. The Son's followers pursue bodily purification by immersing themselves in the same water as the Messiah did to show their allegiance. This act of the reforming of the body politic implies not only the purification of the individuals' bodies but also the governing organ of the nation.

The fact that Milton's Jesus has no former knowledge or recollection of his heritage puts the redeemer in the zone of undecidability in which the Son is confronted with the devil's accusations of his lack of enthusiasm. Again, Satan urges the Son to assume the role his name, Messiah, dictates, an unwholesome impulse that the Son rejects outright and considers performing that name too early too soon. His belated awakening is founded on thorough self-introspection rather than rash self-indulgence. So this chapter accentuates the way in which Jesus approaches and represents his interiority through the exteriority of his meditation on conscience and zeal, on public work and community formation, on the right timing for action, and ultimately on the saving truth. As a result, this not only illumines his own state of mind as he recognizes that by maintaining the purity of the body as a renewed covenant the subject reenacts his potentiality to obtain the newness of life. This also affirms his belief in his true self by rejecting the devil's untimely assumption of selfhood. Milton's emphasis on Jesus's lowly status of being obscure and unmarked constitutes his deferral of self-promotion and accentuation of self-regulation. More than that, unlike the subjects in *Paradise Lost* who are eager to become authors to themselves in order to assume authority and authenticity, Jesus refuses to name himself *auctor*. His

belatedness of laying claim to his originality begins by resisting “the proliferation of meaning”¹⁵ and relations that Satan keeps imposing on him. As Foucault points out, “It’s not the assertion of identity that’s important; it’s the assertion of non-identity.”

One of the most powerful instantiations of myth in emotion, emotion in myth, that permeates *Paradise Regained* is Mary’s affective voice. Her role, seemingly marginal, strongly upholds the center. Her affective discourse, though supplementary, exemplifies the Son’s subjectivity. Mary’s gentle but firm assurance of the Son’s divine lineage delineates Jesus’s transformation into Christ and supplements his discourse of forming and reforming the self and the subjectivity of his community. Milton juxtaposes Mary’s maternal affective appeal with God’s paternal rationality in ways that the heart balances the head, emotion complements reason. Both dimensions collaborate to create a dialogic terrain for the affective restorer, the Son of God, who labors to obtain prophetic visions and express them through his affective experience. That Mary’s affectivity not only materializes the mythical intentions but also justifies Jesus’s mission of appealing to humankind helps return the worldly to the sacred, a powerful representation of myth and emotions intertwined that helps the Miltonic subject achieve full potentiality.

Conversely, falling into non-identity and passing into oblivion are of great concern to Milton’s Samson, who, through remembrance, spares no efforts to reconnect with his past which he never stops to recollect, the history which he helps shape, and the divine which bestows power on him. A shattered subjectivity strives to be re-membered and re-collected. Chapter III focuses on the guilt, remembrance and hope for renewal that this biblical Judge has harbored in his mind. Milton’s poetic volume published in 1671, *Paradise*

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” trans. Paul Rabinow, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 230.

Regained. A Poem in IV Books. to which is added Samson Agonistes, presents two disparate paradigmatic relations to his paradisaical recovery. Milton demonstrates that Samson's alienation is not the final outcome of the first principle. Instead it contains potential for self-integration and self-regeneration by which one may bear on the first principle itself. Samson's dark misgivings, though seemingly rendering heaven's plan of deliverance inoperative, actually bring him back to the state of undecidability, of impotentiality, which following Aristotle under Agamben's exposition, signifies both "power" and "possibility."¹⁶ This whole process of returning to potentiality is where the poet solicits interpretations while the subject reconfigures his engagement with the unknown. In the case of Samson, evidently standing at the threshold pursuing ways to reform his state of mind and will, the domain of potentiality which he is forced to stay in can be viewed as the zone of undecidability or indistinction in which Samson is seen ambivalently sliding back and forth between a regenerate and a menacing terrorizer.

A realm of knowing is what the empirical creates that cannot be free of waverings, nor can it be free of suppositions. This rupture is made quite evident in *Samson Agonistes*. When faced with "divine disposal," Samson responds with his self-inflicted torment in "answerable pains" and "wounds immedicable" (210, 615, 620). As the Chorus names in length his mythical potentials with "Adamantean Proof" (124-50, 74), Samson, "Eyeless in *Gaza*," ironically replies in one sentence: "I hear the sound of words, thir sense the air / Dissolves unjointed e're it reach my ear" (41, 176-77). As the empirical is greatly reduced in *Samson*, what replaces its empty seat of signification is the ineffable with contradictions that may otherwise bring the subject closer to the regenerative power in the originary state.

¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

I would argue, through Badiou, that this is one of those mythic, sovereign moments of achieving revelation and regaining paradise; yet, wavering at the edge of the Apocalypse, Samson chooses to impose on his own potential more limitations and deposes his sovereign nature. Ultimately, in these texts the Miltonic subjects experience emotions capable of returning and repairing, which are motivated by an enigma bound up with the originary potentiality and its consequent effects of expressing the impossible.

So in what way does *Samson Agonistes* extend the paradisaical loss and hope for recovery? Samson is given an opportunity to be in the otherworldliness, his loss of vision amounting to the detachment from the dictates of sense perception. The empirical detachment may facilitate the subject getting closer to the realm of the impossibility by comprehending the ineffable. The act of remembrance permeates Samson's attempt to reconfigure his relationship with the divine while the imagery that Milton associates with him shows that the Judge puts himself in continuous downfall. When his impulse to restore and reinvigorate himself is evident, he is caught in the degradation of the holy and the loss of his own salvific power. From Samson's remembering of his ancient tie to Abrahamic history to calling upon empty words, the myth which he claims and with which he self-identifies thus becomes self-conflicting and is sufficiently broken. He considers his physical strength to be the mark of the divine presence, which in turn forms his identity of his "nurture holy" (SA 362) to be God's chosen. The body becomes the site for identification of sacredness or profanation, fulfillment or defilement. The ideology behind this type of truth claim has its counterpart in Dalila's sexual politics.

Finally, in the Conclusion I employ Satan's phrase, "relation stands," in *Paradise Lost* (IV. 519) to sum up my study of potentiality and subjectivity in Milton's restoration. Milton

studies henceforth need to explore how the real of the Miltonic subjects has been manifested and the way that, within the larger framework of the recovery of lost paradise, its relationship with the symbolic and the imaginary comes into effect. Relating the potentiality of the originary state and relocating the impulses of returning to the divine Word are also the concerns of the poems. All the Miltonic subjects are brought to the threshold of facing the unknown, the impossible. They are engaged in making the impossible possible by either expressing and formalizing the mythical or profaning the sacred so that they may reconstruct new relations. The real, in the Lacanian sense, is related to the impossible or the infinite that cannot be captured by the symbolic or in language, while in Lacanian formation it accentuates the limits of analysis and constantly involves the subject in contact with the unstructured or formless void that is by nature an “impossibility” of symbolization. In this void of resistance to formulation, how can the subject respond and act and still make the relation stand? Here I show a preliminary attempt to delineate the real of the Miltonic subjects as they are standing at the edge of the Apocalypse.

Overall, as if the Miltonic subjects are rebirthing into existence through envisaging the grand visions of cosmogony and eschatology or descending deep into their thoughts and emotions, from one creative process to another, Milton’s restoration lays bare a fluid process in which invariant elements are bound up with contingency and human agency. The poet does not just delineate how his subjects inexorably seek ways to redraw the boundary between the divine and the profane in order to exert their potentiality, assert their subjectivity, and pursue means to return to the divinity. More importantly, he also invites us to participate in choosing and reassembling fragmentary elements in this

discursive, originary process in order to establish new relations and develop fresh significations. Overall, this study revolves around the messianic possibilities bound up with myth and affectivity. The ongoing engagement with the mythical and empirical impulses in the realm of the sacred and profane animates Milton's restoration project and furthermore urges that we continue to explore the immense potential of the affectivity derived from our originary, mythical destiny.

Chapter I

“Author and End of All Things”

—The Meaning of Restoration in *Paradise Lost*

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

St. Paul, *Letter to the Romans*¹⁷

What follows here is an experiment in the technique of awakening. An attempt to become aware of the dialectical—the Copernican—turn of remembrance.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*¹⁸

It will be objected that . . . “truth” designates a mere fable. . . what is important is the subjective gesture grasped in its founding power with respect to the generic conditions of universality. That the content of the fable must be abandoned leaves as its remainder the form of these conditions and, in particular, the ruin of every attempt to assign the discourse of truth to preconstituted historical aggregates.

Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul*¹⁹

The reason *Paradise Lost* continues to engage us is because it lays bare the complexity of the creative process reimagined through the arbitrating and resisting forces represented by sovereigns, their agents, and the created subjects. The epic’s transcendental experience inspires me to think of how the realization of human potential and the formation of

¹⁷ *New Revised Standard Version*, Rom. 12.2. American Bible Society, 1989.

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), K1, 1.

¹⁹ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford University Press, 2003).6.

community take shape. During its process of fermentation what particularly interests me is the way in which, in the sphere of sovereign control,²⁰ where human will and knowledge are burgeoning, subjects, such as Adam and Eve, God's angelic messengers, or Satan and his cohort, maintain their relation with their Sovereign and in the meantime explore their own subjectivity and potential. In Milton's ambiguously administered world, how do these subjects shape their own sense of community while negotiating their freedom with authority? Is it the case, as Sigmund Freud has proposed, that negation engenders intelligence?²¹ If so, then the first human parents' self-inflicted transgression as an ultimate negation of the divine injunction deserves to be considered as the first act of probing and drawing out their own potentiality. As Agamben has proposed through his reading of Aristotle's *De Anima*, potentiality is not exhausted but preserved in actuality.²² Therefore, Adam and Eve's transgression as an actualization of their exploratory act may be considered an act of preserving their immense potentials. Finally, from a different perspective, I will also explore how negation, when treated as a way of knowing and a primary impulse to selfhood's formation, also plays a complex and crucial role in pursuing the originary state, as well as considering how it interacts with self-endowed authority.

Both St. Paul and Walter Benjamin appeal to a certain kind of *auctor* while advocating the ultimate end in human liberation and deliverance through undergoing spiritual renewal and awakening. At a certain moment in time, which Benjamin and

²⁰ Giorgio Agamben's terms in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

²¹ Sigmund Freud, "Negation," in *The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, vol. 19 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (SE)*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1925), 235-39.

²² Agamben, "On Potentiality," 177-84.

Agamben may readily call “messianic” and Alain Badiou “*evental*,” when the subject in his subjective or voluntary act exercises founding power, the concatenation of these moments effects a transformational turn. Material reality of the past, the “remembrance” in our consciousness that has become history and lives in our memory, can serve as not only a reference point of but most important an impetus to engendering a real change in the future. But who or even what is this *auctor* that can recognize “the generic conditions of universality”? As to Paul’s guidance of which discerning the divine is predicated on the *renewing* of our minds, what is the “truth procedure” as Badiou explores it in Paul’s universal singularity? In Milton’s *Paradise Lost* we also experience, as Catherine Gimelli Martin rightly points out, that “the . . . conjunction between the doubly absent presences of human freedom and divine grace is reflected in the verbal and imagistic interplay between the concepts *author*, *authority*, and *authentic*.”²³ For this hidden authenticating power that awakens us, Milton brings us back to the genesis of its material essence in his epic universe. Just as Benjamin enlightens us, one needs to awaken to the formless potential of one’s past in order to rediscover or recover one’s present. I will explore how that authenticating power plays out with respect to this author and authority dynamic in *Paradise Lost*.

I.

The idea of “fall from innocence” and the hope to restore that originary innocent state figure prominently in the poem as an essential purpose for the paradisaical restoration, which involves a complex process of reevaluation of knowledge and conscious reconstruction through “labor.” Joanna Picciotto’s work centers on ideas of rediscovering and recovering

²³ Catherine Gimelli Martin, *The Ruins of Allegory: “Paradise Lost” and the Metamorphosis of Epic Convention* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 123.

“innocence” through labor as an essential quality for paradisaal restoration.²⁴ The kind of labor the subjects are fully engaged in gradually becomes a tool of self-education, generating different kinds of knowledge that inform their further decision and action. Thomas Ramey Watson also observes that the subjects not only labor to tend their garden but also must be on the alert for the lurking dangers posed by Satan. Thus, “it is these very labors,” Watson argues, “which will later be reflected by all who must then labor to show themselves approved of God, who must work out their salvation in fear and trembling before God . . . thus tending their gardens as wisely as Adam and Eve were instructed to do.”²⁵ Laboring in the garden becomes a symbolic act for all who strive for their own reversal of the decayed state of nature. As one of Milton’s Latin elegies has called for, “Arise, haste, arise! (*“Surge, age, surge, leves”*) . . . Now that the time is right, shake off gentle slumbers” and awake to heed the time because there in sleep “the seeds of a consuming illness are bred.”²⁶ Laboring is the antidote to the ill-consuming seeds bred in oneself when one’s awareness is off guard; it is itself an awakening.

Nevertheless, *Paradise Lost* not only recounts the history, memory, and practice of the fallen consciousness but at the same time enacts a complex process with reformative energy to compete with and reverse the originary impetus to fall from grace; it is predominantly an account of recovering paradise. Central to this quest is the discourse that calls for the dethroning and decentering, disavowing and improving, of one’s unstable

²⁴ Joanna Picciotto, “Reforming the Garden: The Experimentalist Eden and *Paradise Lost*.” *ELH* 72, no. 1 (2005): 23–78. See also her full-length exploration of the relationship between labor and awakening, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

²⁵ Thomas Ramey Watson, *Perversions, Originals, and Redemptions in “Paradise Lost”* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007), 66.

²⁶ Translation is taken from Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, 6.

state. For protagonists in *Paradise Lost*, there is a constant impulse to return to the beginning, their origin, as their paradise. To delineate the experience and practice of the rediscovery, that impulse needs to be traced. Relatively crucial is the intention of paradise's originary subjects to make sense of their being in time in relation to the creation myth in order to make the restoration possible. As Barbara Lewalski observes, it is "preeminently a poem about knowing and choosing."²⁷ *Paradise Lost* foregrounds the claim, "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme" (l. 16) that Milton envisions to re-create experiences we once had which were now inaccessible to or outside our fallen awareness. In an inescapably intertwined relationship between knowledge and experience, whether or not the senses will yield truth is the theme Milton engages us in to investigate and "by steps" (V. 512) schools us to discern. Therefore, this chapter focuses on how Milton provides poetic variants of that impulse to return to the originary state. However, Milton's incorporating scientific tropes both sharpens and obscures sight and insight making the endeavor to restore the paradisaal origin so enormously difficult.

Milton, as has been noted, "was preoccupied with origins."²⁸ Yet unlike those modern artistic visions of an ancient theme treating Eden as a utopia and the seat and seed of a pure source of energy, Milton's Garden is the beginning, not the final destination, of recovery of the divine perfection. It is an originary site where potentialities, however conflicting they may be, are being explored, realized, and developed. Unlike St. Augustine's

²⁷ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, "The Genres of *Paradise Lost*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 113. See also her *The Life of John Milton* (New York: Blackwell, 2003), 460.

²⁸ Regina Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating: On Milton's Theology and Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 1.

prelapsarian Paradise,²⁹ where there is no “sign of disease or decay, nor sloth or boredom, neither leisure nor labor,”³⁰ an effortless dwelling, Milton’s is a site where its “purer air” “to the heart inspires / Vernal delight and joy, able to drive / All sadness but despair” (IV. 153, 154–56), where potentials of “Destruction with Creation might have mixed” (VIII. 236). Regarding Augustine’s static paradisaic model, Dennis Danielson in *Milton’s Good God* points out that Milton’s paradise is engaged with soul making from the beginning.³¹ For Milton, even the origin of humanity needs to be reevaluated because truth and falsehood often intermix, not in “things themselves,” but in subjects who accept nurturing in paradise. Arguing that Milton’s “dualisms” weave through his works, William Kerrigan considers that Milton’s central purpose strives to “re-pair” the ruins of the Fall.³² What is involved in his restorative intention is the Edenic subjects’ sense perception leading to knowledge production, which helps them to understand their state of nature, a signifier of a meaningful existence.

By the time Milton composed his great poems, Copernicanism, rearranging the relation between humans and nature, had rendered the Greek presuppositions, the circle and the two-sphere universe, obsolete. As Hans Blumenberg has perceived, the Copernican world “reflects the cosmological differentiation between the parochial perspective of his terrestrial ‘corner’ and the central point of construction from which the universe cannot,

²⁹ St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 14.26.

³⁰ Watson, *Perversions*, 66.

³¹ Dennis Richard Danielson, *Milton’s Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

³² William Kerrigan, *The Prophetic Milton* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), 183.

indeed, be viewed but can be thought.”³³ Specifically, the senses, failing to reflect the material world, furthermore created impediments to making distinctions between primary and secondary purposes. So “the challenge to the observer was no longer to see through creation to the creator, but to see through the ‘false images’ of perception into creation itself.”³⁴ While in Milton’s prelapsarian world the empirical vision takes centrality in transmitting knowledge and explicating phenomena, that sensual means is constantly called into question because it delays the awakening and blinds the way to truth; not until the subjects’ original vision is improved with further assistance will they gain awareness of the matter of things that they previously deemed mysterious. To understand whether or not they are in the state of nature, “sensuous” production of knowledge becomes central. Self-discovery achieved in a paradoxical fashion, which in turn creates ramifications in the paradisaic recovery, renders the process more challenging. The momentary self-discovery becomes momentous: it immediately takes effect in the reversal of fallen consciousness and is itself an act of restoration of paradise.³⁵

Drawing on Francis Bacon’s adoption of “Luther’s redescription of Eden as a specifically *epistemological* paradise” and his attribution of the flawed “human perception to the scope of creation . . . to original sin,” Picciotto, through the experimentalist’s method, lays out her study of Milton’s project, “paradisaic recovery,” in relation to “progressive knowledge production or experiment: the production of alien experiences of the known world”:

³³ Hans Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 38.

³⁴ Picciotto, “Reforming the Garden,” 3.

³⁵ Picciotto in her “Reforming the Garden” also tries to identify a Baconian, experimentalists’ project in *Paradise Lost*.

This task of estrangement was pursued in the laboratory, a new space consecrated to the task of recapturing and reversing the fall, the moment of transformation from the alien into the familiar. Diagnosing and attempting to break down the phenomenological barrier that separated corrupted humanity from created humanity, experimentalists worked to make visible the material causes or “originals” of sensory experience, organizing their efforts around the research question, What is creation *before* the fallen body and mind experience it? —Cleansed of idolatrous attachment to concrete externals of place and time, originary desire gained satisfaction through discovery—the excavation of ontologically rather than historically prior truths.³⁶

Therefore “this labor of alienation,” she argues, would result in new experiences upon which “truth production” depended, and through “progressive work,”³⁷ paradisaal recovery of the lost innocence will be achieved. Furthermore, Picciotto has demonstrated extensively that in seventeenth-century England, not only natural philosophers, the experimentalists of the Royal Society, and Quakers, but also workers from different walks of life all identify themselves as an Adam, inheriting both his intentions and his attributes, hoping to regain redemption through labor by tilling their own ground. Seeking their communion in him, these Adamite laborers obtained throughout the process uplifted spirits with the hope of removing current fallen consciousness. This “laborious program of *imitation Adami*”

³⁶ Ibid., 3.

³⁷ Ibid., 5.

gradually redefined the human existence by realigning the “created and corrupted states” into one, “under the curse: labor”³⁸; the ontological paradisaical return thus begins. Throughout the process, the efforts were centered on self-engagement, making Adamite oneness as “all in all” (VII. 732).

While this chapter also explores the ontologically prior conditions of the origin, with Victoria Silver’s suggestion that “*Paradise Lost* pictures mentalities, not entities,”³⁹ the defining feature of the historical—time—will not be excluded. Time in Milton’s theology is regarded as being created at the moment of the heavenly Son’s begetting (*DDC*) and features significantly in *Paradise Lost*. On the one hand, its existence is coextensive with that of Adam and Eve, showing forth the subjects’ potential coexistence with God. On the other, its progression aligned with the subjects’ belated epiphany and implies the process of decay, hence rendering the need to repair and restore even more urgent. Therefore, as if assuming a material entity in space, time before the Fall is given a different status and quality, a reality intended for marking the enlightened history of humankind, whereas after the Fall, it largely degrades, recording chiefly the history of human decline. The duality of time has been suggested respectively: while the archangel Raphael indicates that “. . . time, though in eternity, applied / To motion, measures all things durable / By present, past, and future” (V. 580–82), the archangel Michael in the last two books reveals the degradation of “future things” to Adam (XI. “Argument”). Therefore, what Milton reveals to us is the primal history, one that, because outside our experience, “human knowledge could not reach” (VII. 75), as opposed to the primeval history, one that we know about, as a convenient reference

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁹ Victoria Silver, *Imperfect Sense: The Predicament of Milton’s Irony* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 226.

to our senses. This endeavor, as Milad Doueihi writes of paradise as “‘geographical’ utopias,” “exploited the uncertainties and ambiguities in the text of first narration,” the Genesis myth, “encompasses the history (or histories) of the depiction of contested legacies and new areas of knowledge—of new freedom above all—but also narratives of questioning and exploration that articulated new interior spaces.”⁴⁰ It is this spiritual interiority that Milton calls us moderns to explore in order to experience what is essentially transcendent and in time to reverse all that (may) have become inverting. Furthermore, in response to what Picciotto has focused on the Adamite difficulties, this project to a large extent emphasizes the important role Eve plays in the process of paradisaal recovery.

II. One to Re-pair All

The potentiality of creating, awakening, and reforming lies in the fragments, the ruins or remains, such as Chaos the Anarch, Jesus’s desert, and even Samson’s dungeon, as formless potentials awaiting being named and thus given substance while coming into existence. Here in *Paradise Lost*, it is in the fragmentation or “privation”⁴¹ that one can find the *auctor*, the authorial self, the authorial voice, and the authenticating potential. It also reflects both the root and the outcome of the subjects’ negotiation with their divine power, how they start to cultivate their subjectivity and selfhood. In the initial moment of human history, the originary act has already contained uneasy elements of ambiguity in the mediated and partial account of God’s creation. The creation of Adam and Eve presented in fragments as a shattered articulation is a good example. The omnipresence of a sovereign mandate directs

⁴⁰ Milad Doueihi, *Earthly Paradise: Myths and Philosophies*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), xii.

⁴¹ See Agamben’s “On Potentiality.”

reflection reveals another level of the Edenic subjects' holding fast to images, manifested by rejecting that of the Other, though in God's eye, her own, making her primary image a more unified one. By rejecting that other image, she is delaying, unaware and innocently, a more complete creation, leaving her state with an "imperfect sense."⁴² The epic narrator's call for restoring our fallen state, in this case, echoes the need to cultivate the originary state of humanity by alienating the inverting qualities.

Eve's fragmentary account in book IV about her own creation is thus echoed and rejoined belatedly by Adam's in book VIII; what separates the two narratives are Eve's dream of transgression instigated by Satan, Raphael's eyewitness account of the war in heaven and the Messiah's victorious return, and God's creation through the Logos. These pieces of storytelling, centering in God's ordinance of creation but fulfilled by the Son's action, prepare us with the rationale behind the Creation, its cause and purpose, and the appropriate mind-set for paradisaal reformation. Under the principle "Good out of evil to create" (VII. 188), God in repairing the ruin of the world caused by Satan and the rebel angels calmly announces the following:

. . . I can repair
 That detriment . . .
 . . . and in a moment will create
 Another world, out of one man a race
 Of men innumerable, there to dwell,
 Not here, till by degrees of merit raised
 They open to themselves at length the way

⁴² Silver, *Imperfect Sense*.

Up hither, under long obedience tried,
 And earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth,
 One kingdom, joy and union without end. (VII. 152–61)

The word “repair” is rich in implications as several pairings of subjects and worlds are created to fulfill the sovereign’s intention. While the Edenic pairing of the first human parents is stalled and their intended world is to suffer decay, another pair of agents who have “under long obedience tried” to propagate the world prepares to take its place. As the Adamite experiment fails to raise the merits of men who will separate them from the cycle of degradation, the divine sovereign tries a workaround. He will have another pairing as the first of Adam and Eve falters, hence the re-pairing. This time the Son of God is implied, but who is he to pair up with in order to repair the damage? This question is to remain unanswered in this epic until Milton’s next act, *Paradise Regained*. Not until then will we understand that this extended sovereign repairing that the heavenly Son is to perform actually involves the very people who fail to “open to themselves . . . they way / Up hither,” the very same people who “trespass” and fail to become “authors to themselves in all / Both what they judge and what they choose” (III. 122, 122–23).

What follows this repairing discourse, then, is the creation performed by “His Word, the filial Godhead” (VII. 175). It implies twofold intentions, enacted not only to reverse the ruin and separate the truth from falsehood but also to achieve ongoing revelation “out of one man,” a phrase harkening back to the beginning of the poem, “one greater man,” thus evoking both the Son and the Adamite. When Milton reveals the consciousness of the divinity about creation by calling upon Urania, the muse of astronomy, the reader is not merely given a model, an exemplar to emulate; the narration evinces authenticity and

sublimity that will ennoble and inspire those who seek to perform for change. Inasmuch as the Son completes the creation of the world, like the “Mansion,” the seed, that God prepares for Adam to inhabit in his initial moments of waking (VIII. 296ff), Adam and his descendants created in “similitude” (VII. 520) the need to make corresponding efforts to furnish the interior so as to uphold his image. Conferred with instructions that early on Raphael provided to Adam to be engaged “in contemplation of created things” (V. 511) with decorum,

By likening spiritual to corporal forms,

. . . though what if earth

Be but the shadow of heav’n, and things therein

Each to other like, more than on earth is thought? (573–76)

So undertaking the “collective process of cultivating knowledge through uncertainty,”⁴³ the Adamite need to bear in mind their status of similitude and the promise of elevation, pertaining to both their individual corporeal form and the material reality of their dwelling, so that progressively, “by degrees,” the Godlike subjects will be raised upward and living on Earth will be like that in Heaven. Yet the poem’s ruptured narration renders the hope challenging. Immediately after the restorative creation in book VII follows Adam’s continuous inquiries into the mystery of that intention, “what cause / Moved the creator in his holy rest / Through all eternity so late to build / In chaos” (90–3). Because the fragment or the part will not emulate the whole without first knowing it, Adam is determined to pursue “worthy” knowledge—“the more / To magnify his works, the more we know” (96–7)—as if knowing preconditions the obedience.

⁴³ Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 18.

Adam's innocent intention to partake in the "prime wisdom" (VIII. 194) by hearing "what was done / Ere my remembrance" and envisioning through his mind's eye⁴⁴ "the book of God" (203-4, 67) gives us a vision of the whole by glimpsing from within the fragment. Eve's fragment serves the same purpose. Rather than presented as a mere narrative, an episode in memory, Eve's "birth to presence" is represented as a potential performance—her performing of the Word from now on to the future is retrospectively to redress any potentially inherent imperfection of now. And indeed, the performativity of human history bound to loom large is writ small in fragmentary retellings throughout *Paradise Lost*. The performance of creation can be traced back to the word of God, the prime author from whom everything proceeds. Milton's God, the "light invisible,"⁴⁵ exists in details and appears at the unforeseeable moment to those willing but not ready to be enlightened. So in *Paradise Regained* Jesus continues to undertake this mission of restoration by teaching the "willing hearts" when they are "Not wilfully misdoing, but unaware / Misled" (I. 222, 225-26).

The question of fragment in relation to the idea of one is an interesting parallel, yet both aim at restoration. The epic narrator begins setting up the agenda of restoration as an epic thesis by focusing our attention on the originary subjects' experience of losing the paradise and the promise of recovering it:

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,

⁴⁴ Picciotto, "Reforming the Garden."

⁴⁵ Robert Crossman, "Light Invisible," in *Reading Paradise Lost* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 60-84.

With loss of Eden, till one greater man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
 Sing heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
 Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
 That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
 In the beginning how the heavens and earth
 Rose out of chaos . . . (I. 1–10)

“One greater man,” whose work will eventually reverse the loss and reinstate the originary state, remains singular and unnamed. The invocation immediately evokes our curiosity: is “Eden” the equivalent of “the blissful seat”? Why *one greater man* and not the Son of God? The ambiguity of one is to be specified by many. First, after the Son of God “offers himself a ransom for man” (III. “Argument”), he

. . . with the multitude of my redeemed
 Shall enter heaven long absent, and return,
 Father, to see thy face . . . (III. 260–62)

Echoing Paul’s doctrine in Romans 5.14–21, Milton has his God respond to Jesus:

be thou in Adam’s room
 The head of all mankind, though Adam’s son.
 As in him perish all men, so in thee
 As from a second root shall be restored,
 As many as are restored, without thee none. (III. 285–89)

And right after his genesis, Adam comments on providence, grasping the meaning of one as opposed to the collective:

No need that thou
 Should propagate, already infinite;
 And through all numbers absolute, though one;
 But man by number is to manifest
 His single imperfection, and beget
 Like of his like, his image multiplied,
 In unity defective, which requires
 Collateral love, and dearest amity. (VIII. 419–26)

And finally, speaking of Noah and God’s Covenant after the fall:

. . . I [Adam] rejoice
 For one man found so perfect and so just,
 That God vouchsafes to raise another world
 From him (XI. 875–78)

“One,” in representing all, becomes all encompassing and generative. Understood as a collective, a composite whole, the one involves distinctive individuals in each of their respective historical moments to enact their own restorative efforts to break the cycle of degradation and reconnect the broken circle of the elevated state. Its ambiguity calls for explications and inclusion through action. Guided by these intentional ambiguities, the reader is goaded again with further understanding about the creation: “In the beginning how the heavens and earth / Rose out of chaos” (I. 9–10). Both “disobedience” and “chaos,” assuming an originary status in their own right, are not the end of the restorative pursuit. Countering the stereotypes about the perfection in Eden and the Son of God as the sole, first, and last redeemer, Milton immediately engages the reader with these ambiguities that

challenge the habitual thoughts and behavior from waiting and reliance to action and independence with the grand and challenging project of deliverance from within. With the opening first ten lines of non-reconciliation, accentuating “restore” and “regain” in the middle bracketed by *disobedience* and *chaos*, with both acts treated as the essence of this pursuit of origin, Milton unfolds a drama full of paradoxes and litotes bound to compel us to relinquish our idolized stereotypes and revitalize our idle thoughts constructed and informed by layers of fallen consciousness in order to rebuild a new *blissful seat*.

The promise of restoration is ultimately echoed in the last book with the final utterance made by Eve, making promise in life and life in promise become a full circle. In the last book, while waking up with God’s message through a dream, Eve resolves to pursue “further consolation” with Adam:

though all by me is lost,
Such favor I unworthy am vouchsafed,
By me the promised seed shall all restore. (XII. 620, 621–3)

This resoluteness returns us back to the Garden, to the beginning of the creation of human subjects when the promise of deliverance is recalled but irrevocably delayed, by various subjects and ultimately by the Fall, which, as the end of *Paradise Lost* confirms, serving as another *felix culpa*, fortunately rejoins the progenitors on their willingness to recover the loss. Just as Ludwig Wittgenstein declares that one has to awaken to wonder,⁴⁶ in the beginning Eve wakes up wondering about her coming to the world of Eden, if not yet awakened to the meaning and purpose of the paradisaal promise. We enter into her thoughts through her remembrance of her initial moments: “That day I oft remember,

⁴⁶ *Culture and Value: A Selection from the Posthumous Remains*, ed. Georg Henrik von Wright and Heikki Nyman. Rev. ed. of Alois Pichler, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

when from sleep / I first awaked" (IV. 449–50) and followed "a murmuring sound / Of waters" "With unexperienced thought" (453–54, 457). The first things appearing appeal to her sense perceptions. Looking into the lake her eyes encounter her own image "opposite" (460); "there I had fixed / Mine eyes till now, pined with vain desire / Had not a voice thus warned me" (465–67). Promptly interrupted by "a voice" unknown to her, Eve is instructed to fix her attention onto a different "shape" (461), "he / Whose image thou art" (471–72); uncertain what to do, she lets herself be "invisibly thus led" (476) on to a place of "no shadow" (470), hence to Adam, her "author and disposer" (635). Her coordination of eye and ear is her source of knowledge, and ours, of the creation of self, while in her recollection God's bidding sublimates the innocent self-consciousness with the purpose beyond her selfhood. The intervening voice being God's, as Adam later in his supplementary account makes clear ("Led by her heavenly maker, though unseen, / And guided by his voice, nor uninformed," VIII. 485–86), tending to prevent if not divest her further indulgence in self-image from self-desire, redirects that impulse by inducing in her innocence a higher purpose. Remembering the history unwritten foretold by that voice, Eve will "bear / Multitudes like thyself" once united with an image "inseparably" hers (IV. 474–5, 473), generating more images, her future seeds, while rendering them irreducible and unobscured by self-centered projection and capable of attending to purposes higher than one's own. In so doing, Eve, we are told, will eventually be called "the Mother of human Race" (IV. 475), which, considered as the processual result of the creation rather than a mere single, "once-upon-a-time" occurrence,⁴⁷ implies that even the original seed needs to be worked through to be the originary so that her future seeds will be free from obscuring

⁴⁷ Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*.

the truth. Therefore life, as *Eve* originally means in Hebrew,⁴⁸ while burgeoning from a dream that brings self-awakening and the promise of self-generation, will continue to start anew.

This may be part of the divine message—from that moment of distilling regeneration from signs of degeneration—involving the nature of ontological existence and historical fulfillment: to stabilize the originary paradisaal existence and consequently future generations, one needs to purge oneself of any possible originary decay by decentering one's self. Eve's creation tells us that gazing on the projection of self-image fails to produce genuine knowledge of that being in time. The integration of knowledge and truth becomes split when the self-centered image continues to assert itself. The impulse to originate history with an empirical vein, glimpsed in the moment of Eve's waking up and the insistence in the self-image momentarily corrected by the divine rationale, will reemerge later in the poem and, in the final books, magnified and multiplied, manifest itself in the pageants of future history that archangel Michael reveals to Adam.

The moment of Eve's "birth to presence"⁴⁹ is replete with potential while the materialization of the Word is taking a bodily form with a promise, which is all too soon being innocently pushed aside and back to its latency. So "in the beginning was the Word," but the truth of the revealed word is delayed due to a lack of understanding. This belatedness of understanding the purpose of creation manifested through deliverance and effecting the historical fulfillment of an enlightened human race is a recurrent theme with

⁴⁸ See Henry Cornelius Agrippa's *Female Pre-eminence, OR THE Excellency of that Sex above the Male*, trans. Henry Care (London: 1670), 3.

⁴⁹ Taken from the title of Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

which recovery poetics in *Paradise Lost* engages. Overall, the belatedness of awakening is central to the dilemma and predicaments of the restoration when we also examine the relationship between the Edenic subjects and God, the transmission of messages.

Ultimately, the force of Milton's renovative poetics, therefore, hinges on this belatedness that urges us to *pervert* and revert, readily to disturb the fixated appearance or remove the impulse to fixate on it.

While the fragment pairs up the author's and the reader's intention and attention, it performs a transformative act on their coexistence through the very materiality of the text. Through the poet's conversing with the muse, we convert ourselves into beings with *perverted* motivations to reconstruct subjectivity. However, what sets in in that same temporo-spatial sphere is also the anxiety complex. Once we readers take things into our hands, we become authors to ourselves, as Milton suggests, and reconstructing a shattered narrative has multiple and ongoing, thus endless, routes. The amalgamation of both writerly and readerly voices makes the writing and reading "confusedly" (*PL*, II. 914)—in terms of both fusion and confusion of emotions. As *Paradise Lost* has shown, the creation tale of the human race in Genesis is taken apart into two distinctive narratives, each fragment bestowed with a perspective into the subject's interior space and his or her communion with their Creator, named or unnamed. What is liberating in this shattering articulation is its welcoming and intimate gesture that invites us to ponder upon the interiority of both founding moments, of man and the text, for instance, through both Eve's and later Adam's birth-to-presence narratives. Yet attendant to the joy of their coming into being and their chase of conjoining is the confounding anxiety of lack, incompleteness, and dependency that mark each fragmentary vision. Readers' expectation derived from their

knowledge of the original Genesis story is suspended in waiting, another of Milton's devices of belatedness. While this shattering articulation creates a standstill, it in turn compels us to attend to what ensues. A mind experiment, as Picciotto suggests, lies in the "decomposition" of the whole that needs to be overcome by the process of "resemblage" in order to restore the legibility of the text and make further sense of the larger implications.⁵⁰ Therefore, decomposition and belatedness are not only the literary devices of Milton's poetics; they mean to engage the reader to reevaluate the genesis of the originary state while in the meantime redirect the readerly as well as the Miltonic subjects' sovereignly impulses to reform or re-pair the shattered selfhood toward actualizing and hence preserving their potentiality.

III. Repair of Sovereignty, Sovereignty of Repair

What is the relation between God and man other than that of creator and created things? So far, we have explored the divine intention and act that is involved in man's formation of selfhood and the recovery process. To better understand the purpose of recovery from within, Milton seeks further means to articulate the mythical or ineffable ways that "assert eternal providence, / And justify the ways of God to men" (I. 25–6). And yet, Doueihi points out the issue of poetic form through Augustine's questioning:

... the material support of the word, the voice itself, raises a first fundamental difficulty: How can a material and finite thing convey the infinite? How can that which lasts only an instant communicate eternal truth? For Augustine, that first

⁵⁰ Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 5.

difficulty corresponds to the problem raised by the very nature of the divine word addressed to man.⁵¹

It is a fact that Milton is extremely conscious of forms or “kinds”; with suitable “answerable style” (IX. 20), he addresses a full spectrum of human conditions. To resolve the difficulty, Milton devises a likeness, a representation, through fragments, as we see in the fragmentary account of Eve’s creation. The fragment in *Paradise Lost* marshals “mediation of the divine word and of its internalization,” a cleansing device that not only recreates unity but also sets in place a textual space where the part meditates the whole, transience the eternal, the everyday the holy, and ultimately the human vision on the messianic vision, allowing the “possibility of direct manifestation or epiphany.”⁵² Augustine furthermore introduces a more complex dimension of the problem:

[God] does not speak through his own substance except for creating all natures, though as regards spiritual and intellectual ones he speaks not only for creating but also enlightening them, since they are now able to grasp his speeches as it is in his Word, which was in the beginning with God But to those who are not able to grasp this, when God speaks he only does so through a creature, either through a spiritual one alone whether in dreams or in ecstasy in the likeness of bodily things, or also through a bodily one, when some specific appearance is presented to the sense of the body, or some sounds and

⁵¹ Doueïhi, *Earthly Paradise*, 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

words are heard.⁵³

Although the inclusion of the communication of the holy through voices creates exactly the effect Augustine perceives, it meanwhile demonstrates the originary challenges in grasping the moment of epiphany.

One of the significant metaphors that organizes both the prelapsarian and postlapsarian state of mind into one is the idea of “home,” the material reality of the social bond; the act of leaving or returning home implies one’s “trusting Satan” or “trusting God.” Postulating in *De Doctrina Christiana* his theology on “the Fall of Our First Parents, and the Sin,” Milton considers the Fall was “instigated first by the devil” and then “man’s own inconstant nature”: “He did not keep his original state, but left his *home*” (382, 383). This “distinction-making,” prevalent throughout *Paradise Lost*, as Regina Schwartz argues, transports us back to the first home and ur-concept of human community, Eden.⁵⁴ The “domesticated nature of the life of Adam and Eve in Eden before the fall,” as Northrop Frye has observed, is made distinctive by their “extraordinary trustfulness” in the constant visits by angels or by God himself, which is “a natural part of the state of innocence.”⁵⁵ Eden’s originary subjects “thought no ill” of their frequenting of their home, an open space with their domestic preoccupations, gardening, housekeeping, sexual activity, and no bounds to their divine neighbors. Understood as a site of the originary unfallen state, home is a seat of divinity by extension. In *Paradise Regained* Jesus’s trial in the wilderness that Milton

⁵³ Ibid., 7. See Saint Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis 8.27–49,” in *On Genesis*, part 1, vol. 13 of *The Works of Saint Augustine*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1990–1993), 374.

⁵⁴ Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 12.

⁵⁵ Northrop Frye, *Return of Eden: Five Essays on Milton’s Epics* (London: Rutledge, 1966), 69.

thematizes as a central task for regaining the paradisaical state is preceded by his leaving home in book II and followed by his returning home to Mary at the end of book IV after defying temptation and understanding his lofty mission on earth. During this interim, the Son fully contemplates his work of restoration.

The apotheosis of returning home is complicated by the discourse of boundary breaking. Schwartz has argued extensively that “In *Paradise Lost*, Milton depicts creation as the act of delimiting, of setting bounds” and adheres to the biblical model of distinction-making, engaging a series of division and separation.⁵⁶ The intention and purpose, Schwartz perceives, is to set apart the sacred from the profane, “pure” from “mixed,” clean from unclean, ultimately teaching a moral value and providing guidance for redemption. Instead of perceiving these bounds as confinement, a limit that arrests movement and increases fixations in a reified position, I view them as thresholds or passages, fluid zones where transformation takes place. Examples of transgression closely related to “bound breaking” and “the perils of boundlessness”⁵⁷ abound—Satan’s breaking out of Hell and into Eden, which is “Access denied” and confined by “Insuperable highth of loftiest shade” (IV. 137, 138), is rebuked by Gabriel:

Why hast thou, Satan, broke the bounds prescribed
 To thy transgressions, and disturbed the charge
 Of others, who approve not to transgress
 By thy example, but have power and right
 To question thy bold entrance on this place. (IV. 878–82)

⁵⁶ Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 11-12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

Chaos, as Milton stresses, unless the Messiah “puts forth his goodness” to make it the base material of creation, would remain as “dark materials” as well as “Illimitable ocean without bound” and hold “Eternal anarchy” and “the noise / Of endless wars” (II. 916, 896–97):

He took the golden compasses, prepared
 In God’s eternal store, to circumscribe
 This universe, and all created things:
 One foot he centered, and the other turned
 Round through the vast profundity obscure,
 And said, Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,
 This be thy just circumference, O world. (VII. 225–31)

And ultimately, “To transgress the law is not only to forget, but to effect the most heinous of confusions, aspiring, as Eve does, to become ‘as the Gods.’ Such ambition is ‘unclean’”⁵⁸ while the violation of God’s bidding is considered crossing out of bounds.

Toward the end of *Of Reformation*, Milton puts forward an extraordinary vision of what will happen on judgment day, an event that will soon elevate the righteous to the angelic “legions” in the “Circle of Eternity” and “put an end to all Earthly Tyrannies” (*CPW*, 1: 616). A final act of separation and reduction is expected, setting apart those worthy of elevation and redemption from others deserving of purgation and punishment. Paradise or even earth transformed into heaven is imminent after the damnation is brought on those who have been “impairing” “the true *Faith*.” Here, in 1641, condemning the bishops’ corrupt faith, Milton employs bodily and anatomical images to describe their demeanor by associating them with the antichristian “*Wolves*” and “*Boares*” and situating them within

⁵⁸ Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 15.

the larger context of England's history of resisting the antichrist: while the nation, the body politic, has been suffering from

bloody Inundations, and the succeeding Sword of intestine *Warre*,
soaking the Land in her owne gore . . . that *Viper of Seditiō* . . . hath
been breeding to eat through the entrals of our *Peace*; but let her cast
her Abortive Spawne without the danger of this travailing & throbbing
Kingdome. (614)

The false church is not to be tolerated. The mention of the history of corruption and antichristian forces is later rehearsed in Michael's instructions to Adam in the concluding book of *Paradise Lost*. Milton, in his early poem *Lycidas*, assuming a poet-prophet role, "foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy then in their height." The false prelate as the grim wolf was already threatening the destruction of the faithful, thereby impeding and vitiating the process and the potential of paradisaal recovery.

David Norbrook has argued that "the themes of creation and reduction" are linked with "republican ideology" in which the ways of restoration were utilized to reduce the overgrown, top-heavy princely power to the "first principles."⁵⁹ Therefore, to be able to reduce and excise the unnecessary, one must revert to the first, originary state.

With more zeal to reveal their idolatry, Milton continues to condemn their idolatrous "Temples" as the "*spirtuall Babel*" built by "*Gold and Silver*," the kind of the

⁵⁹ Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 438, 97. He points to Machiavelli's concepts in Discourse that: "For the maintenance of a Religion or Commonwealth long in being, it is necessary oftentimes to reduce them to their first grounds" and that the princes judgments will be held accountable if they jeopardize the republican government. Norbrook continues, "[s]uch exemplary acts of justice . . . were the best way of discouraging corruption and restoring states to their first principles." Machiavelli believed, Norbrook holds, "that a certain degree of instability was necessary to achieve political dynamism, and such regular 'reduction' had the effect of at once permitting and controlling the process of change" (97).

materials supplied by “*Mammons Son*” (590) even as he complains that their “Extortions” and “open Corruptions” become “the Ulcers of the Kingdome” (591). While Achsah Guibbory regards *Paradise Lost* as “a history of idolatry,”⁶⁰ Sharon Achinstein illustrates that “[t]he Laudian episcopacy was backsliding to the idolatries of Rome,” and quotes *Of Reformation*: “a ‘Tyrannical crew and Corporation of Imposters, that have blinded and abus’d the World’” (537).⁶¹ Yet in that same text, alongside the “millenarian optimism” is the eternal damnation, quite a different fate, which awaits the prelates:⁶²

But they contrary that by the impairing and diminution of the true *Faith*, the distresses and servitude of their *Countray* aspire to high *Dignity, Rule* and *Promotion* here, after a shamefull end in this *Life* . . . shall be thrown downe eternally into the *darkest* and *deepest Gulfe* of Hell, where under the *despightfull* controule, the trample and spurn of all the other *Damned*, that in the anguish of their *Torture* shall have no other ease then to exercise a *Raving* and *Bestiall Tyranny* over them as their *Slaves* and *Negro’s*, they shall remaine in that plight for ever, the *basest*, the *lowermost*, the *most dejected*, most *underfoot* and *downe-trodden Vassals of Perdition*. (616–17)

Contrary to republican principles, the “diminution of true *Faith*,” rather than that of the believer in his magnanimity, is considered detrimental to the entire body politic and true religion, and so needs to be removed. Along with the overall dissenting pamphleteering, as

⁶⁰ Achsah Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 195.

⁶¹ Sharon Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent in Milton’s England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 124. Milton, *Of Reformation*, in *CPW*, Vol.1.

⁶² *Ibid.*

has been seen, the sentiment of optimism and abomination of 1641 finds its way in various forms in *Paradise Lost* in the context of the Restoration.

All those abysmal elements that darken the redemptive hope in the foregoing passage are characteristic of the stygian environment that Satan and his rebel angels inhabit: with “the dusky Air / That felt unusual weight” in the “Land that ever burn’d / With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire,” the space is imbued with

combustible

And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire,
Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singèd bottom all involved
With stench and smoke. (I. 233–37)

This posits a stark contrast to the world in Eden, “a happy rural seat” (IV. 247), “a woody theatre” (141) infused with enclosing greens, birds chirping, gentle animals roaming, and flowing streams: “eternal spring” (268), truly “A sylvan scene” (140). Real joy and contentment fill the space, with inhabitants free of “discontented thoughts” if unprovoked (807). Yet here “this infernal pit” (II. 850) generates perversion (that “perverts best things / To worst abuse, or to their meanest use,” IV. 203–4) and inflicts “transgressions” (879) that lie in every aspect of Satan’s attempts throughout the whole poem. As Lewalski has demonstrated, the various “kinds” of “generic paradigms” or “heroic genres”—epic, romance, tragedy—that Satan moves to parody, pervert, or debase, are chiefly their heroic or redemptive values.⁶³ At the end of the council scene, Satan, “with monarchal pride” (II. 428), prevails in his agenda to reclaim in arms their “just inheritance of old” (38), sending

⁶³ Lewalski, “Genres,” 118–21.

his “royalties” (451) into “rejoicing” (487). Satanic energy, as we shall see, while seeking to resist “submission” (l. 661) and “pervert” Providence (164), refrains from the republican ideal of reduction; it aims at aggression with self-aggrandizement, manifested as either tyrannical self-preservation or overseas military expansion.⁶⁴

This leads to another dimension pertaining to a distorted form of restoration, namely, transgression. Principally flowing outside the bounds and farther away from first principles, forces of perversion also abound in *Paradise Lost*.⁶⁵ In the political arena, the aim of the Restoration settlement was “to turn the clock back to 1641 and ignore the development in between”: several royal institutions were reinstated “exactly as before the Civil War” while “The Church of England was re-established, albeit with narrower doctrine and tougher penalties against dissenters”; a “relentless drive to rebuild old forms of government” was under way.⁶⁶ Norbrook’s perception of Milton’s England moving “from restoration to Restoration” captures the collective sentiment of culture from holding optimism to expressing disillusionment.⁶⁷

It is true, however, that the energy to dissent and transgress, albeit with disillusionment occasioned by “unjustified oppositions,”⁶⁸ continues to permeate the poem.

⁶⁴ See both David Armitage, “John Milton: Poet against Empire,” and Victoria Khan, “The Metaphorical Contract in Milton’s *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*,” in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁶⁵ l.31; III.94; IV.879–80; V.244; VI.912; VII.47; VIII.330, 643; IX.902, 1161, 1169; X.49, 72; XI.164, 253; XII.399.

⁶⁶ John Morrill, ed., *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s* (London: Collins & Brown, 1992), 32.

⁶⁷ “From Restoration to Restoration” (p. 407) is the section title, but the whole book addresses the related issues.

⁶⁸ John T. Shawcross, *The Development of Milton’s Thought: Law, Government, and Religion* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2008), vii.

As critics remind us, dissenting sentiment is present in both angels and man: Satan, Abdiel, and Adam, to whom the word “dissent” is linked.⁶⁹ Arguing that Abdiel represents the true sense of dissent, both Perez Zagorin and Achinstein identify an authorial presence in the loyal angel, registering a different sense of rebellion and dissent. Yet the distinction needs to be made as to whether or not and how the dissenting differs. In the passage wherein Abdiel “stands in for Milton,” his presence “resonates with Restoration Dissent”:⁷⁰

So spake the seraph Abdiel faithful found,
 Among the faithless, faithful only he;
 Among innumerable false, unmoved,
 Unshaken, unseduced. Unterrified
 His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
 Nor number, nor example with him wrought
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
 Though single. From amidst them forth he passed,
 Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustained
 Superior, nor of violence feared aught;
 And with retorted scorn his back he turned
 On those proud Towers to swift destruction doomed. (V. 896–906)

Where “a string of negatives (Unshake’n, uneduc’d, unterrifi’d)” “encloses the choices” Abdiel has to face, Achinstein argues, Milton’s political stand, his “leaps of faith,” is couched

⁶⁹ Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 118–26; Perez Zagorin, *Milton: Aristocrat and Rebel, The Poet and His Politics* (New York: Boydell & Brewer, 1992), 126–7.

⁷⁰ Achinstein, *ibid.*, 120. See also Zagorin, *ibid.*

in those “abrupt enjambment and broken line endings,” “though single / long way / superior” in those three consecutive lines.⁷¹ It is also worth noting, however, that several phrases that commence, if not command, the lines, “Among the faithless,” “Among innumerable false,” “To swerve from truth,” “And with retorted scorn,” seem to resist that very maneuver of self-righteousness: the first principles monitored by clear judgments, one of the defining qualities of the republican ideal, have been lacking even though the constancy of faith in God is not eclipsed.

Satan couches his persuasion in language that smacks of monarchist cause and kingship, an antityrannical or imperialist agenda, or exilic and diasporic discourse that justifies his act of perversion as a result of his perceived victimization. Arguing against the “constancy” of Milton’s thought, John T. Shawcross holds that Milton’s thoughts develop over time, so do his characters. He observes that Satan “repeatedly changes his mind about many things” (2); it quite probably explains why in *Paradise Lost* the word “pervert” is always attached to Satan in relating his scheme of temptation: for instance,

“By some false guile pervert; and shall pervert; / For man will hearken
to his glozing lies” (III. 92-3);

“He in the serpent had perverted Eve” (X. 3);

“ . . . they pervert pure nature’s healthful rules / To loathsome sickness” (XI. 523-4); and

“ . . . thy savior and thy lord . . . to dissolve / Satan with his perverted world”
(XII. 544-7).

⁷¹ Achinstein, *ibid.*, 122.

“Perverting” has literal and metaphorical meanings: in Latin, *per-vertere*, means “to continue to turn about,” and so “to change, alter, transform, convert, and so on.” The implication is that not only does Satan constantly alter his thoughts and justify the unjustifiable, but throughout the poem he diverts and subverts God’s way manifested through Adam and Eve, bringing them and himself farther away from their divine origin.

To put Satan’s tactics in republican tropes, we may perceive his is a perverted version of “deduction” of his state, ambition, and power—*perverting* even his own “quest” by accretion and diminution, in shape and rhetoric. Milton devises a way to display and counteract the satanic agenda, one that employs an astronomical and ultimately cosmological discourse. A powerful instrument such as Galileo’s “optic tube” (III. 590) is utilized to aid our vision, thus serving as “a goad to truth.”⁷² The tool is carefully crafted into the narrative in books I, III, and V to describe Satan’s voyage and Raphael’s cosmic travel, paving the way for the more focused, grander discourse about the universe in book VIII. Milton provides us with the first interpretative challenge of relating the Book of Nature to prophecy when the Galilean goal emerges as closely intertwined with the Satanic scheme. Satan, “the superior fiend” (I.283), is depicted with a “shield” (284)

like the moon, whose orb

Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views

At evening from the top of Fresole,

Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,

Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe. (I.287–91)

⁷² Wittreich, “‘He Ever Was a Dissenter:’ Milton’s Transgressive Maneuvers in *Paradise Lost*,” in *Arena of Conflict: Milton and the Unfettered Mind*, ed. Kristin P. McColgan and Charles W. Durham (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1997), 35.

The association continues: “There lands the fiend, a spot like which perhaps / Astronomer in the sun’s lucent orb / Through his glazed optic tube yet never saw” (III. 588–90). The third instance is realigned with the first reference to the Moon, “As when by night the glass / Of Galileo, less assured, observes / Imagined lands and regions in the moon” (V. 261–3). These references point to Galileo’s shorter works, *The Starry Messenger* (*Sidereus Nuncius*) (1610) and *Letters on Sunspots* (*Istoria e Dimostrazioni Intorno Alle Macchie Solari e Loro Accidenti Rome, or History and Demonstrations Concerning Sunspots and Their Properties*) (1613). In *The Starry Messenger*, Galileo makes two important observations: first, that the moon’s surface is rough and mountainous; and second, that there are four satellites orbiting Jupiter.

The apparent association of Satan’s with Galileo’s endeavors becomes problematic because critics are aware of Milton’s positive relating of Galileo in *Areopagitica*: that he visited “the famous Galileo grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition, for thinking in Astronomy otherwise then the Franciscan and Dominican licencers thought” (*CPW*, 2: 538). Among recent interpretations, Neil Harris observes that the allusion to Galileo with the satanic deportment conveys an unsettling and conflicted sense.⁷³ Along the same line, Roy Flannagan argues that the word “artist” in the seventeenth century assumes a “potentially negative valance” associated with “charlatan scientist.” Therefore, Galileo becomes a figure that enters “the area of unsure and speculative astronomy, which may be meddling close to the black arts of snecromancy, alchemy or any other form of Satanic dissimulation.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Neil Harris, “Galileo as Symbol: The ‘Tuscan Artist’ in *Paradise Lost*,” *Annali dell’Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza di Firenze* 10 (1985): 3–29.

⁷⁴ Roy Flannagan, “Art, Artists, Galileo and Concordances,” *MQ* 20 (1986): 103–5.

Sharon Achinstein associates various political implications in the Civil War era with Satan's "false heroism," "revealed by an act of visual perception" "that underlie[s] the recurrent metaphor of sight and deception" in the Civil War pamphlets.⁷⁵ Annabel Patterson argues that the metaphor may be "applied to the work of skeptical political analysis," and hence the "association is not with the demonic, but with fallen vision."⁷⁶ Michael Lieb, considering the insertion of Galileo "elusive" and "allusive," argues that "the powers bestowed upon the astronomer possess for Milton a dimension that is as much illusory as it is illuminative, most notably because Galileo comes to represent that which is grounded in human limitation, the sensory, the act of seeing confined solely to the physical, as opposed to the spiritual, the transcendent, the visionary." He concludes that this relationship creates "a language of codes, a language of indirection" that occludes and discloses.⁷⁷ Given all these illuminating thoughts, most scholars have examined relevant political agendas in Milton's writings that Satan may come to represent and then try to build a link between the two; none of the interpretations address the inherent values that Galileo's texts hold that in turn may inform Milton's poem.

Overall, the coupling of the Galilean and the satanic achieves the purpose of revealing and disclosing, discerning and deflecting, through some kind of osmosis or internal dialogue between the two. As the two forces figure as experimentalist appeal to

⁷⁵ Sharon Achinstein, "The Uses of Deception: From Cromwell to Milton," in *The Witness of Times: Manifestations of ideology in Seventeenth Century England*, ed. Katherine Z. Keller and Gerald J. Schiffhorst (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1983), 197, 185.

⁷⁶ Annabel Patterson, "Imagining New Worlds: Milton, Galileo, and the 'Good Old Cause,'" in *The Witness of Times: Manifestations of Ideology in Seventeenth Century England*, ed. Katherine Z. Keller and Gerald J. Schiffhorst (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1983), 259.

⁷⁷ Michael Lieb, "Brotherhood of the Illuminati: Milton, Galileo, and the Poetics of Conspiracy," *MS 70* (2008): 75.

images and vision, they both aim at effecting authority and power. In so doing, Milton insists on employing conflicting visions to put his reader in direct contact with the manifestations of creation, compelling us to investigate various “shadowy types” ranging “From centre to circumference” of the universe (V. 510). The fragmentary accounts of Genesis discussed above demonstrate that while the fragment in its dreamtime and wakeful moments announces the potentials and promise of coexistence with the divine, the belated awakening it produces generates a calling to life as well as to death, after the Fall. Only through separating, alienating, and reducing and subliming of blinding qualities will one be purged of fallen potentials and begin to activate the move toward the paradisaic return. Nevertheless, although the creation myth rooted in the filial godhead assumes centrality in *Paradise Lost*, the restoration of the lost paradise lies chiefly in the efforts of man. It is in the return to the origin by repairing the ruin that one may re-create the state of unfallen Edenic subjects and become the likeness of the divine.

IV. Negation

I would now like to return to where I began in this chapter about negation as a mythical impetus to the burgeoning of human potentiality. As I discussed previously, Satan’s perversion, constantly occasioned and accentuated by Milton’s larger narrativization scheme on the fragmentary, is paradoxical. His negation contributes to an urge that one must find a path back to the divine ensemble, the totality of creation that engenders human potentiality. However counterintuitive his outright affronting of God and rejecting of the Messiah may seem, Satan’s return to his richly claimed native seat is compulsive. Quite consistently, Satan insists on and persists in journeying “Homeward with flying march” back to Heaven (V. 688). Examples abound throughout *Paradise Lost*, such as where Satan

compels his cohort to re-found their lost “empire,” once again to “ascend / Up to our native seat” and “to regain / Our own right lost” (II. 75–6, 230–1); ultimately, their fighting back will win them “light” and “what hope the never-ending flight / Of future days may bring,” a happy prospect “Worth waiting” (II. 220, 221–2, 223). Satan’s negation inadvertently reveals his repressed desire that looks ultimately to return to his native seat, the celestial world.

While negation means rejection and evokes its opposite, affirmation, it functions quite differently for the rebel angels and the Edenic subjects. They both share the reigning impulses of returning to their originating divine Word by associating their acts with perception and memory. If Satan is engaged principally with negation as opposed to the Messiah’s affirmation or “exclusive inclusion,”⁷⁸ then how exactly does the relation stand with Adam and Eve performing their judgment between the two seemingly polarized forces?

With negating functioning as expelling and affirming as uniting, as the two diametrical forces manifest their intent to “repossess their native seat” (I. 634) or recover the lost paradise, Milton formulates the Edenic subject as one that bears the signature of the two. Overall, the Edenic subject’s transgression and congeniality only show that expulsion and uniting are correlative. Further on in book V we witness a wonderful display of competing discourses alternating between Satan and the Son, with each pledging allegiance to assert his presence for his own cause. In particular, while debating with Abdiel “the fervent angel,” “the apostate” Satan (V. 849, 852) denies God’s creation and the

⁷⁸ Here I borrow Agamben’s term when he discusses St. Paul’s universality in *The Time that Remains*.

Son's coronation as Messiah, thus boldly claiming kingship by fashioning himself as his own creation:

That we were formed then sayst thou? And the work
 Of secondary hands, by task transferred
 From Father to his Son? Strange point and new!

... who saw

When this creation was? Rememberst thou
 Thy making, while the maker gave thee being?
 We know no time when we were not as now;
 Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised
 By our own quickening power, when fatal course
 Had circled his full orb, the birth mature
 Of this our native heaven, ethereal sons. (V. 853–63)

Out of his rivalry with the Son, Satan's negation as denial, as Freud proposes (more to be discussed below), indirectly confirms that he is part of God's creation. Further denounced by Abdiel as "alienate from God," Satan, arguing for the devil's party's own "puissance," then accentuates his ambition that their "highest deeds" will demonstrate "by proof" "Who is our equal" and that they will "begirt the almighty throne" (V. 877, 864, 865, 866, 868). As we can see, the sophistic orator not only negates his originality through remembrance and perception but also brings to the fore the repressed urge to become his own *auctor*, hinting at his yearning for mastering the mythical originary state. As Freud has acutely observed,

the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into
 consciousness, on condition that it is negated. Negation is a way of

taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed.⁷⁹

Readers of Satan's negativity have tended to interpret it as "purely negative, without positive content."⁸⁰ Yet Milton's portrayal of Satan's negation is more complex than that. That Satan's negation evokes formation of subjectivity, exploration of individual potentials, and effusion of restorative impulses also echoes the Son's resisting and reforming of subjectivity in *Paradise Regained* and Samson's ultimate pursuit (and paradoxically rejection) of returning to the divine ensemble by carrying with him shame and guilt in *Samson Agonistes*.⁸¹

As Freud observes, "to affirm or negate the content of thought is the task of the function of intellectual judgement, what we have just been saying has led us to the psychological origin of that function."⁸² To elaborate on Freud's thought, Jean Hyppolite cautions us to "distinguish between the negation internal to judgement and the attitude of negation."⁸³ With respect to Miltonic negation, Hyppolite's distinction is a significant one such that some certain critical tendency has collapsed the two dimensions into one, hence

⁷⁹ Freud, "Negation," *SE* 19, p. 236.

⁸⁰ Danielle A. St. Hilaire, "The Satanic Question and Poetics of Creation," in *John Milton: Reasoning Words*, 112. Critical readers like Stanley Fish, Victoria Silver, Bryan Hampton, among others, argue similarly that Satan conveys only negativity.

⁸¹ With the penetrating ideas from Freud and his commentator Jean Hyppolite, it may be fruitful to compare the disparate poetic discourses of Miltonic subjects in terms of affirming and negating, especially that of Satan and Samson, how they define their own originality and pursue ways to return to the divine Word, and ultimately how these terms bear the subject and give rise to different forms of subjectivity. Yet it warrants a further study, nonetheless.

⁸² Freud, "Negation," *SE* 19, 236.

⁸³ Hyppolite, "A Spoken Commentary," 290.

resulting in regarding Satan's negativity as being his "absence of divine inflection whose creaturely aspects include variety and individuality, not to mention orderly, intelligible change."⁸⁴ Hyppolite further associates Freudian thought with Hegel's dialectical concept, *Aufhebung*,

which means simultaneously to deny, to suppress and to conserve,
and fundamentally to raise up At this point Freud tells us:

"negation is already an *Aufhebung* of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed."⁸⁵

Satan's negation has definitely raised and opened up a lot of issues regarding creation and sovereign control, potentiality and originary impulse, among others, that have been repressed or embedded in the text.

Here, I want to conclude with Satan's speech about the Son, the first soliloquy of the poem. First addressing the Son with contempt as someone "like the God / Of this new world," Eden, Satan displays his signature of negation with exclusionary discourse, that the God is only "Of this world," just as the Son is only crowned for "thy sole dominion" (*PL*, IV. 33-4). By resorting to alienation, separation, and delimitation, Satan reasserts his own subjectivity. Then comes his real intent:

He deserved no such return
From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence . . . (IV. 42-4)

⁸⁴ Victoria Silver, *Imperfect Sense*, 254.

⁸⁵ "A Spoken Commentary," 291.

Only in a few lines has Satan brought to the fore major issues that all the Miltonic subjects are concerned about: the relation of the subject to the creation, God's role as a supreme arbitrator, and ultimately the desire to return to the fullness of Word. To contrast to Jesus's affirming discourse, Satan's communicable style is through negation. His travesty of divine creation, "With other promises and other vaunts / Than to submit, boasting I could subdue / The omnipotent" (IV. 84-6), just doubly reinforces his urgency to return to the divine ensemble.

Overall, what needs to be recognized is that at the heart of privation lie two senses of perversion set in diametrical opposition to each other. While *Paradise Lost* imagines Satan's negation through perverting the ways of God as the devil's negative agency, *Paradise Regain* in the next chapter profoundly reinvents the wheel for the populace with the Son's affirmation as his positive agency. By embracing privation the Son recasts the formation of subjectivity and fills the inner void of the masses. The Son's *perversion* is through his becoming the "living oracle" (*PR*, I. 460) that will continue to bring the sacred to the profane and elevate the earthly back to the divine, a mission of constant turning and converting.

Chapter II

Naming the Messianic Community

—In Search of the Newness of Life in *Paradise Regained*

For the City of the saints is up above, although it produces citizens here below, and in their persons the City is on pilgrimage until the time of its kingdom comes. At that time it will assemble all those citizens as they rise again in their bodies; and then they will be given the promised kingdom, where with their Prince, “the king of ages,” they will reign, world without end.

St. Augustine, *City of God*⁸⁶

Paradise Regained is a brief epic about Jesus’s exploring the potentiality of his own restorative acts and founding his coming community. Working toward Milton’s larger plan of recovering lost paradise, this brief epic extends what has begun in *Paradise Lost* but tells a different story of restoration and renewal. In fact, the landscape of Milton’s restorative project, in which each of the three poems plays a part, is quite different; each in various ways accentuates issues of prohibition and creativity, potentiality and actualization, memory and originality. Unlike *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* does not stress so much a striving for the perfect age and awaiting a future kingdom that will come about through an act of regeneration. Instead, it urges that man enter the present world *now* to embrace the unknown and comprehend the unexpressed, instead of awaiting a kingdom to come, through regenerative acts. Recognizing the poem’s competing voices of both Jesus and

⁸⁶ St. Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, Book XV, Chapter 2, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 1984), 596.

Satan as they explore and exploit potential, I focus more on Jesus's exploration of his own potentiality while treating Satan's attempt to restore his host's lost "empire" through their "dismal expedition" (l. 63, 101) as often verifying, sometimes supplementing, if not always sabotaging, the Son's acts. Jesus, whose memory only informs vestiges of his divine mission, embodies and performs the potential for comprehending the unpredictable in every uncertain moment so as to create a path toward an enlightenment as ordinary and generative as a creative act. What is central to regaining paradise, through Jesus the Son, is articulating the interrelations between the past and present, the self and the world, and thereupon manifesting a new self through that articulation. To Milton, the word turned flesh is through naming and performing the divine will now residing in the people. *Paradise Regained* thus takes centrality in a different type of performativity in which through articulating his selfhood Jesus obtains the power to relate his subjectivity to history, to his creator, and to his messianic community.

Although the poem was written after the restoration of Stuart kingship had shattered the hope of republican experiments, its unyielding and compelling sense of the *nowness* once again calls for reengaging with the status quo and the ideal of establishing the community of saints. In such a suppressive political climate as Restoration England, as the nonconformists continue to face an imminent threat of persecution, Milton's dissenting voice must remain covert, since the poem's purging of the stigma and invoking of the sacred are pregnant with political implications. Jesus as the second Moses⁸⁷ is initiating a cause for a coming community of sanctified individuals, and the beginning of the poem

⁸⁷ Jesus has been likened to Moses throughout *Paradise Regained* in: I. 352, II. 15, III. 14, and IV. 219, 225.

shows that urgency: “By one man’s disobedience lost, now sing / Recovered Paradise to all mankind, / By one man’s firm obedience fully tried” (I.2–4); “Now had the great proclaimer / . . . cried / Repentance, and heaven’s kingdom nigh at hand / To all baptized . . .” (I. 18–21, emphasis mine). Announcing that the heavenly kingdom is in the time of now, the proclaimer John the Baptist’s preaching in the Gospels also “carr[ies] a tone of urgency”: “[e]ven now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”⁸⁸ With these kinds of speech acts revealing and representing Milton’s wish to actualize the potential for salvation, *Paradise Regained* then becomes a crucial narrative announcing and pursuing the coming messianic community led by the Son. If both the epic narrator’s wish to “sing / Recovered Paradise to all mankind” and John’s cry to repent to gain “heaven’s kingdom nigh at hand” (I. 20) emulate God’s creative acts in Genesis that turn the Word into the world, then the power of discourse and articulation plays a significant role in Milton’s pursuit of human rejuvenation since it is directly associated with creation and regeneration. With these kinds of speech acts revealing and representing Milton’s wish to actualize the potential for salvation, *Paradise Regained* can be viewed as a narrative announcing and pursuing the coming messianic community led by the Son. I will illustrate the poem’s dialectical relation between this discourse and the act later in this chapter and offer more on the re-creation of integral selfhood and enlightened subjectivity in the next chapter on *Samson Agonistes*.

I. Reborn into Christ in Time

⁸⁸ Michael J. McClymond, “Jesus,” in *The Rivers of Paradise: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad as Religious Founders*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Michael J. McClymond (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 376. The quote of the Gospels account is from Matthew 3:10.

At the core of this messiah-led restoration lies the implied issue of continuity of lineage and the source of power, critical of legitimating both the returning Stuart king and the failed republican experiment. At the advent of the Restoration, the issue of legitimate succession of royal prerogative concerns the Stuarts after 1660 and Charles II particularly. The royalist rhetoric of legitimation certainly spares no efforts to reinvent “the hereditary principle and the sacredness of the king’s person.” In terms of reconstructing the monarchy that has been disrupted by the civil war, there are two “preferred” typologies that “greeted the return of Charles”:

In one, Charles was likened to Augustus, restoring peace, prosperity, and culture to a land blighted by civil war; in the other he was like King David, the young king protected by God through years of trouble and exile, but restored at last to his kingdom. The former appealed particularly to poets looking for a golden age of artistic achievement under enlightened patronage, the latter to clerics for whom this was one way of wresting from the radicals the language of divine guidance which had been so characteristic an idiom of the 1650s.⁸⁹

Reinvention means not only that the new royal rule is promoted as uninterruptedly realigned with the previous ones but also that this “explicit, even obsessive, concern to return to the past” is “to root everything in ancient constitutionalism.”⁹⁰ Rewriting of the past justifies the present return, while “ceremonies, traditions and iconographies” all have

⁸⁹ Paul Hammond, “King’s Two Bodies: Representations of Charles II,” in *The Making of Restoration Poetry* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 112.

⁹⁰ John Morrill, “Introduction,” 14, in idem, ed., *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s* (London: Collins & Brown, 1992), 8–14.

to be reinvented “as an act of recovery and restoration.”⁹¹ Milton weaves this kind of compulsive fable of empire building through Satan. In Books III and IV of *Paradise Regained*, Satan strongly bids Jesus to take control over the earthly kingdom that is his by right: “to a kingdom thou art born, ordained / To sit upon thy father David’s throne” (III. 152–3). This is, through Satan, Milton’s coded way of representing royalist ideology in which the claim to legal continuity and imperial assertion is legitimated by birth. Since as the king’s son and heir he owns the right to declare dominion, “to regain / Thy right by sitting still or thus retiring” is not an option (III. 163–4). Charles II therefore spares no effort to reestablish an uninterrupted link with his father, Charles I, deeming the Cromwellian regime of the Interregnum not just illegitimate but even nonexistent. “On 8 May 1660,” we are told, “the Convention Parliament declared Charles II to have been ‘undoubted King’ from the moment of his father’s execution on 30 January 1649,” as if the Interregnum “had technically never existed, and officially no time had elapsed between Regicide and Restoration.”⁹² With Stuart iconology depicting Charles I as King David and his sacrifice as martyrdom, the reasserted king Charles II proclaims his inheritance not just rightful but righteous, making his return necessary to right the previous wrong.

Fully aware of all sorts of anxiety behind the legitimation of sovereign power and the illegitimacy of a military regime that resulted from the regicide, Milton has to put in place his own version of authority more truthful and authentic than that of the earthly regime. The poet’s much more obscured and unmarked Jesus “promote[s] all truth” in

⁹¹ Hammond, “King’s Two Bodies,” 110.

⁹² David Smith, “The Struggle for New Constitutional and Institutional Forms,” in *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s*, ed. John Morrill (London: Collins & Brown, 1992), 15.

order “to do / What might be public good” (l. 205, 203–4) for the present and the future. Intriguingly, “the public good,” as republican John Goodwin cautions, should not be confused with the wishes of the people, because, if the people invested with power become depraved and corrupt, they would forfeit their power and ruin everyone else. This concept became the chief political objective and “remained the doctrine of leading republicans . . . throughout the Interregnum.”⁹³ Milton conveys the similar idea in his “Of Education” in terms such as “great good to this Island” or “the good of this Nation,” whereas in *Eikonoklastes* (1650, 2nd ed.) he refers to “the People” who appear to be ravished by “the Kings picture,” the frontispiece of Charles I at his prayers to *Eikon Basilike*, as “an inconstant, irrational, and Image-doting rabble” (*CPW*, 3: 601). Similarly, as the poem unfolds, references to Yahweh’s liberating work on earth, such as Jesus persevering with the forty-day trial in the wilderness, are also targeting the wavering crowd who gather in the desert looking for the chosen one. These references produce effects reminiscent of the act of Exodus leading up to the desert dwelling and wandering. Milton at once directs us toward the world where and when God is “communicable” to man and man “serviceable to heaven’s King” (l. 419, 421). This typology, which sets up the gloomy opening of *Paradise Lost*, is reinvoked here to symbolize the hope for another victorious Red Sea crossing. So, what is the public good, then? For Milton, a major part of his agenda is carrying through the republican ideal by dismantling the Stuart mythology of sacred kingship, which deploys the Davidic image in its service. However, as Goodwin cautions, the risk of personal corruption from the temptation of worldly gain lurks in the mind of the masses, while the conditional

⁹³ John Goodwin, *Right and Might Well Met* (1649), qtd in Jonathan Scott, “The English Republican Imagination,” in *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s*, ed. John Morrill (London: Collins & Brown, 1992), 37.

word *might*, which Milton adds to the wish with reservation, furthermore testifies to the failed experience of the republican government. What the godly considered to be the public good has failed to be embraced by most people who are deeply rooted in the ancient custom of kingship. This uncertainty immediately undercuts the hope for exodus and redemption on the immediate horizon that the poem launches into. This is especially the case when the poem promises that “the undoubted Son of God” will defeat the tempter “[t]hrough all temptation” to re-create “Eden raised in the waste wilderness” (l. 11, 5, 7). From the viewpoint of the reader’s response, it nevertheless presents an element of instability in the text, and this textual uncertainty may well elicit in the reader’s mind some pondering whether or not there may be any possibility of Jesus faltering. Thus, Milton’s rhetoric compels readers to make a wise decision and meanwhile draws them closer to their infallible leader. In a subtle way, Milton recasts the relationship between the people and Jesus their heavenly king, as the body and the head, in such a way that the instability of the text actually involves and invites the reader to partake in the Son’s journey.

Milton’s focus on the single man “worthy of his birth divine” (l. 141) who is to restore the fallen world is definitely provocative. The Stuart court’s mythmaking of the royal prerogative to consecrate the rule of Charles II is in stark contrast to Milton’s Messiah as one that aims at building a coming community, a redeemed world, with the support of the common people, as the poem opens with John the Baptist calling them for repentance. With a voice so urgent in gospel terms, Milton’s epic narrator introduces the reader immediately to a different kind of history, one that is drastically different from the Stuart iconography of divine kingship, the language of which emphasizes the authoritative representation of a single man, the king himself, as God’s viceroy on earth. Although

Milton's version also stresses continuity, the focus is distinctly different. His late poems prominently figure a history of sacredness linking Adam through Jesus to men. "All" are invited to partake in their savior's grand reconstruction as an act of recovery and restoration for their own good. Through sharpening their perceptions, cleansing physical entities, and making affective commitments to rectifying their ontological damnation, Jesus's subjects are, it is anticipated, to embody their redeemer's strength and resoluteness while forming the enigmatic messianic community. This contrast becomes even starker and more provocative when Milton's messiah and the redeemer's community are compared to Charles II's lewd behavior and Restoration politics.

Milton thematizes the test of faith through his hero's facing of temptations in the desert and reminds his readers of the frailty of the belief that is so much a part of the wilderness story. He also underscores the challenge that the Son encounters: the people whom he intends to reform and recruit may resemble those who, once liberated in the desert, subsequently wavered and defaulted on their belief in the Christian God, as "they fell / Idolatrous" (I. 443-44). The sense of perseverance and victory is accompanied by doubtfulness and idolatry. Doubting and wavering in the face of uncertainty and the unknown is the theme that definitely provided a contemporary ring for Milton and his reader, as the crowd welcomed the return of the exiled king, the institution that the republican experiments sought but failed to abolish. Yet, with English people living through the painful memory of civil wars and regicide amid all forms of disruption of their ties to familiar habits and conventions under the institution of kingship, Milton's recasting must surpass all historical contingencies and transcend his rival panegyrists' seemingly quasi-divine choices of equating Augustus or King David with Charles. A more enlightening

continuum, different from King Charles II's claim of his rightful heritage, is to be desired. In *Paradise Lost* and its sequel, *Paradise Regained*, Adam, Moses, and John the Baptist take center stage to precede Jesus, who is to amend and accomplish all things that they have left off in order to serve God and redeem men. This is a lineage more divine than the royalist's propaganda. This divinely sanctioned lineage promises restoration of the paradisaical ideal that accentuates and optimizes humanity's potential. Apparently this is a very powerful prospect that the Son is carrying out, one that not only puts to an end worldly monarchies but also defies historical contingencies. This is clear as we hear the Son refuting Satan's temptation:

when my season comes to sit
 On *David's* Throne, it should be like a tree
 Spreading and over-shadowing all the Earth,
 Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash
 All Monarchies besides throughout the world,
 And of my Kingdom there shall be no end. (*PR*, IV. 146–51)

Thus, anyone participating in the Son's community will undoubtedly be part of the more sublime hereditary line.

In this sense, both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* echo and corroborate each other in forming this hidden but sacred alliance for deliverance. The Son is leading the populace en route through the second exodus for deliverance, while engaging his followers in repairing the ruins and re-erecting Eden from the wilderness. John's conducting of his ministry by gathering the people to cleanse the body at the beginning of *Paradise Regained* paves the way for Jesus to conduct his public act of redeeming and reasserting the rightful

kingship that is worthy of leading the people. It is actually meant to cleanse and reconstitute the body politic, the nation. As Hammond also suggests: “The body is being used to fashion alternatives to the prevailing discourse of power.”⁹⁴ That this kind of discourse reinvents its own symbolic order for the Son’s followers is meant, on the one hand, to encourage and empower the English people and, on the other, to combat the overarching royalist discourse.

However, the typology of the Red Sea crossing is also part of the discourse that Oliver Cromwell of the Protectorate particularly favored. Addressing the Barebone’s Parliament in 1653, he spoke of the English nation being “at the edge of promises and prophecies.” He then recalled Psalm 68: “He will bring His people again from the depths of the Sea, as once he led Israel through the Red Sea,” thus casting himself in the role of Moses.⁹⁵ Beneath the seemingly calm surface and cool rhetoric of *Paradise Regained* lies the complex battle of ideology, but for Milton, living in such a climate of harsh censorship any apparent provocation to the authority might produce a life-threatening outcome. To avoid further memorializing anything associated with the Interregnum and the Regicide in order to keep himself out of any more danger while presenting his own version of exodus and return in an untainted way, Milton has to maneuver through the troubled water of rival discourses very strategically. Milton’s evoking of Exodus is only brief and ambiguous, laying the emphasis on the second act, that of Jesus, rather than on the first act, that of Yahweh. Yet Cromwell constantly appealed to biblical references in support of his antimonarchical views and “in particular yearned for Israel’s days before the onset of

⁹⁴ Hammond, “The King’s Two Bodies,” 110.

⁹⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell’s Letters and Speeches, with Elucidations*, 4 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897). Vol. 3, 66, 67.

monarchical rule.”⁹⁶ In that speech, he anticipated that “when the Lord shall set-up the glory of the Gospel Church, it shall be a gathering of people as ‘out of deep waters,’ ‘out of the multitude of waters.’”⁹⁷

Therefore, “the Jordan is not just water,”⁹⁸ as the recent memory of religious controversy spoke volumes about political turbulence in Milton’s time. Milton’s representation of dissenting voices must remain covert, and the purging of the sacred is pregnant with political implications. Baptismal immersion in the water brings attention to the body, which is never a guarded issue or topic for Charles II when it pertained to his sexual behavior. Quickly the poem moves from the scene of the people’s gathering out of water from baptism, which is the poem’s starting point, and zeros in on the identity of Jesus as Messiah. As Milton omits Christ’s passion as a centerpiece for the epic, some readers find fault with the work for missing the crucial event for redemption. But Milton refrains from subjecting his hero to the people’s gaze yet once more. He also resists refreshing people’s memory of the beheading of Charles I in Whitehall, which many Londoners witnessed and were shocked by, thus avoiding the royalist claim of the king’s martyrdom. Nor would Milton wish to associate his hero with Charles II’s lewd, degrading behavior of publicly displaying his sexuality for his subjects’ gaze. The means and end of representation matters, as Milton instructs. Charles II’s behavior, deliberately or not, does undermine the reconstructed edifice of his sovereign sacred body. Comporting himself in this way, he

⁹⁶ Naomi Tadmor, *The Social Universe of the English Bible: Scripture, Society, and Culture in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 163.

⁹⁷ Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 67.

⁹⁸ This is borrowed from the title of Chapter 2 of John Crossan’s *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

makes himself more accessible and available to his subjects.⁹⁹ In contrast, the end of Jesus's cause, as Milton represents it, is not about himself but about the people he may inspire.

The reformation of the subject is manifested through the reformation of the body—the “mass of sinful flesh” (I. 162) of individuals as well as the body politic, the nation as a whole—and its “passions” or emotions (II. 467, 472). The reforming of vision and the purification of the body feature prominently in both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* as the program of restoration. There in the epic about knowing, exploring, and revealing humanity's potential, as embodied in the prelapsarian Adam and Eve, individuals learn to acquire a magnified and elevated vision as a crucial component and a first step toward recovering the lost paradise and effecting regeneration. Here in *Paradise Regained*, an epic about repairing and restoring human potentiality, the discerning vision is put into test and practice toward the end of renewal and recovery. The Son's followers will pursue bodily purification, as they begin their allegiance by immersing themselves in the River Jordan with this obscure person that John calls upon as Messiah, who is to reconstitute his community. This reforming of the body politic implies not only the purification of the individuals' bodies but also the governing organ of the nation.

Paradise Regained thus presents what Milton sees as one of the last possibilities for cultural reform in the form of the Son of God's exemplary, self-exploratory enlightenment for the sake of cultural reform. This reforming of the body politic implies not only the purification of the bodies of individuals but also that of the nation. As the Son acknowledges his own mission of inclusiveness, “God hath now sent his living oracle/ Into

⁹⁹ Kevin Sharpe, “‘Thy Longing Country's Darling and Desire’: Aesthetics, Sex, and Politics in the England of Charles II,” in *Politics, Transgression, and Representation at the Court of Charles II*, ed. Julia Marciari Alexander and Catharine MacLeod (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 1–32.

the world, to teach his final will" (I. 460–61). All who are to embrace this God-sent oracle will be included; being all inclusive, the "final will," while bidding those believers to embark on their path to reform, is an act to rekindle the zeal for renewal. Obviously Milton has in mind all the rhetorical hubbub regarding Charles II's return from exile. As opposed to the Son's liberatory rhetoric and (re)public mission, Charles, who after the Interregnum ended regained more support for his return, had to tackle uncertain but adversarial political circumstances. Milton's employment of Satan's allurements is a poetic imagining and representation of the king's attempt to take hold and control of power. Nevertheless, the Son, sent as the "living oracle into the world," as Milton astutely emphasizes, possesses a dual nature. While his status as a living being indicates Jesus's coterminous existence with rejuvenating Nature, living in the world implies his temporal historicity that will be confined by time and subjected to degradation. Appearing both as an eternal being and a public figure living at this particular historical juncture among his people, Milton's hero lays bare his private moments with inner thoughts and emotions during his pursuit of renewal throughout this poem. Just as *Lycidas* accentuates inner emotions, *Paradise Regained* represents Jesus's private experience through public and political events. This public experience turned private is the poet's strategy to build connections with his contemporaries and include them in the anticipated community of saints.

It is this public voice that Milton creates not only to have Jesus's "spirit of truth . . . to dwell / in pious hearts" (I. 462–63) but also to persuade all people to embody that "inward oracle" (I. 461) as if they join in Christ's body, thus multiplying an enlightened private experience in all his followers. The baptism scene at the opening of the poem highlights the essence of all in one, one in all. Consoling the oppressed conscience with a vision to enliven

the spirit of the English people and a hope to exert further energy for restoration, Milton projects a growing chorus of voices through a single one, Jesus's, that answers the murmuring in the wilderness and wishes to address the public good. The Son's voice from his corporeal presence extends and far exceeds Adam's in *Paradise Lost*, as his uncertain voice seeks simply "an individual solace" (*PL*, IV. 486) both at his creation in Eden and after the fall. Nevertheless, the Son manifests his own voice through salvific words and deeds by substantiating the voices from above on high as in God's "solemn message" (*PR*, I. 133). His salvific efficacy is further confirmed by the presence of the angelic "hymns" (I. 169), "odes" (I. 182), and "vigils" (I. 18). Again, the language or speech of sacred modes reiterates the Son's potency and future act, while beyond that, by extension, John, "the great proclaimer," calling for people's participation in Jesus's cause, helps materialize the prophecy. Moreover, realizing his own divine identity, if not immediately the nature of his mission, Jesus elevates himself from being "low of parentage" (I. 235) to the role of the Messiah through his own redemptive cause, ultimately vanquishing Satan's equivocal and duplicitous discourse.

As regards the lineage of this energizing force, I want also to emphasize the issue of continuity and legitimacy of kingship that lies at the core of the Restoration settlement. Dislodging the Stuart iconography of the king's two bodies that accentuates the patriarchal discourse of the royal prerogative power, Milton's epic sequel intends to incorporate voices of the masses and offers his reader a different path to recovery. Obviously, Milton believes that the return of King Charles is tantamount to further downfall and not recovery of lost enlightenment. The poem is not merely a politically oppositional narrative of Restoration but also an instructive corrective to the libertinism that prevails in Restoration England

and especially in Charles II's court. More significantly, this anti-Restoration poem acutely provides a different model of kingship. Composed during the years when restricting measures were imposed on dissenters and Nonconformists while "renewed fears of popery or Roman Catholicism" were widespread, it boldly emphasizes the public ministry of Jesus, a true dissenter of his time.¹⁰⁰ Presented furthermore as the second Moses, who grows bold to defy Pharaoh's demands, Jesus is anticipated by John the Baptist and proves himself a self-exploratory, true savior who is more spiritually perceptive and physically abstinent in leading the flock than the English sovereign.

In many of his tracts and poems, Milton regards monarchy as the seat of popery and idolatry, the ultimate evil that hinders the reformation and restoration of true liberty. To that end, the civil war and the subsequent republican experiments tentatively succeeded in suppressing that "papist" institution. Even though the experiments failed, Milton nevertheless attempts a further emancipation and reform after the Restoration. He understands that the problem lies not only in the monarchical institution but also in the people whose minds are locked in centuries-old habits—they yearn to be ruled and have no capacity to govern themselves. As the crowds appear in the poem, Milton treats them as a doting public fond of believing in and doubting the appearances; they now rejoice in hearing about Jesus's ministry and now panic at his tentative absence. The ease with which they can be swayed resembles the fickle nature of the people in the wilderness, also echoing Milton's republican ethos. God's Englishmen, constantly likened to the children of Israel in early modern England, had their opportunity once—with all the social and

¹⁰⁰ David Loewenstein, ed., "Prefatory Note to *Of True Religion, Haeresie, Schism, and Toleration*," in *John Milton Prose: Major Writings on Liberty, Politics, Religion, and Education* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 448. Milton later addressed the widespread concern in *Of True Religion* published in 1673.

political experiments during the civil wars—to explore the potential and to build their own kingdom. They could have left “modern bondage” and relived “ancient liberty,”¹⁰¹ as Milton’s republican devotions instructed. Having experienced the civil war, the unprecedented beheading of the king, and the formulating of republican experiments and their subsequent abandonment, Milton reenacts and reimagines what was once celebrated but lost during his time. As I will show, the forces of prophecy and apostasy rival each other as a model for revival, whereas the self-conscious return to advocating individual liberty of conscience and public sovereignty combats both the institutionalization of irrationality and ephemerality and the royal prerogative as an institution.

II. Leaky Bodies and Material Virtues

The reconfiguration of restoration commences with the cleansing and consecration of the body. It comprises the reformation of the body politic as one of the central issues. Milton’s program takes on the body politic while seeking to bring about revitalization to English culture. Some of Milton’s poems, from his early Latin exercises on the Gunpowder Plot, through *Lycidas*, to his three last great works, all feature the body in various forms and transformations and share a common ground. Body is the vessel of enlivened animus or salvific spirit; to achieve that elevated, salvific state, it is also necessary to cleanse and cultivate its carrier. In the political arena both the Tudor and the Stuart sovereigns understood the body’s significance and exploited the discourse of its potential. Ranging from the cult of the Virgin Queen (Elizabeth I), to the patriarchy and divine right of kingship (James I, hiding his homosexuality), to platonic love (Charles I), to open sexuality

¹⁰¹ *Paradise Lost*, “The Verse”

as a sign for vitality and regeneration (Charles II), each ruler deployed different discourses and strategies in order to mystify his or her royal cult, signifying his or her special distinction and acquiring iconographical power. These discourses contributed to the theory of the king's two bodies,¹⁰² and the main purpose of this mystification was to secure and popularize each sovereign's rule. Milton's engagement with this issue not only subverts its signification of the contemporaneous agenda but also dislodges the internal interlocking of a long tradition of royal prerogative. Appropriating Stuart political signification with the Son's reformative act, Milton is quite aware of the potential risk of putting the Messiah in the same position as a worldly sovereign that not only his late poems but all his life had been combatting. Therefore, the poem's *quiet* ending, where "he unobserved / Home to his mother's house private returned" (IV. 638–9), I argue, is to depose that attempt and reposition the Messiah as a community leader for the masses. Along with his previous absence in Book II, the ending prevents our readerly thinking from even associating the Son with a political sovereign. I will focus more on all three poems' endings in their own regard in the epilogue of this project.

So how is a poem engaged with the political agenda? Almost immediately, as *Paradise Regained* unfolds the promise of return with "Eden raised in the waste wilderness" (I. 7), readers find themselves in the wilderness of Jordan, with the focus on the images of water and desert. It might be tempting to relate these images to the dismal political circumstances of post-Restoration England, correlating the desert with the English court and the cleansing water with the godly or dissenters. This interpretation is feasible.

¹⁰² For the strategies centering on the body that Charles II utilizes to legitimate his reign, see Paul Hammond, "The King's Two Bodies: Representations of Charles II," in *The Making of Restoration Poetry* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 107–136. Also, Sharpe, "'Thy Longing Country's Darling and Desire,'" 1–32.

Yet the text ruminates over the significant issue of prophesy and apostasy, represented through John's urgent proclamation and Satan's luring machinations: "That [John's eschatological exhortation] heard the adversary, who roving still / About the world, at that assembly famed" (I. 33-4), followed by Satan's convening his cohort to devise yet another plot of subversion. The image of the desert in *Paradise Regained* manifests itself as one type of "fitter soil" (PL, XI. 98, 262) that facilitates burgeoning ideas to flourish and disseminate. It ultimately signifies a point of reentry and return and serves as a fertile ground for rebirth and renewal.

First and foremost, the kingdom of God promoting renewal on earth is represented in *Paradise Regained* through spatial and geographic tropes. The desert, that "victorious field" (I. 9), is a significant site that recalls the hope and promise of divine grace, while the River Jordan in the wilderness, where Jesus is submerged for baptism and joined by the masses, is another that multiplies Jesus's private experience made public and accessible to all. The desert, of scriptural significance as seen in *Exodus*, on the one hand, projects history pregnant with faith and idolatry, political oppression and providential guidance. To put it in Milton's political context, the trope criticizes the desolate condition of England under the Stuart reign, while conversely reminding people of the hope for liberation. The River Jordan, on the other hand, while viewed as a *topos* of political resonance, deserves special attention, though its significance has apparently eluded most critics. Milton uses the word "Jordan" eight times throughout the poem,¹⁰³ definitely trying to draw our attention to the locale that symbolizes more than just bringing about the remission of sins. A site that emanates potential for recovery, Jordan bridges the mundane and the divine. Around it we

¹⁰³ I. 24, 119, 329; II. 2, 25, 62; III.438; IV. 510.

hear God's voice and divine manifestations hovering above the water, witness the baptismal rituals in "the flood Jordan" (I. 24), and experience the peregrinations in the deserts of Jordan with John the Baptist, Jesus, and Satan. These Miltonic devices indicate tangled, complex connections between religion and politics, constancy and apostasy, since all of them represent different types of associations of faith and perception.

In Book I Milton references Jordan the cleansing site three times, and around it, Milton limns different pairings and repairings of characters—with John supplementing Jesus, and then God discountenancing Satan, and finally, Jesus confronting and overcoming Satan. In the first pairing John, an ante-Christ acting as the precursor to the Messiah, brings up several issues of great significance regarding body and authority:

Now had the great proclaimer with a voice
 More awful than the sound of trumpet, cried
 Repentance, and heaven's kingdom nigh at hand
 To all baptized: to his great baptism flocked
 With awe the regions round, and with them came
 From Nazareth the son of Joseph deemed
 To the flood Jordan, came as then obscure,
 Unmarked, unknown; but him the Baptist soon
 Descried, divinely warned, and witness bore
 As to his worthier . . .

. . . nor was long

His witness unconfirmed: on him baptized
 Heaven opened, and in likeness of a dove

The Spirit descended, while the Father's voice
 From heaven pronounced him his beloved Son.

(l. 18–32)

An extensive deployment and organization of the crowd is being conducted, this time not for the revolution against King Charles I, later beheaded, nor for the welcoming of the return of Charles II, but for someone unknown and unmarked: a lowly commoner. John, a leader of an eschatological baptizing movement, speaks of “a ‘Coming One’ who would carry out the judgment.”¹⁰⁴ Judging, as Lyotard reminds us, is closely related to making distinctions and above all tied to ends and closure.¹⁰⁵ Jesus is both alpha and omega, of beginning and end. With Milton, Jesus plays an even more complex role in treating first and last things. John appears to be more concerned with ends, while the poem aims to invoke an originary force from those who would announce their allegiance to the messianic cause. I argue this is truly what the opening of the poem implies and promises, raising of Eden in the “waste wilderness”: that the imminence is not of the end, but the new beginning.

Yet the potential for a radically different political or historical outcome is unpredictable. Any unstructured, unscrupulous formation is cautioned against, as we quickly see in the opening of the poem the anxiety of the crowd prevailing. What Milton does to intensify that caution is to set up the tension between the anticipation of the messianic and the dissipation of the Satanic upheaval, while calling for people's support to materialize the Messiah's arrival and his promise. The crowd joins in libation or immersion in the same water where Jesus receives confirmation of his identity. Hence, as the first step

¹⁰⁴ McClymond, “Jesus,” 376.

¹⁰⁵ Jean-François Lyotard, *Enthusiasm: The Kantian Critique of History*, trans. Georges van den Abbeele (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

of renewal, from cleansing to the consecration of the body, the collective body of the people needs to be conjoined to their savior's. The immersion of the Son's body is corroborated by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, confirming Jesus's divine association while God's voice declares the Son's active messianic status and duties. This is a significant moment because it affirms that from the beginning, "God and man cooperate in recovery of the lost paradise" with the Satanic scheming lurking behind.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, this preliminary act, the poem relates, is also part of "deeds / Above heroic" (I. 14–5). The collective outcome, the epic narrator tells the reader, will be a different kind of history from those of the rulers or victors, one that will not be "unrecorded left through many an age" (I. 16) since it is "[w]orthy t' have not remained so long unsung" (I. 17). This narratorial comment is later refocused in Satan's sarcastic reaction: "In what degree or meaning thou art called / The Son of God, which bears no single sense; / The Son of God I also am, or was, / And if I was, I am; relation stands." Thus Satan concludes, "All men are Sons of God" (IV. 516–20).

Nevertheless, the issue of messianic history and the validity of the Son's identity are not raised simply out of convention. The poem was published at a time when the regicides were relentlessly persecuted while relentless, constrictive religious policies continued to impose on the dissenters and Nonconformists. The sons of God, regardless of affiliation, but especially the godly, suffered tremendous political oppression. Religious intolerance emanated from a barrage of repressive statutes called the Clarendon Code, which "severely curtailed the civil and religious rights of Protestants who conscientiously objected to

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Wittreich, "Review" of *Milton's Messiah: The Son of God in the Works of John Milton*, by Russell M. Hillier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 186.

certain features of Anglicanism.”¹⁰⁷ Understood in the context of Charles II’s Restoration England, John’s call to his followers to cleanse and renew their relationship with the redeemer in the wilderness may antagonize the sensitive nerves of the authorities. What has been elided in the text is that, as Jesus is anticipated by John, the parallel of their fate has been covertly sneaked in. Jesus remains “unmarked,” a pun pointing both to his social status and the condition of his body before persecution, when it was marked on the cross.

As I mentioned earlier, Milton’s deliberate avoidance of the Passion scene actually constitutes a significant poetic tactic that not only signifies the Son’s restorative maneuver but also launches his own critique of the Stuart propaganda of kingship. While the royalists attempted to associate the beheaded King Charles I with King David of Israel and Charles’s suffering and death with martyrdom, Milton tries to banish the royalist propaganda that appropriates biblical language and imagery for their tentatively lost cause. Throughout the poem, though mostly in Book III, in his kingdoms-of-the-world temptation, Satan time and again refers to Jesus as being “ordained / To sit upon thy father David’s throne” (152–3), thus goading him to be more zealous about taking action. By referencing biblical history, “thy father David’s house / Led captive, and Jerusalem laid waste” (282–3), Satan urges the Son to waste no time in assuming his role and power for domination. Interestingly enough, we should note that, unlike the royalists’ claim and self-justification of the deceased king’s connection to authority, it is Satan who confirms the history and lineage of Jesus and tempts him to act as the Son wishes. It is also worth noting that “[t]he application of the biblical story . . . to contemporary political events was common among both supporters and

¹⁰⁷ Robert Bliss, *Restoration England: Politics and Government 1660–1688* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 32. See also N. H. Keeble, *“Settling the Peace of the Church”: 1662 Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

opponents of the king.”¹⁰⁸ John Dryden’s political satire, *Absalom and Achitophel*, published in 1681 after *Paradise Regained*, draws upon scriptural texts like 2 Samuel 13–18 and allegorizes the Exclusion Crisis of 1678–81 by casting Charles II as King David.¹⁰⁹ The battle of asserting the ancient heritage continues, whereas the political stance and influence of *Paradise Regained* undoubtedly persists in the arena of contention.

More important, Milton unequivocally revises Christian thought and Reformation theology. According to Regina Schwartz, the “victory over sin and death was signaled by the Resurrection, not just confirmation that an atonement by the Crucifixion had taken place, but also part of an atonement that included both the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.”¹¹⁰ However, in the Gospels Mark records John’s death in such a way as to cunningly show “especially how both [John and Jesus] were put to death at the insistence of others by a reluctant and almost guiltless civil authority—Antipas for one, Pilate for the other.” Adopting Mark’s account, Milton intriguingly critiques not only the authority’s persecution of the godly but also royalists and court supporters who have endorsed the persecution of the dissenters and Nonconformists. Overall, this select scene intricately and intriguingly indicates the tendency of royal prerogative to “smother politics in piety and rebellion in religion.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Keith Walker, ed., *John Dryden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 884, n. 177.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., ed., 177–205. See also John Hale, “England as Israel in Milton’s Writings,” *EMLS* 2.2 (1996): 3.1–54 <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/02-2/halemil2.html>>.

¹¹⁰ Regina M. Schwartz, “Redemption and *Paradise Regained*,” in *Milton Studies: “Paradise Regained” in Context: Genre, Politics, Religion*, ed. Albert C. Labriola and David Loewenstein, XLII (2003), 26–49. 38–39.

¹¹¹ Crossan, *Jesus*, 35–36, 37.

So far, I have explored several fronts with which Milton's project of renewal engages. These involve mainly the poem's internal poetics, including the ideology of both the flesh and the wilderness stories and the external diatribe against not only the Restoration settlement but also the meaning of messianic kingship in contrast to the mystic cults that the Tudor and Stuart crowns have employed to sustain their rule. Milton therefore sets a very high standard for his own restoration program and demands much from his readers. Though *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* each tell a different story of "how paradise is recovered,"¹¹² their similar assignments to regain the lost paradise and achieve the newness of life demand that all the participating subjects endure extraordinary trials and gain discerning visions. To understand each individual's relationship with God and that of the Church¹¹³ with the kingdom of God, *Paradise Regained* harkens back to the origin of the flesh, where memory and experience reside. Just as *Paradise Lost* retells the Genesis story that God infuses life into Adam and Eve and has an archangel expounding to Adam the possibility of sublimating their body to a purer form to attain a more enlightened life, so does *Paradise Regained* advance the discourse of the body in order to illuminate a state of mind for the purpose of advocating for prophecy and preventing humanity from falling into apostasy. The choice of salvation or damnation is then tied to the body politic, which I will examine further on through Satan's temptations.

While the continual elevation to a new level of life is promised as long as a person fulfills divine expectations, *Paradise Regained* highlights the belief in the apocalypse that now finds its expression in the body, the seat of zeal and desire, reason and emotions. If the

¹¹² Joseph Wittreich, "Review," 187.

¹¹³ The word "church" has its Old Testament meaning derived from Greek, *ekklesia*, meaning "assembly." Hence the people, the assembly, was the church.

kingdom of God can be located (and Milton and many others had considered England to be that locale), then the Christian body will be the site of their belief, since the yearnings of the body have been tied to belief and disbelief, worship and irreligion, since the Exodus. The result of overcoming the temptations, as Milton implies, is more than just returning to “Eden raised in the waste wilderness” (I. 7) but is also regaining the divinity that God has bestowed on man. In Book I, God reminds Gabriel that the Son of God is to be exercised to “verify that solemn message late” (I. 133), including Jesus’s “birth divine” (I. 141) and his mission to “earn salvation for the sons of men” (I. 167). Jesus will undergo the trial in the desert as pronounced, the trial of his uninstructed faith, and the test of his restorative plan. While God confirms this patriarchal relationship, the reformation of the body becomes a new covenant for obtaining the newness of life. While in the poem the whole process of trial occurs in a less administered world and in less constrained condition, a world reminding us of England’s topsy-turvydom, Milton strongly encourages his English readers to identify their own circumstances with Jesus’s or “righteous Job[’s]” (I. 425). They should understand that, even through turbulent times like the civil war in their past or the persecutions of Nonconformists in their present, they have witnessed or undergone the trial and still remain “communicable” with their restorer, who will reverse their “lost bliss” (I. 419) as long as they stand fast and maintain their liberty of conscience. Through Jesus, who on behalf of his subjects will “conquer Sin and Death the two grand foes, / By humiliation and strong sufferance” (I. 159–60), “God and man cooperate in recovery of the lost paradise.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Wittreich, “Review,” 186.

Previously I have talked about the originary and generative dimension of the flesh in Jesus's restorative act; in the following, I want to explore this aspect more by focusing on the relationship between the body and the messianic nature. Milton brings his readers back to the time before Jesus was being crucified, as yet "unmarked," and the time when John the Baptist had been incarcerated and executed, that is, before their bodies had suffered injustice. Yet the imminence of suffering lurks behind. Here, reforming the body is hinted at as equivalent to reforming people's beliefs and, more broadly, their culture and politics as a whole. That is also the time when the form of the church is in flux and under the control of the Roman emperor. Milton's efforts—to carry out his ideal of reforming Englishmen so that they become "saints"—have not ceased.¹¹⁵ His endeavor is not a nostalgic revisiting of the culture's tradition but an active re-searching for the originary energy of its people. In this sense, food that helps the recuperation of the physical body is not enough to bring about the path to the recovery of what has truly been lost. The intention behind Satan's extensive exhortations to Jesus is simply to downplay the magnitude of the loss, to keep him cultivating and craving physical but not spiritual revival. Satan is maneuvering with control and manipulation tactics. Milton's presentation is double-edged. With Jesus he wants his reader to move forward and make progress on descrying ambiguities and making the right decisions. With Satan, the master seat of "apostasy" (I. 146) and the voice of imperial vision that maintains "all our power" not "[t]o be infringed . . . / In this fair empire" (I. 61–3), the poet intends to equate him to a king's worldly possessions.

Before establishing the relationship between language and healing through naming, I want to bring in a different sense of the word *unmarked* that pertains to the status of the

¹¹⁵ Christopher Hill, *The Collected Essays*, vol. 1: *Writing and Revolution in 17th Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 164–5.

redeemer. While it clearly designates Jesus's physical circumstances and social status, Renaissance alchemical philosopher Paracelsus makes the point that there is something else. In his writing on signature as a method of understanding the namer and the referent, Paracelsus writes that "[n]othing is without a sign . . . since nature does not release anything in which it has not marked what is to be found within that thing." Exploring the signature as a science of revealing the hidden divine nature, Agamben observes that it, "like all knowledge, is a consequence of sin, insofar as Adam, in Eden, was absolutely unmarked . . . and would have remained so had he not 'fallen into nature,' which leaves nothing unmarked."¹¹⁶ The human Jesus, the becoming of the messianic, has not fallen into nature and so remains unbound. The poem enacts the process of his understanding of his own free status.

Throughout the poem the coupling of body and morality abounds. Self-governing or loosening becomes centrally concerned with the reformation and restoration of the lost paradise. Milton's past attempts at reform are now refigured and displaced into Christ's resoluteness, his standing fast even with incomplete knowledge, his "communion with the will and timing of God."¹¹⁷ In *Paradise Regained* Milton's hero shows his utmost strength in discipline and self-governance, endurance of bodily deprivation, and patience in waiting for due time. On the contrary, at court the licentious libertinism, lack of self-regulation, and transgression attracted both popularity and criticism. Some court writers also perform private erotic pursuits in public forms, and Milton considers that doing so is some sort of

¹¹⁶ Paracelsus is quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D'Isanto and Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Book, 2009), 33.

¹¹⁷ Blair Hoxby, "Milton's Steps in Time," *SEL* 38.1 (1998), 149–72. 170.

“libertine ethos”¹¹⁸ and deems it to be “the ‘injury and outrage’ of the privileged classes,” as James Turner writes.¹¹⁹ “In 1660,” according to Christopher Hill, “when forward youths were competing to write panegyrics on Charles II . . . , Milton [was] conspicuous by [his] silence.” The poet “publicly attacked the Stuarts with the venom [he] had shown in *Eikonaklastes* and the *Ready and Easy Way*.” Certainly, in view of his earlier tracts advocating regicide, he would have faced a dire fate, but with his friends’ help Milton was “saved from the hanging, disembowelling and quartering” and ultimately from execution.¹²⁰ As Kevin Sharpe has noted, cavalier poets like Rochester, Waller, and Dryden write about Charles’s so-called appetites in defense of his sexual freedom, while “contemporary verse connects the king’s immorality with possible irreligion.”¹²¹

In contrast, as Charles II’s court becomes the realm of the licentious libertinism and lack of self-regulation, Jesus maintains his self-discipline, having his mind set to do “[w]hat might be public good” and “serviceable to the heaven’s King” (I. 20–25, 421). Milton sends out a strong message of his disagreement with Restoration politics and the court culture. Now the narrator assumes a public voice, proclaiming

Send thy Messiah forth, the time is come;
Behold the kings of the earth how they oppress
Thy chosen, to what highth their power unjust
They have exalted . . . (II. 43–6)

¹¹⁸ George Haggery, quoted in Jeremy W. Webster, *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court: Politics, Drama, Sexuality*, 4.

¹¹⁹ James Grantham Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), x.

¹²⁰ Hill, *The Collected Essays*, vol.1. 164.

¹²¹ Sharpe, “‘Thy Longing Country’s Darling and Desire,’” 15–17.

Here, accentuating justice and deliverance, Milton reenacts the typology of wilderness and the River Jordan as a token of liberty and faith in opposition to tyranny and oppression. As human frailty is met with divine humanity, and idolatry with faith, Milton's model shows his unequivocal response to the nation's negligence and the king's irreligion. Knowing that his path is set up for serving the public good, Milton's hero explores his mission by reforming his mind and body. Through standing fast and resisting the temptations of desire for physical satisfactions and political power, the hero is able to materialize providential expectations and realize his own potential where Adam and Eve and the assembly in the desert have failed. No doubt in Milton's mind monarchy is the greater evil, a tyrannous entity that tends to enslave people's minds. Over the centuries, the royal prerogative, while utilizing the theories of the divine right of kings and the king's two bodies, has usurped Christ's power on earth. In contrast, the wavering crowd then in the desert no doubt rested their belief in God on senses and appetites; the waving London crowd now has also irresistibly been drawn to "Restoration extravagance and indecency,"¹²² their joys displayed at the parade and fireworks that welcomed King Charles II's return. Satan's trickery and manipulation is made parallel with the "Restoration extravagance and indecency" of Charles II's reign. All of these issues Milton's hero takes to task in wrestling with the competing ideology of senses and body politic that the royalists promote and claim with their own literary propagandas.

III. Naming the Self and the Messianic Community

¹²² Sharpe, "Thy Longing Country's Darling and Desire," 19.

Paradise Regained is the poem about the Son's naming of his selfhood and his ideal community. In other words, through performative discourse that taps into the potential of amplifying and multiplying his messianic nature, Jesus identifies his own subjectivity, and through that self-identification and self-reference, he comes to terms with the nature and the topology of the redeemer's community. Compared to Adam's naming of created things in nature, the second Adam's naming is more about performing human potential than identifying divine nature. *Paradise Regained*, therefore, is a poem not so much recalling the past as reinventing the un-presupposed present to reach a better future. This process makes Jesus's appeal to discourse all the more challenging because his naming is performing, fulfilling, and actualizing not only his cause but also the potential of those who pledge allegiance to it. Naming in Milton's paradisaical texts plays an important role in repairing the ruins. These two acts, naming and healing, may seem unrelated in the first instance, but I argue that they converge in a complex way. Although critics have pointed out ample allusions in *Paradise Regained* to *Paradise Lost*, I will further explore later the dimension of the speech act, the "potency and act"¹²³ of naming and healing.

Therefore, *Paradise Regained* is about how Jesus becomes Christ, about how he is different from God to the extent that he pursues laying claim to his originality that all those who follow him will also learn to lay the same claim so that all in all they will prepare themselves for the revelation of last things that God anticipates when creating first things. As in *Paradise Lost*, the words from the Son, who is making promises to God, can now be

¹²³ Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: Essays on the Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 1993), 7–9, 69. Here by reintroducing Aristotle's idea of "dynamis and energeia, of potency and act" in terms of potentiality, Agamben discusses the concept of "language, in its split of language and speech" as the basis of community formation. He considers that only because language exists as such can the opposition of potency and act be formed, and that it connects the potentiality and knowledge with their actualization.

understood as his forming his own messianic community, that “when in the end / Thou shalt be all in all, and I in thee / For ever, and in me all whom thou lov'st” (VI. 731–33). This discourse can be the Son’s addressing his potential community of prophets. Through Milton’s relegating different discourses of modes of passion, the reader sees Jesus distinguishing himself as Messiah, different from God, the prime mover. In *Paradise Lost* God initiates first things in anticipation of their participation in last things; in *Paradise Regained*, with first things internalized in the Son, the reader witnesses the Messiah paving his own way toward fulfilling that anticipation for last things. But how does the anticipated fulfillment of last things come about? The Son says in the poem, “of my Kingdom there shall be no end: / Means there shall be to this, but what the means, / Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell.” So last things are the realization of the means without end. Behind these lines lies the authorial voice tempting the reader to interpret what the means without end imply. The means and ends are crucial because they point to the essence and use (*utor*) of the matter, and attention to them will help in discerning the implied meanings of the text. By so doing, the horizon of the present interpretation will become wide enough to accommodate what some readers have identified as contradictions in Milton’s poems, something that I will also demonstrate later.

Milton’s texts oftentimes register contradictions, which critics continue to identify and reinterpret. In his *Destabilizing Milton: “Paradise Lost” and the Poetics of Incertitude*, Peter C. Herman identifies the word *or* to be one of the poet’s intentional strategies that not only complicate the poem but also enrich the reader’s interpretations. He argues persuasively that they should not be “resolved” or explained away for the purpose of a consistent reading. His reading quite helpfully points out that it is exactly this zone of

undecidability or indistinction that the Miltonic *or* creates to demand readers to reevaluate their own perspectives. So this zone not only contains textual potential for various interpretations but also mirrors readerly potentiality for dissecting mesmerizing opinions as “the blind mazes of this tangl’d wood” (*Masque* 180). However, here, by way of scrutinizing the means and ends in the verse, I provide a different strategy for understanding Miltonic contradictions. This brings me to the point where I find what is most fascinating about this poem, which is twofold. First, as the Son’s naming of his kingdom is not through telling but performing, “the means” deserves further exploration. Second, equally interesting and closely related to this performativity, is his use of affective language to describe his kingdom, his ideal community. For instance, as “my season comes,” the Son announces, his kingdom “shall be like a tree / Spreading and over-shadowing all the earth” (IV. 146, 147–8). Accentuating the type of discourse that “would seek to free” the “degenerate, by themselves enslav’d” (IV. 143, 144), the Son’s visionary but affective discourse is appealing to mother nature that regenerates, which is different “from the daily Scene effeminate” (142), which his words here and elsewhere suggest are a means to a degenerate end. In particular, the poem tends to make a distinction between effeminate and affectivity, distinguishing different modes of passion with disparate means and ends.

If *Paradise Lost* is about “knowing and choosing,”¹²⁴ then its sequel concerns feeling and perceiving. Recourse to the emotional or affective dimension of the renewal in *Paradise Regained* has not been well explored; hence, considering the emotional dimensions that

¹²⁴ Barbara K. Lewalski, “Genres of *Paradise Lost*,” *The Cambridge Companion to John Milton*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Milton incorporates into his reconfigurations of the body politic becomes crucial. Indeed, reading *Paradise Regained* after *Paradise Lost* requires more than just patience in order to see why this well-crafted work feels “so cold.”¹²⁵ It is true that, relative to the gamut of emotions integral to an array of genres and discourses in *Paradise Lost*, the overall affectivity of this brief epic is less explicitly expressed. Approaching Milton’s last three poems altogether in the order of their composition, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, as his final restorative act, performing construction, restoration, and destruction, respectively, appears to suggest that the brief epic in the middle serves as a balancing act and an emotional coolant. Yet this study argues that *Paradise Regained* establishes a nonrationalistic dimension in its poetics, an alternative perspective that is drastically different from what now the New Science has provided.

Published in the era when the new science gained its ascendancy, a time in which the demand for coherence, order, or reason was increasing, *Paradise Regained* nevertheless distinguishes itself from that rationalist, epistemological reign by refiguring an irrationalist and affective dimension. More than that, it presents contradictions that render certainty and order inoperative, thus creating a space of indeterminacy that makes it possible to apply, test, and anchor interpretations in multiple ways. I will elaborate more on this with examples at a later point. In the poem, the discourse about prophecy, divine providence, and the apocalypse revealed are often embedded in or revolved around affective language. Milton’s reformation of body politic tries to dislodge the court’s self-justifying claim to the legitimacy and adequacy to lead the nation. He puts in place a different path for the English people, one of exerting and assuming power and authority through the exercise of renewal.

¹²⁵ Alan Fisher, “Why Is *Paradise Regained* So Cold?” *Milton Studies* (1980): 195–217.

It is derived from feeling rather than knowing, from the heart rather than the senses; it is evident in obscurity and silence more so than in exuberance and clamor.

Contrasting God's more rationalist, scientific rhetoric, Milton accentuates the Son's more affective self to redraw the boundary for and redefine the nature of human virtue, heroism, and redemption. The kind of discourse appeals not to reason or senses but to the heart of the reader, and it gradually becomes the controlling principle in the Son's discourse of regeneration in *Paradise Regained*. First, "the eternal Father" confirms that his beloved Son, "a man / Of female seed," is endowed with "constant perseverance," while with this affectivity "His weakness shall o'ercome Satanic strength" and "mass of sinful flesh" (l. 168, 150–1, 148, 161, 162). A more masculine, grand, succinct, patriarchal-heroic type of discourse such as the following, supplied by the narrator, tends to envelop the Son: "Victory and triumph to the Son of God / Now ent'ring his great duel, not of arms, / But to vanquish by wisdom hellish wiles" (l. 173–5). A tone like this that appeals to external appearances may raise doubts about the epic narrator. A split character appears in this narration. Within such crevices emerges the Son's selfhood:

Musing and much revolving in his breast,
 How best the mighty work he might begin
 Of savior to mankind, and which way first
 Publish his godlike office now mature,
 One day forth walked alone, the spirit leading
 And his deep thoughts . . .
 Thought following thought, and step by step led on. (l. 185–92)

And so “His holy meditations thus pursued” (l. 195). In such a prolonged, internalized fashion, Milton strategically presents the Son, in the language of introspection and circumspection taking over God’s grand style, having him “lay down the rudiments / Of his great warfare,” “To earn salvation for the sons of men” (157–8, 167). Affectivity that reveals his inner world abounds in verses such as “musing and much revolving in his breast,” as he “walked alone” with “deep thoughts,” even though the thoughts pertain to so grand a project as saving humankind. This is not the kind of zeal for action that the Son shares, or even the zeal with which Satan later urges the Son to act. Now for the first time Milton conveys Jesus’s perplexed feeling, the human Jesus’s troubled thought:

O what multitude of thoughts at once
 Awakened in me swarm, while I consider
 What from within I feel myself, and hear
 What from without comes often to my ears,
 Ill sorting with my present state compared. (l. 196–200)

This emphasis on the internal sets the tone and pattern for everything that follows. By installing that sustainable state in men and constructing a messianic community on earth, the Son with “multitude of thoughts” presented in affective language seeks to *name* or characterize by now seemingly a void that otherwise speaks to his selfhood, “What from within I feel myself.” Throughout the poem, the focus on the senses or external appearances represented by the crowd receiving baptism and by Satan’s cohort brings stark contrast to the Son’s ideal that dwells upon the inner through an affective mode. Satan’s machinations such as magnifying the external glory seek to divert the Son’s pursuit

of comprehending the strength of the mind, the ultimate enlivened state of which will be the “paradise within thee, happier far” (*PL*, XII. 587).

Furthermore, through negation can come a clearer view of truth. As I mentioned earlier, Satan’s truth claims, his sugar-coated rhetoric of apostasy that proclaims itself as prophesy, help point the reader in the right direction and identify significant issues revolving around the Son’s messianic cause. It is also through Satan that the discourse of the heart links with that of authority, though with Satan the authority can only be derived from worldly power, political strength, and abundant possessions. Authority and power to him means dominion and control. These become the thrust of his temptations. Here I want to emphasize the Satanic discourse echoing the issue highlighted by the epic narrator. That is, Satan appropriates and refocuses sacred elements to his own purpose. In Book II, the narrator immediately reports the reaction of “the newly-baptized” crowd who now see the famed redeemer, then miss him, and experience doubt. They “had seen / Him whom they heard so late expressly called / Jesus Messiah Son of God declared / And on that high authority had believed” (1, 2–5). This is the first time we hear of the Son’s full denomination with “Messiah” in it. Where does the Son’s authority come from except from this glorious naming? The crowd’s belief in “that high authority” rests on the fact that they had “with him talked, and with him lodged” (6). On the one hand, the narrator probably reports truthfully, because it later occurs that the members of the crowd ground their belief on their senses and the “appearance”: “our eyes beheld / Messiah certainly now come . . . / . . . we have heard / His words, his wisdom full of grace and truth” (II. 31–34). On the other hand, the epic narrator once again conspires with Satan’s discourse in bringing the idea of authority to the fore as when Satan urges the Son thusly:

... all thy heart is set on high designs,
 High actions; but wherewith to be achieved?
 Great acts require great means of enterprise,
 Thou art unknown, unfriended, low of birth,

...

Lost in a desert here and hunger-bit:
 Which way or from what hope dost thou aspire
 To greatness? Whence authority deriv'st ... (410-3, 416-8)

Michael Bryson has rightly pointed out that the Son pursues "the first things," focused on the internal, not "the last things," geared toward external, physical objectives.¹²⁶ However, another argument on the relationship of God and the Son deserves further consideration.

Bryson maintains that, given Milton's acknowledgment of the difficulty of imagining and describing God because of humankind's inability to grasp the unimaginable and indescribable, "the key to this question lies in Milton's single most iconoclastic character—the human Jesus." Milton's method is one similar to Pseudo-Dionysius's, in Michael Lieb's terms on Milton's visionary mode, which is "a deconstructive reading:"

This deconstructive reading, with its use of dissimilar and crass shapes and signs, is part and parcel of the visionary mode's simultaneous use and contestation of the images and concepts of the tradition within which it works. In using "dissimilar shapes" as representations of the divine, Milton is trusting his "fit audience ...

¹²⁶ Michael Bryson, "From Last Things to First: The Apophatic Vision of *Paradise Regained*," *Visionary Milton: Essays on Prophecy and Violence*, ed. Peter E. Medine, John T. Shawcross, and David V. Urban (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010), 241–65.

though few" to understand the significance of "the sheer crassness of the signs" he uses in his great poems, to understand his own simultaneous use and contestation of the images and concepts of the tradition within which he is writing and they are reading.¹²⁷

In arguing Milton's dynamic flow between first and last things, Bryson notes that "[t]he contest between the Son and Satan is precisely a contest between first things and last things."¹²⁸ However, Bryson's conclusion is more radical: the Son actually is God. But from my analysis above, the kinds of language both God and the Son appeal to are drastically different, and the road to authority is also derived from different domains. The Son is the becoming and being of the messianic.

Milton juxtaposes Mary's maternal voice with God's paternal one, in which the heart balances the head, emotion complements but does not oppose reason. Both dimensions collaborate to create a dialogic terrain for the affective restorer, the Son of God, who possesses futuristic visions and expresses them through his affective experience. Nonetheless, the language of God's announcement to Gabriel is rationalistic:

by *proof* thou shalt behold

... how I begin

To *verify* that solemn message late,

On which I sent thee to the virgin pure

In Galilee, that she should bear a son

Great in renown, and called the Son of God

¹²⁷ Bryson, "From Last Things to First," 241, 245.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 247.

...

To show him worthy of his birth divine
 And high prediction, henceforth I expose
 To Satan; let him tempt and now *assay*
 His utmost subtlety, because he boasts

...

Of his apostasy . . . (l. 130–5, 142-6, italics mine)

Witness and proof, verifying and assaying through demonstration, all are indicative of probative diction and methods commonly found in many of the scientific works of Milton's time. Setting his prophecy against Satan's apostasy, Milton's God concludes that Satan will soon be defeated through "Winning by conquest what the first man lost / By *fallacy* surprised" (l. 154–5, italic mine). In a swift sweep of pronouncement, God lays out the history of Jesus's nativity, trial, and mission of salvation (130–67). God's words stress the collective, impersonal aspect in scientific terms.

When scientific terms are deployed to reveal prophecy, they are just as useful in conveying apostasy. In the kingdom-of-the-world temptation, Satan shows Jesus "great and glorious" (IV. 45) Rome, the seat of the Roman Empire, regarded as the greatest of all earthly powers:

an imperial city stood,
 With towers and temples proudly adorned,
 Porches and theatres, baths, aqueducts,
 Statues and trophies, and triumphal arcs,
 Gardens and groves presented to his eyes

Above the height of mountains interposed.
 By what strange parallax or optic skill
 Of vision multiplied through air, or glass
 Of telescope, were curious to inquire . . . (IV. 33–42)

Milton provides the reader first with a close-up picture of a focused vista with details, as if it were viewed through a telescope. However, he immediately undercuts that settled perception, relegating it to the status of a mere “parallax,” an optical illusion. It should be noted that, as the new science considered itself a system of thought that claimed some value of truth, Milton presents it mostly through Satan, quite consistently in both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Further references to the new technology, Satan’s “airy microscope” (*PR*, IV. 57), continue this line of questioning and critiquing. Under the spell of a magnified illusion, Satan presents in front of Jesus options of “ample territory, wealth and power, / Civility of manners, arts, and arms” and concludes that “I have shown thee all / The kingdoms of the world, and all their glory” (IV. 82–3, 88–9). When comparing the passages relevant to the new science in terms of prophecy and apostasy, I consider the following claims others have made to be quite inadequate: (a) that by associating the new science with Satan, Milton disavows science and (b) that by disclaiming the validity of the new science, Milton is also presenting God’s message with scientific discourse, and this amounts to his disapproval of the divine and hence implies his heresy.

First and foremost, it is vital to understand the significance of Satan not only as a defector from the divine plan but also as a keen observer and skilled interpreter of prophetic moments. Satan as the Son’s counterpart, the Anti-Christ, means that he understands when the crucial moment in God’s plan comes for him to intervene both to

avenge his lost luster and position in heaven and to assert his authority, however momentarily or fortuitously, in God's universe. His intent is ultimately to affront God and avert his assigned course by rewriting human history with his potency and acts, persuasion, and interpretation. As Wittreich astutely observes, "Satan alerts us to the essential nature of Milton's last poems, each of which is rippling with interpreters, rife with interpretations."¹²⁹ In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish essence from use or application. Essence means the "essential nature" or the issues that in *Paradise Regained* God announces and the Son sets out to complete, while the use refers to Satan's means and end or purpose, be it his distorting the vision of zeal or paradisaical vista, or even "deforming prophecy."¹³⁰ Therefore, as the new science of Milton's time was committed to scrutinizing and illuminating nature as a material object for control and as an instrument used to dominate, Milton challenges scientific ideology, its objectivity or neutrality, and ultimately its claim to truth.

Is the new science a better way to lead humankind out of darkness toward the light? Apparently with doubts, and Milton presents those doubts fervently by using the self-styled new knowledge of his time by placing its terms in Satanic discourse in his late poems. This furthermore brings up the second question regarding Milton's intermingling of scientific discourse with divine pronouncement. The purpose of this is not to deform God's message but rather, by way of reflecting the new science's claim to its promise for deliverance, to encourage readers to rethink the validity of science's claim to truth. Here it seems appropriate to revisit the typology of exodus and the wilderness story that the Royal

¹²⁹ Joseph Wittreich, *Why Milton Matters: A New Preface to His Writings* (NY: Macmillan/Palgrave, 2007), xiv.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16, 129.

Society of London appropriates to justify its own prospect in this new era of scientific ascendancy. In harkening back to the desert where men meet their Almighty, the Royal Society considers itself as a vanguard following in the footsteps of Francis Bacon, whom it emblemizes as its Moses in the wilderness of scientific pursuits. Thomas Sprat in his *History of the Royal Society* (1667) dedicated a verse epistle to the Royal Society in this regard. After pondering upon the fall of humankind and “ripeness and perfection,” “a science so well bred and nurst” might have brought, Sprat writes (in verse V),

From these and all long Errors of the way,
 In which our wandring Praedessors went,
 And like th’old Hebrews many years did stray
 In Desarts but of small extent,
 Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last,
 The barren Wilderness he past,
 Did on the border stand
 Of the blest promis’d Land,
 And from the Mountains Top of his Exalted Wit,
 Saw in himself, and shew’d us it.¹³¹

All parties intentionally assert their position by appealing to these images of crossing a divide, wandering in a wilderness, and reaching the Promised Land. Milton’s particular message is that any truth claim seeking to “subdue / By conquest far and wide” is apostasy and “false glory” (IV. 71–2, 69).

¹³¹ Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, ed. Jackson I. Cope and Harold Whitmore Jones (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1959), B, B2–B3.

However, another dimension that is equally significant is that scientific practice tends to remove private experience from human life. It is this experience that is directly linked to the Son's naming and his affective performing of the self and formation of his community. "The expropriation of experience," notes Agamben, "was implicit in the founding project of modern science."¹³² However, it is the un-presupposed, ineffable experience that the Son is searching to reveal and come to terms with in the process of forming and reforming his salvific community. Such experience is diametrically opposite to the nature of scientific communities, which, as Bacon had done, condemn experience that cannot be "regulated and digested."¹³³ Particularly the affective experience, that which is not based on logical truth, cannot be measured or produced through knowledge. Yet it is the affectivity that will return or restore human experience to its original force, through "the power of words and narration":

For experience has its necessary correlation not in knowledge but in authority—that is to say, the power of words and narration; and no one now seems to wield sufficient authority to guarantee the truth of an experience, and if they do, it does not in the least occur to them that their own authority has its roots in an experience.¹³⁴

Thus, authority, as presented in the author's words and narration, used to describe personal experience that is unique and unanticipated, hence remaining authoritative in its own right, is brought back to individuals. During the Son's search for the meaning of

¹³² Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 17.

¹³³ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, qtd. in Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 17.

¹³⁴ Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 14.

authority, "The Authority which I deriv'd from Heaven," he ponders,

And now by some strong motion I am led

Into this Wilderness, to what intent

I learn not yet, perhaps I need not know;

For what concerns my knowledge God reveals. (I. 289, 290–93)

The knowledge the Son is searching for is never of a scientific, rationalist kind but rather one of transcendental experience revealed by God. This is the core message of the Son's messianic community and the controlling consciousness behind his use of affective language. As I mentioned earlier, the participating individuals in this community will be receiving guidance for deliverance from a more sacred lineage, and their "authority" will emanate from their experience sanctioned by God's will. Again, a comparison of Satan's inquiry and critique of authority further affirms that the Son's authority is associated with transcendental experience, transcending all the worldly categories that Satan utilizes to lure him:

Thou art unknown, unfriended, low of birth,

A Carpenter thy Father known, thy self

Bred up in poverty and streights at home;

Lost in a Desert here and hunger-bit:

Which way or from what hope dost thou aspire

To greatness? whence Authority deriv'st,

What Followers, what Retinue canst thou gain,

Or at thy heels the dizzy Multitude,

Longer then thou canst feed them on thy cost?

Money brings Honour, Friends, Conquest, and Realms. (II. 413–22)

Satan's goading for enthusiasm and zeal echoes the description of the Son's status at the beginning of the poem, who "came as then obscure, / Unmarkt, unknown" with his status "unconfirmed" (I. 24–5, 29). Nevertheless, the Son does not derive his authority from an external, worldly name or fame, nor does it come from the hereditary honor, social connection, military might, or political domination that the courts or monarchies of the world are inclined to value. The relationship of the Son's authority with his "dizzy multitude" that Satan points out is what the Son pursues through other means, not through placing them at his heels but "[b]y winning words to conquer willing hearts," not enforcing their will but "by free consent of all" (I. 222, III. 358).

Another aspect of affective language that upholds Jesus's restoration also appears in the discourse used by Mary. In a more affective way, Mary's and the Son's recollections in Book II point to the self-revelation of the Son's personal endeavor. Whereas God's pronouncements are presented diffusely throughout *Paradise Regained* in confirming, directing, and dissecting the poetic maneuverings of the mental fight between the Son and the Devil, the "pondering" (II. 105) of Jesus's mother inserted into that discourse blends maternal affective experience with the paternal prophetic visions. While God's oracle of the Son's mission represents divine sanction, Mary's monologue about Jesus represents the human condition of partial knowledge and individual clear conscience. Furthermore, the complementarity of impersonal and personal representations of Jesus's ultimate reality implies Milton's ideal leader who is ready to address people both high and low. Compared to the monarch at court, Jesus demonstrates a very different type of kingship.

To sum up, as some modern readers have been inclined to read *Paradise Regained* as a poem that calls for the reversal of what has been lost by Adam and Eve, I have demonstrated quite a different kind of reading: that Milton refrains from treating the beginning on the basis of the end, or the sense of its imminence. It is through the Son's exploratory act that men need to embrace instantly and *descend* into their own potential to reinvent that originary force and to re-create their own Eden out of the waste of wilderness. As Hannah Arendt pointed out through her lectures on Kant, the idea of critique leading to enlightenment, oftentimes "the unthinking dogmatism of the many is countered by the select but equally unthinking dogmatism of the few."¹³⁵ This observation fits the characterization of Milton's Jesus, who, even though he has throughout his journey been confirmed of his role as the Messiah, spares no efforts to resist that dogmatic tendency. As the Son has demonstrated, he shuns blind obedience to how tradition dictates he should fulfill his role; nor does he appeal to the authority of the founding force, as Satan urges, or even we as readers may have anticipated of his role as the Messiah. Instead, Jesus turned Christ navigates internally and externally to found his own coming community that can sustain even the gravest consequences of crises as an ultimate way to heal the wounds from which the English people of a turbulent era have suffered. Indeed, as the poem's ending confirms the naming of the Messiah, "Therefore to know what more thou art than man, / Worth naming Son of God by voice from heaven, / Another method" he now has begun (IV. 538–40). If, as Arendt suggests, "an unexamined life is not worth living,"¹³⁶ then in the next chapter on *Samson Agonistes* further introspection and retrospection come

¹³⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

rushing through. The biblical judge's self-healing with regard to guilt and remembrance and holding onto the past as opposed to laying claim to originality will take centrality in the discussion about Milton's final project of paradisaical renewal and recovery.

Chapter III

Paradigms of Restoration:

Guilt and Renewal in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*¹³⁷

What follows here is an experiment in the technique of awakening. An attempt to become aware of the dialectical—the Copernican—turn of remembrance.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*¹³⁸

The idea of creation lends itself to what Milton wants to show to the English people: his perception of renewal and restoration of life. It serves as an ultimate source for generating personal salvation and understanding the downfall of humankind in Milton's poetry. With his late work on continuous revelation and recovery of the lost paradise, Milton presents his own version of restoration in which the creation is essentially tied to his dissident politics and biblical hermeneutics in opposition to the official discourse of the Restoration settlement. In *Paradise Regained* Milton focuses specifically on the renewal of the Son's mission, not his passion. In the previous chapter, I argued that Milton's prophetic visions and personal revelation are often bound up with a discourse of emotion, with the reformation of the body politic as the aim. In this regard, the affectivity of poetic language helps the reader reach beyond the limits of sensual experience into mythical experience. With the concrete sources of our collective mythology that Milton has so carefully provided

¹³⁷ For *Samson Agonistes* I quote from *The 1671 Poems "Paradise Regain'd" and "Samson Agonistes,"* ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of John Milton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹³⁸ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, K1, 1.

and organized, we start to see ourselves reflected in the process of awakening and recovery.

If naming means identifying a certain divine nature in created things, then Milton's three great works all share this pattern of naming. Adam reveals his divine potential by naming things in nature while Jesus affirms his divine mission by naming his messianic community. Like Jesus, Samson also names the unexpressed and unknown. But unlike Jesus, who musters his generative power by resisting tradition and dogma, Samson struggles to materialize his relationship to the divine through naming or remembering his past. In this chapter on *Samson Agonistes*, my examination takes a new, deeper turn by accentuating another component: memory or remembrance. I will focus on Milton's poetic volume published in 1671, *Paradise Regained. A Poem in IV Books. to which is added Samson Agonistes*. This work presents two disparate paradigmatic relations to paradisaal recovery. In this joint publication, the final poem, *Samson Agonistes*, a tragedy, reflects on a fallen biblical deliverer who seeks to redefine his relationship with God in his own terms as a way to understand his mission to "justify the ways of God to men" (*PL*, I. 26). As much as he tries to reconnect with providence, Samson, through recollection, projects the past into the present temporality so as to reconstruct a paradigm for his own redemption. As opposed to Samson's world where *contra*-dictions prevail and mark the creative impulse, which some readers consider to be of divine intention, Jesus's universe in *Paradise Regained* abounds with ambivalence. The end of both poems brings their revelation at the house or hall where they *belong*, a significant design that I will discuss later. But these enigmatic endings with strong religious undertones are a glimpse of the different attitudes toward redemption in

these two “process” poems.¹³⁹ The tale of Milton’s paradisaical recovery accentuates a new element—memory or remembrance—which internally links the world of *Paradise Regained* to that of *Samson Agonistes*. I will start by exploring the issue of memory and guilt in relation to different paradigmatic relations in Milton’s restoration project and argue that this joint poetic volume is Milton’s one last effort to renew and transform this late age of passion.

I. Two Paradigms in Dialogue

This poetic volume, in the languages of Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben, constantly demands something from us that has something to do with exigency. The *re-mem-bering* uses both body and mind in re-creating a new selfhood; this formation is reflected in Milton’s affective language. Samson’s tormented body is an obvious contrast to Jesus’s suffering body. Both Jesus and Samson come to terms with the divine through their bodily experience in order to comprehend their state of deliverance. In juxtaposing these two poems in the same volume, Milton gives us the option of reading them in a different order, first *Paradise Regained* then *Samson Agonistes*, or in reverse, or even to choose one over the other. No matter how we read, Milton invites us to reconsider the meaning of the self either in isolation or in relation. Both poems showcase and reenvision how significant a part one can play in light of ongoing revelations for enlightenment. This process of shared tendency becomes a shaping (as in Jesus) or a shattering (as in Samson) force that traverses the contours of pursuit in Jesus’s and Samson’s journeys. Here I adopt notions regarding the

¹³⁹ Joseph Wittreich, *Interpreting Samson Agonistes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 102. Wittreich rightly considers that *Samson Agonistes* is “less a crisis than a process poem, and the tragic process unfolds not by tying a knot but by retelling a tale.”

real from philosophers like Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Walter Benjamin, Giorgio Agamben, and Alain Badiou.¹⁴⁰

To me, the real is the abstraction of some authentic experience without being able to name it in specific discursive or symbolic terms or to grasp them through physical force. It is a composite of unknown existence that encourages one to aim higher, however that might be or mean. The real, while phenomenologically intangible and unable to be represented through symbols or discourse, evokes the impossible. Apparently the quite different dimensions of these two poems sharply evaluate the protagonist's core values or doubts of faith in religion, the church, and even the divine, causing him to reposition himself in a different relation to the unknown. Those unknowns are the real, and I argue that to Adam, Jesus, or Samson, who posit their roles in the divine ensemble as significant, their real means to comprehend the signs or impulses for self-re-creation and figure out a way to return to that source. The subject may feel urged to grasp the unknown in discourses through time and space because they evince and provide them with authentic experience of existence, and for Jesus as well as for Samson, this means experiencing the real, that is, the love of the divine. So we constantly witness Jesus and Samson justifying

¹⁴⁰ On "the real" I greatly benefit from the following works: for Sigmund Freud, "Negation," SE 19, 235–39. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977); *Seminar XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007). Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings, 1938–1940*, ed. Howard Eliand and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility," in *Illuminations*, trans. Hary Zohn (London: Verso, 1970), 238–9; "On Language as Such and the Language of Man," trans. E. Jephcott, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004). For Giorgio Agamben, see his *Infancy and History; State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005); *The Idea of Prose*, trans. Sam Whitsitt (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995); *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); "Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord's Films," in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, trans. Brian Holmes, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004). For Alain Badiou, see *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*.

their thoughts and adjusting their rhetoric in order to be in alignment with what they believe divinity means.

These are the dimensions I will explore in this chapter, rather than repeating the debate as to whether Samson is a regenerate or degenerate. Those perspectives may put us in the position of the transcendent and are not my approach in mapping out Milton's restoration project. One further point regarding the issue of anarchy that Joseph Wittreich touches upon in his illuminating book, *Interpreting Samson Agonistes*, helps focus my idea about repairing the ruin in terms of governance, originality, and time. I will also show that anarchy functions as a pivotal link in this poetic volume with the intersections between the issues of restoration and originality.

In his book Wittreich argues compellingly about Samson's failings through Milton's strategy in reinterpreting the Samson story in the book of Judges. Referencing John Trapp's comment on the people in the time of the Judges, that "all was out of order, and their *Anarchy* begot a general Ataxy," Wittreich states, "The anarchy of the times is reflected within the planned anarchy of the Judges narrative."¹⁴¹ Anarchy is an interesting idea but has not yet been emphasized in Milton studies. As Agamben points out, anarchy originally in Greek, parsed as *an-arche*, means without beginning, without origin. Anarchic signifies "beginningless." As regards the materiality and attainment of universality through St. Paul, Alain Badiou considers that Paul takes Jesus's resurrection to be a pure "event" in itself that is free of prescriptive and external conditions. And Paul's belief in that event drives him to establish his own community for salvation. So for Agamben, Paul and his messianic community are anarchic; he causes anarchy under the Roman power and among disparate

¹⁴¹ *Interpreting Samson Agonistes*, 99. John Trapp, *Annotations upon the Old and New Testament*, 5 vols. (London: Printed for Robert White, 1865-1868), I, 109.

Greek and Jewish communities. Although the discourses about first things pervade Milton's created worlds—the first things that Galileo's spyglass projects from afar that envision the last things from within the subjects' thoughts and imaginations—they are presented and represented as imaginable and yet unstable, as Milton's edenic world is imbued with potential for better or worse.

We then can say that Milton's protagonists live next to anarchy or an anarchic state since they invest their efforts mostly in looking for ways of deliverance, of retaining and regaining that originary state. As a matter of fact, there is no fixed origin to return to as Milton has clearly shown through the edenic instability in *Paradise Lost*, so each subject shall become his own originary act that moves as a prime mover. As we see Samson's father, Manoa, sparing no efforts to prepare ransom for his son, the Chorus responds to his hope thus: "Thy hopes are not ill founded nor seem vain / Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon / Conceiv'd, agreeable to a Fathers love, / In both which we, as next participate" (1504–7). In these lines words like "founded," "delivery," and "conceived" refer to a certain originary state or point of return, with potential of renewal by the subject.

Indeed, the whole poem revolves around seeking delivery or redemption for Samson, and each character, including the Chorus, presents his or her own version of understanding of the divine plan in order "to work his liberty" (1454). Each hopes to engage with an anarchic restructuring of Samson's distressed state. Even some of the Lords of the Philistines express their readiness for truce, Manoa so reports, as he tries his fatherly supplication for his son's life, those "More generous far and civil" ones, or others being "magnanimity to remit" "who confess'd / They had enough reveng'd, having reduc't / Thir foe to mistery beneath thir fears" (1467, 1470, 1467–9). But Samson rejects outright all

outside offers and chooses to react to his own inner “rouzing motions . . . which dispose / To something extraordinary my thoughts” (1382–3) because he regards theirs as “dishonourable, impure, unworthy / Our God, our Law, my Nation, or my self” (1424–5). In his last speech, after he agrees to present himself at the enemy’s feast day, Samson understands his presence may “exasperate” enemy aristocrats, hence expressing that “The last of me or no I cannot warrant” (1417, 1426). Redemption, the ultimate manifestation of the real, is not readily reserved for us, Milton seems to convey, but resides in the very action of summoning the subject’s willing heart and action in anticipation of meeting God’s initial will, while hoping that his end, “the last of me,” can justify his means and lead him to righteousness. Indeed, Samson’s last words, “The last of me . . . I cannot warrant,” emit uncertainty. The poem continues to remind us of the troubling fact that Samson inflicts “Self-violence,” “At once both to destroy and be destroyed,” and ultimately as his father concludes, “A dreadful way thou took’ st to thy revenge” (1584, 1587, 1591). Does he believe he has used the right means to achieve deliverance or redemption as he with his returning mighty power pulls down the supporting pillars of the theatre, thus destroying the Philistine’s “choice nobility” and bringing down “the same destruction on himself” (1644, 1648)? Samson’s potential to reroute his destiny is cut short by his self-inflicted violence, the horrible end that fails to meet the promise of the first things created by God.

Starkly contrasted to Jesus’s paradigm of recovery in *Paradise Regained*, Samson’s is an attempt that retrospectively looks toward the obscured “origin” of his existence and mission and tends to neglect the real meaning of his own singularity at the current moment of his captivity, to the point where he liquidates all the potentials of self-reinvention he has acquired. Yet, Jesus’s paradigmatic gesture, while unable to recall the full “intent” of his

own assigned task (*PR*, I. 291), springs from producing and recognizing the validity of his own stance at every unexpected moment of his encounter with Satan's temptations and ultimately arrives at his "evental,"¹⁴² enduring force of self-enrichment. With the seeming separation from God in Jesus and Samson, Milton shows us, through moments and events of temptation and doubt, how these two exemplary figures come to fruition or collapse. They represent two different strains of what Badiou terms the subject-thought while accessing their core values. Whereas the Son, immersed in the discordant "now-time,"¹⁴³ embraces the seemingly disparate correlating relationship of the occurrences at every ambivalent moment, Samson, pulling back in distance through recollection, strives to create a coherent and continuous narrativization of his being and act as a God-sent subject and, with that self-justifying discourse as a solace, continues to affirm and sustain his state of existence.

However, Milton wants to show us that Samson's captivity and alienation is not the final outcome of the first principle. It is instead a burgeoning self-integration and the shifting threshold for individual self-regeneration by which as a stepping-stone one can reach some understanding of the first principle itself. In other words, Samson's dark misgivings, though seemingly rendering heaven's plan of delivery inoperative, actually bring him back to the state of potentiality, which with Aristotle, as Agamben expounds, signifies both "power" and "possibility."¹⁴⁴ And this whole process of returning to one's potentiality, in the case of Samson, manifested as the domain of the subject re-forming his state of mind and will, is the site where Milton solicits interpretations. The domain of

¹⁴² Badiou, *Saint Paul*.

¹⁴³ Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*. This term appears on pages 395–397.

¹⁴⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains*.

potentiality is considered as the zone of undecidability or indistinction in which Samson is seen ambivalently sliding back and forth between a regenerate and a menacing terrorizer.

If we as readers continue to interpret the poem such that “Samson remains mired in self-defeating solipsism. Solitary retirement turns anathema for Samson, and it renders him even more vulnerable to the dark misgivings that gnaw at his soul,”¹⁴⁵ then we fall into Sisyphus’s dilemma, trapped in finding evidence of Samson as being either a regenerate hero or a degenerate man. Yet we also hear a hopeful Samson respond to the Philistine giant Harapha, who intimidates Samson with the “indignities” (1168) he has suffered:

these evils I deserve and more,
 Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
 Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon
 Whose ear is ever open; and his eye
 Gracious to readmit the suppliant . . . (1169–73)

Milton’s Samson is restless, ever-changing through self-examination. His potential for divine delivery, is, contrary to what it seems, the exhibition of divine inclusion, not exclusion. In other words, he already belonged to the divine ensemble but himself falsifies his judgeship of the heavenly mission, failing to “his great name assert” (466–7). Neither should we become a Harapha, who assesses the circumstances by using the end to justify the means in Samson, should “thy appearance answer loud report” (1090). That since Samson is fallen and “thy nation subject to our lords” (1182, 1205), then a Harapha would distrust the hearsay about your power and your god:

¹⁴⁵ Vanita Neelakanta, “*Paradise Regained* in the Closet: Private Piety in the Brief Epic,” in *To Repair the Ruins: Reading Milton*, ed. Mary C. Fenton and Louis Schwartz (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 157.

Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be,
 Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
 Quite from his people, and delivered up
 Into thy enemies' hand, permitted them
 To put out both thine eyes, and fettered send thee
 Into the common prison, there to grind
 Among the slaves and asses thy comrades,
 As good for nothing else, no better service
 With those thy boisterous locks, no worthy match
 For valour to assail, nor by the sword
 Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,
 But by the barber's razor best subdued. (1156–67)

Judged by Harapha's eye, eyeless Samson's God is not one famous for revival and rejuvenation, if we also compare the circumstances of Jesus in the wilderness when he faces Satan urging him to end hunger with the means he provides. Yet for a Samson, "my trust is in the living God" (1140) whose power is passed through his strength. He claims that his strength is "At my nativity,"

diffused

No less through all my sinews, joints and bones
 Than thine, while I preserved these locks unshorn,
 The pledge of my unviolated vow. (1141–44)

The power of the flesh circles back in figuring faith, hope, and rebirth, echoing what I have shown in the previous chapter, the renewal derived from the reformation of the Christian

body. As in both the famished Jesus in the wilderness and the eyeless Samson in Gaza, the means for revival come from internal, not external, strength. The site of privation becomes the zone of potentiality where one is brought to the threshold to heal the wound and repair the ruin, but Samson fails to see it. Much inclined to act on emotive discourse driven for exclusion as opposed to Jesus's emphatically affective language aimed at inclusion, a fallen Samson would thus respond:

When I perceived all set on enmity,
 As on my enemies, wherever chanced,
 I used hostility, and took their spoil
 To pay my underminers in their coin. (1201–4)

Ironically, he is trapped in the “restless thoughts” (19) in which he continues to utilize the means (of military might and militant mentality) that bring his downfall.

Overall, Milton's late poems contain promises of paradigmatic reconstruction that form a full circle back to the threshold of regaining lost paradise. From *Paradise Lost*, through *Paradise Regained* to *Samson Agonistes*, the Miltonic world variably but compositely presents potential for reconstruction or collapse. From this particular perspective, Adam, Jesus, and Samson, though performing in quite different fashions, all share an urge to search for the prime, governing principle that not merely repairs all wounds, but more significantly will return them to the divine ensemble. So this dynamic field of Edenic recovery, of “discursive formations”—mediated through language and memory that Adam initially queries to delve into, Jesus the second Adam acts to summon, and Samson the failed deliverer suffers to grapple with—needs to be articulated. Milton intends for his reader to understand that if one problematizes the truth claims in order to

rediscover the true meaning of the divine, one will eventually “lay claim to originality.”¹⁴⁶

Or, as the Chorus in *Samson* quite rightly comments, even though their opinion oftentimes deserves caution and doubt:

But patience is more oft the exercise
Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,
Making them each his own Deliverer,
And Victor over all
That tyrannie or furtune can inflict. (1287–91)

These verses apparently echo the theme of *Paradise Regained*, in which Jesus with his enduring strength patiently navigates the challenging circumstances and internalizes their impact toward his own discovery. Hence each one will become a beginning—anarchic or “ungrounded”—a paradigm or an exemplar accorded with one another,¹⁴⁷ and this collective effort, Milton believes, constitutes the base and the core of a graced community of salvific force. In this fashion, *Samson Agonistes* completes the circle of Milton's project of restoration.

As this chapter explores the poems' renewing energy that turns “intimate impulse” into “true experience” (SA 1746), I will delineate what Walter Benjamin terms “the guilt context of the living”¹⁴⁸ in light of Milton's retelling of Samson story, not of revenge, but of reinvention. Considering guilt as a central issue of the wound permits us more effectively

¹⁴⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things*, 8.

¹⁴⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II, 2)*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa & Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

¹⁴⁸ Walter Benjamin, “Fate and Character,” in *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (Norfolk: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 127.

and affectively to come to terms with Milton's discourse of emotion that he utilizes as a strategy for healing. It furthermore helps us to understand the role the guilt/fall dyad plays in Milton's project of paradisaical recovery. Guilt, this nameless thing that stems from the first couple's probing act into their own potentiality, renders God's injunction incommensurable, as the first human couple have shown in *Paradise Lost*. There we see several attempts of query made by Adam/Eve and Satan that Milton compares to Galileo's gazing of the sky, a trope that lays bare the human desire for knowing heavenly secrets and their future. God has Adam and Eve toil in the Garden to learn what their limits/potential are and to perceive how far they can perform and elevate their potential. Yet the sky, or God's injunction, is the limit; it actualizes their act of disobedience to be the originary sin. Without God's forbidding, the human parents' desire for elevation would not be considered transgression or sin. Adam's curiosity about "the book of God" (*PL*, VIII. 67) and his queries into the rationale behind it receives advice in return, that "heaven is for thee too high / To know what passes there; be lowly wise: / Think only what concerns thee and thy being" (172-4). The first couple eventually come to accept an alternative narrative, one that projects an enlightened life nicely packaged in language by Satan. Ultimately cajoled by Satan, Adam and Eve insist on redrawing their boundary of potentiality, and behind the consequential punishment lurk tremendous guilt and fallen consciousness. In the shattering of the order arises their self-consciousness of their fallen state.

The formation of this experience of fragmentation and the sense of loss emerging from the deep domain of the human mind evokes the image of Galileo's "optic glass" (*PL*, I. 288), one curious look into the unknown with hopes to reflect on ourselves. Obviously the spyglass cannot "descry" (290), through "the inward part" to the unseen deep (*PL*, III. 584),

of the human mind, of God's plan, or even human destiny. This domain—analogue to the Chaos from which the Holy Spirit forms the creation, the unformed matter, the unexpressed, "What in me is dark / Illumine" (*PL*, I. 22–3)—is where human potential is explored, shaped, regulated, and delimited by various forces, of law, nature, and the self. Also it is exactly what *Paradise Regained* and mostly *Samson Agonistes* are getting at. Later in *Paradise Regained* guilt becomes instrumental for Satan in provoking action from the Son of God, and at last it exerts its full force in transforming Samson's (im)potentiality (in reference to Agamben)¹⁴⁹ to destruction in *Samson Agonistes*. From the context of guilt, we may envision the sphere of potentiality that has its own history of manifestations. Intertwined into a relation in which guilt absorbs and propels human potential are Milton's subjects, from Adam and Eve's birth into being and coping with guilt, and through Samson's guilty conscience paradoxically embedded in his lost vision and dark misgivings.

With their demand for love and emancipation, both Jesus's rise and Samson's fall deal with their own potentiality/impotentiality. The site of potential is where seemingly conflicting sensations and concepts for renewal coincide. It is also where one meets the self and the Other by refiguring one's own emotions in language. The demand for love, as a desire for rebirth that marks all Miltonic beings, innocent or intransigent, unites both their potentiality and their impotentiality. While it enables them to see what the other signifies, that capacity of perceiving the Other also makes them unique. Since at its core resides a universal urge for love growing out of one's singular privation and deprivation, Milton's community of recovered paradise thus includes all in one and becomes one in all. This study, instead of designating Samson as a hero of the regenerate or a violent provocateur,

¹⁴⁹ Agamben, *Potentialities*.

zeros in on the trajectory of potentiality and formation of guilt and thus adumbrates the process of Milton's mythologizing and the creation of a living myth, or "the living God," that, I argue, as the poet hopes, will sow the seeds of reinventing English culture and provide a salvific paradigm for generations to come.

II. An Ancient Myth Made Modern

... the *mythos* is the way to true *mimesis*.

Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*¹⁵⁰

The joint publication of Milton's 1671 volume of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* not only binds the two poems materially but also connects them thematically. Their intertextual connection has been noted in ways in which the poems either are juxtaposed on purpose in order to create a plurality of meanings, or being "originally accidental," are disconnected between the two while the continuities occur only between *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* as "its sequel."¹⁵¹ The printing house practices also show collaboration, which provides emphasis of the text and guides the reader to their relevant context.¹⁵²

Evident in this poetic volume of 1671, both poems are expanding certain dimensions of Adamic enlightenment or disgrace prefigured in *Paradise Lost* in relation to regeneration and guilt. Moreover, remembrance involves the position of the subject toward history, toward his or her own past in the history of the masses. And this history in the subject's

¹⁵⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (London: SPCK, 1981), 102.

¹⁵¹ *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, 3 vols, ed. David Masson (London: Macmillan, 1882), vol. 3: 2, 4, quoted in Joseph Wittreich, *Interpreting Samson Agonistes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 344.

¹⁵² Laura Lunger Knoppers, textual introduction to *The 1671 Poems "Paradise Regain'd" and "Samson Agonistes,"* lxxv–lxxxvii.

mind is concretized by narrativization formulated through the process of signification. *Paradise Regained* ambiguously displaces Jesus's close tie to the originary sin, whereas *Samson Agonistes* reformulates and condenses the edenic misfortune into Samson's guilt. However, *Samson Agonistes* embraces what *Paradise Regained* has deemphasized, that is, the hero's remembering and evoking of the radical self channeled through passions while immersing in and working through them in order to face his own provocation. Therefore, Milton's renewal project through Samson's story inevitably deals with shame and guilt in relation to the originary ill judgment, a biblical judge's way of freeing himself of a guilty conscience.

If all beings are in the process of becoming, as Milton shows in subjects like Adam and Eve, Satan, Jesus, Samson, and even angels like Abdiel, and all are undergoing their path of discovery or recovery in the heaven's grand scheme, then fragments of their memory in relation to God or the perfect world are constantly going through adaptive transmission and reinterpretation. This complicates the discourse of restoration and the affectivity of the language, as we will see further in *Samson Agonistes*.

But in what way does *Samson Agonistes* extend the paradisaical loss and hope for recovery? That text is largely concerned with a reputed biblical judge's fall from grace, culminating in his violent descent into oblivion. By no means does Milton retell the Samson story simply as an allegory about the fall of a cultural symbol in order to caution his Englishmen about ill judgment. Nor would I intend to argue, as some critics have, that Milton depicts a regenerate hero whose experience of defeat reflects on the defaulted republican experiment and so the poem serves as an exemplar for frustrated republicans and saints of private conscience.

depiction, or both? And of what? As the sphere of the solemn is no more, the fragmented solemnity of the Christian promise of rejuvenation through work hereby collapses, undergirded by a stream of forbidden consciousness—forbidding, “laborious,” unwilling, superstitious, and yielding—all contrarious to easing the toil of body and mind. Samson’s once elevated spirit is now reduced to bare primitive, biological reactions like hornets swarming for survival, a reversed evolution.

Samson’s tone is fraught with self-mockery and self-pity when he reflects on the clear reasons for his fall:

O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold
 Twice by an Angel, who at last in sight
 Of both my Parents all in flames ascended
 From off the Altar . . .
 As in a firey column charioting
 His Godlike presence, and from some great act
 Or benefit reveal’d to *Abraham’s* race?
 Why was my breeding order’d and prescrib’d
 As of a person separate to God,
 Design’d for great exploits; if I must dye
 Betray’d, Captiv’d, and both my Eyes put out,
 Made of my Enemies the scorn and gaze;
 To grind in Brazen Fetters under task
 With this Heav’n-gifted strength? O glorious strength
 Put to the labour of a Beast . . . (23–37)

Yet he traces his lineage back to the ancestral state that Abraham represents of their shared, close tie to God, and shows his hope for reversal or return. This kind of gesture through recollection is a common feature in Milton's poetry; it often intermingles the historical and the mythical, and thus positions the speaker in a point in time and space with figurations that further require interpretation. We see in *Paradise Regained* when Satan attempts to incite the Son of God to become a sovereign himself, the devil provides abundant historical and mythic references spanning time and space. The effect is to make his truth claim appear more credible. So in a similar fashion, Samson performs this recollection in order to corroborate his divine heritage. The mythical, while being named or called upon in the mind of the subject, transforms itself into some kind of history that confirms his anticipation. In his consciousness the mythical history turns into part of his memory. Remembering for Samson becomes self-reaffirmation, creating a reference point for return. For him to capture the fleeting sense of the real lies in his very act of recalling and naming/speaking of the signs and manifestations of "th' unsearchable" (1736). By providing Samson with a past in time, Milton also creates a depth in Samson's mind, a domain of emotions with a reference point in time that the biblical judge can connect to.

Remembrance connects the fall of Eden with Samson's guilt throughout Milton's restoration project. The shared memory of potentiality, loss, and guilt that Adam and Eve have initially experienced transforms into Jesus's partial memory, then into emotions aroused in Samson, whose effort in re-creating that shared memory eventually overwhelms the promising hope for a restorative ideal. From this perspective, we experience various emotions merging in the instantiations of a singular event, that is, the Fall, one that springs out of the first couple's intention to know more about their own potentiality. Throughout

Samson Agonistes, Samson also reflects upon his own potential in discourses of emotion through remembrance, which becomes chiefly the vehicle that carries the feelings of his guilty conscience and displaces the fallen consciousness that first comes into being in *Paradise Lost*. Remembering is repeating, and Samson's repetition is "the cipher of an *apokatastasis*," namely, restitution, or restoration to the original condition, and an ongoing "recapitulation of an existence,"¹⁵³ looking for the ultimate return. This is itself a myth that Samson inadvertently creates for himself; he labors from within and unwittingly brings it to eventual collapse.

Milton's own restoration project does not separate spirit and matter. In *Samson Agonistes*, in order to strengthen the poem's link to the project of edenic recovery pursuant to the divine arrangement, Milton appeals to the effects of cleansing and healing central to the nature of this tragedy, his intention clearly foregrounded and stressed in the poem's separate title page and preamble. In this regard, Samson's guilt in relation to paradisaical loss and renewal is significant and needs to be addressed. On the separate title page for *Samson Agonistes* (1671), we see an epigram that Milton quotes from book 6 of Aristotle's *Poetics* regarding the definition of tragedy with a Latin passage that translates the epigram "at greater length."¹⁵⁴ This epigram emphasizes the curative power of language and passion: "Tragedy, then, is the imitation of a serious action, &c. Through pity and fear completing the lustration of such passions (affections, emotions)."¹⁵⁵ There is a telling gap between the

¹⁵³ Agamben, "Judgment Day," *Profanations*, 25.

¹⁵⁴ Knoppers, *The 1671 Poems "Paradise Regain'd" and "Samson Agonistes"*, 143.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

text's therapeutic power elaborated at length both on the title page and the preamble, and Samson's want of that restorative force.

Samson's fallen state "confus'd with shame" (196) echoes Adam and Eve's loss of innocence in *Paradise Lost* as a consequence of their acts that intend to go beyond the bounds. And yet Samson and the first couple assess the Fall in quite different ways. Unlike Adam, who avidly looking to learn about their future prospects is willing to embrace uncertainty, Samson, relishing his glorious past, seeks to find residual components for redemption: "I, . . . / . . . like a foolish Pilot have shipwreck't, / My Vessel trusted to me from above, / Gloriously rigg'd" (196–200). Yet what sinks the vessel of his and his people's destiny is "a word," his word, which has "divulg'd the secret gift of God," "th' interminable," where his "immeasurable strength" has gone awry (200–1, 307, 206). The Word that floats the ship sinks the ship as well. And Samson's is the fallen version of Noah's ark that runs afloat in the fallen world, "vanquisht with a peal of words" (235). God's gift is interminable, namely, without end, if perceived and received in a right way, so does his Word. While Samson admits that his "crime" of "Shameful garrulity" is to "have publish'd" God's "holy secret" (490, 491, 498, 497), his sin is really to terminate, that is, to bring to end God's gift and cut short the divine grace, thus making the known partial truth as the inexpressible whole truth and forfeiting the gift as his "debt" (508–9). And it is quite fitting for Milton to relegate these associated concepts of theological import to financial terms through Manoa. He urges that Samson "Repent the sin," and for his "self-preservation" he should not tax himself with too much burden of conscience (504, 505): "let another hand, not thine, *exact* / Thy penal *forfeit* from thy self; perhaps / God will relent, and quit thee all his *debt*" (507–9, *italic mine*). After all, Manoa is negotiating a ransom to redeem Samson. However,

Samson's "great transgression" (1356), which is to take over God's position as his, cannot be redeemed through ransom. So words, when in enlightenment, procreate and regenerate; while in confusion, they transgress and "transverse" (209). Without having Samson sinking even lower, Milton lifts him up by having him dwell upon his mythic origin and his originary strength and past exploits. Here, as the passage quoted above shows, Hebraic and Hellenic images like the angel and fiery chariot intricately intermingle, supplementing and destabilizing each other to make up Samson's identity and status. Insofar as the images reinforce his belief in his divine gift and heritage, making the contrast of his fall even starker and his feelings of downfall even stronger, they also render his understanding unstable, especially with his tremendous leap in thoughts—from thronging hornets to angelic presence, from the blessed Abrahamic heritage to his now miserable bestial state. Mixing the high and the low, this structure of heterogeneity and asymmetry defines Samson's voice.

The rich resonance of the poem derives from this heterogeneity and yet revolves in particular around Samson's degradation of the holy. In addition to its common sense of corruption and corrosion, degradation in Bakhtin's idea reveals a different dimension to the sense of the Fall. Its principle is "the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity."¹⁵⁶ So this act of degrading of the high or solemn, bringing the high to the low, creates excess of potentiality for the world. As Samson laments his eyes being put out and

¹⁵⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 19.

the darkness surrounding him, his imagery of “debasement of the higher”¹⁵⁷ recurs, this time closest to earth: “Inferior to the vilest now become / Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me” (73–4). As in the book of Judges, Mieke Bal reminds us, “The character who has the most intimate relation to nature is Samson, who flees into it.”¹⁵⁸ As Samson himself also reflects, “Can they think me so broken, so debas’d / With corporal servitude, that my mind ever / Will condescend to such absurd commands?” when reacting to the Philistinian officer’s bidding to perform in their feast day (1335–7). Samson fails to comprehend the potentiality of the debasement and inconsistency, but we as readers of Milton’s hidden maneuvering should excavate this intent for renewal. Although for some commentators Milton’s use of imagery may seem unfit for the stature of a biblical judge raised up by God, yet the base image is coherent with Milton’s “eschewing of the usual Samson typology,” for instance, “a representative” of “the Christian elect” or associated with the angel of “the Apocalypse.”¹⁵⁹

The resonance of divine creation from *Genesis* recurs in echoing Samson’s previous harkening back to his Abramic origin. It can further be seen in Samson’s call for God’s help:

O first created Beam, and thou great Word,
 Let there be light, and light was over all;
 Why am I thus bereav’d thy prime decree? (83–85)

As he later refers to himself as being “exil’d from light” (98), Samson evokes and connects with a certain part of the Israelites’ life story, their exodus, exile, and covenant,

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁵⁸ Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 14.

¹⁵⁹ Wittreich, *Interpreting Samson Agonistes*, 56, 40–41

corroborating his association with the mythical origin. Yet this invocation of “let there be light” carries a deeply miserable tone, since his naming, unlike God’s or Adam’s, carries no power, nor can he give substance, to reverse his downfall. His discourse moving from God’s creation to personal bereavement serves as a further example of Milton’s depiction of Samson as a role of undecidability from the degradation of the holy. Samson’s vain hope to recuperate or restore vision from “Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse” (81), nonetheless, sounds more like an incantation, deliberately mimicking the performative act of the divine power in order to sustain his faith. The urge to restore and reinvigorate himself is evident, though he is caught in the degradation of the holy and the loss of his own salvific power. From Samson’s remembering of his ancient tie to Abrahamic history to calling upon empty words, the myth he claims and self-identifies thus becomes self-conflicting and is sufficiently broken.

Milton’s engagement with the biblical myth in *Samson* starts from emotions and advances to the interpretation of visions. Like Milton’s other subjects, Samson also takes part in some partial truth offered by God, crystalized in the form of a mighty strength that Manoa recognizes as “so great a gift” and the Chorus considers an entity of “prophecy” that, quite ironically, “outward acts defile not” (1500, 473, 1368). The knowledge of that partial truth would have become the whole truth had Samson fulfilled his role as a deliverer, so he believes. Therefore, that Samson attempts to summon that identity through memory is also his way to reconfigure his relationship with the divine. He considers his physical strength to be the mark of divine presence, which in turn forms his identity of his “nurture holy” (SA 362) to be God’s chosen one. The body becomes the site for identification of sacredness or profanation, fulfillment or defilement. The ideology behind this type of truth claim has its

counterpart in Dalila's sexual politics. Yet, to return to the flow of emotion into vision, the movement is embedded in the materiality of the text and the language itself.

III. Living at the Edge of Apocalypse

When she writes about the leveling and transforming power of words into minds, Harriet Beecher Stowe hopes for "noble and generous hearts to whom never was a tale of suffering told in vain." Words of suffering may excite emotions into action. So if Milton's tale of suffering is to influence the masses, then the question will be whether it will effect change.¹⁶⁰ Suffering may easily be associated with Christ's passion for atonement, but clearly in *Paradise Regained*, Milton problematizes that association by eliding it. More than that, even the performativity of the ritual is seriously undercut, the act that claims to take away the burden of sin. Here Milton adopts yet another similar strategy of disrupting Church worship, as we have discussed above in the opening verses of *Samson Agonistes* about solemnity and the idol. Also *Paradise Regained* unfolds when John the Baptist, "the great Proclaimer" (I. 18), in receiving Jesus, "in the Consecrated stream / *Pretends* to wash off sin" (I. 72–3, italic mine):

Now had the great proclaimer with a voice
 More awful than the sound of trumpet, cried
 Repentance, and heaven's kingdom nigh at hand
 To all baptized: to his great baptism flocked
 With awe the regions round, and with them came

¹⁶⁰ The idea that tales may produce change is taken from Ronald G. Walters, "Harriet Beecher Stowe and the American Reform Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Cindy Weinstein (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 180.

From Nazareth the son of Joseph deemed
 To the flood Jordan, came as then obscure,
 Unmarked, unknown; but him the Baptist soon
 Descried, divinely warned, and witness bore
 As to his worthier . . . (l. 18–27)

The poet here demonstrates a bold move, bringing the critical to bear on the doctrinal. Milton is attempting exactly what Jean-François Lyotard proposes when he explicates Kantian philosophy on the critique of judgment and the validity of truth claims. In “The Critical Is Analogous to the Political,” Lyotard writes, “The doctrinal, or systematic, phrase ought to come after the critical phrase.”¹⁶¹ Focusing on “the interrelations between ‘phrases,’ or ‘phrasing,’” Lyotard studies the effectiveness of making judgments as to how to “move judiciously from one phrase to the next.”¹⁶² We are told that basically Lyotard’s project in his book *Enthusiasm* is “rethinking and repurposing what are psychological/cognitive categories” like “understanding, reason, imagination, and so on” “into discursive units he terms ‘phrases,’ such as interrogatives, cognitives, imperatives, and so forth.”¹⁶³ Now let us return to the above quote on John’s call in *Paradise Regained*. If, through John, Milton wants to name the unexpressed, or more precisely, to call upon the power of renewal in our mind, then he has skillfully returned religion back to its primitive stage. In other words, Milton re-treats the act of libation and brings it back to its potentiality. John’s call in the wild, therefore, is what Agamben considers an act of

¹⁶¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *Enthusiasm: The Kantian Critique of History*, trans. Georges van den Abbeele (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2.

¹⁶² Georges Van Den Abbeele, “Translator’s Preface” to Lyotard, *Enthusiasm*, xii.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, xi.

profanation that returns the sacred to the worldly use. While this profanation is formalized through the baptismal bath, it largely tends to describe the unknown or the impossible or the mythical. That water of Jordan serves as a threshold or a materialization of relation between a potential follower and an unknown experience. The authentic experience of the real “that is always in the process of being lost,”¹⁶⁴ becomes possible by negation.

Regarding “Milton’s monism,” David Norbrook observes, “his rejection of a sharp split between spirit and matter, worked also against a comparable split between theology and politics.”¹⁶⁵

Here, with the doctrinal in retreat, the main purpose of Milton’s engagement with one of the core values of Christian worship is to put his politics of the restoration to the fore. As we have seen in *Paradise Regained*, the Son, while facing the Devil’s temptations, is to put forward the critical before the doctrinal, and, with Badiou’s idea on Paul, Jesus, to become the messiah, will have to come to terms with ways of self-reliance and achieving redemption on his own without prescribed instructions. However, it is the Son’s faith that empowers the critical, the ability to discern and distinguish the real. In other words, for Jesus to become Christ, he must first get hold of himself by laying claim to his own originality through faith. “Faith prescribes a new possibility, one that, although real in Christ, is not, as yet, in effect for everyone.”¹⁶⁶ In *Regained* it is this *not yet* that creates the delay that implies that Jesus in time can legitimately be named redeemer. Yet as Agamben has persuasively demonstrated, precisely this delay creates a void, a “zone of indistinction”

¹⁶⁴ Giorgio Agamben, “Judgment Day,” *Profanations*, 27.

¹⁶⁵ David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 437.

¹⁶⁶ Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 88.

or “undecidability,” as John’s speech act has opened up, in which Jesus with his “obscure, / Unmarkt, unknown” (*PR*, 24–5) status will work through the process to become Christ. It is a space where law and conventions are suspended and rendered inoperative; that is, this zone cannot be structured through law. And only in this zone of indistinction can one obtain greater liberty and possibility to explore and exert one’s potential and achieve greater than what law hopes to achieve. As if time has been released to be a different temporality, “the time that remains” or the “operational time” of the messianic, as Agamben calls it,¹⁶⁷ the condition of *not yet* anticipates something forthcoming that human potential can develop more fully. In this effect, the process of discovery and recovery becomes the whole poem.

In another instance, guilt and sin together in one line mark and mock Satan’s emotion: “and here again / Satan had not to answer, but stood struck / With *guilt* of his own *sin*, for he himself / Insatiable of glory had lost all” (III. 145–8, italics mine). Here, guilt and sin are beside themselves; their presence brings about their absence. Milton seems to say that if one is tried by “things adverse, / By tribulations, injuries, insults, / Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence” (III. 189–91), like Satan, their guilt is turned into their drive for revenge. Satan’s so-called guilt does not awaken in him an interest in atonement, let alone an effort in the process of reformation. So what kind of relationship is it between guilt and atonement if one is to coincide with the other? And how are they related to the Revelation?

Let us begin by investigating the issue of guilt central to Milton’s renewal project if guilt and atonement do not collide but coincide. A brief genealogy in Milton’s late poems is

¹⁶⁷ Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 65–73.

in order. In *Paradise Lost* this nameless thing called guilt comes into being as a consequence of the first couple's transgression. That the couple's initial intent is to explore the terrain of their potential breaks up the bounds and univocity that God's law dictates. Toward the end, we see their joy and guilt once they reconcile with themselves and with God. That part of self with joy and hope becomes the mainstay in Jesus's ministry in the work's sequel, *Paradise Regained*. This work, with the exception of one incident associating guilt with Satan, displays his guile and anguish. The other part of the guilty self Milton brings onto Samson. That Milton makes this a chief subject for *Samson* will no doubt create immediate relevancy to his contemporaries, especially for those who experienced the turmoil of the civil wars and their aftermath. Emotions of both guilt and suffering, once thematized in the story of Adam and Eve and of Jesus, respectively, now as a confluence take centrality in Milton's retelling of the Samson story.

The complex dimension of guilt as such, which has initially been broached in *Paradise Lost* as a consequence of the disobedience, will now be conceived in *Samson Agonistes* as an impetus to further speech acts for materializing the potentiality. Related to it is the issue of loss and defense of the flesh and its resurrection, a core component of Christian theology, which Milton incorporates into all of his late poems. Furthermore, including the two last poems featuring the redeemer Jesus and the deliverer Samson, the materially bound single volume accentuates the echo and dialogue between both poems. The dedicated title page of *Samson Agonistes* separates and interfaces the two poems, through which the "materiality of grace"¹⁶⁸ and the conscience of guilt are further reflected on the personal level. A flow of emotions revolves around guilt from *Paradise Regained* to

¹⁶⁸ Badiou, *Saint Paul*. Badiou also uses "materialism of grace" to delineate "the One," an event that achieves the status of universality, 66, 81.

Samson Agonistes. The former, free of bondage of the flesh and guilt, begins in obscurity and ends in light; through action and not remembering, the Son engenders his messianic mission. The latter, once deprived of his physically “immeasurable strength” (SA 206), remains confined by his own vision and withdrawn throughout; through recollection, he traces his history back to the point where things still remain obscure. Nevertheless, going through the process of separation, another repeated theme derived from the originary Fall to the edenic ideal, both Jesus and Samson need what has yet to be acquired or restored in order to found their own enterprise.

Against Jesus’s response to Satan’s query on his reserved zeal and mystic timing, we hear in stark contrast Samson’s reflection expanding into emotive discourse regarding his complex enthusiasm and guilty conscience. Yet they, who “into [themselves] descended” (PR, II. 111), would through their participation reconfigure and submit themselves to the mystery of God. And to conjoin themselves to that mystery means to understand and recommit themselves to what God has arranged for them. This is a process of subjectivation that will help mend the fragmented self. It is this hope of rejoining and return that sets off Jesus, though temporarily uncertain of his task, to undertake the lofty pursuit that makes him realize that the messianic community is the mystery already represented in the divine arrangement that awaits him to materialize on earth. That hope nevertheless makes Samson, while deeply “profan’d” (377) but unyielding, founder and fathom gravely in torment while bearing the thought that his redemption may become unmoored. He suffers from the self-inflicted fracture that alienates him from “heavenly disposition” (373), and finally seeks to recompose himself to suture that division.

IV. Critiquing as Re-creation

The aim of critique is not the ends of man or of reason but in the end
the Overman, the overcome, overtaken man. This point of critique is
not justification but a different way of feeling: another sensibility.
Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*¹⁶⁹

In both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, Milton devises competing perspectives for ongoing revelations. To regain the lost paradise, one must begin to obtain a sharper vision in order to discern and penetrate into the true meaning and spirit of life beyond appearance. The purpose of critique is to create new meanings or excavate what has been suppressed or lost. Yet without creating new and constructive meanings, the act of critique falls short of its genuine purpose and becomes a mere act of opposition, negation, and annihilation. Satan is the chief antagonist of God's plan, whereas the Son of God contrarily keeps refuting the archfiend's misreading and providing his own take on the divine manifestations. What distinguishes the two rivals are the ways they interpret providence or prophecy, and one tends to create while the other sabotages. As Satan's "temptations against faith" create "the diversionary appeal to charity" or skewed assessments,¹⁷⁰ the act of critiquing becomes a performative act:

But if thou be the Son of God, command
That out of these hard stones be made thee bread;
So shalt thou save thyself and us relieve
With food, whereof we wretched seldom taste. (I. 342–45)

¹⁶⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Continuum, 2006), 88.

¹⁷⁰ Fisher, "Why Is *Paradise Regained* So Cold?" 203.

In these two poems the subject's appetites is the site for the test. Adam before the Fall has been told that genuine physical recuperation and spiritual elevation will come about through cultivating individual innocence through work, grounded on trust in and obedience to God. Innocence will materialize into energy and wisdom, and the edenic couple will become angelic, a more sublimated form. They failed by choosing the alternative, the mere truth claims offered by Satan in disguise. The consequences they are facing are tragic—the uncoupling of trust, intimacy, and morality resulting in grave uncertainty and a grim view of the future—as we can see through their shame, quarrels, and denials that they have committed a sin in the later books of *Paradise Lost*. The unity bequeathed to Adam and Eve, their relationship with God, with Nature, with celestial entities, with higher beings and lowly creatures—all is disrupted and lost. These issues find their afterlife in a more concentrated form after the Restoration, in Charles II's court, as Milton continues to represent them through *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. So here in *Regained* physical nourishment and recuperation of the spirit once again serve as the ground of contestation. Jesus standing fast reproaches Satan by scrutinizing his diversionary tactic: that because satisfying one's appetites or desires, as do Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*, is not the real cause of losing paradise, this cannot be the drive for revival; that turning stones to bread would be an act of "distrust"¹⁷¹ or "would imply mistrust of God's providence."¹⁷² Jesus, being a true believer, continues with a scornful, "Think'st thou such force in bread?"; he considers his own faith, not food, the substance of life.

¹⁷¹ "Why doth thou then suggest to me distrust?" (l. 355)

¹⁷² Fisher, "Why Is *Paradise Regained* So Cold?" 203.

However, the debate between Jesus and Satan is heavy with political freight. The poem critiques not only the ungodly behaviors of the contemporary court culture but also the politics in the prerevolutionary era, the reign of Stuarts, and the monarchical institution as a whole. Milton, along with other republicans, has quite persistently mounted a backlash against the Caroline monarchy as the evil papacy. The Hobbesians figured the state as a monster Leviathan that “surveys everything that is lofty; it is king over all that are proud.”¹⁷³ Satan is Charles I incarnate. The way the tempter falsifies God’s message to suit his own incapacity,¹⁷⁴ Milton seems to imply, finds a parallel in Charles, who has been compared to King David, an image of martyrdom that the royalists propagated through his book *Eikon Basilike* and made his death as unjust as Christ’s suffering. Satan’s tyrannical endeavor can also be read as the representation of Charles’s personal rule that plunged the nation into misery. The poem is not merely an expression of political or religious dissidence but paves the way for the reconstruction of an individual realm leading to individual re-creation. Milton gradually brings this understanding to the fore through the rhetorical tug-of-war between the Son and Satan. It applies not only to the understanding of the divine creation but also to that of the creation of civilizations and human history, referenced through Satan in the temptation scenes of books III and IV, which involves inheriting and discovering ancient pagan texts and engaging them with critical hermeneutics. A “hermeneutic combat,” as Radzinowicz has observed,¹⁷⁵ Milton’s poetics

¹⁷³ Job 41:34.

¹⁷⁴ John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), xiv.

¹⁷⁵ Mary Ann Radzinowicz, “*Paradise Regained* as Hermeneutic Combat,” *University of Harvard Studies in Literature* 16 (1984): 99–107. See also her “How Milton Read the Bible: The Case of *Paradise Regained*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, 202–18.

henceforth fuses the ontological and the literary. Through the Son of God, the real meaning of creation manifests itself as a pursuit. A personal re-creation or salvation begins with aberration (from the conventions) and rebellion (against temptations), moves through exploration and pursuit (as the Son has undergone in various aspects in the desert), and culminates in the return to the reconstructed Garden of Eden, as *Paradise Regained* implies by ending with Jesus's return home to Mary.

Featuring Jesus in the center of a brief epic for a Restoration audience, Milton intends something quite audacious and profound. The year 1660 saw the return of Charles II to the throne, marking a moment of political and cultural change that disrupted the republican cause. Milton and the godly republicans responded disapprovingly with verbal and visual images of the new king and his court. Facing a whole range of challenges, the king also launched his own program to muster support to secure his rule, the literary and visual representations that attempted to maintain support and reassure the doubters. As a recent study of Charles II's mistresses in court, especially the "Windsor Beauties," has observed, "[a]fter the repressions of the interregnum and the uncertainties and poverty of the exiled court, there was an appetite for exuberance, indulgence, and transgression—of written and unwritten rules alike—an appetite that the king, and especially the women at his court, came to symbolize."¹⁷⁶ The King's "unabashed sexuality," his new discourses of love and sex, carried political valences that first won him some popularity but also attracted criticism.¹⁷⁷ Popular anxiety abounded in "sermons, print, manuscript verse,"

¹⁷⁶ Alexander and MacLeod, "Introduction," in *Politics, Transgression, and Representation at the Court of Charles II*, xiv.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, xiv. See also in this volume, Kevin Sharpe, "'Thy Longing Country's Darling and Desire': Aesthetics, Sex, and Politics in the England of Charles II," 1–32, and Tim Harris, "'There Is None That Loves Him but Drunk Whores and Whoremongers': Popular Criticisms of the Restoration Court," 35–58.

denouncing Charles II's whoring as the sin of the age.¹⁷⁸ Under such an atmosphere, we may detect the disguised urgency behind Milton's *Paradise Regained*, which takes the political exigencies of the time to task. This reading, therefore, counters the claims of some readers who consider this a quietist work, written by a defeated poet who retreats from the world of sound and fury.

Hence, figuring his own restoration program through Jesus, Milton is evoking the experience of redemption: that a single man's extraordinary "educative experience"¹⁷⁹ can be replicated in the life of the multitude. As book IV opens with Satan's renewed "assault," as "surging waves against a solid rock" (l.19, 18), Christ's "calm of mind" (SA 14), capable of resisting temptations, is in stark contrast to the king's debauchery and the court's sensual exuberance. *Paradise Lost* evokes the complex experience of Adam and Eve, whose potentials for elevation to divinity as well as their failure to cultivate them bring about sin and death. Redressing this slippage, *Paradise Regained* features prominently the second Adam's private experience made public in reversing the consequences of Adam's trespass and reviving righteousness and new life in all. Central to that pursuit of renewal is not Christ's crucifixion but his quest for personal salvation through self-knowing. Milton, once again, is on a mission to find a new way to restore the spirit of the English people, first shattered by the war and the regicide and then dampened by the constricting Anglican settlement. Through Jesus the Son of God, Milton is able to create an integrative public voice that speaks to all Christians, not only to reshape and advance public discourse, but to address the individual urge to restore their fractured righteousness. By exploring the

¹⁷⁸ Tim Harris, "There Is None That Loves Him," 43.

¹⁷⁹ Lewalski, "Milton and the Hartlib Circle," 217.

internal suffering of this integral Christ figure, Milton attempts to relieve individual torments and convert them into a shared and collective experience; by treating the relentless perseverance in the cause of the Messiah, the poet aspires to divert people's turmoil and uplift their spirits, thereby transforming the private suffering into a more public and yet constructive force for England's future. How that shared experience that links men and women to Adam transfers to one that links them to Christ takes centrality in the restorative project of *Paradise Regained*. Alongside the discussion of that project, I will also explore Milton's strategy of forming a public discourse, specifically as to how the hero addresses the collective experience of turmoil by reviving and extending the potentials God has bestowed on Adam at creation and representing that integrative voice of the people as authority so as to critique political power and its rhetoric.

Although the images of destruction prevalent in Milton's late poems serve different purposes, either as an instrument for the poet's grand scheme for ultimate restoration or as possible consequences of individual failure of potential, they must not be viewed as Milton's only or ultimate goal. Samuel Johnson's assessment reflects only one type of reader's response. In this chapter I present a different reading in which Milton puts in place a demonstration of private, subtle processes of self-discovery for restoration of the lost cause in pursuit of an ideal society that he anticipates to be governed by the enlightened. The newness of life does not lie in the passive acceptance of the status quo, the renewed monarchical rule. Rather, by returning to the origin, the source, in God's creation or Christ's resurrection, Milton counteracts the official propaganda by subjecting the national culture and tradition to scrutiny. By overseeing its development from the beginning to the present moment of England's history, Adam is bestowed with a new vision in the final books of

Paradise Lost. Through reevaluating religious rituals, Jesus is constantly refuting Satan's skewed political and ontological discourse in *Paradise Regained*. To that end, in *Paradise Regained*, Milton dramatically privatizes part of the Christ story, his self-discovery and not his crucifixion, his resistance to temptations and his path to redemption. Milton's purpose, instead of binding up the wounds of the nation, is to wage a complex battle on several fronts about issues like the foundation of culture, kingship, power, and authority in the context of the Restoration. Overall, it is a different restoration Milton launches in competing with the received restoration settlement of monarchy.

The newness of life promised after paradise is first perverted by Satan and then uncultivated and lost by Adam and Eve. So the paradisiacal becomes the state of potentiality, worthy of one's devotion and action to relocate and replicate among all. The beginning of *Paradise Regained* transposes us to the threshold of possibilities that Milton illuminates in *Paradise Lost*:

I who erewhile the happy garden sung,
 By one man's disobedience lost, now sing
 Recovered Paradise to all mankind,
 By one man's firm obedience fully tried
 Through all temptation, and the tempter foiled
 In all his wiles, defeated and repulsed,
 And Eden raised in the waste wilderness. (*PR*, I. 1-7)

The promise of renewal requires some labor and endurance, and it is a processual challenge that Milton wants to prepare his reader to meet. With the allusions to *Paradise Lost*, Milton's emphasis on this single man not only signals the role of Christ as the second

Adam whose work will reverse the consequences of Adam's trespass but also evokes multiple political circumstances during England's tumultuous decades. Learning about the dissolution of the Long Parliament and "the force of the tide running toward monarchy,"¹⁸⁰ Milton in *Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660, 2nd ed.) continues to denounce kingship and once again tries to urge the English to erect a "free Commonwealth": "Certainly then that people must needs be madd or strangely infatuated, that build the chief hope of thir common happiness or safetie on a single person." "The happiness of a nation," Milton reiterates, should be governed by the people, "where no single person, but reason only swaies." Against monarchy, Milton continues with religious rhetoric to reference England's republican experiment: that going back to monarchy, then the "far more precious of all" treasures, "our late miraculous deliverances" will be wasted—"treading back again with lost labour all our happie steps in the progress of reformation."¹⁸¹ This is the threat of perverted measures, and reinstating monarchy is the opposite of revival that Milton cautions against adopting. Quite evidently, Milton is far from retreating into solitude, or avoiding public engagements. But with strict censorship implemented after the Restoration, Milton shrouds his critique in a different type of language and poetic form.

Paradise Regained is also concerned with the issue of power in one person, and this may be related to Milton's disillusionment with the Protectorate government. In the *Second Defense* (1654), Milton praised the army leaders as God's radical instruments to whom

¹⁸⁰ Preface to *The Readie and Easie Way*, ed. Robert W. Ayers, *CPW* 7: 397.

¹⁸¹ *The Readie and Easie Way*, *CPW* 7: 427.

people could “entrust our liberty.”¹⁸² The chief is Oliver Cromwell: “Cromwell, we are deserted! You alone remain. On you has fallen the whole burden of our affairs. On you alone they depend.”¹⁸³ Milton seems to imply that the nation should not build its hopes on any single man, as Cromwell becomes increasingly authoritarian and condemned as a betrayer of the cause because of his implementation of a religious policy that is but “a small step forward to the Parliamentary persecution of sectaries after 1660.”¹⁸⁴ Overall, the opening lines of *Paradise Regained* set a tone and position that not only deploys his own proposed reversal against the institution of monarchy but also indirectly critiques such efforts as Cromwellian, defecting republican ideals and parliament’s failure to put England on a different course.

However, Milton has many reasons for making Christ the one to raise Eden “in the waste wilderness,” from “the barbarous dissonance” (*PL*, VII. 32) of Restoration culture. First, by invoking this historical figure, Milton appeals to all people by emphasizing Jesus’s private experience: his subtle, inner aspects and processes of self-discovery, self-regulation, and self-governance, represented “in quintessentially Miltonic terms as individual, self-generated, arduous, dialogic processes.”¹⁸⁵ So the voice is at once public and private, while the hero’s solitude in nature, the desert, is highly rhetorical, attempting to create an individual bond with its reader. We are told that “this glorious eremite” was led into the desert by the divine spirit; the hero is qualified as “obscure, / Unmarked,

¹⁸² *A Second Defence of the English People*, CPW 4: 678.

¹⁸³ *A Second Defence*, CPW 4: 671.

¹⁸⁴ Christopher Hill, *God’s Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 187.

¹⁸⁵ Lewalski, “Milton and the Hartlib Circle,” 215.

unknown” but will perform “deeds / Above heroic, though in secret done” (*PR*, I.8, I.24–5, I.14–5). And the heroic landscape, a “pathless desert, dusk with horrid shades,” “barren waste,” will become “his victorious field” (*PR*, I. 296, 354, 9) of combating and conquering his inner enemies. The location of the hero’s temptation and his modest abode (“cottage low” and “private house”) are starkly contrasted to images of the court that Milton aims at—Satan’s pomp and regal extravagance, “palaces adorned, / Porches and theatres, baths, aqueducts, / Statues and trophies, and triumphal arcs” (*PR*, II.28, IV.639, IV.35–37). To restore collective righteousness, one first needs to discern the vices. The wilderness, on the one hand, invokes the memory of early Christians’ turmoil and waiting for God’s grace, but, on the other hand, serves as a terrain for hope and promise that may be harkening back to the Exodus when Moses, the lawgiver, establishes his community, newly liberated from tyranny: the beginning of a new life.

Most of all, this Christ figure presents himself as one who has no recollection of his heavenly identity nor fully grasps the purpose of his earthly mission, as opposed to Satan’s partial knowledge of God’s plan. As Lewalski argues, “[u]ndergirding Milton’s position is a radical spiritual egalitarianism that obliterates any real distinction in status of function between clergy and laity.”¹⁸⁶ We are also reminded of Milton’s idea from his *Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church* (1659):

As “a holy and a royal priesthood” all Christians have “equally access to any ministerial function whenever calld by thir own abilities and the church”; and ministers may be “elected out of all sorts and orders

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

of men . . . from the magistrate himself to the meanest artificer.”¹⁸⁷

Chiefly, this is the purpose of Milton appealing to Christ in the poem, whose leveling experience will appeal to the Christians as opposed to the court and the Anglican hierarchy. He has the potential to institute the “complete disestablishment of the church”¹⁸⁸ and religious hierarchy. Furthermore, Christ is the one who is able to break free of Adam’s legacy, not simply because he is the Son of God, as he later interprets the sign of the dove and realizes that he possesses “[t]he authority which I derived from heaven” (I. 289). Rather, as Milton here tends toward his own theology or presents his strategic interpretation, Christ is also the son of man, who will go through a process of self-discovery to self-revelation to understand his being the Son of God. It is that trying process in which he defeats the anti-Christ archfiend who materializes his authority, ascending from the son of man to the Son of God. Therefore, a commoner “low of parentage” (*PR*, I.235) like Christ is contemplating ways of healing the wounds of his community and leading them out of thralldom to true liberty, a story quite diametrical to the lavish image of the court, where the monarchists are intent on restoring the king’s divine right and maintaining his royal prerogatives on earth. While Adam fails in his self-governance that will bring him through self-discovery to enlightenment, Milton’s hero, Jesus the second Adam, is demonstrating that it can be cultivated by many. Milton appeals to Christ’s humility and individual quest, not to his inherited authority and arbitrating power. The Son of God understands “heroic acts” (*PR*, I. 216) not in military or political terms but in terms of their potentiality:

. . . to subdue and quell o’er all the earth

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.; *Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church*, CPW 7: 319–20.

¹⁸⁸ Lewalski, “Milton and the Hartlib Circle,” 213.

ground,”¹⁹⁰ the temptation alone. Focusing on this remedial strategy, *Paradise Regained* seeks to replace a culture of compromise and disguise with one of visionary combat and spiritual sagacity.

V. Conclusion

This chapter explored the connection between the fall of Eden and Samson’s guilt, and discussed the theme that weaves through Milton’s whole restoration project—remembrance. Samson, though “not another Christ,” like the Son in *Paradise Regained*, also filiates us all into the future. The disjuncture that the civil wars created provides an opportunity for people to allow themselves to emulate the Son, who is released from a past that no longer dictates or even haunts him for what he is and is going to do next. Jesus founds his own subjectivity by declaring himself the son of his mission and destiny, not through any predicative relations, personal, legal, or historical. To remember the past is only human, but as *Samson Agonistes* has shown us, memory may twist our understanding about the present and change our path toward the future.

¹⁹⁰ Charles Dunster’s edition of *Paradise Regained* (1795), reprinted in the appendix in *Milton’s “Paradise Regained:” Two Eighteenth-Century Critiques*, ed. Richard Meadowcourt, Charles Dunster, and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr (Gainesville: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971), 3.

“Relation Stands”: Standing at the Edge of the Apocalypse

—A Conclusion

Milton’s three late work treated here all revolve around the existence of forms of life featuring two major aspects: first, potentiality, in which the subject is expected to embrace his own privation and be in relation to his own incapacity,¹⁹¹ and second, the threshold or a limit point at which the subject is given an opportunity to reach into the infinite and the unknown.¹⁹² As I have argued, what these late works, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, have shown is that Milton presents a powerful restoration scheme aimed at optimizing human potentiality through myth and engaging in the critical stance of recovery of a lost paradise as the poet’s act of radical politics. Thematising the recovery of the lost paradise through awakening to the subject’s own potentiality, these late poems accentuate their subjects’ attempt at returning to the originary state, which has been rendered undecidable and indistinct and thus full of potentials. In concluding this study, I want to stress one aspect that has been mentioned in passing but deserves more attention, that is, the real of the subject.

What is the real of the subject? Jacques Lacan finds that in the subject’s unconscious something dominating the subject only “presents itself instead of the subject.”¹⁹³ In the realm of meaning, symbols, metaphors, or some isolating signifiers will not represent the subject or articulate his symptoms. Thus, for Lacan, because “the real is that which always

¹⁹¹ Agamben, “On Potentiality,” 182.

¹⁹² With this idea of a limit point or threshold, I am thinking mainly of Freud, Lacan, Benjamin, Badiou, and Agamben.

¹⁹³ Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter: Reading “Écrits” Closely* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 104.

returns to the same place,"¹⁹⁴ to treat any symptoms effectively, "[t]he subject has to come into being where (that thing) was."¹⁹⁵ In other words, the subject must embrace the unknown or the thing he resists in order to come close to his own subjectivity. The real is that which is not yet, which has not yet entered the language, so Lacan declares, "*what did not come to light in the symbolic appears in the real.*"¹⁹⁶ Overall, "presenting a function of constancy," the real "then became that before which the imaginary faltered, that over which the symbolic stumbles, that which is refractory, resistant. Hence the formula: 'the real is the impossible.'"¹⁹⁷ In all of Milton's late work, the relation of the subject to the real has been one that is to the ineffable or the impossible. Such a site of impossibility, the infinite or the unknown that escapes the grasp of the symbolic or the imaginary, is what Lacan calls the real.¹⁹⁸ So here I would like to conclude by thinking about the real of the subject, a topic worthy of a book-length study. This short Conclusion, nevertheless, serves as an attempt at engaging with this idea as a new beginning.

The potentiality of forming the selfhood is closely connected to the impossibility of the real. As the poems lay bare the journey from labor to transgression, temptation to redemption, or from suffering to destruction, the trajectory of the Miltonic subjects' pursuit is clear. Their craving for experiencing themselves as part and parcel of the composite

¹⁹⁴ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1978), 49.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-5.

¹⁹⁶ Lacan, *Écrits*, 324.

¹⁹⁷ Alan Sheridan, "Translator's Note," in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI*, 280.

¹⁹⁸ Lacan constantly returns to Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) to further think about how the real can be revealed in every dream. See his *Écrits, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI), and *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore*, among other works.

work of divine creation and the impulse to return to the totality of that procreative source is strong. During this process Milton renders inevitable the challenge of repetition and alienation which the Miltonic subjects must undertake and in which they constantly get caught. Evidently Milton's restoration is built upon the continuous acts of reaching into the impossible and drawing out new possibilities and founding new relations.

Building new relations by tapping into the originary state and originating process is the key. The illuminating ideas of the thinkers I employ, from Aristotle to Freud and Lacan, from Walter Benjamin to Agamben and Badiou, all highlight the "formless" or messianic moments as those replete with awakening potentials. Very often Milton makes this attempt at awakening an extreme case. He would bring his subject and the reader to the edge of the unknown to access the real or to experience the truth procedure in order for them to become the subject of truth and universality. For the Son the redeemer is brought to the desert to suffer from his own privation in order to understand his impotentiality, "the potentiality to not-be."¹⁹⁹ Through negation, the imposter Satan imposes on the Son the zeal to prove his sonship on the pinnacle of the Temple by falsifying God's message to suit his own incapacity.²⁰⁰ As for Adam and Eve, they have come a long way from being born free to choose to forfeiting their impotentiality, namely, their choice not to follow their human impulse. For Samson, finally, the Judge must face the blasphemy of reconciling his God with Idols when he is forced to perform at the feast to Dagon since that about which he cares the most is his belief in God and the hope and promise of his ultimate deliverance. So Agamben writes, "The greatness—and the abyss—of human potentiality is that it is first of

¹⁹⁹ Agamben, *Potentialities*, 183.

²⁰⁰ Crossan, *Jesus*, xiv.

all potential not to act, *potential for darkness*.”²⁰¹ Therefore, “[t]o be free is,” he continues, “*to be capable of one’s own impotentiality*, to be in relation to one’s own privation. This is why freedom is freedom for both good and evil.”²⁰² How to act or react toward the real of the subject themselves in order to remain free clearly prevails in these poems. It can also be considered one of the many dimensions of the real of the Miltonic subjects.

It appears that the relation which the Miltonic subjects repeatedly visit for the purpose of reaffirming their hope for the ultimate return serves as a threshold, a passage, or a limit point beyond which the symbolic ceases to shed light on and the real begins to emerge. Take the creation of Adam and Eve as an example. Encountering the infinite in their own way, both of our human parents bring themselves into contact with the real. Eve’s first gazing at her own image in the river is arguably the starting point of her accessing the real of subjectivity. God’s voice to lead her away from indulging in her own image draws her near her other *auctor*, Adam. In contrast, immediately after God’s voice, as we are told through her remembrance, Eve for some reason is repulsed by Adam’s calling for her return. In Jean Hyppolite’s regard on these “primary forces,” these moments of “attraction” and “repulsion” form “a primary myth of the outside and the inside,” the formation of selfhood. And perhaps this also shows “how the intellectual separates itself (in action) from the affective to give a formulation of a sort of genesis of judgement, that is, in short, a genesis of thought.”²⁰³ The real of Eve’s subject formation lies at the threshold of affirming or repelling the relation she has yet to be able to comprehend and articulate. Just

²⁰¹ Agamben, *Potentialities*, 181.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 183.

²⁰³ Hyppolite, “A Spoken Commentary,” 294, 293.

right at that moment of *not yet*, where the symbolic fails to keep up with the potential of actuality, her selfhood seems to come into being. Relation stands when the separation of inside and outside is formulated.

Represented as an impetus to returning to the originary forms of life, the subjects' unfettered impulses of reaching into the impossible prompt them to seek ways to abolish the alienation that the Fall imposes and to transform the fallen consciousness as a remnant of sacredness and profanity²⁰⁴ into new use and create new significations. I conclude that *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, all embody versions of the Miltonic restoration, an ambitious and enthusiastic pursuit of humanity's originary state imbued with spiritual potentialities and the capability for ongoing revelation, while that state has been separated from itself by the Fall. On the one hand, that separation as a split in being and substance is mediated through the divide in language, the mythic-affective and rationalist-empirical discourses. On the other hand, the empirical apparatuses, which aim at revelation through sense perceptions and scientific observations, perceive their communicability with the unknown through making separations and distinctions. The restorative impulse, prevalent in spheres of the sacred and the profane, is dedicated to abolishing the separations and facilitating a return to the originary state capable of founding new relations. Central to this pursuit is the re-creation of the subject, whose latent regenerative and rejuvenating force, the prime mover of recovered paradise, is ultimately revealed and amplified by engaging tension and profanable separation. This study therefore delineates the trajectory of Milton's restoration in his late poems with regard to the antithesis between the inclusive and exclusive forces.

²⁰⁴ Agamben, "In Praise of Profanation," 78.

Milton's poetics of fragmentary articulation intentionally engages the reader in participating in more actively the re-membering, re-pairing or even re-turning process. Satan's intriguing perversion, literally and metaphorically, compels the Miltonic subjects to constantly turn to change because change as first principle, or *prima mobile*, will sustain not only the momentum but also hope for the ongoing re-pairing and for ultimately receiving revelation. As Joseph Wittreich in his *Why Milton Matters* astutely reminds us,

As we move toward a fullness of perception, Milton's changing rather than changeless mind will become increasingly the object of our study, producing a criticism that involves not just validation of the past but often correction of it.

Understanding that change in reading Milton's texts and profaning it for modern use only contributes to a fuller picture of Milton's world as well as our own. The real of the subject is full of undecidables, so we need to per-vert and profane what has been consecrated in or fixated upon Milton's texts and continue to re-find new relations.

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