

**'BLISS', 'DELIGHT', AND 'PLEASURE'
IN PARADISE LOST**

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by

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY PARENTS

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I

INTRODUCTION

Comparing Spenser's destiny with Milton's in the Republic of Critical Letters - the twentieth-century Republic, at any rate - A Bartlett Giamatti writes:

Those who do not think Spenser was a good man, or a great poet, or an orthodox Christian; or who think his ideas are outmoded or that Archimago is the real hero of the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, do not write books about it. They pass him by, or - what is perhaps worse - make gestures toward his "painterly" qualities, or his "music". Indifference, or neglect, has not marked Milton's career. (352)

Indeed they have not. R G Siemens informs us (in Danielson 268) that in the 30-year period from 1968 to 1998 some 6000 studies on Milton were published, nor does there appear to be any slackening in the rate of output. The bulk of Milton criticism, by a long way, centres on *Paradise Lost* which has been viewed from every conceivable angle - until a new study turns up with a new interpretation. Still, this plethora of critical probings and soundings of the epic may be grouped, considering their profusion, under relatively few heads: sources, intertextual echoes and allusions, genre(s), political/social/historical/biographical context(s), literary tradition(s), influence upon successors, critical reception, theodicy and theology, themes, archetypes, characterization, language, imagery, prosody, style,

pattern(s), organization, structure. This dissertation seeks to bring together two of these categories, language (in the form of a trio of keywords, the ones that furnish its title) and structure. The precise character of the relation between the keywords in question and the structural configurations with which they mesh will be spelled out later in this chapter; to begin with let us consider a sampling of critical opinion on issues of language and structure in *Paradise Lost*, thereby creating a backdrop against which the lineaments of the present enquiry can stand out the more clearly. If one effect of that is to bring into view a measure of common ground, a more striking effect is to show up the degree to which this study represents a departure from previous analyses of *Paradise Lost* with roughly similar 'briefs'. Our sights fixed on those earlier analyses, let us begin the critical survey by passing under review a sampling of critics who have pronounced on matters of structure.

There have been about as many views of the structure of *Paradise Lost* as there have been critics to view it.¹ But the many and diverse interpretations fall naturally into three major groupings (with, not unexpectedly, a degree of overlap and blurring-of-the-edges amongst them). That granted, it may be affirmed that the unifying principle of the first grouping is its members' shared

¹ It is well, therefore, to keep in mind Joseph H Summers's caution that "To speak of the 'structure' of [*Paradise Lost*] is to invite misconceptions" inasmuch as the word "may imply that there is [only] one principle of organization" in the poem. "Perhaps it would be preferable", Summers continues, "to speak of the 'structures' [of *Paradise Lost*] rather than the 'structure'", given the complexity "of the organization and articulation of the whole" (113-14).

inclination to view Milton's epic poem chiefly in terms of its grand architecture, the emphasis falling, accordingly, on considerations of overarching design, on the work's paramount 'lines of force'. Second, there are the critics who see the poem chiefly as a system or network of symmetries, parallels and continuities, the emphasis being placed in this case on the way in which separated - often widely separated - parts of the epic performance link up with one another, as well as the basis on which they do so. A third grouping consists of the critics who see the work mainly in terms of its divisibility and propose various models of division.

Characteristic of the orientation of the first grouping is this statement by Louis L Martz:

Milton's poem comes to assume a form that might be described in visual terms as a picture with a dark border [comprising, at one end of the poem, Books I and II and, at the other, Books XI and XII] but a bright center. (140)

If Martz's organizing analogy is painterly, R W Condee's is architectural:

In *Paradise Lost* we can see most clearly [Milton's] ability to create a poem in which the structure progresses by firmly built steps from initial perturbation to ultimate resolution so that one part rests upon another from the foundation to the pinnacles. (3)

Other critics of this group rely on geometrical prototypes in conceptualizing the epic's structure: "The shape of *Paradise Lost*", writes M M Mahood, "coincides so justly with the concentric spheres of Milton's cosmography

that it might be called geometric; and the movements of various bodies in this cosmos are repeated in the work's dynamic form" (177). Little wonder that in her analysis of this 'dynamic form', Mahood has occasion, given her analogical paradigm, to utilize terms such as 'circle' (179), 'arc' (183) and 'curve' (idem), or that she brings her argument to a close with praise for Milton's "architectonic sense" which she considers "the outstanding quality of his art" (188). Close to Mahood in outlook (and indebted to her) is Anne Davidson Ferry who argues that the poem's "total outline" (149) is based on the figure of the circle. "This figure", she contends, "is especially suited to Milton's needs...because it is a repeating pattern, turning endlessly upon itself, and because it is the traditional symbol of divine perfection, unity, eternity, infinity. By building the poem in repeated circles...Milton imitated the form of the world envisioned by his inspired narrator" (150). Isabel G MacCaffrey likewise conceives of the poem's grand design in unmistakably geometrical terms, her commanding prototype being the pyramid:

The structure of *Paradise Lost*...is a great inverted V...with its roots in Hell and its crown in Heaven. We begin at the lowest point; we end at a point not quite so low, but far below the heights to which we have soared in the middle. ...This, then, is the main configuration of the poem: from deep Hell up to the Mount of God, and down again to the "subjected Plaine" of fallen earthly life. (56, 59)

Other commentators again think of the poem's architecture in terms of cross- and counter-currents

between and among the grand archetypal polarities. Thus Jackson I Cope distinguishes two linked "primary structural pattern[s]", the "contrast and alternation between light and dark", and the pattern of "fall and subsequent arising and resurrection" (85, 76). Cope probably took his cue from Don Cameron Allen who, in an essay published in 1961, the year before Cope's book came out, drew attention to "verbs of rising and falling, of descent and ascent, and...contrasts between light and darkness" in *Paradise Lost* (621).

Representative of the second critical tendency, the one that emphasizes the unifying effects achieved by strategic connections and correspondences between, and among, often widely separated parts of the text, is the position advanced by J R Watson who discovers, to begin with, patterns of repetition between passages in Books I and XII; but these repetitions function simply as the "corner-pieces" of a larger "symmetrical pattern" (154) with "its centre in Books VI and VII" (153). Viewing Milton's epic as a vast network of symmetries and interconnections, Watson finds much to praise in the author's "unfailing grasp of the various interconnecting elements, his mastery of the *architectonicé* of the long poem" (148). In this mastery, adds Watson, echoing Mahood, lies "Milton's true greatness" (*idem*).

It was indicated earlier that there exists a degree of (inevitable) overlap among the three major ways of thinking of the structure of *Paradise Lost*. In illustration of this it is interesting to note that the light/darkness and

descent/ascent binaries, which Cope sees as bound up with the work's grand architecture, are viewed by Kristin P McColgan within a narrower, more localized frame of reference as a network of interconnecting, unifying repetitions and symmetries - a perception characteristic of our second category. Writes McColgan: "The repeated references to light/darkness and height/depth that frame the individual books of Milton's epic...are an important means of achieving structural unity, both between and within books. They are interlocking hands that stretch from Book 1 through Book 12, then reach back again to Book 1, thus encircling the whole" (90).² For Donald F Bouchard the degree of overlap between the first and second critical tendencies appears to be so extensive that, wittingly or unwittingly, he conflates them, referring matter-of-factly to the "symmetry and reciprocity implicit in Milton's circular poem..." (115).

As parody is but parallel inverted or distorted, it follows that the sizeable number of critics who have called attention to Milton's use of parodic techniques in *Paradise Lost* must be reckoned to form part of our second grouping. Their attention has for the most part been claimed by the way the fallen angels' - and particularly Satan's - words and deeds parodically mimic the forms of address and

² Critics like McColgan who track patterns of 'repeated reference' in *Paradise Lost* are in effect mapping the geography of what John Hollander calls the epic's "self-echo" - "the leitmotivic reappearance of phrases and cadences." "[S]uch patterns", he continues, "are quite basic to the fabric of *Paradise Lost*, and might be considered as elements in what seems to be the poem's memory of itself" (51).

behaviour of the Heavenly Assembly. Of this critical fellowship³ John R Mulder is a representative spokesman:

Satan always borrows God's patterns; he never discovers a method of his own, but merely abuses whatever he can see of God's mode of operation. When he begins his rebellion in heaven, he calls his legions to "his royal seat", The Palace of Great Lucifer... The proud Lucifer therefore starts with a cheap, distorted imitation of God's order in heaven. And later, in hell, Satan must, like God, have his own palace and place of worship, the Pandemonium of Book I. It is "Built like a Temple" (713) and stands, of course, on a hill (670), with artificial lights copied after the blazing stars of God's empyrean. (144-45)

The third critical tendency contemplates *Paradise Lost* from the standpoint of its divisibility; several possible models of division are posited. Northrop Frye argues for "four orders of existence in *Paradise Lost*, the divine order, the angelic order, the human order and the demonic order" (20). MacCaffrey speaks of the "three areas of Milton's stage: Heaven, Hell, and the Garden" (144), while Summers calls those locations the "three major settings of the poem" (177).

The thesis I propose to defend in the ensuing enquiry has its roots in this third tendency, and the structural model to which I subscribe is the same as the one John B Broadbent relies on in *Paradise Lost: Introduction* (97). A conventional model, it postulates a four-part division of

³ Other members of this fellowship who, like Mulder, view Milton's presentation of fallen existence (whether in Hell or in the post-lapsarian world) as a "large-scale parody...a negative transfiguration" of the unfallen state (Turner 299), include, in addition to Turner (299-303), such critics as Steven C Dillon (esp. 270, 274, 277), Diana T Benet (in Durham and Pruitt 49, 53), Joseph E Duncan (238), M M Mahood (187), Anne D Ferry (140-45), John R Knott (55-57). This list is but a sampling.

the epic which is seen, accordingly, as consisting of four major operational areas, levels, tiers, realms (in the ensuing exposition, I shall mostly be talking about 'realms'), hierarchically-ordered from highest to lowest. The four divisions are: Heaven, the Garden in Eden ('Paradise'), Fallen Existence and Hell.⁴ For the purposes of the present enquiry, which treats of 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' in *Paradise Lost*, it is evident that the fourth realm, Hell, is mostly beside the point. Effectively, this study has to do only with the first three. So the question is, how exactly does it have to do with them?

The first thing to say, in responding to the question, is that to view *Paradise Lost* as a poem organized on a quadripartite basis is not, in itself, a particularly interesting move, and certainly is not a controversial one. For an organizational scheme based on the four realms or tiers noted above could be considered a virtual inevitability, given the poem's subject and 'plot' - and given also Milton's Protestant 'take' on them, the effect of which was to exclude Purgatory from the picture (in contradistinction to Dante's Catholic and, accordingly, tripartite arrangement), thereby "intensif[ying] the polar opposition between heaven and hell" (Levin 181). In sum, if the scope of this enquiry were restricted to a

⁴ This quadripartite division can be viewed as an elaboration of what Josephine Miles suggests was the commanding binary of the poetry of the mid-seventeenth century - "the opposition and interplay of the realms of the human and divine", as expressed in the interaction and/or mirroring of "heavenly and earthly love...heavenly and earthly kingdoms...heavenly and earthly souls..." (1948:101,123).

consideration of the structural divisions of *Paradise Lost*, it would hardly be worth taking further. What makes it worth taking further is a somewhat different interest: once Milton established his four organizational realms (or, it could be argued, had them established for him by the exigencies of his subject), what did he do with them in order to make them stand out from, and against, one another? Since this study effectively has reference to but three of those realms, the question posed pertains to Heaven, the earthly paradise in Eden, and Fallen Existence - and also, in some degree, to Satan, but not, in any sustained sense, to Hell.

In endeavouring to differentiate and individualize the three realms under discussion, Milton has recourse to a variety of techniques, among them particularization of setting, event and action, individualizing characterization, based in part on distinctive speech styles and speech registers;⁵ different orders of imagery, different levels of representational 'concreteness' (Heaven, for example, is represented with less concrete specificity than the other realms: v. Knott 65, Bush 386, Leonard 250, Le Comte 40-41, 165), the differential orchestration of intertextual echoes and allusions, differentiated vocabulary, as expressed in the self-

⁵ Calling attention to a particularly subtle example of distinctive speech style, Ferry notes how the "quality of pastoral innocence" (72) marking the archangel Raphael's similes becomes characterizing for him. The epic narrator's similes, by contrast, rarely bear the stamp of 'pastoral innocence'. Ferry theorizes that Milton's motive in "assigning pastoral images to the angel" was to emphasize "by this selection of comparisons...the purity of angelic vision, and the innocence of man's first condition. The familiar terms of the comparisons are all drawn from a nature as yet untroubled by change or violence or death" (73).

conscious allocation to a given realm of a distinctive characterizing terminology exclusive (or almost exclusive) to it. Of the possible avenues of enquiry listed above, only the last-mentioned, the selective allocation of characterizing terminology, is explored in this study - and then, further limiting the scope of the investigation, while sharpening its focus, only three characterizing terms in all are brought under scrutiny: 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure'.

The connection between these signifiers and the three organizational realms under discussion may be stated thus: in *Paradise Lost* Milton distinguishes with care amongst 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure', restricting the signifying field of each to a single organizational setting or 'realm', such that 'bliss' has reference specifically to Heaven (or to the earthly paradise viewed as a simulacrum of Heaven), 'delight' to the earthly paradise in Eden and to the prelapsarian condition nourished by it, while 'pleasure', whose signification is ambiguous, refers in its favourable sense (which is but little removed from 'delight') to the Garden and the sensations associated with it, and in its unfavourable one to postlapsarian sensations and to the fallen characters.⁶ It follows, therefore, that 'bliss' and 'delight' function as prelapsarian markers; and so does 'pleasure' in its favourable sense, while in its unfavourable one it functions as a postlapsarian marker.⁷

⁶ Conformably, then, with the three realms to which they answer, our three key terms are seen to be hierarchically ordered, with 'bliss' topmost, 'delight' in the middle, and 'pleasure' bottom-most.

⁷ It bears noting that 'pleasure', unlike Milton's double-sense signifiers (v. infra), is not used in two senses at once in any single

To say that Milton restricts his use of 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' to Heaven, Paradise and Fallen Existence respectively, is not to claim that his practice is without any exceptions whatsoever. There are occasions when one or other of those terms puts in an appearance in the 'wrong' place, but such occurrences are rare: for the most part our three 'anointed' signifiers are dispatched to the right destinations with notable consistency. In any case, for a postulate to hold good it is not necessary for it to achieve a flawless level of generalization unblemished by even a single deviant instance. A "probabilistic" level of generalization is sufficient, argues Arend Lijphart, drawing attention to the "erroneous tendency to reject a hypothesis on the basis of a single deviant case." He continues: "...it is...a mistake to reject a hypothesis 'because one can think pretty quickly of a contrary case.' Deviant cases weaken a...hypothesis, but they can only invalidate it if they turn up in sufficient numbers to make the hypothesized relationship disappear altogether" (686). The 'deviant' occurrences of 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' in *Paradise Lost* are nowhere near numerous enough to invalidate the claim that those terms are used selectively and restrictively in the epic. Moreover, although in theory Lijphart's 'ruling' provides a way out in case of need, in practice that need should seldom (if ever) arise since the 'deviant'

context; rather, its separate senses are kept separate, doing duty in separate settings, in accordance with the meaning required by the setting in question. As used in *Paradise Lost* 'pleasure' could as well be two separate words - as in French it is: there *plaisir* ordinarily conveys the notion of 'untainted' pleasure, including 'delight', while *volupté* gestures towards sensual, voluptuous, 'fallen' pleasure.

behaviour, when it occurs, of our three keywords can be shown in most cases to result from the epic poet's attempts to achieve special, or even 'shock' effects (for which departures from consistency always provide an opportunity).

Consider, by way of illustration, God's bantering speech to Adam in Book VIII, in the course of which he declares: "A nice and subtle happiness I see/ Thou to thy self proposest, in the choice/ Of thy associates, Adam, and wilt taste/ No **pleasure**, though in **pleasure**, solitary" (399-402). Once we have mentally rearranged (for intelligibility's sake) the last line's syntax to: 'and wilt taste no pleasure solitary, though in pleasure...', the question arises: the setting here is Paradise, the Garden in Eden, so why are we hearing about 'pleasure' when, in terms of this enquiry's hypothesis, we should be hearing about 'delight'? A moment's reflection, however, leads to the realization that Milton in line 402 is going after a special effect - a special effect of wordplay (one of many in the poem). Owing to a false etymology, which derived the Greek word *hédoné* ('pleasure') from the Hebrew *eden* (Levin 135), the Garden of Eden came by many to be linked, both lexically and ideationally, with 'pleasure'. Hence, when Milton writes "...and wilt taste/ No pleasure, though in pleasure...", the phrase "in pleasure" is really just a punning way of signifying 'in Eden'. The self-conscious deliberateness of Milton's proceeding in this example is a manifestation in little of his artistic deliberateness and self-consciousness in general, a feature of his poetic performance much commented on, and in

relation to the œuvre as a whole, not just *Paradise Lost*: "No poet compares to Milton in his intensity of self-consciousness as an artist", declares Harold Bloom (125), whose verdict is seconded by Giamatti: "...no one was more aware of what he knew, or what he was doing, than John Milton" (298). The well-foundedness of these judgments is tellingly corroborated (from, be it said, a hitherto unremarked angle) by Milton's consistent practice in *Paradise Lost* of earmarking the terms 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' for allocation to their corresponding operational realms.

To gain an idea of just how premeditated and self-conscious Milton's earmarking praxis is in *Paradise Lost*, one should compare it to his manner of proceeding in other of his poems different in subject from the epic, and different also in structure: poems, that is, which are not divisible into distinct organizational levels requiring to be individualized through the use of characterizing terminology. In such performances where, compared to the situation in *Paradise Lost*, there is little or nothing 'at stake', so to speak, we discover that Milton is not fastidious about how, where and when to use 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure'. (His relative non-fastidiousness is itself, of course, premeditated and planned, and in no way reflects a loss of control⁸: Milton

⁸ Richard Bradford stresses the degree to which self-consciousness typified Milton's poetic practice from the earliest stages of his career. Reviewing critical opinion on the poet's early verse (that is, poems written prior to, say, 1650, and published in *Poems of Mr John Milton...1645*, or in the later Collection of 1673, or in both), Bradford finds that

The common feature of those discussions of the early verse...is the impression that Milton by various means

is less fastidious because he knows he can afford to be, since he knows that there is little or nothing 'at stake'). In sum, by comparison with his proceeding in *Paradise Lost*, he is not just relaxed elsewhere in the œuvre, but, on occasion, positively 'promiscuous'. Consider, for example, the concluding lines of "L'Allegro": "These **delights**, if thou canst give,/ **Mirth** with thee, I mean to live." In the context of *Paradise Lost*, this kind of conjunction, in which the emphatically prelapsarian verbal marker 'delight' is made to keep company with the emphatically postlapsarian marker, 'mirth', would be all but unthinkable; 'pleasure' (in its unfavourable sense) could perhaps be 'mirth's' boon-companion in the epic, but not 'delight'.⁹ Enforcing the same point in a rather similar way is this passage from the prose writings: "...there be **delights**, there be recreations and jolly pastimes that will fetch the day about from sun to sun..." (*Areopagitica*, IV 334). The thing to notice here is the sentence's appositive construction whose effect is to grant its two segments semantic parity, such that the collocation "recreations and jolly pastimes" becomes, for the context in question (though obviously not for any or every context), an explanation - if not, indeed, a translation - of the meaning of 'delights'. Well, *Paradise Lost* is one context,

distanced himself from both orthodoxy and fashion, consciously and pre-emptively separated himself from contemporary convention as a rehearsal for what would eventually become *Paradise Lost*. (165)

⁹ Instances of 'inadmissible' uses of 'mirth' (by the standards of *Paradise Lost*) occurring in the productions of religious poets of Milton's century are brought under scrutiny in the Excursus at the end of this chapter.

certainly, where any possibility of semantic equivalence between 'delights' and things as trite, as flippantly earthly as 'recreations and jolly pastimes', is, 'by definition', ruled out in advance. Similarly, the following lines from "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity", utilizing a different set of signifiers, add their weight to the evidence of Milton's linguistic 'licentiousness'¹⁰ in productions other than *Paradise Lost*: "As all their souls in **blissful rapture** took:/ the air such **pleasures** loth to lose..." (ll.98-99). Here pre- and post-lapsarian markers are made to inhabit the same signifying space in a conjunction that would be out of the question in the epic. And, to drive home the point, a final pair of examples: similar to each other in tendency, the first is taken from "At a Vacation Exercise...", the second from the Attendant Spirit's epilogue at the end of the Ludlow Masque:

...and at heaven's door
Look in and see each **blissful** deity... (34-35)

Two **blissful** twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn. (1009-10)

In both passages the attributive 'blissful' does duty within a pagan frame of reference; in the first, to be sure, mention is made of 'heaven', but it is a pagan one. Never in *Paradise Lost* is 'blissful' used in connection with a pagan referent, ubiquitous though those are in the poem. It is a term reserved exclusively, as is its noun-

¹⁰ Sir Walter Raleigh speaks of "the gust, the licentious force" of Milton's writing in parts of his oeuvre. Not, however, in *Paradise Lost* whose hallmarks are "chastity...severity, and...girded majesty" (217).

sibling 'bliss', for the Judæo-Christian heaven, or for the earthly paradise conceived as a simulacrum thereof. So what do these examples¹¹ of terminological 'licentiousness' tell us? They tell us that when Milton wrote poems which, in point of structure and/or subject matter, had nothing in common with the epic-to-be, he recognized no obligation to comply with requirements and stipulations that would appertain - years later, and uniquely - to the great work. In other words, in poems he wrote prior to *Paradise Lost*, Milton was not given to using the terms 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' restrictively and selectively; it was not his practice to reserve them for special contexts. So his doing precisely that in the epic constitutes, at the very least, strong presumptive evidence of premeditation and deliberateness.¹² Once Milton found himself writing a

¹¹ Which are but a sampling. See further, on 'bliss': "On the Death of a Fair Infant...", line 7; Ludlow Masque: lines 262, 740, 812. All the references to 'bliss' in the Ludlow Masque appear to be determinedly pagan and/or terrestrial in resonance, and, in one or two instances, decidedly sensual as well. The removal to a terrestrial context of a term so closely identified with the celestial suggests a self-conscious design on Milton's part to secure some kind of special effect. What might it be? Perhaps the startling impropriety of 'bliss's' use in the 'wrong' setting is intended to underline the impropriety, aberrancy - the topsy-turviness, indeed - of Comus's value-system - relative to the one endorsed by the masque as a whole.

On the 'licentious' use of 'delight', see further: *Samson Agonistes*, lines 916, 1642; "At a Vacation Exercise...", line 20.

On the 'deviant' uses (by the standards of *Paradise Lost*) to which 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' are sometimes put by seventeenth-century religious poets writing in sacred contexts, see the Excursus at the end of this chapter.

¹² Consider, in this connection, C S Lewis's reflection:

We tend perhaps to assume that if Milton's *Arthuriad* had been written it would have been the same sort of poem as *Paradise Lost*, but surely this is very rash? A much more Spenserian Milton - the Milton of *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Comus* - had to be partially repressed before *Paradise Lost* could be written: if you choose the rockery you must abandon the tennis court. It is very likely that if Arthur had been chosen the Spenserian Milton would have grown to full development and the actual Milton, the 'Miltonic' Milton, would have been repressed. (6-7)

sacred epic predicated structurally on a division into several organizational tiers, the need arose - a need not only artistic but theological - to find appropriate characterizing terminology for each of them; and to this need Milton responds with a high degree of self-conscious deliberateness. His earmarking praxis in the epic amounts, indeed, to nothing less than a *manifesto* of self-conscious deliberateness (expressed, of course, through what is performed, not through anything proclaimed).

That Milton did not reserve the terms 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' for special contexts in poems other than *Paradise Lost* testifies in itself to a kind of self-consciousness that could be labelled the self-consciousness of resistance. For in using those signifiers with considerable freedom in a variety of settings, he had in fact to stand his ground against the pressures exerted by the close links, going back many hundreds of years, between our three key terms and the realms of Heaven, Paradise and the Fallen World respectively. That is not to say, of course, that when he *does* selectively route each of those terms to its correct habitation in the epic, he is somehow at the mercy of those 'close links', surrendering unthinkingly to their influence. On the contrary, fully aware of the longstanding connections between our 'anointed' signifiers and their 'naturally' corresponding spheres of operation, he recognized the opportunities that presented for achieving characterizing effects, and capitalized self-consciously on those opportunities. But the purpose of adverting to our key terms and the

operational spheres they answer to, supposedly by 'natural affinity', is not to insist yet again on Milton's artistic self-consciousness, but rather pre-emptively to confront the objection that the terms in question were chosen arbitrarily: why those particular three? Why not others? And in the context of an allegation of arbitrariness, the 'historically close links' factor constitutes a powerful counter-argument - given that those links were real, were close, and, already in Milton's day, were of many hundreds of years' standing. So the special relationship subsisting between 'bliss' and the celestial realm, 'delight' and the earthly paradise,¹³ and 'pleasure' (in its unfavourable sense) and fallen existence, could indeed be seen as giving those signifiers a built-in advantage, so to speak, in the race for selection, but what clinched their selection in the final analysis was not the argument of 'historically close links', despite its importance, but the 'facts on the ground', meaning the actual frequency of occurrence, taken in conjunction with the sites of concentration, of the three lexemes in question. More will be said in subsequent chapters about the ties between those lexemes and the operational realms that appear to be naturally congruent with them, but of the allegation of 'arbitrariness' it may be affirmed even now that it can be not just weathered but

¹³ The Hebrew word *eden* actually means 'delight', and so the phrase *gan eden* (also Hebrew), which usually is rendered as 'Garden of Eden', properly (and literally) means 'Garden of Delight' - the very expression both du Bartas and van den Vondel fasten on in alluding to the earthly paradise in their respective 'analogues' of *Paradise Lost* (v. Kirkconnell 63, 479). The identity of meaning between 'Eden' and 'delight' makes clear, moreover, that (and why) our "loss of Eden" (I 4) properly and precisely means "loss of the joy for which Eden had once been named" (Leonard 280).

countered. Even so, there remains a case to answer, though the point at issue relates not to the three terms selected but to one that was 'unfairly' overlooked - 'unfairly' because, as a strong contender, it ought to have been chosen along with the others.

This strong contender is the word 'joy', an important one, to be sure, in *Paradise Lost*. Together with its variant forms ('joys', 'joyed', 'joyous'), it occurs no fewer than 66 times in the poem.¹⁴ But the problem is that its distribution pattern is not right - is not selective enough, and so it had to be ruled out of contention. Rather than being heavily concentrated within a single organizational realm (as our three 'anointed' signifiers are), 'joy' exhibits too scattered a pattern of distribution: as might be expected, it occurs with greatest frequency in relation to Heaven, less often in relation to Paradise, but it also surfaces in the Fallen World and even in Hell (I 524). It is a kind of roving ambassador of elevated spirits¹⁵ through the length and breadth of the epic, but that is not 'the one thing needful' for it to gain admission to the select company of the three signifiers that finally 'got the nod'.

* * * *

¹⁴ All word-frequency counts in this study are based on *John Milton: A Concordance of Paradise Lost* (ed. Florén, C).

¹⁵ There is, however, a darker side to Milton's use of 'joy' in *Paradise Lost*: on at least eight occasions the word is used to signify (or at least to intimate) *malevolent* joy ("schadenfreude" - joy in another's harm): I 123, II 371-2, II 387, IX 478, IX 633, X 345, X 351, X 577.

The argument as it has developed makes clear that the present enquiry is really two things at once - a study in structure and at the same time a study in words, or, to be more exact, key words; its concern is with three major divisions of Milton's epic and the way three keywords relate to, and function within, them. We proceed now to examine the 'other side of the coin', the verbal side.

In surveying critical opinion on the verbal aspects of *Paradise Lost*, it is as well, for clarity's sake, to begin with a distinction: the background to be sketched in bears upon Milton's way with words rather than his way with language. Though this may seem to be an odd distinction ("How can words and language be separated from each other?"), its gravamen is readily enough perceived. Accordingly, in the remarks that follow, attention is focussed on the way Milton uses, and plays with, individual items of vocabulary ('lexemes') - or, to be more exact, *significant* individual items of vocabulary ('keywords') - rather than on the way he combines such items into sentences, or the way he complicates and ramifies those sentences. In other words, we shall have to do not with the syntagmatic axis (the axis of linguistic combination), but with the paradigmatic one, the axis of linguistic selection - meaning the selection of a given item of vocabulary from the range of possible (= substitutable) alternatives.

With reference, then, to Milton's way with words in *Paradise Lost*, we may distinguish three principal critical orientations: one focusses on keywords in relation, mainly,

to their thematic import; a second spotlights Milton's wordplay, and a third centres on what one might call the 'prelapsarian undertow' of some of the poem's important signifiers. (The phrase 'prelapsarian undertow' gestures towards Milton's endeavour to evoke prelapsarian resonances by using certain words in a double sense, the one current and fallen, the other no longer current, closer to the word's etymological roots, and, in so far, that much 'purer', that much closer to prelapsarian indefectibility. This, to be sure, is a fiction - for all language since the Fall is fallen - but it is a fiction Milton enlists, relying on our suspension of disbelief, in pursuit of his aim (a logically impossible one, as Dr Johnson long ago perceived¹⁶) of evoking, through the fallen medium of language, an unfallen, unknowable and hence, in principle, indescribable human condition drawing nourishment from its protective habitat-sanctuary, Paradise, equally unknowable, equally indescribable.¹⁷ And as if the challenge posed by these difficulties were not enough, what of that posed by trying to represent the Godhead through the fallen medium of language?¹⁸)

¹⁶ "The plan of *Paradise Lost* has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. ...[Hence] [t]o find sentiments for the state of innocence was very difficult. ...[Yet] [a]nother inconvenience of Milton's design is that it requires the description of what cannot be described..." (I 181,186,184).

¹⁷ See Ira Clarke's article "A Problem of Knowing Paradise in *Paradise Lost*". *Milton Studies* XXVII (1991): 183-207. See also Giamatti 84-85.

¹⁸ Consider, in this connection, Belsey's comment: "Whatever words are invoked to define him, God cannot be contained there. He is beyond difference, and yet at the same time he is difference itself, able to be defined only in a succession of negatives: 'Immutable, immortal, infinite' (III, 373), 'invisible' (III, 375), 'inaccessible' (III,

Most of the critics with an interest in Milton's way with words march under the banner of the first tendency, the one that focusses on keywords in terms, principally, of their thematic bearings. To begin with, here are three critics who spotlight the same keyword, the verb "wander":

To *wander* is a key word in *Paradise Lost*: it connotes the mental dereliction of living in the fallen world, a state of queasy, undirected, circuitous and inconclusive motion - a form of mental exploration which resembles blind searching... (Davies 101)

'Wander' is one of its [*Paradise Lost*'s] key verbs, and it belongs to the lost, the fallen. (Carey 95)

The word *wander* has almost always a pejorative, or melancholy, connotation in *Paradise Lost*. It is a key word, summarizing the theme of the erring, bewildered human pilgrimage... (MacCaffrey 188)

For his part, Frank Kermode reflects on the import, thematic and philosophical, of "baumie" ['balmy']:
"'baumie' is a key-word in the life-asserting parts of the poem, being used in the sense in which Donne uses it in the 'Nocturnall', as referring to the whole principle of life and growth" (in Kermode (1960) 108). In comparable fashion Christopher Ricks teases out the philosophical and thematic implications of 'hand', 'face', and 'flower'. Glossing "defaced", a descriptor occurring in Adam's anguished

377). God is different from everything we know, and therefore 'unspeakable', 'beyond thought' (V, 156, 159)" (38-39). Arguing along similar lines, John G Demaray writes: "Milton's artistic dilemma was theoretically if not imaginatively insoluble: how to portray directly a godhood 'Omnipotent, / Immutable, Immortal, Infinite'; a godhood in heaven of supreme perfection that could not be readily embraced by mortal poetic images, analogies, and metaphors; a godhood of infinite mystical depths...a godhood of different divine persons - one both God and man - in a single perfect divine being" (86).

exclamation just after Eve's Fall - "How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost, / **Defaced**, deflowered, and now to death devote?" (IX 900-1), Ricks writes: "And there rushes into 'defac't' everything that the poem has shown us of sin and its effects: 'A diminution of the majesty of the human countenance, and a conscious degradation of mind'" (140). Particularly befriended by the commentators has been 'hand(s)'. Ricks (139) mentions Charles Williams and Kester Svendsen as having singled out this keyword for attention prior to his doing so himself in 1963.¹⁹ Four years later Mario A DiCesare revisits 'hand(s)', viewing its thematic bearings in a triple aspect: "the hand as creative, the hand as symbolizing power, and the hand as symbolizing relationship" (in *Emma and Shawcross* 20-21). William Empson, however, stands out as something of an exception since in his examination of 'all', a word that occurs hundreds of times in *Paradise Lost*, he connects it not with the poem's theme(s) but with its temper: "...one can almost say that Milton uses *all* whenever there is any serious emotional pressure" (102). John Leonard joins Empson in swimming against the first-tendency mainstream: analyzing Milton's use of the demonstrative adjective "that", he views it not as a thematic pointer so much as a locational marker defining the epic narrator's position relative to the matter of his narration. Specifically, argues Leonard, the epic narrator's numerous "'that' gestures" (281), which form "a distinctive part of [his]

¹⁹ Ricks does not however mention Edward S Le Comte who in *Yet Once More* (1953) devotes a paragraph to 'hand(s)' (v. p.41).

style from the poem's opening lines" (283), operate as a distancing - indeed, as an excluding - device signalling his 'shut-outness', as a fallen creature, from "the thisness of Paradise" (284).

Then there are the critics who focus on Milton's wordplay. Here one has to begin by distinguishing between those for whom the poet's wordplay is actually 'in' the text, on its surface, waiting to be spotted and inventoried, and those for whom, if it is 'in' the text at all, is there only potentially, beneath (or 'behind') the surface, waiting to be actualized or 'produced'. Does this sound familiar? If so, that is because the dividing line being traced here is conterminous with the one separating traditional from deconstructive critics in general. For F T Prince, a critic of traditional (meaning, nineteen-fiftyish New Critical) outlook and method, Milton's wordplay in *Paradise Lost*, visible at the surface of the text, bears witness to a species of mental ebullience of which he cannot wholly approve: the epic poet's verbal "sports", as Prince labels his wordplay (124), are at once the sign and product of "an incessant, sometimes obtrusive activity of mind at the level of verbal wit" (123).²⁰

²⁰ Prince's reservations about Milton's wordplay are in the line of descent from those of Sir Walter Raleigh, writing at the turn of the 20th century. Raleigh hypothesizes a Milton who, beguiled by the lure of etymology (cf. *infra*, Ricks's reference to Milton's "etymological faith" (68)), allowed himself to be taken in by deceitful linguistic appearances through whose influence he constructed bad puns. To quote Raleigh: "...in most of these cases [of bad punning] it seems likely that he believed in an etymological relation between the two words [telescoped or juxtaposed for the purposes of the pun], and so fancied that he was drawing attention to an original unity of meaning. Some such hypothesis is needful to mitigate the atrocity of his worst pun, in *Paradise Regained*, where he describes '...the ravens.../ Food to Elijah bringing.../ Though ravenous...' [II 267-69]. Milton was no philologist, and we may be permitted in charity to suppose that he derived 'raven' and 'ravenous' from the same root" (211).

Prince finds and 'flags' quite a number of instances of verbal 'sporting' in *Paradise Lost* (v. pp. 124-26), among them the following:

Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall (I 642)

At one slight bound [Satan] high overleaped all
bound
Of hill or highest wall... (IV 181-2)

...he to be avenged,
And to repair his numbers thus impaired...
(IX 143-4)

Serpent, we might have spared our coming hither,
Fruitless to me, though fruit be here to
excess... (IX 647-8)

Prince, then, compiles a straightforward inventory of Miltonic wordplay in *Paradise Lost*, harvested unproblematically from the poem's textual surface. How different from this is the proceeding of R A Shoaf. Marching to the tune of the post-Saussurian teaching that the "the free play of the signifier...*produces* meaning" (56; Shoaf's emphasis), responding to the "summons...[to] deconstruct and produce!" (57), Shoaf provides a striking instance of Deconstruction's "remorseless logocentrism" (Bradford 190) in his treatment of the epic poet's wordplay:

We should never lose sight of the following facts: Adam and Eve are a *pair*, "the loveliest pair" (*PL* 4.321, 366; see also 5.227; 8.58 esp; 9.127; 11.105). They live in Par(*pair*)adise. Only as a *pair* are they fully and completely

As infelicitous as the raven/ravenous pun are most of those spawned by the punning-bout starring Satan and Belial during the War in Heaven (VI 609-27) - a performance prompting Landor's witty observation that "the first overt crime of the refractory angels was *punning*" (*The Poems of John Milton* ed. Carey and Fowler 755).

human (whole). When they are no longer a *pair* but are a *part* - though not, as we shall see, separate - they are *impaired* by Satan. Satan is able to *impair* them, and *im-pair* them, in part because Adam believes Eve is "beyond compare" (PL 9.227-28) when, in fact, only Christ is "beyond compare" (PL 3.138). When they beg God's forgiveness for their sin, they "*repair*" (PL 10.1087) for this purpose to the place at which he first judged them, where the verb *repair* is also obviously *re-pair*, connoting their joining themselves again to God. (15)

Also touched by the Deconstructive Angel is Albert C Labriola. Bringing under scrutiny Satan's declaration that "All is not lost" (I 106) following the rebellious angels' Fall into Hell, Labriola writes:

The homophonous wordplay on "not" and "naught" urges the reader to engage the satanic paradox also in the following way: All is naught (or nothing) lost. From such a rewrite, various interpretations will emerge, one of which is the following - what *is not* (or never?) lost *is* the capability to disobey and to exercise disobedience in any one or all ways. (in Durham and Pruitt 46) [Labriola's emphasis]

If Labriola describes 'satanic paradox' in the utterance "All is not lost", that is because in his 'rewrite' he put it there. The next piece of exegesis, cut from the same cloth as the preceding one, probably outdoes it in ingenuity:

The paradoxical wordplay on "one" and "all" proliferates, even to the extent that "all" is "one" with and within another word, namely "shall" - "to *him* shall bow/ All knees in Heav'n, and shall confess *him* Lord" ([V] 607-8; emphasis mine). Thus, "shall," used twice to express the Father's issuance of a command that *all* shall worship the Son, interacts with "him," also twice used as a reference to the Son. These words appear in a chiasmic arrangement, at the center

of which, appropriately, is the word "All." (in Durham and Pruitt 40-41)

So whose wordplay is it? Milton's? Manifestly not. Quite obviously it is Shoaf's and Labriola's. Prince's judgment on Milton is fitly applied to them: what is on parade is *their* "obtrusive activity of mind".²¹ But for a deconstructive critic that is a compliment, not a reproach. Still, there is reason to be surprised by the recency of Labriola's lucubration which appears in a book published only two years ago (Shoaf's study came out in 1985). Was Deconstruction still in vogue, still at the 'cutting-edge', in 1999?

It remains to consider the third critical tendency, the one that views Milton as attempting to evoke intimations of the originary, unfallen condition of humankind (and of language as well) by using certain words in a double sense, the one current in his day, the other not - the implication being that the non-current sense, closer (ordinarily) to the etymological roots of the word in question, is on that account less 'fallen', and so is somehow closer to, and thus more suggestive of, the conditions of prelapsarian life.²² The tug exerted by

²¹ Cf. Anatole France's celebrated *bon mot*: "To be quite frank, the critic ought to say: 'Gentlemen, I am going to talk about myself on the subject of Shakespeare, or Racine, or Pascal, or Goethe - subjects that offer me a beautiful opportunity.'" (*La Vie littéraire*, in Adams 656)

²² In a deftly executed capriole, John Leonard points out that the "very etymology of 'etymology' (Gk. *to etymon* - 'the truth') implies the delivery of true statements" (20). The suggestion is, then, that the more originary, etymologically speaking, a word's sense is, the truer will be the tale it tells. Leonard's observation may be seen as inscribed within a philosophical-religious "tradition stemming from Plato's *Cratylus*, according to which the etymology of the word gives a glimpse into the true nature of the thing" (Williams 230).

etymology²³ in Milton's double-sense signifiers - their prelapsarian undertow, in other words - has been felt and commented on by a number of critics, beginning with one of the poem's early editors, Thomas Newton, who as long ago as 1749 drew attention, in a general way, to Milton's "frequently...us[ing] words in their proper and primary signification" (in Leonard 233). Twentieth-century critics have tended to be more focussed than Newton, seizing on specific words for analysis, as Arnold Stein in 1953 seized upon the word 'error':

Milton has compressed a whole rhetorical argument in the phrase that describes how the brooks water the Garden - "With mazie error" [IV 239]. Here "error" is a primitive argument, an argument from etymology... Here, before the Fall, the word error argues, from its original meaning, for the order in irregularity, for the rightness in wandering - before the concept of error is introduced into man's world and comes to signify wrong wandering. (66-67)

No discussion of 'etymological tug' in some of *Paradise Lost's* important signifiers (and it bears noting how many of the epic's pivotal signifiers are of the double-sense type: 'error' is one example, but far from being the only one) has been more influential than Christopher Ricks's in *Milton's Grand Style* (1963). Ricks's treatment of the subject deserves its high standing for two main reasons: to begin with, he was the first critic (as far as I am aware) explicitly to connect 'etymological tug' with a self-conscious design on Milton's

²³ In Europe the tug of etymology has been felt as far back as the beginning of literature: v. E R Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Excursus XIV, "Etymology as a Category of Thought".

part to "re-create something of the pre-lapsarian state of language" (110) by "reaching back to an earlier purity" (111).²⁴ Second, while acknowledging his debt to Stein, Ricks refines subtly upon the latter's insights by theorizing that when Milton deploys a double-sense signifier, there comes into play a double movement of invoking and excluding, or, more exactly, of invoking only to exclude. Meant by this is that the signifier's 'fallen' sense is invoked only in order to be superseded, however temporarily, by its etymologically more originary 'unfallen' one. So (to make use of an example Ricks brings forward), in the phrase "liquid lapse of murmuring streams" (VIII 263), the signification first called into play by the word 'lapse' is the current, fallen one - because the eye whose gaze meets it is fallen, like everything else in postlapsarian existence. However, since the phrase occurs in an unfallen setting (Paradise), the initial, fallen reading has to be revised in favour of an 'innocent' one - meaning an etymologically-based interpretation appealing to a more originary sense of 'lapse', one that gestures towards the notions of 'unfallen falling', 'harmless downward gliding'.

Facing the problem of how to give written expression, in serviceable, condensed form, to the ascendancy of a signifier's unfallen sense over its fallen one, while

²⁴ Cf. Leonard's characterization of *Paradise Lost's* epic voice as "striv[ing] ever for the unfallen" (292). However, as *all* language since the Fall is fallen, it follows that Milton's project of trying to recover an 'earlier purity' of language through etymological 'regress' is founded on a fiction (v. supra). Hence Ricks's reference to the epic poet's "etymological faith" (68) is well-aimed: it takes faith to see feasibility in a fiction and opportunity in an illusion.

making the purport of the unfallen sense stand out, Ricks hits on the idea of yoking together the two senses in an arrangement that contradistinctively plays off the unfallen against the fallen sense. This move, which enlists the help of negative definition to bring out what the unfallen sense means by pointing to the fallen sense it does not mean, has the effect of more precisely demarcating the signifying compass of the unfallen sense, thereby clarifying and sharpening its purport. To illustrate by way of an example - sticking for this purpose to the word 'lapse': its unfallen sense, in Ricks's scheme, is expressible in written form (or formula) as: 'lapse' = "'falling (not the Fall)'" (111).²⁵ Compact and suggestive, this figure is able to specify at once the presence, primacy and purport of 'lapse' in its 'unfallen' sense. For all that, Ricks's notational *trouvaille* is something of a two-edged sword. Though its intention is to figure forth, with near-diagrammatic compactness, the primacy of a double-sense signifier's unfallen sense and the simultaneous setting-aside, however briefly, of its fallen

²⁵ There are occasions in the poem when the word 'fall' itself, because used innocently, asks to be represented in just this way. Take, for example, the following lines from Adam and Eve's Morning Hymn: "Thou Sun.../...sound his [God's] praise/...both when thou climb'st,/...and when thou **fall'st**" (V 171-74). Again, from the same Hymn: "Ye mists and exhalations...rise,/ Whether to deck with clouds the uncoloured sky,/ Or wet the thirsty earth with **falling** showers,/ Rising or **falling** still advance his praise" (185-91). The formation 'falling(not the Fall)', applied to the lines here quoted compactly and accurately figures forth our First Parents' innocent understanding of 'falling' - even while taking account of our own unavoidably postlapsarian understanding of the word by keeping in view, in the brackets, its fallen connotation. This double perspective, which Ricks's figure is so well adapted to express, is precisely what catches Leonard's eye as he brings under scrutiny the lines from the Morning Hymn quoted above: "As we read these lines", he writes, "we cannot but think of the Fall; yet Adam and Eve know nothing of the word 'fall' as a lapse into sin" (250).

one, the actual outcome is rather different: the fact that the formula's game-plan calls for the fallen sense to be kept in view (though for the sole purpose of being negated) serves only to dramatize the impossibility, in practice, of ever wholly setting aside, wholly screening out, the fallen signification; its pressure, jostling the prelapsarian intimations, will be always present, always felt. So in the end what Ricks's notational formula mainly manages to suggest is that Milton's attempt to 'reach back to an earlier purity' of language by enlisting the services of double-sense signifiers was bound to be compromised by the inevitable presence, and pressure, of postlapsarian dissonances in the score of the prelapsarian music.²⁶

²⁶ Furnishing one of the clearest instances of a double-sense signifier whose postlapsarian 'dissonances' simply will not be shut out is the participle "insinuating", as used in Book IV in the 'innocent' context of the "pre-lapsarian zoo" (Stein 71). After describing a variety of beasts frolicking and frisking, the epic narrator turns his attention to the serpent: "...close the serpent sly/ **Insinuating**, wove with Gordian twine/ His braided train, and of his fatal guile/ Gave proof unheeded..." (347-50). Surveying these lines, Leonard comments:

'Insinuating', as Richardson [one of the epic's early editors] points out, is limited to its Latin meaning: 'Wrapping, or rolling up Himself'. The poet uses the word in its 'proper and primary signification', and yet the improper meaning does not pass unheeded by him. The sense 'hint obliquely' (*OED* 'insinuate' 6) was well established by the seventeenth century; here that meaning hints darkly at the serpent's future employment by Satan. (274)

Examining the same lines from Book IV three years before Leonard, Marshall Grossman (of whom there is no mention in Leonard's book) adopts a position which anticipates that of the later critic, though Grossman's angle stresses Adam and Eve's exemption, as innocents, from postlapsarian knowledge:

...the narrator presents the scene from the prelapsarian point of view until he reaches the serpent, which he invests with a significance that it could not have had for Adam and Eve. Thus the narrator may be said to occupy a prelapsarian point of view until the symbolically charged serpent comes into view, at which point he cannot refrain from reading his fallen knowledge into the innocent world. The narrator's experienced eye sees a potential ill Adam and Eve's goodness cannot. (80)

Taking up the story from where Ricks leaves off, Stanley Fish (who makes clear his debt to Ricks) approaches the issue of prelapsarian undertow very much from the standpoint of its implications for the reader. Bringing under scrutiny the lines "She [Eve].../ Her unadorned golden tresses wore/ Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved..." (IV 304-6), Fish, registering the presence of 'etymological tug' in the signifiers 'dishevelled' and 'wanton', argues that as their primary tendency (in the given context) is prelapsarian, 'dishevelled' requires to be read, in terms of Ricks's notational scheme (which he adopts, for the nonce), as 'hanging loose' (not hanging disorderly) and 'wanton' as "'unrestrained' (not lascivious)" (102).²⁷ But Fish's distinctive 'angle' on

²⁷ While the prelapsarian undertow in Milton's double-sense signifiers ordinarily gestures towards a condition of unfallen innocence and harmony, such is not always or necessarily the case. Sometimes the etymologically more originary (and thus more 'prelapsarian') sense is itself charged with a vehement, almost primitive quality. Consider, as an example, the phrase "torrent rapture" in Raphael's account of Creation in Book VII (at line 299), which describes the newly-created waters rushing down steep slopes. Leonard argues that in this phrase both 'torrent' and 'rapture' are used in 'their proper and primary signification' which, though imbued with vehement, near-primitive associations, is not the less 'prelapsarian' for that. To quote Leonard: "The etymology of 'torrent' (from Latin *torrere* - 'to scorch, burn') might seem more appropriate to the burning lake of Hell than to the newly created waters of earth; yet the sense of boiling and surging is here exactly right for the impetuosity of the newly created seas and rivers hastening to obey God's Word" (236).

The signifier "rapture", no less than "torrent", also contains "violent possibilities" (*idem*), a suggestion to which Fowler lends his support by glossing it 'etymologically' as "force of movement (*OED* 2)" [*The Poems of John Milton* 793]. Indeed, the 'violent possibilities' lurking in 'rapture' (which are traceable to its Latin etymon *rapere* - to snatch, seize, tear away) are seldom far below the surface even when the word is used in its usual sense of "transport of mind, mental exaltation" (*OED* 5a). Illustrating this is the way Patrick Hume, one of the epic's earliest editors (1695), glosses the phrase "holy rapture" (V 147) whose primary meaning in its context (Adam and Eve's exalted Morning Hymn) is unquestionably 'transport of mind'/'mental exaltation':

Raptura. Lat. a Rapture, a sort of Ecstasie, a sudden and pleasing Violence, whereby we are (as it were) snatched from our selves, and raised above the ordinary Heights of Understanding... (in Leonard 236)

all of this is the implications it has for the reader - specifically, the way it constrains him to confront the reality of his fallenness, a fact so much taken for granted in the ordinary course of life as to be seldom, if ever, noticed. Fish's argument is that the reader's being alerted to - and implicitly being asked to be on the lookout for - prelapsarian intimations in the vocabulary of *Paradise Lost*²⁸ has the effect of making stand out by contrast his own usual practice of overlooking all interpretative possibilities but fallen ones - and the effect of this, in turn, is to force upon him a recognition of his fallen state in general. Fish puts it this way: "The reader...is forced to admit again and again that the evil he sees under everyone's bed is his own" (102).²⁹ Fish's reader-centred orientation is, then, monitory and

Developing her argument for separate gardening, Eve responds to Adam "With sweet austere composure..." (IX 272). Examining this oxymoronic phrase, Le Comte offers an etymologically-based reading of "austere" in terms of which the word's more ordinary sense turns out to be more, not less, distant from the conditions of prelapsarian innocence. (That, however, is precisely the suggestion the poet wishes to convey at this particular point in the unfolding of events.) Writes Le Comte: "This scholar-poet is an inveterate etymologist and lexicographer... Milton knows very well - and expects us to know - that in Greek *austeros* is sour, the opposite of *glukus*, sweet: Eve has turned sweet-sour" (1981:ix).

²⁸ While the ordinary fallen reader requires both specialized information and a self-conscious effort to cognize the prelapsarian bearings of, say, 'dishevelled', this would not have been necessary for aristocrats familiar with court masques and entertainments, argues Demaray who examines *Paradise Lost* from the standpoint of its connections with Renaissance pageants and masques. "Aristocrats of the period," he writes, "would have recognized Eve as an ideal marriage partner who had adopted a hairstyle popular with chaste brides at wedding masques and ceremonies. Princess Elizabeth [James I's daughter], who surely was not regarded as a scarlet woman by Henry Peacham, is said by him to have come to her wedding in 1613 with 'her haire discheueled, and hanging downe ouer her shoulders'. The Bride in [Ben Jonson's court masque] *Hymenaei*...appeared throughout the masque with 'hayre flowing, and loose'" (79-80).

²⁹ Cf. Oscar Wilde, commenting on Dorian Gray's alleged sins: "He who finds them has brought them" (in Gaunt 151).

heuristic in its bearings, and, while building on Ricks's position, goes beyond it: for Ricks, the reader is made aware, in a general way, of the corruption of language and life since, and through, the Fall; for Fish, the reader is made aware, in a much more intimate and personal way, of the corruption of *his* language, *his* life.

* * * *

To reflect upon the backdrop we have sketched in is to perceive that there exists little if any common ground between the positions and approaches adopted by any of the critics in any of the three orientations examined above and the position upheld in this study. None of them, after all, seeks to relate to a structural paradigm the words he or she singles out for attention. Ricks, perhaps, ploughs his furrow somewhat closer to mine in pointing out that the signifiers Milton uses in a double sense in *Paradise Lost* he uses *only* there in that way: "...outside *Paradise Lost* Milton does not use the word ['luxurious'] in its 'unfallen' sense" (112); and again: "...when Milton uses 'error' elsewhere than in *Paradise Lost*, it always has the fallen meaning" (110). So Ricks, with respect to double-sense signifiers, and I, with respect to three 'anointed' ones, each make a claim for the uniqueness of Milton's proceeding in the epic. That constitutes a measure of common ground, but beyond this point we move in opposite directions: I maintain that 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' are used *more* restrictively in the epic than elsewhere in Milton's poetic *œuvre*; Ricks, by contrast, maintains that such double-sense signifiers as 'luxurious',

'error', 'wanton', 'lapse' are used *less* restrictively in *Paradise Lost* than elsewhere: in poems other than *Paradise Lost*, those terms, he argues, are used univocally, in the epic equi(-)vocally.

It seems to me, in the end, that the critic whose position has most in common with mine is C A Patrises. In *Milton and the Christian Tradition*, in a notable chapter dealing with "The Christian Idea of Love", he observes that Milton employs the word 'love' restrictively in the epic, using it "solely in relation to the Son, never in direct relation to the Father"³⁰(157); that such is his practice is the consequence, contends Patrises, of his subscribing to the "Protestant thesis that justice is 'much like to God' and mercy 'much like to Christ'" (idem). To the extent that Patrises is regardful of the poet's earmarking a particular term for a particular context in *Paradise Lost*, his position shares some common ground with mine, but he no more connects that term with a postulate about structure than do any of the other commentators whose views I have brought under contribution.³¹ In short, the critics

³⁰ Conversely, the word 'Author', predicated of the Father, is never predicated of the Son because the Son, as the "authored", the "expressed", cannot be "the 'author'" (Shoaf 122). On the other hand, 'author' is a number of times predicated of Satan - thrice by Sin (II 864, X 236, X 356). The attribution of the term 'author' to God and his Adversary alike is an aspect of that dense network of parodic cross-reference, noted earlier, that permeates the poem and helps to unify it. Consider in this connection M M Mahood's remark: "...the filial devotion found in its purest form in Heaven...is parodied in Hell, when Sin greets Satan with the words 'Thou art my Father, thou my Author...'" [II 864] (187).

³¹ Adopting an approach very similar to that of Patrises, Le Comte sees Milton as earmarking the signifiers 'sweet' and 'sweetness' for particular contexts, though not in relation to structural considerations - in which respect too he resembles Patrises, and all the other critics. He differs from them, however, in referring his findings on 'sweet'/'sweetness' to Milton's entire poetic oeuvre, not just *Paradise Lost*. Concludes Le Comte: "'Sweet' and 'sweetness' are words that this poet reserves, almost always, for music, for paradise,

who focus on structure do not relate it to words, and the critics who focus on words do not relate them to structure. Though I believe this to be a valid generalization, its sweeping character may be unfair to individual commentators - someone like John R Knott, say, whose book, *Milton's Pastoral Vision*, is in part organized with reference to some of the same structural categories that the present enquiry invokes. So, for example, Knott titles two of his chapters (out of a total of seven) "Eden" and "Heaven" (he does not have chapters dealing directly with Fallen Existence and Hell) - and a striking feature of those two chapters is their being so thickly strewn with allusions, respectively, to 'delight' and 'bliss'. But even more striking is the fact that the ubiquitousness of those two signifiers (a hardly avoidable outcome when seen from the perspective of this enquiry) is not spotted by Knott, or, if it is, is not remarked on. So we obviously should not expect him to argue for the existence of a special relationship in *Paradise Lost* between 'bliss' and Heaven or 'delight' and Eden.

If parts of Knott's book are organized around two of the operational realms that are of central importance to our investigation, Ingrid G Daemmrich's "In Search of Bliss: The Nature and Function of the Paradise Motif in Western Literature" appears to take as its starting-point one of our 'anointed' signifiers, 'bliss'. In the event, however, 'bliss' proves in Daemmrich's hands to be an

and for the originally perfect affection between Adam and Eve" (1953:16).

unproductive, even an inert signifier, for as her piece (which surveys a variety of paradises over a broad range of literatures) unfolds, it becomes clear that 'bliss' is viewed as a taken-for-granted attribute of Paradise(s), and, as such, is assumed to require neither explanation, justification, nor further comment. (Pretty much the same holds true, by the way, of Knott's attitude to 'bliss' in his 'Heaven' chapter.) And there certainly is no attempt on Daemmrich's part to relate 'bliss' to issues of structure. So, then, surveying the critical landscape from a somewhat elevated point of vantage, I hazard the claim that in bringing together the domains of words and structure in the present enquiry, I am attempting something new in *Paradise Lost* studies - and perhaps in Milton studies in general.

That this claim is not without foundation gains support from the fact that there exists no critical literature to speak of which pertains directly (rather than incidentally) to the subject of this dissertation. This assertion is made on the strength of a thorough electronic search of the most comprehensive relevant databases, using specifiers designed to cast the widest net possible.³² What the literature search brought to light is that the

³² My databases were the outstandingly comprehensive MLA database, going back electronically to 1963, supplemented by (so as to 'cover all bases') the no less inclusive ABELL (*Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature*) database whose electronic archive reaches back to 1920. In conducting my searches I for the most part used the specifiers 'bliss' + 'literature', ditto for 'delight' and 'pleasure'. I actually started off more narrowly and kept widening the net as I kept drawing blanks. In the end, I just keyed in 'bliss' etc. on their own. I managed to wade through the hundreds of items that came up under 'bliss' (including surnames), but 'delight' and 'pleasure' whelped too prolifically, so I gave up on them.

three signifiers on which this study focusses have been overlooked in relation not just to Milton's poetry (and that in every connection, not just in connection with structure) but English poetry in general, including that of Traherne, whose *œuvre*, the verse and the prose *Centuries* alike, deserves, if any poet's does, to be treated from the perspective of 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' - and also, importantly, 'joy'. When, in fact, I added the specifier 'joy' to my search in the hope of lighting upon leads, fruitful matches started coming in when 'joy' crossed paths with 'Wordsworth'. Hardly surprising, to be sure, given the prominence of Joy within the *œconomy* of Wordsworth's outlook and *œuvre*. But as much can be claimed for the rôle of 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' within the *œconomy* of *Paradise Lost*. Hence, when Isobel Grundy, writing about Samuel Johnson, asserts: "...I marvelled that among the many views offered of Johnson nobody seemed to have taken my own, although it pressed itself upon me as central - a position from which the landscape of his works may be triangulated, [and] new prospects opened..." ("Preface"), she voices a sentiment that could with equal relevance be applied to our three 'anointed' signifiers in their bearing upon *Paradise Lost*.

Related to the points just made is another: the out-of-the-way (idiosyncratic?) character of this enquiry, which would appear to account for the unproductiveness of my literature search, also explains my inability to find a theoretical paradigm into which to fit it, although once my postulate is unpacked into its component halves possible

theoretical anchorages do come into view (the reader will recall that in the early pages of this Introduction, in the survey of the various theories bearing upon the epic's structure, I actually did find one with which I could - and did - align my own standpoint). But to look for a theoretical paradigm capable of accommodating my position in its plenary form as a hypothesis postulating the confluence, the inter-involvement, of words and structure, is, it would seem, to look in vain.

The starting-point of this study was a trio of words; the structural divisions answering to them came later. That order of priority is reflected not only in the overall title of this dissertation, but also in the titles of its individual chapters. For it seems only natural that the terms which were formative for this enquiry should serve as organizational reference points for its design. That design is simplicity itself: following this chapter there are another three; titled "Bliss", "Delight", and "Pleasure", they succeed one another in that order. Evidential in function and character - that is, having as their 'brief' the presentation of the evidence needed to bear out the claims advanced in this Introduction - they are themselves succeeded by a brief Conclusion that rounds off the whole. Lastly: the text used for all quotations from, or references to, *Paradise Lost*, or any other of Milton's poems, is *The Poems of John Milton*, edited by John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London, 1980). The source-text for quotations from the prose writings is *The Works of John*

Milton, edited by Frank A Patterson et al. (New York, 1931-1938).

EXCURSUS

Should we expect, in poems similar to *Paradise Lost* in tendency and temper (that is, religious, Christian and transcendent), and similar also in structure (that is, having distinct, hierarchically-ordered divisions), to find the terms 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' occurring with some frequency and, if so, might their pattern of allocation and distribution (assuming a 'pattern' existed) bear some resemblance to the pattern operative in *Paradise Lost*? The mediæval dream-vision, *Pearl*, composed probably in the latter half of the fourteenth century, is a poem sufficiently similar to Milton's with respect to the above criteria to serve as a kind of test case.

In this poem, the dreamer, mourning the death at a young age of his daughter Margaret (which means 'pearl'), visits her grave where he swoons. The swoon serves as the trigger for the dreamer's vision which as it unfolds traverses several distinct structural realms, the first being Paradise where the dreamer sees his Margaret. Then Margaret herself raises the curtain on the next phase of the vision whose setting is Heaven, in which she occupies an exalted place as "Queen of Courtesy" pledged to Jesus: "My Lord the Lamb.../ Made me his with marriage pledge,/ Crowned me queen, in **bliss** to shine..." (stanza 35; in Stone 153). Later, a vision of the Celestial City, self-evidently a simulacrum of Heaven, is vouchsafed the dreamer. Finally he is brought back to himself and wakes

from his vision in the place where he swooned and fell. So - does this poem have anything to say to us about 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure', and about the anonymous author's handling of those terms?

The first thing to be said is that the words 'bliss' and 'delight' occur frequently in the poem, but not equally frequently. Second, they occur in the Paradise, Heaven, and Celestial City sections, but - significantly - not in the opening and closing cantos whose general character one could describe as 'earthbound'. Third, regardless of where in the poem 'bliss' and 'delight' appear, the *Pearl* poet seems not to distinguish between them; he treats the two words as virtual equivalents. But while using them almost synonymously, he does not, as indicated above, use them with equal frequency: 'bliss', as one might expect, given the poem's rarefied visionary settings and transcendental temper, is used much the more frequently; it is, indeed, one of the most frequently used words in the poem (which consists of twenty cantos, nineteen containing five stanzas each, and one containing six).

Now, what of the term 'pleasure'? This is a word that occurs hardly at all outside the first and last cantos, the 'earthbound' ones. In the last it is particularly prominent because there it does duty as a concatenating term, that is, it operates as a linking mechanism by featuring in the last and first lines of successive stanzas. (At different points in the text both 'bliss' and 'delight' also serve as concatenating terms, the device of

concatenation operating as an organizing principle of structure right through the poem).

From this sketch, what conclusions can we draw about the anonymous poet's way with the words 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure'? While he appears to make no attempt to distinguish between 'bliss' and 'delight', there plainly is a conscious intention to distinguish between those two terms taken together and the third term, 'pleasure', such that 'bliss' and 'delight' are deemed appropriate for use in the visionary sections of the poem, but not in the opening and closing cantos, while 'pleasure' is deemed appropriate *only* for the opening and closing cantos, but not for the rest of the poem. In sum: though the differences between *Paradise Lost* and *Pearl* with respect to their treatment of our three keywords should not be overlooked, one equally should not overlook the interesting similarities. (Worth adding is the observation that *Pearl* contains a characterization of 'bliss' that sounds the depths of that concept as incisively as any dictionary definition: in stanza 15 we light upon the phrase "glorious gladness" - in the original "gladande glory". That is a formulation that comes as close to the heartbeat of 'bliss' as we are likely to get).

Bringing the time-frame of this excursus closer to Milton's own day, the issues raised in relation to *Pearl* bear revisiting in relation to religious poetry of the seventeenth century. Though I am unable to bring forward for consideration an extended religious poem with a structure resembling that of *Paradise Lost*, I can say that

there are many seventeenth-century religious poems (or passages in them) which, when viewed from the standpoint of tendency and temper, and of subject-matter as well, in some cases, put one in mind of Milton's epic. So the question that arises is this: when seventeenth-century religious poets (say, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, Traherne who make up a representative sample) visit Heaven, Paradise and Fallen Existence in their poetry, do the terms 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' put in an appearance? The short answer is that they often do. However, to adduce evidence in the quantity needed to bear out this claim would mean entangling myself in an investigation of extended scope that forms no part of my 'brief' in the present enquiry. So the short answer will have to remain short and unsubstantiated - and be judged accordingly. Mention must however be made of a contemporary of Milton, Thomas Traherne, "the poet of felicity and light", as Barry Spurr describes him (in Cunnamore and Johnson 281). Traherne's poetry, all of it religious in a broad sense, is full of 'heaven' and 'bliss' - words which occur there not only very frequently, but very frequently in each other's company. Considering the rhapsodic, heaven-aspiring tendency of so much of his verse that is scarcely surprising. And it is scarcely surprising for another reason also: the close, long-standing connection between Heaven and 'bliss' - and, for that matter, between Paradise and 'delight', and the Fallen World and 'pleasure' (v. supra). These long-standing connections are of relevance to a consideration not only of Traherne's poetry but of any

poetry characterized, as Milton's is in *Paradise Lost*, by a conjunction of those particular 'operational realms' and those particular items of vocabulary.

Such conjunctions, which in *Paradise Lost* occur on a planned and systematic basis, also show up, not infrequently, in the output of the leading religious poets of the seventeenth century. In so far, then, a measure of common ground exists between Milton's poetic practice and that of religious poets of the earlier decades of the century. And while such similarities are certainly deserving of notice, what equally deserves notice is the fact that the same poets, in poems with sacred settings, sometimes go in for combinations and transpositions of a kind that Milton never would - and never does - countenance in his epic. Here are some examples: the Lord's Day, which "knock[s] at heaven with thy brow" is nonetheless, for Herbert, "a day of **mirth**" ("Sunday" 10, 57). Supplicating God, the same poet begs for "quickness [= liveliness] that I may with **mirth**/ Praise thee brim-full" ("Dullness" 3-4). For Vaughan, "He that hath left life's vain joys...keeps his soul unto eternal **mirth**" ("The Timber" 29, 32). Even so for Traherne: we humans "shall be sated with celestial **mirth**" ("The Bible" 12). In *Paradise Lost*, by contrast, the calmly rational, serenely harmonious precincts of Heaven and the Garden are never shamed by the intrusion of 'mirth', an emotion (or is it a state?) dishonouring to those realms and unworthy of its inhabitants, not only because of its connotations of frivolity, rowdiness and meretricious gaiety but, more importantly, because of its

suggestion of non-rationality or, at best, the suspension of rationality. (For the beasts, which were created non-rational, the situation is different: v. IV 346.) 'Mirth' is, then, for the Milton of *Paradise Lost* (but not the Milton of "L'Allegro"), unmistakably a postlapsarian marker pointing to the corruptions of fallen existence (cf. Adam and Eve who, as if "with new wine intoxicated.../...swim in **mirth**" immediately after the Fall: IX 1008-9).

Next let us consider instances in which seventeenth-century religious poets, in productions with a sacred setting, tether 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' to signifiers so 'deviant' (by the standards of *Paradise Lost*) that the combinations which result stand no chance of being countenanced in that poem. In *Mundorum Explicatio* (1661), Samuel Pordage, contemplating the "sad and deplorable...state of man", declares that his "years [are] a bubble, and [his] **bliss** is **pain**" (in Kirkconnell 424). 'Bliss', as and when experienced, is never 'pain' in *Paradise Lost* (though, to be sure, the recollection of bliss once had, since lost, is for Satan and for Adam and Eve alike unquestionably a source of profound pain). Similar in 'trajectory' to Pordage's collocation is Vaughan's reference to "**sour delights**" ("The World" 11). Again, 'delights', as and when experienced, are never 'sour' in *Paradise Lost*. In "Self-Condemnation" Herbert writes: "He that doth love.../ **This world's delights** before true Christian joy..." (7-8). If Herbert's line were transposed to *Paradise Lost*, those 'delights', alas, would have to be given up in return for mere 'pleasures'.

Contrariwise, Traherne's 'pleasures' in the couplet "'Tis the life of **pleasures**!/ To see myself His [God's] friend!" ("The Vision" 53-54) would be, in *Paradise Lost*, instantly sublimed to 'bliss', as would be the 'pleasures' he envisions in "Thoughts IV": "...and at thy [God's] right hand there/ Are **pleasures** for evermore" (lines 2-3). And the same goes for the 'pleasure' Spenser envisions in line 75 of *An Hymn of Heavenly Love*: "But there [in Heaven] their termless time in **pleasure** spend".

What the above analysis throws into relief is this: some of the leading religious poets of the seventeenth century permit themselves a terminological and collocational freedom, when writing in sacred contexts, of the kind Milton permits himself only in poems other than *Paradise Lost*, the great majority of which are not religiously complexioned.

II

'BLISS'

Deriving from Old English **bliðe**, meaning 'blithe', 'joyous', '**bliss**' originally signified *earthly* joy.¹ However, owing to a confusion, which began early, between 'bliss' and 'bless', a tendency developed to disjoin "'bliss' from earthly 'blitheness' [and link it to] the beatitude of the blessed in heaven, or that which is likened to it" (*OED* (2nd edn.)).² It is on the strength, then, of its close and ancient connection with Heaven,

¹ In keeping with its earthly origins and connotations, 'bliss's' etymon, 'blithe', does duty in *Paradise Lost* as an exclusively postlapsarian marker:

To whom the wily adder, **blithe** and glad... (IX 625)
Thus Eve [having just fallen] with countenance **blithe** her
story told... (IX 886)
For that fair female troop thou saw'st [says the archangel
Michael to Adam].../...so **blithe**, so smooth, so gay,/ Yet
empty of all good... (XI 614-16)

Moving in precisely the opposite direction, Shelley, in "To A Skylark", connects the mundane signifier 'blithe' with Heaven by closely identifying his "blithe spirit" (the skylark) with it:

Hail to thee, **blithe** Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from **Heaven**, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.
(Stanza 1; see also lines 9, 18, 61)

A question comes to mind: does Shelley so closely identify his 'blithe spirit' with Heaven on purely poetic grounds, or is there also an element of 'tease' (provocation?) involved, traceable to the poet's atheistical convictions?

² The 'bliss'/'bless' confusion (or conflation) is clearly brought out in these lines from *The Canterbury Tales*: "...to Caunterbury they wend,/ The hooly **blisful** martir [St. Thomas à Becket] for to seke..." ("General Prologue" 16-17). 'Blisful' here connotes 'blessed' and is so glossed (*The Riverside Chaucer* 23).

visualized as the abode of the blessed in joy, that 'bliss' has come to be understood as gesturing, in its current acceptation, towards such notions as "supreme delight" (Herbert, "Sunday" 3), "pure delight" (Cowper, *Conversation*, line 681; *Poems* I, 371), "perfect delight" (Thomas Aquinas, in Cogan 35), "perfect happiness" (Lorenzo Valla, in Vickers 314), "intense happiness" (St. Augustine, in Martz 42), "joy unspeakable" (John Wesley, in Lucas 19), "glorious gladness" (*Pearl*, stanza 15).

Milton was not slow to capitalize on the link between 'bliss' and Heaven,³ making it a distinguishing characteristic of the Heaven he constructs in *Paradise*

³ This link comes most conspicuously into view in the locution "heavenly bliss", already in Milton's day a commonplace, like 'Christian liberty' or 'right reason' (Le Comte 1953:13). Of the many instances of this locution's use that one could bring forward, here is a slim sampling drawn from an approximately 80-year period preceding the publication of *Paradise Lost*:

That Stella (O dear name) that Stella is
That virtuous soul, sure heir of **heavenly bliss**...
(Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* (ca. 1582, publ. 1591),
52:6-7)

Earl of Warwick: I here protest in sight of heaven,
And by the hope I have of **heavenly bliss**,
That I am clear of this misdeed...
(Shakespeare, *3 Henry VI* (1590-91), III,iii,181-83)

...that I obtaine **Heaven, and the blisse thereof**, is
accidentall, and not the intended worke of my devotion...
(Browne, *Religio Medici* (ca. 1636, publ. 1643): *Works* I:64)

Each man an Adam; a good conscience is
His Paradise, and pledge of **Heavenly blisse**
(Bancroft, *Two Bookes of Epigrammes and Epitaphs* (1639): Epigram
240, lines 1-2)

[My spirit] A deep abyss
That sees and is
The only proper place of **heavenly bliss**.
(Traherne, "My Spirit" (ca. 1660), lines 77-79)

God "ordained him [man] a law, by observation of
which...he should ascend up to supernatural and **heavenly
bliss**".
(John Hales, *Sermons preach'd at Eton* (1660); in Patrides
108)

Lost. While his handling of 'bliss' in relation to Heaven is multifaceted, the various connections in which the word is used are uniformly premised on Heaven's being cleansed first, so as to render it fit for the reception and reign of bliss. Signified by the term 'cleansed' is that all traces of the passions - envy, pride, ambition - that ignited the rebellion of the disloyal angels are cast out of Heaven together with them. Purged of these ills (which in their terrestrial manifestation had swollen the inventory of the *theologia negativa*⁴ for many centuries already by Milton's day), Heaven is ready - indeed, ripe - for bliss.⁵

To begin with, Heaven is the very "seat of bliss" (VI 273) because it is the dwelling-place of God, the source of

⁴ A technique of accommodating to the human understanding what is in principle beyond its capacity to grasp - God, Heaven, the angels, the afterlife - by stating what they are *not* rather than what they are (or may be); in other words, by enumerating the known ills of our fallen condition from which they are *exempt*. So, for example, Heaven is that region in which there is "no sickness, no sorrowes, no disease nor maladie, no crosse, no curse, no vexation, nor calamitie, no defect' - and so on almost endlessly" (Thomas Tuke (1609), in *Patrides* 283). See also Giamatti 84-85.

⁵ If Milton's Heaven is rendered fit for the bliss of spotless spiritual beings because of what has been thrust out (the bad angels), it is equally rendered fit for their bliss because of what has been *left out* - to wit, the oppressive presence of gold, jewels and other evidences of earthly opulence such as underprop and encrust the New Jerusalem of the *Revelation of St. John*. Though usually associated with representations of the terrestrial paradise, displays of earthly opulence also on occasion vitiate the celestial one. *Patrides* makes mention of John Vicars's *A Prospective Glasse to Looke into Heaven* (1618), which he describes as "a horrid poem that devotes over 2,500 incredible lines to Heaven's material possessions, notably its substantial collection of jewels" (283). The Heavens of Sannazzaro (*De Partu Virginis*) and Vida (*The Christiad*), though less egregious than Vicars's, also glitter with gold and jewels (Knott 64). Such excesses do not mar *Paradise Lost*: Milton's worst 'lapse' occurs in V 634, in the reference to the angels eating and drinking from vessels of "pearl...diamond, and massy gold". The incongruousness of the scene (V 631-41), at the centre of the description of which is found the allusion to the angels' jewel-encrusted stoups and trenchers, has been remarked by Barbara K Lewalski: the "angels drink and eat from magnificent vessels of jewels and gold while reclining on pastoral flowers" (143).

bliss. Even as the Creator floods the environs of his throne with light, so he emits, sheds and engenders bliss, though, as its author, he is not himself 'in' it: 'in' bliss are all those beings, the angels chiefly, and other "sanctities", who inhabit the space between the source and the circumference of bliss:⁶

About him [God] all the sanctities of heaven
Stood thick as stars, and from his sight received
Beatitude past utterance; on his right
The radiant image of his glory sat,
His only Son... (III 60-64)

Seated at the Father's right hand after the Exaltation, the Son is thus close enough to the source of bliss to be actually enveloped by it, embosomed in it - as the text, using that very image, twice affirms:

...the Father infinite,
By whom in **bliss embosomed** sat the Son
(V 596-97)

To him [the Father] with swift ascent he [the Son] up returned,
Into his **blissful bosom** reassumed
In glory as of old... (X 224-26)⁷

'Bliss' is Milton's word of choice also in other collocations intended to suggest the incomparable felicity

⁶ The position of which is indeterminate: sometimes it seems as if bliss fills the whole of Heaven, at other times as if it is confined to a smaller area around the divine presence.

⁷ Cf. *Paradise Regained*:

True image of the Father whether throned
In the **bosom of bliss**, and light of light
Conceiving, or remote from heaven, enshrined
In fleshly tabernacle... (IV 596-99)

Cf. Spenser, *An Hymn of Heavenly Love*:

Out of the **bosom of eternal bliss**,
In which he reigned with his glorious sire,
He down descended... (lines 134-36)

the Son enjoys thanks to his privileged proximity to the Father: thus, to sit at the Father's right hand means to be "throned in **highest bliss**" (III 305). The angels extol the Son's offer of himself as a ransom "[f]or man's offence" (III 410), "Regardless of the **bliss** wherein he sat/ Second to thee..." (408-9). Returning in triumph from his victory over Satan and his host, the Son is received back into glory by the Father, resuming his place "at the right hand of **bliss**" (VII 892). Having been commissioned by the Father to administer the *coup de grâce* to the army of renegade angels, the Son affirms that to fulfil the Father's will "is all my **bliss**" (VI 729). In this last instance, the occasion of bliss is the "confluent wills" of the Son and the Father (Benet, in Durham and Pruitt 53).

To be within God's circuit in Heaven is, then, to be in bliss (and to be intimately within his circuit is to be 'embosomed' in 'highest bliss'). From this it follows that to be expelled from the divine presence is to be expelled from bliss, a corollary underscored and enforced by God himself when he charges the archangel Michael "to drive...out [the renegade angels] from **God and bliss**,/ Into their place of punishment..." (VI 52-53).

Prohibited from regaining Heaven after their expulsion, the fallen angels can retrieve the image of their life there only through the operation of memory, and it is noteworthy how often it is their lost bliss that they call to mind when they think back to the time before

disaster struck.⁸ Thus Satan, surveying his shattered host, and recalling what they once were, views the whole of their earlier condition under the single aspect of bliss - once had, now irrecoverably lost: with "[s]igns of remorse...[he] behold[s]/ The fellows of his crime.../ (Far other once beheld in **bliss**)..." (I 605-7). And, later on, when he first sets eyes on Adam and Eve in Paradise, witnessing, resentfully and bitterly, their enjoyment of a state so like the one from which he and his confederates are everlastingly excluded, he finds it perfectly natural, in calling to mind that former state, to subsume the whole of it, once again, under the aspect of 'bliss': "O hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold,/ Into our room of **bliss** thus high advanced/ Creatures of another mould..." (IV 358-60).

Like his commander, the warlike Moloc finds it natural to think of bliss as in retrospect the characterizing attribute of his and his confederates' previous estate: "...what can be worse/ Than to dwell here, driven out from **bliss**...?" (II 85-86). Satan's and Moloc's interpretation of their former condition is corroborated by the epic narrator who summarizes under the term 'bliss' everything from which the fallen angels are excluded in being excluded from Heaven: theirs is "a sad exclusion from the doors of **bliss**" (III 525). While sharing the epic narrator's perspective, the archangel Raphael amplifies it, offering a more inclusive picture of the fallen angels' plight by

⁸ It can be argued that there exists a direct relation between the sharpness of the fallen angels' recollections of their former bliss in Heaven and the keenness of their torments in Hell.

contrasting what they fell from with what they fell to:
"...O fall/ From what **high state of bliss** into what **woe**" (V
542-43).⁹

The point all the preceding examples enforce is that, in losing Heaven, the wicked angels lose bliss. The connection between the two is indeed intimate, so that whereas earlier in this chapter bliss was described as a 'distinguishing characteristic' of Milton's Heaven, we can now see that it is more like a defining one. So much is that the case that by a kind of synecdochic shorthand 'bliss' does duty as a summarizing (if not quite as a stand-in) term for Heaven.

Even as the virtual synonymy between Heaven and bliss in Milton's scheme of things works against the bad angels who, in losing the one, lose the other, even so it works in favour of the good ones who, in enjoying and possessing the one, enjoy and possess the other. Possessing Heaven means, for the good angels, being within God's circuit, and that means being *in* bliss (which highlights the fact that bliss is not an emotion so much as a condition). The blissful estate of the good angels is signalled with respect to their habitations: "...from their **blissful** bowers/ Of amarantin shade.../...the sons of light/ Hasted..." (XI 77-81); their environs: "...the river of **bliss** through the midst of heaven/ Rolls o'er Elisian flowers her amber stream..." (III 358-59); the ambience and temper of their

⁹ Bliss-woe, and its companion - and, to a degree - co-extensive binaries, light-dark and ascent-descent, together constitute the principal oppositional paradigms of the epic. Pertinent here is Le Comte's observation: "The blind poet stressed their [the angels'] brightness, as he did that of everything, *Paradise Lost* being a study, not in colors, but in darkness and light" (1953:39).

milieu: "...the peace of God in **bliss**..." (VII 55); the general constitution of their existence, such that when news of mankind's Fall reaches Heaven, although it engenders "dim sadness" (X 23) among the angels, yet it "violated not their **bliss**" (25) - as indeed it could not, for if bliss is the *condition* of the inhabitants of Heaven, it can be 'violated' only if there is a change in the character of Heaven or in the character of its inhabitants' relationship to it; and there is a change in neither.

The phenomena associated with 'bliss' in the above quotations - the bowers, the river, the peace - have a strong pastoral resonance. For Knott, who brings a pastoral frame of reference to bear on *Paradise Lost*, the bliss suffusing the epic's Heaven arises in part from its being "among other things a pastoral heaven, where the angels enjoy their meals 'On flours reposed'...and take their leisure in 'blissful Bowers'" (63). Developing his argument, Knott proposes that the final authority "[w]ithin the framework of *Paradise Lost*...for the ideal of pastoral simplicity is the life of the angels in their celestial paradise" (*idem*). This optic is largely shared by Lewalski who sees the "Vita Beata" (140) of Milton's Heaven as bound up with its inhabitants' pastoral lifestyle, a pastoral lifestyle of a uniquely privileged kind:

The angels enjoy the *otium* of pastoral without its limitation to rustic things. They take on the...cares and responsibilities of georgic with none of the drudgery of tending farm or garden or bees.¹⁰ (*idem*)

¹⁰ In addition to its peace, streams, flowers and bowers, in addition to its citizens' *otium*, Milton's Heaven is also furnished with trees (V 652), hills and valleys (VI 784, V 619), is "fanned with cool

The good angels' enjoyment of pastoral *otium* - "golden ease" predicated on "the contented acceptance of what one is given" (Snyder 97, 4) - undoubtedly contributes to their bliss, though without implying inertia (for *otium* has nothing to do with passivity and torpor though sometimes mistakenly associated with them). Far from being torpid, the angels' bliss in fact finds active expression, and that in two principal forms - obedience to God and praise and adoration of him. At once manifesting and augmenting the angels' bliss, these expressions of it are 'flagged' with reference to the words 'love' (as pointing to obedience) and 'joy' (as pointing to praise and adoration).¹¹ By way of illustration, a few examples:

...freely we **serve** [declares Raphael]
Because we freely **love**... (V 538-39)

The multitude of angels with a shout
...uttering **joy**, heaven rung
With **jubilee** [= joyful shouting, acclaim], and
loud **hosannas** filled
The eternal regions... (III 345-49)

winds" (V 655), brushed by "roseate dews" (V 646), penetrated with "melodious hymns" (V 656) and robed in the "grateful twilight" (V 645) of calm evenings. It is evident, then, that in the Heaven of Milton's epic are assembled the principal components of the pastoral 'pleasance', the *locus amœnus*, which, according to Ernst R Curtius, for many hundreds of years until the sixteenth century formed "the principal motif of all nature description" in European literature (195). The pleasance, continues Curtius, enumerating its characteristics, is

a beautiful, shaded natural site. Its minimum ingredients comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook. Birdsong and flowers may be added. The most elaborate examples also add a breeze. (idem)

¹¹ As the angels' obedience to, and praise of, God are *expressions, manifestations* of bliss, the word 'bliss' itself, it bears noticing, is not predicated of them: as a term reserved for describing the angels' *condition*, 'bliss' is not appropriately used of its expressive manifestations.

Thus they [the angels] in heaven, above the
starry sphere,
Their happy hours in **joy** and **hymning** spent.¹²
(III 416-17)

Once we reach the last two Books of the epic, the
prospective ones which survey the whole of futurity, it
comes as no surprise to discover 'bliss' taking on an
eschatological coloration as it evokes the glorious destiny
laid up for the Redeemed:

...where with me [the Son]
All my redeemed may dwell in joy and **bliss**...
(XI 42-43)

...and thence shall come [the Son]
...to reward
His faithful, and receive them into **bliss**...
(XII 458-62)

[In the day of] respiration to the just,
And vengeance to the wicked...
[The Son will] raise...
New heavens, new earth...
Founded in righteousness and peace and love

¹² Surveying the good angels' daily routine in Heaven, Knott remarks:
"To the satisfaction of repose [*otium*] Milton added the greater
fulfilment of active attendance upon God" (83). This 'active
attendance' mostly takes the form of singing the praises of Heaven's
King, the hymn of praise being the "lyric genre characteristic of the
angels" (Lewalski 160). Reflecting upon the rôle and character of the
angels' hymnody, Knott sees it as, first and foremost, an expression
of joy:

The angels of *Paradise Lost* serve God as messengers and as
soldiers, but the highest and most satisfying form of
celestial service is the praise of God. Heaven rings with
the hallelujahs of angelic choirs. With sacred song they
celebrate the anointing of the Son, the defeat of Satan,
the days of Creation: all the occasions for "Jubilee".
...In *Christian Doctrine* Milton quotes the sixtieth psalm
to illustrate the happiness that arises from seeing God
face to face: "in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy
right hand there are pleasures for evermore". The
evidence of *Paradise Lost* suggests that this fullness of
joy naturally finds expression in praise... (84-85)

Michael Fixler notes that God is praised also through dance. He
calls attention to the "[m]ystical dance" of the angels (V 620) as
well as to the symbolic dance of "universal Pan" (IV 266). These, he
contends, are "expression[s] of worship involving a dance figure as a
partial or entire metaphor for the universal concord of praise..." (in
Sims and Ryken 123).

To bring forth fruits joy and eternal **bliss**.¹³
(XII 540-51)

To crown the foregoing quotations, here, from the prose writings, is Milton's triumphant eschatological vision of the Righteous entering into their inheritance after the Day of Judgment. As if in recognition of the 'bliss'-'bless' nexus, the passage includes both terms in its swelling cadences:

...and in supereminence of **beatifick** Vision
progressing the datelesse and irrevoluble Circle
of Eternity [the Righteous] shall clasp
inseparable Hands with joy, and **blisse** in over
measure for ever. (*Of Reformation...:III(i)*,79)

But what of the righteous ones living before Christ's terrestrial ministry who merited salvation? To judge from the example of Enoch, they are equally the beneficiaries of bliss in Milton's scheme of things¹⁴: Enoch, "The only

¹³ Spenser 'blasphemously' uses this very phrase ('eternal bliss') in transposing eschatological bliss into an erotic key in *Amoretti* 63 ("After long storms' and tempests' sad assay"). Following the speaker's declaration that he "at length descr[ies] the happy shore" of the beloved's imminent surrender to his addresses, we come upon the parodically 'eschatological' sestet with its baggage of eroticized spiritual terminology:

Most happy he that can at last achieve
The joyous safety of so sweet a rest,
Whose least delight sufficeth to deprive
Remembrance of all pains which him oppressed:
All pains are nothing in respect of this,
All sorrows short that gain **eternal bliss**.

Needless to say, Milton never uses 'bliss' in *Paradise Lost* as Spenser uses it in Sonnet 63 (or, for that matter, in the even more desacralized and eroticized Sonnet 72). As Spurr points out: "...words which are patient of sensual or erotic connotations would have been handled [by Milton] with even more than his usual care, because of a temperamental persuasion against those connotations. It's unfashionable to say so, but Milton probably was, to a large extent, puritanical." (Private communication)

¹⁴ Cf. Donne, referring in Satire 3 ("Kind pity chokes my spleen..."), to the "first blinded age" (line 7), that is, the pre-Christian era destitute of the light of the Gospel:

...and shall thy father's spirit
Meet blind philosophers [such as Socrates who, though not
privy to revealed truth (>> 'blind'), ranks nonetheless as

righteous in a world perverse,/ And therefore hated..."
finally comes into his reward, "walk[ing] with God/ High in
salvation and the climes of **bliss**..." (XI 701-8).

* * * *

The relation between 'bliss' and Heaven has a dual aspect: besides its connection with Heaven proper, as exhibited in *Paradise Lost* and in the works of other authors, bliss is also a presiding characteristic of the terrestrial paradise conceived as a simulacrum of the celestial. Knott puts it this way:

The true image of perfection in *Paradise Lost* is heaven. Although the landscape of Eden is much more fully and convincingly realized, it can only be regarded as a "shadow" of the hills and valleys of heaven, which stand for a bliss beyond the threat of change. (53)

Even as our First Parents, occupants and overlords of the earthly paradise, are made in the similitude of their, and its, Creator, even so is their Garden sanctuary made in the similitude of that Creator's seat, the heavenly paradise. That the Garden in Eden is a simulacrum of Heaven (though not necessarily viewed in that light all the time) is one of Milton's key premises in the design of his epic, and it is therefore something the text insists on: "...yet God hath here [in the Garden and/or in Eden more generally]/ Varied his bounty so with new delights,/ As may

an exemplar of pre-Christian virtue] in heaven, whose merit
Of strict life may be imputed faith [thus making them
eligible for salvation]...? (lines 11-13)

In an editorial note, Carey comments that the question of whether the "virtuous heathen...would be saved was [a] much debated" one in Donne's day (425).

compare with heaven...", affirms Raphael (and he should know), addressing Adam (V 430-32). And, more conclusively still, because stamped with the epic narrator's authority:

Beneath him with new wonder now he [Satan] views
To all delight of human sense exposed
In narrow room nature's whole wealth, yea more,
A heaven on earth, for **blissful** Paradise
Of God the garden was, by him in the east
Of Eden planted...¹⁵ (IV 205-10)

¹⁵ Jennifer Stead advances the view that "the Renaissance idea of the garden was as a paradise on earth, where senses, intellect and spirit were enhanced and sublimated. Renaissance gardens were set out as banquets for the mind..." (in Wilson 120).

This statement prompts the question whether the Renaissance conception of the garden, as characterized by Stead, played a rôle - and, if so, what rôle, and how big a one - in Milton's transformation of the skeletal Eden of *Genesis* into the richly detailed, sensuously evocative Garden that we encounter in *Paradise Lost*. To this question I have no answer - and that not because the issue of what (aside from the Biblical and other literary accounts) fed into the poet's conception and depiction of the Edenic Garden has lacked its enquirers, but because the enquiry itself is of so speculative a character (a good deal more speculative than, say, the project of tracing Homeric, Virgilian, Ovidian or Spenserian echoes in the epic, where recourse can be had, after all, to detailed textual comparison) that it is difficult to know on what basis to choose among competing and, at times, conflicting theories.

Still, the speculative nature of the undertaking has not deterred some critics from singling out specific gardens as the 'originals' of Milton's (or of particular features within it). So, for example, John Dixon Hunt suggests variously the Medici estate of Pratolino, the Villa Celsa near Siena, and the Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati as possible models for particular features of the Edenic Garden of *Paradise Lost* (93). Other critics, adopting a more general approach, emphasize the possible influence of garden 'styles' or of gardening 'ideologies' on Milton. Yet others propose as models or as influences paintings of imagined earthly paradises, or of gardens more generally, or of landscapes with gardens in them, which Milton may have seen, probably in Italy, during his twelve-months' visit there in 1638-39. The most sensible approach to the subject is perhaps Fowler's:

It may be misleading, however, to cite particular sources for the details of M.'s Paradise; for it really assimilates and refines upon the whole European tradition of paradises, gardens, pleasancess, fortunate isles, and lands of the blessed as subjects for conventional description. (615)

Worth consulting in relation to this theme, in addition to Hunt's stimulating essay, are: Demaray, H D: "Milton's 'Perfect' Paradise and the Landscapes of Italy" (*Milton Quarterly* VIII [1974]); Koehler, G S: "Milton and the Art of Landscape" (*Milton Studies* VIII [1975]); Otten, C F: "'My Native Element': Milton's Paradise and English Gardens" (*Milton Studies* V [1973]). Also relevant are the books by Duncan and Giamatti (v. Works Cited).

In the light of these passages (as well as of others not here adduced), it is difficult to quarrel with Knott's claim that Milton represents Eden as "virtually an outlying province of heaven" (20). And, in truth, owing to the combined influence of Biblical exegesis and the Platonic idea that "the world which we see is a simulacrum of the eternal one" (Cicero, in Barker 247),¹⁶ Eden had been for so long imagined and portrayed as a true likeness of Heaven that Milton could hardly have conceived of it in any other way.

In Book IV, line 208, as we have seen, the Garden, imagined as a simulacrum of Heaven, is described as 'blissful' ("...for **blissful** Paradise/ Of God the garden was..."). And naturally enough; for if bliss is a presiding characteristic of Heaven, the same must hold true for its terrestrial copy. So it is altogether in line with expectations to come upon the terms 'bliss'/'blissful' being used time and again in relation to the Garden - and each such use serves as an invitation - perhaps, more

¹⁶ These words come from Cicero's neo-Platonic treatise *Timaeus ex Platone* (though the belief in celestial archetypes appears to predate Plato: v. Duncan 243). Be that as it may, the neo-Platonic eddies in *Paradise Lost* supposedly rise to the surface in Raphael's question: "...though what if earth/ Be but the **shadow** of heaven...?" (V 574-75). Fowler glosses these lines thus: "It was a fundamental doctrine of Platonism that the phenomenal world bears to the heavenly world of Ideas the same relation as shadow to reality" (711). But William G Madsen, whose essay ("Earth the Shadow of Heaven...") in Barker's Collection contains the quotation from Cicero, takes issue with the general view that the word 'shadow' in Raphael's question has neo-Platonic connotations. Madsen argues that "Milton is using 'shadow' here not in its Platonic or Neoplatonic sense but in its familiar Christian sense of 'foreshadowing' or 'adumbration'; and that the symbolism of *Paradise Lost* is typological rather than Platonic" (in Barker 247).

accurately, as a cue - to the reader to visualize it as a likeness of Heaven. In that sense 'bliss'/'blissful' functions as a kind of cipher (perhaps as a mnemonic) for putting the reader in mind of a relationship between the Garden and its celestial archetype that is seldom spelled out as explicitly as in IV 208, but is to be understood nonetheless as subsisting continuously - until the Fall unravels everything.

As predicated of the earthly paradise, 'bliss' operates for the most part as a generalizing term, summing up in an unparticularized way the general character of the Garden. So, rather than referring to specific properties, such as its "goodliest trees" (IV 147), say, or its "crisped brooks" (IV 237), or its "flowers of all hue" (IV 256), 'bliss' in most cases simply refers to the Garden as a whole, implying thereby that it is its defining characteristic (or, at any rate, a defining characteristic). This is borne out in the following examples:

...With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us, and regain the **blissful** seat...
(I 4-5)

Direct against which opened from beneath,
Just o'er the **blissful** seat of Paradise,
A passage down to the earth... (III 526-28)

...a place of **bliss**
In the purlieus of heaven... (II 832-33)

...those [= Adam and Eve]
Whose dwelling God hath planted here in **bliss**.
(IV 883-84)

...Adam rise,
...called by thee I come thy guide

To the garden of **bliss**, thy seat prepared.
(VIII 296-99)

But more pregnant than the instances which confirm the rule that in referring to the Garden 'bliss' has a general application, is the one that deviates from it in linking 'bliss' to specific features of the Garden's décor:

...and now is [Raphael] come
Into the **blissful** field, through groves of myrrh,
And flowering odours, cassia, nard, and balm;
A wilderness of sweets; for nature here
Wantoned as in her prime, and played at will
Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
Wild above rule or art; enormous¹⁷ **bliss**.
Him through the spicy forest onward come
Adam discerned... (V 291-99)

Figuring forth an earthly paradise whose sensuous richness projects "a naturalized image of Heaven" (Duncan 238), this passage throws into relief the connection between 'bliss' and four capital features of the Garden, its dynamism, variety, productivity and fragrance. To these attributes 'bliss' relates as concomitant, product or source (or all three). But so does 'delight' - and at least as much.¹⁸ It is therefore best if the attributes in question come up for consideration under the rubric of 'Delight' in the next chapter. However, as the attribute

¹⁷ Here used in the sense, now obsolete, of "unfettered by rules" [Latin *e* = out (of) + *norma* = mason's square >>> rule] (*OED* 1). From this it is evident that the qualifier "enormous" amounts to a restatement, in apposition, of the phrase "Wild above rule" in the immediately preceding locution.

¹⁸ The high degree of overlap here is hardly surprising: both signifiers, after all, have reference to the same entity, the earthly paradise - 'bliss' in the context of its resemblance to Heaven, 'delight' when it is conceived of in its own terms. Viewed from either perspective, the Garden is characterized by dynamism, variety, productivity and fragrance; these traits, however, are more clearly, and more closely, linked to 'delight' than to 'bliss'.

of fragrance is particularly identified with 'bliss' in the above extract, it is to the purpose to quote Knott's remark that "When Raphael enters the 'spicie Forrest' on his way to Adam, it is as if he has entered a region, or state, of bliss" (38).

Knott appears to equate 'region of bliss' with 'state of bliss', but it is better to keep them apart: 'region of bliss' best describes the Garden (viewed as a likeness of Heaven); 'state of bliss' best describes the condition of our First Parents in that choice Garden prior to the Fall. Adam and Eve subsist in bliss because they were created in the image of the Source of Bliss,¹⁹ because their 'blissful seat' envelops them in it, and because of the bliss they impart to, and receive from, each other. These three sources of their bliss find expression in the three distinct ways in which that signifier is used of them in the epic: first, as a general term pointing to a general state of being; second, as a term describing how the

¹⁹ Cf. Traherne, from *The Third Century of the Centuries of Meditations*:

In discovering the matter or objects to be enjoyed, I was greatly aided by remembering that we were made in God's image. For thereupon it must of necessity follow that God's treasures be our treasures, and His joys our joys. ...The image of God implanted in us, guided me to the manner wherein we were to enjoy, for since we were made in the similitude of God, we were made to enjoy after His similitude. Now to enjoy the treasures of God in the similitude of God, is the most perfect blessedness God could devise. For the treasures of God are the most perfect treasures and the manner of God is the most perfect manner. To enjoy therefore the treasures of God after the similitude of God is to enjoy the most perfect treasures in the most perfect manner. (256-57)

The last sentence in particular, amounting as it does to a definition of bliss (or, more exactly, the idea of 'living in bliss'), can be read as a gloss on Adam and Eve's state of being in their paradisaal Garden prior to the Fall.

paradisaal Garden, their habitat-sanctuary, bears upon their condition of life; third, as a term defining their relations with each other.

In their altercation after the Fall, when Adam tells Eve that, but for her, the bliss he enjoyed until she tempted him would have been prolonged into eternity as a condition of "immortal **bliss**"²⁰ (IX 1166), he uses the term in a general, undifferentiated sense; in other words, the absence of a particularizing context to which 'bliss' can be linked (over and above its qualification as 'immortal') allows the term to retain a generalizing cast connotative of a general state of being. Similarly, when the epic narrator, assuming the office of Chorus, apostrophizes Eve in a *diabole* ("a prediction or denunciation of future events" (Lanham 121): for her, future, for him, past),

²⁰ There is a deal of special pleading in this speech: Adam is more interested in winning the argument than in being consistent. For him to claim now that by not joining Eve in sin - which would necessarily have resulted in her separation from him (assuming she escaped extinction) - he would have put himself in a fair way to achieving 'immortal bliss', runs counter to what he had earlier told Raphael (VIII 460-559), and flatly contradicts what he told himself just before becoming her accomplice (IX 896-916).

It is further worthy of remark that in the Garden of Adonis episode of *The Faerie Queene* (III vi), Spenser frames his argument regarding the detrimental effect of Time on the Garden along precisely the same lines that Adam does in suggesting Eve's detrimental effect on him during the altercation alluded to above. And not only that: to describe what Time robs Adonis's Garden of, Spenser has recourse to the very phrase - "immortal bliss" - that Adam [= Milton] appeals to in specifying what Eve has robbed him of. Here are the relevant lines from *The Faerie Queene*:

But were it not, that *Time* their troubler is,
All that in this delightfull Gardin growes,
Should happie be, and haue **immortall blis**...
(III, vi, 41, 1-3)

Is there an echo, then, in the altercation scene in *Paradise Lost*, of these lines from the major work of "our sage and serious Poet Spenser" (*Areopagitica*, IV 311), to whom Milton referred, in conversation with Dryden, as his "original" (Parker I, 635)? It is at least arguable that to the already long list of Spenserian echoes in Milton's *œuvre* we can add another.

'bliss' is again used in a general way suggestive of an overall, unparticularized state of being: "O...hapless Eve,/...Such ambush hid among sweet flowers and shades/ Waited...To intercept thy way, or send thee back/ Despoiled of innocence, of faith, of **bliss**" (IX 404-11). God too uses 'bliss' in a general way when he charges Raphael to "...tell him [Adam] withal/ ...what enemy/ Late fallen himself from heaven, is plotting now/ The fall of others from like state of **bliss**" (V 238-41). And when that Enemy, to whose mischief it is Raphael's task to alert Adam and Eve, looks forward to their and their issue's loss of bliss, his use of the term has a general bearing:

...when his [God's] darling sons
Hurled headlong to partake with us, shall curse
Their frail original [our First Parents], and
faded **bliss**,
Faded so soon... (II 373-76)

Adam and Eve's condition of life in the Garden is twice characterized with reference to 'bliss':

...on earth he [God] first beheld
Our two first parents, yet the only two
Of mankind, in the happy garden placed,
Reaping immortal fruits of joy and love,
...In **blissful** solitude... (III 64-69)

...Can we want obedience then
To him, or possibly his love desert
Who formed us from the dust, and placed us **here**
[in the Garden]
Full to the utmost measure of what **bliss**
Human desires can seek or apprehend?²¹
(V 514-18)

²¹ Cf. "...needs must the power/ That made us.../ Be infinitely good.../ ...That raised us from the dust and placed us **here**/ In all this **happiness**..." (IV 412-17).

In his description of Elysium in the *Aeneid* (VI 637-94), Virgil posits a causal connection between the blessedness of the setting ("locos laetos...amœna virecta...sedesque beatas") and the blissful condition of its inhabitants ("Fortunatum Nemorum") (VI 638-39; v. Duncan 22 & Giamatti 68). It is clear from the evidence that Milton, extolled by some as the English Virgil (v. Dryden, in Parker 662-63; also Thomas Sheridan, in Danielson 248), does the same, in a poem shot through with Virgilian echoes. Indeed, he imagines a degree of convergence between setting and condition of life that goes beyond anything Virgil envisaged. As Duncan puts it: "For them [Adam and Eve], Paradise is bliss and bliss is Paradise" (264). So which of the Garden's attributes chiefly promote our First Parents' bliss? The evidence points to three: its incomparability, its superabundance, and its harmony.

If the fabled Hesperian apples could be imagined to exist anywhere, it would be "here only", in the Edenic Garden (IV 249-51) - meaning, they could exist only in a place as incomparably choice as that Garden. A few lines later Milton drives home his point about the Garden's incomparability when, having compiled a list of the choicest gardens of mythology and fabulous report, he proceeds to dismiss them all as paling in comparison with the one planted by God in Eden: "Not that fair field/ Of Enna...nor that sweet grove/ Of Daphne...nor that Nyseian isle...Nor/ ...Mount Amara" bears comparison "with this Paradise/ Of Eden..." (268-81). Interrogating this

celebrated passage, Lewalski comes to the conclusion that "Milton does not intend us to focus upon specific comparisons but rather to respond to the cumulative effect, which intimates that Eden is beyond all compare" (175).²² It is in the nature of such a place to make its two human occupants²³ "feel...happier than [they] know" (VIII 282) - and that is bliss, if anything is.

We have seen already that the Garden is a place in which Nature, "wild above rule or art", "wanton[s] as in her prime" (V 297, 295), pouring herself forth thriftlessly,²⁴ but with powers of self-replenishment

²² Cf. Giamatti: "The earthly paradise in *Paradise Lost*...blends all the previous images of the beautiful place into one. ...[Milton's Garden stands] as a master-image...of the blissful Truth that man has always wanted and by which all other gardens are found wanting" (350-51).

While the paradise in Eden defies all attempts to bound it through comparison with earthly analogues, it becomes itself the final standard to which all terrestrial beauty and rarity that is felt to be beyond earthly compare appeals. This is a subject Chloe Chard explores under the head of what she terms the "theme of incomparability" (53), a theme that has much in common with the rhetorical scheme of "outdoing" (Curtius 162-65). As an illustration of how there comes into play an impulse to recruit the Edenic paradise as a standard of comparison where it is felt that no earthly locale can perform that office, Chard brings forward from Fynes Moryson's *An Itinerary*... (1617) an encomium of Naples whose gardens are compared in the coda to the Edenic paradise; in this comparison "an allusion to the garden of the Hesperides merely prepares the way" (72):

On all sides the eye is as it were bewitched with the sight of delicate gardens, as well within the City, as neere the same. The gardens without the wals are so rarely delightfull, as I should thinke the Hesperides were not to be compared with them; and they are adorned with statuæs, laberinthes, fountaines, vines, myrtle, palme, cetron, lemon, orange, and cedar trees, with lawrels, mulberies, roses, rosemary, and all kinds of fruits and flowers, so as they seeme an earthly Paradise. (idem)

²³ It appears that bliss, both the word and the idea towards which it gestures, bypasses the animals, which belong to the non-rational part of Creation. But so does the Garden, one could argue. While, technically, that is true, nevertheless, because the Garden is a simulacrum of Heaven, it has to be invested with bliss. By contrast, there are no archetypes of the animals in the Judæo-Christian Heaven.

²⁴ Cf. IV 242-43: "...nature boon (= bounteous)/ Poured forth profuse on hill and dale and plain..."

It is interesting to place alongside Milton's conception of the Garden that of John Calvin: "...the blessing of God which in some

greater than the prodigality of self-expenditure, and greater than any attempt at containment - a state of affairs that tries Eve's patience:

...the work [of dressing the Garden] under our labour grows,
Luxurious by restraint; what we by day
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,
One night or two with wanton growth derides
Tending to wild. (IX 208-12)

If these quotations give the the impression of a Garden rejoicing only in its own profuseness, in its powers of productivity, we need to balance the picture by bearing in mind that it rejoices as much in being *useful* to its occupants through the provision of nourishment in superabundance. As Adam says when inviting "Raphael, / The affable archangel" (VII 40-41) to partake liberally of his table's abundance:

...Heavenly stranger, please to taste
These bounties which our nourisher, from whom
All perfect good **unmeasured** out, descends,
To us for food and for delight hath caused
The earth to yield... (V 397-401)

Underlying Adam's invitation is the recognition that it is well

...large [to] bestow
From large bestowed, where nature multiplies
Her fertile growth, and by disburdening grows
More fruitful, which instructs us not to spare.
(V 317-20)

other places [on earth] was but meane, wonderfully had poured out it selfe in this place [the Garden in Eden]. Neither was there plentie onely for meate, but there was added also a great & delicate sweetenes for the taste of the mouth, & delectable comlines to the eye..." (cited by Goodman in Mulryan 86). Calvin, like Milton, imagines a sensuous Garden. (As who does not - among theologians and poets alike?)

So, "[f]rom our first glimpses of it, we see a Paradise whose bounds are being pushed, a creation always spilling over the lips that try to imbibe its heady liquors" (242). These are the words of W Gardner Campbell whose analysis of Edenic superabundance, of which Adam and Eve's banquet with Raphael is emblematic, leads to the conclusion that the "profusion of Paradise is the essence of God's goodness" (in McColgan and Durham 243). Quite true, but it is equally the sign and pledge of his special love and care for the crown of his Creation: "the fruits of [God's] love" by which Adam and Eve are "encompassed" (Traherne, "Adam" 31) are also the proofs thereof: everywhere, all the time, they are surrounded by the inexhaustible tokens of divine blessing and benignity; the paradisaical profusion is the living, omnipresent evidence of the Creator's special regard and solicitude for them. And to be in this condition is to be enveloped by the beatitude that is bliss.²⁵

The harmony that permeates the Garden derives from a number of sources: its organization as a pastoral *locus amœnus*, the state of concord, even consentience, in which all living things within it coexist, the concord between Adam and Eve (contingent in large measure upon her continued acceptance of the divine edict prescribing her

²⁵ "Talke of perfect happinesse..., and what place was so fit for that as the garden place wherein Adam was set to be the Herbarist?" Thus John Gerard 'To the Reader'(5) at the opening of *The Historie of Plants* (Gerard's *Herball*), first published in 1597, and destined to become the most celebrated of all Herbals.

subordination to him)²⁶, the confluence between our First Parents' wills and God's.

Simply by forming part of a Creation judged by its Author to be good - "...this new created world/ ...how good, how fair,/ Answering his great idea" (VII 554-57) - the Garden of necessity is blessed with harmony, for it cannot be 'good' and 'fair' by divine standards without also being harmonious, even as its archetype, Heaven, is. Upon this Biblically-derived image of a Garden already endowed with harmony thanks to the blueprint of Creation, Milton superimposes his personal vision of the Garden as a pastoral 'pleasant place', which certifies it, 'by definition', as a cradle of harmony. For the various components definitive of the 'pleasance' (v. Curtius supra) do not just coexist, they coexist in harmonious inter-relationship. And if we bring under scrutiny the passage (IV 237-68) in which Milton puts his Garden on display as a *locus amœnus* (recalling the representation, under the same figure, of its heavenly archetype (v. supra), but far surpassing it in richness and density of detail and in solidity of specification), we see everywhere the evidence of harmonious design - not only in the total conception, not only in the "harmony of bird song, rustling leaves and murmuring waters" (Fowler (ed.) 627) characteristic of the pleasance, not only in the strategic deployment of signifiers such as 'amiable', 'unite', 'choir', 'airs',

²⁶ It is thus that Milton represents their relationship (IV 295-311), in line with the dominant exegetical tradition. But, as Turner points out, it "is important to recall...that the text of Genesis says nothing whatever about male superiority or rule over the female, until the latter is imposed as a punishment after the fall" (273).

'attune', or of markers of spatial and temporal relationship such as 'betwixt', 'interposed', 'o'er which', 'mean while', but, above all, and climactically, in the coda that rounds off the passage, where, "in a poetic translation of Botticelli's *Primavera*" (Fixler, in Sims and Ryken 120), "...universal Pan/ Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance/ Led on the eternal spring" (266-68).

Who can be unaware of the symbolic significance of dance in the Renaissance outlook: in little, where "of a most ancient custom there danceth together a man and a woman, holding each other by the hand or the arm, [it] betokeneth concord" (Elyot 162) - as it does in the courtly masque; in large, where the dance of the stars and planets (v. III 580, and Fowler's gloss) serves as an emblem of cosmic order and harmony. All the symbolic currents come together in Sir John Davies's witty poetic celebration of dancing, *Orchestra* (1596), where we read that "Dancing [is] itself both love and harmony/ Where all agree and all in order move"; that it is "the fair character of the world's consent,/ The heaven's true figure and th' earth's ornament" (stanza 96). By the time Davies wrote *Orchestra*, dance, conceived of as a metaphor of harmony, represented "a way of thought centuries old and perhaps almost as traditional and as familiar as the metaphors we use unconsciously in our everyday conversation" (Sanderson 71). We cannot doubt that Milton was fully sensible of the symbolic import of dance as a hieroglyph of harmony, or that this symbolism is powerfully present in the image of

"universal Pan knit...in dance" with the Graces and the Hours.

Further witnessing - and contributing - to the harmony of the Garden is the concord and, to a degree, the consentience of all living forms within it. On a superficial level this is exhibited in the charming pastoral scene where "All beasts of the earth, since wild" (IV 341), and often predatory, but before the Fall harmless²⁷ and playful, surround Adam and Eve frisking and gambolling (IV 340-47). At a deeper level, concord blends into consentience when, at dawn, making common cause with all breathing things that "From the earth's great altar send up silent praise/ To the creator", Adam and Eve join "their vocal worship to the choir/ Of creatures wanting voice..." (IX 195-96, 198-99). These images, as well as others, of concord and peaceful interaction between and among the different tiers of the animate Creation, lead Ellen Goodman to the conclusion that

Milton envisions in the earthly paradise a dynamic harmony that encompasses all parts of nature and that embraces man and nature, male and female, earth and the heavens in an interdependent, interacting order. (in Mulryan 85)²⁸

²⁷ Including the serpent "Not [yet] noxious..." (VII 498). As Sir Thomas Browne remarks, in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*: "For noxious animals could offend them [Adam and Eve] no more in the Garden, than Noah in the Ark: as they peaceably received their names, so they friendly possessed their natures..." (II 344).

²⁸ Cf. Lewalski: "As night approaches, Adam observes that humankind's daily round is in perfect harmony with the courses of pastoral nature - 'Labour and rest, as day and night to men/ Successive...' [IV 613-14]" (186). Against this set what the daily round turns into after the Fall: "...But the field/ To labour calls us now with sweat imposed,/ Though after sleepless night...", says Eve (XI 171-73). Reflecting on these lines, Knott observes:

Until Eve's insistence upon gardening separately introduces a discordant note into her relationship with Adam, the concord between them is complete,²⁹ and this too contributes to elevating the Garden's harmony to the point where it comes to resemble Heaven's. To be sure, the perfect concord between our First Parents can last only as long as Eve's willingness to acknowledge Adam as in all things her "guide/ And head" (IV 442-43), her "disposer" and "law" (IV 635, 637) does. And, as we discover, it does not last long. But until Eve starts having second thoughts about the attractions of total submissiveness, the concord of the first married couple is truly unalloyed, finding expression in a frequent appeal to the plural pronoun (in IV 413-37, for example, eight 'us's and two 'our's within the compass of just 25 lines), and in acts of praise and devotion performed in unison: "...let **us** ever praise him [God]..." (IV 436), bids Adam, and so they do - jointly: "Thus at their shady lodge arrived, **both** stood/ **Both** turned, and under open sky adored/ The God that made both sky, air, earth and heaven..." (IV 720-22). Similarly, "Lowly **they** bowed adoring and began/ **Their** orisons..." (V 144-45); and, again, with conjoined voice they offer up praise to the Author of all, in concert with the rest of the animate Creation: IX 195-99 (v. supra). The paramount

The custom of rising at dawn and retiring at evening may be reestablished in another, "lower" world... But it is impossible for Adam and Eve to recover the perfect harmony with nature and with God that was a basic condition of their bliss. (104)

²⁹ ...unfeigned
 Union of mind, or in us both one soul;
 Harmony to behold in wedded pair
 More grateful than harmonious sound to the ear. (VIII 603-6)

emblem of their concord, however, is their clasped hands, as not a few critics have pointed out (reference is made to some of them in the preceding chapter). For Milton, no less than for Sir Thomas Elyot, the clasping of hands 'betokeneth concord'; and Adam and Eve are several times shown in that posture:

So hand in hand they passed, the loveliest pair
That ever since in love's embraces met...
(IV 321-22)

Thus talking hand in hand alone they passed
On to their blissful bower... (IV 689-90)

...into their inmost bower
Handed they went... (IV 738-39)³⁰

Against this backdrop, the symbolic import of the unclasping of their hands as Eve sets off to garden on her own is evident. The high-toned tiff between her and Adam has already dealt a blow to their spiritual and emotional harmony, and the disengagement of hands which follows - "...from her husband's hand her hand/ Soft she withdrew..." (IX 385-86) - symbolically sets the seal on the damage that has been done, suggesting concord not just bruised but breached.

Before the Fall changes everything, the confluence of Adam's and Eve's wills with their Maker's is so seamless that Adam finds it difficult even to conceive of a situation in which a clash of wills might occur:

...But say,
What meant that caution joined, *If ye be found*

³⁰ See also: "...then with voice/ Mild.../ Her hand soft **touching**, [Adam] whispered..." (V 15-17). After the Fall, this becomes "Her hand he **seized**..." (IX 1037), betokening lust.

Obedient? Can we want obedience then
To him, or possibly his love desert
Who formed us from the dust, and placed us here
Full to the utmost measure of what **bliss**
Human desires can seek or apprehend?

(V 512-18)

Earlier, in conversation with Eve, he represents the bending of their wills in obedience to God's as something not just "easy" (IV 421, 433), but "delightful" (437). And although obedience to the divine edict not to taste of the forbidden fruit takes the form of abstention (non-act) rather than act, non-act in this case in no way implies a hibernation of the will; on the contrary, with the interdicted fruit always enticingly, even provokingly, before our First Parents' gaze, their abstention from action, that is, their resisting the temptation to reach out and pluck, bears witness in fact to something positive and *active* - the active alignment in obedience to their Maker's will of their own. Fish sums up the matter trenchantly:

...the decision to obey is made all the time.
Adam and Eve obey every second they decline to
disobey, even when no one is inviting them to.
The tree is always there and eating of it is
always a possibility and not eating of it is
always a virtue.³¹ (160)

³¹ We are inescapably put in mind of these famous words from *Areopagitica*:

He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits
and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet
distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he
is the true warfaring Christian. I cannot praise a
fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd,
that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks
out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run
for, not without dust and heat. ...That vertue therefore
which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evill,
and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her
followers, and rejects it, is but a blank vertue, not a
pure... Which was the reason why our sage and serious Poet

In linking their obedience to God with love of him, Adam and Eve imitate the good angels: "...we never shall forget to **love**/ Our maker, and **obey** him whose command/ Single, is yet so just..." (V 550-52). (Cf. Raphael's affirmation: "...freely we **serve**/ Because we freely **love**..." (V 538-39)). But even without bringing love into it, Adam and Eve imitate the good angels just by ensuring that their wills, through conscious choice, are aligned with their Maker's,³² for so it is with the angels, and because it is so - and only for as long as it remains so - they "hold [their] happy state", as Raphael makes clear:

My self and all the angelic host that stand
 In sight of God enthroned, our happy state
 Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;
 On other surety none... (V 535-38)

As the harmony of Heaven depends on the freely chosen obedience of the angels, so that of its earthly copy depends on Adam and Eve's obedience. Consequently, when through pride, self-will,³³ or uxoriousness they break

Spencer, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than *Scotus* or *Aquinas*, describing true temperance under the person of *Guion*, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon, and the bower of earthly blisse that he might see and know, and yet abstain. (IV 311)

³² This also imitates the confluence of the Son's will with the Father's: v. VI 726-29, and supra.

³³ Cf. Ralph Cudworth, from *A Sermon Preached...at Westminster* (1647):

Happinesse is nothing but that inward sweet delight, that will arise from a Harmonious agreement between our wills and Gods will. There is nothing contrary to God in the whole world, nothing that fights against him but *Self-will*. ...It was by reason of this *Self-will*, that Adam fell in Paradise; that those glorious Angels, those *Morning-starres*, kept not their first station... (in *Patrides* 172)

trust with their Maker, the harmony of the Garden is immediately and dramatically dissolved, to be replaced by a rampaging disharmony which, as it engulfs both the Garden and the regions beyond, sows discord not only between our First Parents (IX 1122-86, X 867-908), but within and throughout the whole frame of Nature (X 651-715, XI 181-92). Nothing could more tellingly demonstrate the degree to which the Garden's harmony is dependent upon its occupants' wills being, and remaining, confluent with their Maker's.

In the foregoing paragraphs we have enquired into the four principal sources of the Garden's harmony which, until the Fall, is an image of Heaven's; and our First Parents' experience of that Heaven-imitating harmony cannot but be generative of bliss.³⁴

When we add to the Garden's harmony the other two attributes - incomparability and superabundance - which serve with it to bestow bliss upon Adam and Eve, we find ourselves contemplating so rich, full and evocative a portrayal of the earthly paradise that we surely would wish to concur in Giamatti's praise of it as "the most complete and satisfying image of a blessed garden in European literature" (302).³⁵

³⁴ Harmony is a condition whose settled pervasiveness sorts well with the relative inwardness and calm expansiveness of bliss, while the more active and externalized traits of dynamism, variety, productivity and fragrance, mentioned earlier in this chapter, sort better with the more visible and more outwardly-directed character of 'delight'. It is for this reason that 'superabundance', as an *outcome* and a *condition*, is treated under the head of 'bliss', while 'productivity', as a *process*, is treated under the head of 'delight'.

³⁵ There are some splendid lines in Wordsworth's fragment "Home at Grasmere" (ca. 1800) which run Milton's Eden a close second, even while resonating with Miltonic echoes (Wordsworth, as we know, was haunted by Milton's poetic shade).

In addition to being predicated of Heaven and its inhabitants, and of the Garden conceived as its simulacrum, 'bliss' is predicated also of Adam's and Eve's mutual love (viewed ordinarily within a conjugal frame of reference). And no wonder, seeing that their "bliss...truly seems a [Platonic] 'shadow' of that of the angels" (Knott xiii), whose mutual love and enigmatic lovemaking (VIII 622-29) are blissful by definition, being the satisfactions of Heaven-dwellers.³⁶ That our First Parents' love - and

The first part of a never-to-be-completed *magnum opus* called *The Recluse*, "Home at Grasmere" is in its earlier sections the record of a true idyll shared by Wordsworth with his sister, Dorothy, at Dove Cottage in the Vale of Grasmere during the spring and summer of 1800. Reflecting the mood of beatitude (it can hardly be described in any other way), the poet tells us that

...surpassing grace
 To me hath been vouchsafed; among the bowers
 Of blissful Eden this was neither given
 Nor could be given - possession of the good
 Which had been sighed for, ancient thought fulfilled,
 And dear Imaginations realized
 Up to their highest measure, yea, and more. (122-28)

The Milton of *Paradise Lost* is everywhere in these lines which most conspicuously echo, it seems to me, V 517-18.

A little later, Wordsworth alludes to the "one sensation" (156) which "nowhere else is found" (154), but which in Grasmere found him. Enlisting the "inexpressibility topos", as Curtius styles it (pp.159-62), the poet avers that he "cannot name" (161) that sensation, but in view of what follows we shall come pretty close to the mark if we call it bliss. Wordsworth presents an image, as Milton does, not just of a place of bliss, but of a place *in* bliss, in a condition of bliss; and, beyond that, he manages to suggest the rapt state of a mind straining to capture in words the *genius* or animating spirit of the object of its contemplation, in this case the Vale of Grasmere:

'Tis (but I cannot name it), 'tis the sense
 Of majesty and beauty and repose,
 A blended holiness of earth and sky,
 Something that makes this individual Spot,
 This small abiding-place of many men,
 A termination and a last retreat,
 A Centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,
 A Whole without dependence or defect,
 Made for itself and happy in itself,
 Perfect Contentment, Unity entire. (161-70)

³⁶ Cf. Joseph Beaumont, from *Psyche* (1648):
 In this condition did they [Adam and Eve] live and love,
 And by perpetual interchange of hearts
 Fairly transcribe our blessed life above
 Where through his eye his Soul each Angel darts

lovemaking - resembles that of the angels (and must therefore be blissful) is brought out in a number of ways.

For example, even as the "downy bank damasked with flowers" on which Adam and Eve 'fall to' their "supper fruits" (IV 334, 331) is modelled on the setting in which the angels "On flowers reposed, and with fresh flowerets crowned" take their "sweet repast" (V 636, 630), so the first Wedded Pair's nuptial bower alludes to the "amarantin" bowers of the angels; it is no accident, therefore, that both bowers are qualified by the same adjective, 'blissful', which both throws into relief the link between them and sets the seal on it:

...from their **blissful** bowers
Of amarantin shade...
...the sons of light
Hasted... (XI 77-81)

Thus talking hand in hand alone they passed
On to their **blissful** bower... (IV 689-90)

Could we go further and claim, on the strength of the shared descriptor 'blissful', that Adam and Eve's '**blissful** bower' is somehow an image of God's "**blissful** bosom" (X 225)? After all, the nuptial bower, secluded, protective, embosoming, was built by the "sovereign planter" himself (IV 691).³⁷

In his fellow's breast, that all may be
In common blest by one felicity.
(Stanza 252; in Kirkconnell 353)

³⁷ Cf. G Stanley Koehler: "The meaning of the bower, blissful rest in a place chosen by God..." (24). Koehler further argues that "it is in this bower rather than in any feature of the terrain that we find the narrative and thematic center of Eden itself" (21). A little later, coming back to this idea, he implicitly 'pits' the nuptial bower against the Tree of Knowledge, deciding again that the former is at the centre of the Garden universe (23). I think Koehler is mistaken. The interdicted tree is demonstrably the symbolic focus of the Garden,

When Satan, in his first infiltration of the Garden, lays envious and, indeed, lascivious eyes upon Adam and Eve clasped in each other's embrace, he "thus plain[s]":

Sight hateful, sight tormenting! Thus these two
Imparadised in one another's arms
The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
Of **bliss on bliss**, while I to hell am thrust...
(IV 504-8)

Why do the words "bliss on bliss" fall from lips whose normal inclination is to denigrate and besmirch? Because, surely, the sight of Adam and Eve in loving embrace recalls to his mind, tormentingly, against his will, perhaps, the only thing he knows of from his own experience that he can compare it to, namely, the angels' blissful lovemaking which he would himself have savoured once, while he was yet among the foremost of Heaven.³⁸

It is with respect to its innocent purity that our First Parents' lovemaking most resembles that of the angels: in both cases, we have to do with "love unlibidinous" (V 449) - "where no voluptuousness, yet all delight", as Donne puts it ("The Autumnal" 22). As if in acknowledgment of the resemblance between Adam and Eve's lovemaking and the angels', the phrase 'love unlibidinous' faces in two directions at once, grammatically speaking (a manifestation that has much in common with Milton's predilection for "double syntax" (Ricks 96; v. also 81-

even as it is the symbolic object on which the poem's narrative and thematic 'lines of force' converge.

³⁸ Similarly, the epic narrator's reference to Satan's being overcome by Eve's "heavenly form/ Angelic" (IX 457-58) on his return trip to the Garden is entirely plausible: having once been surrounded by them, Satan knows all about 'heavenly form[s] angelic'.

102)), gesturing simultaneously towards the angels' love and Adam and Eve's (Turner 271, Lindenbaum 288).³⁹ And it is precisely in order to underscore the purity common to our First Parents' and the angels' lovemaking that Milton, exploiting the associations of spotless felicity adhering to 'bliss', has Adam and Eve characterize their mutual love with reference to that signifier:

...we...our appointed work
Have finished happy in our mutual help
And mutual love, the crown of all our **bliss**...
(IV 726-28)

Whether his [Satan's] first design be to withdraw
Our fealty from God, or to disturb
Conjugal love, than which perhaps no **bliss**
Enjoyed by us excites his envy more...
(IX 261-64)

When, having just fallen, Eve resolves to carry Adam into oblivion with her if necessary, the alternatives she poses ('bliss' vs. 'woe') show, notwithstanding her transgression, that she as much as ever conceives of life, and love, together with Adam in terms of 'bliss' (as a possibility, anyhow): "...Confirmed then I resolve,/ Adam shall share with me in **bliss or woe**..." (IX 915-16). As deluded as his wife in fancying that the perfection of their love before sin can somehow survive it without change or scathe, Adam shares her belief in the possibility of

³⁹ One would think 'love unlibidinous' was unique to Paradise - as unique as the thornless rose. Yet in the idealized fantasy-world of the court masque the sovereign and his consort are not seldom credited with transcendent capabilities reminiscent of the unlibidinous love of the paradisaal state. So, for example, in *Love's Welcome at Bolsover* (1634), Ben Jonson's entertainment for the visit of Charles I and his consort, Henrietta Maria, to Bolsover Castle, there occurs "a fundamental revision of Neoplatonic doctrine in honor of the royal couple who, uniquely, may ascend to the level of pure intelligence by descending to their material appetites" (Raylor 417).

prelapsarian bliss on the other side of sin, the identity of outlook being signalled by an identity of phraseology: "Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state/ Mine never shall be parted, **bliss or woe**" (IX 915-16). This explains why, when Eve sets about tempting her spouse to fall with her, the bait she uses is the promise of bliss - augmented bliss, indeed, embodied in the prospect of

...growing up to godhead; which for thee
Chiefly I sought, without thee can despise.
For **bliss**, as thou hast part, to me is **bliss**,
Tedious, unshared with thee, and odious soon.
(IX 877-80)

Fully aware of the connotations of supreme felicity conjoined to angelic purity which inhere in the term 'bliss', Eve designedly invokes it as a cover for her real, and far from selfless, intentions. But her cover is blown, not through any explicit comment on the part of the epic narrator, but through the intimations of bad faith and imposture arising from his fastening upon her, just a few lines later, the attributive 'blithe', 'bliss's' desacralized cognate, and an unambiguous marker of fallenness throughout the epic (v. supra): "Thus Eve with countenance **blithe** her story told..." (IX 886).

While, in the above example, the epic narrator is seen to play off against each other the kindred terms 'bliss' and 'blithe', more to the purpose, having regard to the present enquiry's 'brief', are the instances where he plays off against one another the key words represented in its title, for when that happens it bears witness to a conscious intention on Milton's part to distinguish among

them; it is the moment when the epic poet's self-conscious programme of differentiated and hierarchized keyword-use comes fully into view. Moreover, because of the circumstantial detail accompanying the playing-off process, pointers emerge as to how the terms in play should be discriminated - what it is that each of them gestures towards.

Now, just such an instance of playing-off, involving the signifiers 'bliss' and 'delight', occurs in Book VIII, in the context of a comparison Adam frames between his conjugal felicity and everything else in his experience: after giving Raphael an account of his very brief life-history, singling out his marriage to Eve as its high point, Adam brings his narrative to a close with these words:

Thus I have told thee all my state, and brought
My story to the sum of earthly **bliss**
Which I enjoy... (521-23)

Then, turning analytical, he (read, Milton) plays off his 'bliss' as Eve's spouse against mere 'delight':

...and must confess to find
In all things else **delight** indeed, but such
As used or not, works in the mind no change,
Nor vehement desire, these delicacies
I mean of taste, sight, smell, herbs, fruits, and
flowers,
Walks, and the melody of birds... (523-28)

The gist of the distinction being aimed at is readily enough discerned: 'bliss' implies an exalted, inward, totally fulfilling condition; 'delight', bound up with the activity of the senses and with objects of sense, gestures

towards the external, the earthly. But that is not the end of the story. For worthy of remark is the fact that in the last-quoted passage all the senses are listed, save for that of touch, in Renaissance thought considered the lowest of the five because of the necessity of actual contact with its object (in contrast to sight and hearing which, performing their office without physical contact, accordingly ranked highest (Kermode 1961:84)). However, in the lines immediately following, Adam makes good the earlier omission, invoking the sense of touch in an interesting context:

...but here [in the relationship with Eve]
Far otherwise, transported I behold,
Transported **touch**... (528-30)

Touch, then, 'transports' Adam - that is, it lifts him into an ecstasy (Fowler (ed.) 843) which, as he is unfallen, has to be imitative of the angels' ecstasy, hence innocent, chaste, unlibidinous. In a word, what Adam experiences when he touches Eve is angelic bliss. It is evident, therefore, that in the context of prelapsarian love and lovemaking the sense of touch is endowed with a value quite different from the abject one that is its lot in a postlapsarian setting. While not decarnalized, touch is nonetheless sublimed, becoming, under the influence of a different dispensation, a paradisaic one, the begetter of sensations and feelings which, however much Raphael may frown on them, are yet, in their purity, in their registration of 'delight' unmixed with 'voluptuousness', of a different order altogether from the insatiable,

flagrantly sensual and, in the end, self-cozening impulses, urges and drives that they are destined to turn into after the Fall.

* * * *

There remain only three occurrences of 'bliss' in the epic that have still to be accounted for, and they are quite different from all the others in having to do neither with Heaven, nor with the earthly paradise viewed as its similitude, nor with Adam and Eve's relationship, but rather with the villains of the piece. We come upon the first of these apparently wayward uses of 'bliss' in Book II, where the word falls from Sin's lips during her colloquy with her "father" and "author", Satan, at Hell's Gate:

...Thou wilt bring me soon
To that new world of light and **bliss**, among
The gods who live at ease, where I shall reign
At thy right hand voluptuous...
...without end. (866-70)

The next 'rogue' use of the term occurs when Satan commissions his "offspring dear" (X 349), Sin and Death, to descend to Paradise and there to "dwell and reign in **bliss**", exercising "[d]ominion.../ Chiefly on man, sole lord of all declared..." (X 399-401). Finally, after boastfully acquainting his "associate powers" (X 395), the fallen angels, with the good tidings of his success in bringing about the ruin of mankind, Satan, speaking his last words in the poem, thus charges them:

...Ye have the account
Of my performance: what remains, ye gods,

But up and enter now into full **bliss**. (X 501-3)

Nothing falls wider of the mark than to conclude that because in a few instances Milton brings 'bliss' to bear on referents other than Heaven (or its simulacra), he somehow stands convicted of using that signifier carelessly, haphazardly or inconsistently. That this is a false conclusion is due not to the 'inconsistent' usages being so few but to their not really being inconsistent at all, for what appear to be instances of anomalous usage are actually instances of 'bliss' being deployed with a high degree of purposiveness in focussed pursuit of a determinate and specific goal, that of the special effect. Consequently, far from placing a question mark over the postulate that Milton never uses keywords haphazardly or inconsistently in *Paradise Lost*, the three apparently deviant occurrences of 'bliss' serve in the end only to strengthen it. At the same time, the very different use to which they are put functions, by means of contrast, to thrust into relief the other forty three occurrences of 'bliss'/'blissful'⁴⁰ that are undeviatingly and systematically assigned to their right and natural habitat, the realm of Heaven (or its similitudes).

What special effect, then, are the three 'deviant' uses of 'bliss' meant to achieve? The answer is, the effect of parody. *Paradise Lost* is criss-crossed by entire networks of parodic mimicry - verbal, thematic, diegetic -

⁴⁰ The importance Milton attached to 'bliss' as a keyword may be gauged from the fact that in 25 of its 38 occurrences in the epic, it occupies the commanding, 'high-profile' terminal position in the poetic line.

which Isabel Rivers sees as expressive of its author's "structural wit" (in Broadbent (1973) 102). Of these networks the most important is the one involving the infernal powers' mimicry of the Heavenly order (v. chapter I), and it is in this context that 'bliss' does duty as a special-effects device.

In the first of the instances remarked above, 'bliss' contributes importantly to a diabolical parody of the Nicene creed which, in its unperverted form, affirms the eternal reign of Christ in bliss at the Father's right hand (Fowler (ed.) 547). The second 'exhibit', Satan's charge to Sin and Death, parodies God's charge to Adam to exercise dominion over the earth and its creatures (VII 530-34). God's words to Adam, framed as a blessing for abundant life, are purloined by Satan who puts them to perverted use in formulating what amounts to a devilish anti-blessing for abundant death.

Forcing words to serve an unwonted (and often debased) purpose and/or forcing them into an unwonted (and often debased) context are the primary strategies of verbal parody, as Sin's perversion of the Nicene creed and Satan's of God's charge to Adam amply demonstrate, thereby contributing importantly to Milton's broader parodic purpose of projecting the Satan-Sin-Death triangle as a Hell-spawned anti-Trinity grotesquely caricaturing and impiously mimicking the words and acts of the real one. And it is precisely this kind of parodic mimicry that we see at work in the third of the special-effects passages where Satan, appropriating the mantle, manner and diction

of a saviour, expansively promises "full bliss" to his faithful ones. But the immediately ensuing events, in which that promise is greeted by a "dismal universal hiss" (X 508) from an audience metamorphosing into serpents in accordance with the divine sentence, make a mock of this would-be saviour and give the lie to his pretensions to divinity. Of the passage under discussion George M Muldrow remarks: "Milton intends that we recognize the parodic nature of Satan's...plan to lead his troops out of Hell" and into 'bliss'. As he is a "mock-saviour...[his] claim to provide 'full bliss' in a kingdom here and now is a parody of an action which can be achieved properly only by the Son at the Last Judgment" (99).

So the three apparently deviant occurrences of 'bliss' in the epic, which might have led us to suspect (if not to 'convict') Milton of carelessness, haphazardness or inconsistency in his handling of that term, are shown, upon examination, to be neither careless, nor haphazard, nor inconsistent but, on the contrary, to represent a highly self-conscious special use of the word designed to achieve a highly specific special effect, that of parody.⁴¹ The

⁴¹ Compared to the special effects other poets of the seventeenth century, or of earlier ones, achieve with 'bliss', Milton's, in *Paradise Lost*, are, on the whole, rather muted.

The most striking effects are achieved when the bliss-heaven nexus is invoked only in order to be transgressed. This nexus, which often finds expression in the commonplace 'heavenly bliss' (v. supra), ranks as a commanding paradigm of Renaissance thought, which is precisely what makes possible the release of special and, indeed, shock effects when it is tampered with.

The shock effect which seems, overall, to be the poets' favourite involves quite a serious level of transgression - decoupling 'bliss' from the beatific and spiritual Judæo-Christian Heaven and tethering it, still heavy with its beatific associations, to a very different kind of heaven, the erotic 'heaven' of sensual gratification. The result is a discontinuity, a jarring, arising from the clash between a numinous signifier and the fleshly context it is pitchforked into; and as the jarring is sensed by the reader to be more acute or less acute, so, in proportion, will be the shock-effect

sum of all, then, after a canvass that has taken account of

registered. Here are a couple of examples of the method in action; the first is taken from a mediæval poem in the Harley MS (suggesting a date of composition towards the end of the thirteenth century):

Those eyes have dealt me agonies;
Her curving brows have brought me **bliss**:
Her comely mouth a man might kiss
And be in **heaven**. (Anon., in Stone 204)

In his libertine poems John Donne often and deliberately sets out to shock, and so it comes as no surprise to find the speaker of Elegy 12 ("Nature's lay idiot") hijacking the adjective 'blissful' and blasphemously (or all but) forcing it to subserve a vision of love made in a sensualist's Eden: addressing his female auditor, the speaker assures her that he has "with amorous delicacies/ Refined thee into a **blissful** paradise" (23-24).

Another realm where a shock effect accompanies the forcible intromission of the signifier 'bliss' is that of earthly political ambition, the desire for earthly sway. In this connection the author to refer to is Christopher Marlowe who even more than Donne likes to test the limits. The way in which Marlowe repeatedly yokes the word 'bliss' to earthly ambitions grandiose or base, or both, leads in several of the plays to blasphemous or near-blasphemous utterances that may indeed be a camouflaged expression of the author's reputed atheism. At the opening of *Edward II*, Gaveston, invited by the newly-crowned Edward to return from exile, crows:

Ah, words that make me surfeit with delight;
What greater **bliss** can hap to Gaveston
Than live and be the favourite of a king?
(I,i,3-5)

In *Tamburlaine the Great* the audacity of utterance is even more marked; in the following extract the speaker is Tamburlaine himself:

The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown
....
Wills us to wear ourselves and never rest,
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That **perfect bliss** and **sole felicity**,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.
(II,vii,12; 26-29)

When Tamburlaine's rhetoric, in its gathering crescendo, reaches the line "That perfect bliss and sole felicity", every educated reader or playgoer of the day would have expected the next line to contain a reference to heaven, owing to the commanding status of the bliss-heaven nexus. Marlowe deliberately and provokingly sabotages that expectation as he caps Tamburlaine's speech with the words "The sweet fruition of an **earthly** crown", words, says Jonathan Bate, that "constitute one of Tamburlaine's most magnificent blasphemies" (117).

On the few occasions in the epic that Milton uses 'bliss' to achieve a special effect, he indisputably succeeds in his aim: through what amounts to a technique of defamiliarization, he engineers a reconceptualization of that signifier, jolting us into seeing it as a vehicle of parody. He disarranges perspectives and thought-lines, compelling their reconfiguration in ways reflective of the unexpected turns 'bliss' takes as it performs its parodic office. These are considerable successes. But in *their* handling of 'bliss' for special effect, Donne and Marlowe are willing to go further than Milton in destabilizing expectations and in reordering perceptions.

every occurrence of 'bliss'/'blissful' in the text of *Paradise Lost*, is that there exists not a single instance of its use which contradicts the thesis that Milton self-consciously, systematically and selectively refers this signifier to the organizational realm of Heaven (or its simulacra).

III

'DELIGHT'

Let us continue our safari with a visit to a Garden where all the wild life is tame, where all the food is organic and natural (just as the language is), where the rose has no thorn, the spring no end, the inhabitants no clothes, and where neither death nor taxes cast a shadow over delight in its fulness.

The Garden is the one planted by God himself in the East of Eden (IV 209-10), and its character is expressed in its name for, as previously noted, the phrase Garden of Eden means, literally, 'garden of delight' (Hebrew *eden* = 'delight'). It is probable that the etymological connection between 'Eden' and 'delight', of which Milton, with his knowledge of Hebrew, was surely aware, played a rôle in the intimate link between the two that he develops in the course of the epic. But supposing that were not the case, the poet's linking of 'delight' to the Edenic Garden and the prelapsarian condition could as readily be accounted for in terms of a long-standing tradition connecting the terrestrial paradise with 'delight'.¹

¹ The researches of Josephine Miles suggest that around the middle of the seventeenth century 'delight' started coming into greater favour among English poets (1974:44-45). It may be that this development contributed in some way to Milton's partiality to that signifier. Both 'delight' and 'pleasure' (though not 'bliss') rank among the 260

Reflecting this tradition in a straightforwardly literal way, Du Bartas, as englished by Sylvester (*Du Bartas His Divine Weekes and Workes*, 1608), offers a simple translation of the Hebrew phrase *gan eden*: "Yet (over-curious) question not the site,²/ Where God did plant his **Garden of delight...**" (in Kirkconnell 63). Joost van den Vondel, the 'Dutch Milton', does the same in his *Adam in Ballingschap* (*Adam in Exile*) of 1664: "We go, devoid of hope of e'er again/ Beholding thee, O **Garden of Delight!**" (in Kirkconnell 479). Likewise the Reverend Samuel Purchas in *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1613): "this place [the Garden of Eden]..., a Paradise and **Garden of delights...**" (18); then, a few pages later, Purchas speaks of "our first Parents...**delighting** themselves in the enamelled walkes of their **delightfull garden**" (25). And Hugo Grotius, the celebrated Dutch jurist (whom Milton visited in Paris in 1638), alludes, in his youthful Latin drama, *Adamus Exul* (1601) - of which there is many a reminiscence in *Paradise Lost* (Kirkconnell 584-85) - to *deliciae Hedenis*, 'the **delights** of Eden' (ibid. 139).

Seventeenth-century travellers, setting eyes upon landscapes and cities for describing the choiceness of which the imagined earthly paradise was alone felt to

most frequently used words in English poetry, according to Miles (1960:49,52,62-69).

² Cf. *Paradise Lost* VII 120-30 and VIII 167-78. The youthful Milton is known to have read and admired Du Bartas's poem in Sylvester's translation. There are not a few echoes of it in *Paradise Lost*, as well as two word-for-word borrowings (v. Kirkconnell 587-88).

provide an adequate comparison, appear to gravitate towards the signifier 'delight' within the context of an invocation of the paradisaal Garden. Thus Thomas Coryate on Mantua:

Truely the view of this most sweet **Paradise**, this *domicilium Venerum et Charitum* did even so ravish my senses...with such inward **delight** that I said unto my selfe, this is the Citie which of all other places in the world, I would wish to make my habitation in... (*Coryats Crudities* [1611], in Chard 52)

In like manner, in *An Itinerary...* (1617), Fynes Moryson, searching for utterance capable of doing justice to the charms of Capua, fastens on the terms 'delight' and 'Paradise', treating them virtually as correlates:

The Capuan **delights**...are knowne to all the World. This Province is an earthly **Paradise**, where *Bacchus* and *Ceres* strive for principallitie. (in Chard 61)

The mention of Bacchus and Ceres puts us in mind of the Edenic Garden's pagan counterpart, Elysium, the appeal to which, like the appeal to the Judæo-Christian Eden, is accompanied not seldom by references to 'delight', as evidenced, for example, in Michael Drayton's *The Description of Elizium* (1630): "A **Paradice** on earth is found,/ Though farre from vulgar sight,/...Where, in **Delights** that never fade,/ The Muses lulled be..." (*Works*, III 248). Similarly, in the address "To the Reader" prefacing his *Herball*, John Gerard writes:

Whither did the Poets hunt for their sincere **delights**, but into the gardens of *Alcinous*, of *Adonis*, and the Orchards of the Hesperides? Where did they dreame that heaven should be, but in the pleasant garden of Elysium?³ (5)

³ In speaking of gardens, Gerard can hardly shake himself free of the word 'delight'. Consider these lines from the Epistle Dedicatory:

In linking 'delight' to the earthly paradise, Milton places himself squarely in the tradition here adumbrated, while the linkage itself, when it comes into play, serves to signal that the Garden is being conceived of in its own terms rather than as a similitude of Heaven (in which context the poet enlists the term 'bliss').

In examining Milton's portrayal of the Edenic Garden under the aspect of 'delight', I propose to include within the compass of that signifier the terms 'delicious' and 'delectable', whose Latin etymologies make them cognate with 'delight' both lexically and ideationally. That allowed, the following examples are to the purpose:

So on he [Satan] fares, and to the border comes,
Of Eden, where **delicious** Paradise...
(IV 131-32)

...and this **delicious** place [the Garden]
For us [Adam and Eve] too large... (IV 729-30)

[The Edenic Garden] Spot more **delicious** than
those gardens feigned
Or of revived Adonis, or renowned
Alcinous... (IX 439-41)

...did I solicit thee [cries a despairing Adam to
his Maker after the Fall]
From darkness to promote me, or here place
In this **delicious** garden? (X 744-46)

He [God] brought thee into this **delicious** grove,
This garden, planted with the trees of God,
Delectable both to behold and taste...

...if **delight** may provoke mens labor, what greater **delight** is there than to behold the earth apparelled with plants, as with a robe of embroidered worke, set with Orient pearles and garnished with great diversitie of rare and costly jewels? ...But these **delights** are in the outward senses: the principal **delight** is in the mind, singularly enriched with the knowledge of these visible things, setting forth to us the invisible wisdome and admirable workmanship of Almighty God. (1)

The last-quoted item makes explicit what the preceding ones only imply, namely, that the delightfulness of the Garden is in part - in large part - a matter of sensuous gratification. Lending support to this claim is a passage already brought forward in the previous chapter, in which 'delight' is played off against 'bliss': while 'bliss' points to a higher order of spiritual exaltation, 'delight' connotes lesser satisfactions, meaning sensuous ones; hence, by comparison with his conjugal 'bliss', Adam

...confess[es] to find
 In all thing else **delight** indeed, but such
 As used or not, works in the mind no change,
 Nor vehement desire, these delicacies
 I mean of taste, sight, smell, herbs, fruits, and
 flowers,
 Walks, and the melody of birds... (VIII 523-28)

Enforcing the same point are the lines describing Satan's bird's-eye view of the Garden: perched on the highest tree "like a cormorant" (IV 196), he sees beneath him "To all **delight** of human **sense** exposed/ In narrow room nature's whole wealth..." (206-7). As Kermode remarks: "...for Milton the joy of Paradise is very much a matter of the senses" (1960:103). Developing his argument, Kermode brings under inspection the Authorized Version's rendering of two verses in *Genesis*, chapter II, that make reference to the Garden: verse 8, which reads "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden..."; and verse 15: "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it". In contrast to the rendering of the King James Version, Latin translations

prefer to draw out the *meaning* of 'Eden', rather than just state the name (v. Leonard 277-79); hence, the Vulgate's reading of 'Eden' in *Genesis* 2:8 is *paradisum voluptatis* ('paradise of pleasure'), while an alternative Latin version renders the phrase 'into the garden of Eden' (2:15) as *in paradiso deliciarum* ('into a paradise of [sensory] delight[s]'). Concludes Kermode: "Milton's Paradise is that of the Latin version; in it, humanity without guilt is 'to all delight of human sense expos'd'" (1960:103).

But humankind is not alone in being taken with the Garden's sensuous delights; Satan is too. Thus it is that in beholding "all kind/ Of living creatures new to sight and strange" (IV 286-87), he beholds "all **delight**" (286) - the two categories are really one. However, because of the furnace of envy, hate, spite and resentment burning inside him, he beholds delight "undelight[ly]" (286). On his return trip to Eden, Satan speaks of 'delight' in his own voice (in the preceding example the voice is the epic narrator's), and on this occasion the word has to do not so much with the Garden's intrinsic beauties as with his response to them:

With what **delight** could I have walked thee round,
If I could joy in aught, sweet interchange
Of hill, and valley, rivers, woods and plains,
Now land, now sea, and shores with forest
crowned,
Rocks, dens, and caves... (IX 114-18)

This is an interesting utterance, not least because it raises the question of how an 'unfallen' word like 'delight' can be permitted to pass the lips of so miscreant

a creature as the Archfiend. To begin with, though delight is no longer Satan's to enjoy, he can still conceive of it (as he can still conceive of 'bliss': v. chapter II), for having once savoured it, he knows what it is. Second - and more to the purpose - the grammatical construction of his utterance compels our attention: its subjunctive and conditional structure clearly marks it as a hypothetical statement reflecting the speaker's recognition that if, once, before he fell, he could have circumambulated the Garden 'with...delight', that is not now possible for him because he is no longer able to 'joy in aught'. In other words, Satan at one and the same time realizes that while taking delight in the Garden is possible, it is not possible for *him*, not any more - and herein lies the source of the considerable poignancy with which his words are tinged. Once the Adversary returns from his hypothetical projection to the realities of the present (reflected in a return to the present tense), although he continues to gaze upon delights, because he views them through the lens of his fallenness, he views them perforce as 'pleasures':

...and the more I see
Pleasures about me, so much more I feel
Torment within me... (119-21)

So here again we come upon one of those important and instructive passages in which, by playing off 'delight' against 'pleasure', Milton signals to us that the two terms are not to be thought of as equivalents, that their self-conscious juxtaposition bears witness to a purposeful

intention to distinguish between them hierarchically, thematically and organizationally.

Sensuous delight is awakened not just by the Garden *per se*, but also by things said and/or heard within its confines by beings human or angelic. The sense of hearing is exquisitely gratified in the Garden:

...Thy words [says Adam to Raphael]
Attentive, and with more **delighted** ear,
Divine instructor, I have heard, than when
Cherubic songs by night from neighbouring hills
Aerial music send... (V 544-48)

Later, at the beginning of Book VIII, Adam again uses the word 'delight' to describe his response to Raphael's account of the Creation still ringing spell-bindingly in his ears (1-2). He thanks the "divine/ Historian" (6-7) for having "vouchsafed/ ...to relate/ Things else by me unsearchable, now **heard/ With...delight...**" (8-11). When, shortly hereafter, in deference to Adam's request, Raphael launches into another lecture, Eve rises to leave, not (as the epic narrator hastens to assure us) because "she [is] not...with such discourse/ **Delighted**, or not capable her ear/ Of what was high" (VIII 48-50), but because she prefers to hear a digest of the archangel's disquisition from her husband later. Finally, after the Fall, Adam casts his mind back to a better time, remembering the "voice once **heard/ Delightfully** [enjoining him to] *Increase and multiply...*" (X 729-30).

We noted above that Satan's Fall does not prevent him from knowing what 'delight' is, or from invoking that term.

In like manner, Adam, though fallen, remains fully capable of calling to mind past delight and of invoking that signifier, as he does here. That he is able to remember past delight is in truth less a source of gratification than of anguish (as it also is for Satan), for it serves only to focus attention on what is lost forever: "O voice **once** heard/ delightfully..." carries the clear implication that Adam does not expect ever again to hear God's voice - not 'delightfully', anyhow.

The sense of sight, no less than that of hearing, is abundantly gratified in the Garden - often within the context of 'delight'. We have already noticed the allusion to "This garden, planted with the trees of God,/ **Delectable** both to **behold** and taste..." (VII 538-39); however, the chief source of visual delight in prelapsarian Eden is Eve's beauty. Raphael tells Adam that Eve has been "Made so adorn[ed with beauty] for thy **delight**..." (VIII 575), and the way her beauty is elsewhere in the text linked to Adam's delight on a cause-effect basis bears out Raphael's contention: "...he [Adam] in **delight**/ Both of her beauty and submissive charms/ Smiled with superior love..." (IV 497-99). And more evocatively: fixing his gaze upon his wife setting off to garden on her own, surpassing in "goddess-like deport" (IX 389) the immortal Diana, Adam "Her long with ardent look his eye pursued/ **Delighted**..." (397-98). Because the operative context is a prelapsarian one, in consequence of which "Love unlibidinous reign[s]"

in our First Parents' hearts (V 449), we have so far to suspend disbelief (fallen readers that we are) as to accept that Adam's 'ardent' delight at this juncture is somehow a purely sensory, and therefore innocent, response⁴ rather than a lasciviously sensual one of the kind that comes to the fore after the Fall when, "inflame[d]" (IX 1031), he exhibits a domineering and lustful "**ardour** to enjoy" Eve (1032).

When Adam's frankness in confessing to Raphael his susceptibility to Eve's beauty succeeds only in calling down on his head the archangel's admonition against becoming mired in "carnal pleasure" (VIII 593), our First Father, "half abashed" (595), changes tack, claiming now that neither his wife's beauty ("her outside formed so fair"(596)), nor the satisfactions of marital sex ("nor aught/ In procreation common to all kinds"(596-97))

So much **delights** me as those graceful acts,
Those thousand decencies that daily flow
From all her words and actions mixed with love
And sweet compliance... (600-3)
Adam is not alone in being ravished by Eve's beauty;

Satan is too, and his subjection to it, though brief, is

⁴ Adam's response gains in credibility when inserted into the context of Plato's *Symposium* which sets forth the philosopher's theory of love. In terms of that theory it is possible to place a chaste construction on Adam's 'ardent look' by interpreting it as a Platonic ardour of the mind - the very phrase, indeed, that Ben Jonson presses into service in the course of his accurate précis of Plato's standpoint in *The New Inn* (1629):

Love: [Love] is a flame and **ardour of the mind**,
...
Transfers the lover into the loved.
...
Love is a spiritual coupling of two souls,
So much the more excellent, as it least relates
Unto the body... (III,ii,114-25)

linked in an interesting way to 'delight'. Alluded to is one of the poem's dramatic high-points, the episode in which the Archfiend is momentarily abstracted from himself by the sight of Eve's grace and beauty before being recalled to his baleful purpose. What imparts point and instructiveness to an event in itself brief and small in scale is the fact that it unfolds in terms of the playing off of 'delight' and 'pleasure' against each other (in a manner reminiscent of the process at work in the episode discussed above where Satan's shift from hypothetical self-projection to the realities of his situation goes hand in hand with a shift from 'delight' to 'pleasure'). In the present instance, the action begins with the Adversary's gaze fixed on the patch of ground where Eve is gardening, and as what he beholds is perceived through the lens of his fallenness, the highest satisfaction he is able to derive from the sight is 'pleasure': "Such **pleasure** took the serpent to behold/ This flowery plat, the sweet recess of Eve..." (IX 455-56). Then Satan turns his gaze upon Eve herself, and he is ravished (quite literally, the word 'ravish' going back ultimately to Latin *rapere* - to snatch; Satan is snatched out of himself)⁵:

...her heavenly form
Angelic, but more soft, and feminine,
Her graceful innocence, her every air
Of gesture or least action overawed
His malice, and with rapine sweet bereaved

⁵ Cf. the spell cast on Comus by the "divine enchanting **ravishment**" (line 244) of the Lady's song. Turner remarks that when Satan "catches sight of Eve in Book IX...he becomes a momentary romance hero, struck by the *coup de foudre*..." (261).

His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
That space the evil one abstracted stood
From his own evil, and for the time remained
Stupidly good... (457-65)

So Satan, momentarily taken out of himself, becomes 'stupidly good'. Milton is here using 'stupidly' in an archaic 'etymological' sense connotative of stupefaction (Latin *stupidus*, from *stupere*, to be stunned, stupefied; cf. Brooks 341-42). In other words, Satan, momentarily stupefied, becomes 'good' - that is to say, he momentarily stops being himself, stops being Satan, the 'Evil One'; and in that privileged instant, when his fallenness and balefulness are in abeyance, so to speak, he is, as the text reports, vouchsafed 'delight'.⁶ But very soon he is recalled to himself and to his malignant purpose, and when that happens the text reverts, significantly, to the term 'pleasure':

But the hot hell that always in him burns,
Though in mid heaven, soon ended his **delight**,
And tortures him now more, the more he sees
Of **pleasure** not for him ordained... (467-70)

In playing off 'delight' against 'pleasure' as he does in this episode, Milton brings plainly into view his conscious intention to discriminate between the two keywords through their selective referral to different organizational-thematic realms, 'delight' being reserved for the prelapsarian condition, 'pleasure' (in its unfavourable sense) for the fallen one.

⁶ Because Satan's fallenness is here in abeyance, this episode does not contradict the 'rule' that the signifier 'delight' is not predicated by the epic poet of already-fallen creatures (save when he seeks to achieve special/shock effects).

'Delight' and 'pleasure' are again played off against each other later in the epic, once more within the context of the visual sense. In Book XI the archangel Michael reveals future events to Adam through a succession of animated tableaux whose import he consistently misinterprets; and it then becomes Michael's (and, behind him, Milton's) business to correct his faulty understanding. In one of the tableaux offered to Adam's gaze comely young men and women are shown courting, marrying, and then banqueting and dancing. Having as yet no frame of reference into which to fit what he beholds other than a prelapsarian one, it is only natural that Adam should see in this spectacle of marriage and rejoicing an image of the prelapsarian condition; and, seeing it thus, should link it to 'delight':

Such happy interview and fair event
Of love and youth not lost, songs, garlands,
flowers,
And charming symphonies attached the heart
Of Adam, soon inclined to admit **delight**,
The bent of nature; which he thus expressed.
True opener of mine eyes, prime angel blest,
Much better seems this vision, and more hope
Of peaceful days portends, than those two past;
Those were of hate and death, or pain much worse,
Here nature seems fulfilled in all her ends.
(XI 593-602)

It is Michael's function to point out to Adam that he has been deceived by the evidence of his eyes - that what he took to be a scene of delight was simply a sensual pleasure-revel: "To whom thus Michael. Judge not what is best/ By **pleasure**, though to nature seeming meet..." (603-4). In effect, Michael is saying to his pupil: 'I want you

to know *that* you should distinguish between - as I hope to teach you *how* to distinguish between - delight and pleasure'. And Milton is implicitly addressing the same message to the readers of his epic.⁷

The sense of taste is fraught in *Paradise Lost* with fateful associations, and it is therefore not surprising that its connection with 'delight' occurs within the context of the Fall. As Eve tastes of the interdicted fruit, the epic narrator furnishes the following commentary:

...Eve
Intent now wholly on her taste, naught else
Regarded, such **delight** till then, as seemed,
In fruit she never tasted... (IX 785-88)

How can it be that the narrator ascribes 'delight' to Eve at the very instant of her Fall? Yet the ascription is both credible and appropriate: Eve has, after all, no yardstick against which to measure the savour of the forbidden fruit other than the taste of the paradisaical food which up to now has been her and Adam's staple diet - and he has already linked the food of Paradise to 'delight':

...Heavenly stranger [says he to Raphael], please
to taste
These bounties which our nourisher, from whom
All perfect good unmeasured out, descends,
To us for **food** and for **delight** hath caused
The earth to yield... (V 397-401)
So if the taste of the interdicted fruit on Eve's palate
surpasses anything she previously tasted in Paradise, it

⁷ One of its twentieth-century readers, James Joyce, in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode of *Ulysses*, has Stephen Dedalus frame the kind of distinction between the two signifiers that Milton would surely have approved: "Twenty years he [Shakespeare] dallied there [in London]

must, at the very least, qualify as 'delightful' - and its characterization as such by the epic narrator is, accordingly, well-aimed and justifiable. But the epic narrator in the passage under discussion is playing a double game - meaning, that he is juggling with a double perspective: on the one hand, he offers an accurate account of what Eve subjectively experiences, her sensation of delight; on the other, from the elevated vantage point of his omniscience, he suspends a question mark over that experience by planting in the very line in which 'delight' appears the undercutting phrase 'as seemed', suggesting thereby that Eve's delight in the fruit, while real enough for *her*, is actually more fancied than real when evaluated from the standpoint of omniscience.

When Adam in his turn partakes of the interdicted fruit, 'delight' once again comes into the picture: "Much pleasure have we lost, while we abstained/ From this **delightful** fruit, nor known till now/ True relish, tasting..." (IX 1022-24), says he, with unseemly jauntiness. Milton's putting the word 'delightful' in Adam's mouth at the very moment of his Fall can be defended on the same grounds as his ascription of 'delight' to Eve at the very moment of hers: like her, he has no standard against which to assess the unrivalled taste of the fatal fruit other than the taste of the food of Paradise which he has already judged to be delightful. And there is a

between conjugal love and its **chaste delights** and scortatory love and its **foul pleasures**" (165).

further parallel between the poet's management of this episode and the one describing Eve's tasting: here, as there, a double perspective is at work, but in the episode involving Adam greater subtlety is required because as his reference to the 'delightful fruit' forms part of an address in direct speech, preventing the epic narrator from intervening (except clumsily) to furnish authoritative commentary, indirect means - the ways of stealth - have to be enlisted. This Milton does, calculatedly planting the signifier 'pleasure' in Adam's utterance - "Much **pleasure** have we lost..." - as a counterweight to 'delightful'. In other words, here is the epic poet once again playing off 'delight' and 'pleasure' against each other. On this occasion, 'delight' has reference to Adam's sensory understanding, while 'pleasure' serves as a marker of his condition, his *fallen* condition. If his use of the 'unfallen' signifier 'delightful' in alluding to the fruit shows that his sensory frame of reference is still prelapsarian, his letting slip the word 'pleasure' (under the epic poet's unseen direction) reveals that his *condition* is already postlapsarian, whether he realizes it or not. 'Pleasure' is the 'giveaway' word that 'convicts' Adam of fallenness from his own lips. And if we would know what it is that his understanding of 'pleasure' embraces, we have only to cast our eyes a little way up the page to lines entrusted to the epic narrator, and therefore bearing the stamp of authority:

Carnal desire inflaming, he on Eve

Began to cast lascivious eyes, she him
As wantonly repaid; in lust they burn...
(IX 1013-15)

It is hard to imagine anything more postlapsarian than this (the more so when set against the 'unlibidinous' quality of Adam and Eve's love-making before the Fall).

We saw in the previous chapter how, in a paradisaical context, the sense of touch is sublimed: speaking to the archangel Raphael of his love for Eve, Adam characterizes touch as the gateway to ecstatic bliss (VIII 528-530). Raphael, as we know, greets Adam's effusion not with sympathy but with an admonitory lecture containing this riposte to his interlocutor's commendation of touch as propitious to the ecstasies of love:

But if the sense of touch whereby mankind
Is propagated seem such dear **delight**
Beyond all other, think the same vouchsafed
To cattle and each beast... (VIII 579-82)

Raphael's words do not merely betray his distaste for Adam's theory of touch, which he evidently appraises from the lofty vantage-point of angelic commingling, they set it on its head: whereas, for Adam, touch serves as a means of raising man to the level of the angels, for Raphael it is a means of dragging him down to the level of the beasts (581-82). So the archangel's 'brief' is to find a way of refuting the exalted (and, from his point of view, profoundly misguided) value Adam places on the sense of touch. (He has somehow to rectify Adam's understanding, much as his colleague Michael will seek to do in the concluding Books of the epic.) In pursuit of his purpose,

Raphael executes three distinct moves: first, he silently disallows Adam's association of the sense of touch with 'bliss' (VIII 521-33) - the most he is prepared to grant is 'delight' (and in a 'for-argument's-sake' spirit, at that). Second, he dangles a question-mark over that putative 'delight' by introducing into his statement of rebuttal the verb 'seem': "But if the sense of touch.../...**seem** such dear delight..." (579-80). The clear implication is that any 'delight' engendered by the sense of touch will be no more than illusory - mere 'seem[ing]' delight. Third, he calls to his aid the powerful weapon of irony: it is evident that the reference to 'such dear delight' is ironical (and perhaps sardonic as well), suggesting that the 'delight' Adam believes is engendered by the sense of touch is in fact nothing of the kind when viewed from the elevated vantage-point of angelic understanding; it follows, therefore, that Adam's conception of 'delight' is, in this particular, a deeply mistaken one, having nothing to do with what that term gestures towards in its capacity as an 'unfallen' signifier.⁸

While the Garden's fragrance is a principal contributor to its delight in a general way, on only one

⁸ To strip 'delight' of its prelapsarian connotations through ironic reversal and then to portray Adam as championing the reversed and vitiated version of that signifier is an essential element in Raphael's strategy of refutation. Why? Because he is concerned to drive home the point that although Adam is unfallen, his misguided valorization of the sense of touch has led him, without his realizing it, to embrace a perverted and fallen conception of delight. And it is precisely in order to enforce this point that the archangel in his statement of rebuttal sees fit to link 'delight' to the sense of touch visualized in its most repellent aspect as simply the copulation of brute beasts.

occasion is the Garden explicitly credited with conferring delight through gratification of the sense of smell:

...and of pure now purer air
Meets his [Satan's] approach, and to the heart
inspires
Vernal **delight** and joy, able to drive
All sadness but despair...⁹ (IV 153-56)

Most of the references to 'delight' in *Paradise Lost* occur in the context of sensory responses awakened in Adam and Eve (and in Satan too, for that matter) by the Garden as such, by the angelic or divine beings who visit it, and by our First Parents' own attributes (Eve's beauty, for example). Adam and Eve were, however, created not only sensate, but also, in contradistinction to the animals, rational; and this attribute, of such importance in the epic's scheme of things, is on a couple of occasions associated with 'delight':

For not to irksome toil [says Adam to his wife],
but to **delight**
He [God] made us, and **delight** to **reason** joined.
(IX 242-43)

Among unequals what society
Can sort, what harmony or true **delight**?
Which must be mutual, in proportion due
Given and received...
...
...of fellowship I [Adam] speak
Such as I seek, fit to participate
All **rational delight**... (VIII 383-91)

⁹ As Satan's 'sadness' is 'despair', the clear implication is that the delectable zephyr of 'vernal delight and joy' will not be able to drive out *his* 'sadness'. Hence Milton's careful and deliberate choice of the definite article 'the' in the locution "and to **the** heart inspires..." (= 'the heart' in general, anybody's 'heart'), rather than the pronoun 'his', which would suggest, misleadingly, that Satan's heart is capable of being inspired by 'delight' and 'joy'. While the Evil One, as we have already affirmed, is capable of recognizing 'delight' and 'joy' in others, that recognition goes hand in hand with the realization that they will never be his to savour - and that serves only to intensify his despair, as well as his resentment and rage.

Worthy of remark in the second quotation is the implied equivalence between 'true delight' and 'rational delight'.

We now consider the instances in which 'delight', as used of the Garden, carries no conspicuous sensory 'charge', being predicated of it (and of the undemanding tasks necessary to its upkeep) in a non-particularized, general way. Take, for example, Eve's reference to the Garden as "this **delightful** land", a reference occurring in both sections of the rhetorically elaborate love song she addresses to her spouse:

...pleasant the sun
When first on this **delightful** land he spreads
His orient beams... (IV 642-44)

And in the symmetrically-balanced answering segment, we encounter the same generalizing phraseology:

But neither breath of morn...
...nor rising sun
On this **delightful** land...
...
...without thee is sweet. (650-56)

Organized on much the same basis are the following instances, in the first of which, a half-aside spoken at, rather than to, Adam and Eve, Satan from his hiding-place unburdens himself with silky malice:

Ah gentle pair, ye little think how nigh
Your change approaches, when all these **delights**
[of the Garden]
Will vanish and deliver ye to woe...(IV 366-68)

In like manner, upon being arrested in the Garden, Satan views it, again in a non-particularized way, as a focal point of delight: "Lives there one who loves his pain?" he

enquires of his captor, the archangel Gabriel. "Who would not, finding way, break loose from hell,/...and soonest recompense dole with **delight**, which in this place I sought..." (IV 888-94).

The epic narrator, too, characterizes the Garden, in general terms, as Adam and Eve's "tendance and plantation for **delight**..." (IX 419). Likewise cast in general terms is his reference to the Creator's "fram[ing]/ All things [in the Garden] to man's **delightful** use..." (IV 691-92). This generalizing perspective finds an echo in these lines Adam addresses to his wife:

...Then let us not think hard
One easy prohibition, who enjoy
Free leave so large to all things else, and
choice
Unlimited of manifold **delights**:
But let us ever praise him, and extol
His bounty, following our **delightful** task
To prune these growing plants and tend these
flowers... (IV 432-38)

From this quotation, as well as preceding ones, it is evident that the Garden inspires delight in its occupants. But in an interesting reversal of the rule, Adam imagines Eve as being herself so completely an embodiment of delight as to breathe delight into the Garden; that is to say, she adds delight to the very source of delight: "...and into all things from her air inspired/ The spirit of love and amorous **delight**" (VIII 476-77). Compared to Eve thus exalted, everything else in his existence strikes Adam as paltry, trifling. And the word Milton presses into service

to stand for the 'lessness' of everything else relative to Eve is (not unexpectedly) 'pleasure':

She [Eve] disappeared, and left me dark, I waked
To find her, or for ever to deplore
Her loss, and other **pleasures** all abjure...
(478-80)

So here, yet again, we observe the epic poet with manifest deliberateness playing off 'delight' and 'pleasure' against each other.

Lending support to the claim advanced above that Adam views his wife as in herself an embodiment of delight (or, at the least, an inspirer of it) is the celebrated aubade at the beginning of Book V, in the course of which he describes her (again in a non-particularized way) as his 'delight'¹⁰:

...Awake
My fairest, my espoused, my latest found,
Heaven's last best gift, my ever new **delight**...
(17-19)

This characterization is poignantly echoed after the Fall when, following Eve's remorse for her rôle in it, Adam's "heart relented/ Towards her, his life so late and sole **delight**..." (X 940-41). The point of view here is retrospective ('so late'), and the poignancy arises from what that phrase implies, namely, that under the new

¹⁰ Eve thinks of Adam in the same way, though without bringing under contribution the signifier 'delight'. However, the iterative love-song she addresses to him (adverted to above), as well as her declaration near the end of the epic - "thou to me/ Art all things under heaven, all places thou" (XII 617-18) - makes her attitude perfectly clear. MacCaffrey is accordingly well justified in claiming that "Adam is Eden, in a very real sense, for Eve" (77) - though it would hit nearer the mark to say that he is her 'Eden' in a *literal* sense, for, to repeat a point already made, 'Eden', in its literal signification, connotes 'delight'.

postlapsarian dispensation that is about to take effect, Adam cannot ever again look to Eve to be for him the 'delight' she used to be before the cataclysm of the Fall supervened.

On a couple of occasions the term 'delight' is associated with, though not predicated of, regions other than, and beyond the confines of, the paradisaal Garden. The association in one instance is with planet earth as a whole:

...earth now
Seemed like to heaven, a seat where gods¹¹ might
dwell,
Or wander with **delight**... (VII 328-30)

In the other instance, 'delight' is connected, obliquely, with the whole of Creation:

For wonderful indeed are all his [God's] works
[declares the archangel Uriel],
Pleasant to know, and worthiest to be all
Had in remembrance always with **delight**...
(III 702-4)

"God almighty first planted a garden" (57). To these words, which open Bacon's essay "Of Gardens", we may add that God planted in that choice Garden two human beings equipped (as the brute beasts were not) with the sensory and intellectual capacity to respond with delight to the delightful stimuli all around them. And God in his turn responds to his Creation and, notably, to its "master work", man, "the end/ Of all yet done" (VII 505-6), with the same delight that Adam and Eve show in responding to their habitat or to each other:

And in their [the planets' and stars'] motions
harmony divine
So smooths her charming tones, that God's own ear
Listens **delighted**. (V 625-27)

...for God will deign
To visit oft the dwellings of just men
Delighted... (VII 569-71)

...such **delight** hath God in men
Obedient to his will, that he vouchsafes
Among them to set up his tabernacle...
(XII 245-47)

The parallel extends further still: even as Eve is
Adam's 'delight', so is mankind God's (both the signifier
'delight' and the way it is handled mirror each other in
the two settings):

Unspeakable desire to see, and know
All these his wondrous works, but chiefly man,
His [God's] chief **delight** and favour...
...
Hath brought me [Satan] from the choirs of
cherubim
Alone thus wandering. (III 663-67)

...behold in stead
Of us outcast, exiled, his new **delight**,
Mankind created, and for him this world.¹²
(IV 105-7)

Finally, the Father and the Son delight in each other,
much as Adam and Eve do:

O Son, in whom my soul hath chief **delight**,
Son of my bosom... (III 168-69)

¹¹ "...not pagan gods, of course", Knott hastens to assure us, "but angels and archangels" (50).

¹² That Satan is the source of these two statements which are spoken in a spirit of bitterness, reflecting his resentment at having been replaced in God's affections by a new favourite who has usurped "our room of bliss" (IV 359), does not necessarily impugn their credibility. It is perfectly possible for the Evil One objectively to recognize that man is God's new 'delight' and accurately to report that fact while at the same time resenting and bewailing it. In other words, there exist no grounds for inferring that when Satan refers to man as God's 'delight', he must be using that term ironically, disingenuously or mendaciously.

O Father, O supreme of heavenly thrones,
...
...this I my glory account
My exaltation, and my whole **delight**,
That thou in me well pleased, declar'st thy will
Fulfilled... (VI 723-29)

What shall we make of the epic poet's ascribing to God the human sensation of delight? Beyond that, what significance can we attribute to the fact that the poet's use of 'delight' as applied to the godhead mirrors its pattern of use as applied to Adam and Eve?

Once Milton decided that God would be a real actor in his epic poem (as he is not in any of the drafts of the Trinity College MS. of ca. 1640 which foreshadow it: v. Fowler (ed.) 419-21), rather than a remote, shadowy Being existing merely to be invoked or cited from time to time, he committed himself of necessity to an anthropomorphic representation of the godhead as the only way of rendering intelligible to human understanding the active rôle proposed for him in the unfolding of the poem's events. In these terms, the attribution to God of human emotions and sensations, including those, like delight and pleasure, which are shared in common with our First Parents, follows logically enough. But Milton goes beyond the minimum requirements of anthropomorphic verisimilitude in making God's delight so conspicuously mirror Adam and Eve's. So that in this particular it may be asserted that the poet creates his Creator in the image of His image - thereby ensuring that even when the signifier 'delight' is predicated of God, its special connection with our First

Parents and with the conditions of prelapsarian existence continues to hold good.

* * * *

Let us now enquire into causes. What are the factors that chiefly contribute to the paradisaal Garden's delightfulness? Thinking back to the preceding chapter we will recall that negative factors as well as positive ones play a rôle in bringing about the reign of bliss in Milton's Heaven. Meant by 'negative factors' are the passions (envy, pride, ambition) and the material objects (gold and jewels) whose absence (whether through expulsion, exclusion or omission) from the heavenly 'theatre of operations' renders that realm fit for the ascendancy of bliss. Similarly, 'negative factors' also play a rôle in facilitating the Garden's delightfulness. Referred to are the things whose *absence* from the Garden makes for the paramountcy of delight there. To elaborate: in 1613 Giambattista Andreini published his play *L'Adamo* (an 'analogue' of, and possible minor influence on, *Paradise Lost*), the setting of which is the earthly paradise. In his Preface to the work Andreini reflects upon some of the inconveniences attending the choice of the Fall as a theme and the paradisaal Garden as a setting:

...the composition must remain deprived of those poetic ornaments so dear to the Muses; deprived of the power to draw comparisons from implements of art introduced in the course of years, since in the time of the first man there was no such thing; deprived also of naming (at least while Adam speaks or discourse is held with him), for example, bows, arrows, hatchets, urns, knives, swords, spears, trumpets, drums, trophies,

banners, lists, hammers, torches, bellows, funeral piles, theatres, exchequers, infinite things of a like nature, introduced by the necessities of sin; ...deprived moreover of introducing points of history, sacred or profane, of relating fictions of fabulous deities, of rehearsing loves, furies, sports of hunting or fishing, triumphs, shipwrecks, conflagrations, enchantments, and things of a like nature, that are in truth the ornament and the soul of poetry. (in Raleigh 95-96)

Following this passage of quotation, Raleigh observes that "All these difficulties for Andreini's drama were difficulties also for Milton's poem" (96) - though through his sumptuous treatment of the Garden's natural beauties Milton skilfully masks the absence from it of 'those poetic ornaments so dear to the Muses' whose necessary exclusion from *L'Adamo* Andreini laments.¹³ That Milton's and Andreini's being obliged, for propriety's sake,¹⁴ to exclude from their respective Gardens so extensive an array

¹³ When Sir Philip Sidney penned these famous lines in his *Defence of Poesy*, he might almost have been prophetically envisioning Milton's consummate performance in the Garden sections of his epic:

Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden. (216)

¹⁴ Ever studious of the requirements of propriety, Milton carefully excludes from *Samson Agonistes* objects, allusions and descriptions that would run counter to his aim of imparting authenticity to that work's biblical-historical setting. Analyzing Milton's "significant omissions" in *Samson Agonistes*, Roy Flannagan calls attention to

what he leaves out or what he rejects from previous poetic devices or banks of allusion. He does not refer to the New Testament or to Christ at all, and he does not refer to classical mythology... Given that Samson was considered a type of Christ and that Hercules was his mythic parallel, Milton's restraint in not alluding to either explicitly is remarkable. Despite Samuel Johnson's accusation that Milton was anachronistic in using "Chalybean Steel" or "Alp [as] the general name of a mountain" (*Rambler* 140; 377), the dramatic poem is remarkably free of time-tied baggage. (793)

of postlapsarian artefacts, activities and allusions confronts them with 'difficulties' is doubtless true, but it is equally true (in *Paradise Lost*, anyhow) that the very exclusion of all that postlapsarian baggage from the Garden setting is precisely what makes room in it for delight to take root and thrive.¹⁵ For what could be more inimical to the reign of delight, with its prelapsarian intimations of naturalness, uncomplicatedness, buoyancy, freshness, ingenuousness, innocence and spontaneity than the encroaching presence of the material and intellectual productions of postlapsarian existence, all of them bearing the imprint of effortfulness, emulousness, artifice and complication.

Once the conditions making it possible in the first place for delight to flourish in Milton's Garden have been met through 'negative selection' (that is, exclusion), what are the positive factors that then come into play, delivering actual delight from the womb of possibility? As indicated in the previous chapter, there are four such factors - four main ones, anyhow: variety, dynamism, productivity and fragrance.

¹⁵ Conducive to the same end is the absence from Milton's Garden of other things as well, which do not feature on Andreini's list - for example, the absence of noxious plants and animals, the fact that artifice is shunned ("...not nice art/ In beds and curious knots, but nature boon...": IV 241-42), the fact that the Garden is not bedizened with jewels and precious metals, as were so many mediæval earthly paradises (v. Knott 33, Giamatti 71, Duncan 213, 232-33), and as, in *Paradise Lost*, Hell, Pandæmonium and Satan's palace in the north of Heaven are (v. I 537-39, 688-722; V 756-59). If anything bejewels the earthly paradise of Milton's epic, it is Nature, as evidenced particularly in the conjunction of the morning and evening stars (v. Leonard 249).

In speaking of the Edenic Garden's variety, the Reverend Samuel Purchas sees it as an attribute from which ramify others, also productive of delight:

...since the fall the earth is accursed, whereby many things are hurtful to mans nature, and in those which are wholesome there is not such **varietie** of kindes [as before the Fall], such plenty in each **variety**, such ease in getting our plenty, or such quality in what is gotten, in the degree of goodnesse and sweetnesse to the taste and nourishment... (17)

In a letter written to Lord Bathurst in 1719, Pope adverts to "the Paradise of God's own planting, which is expressly said to be planted with *all trees*" (II 14) [emphasis in original]. And among recent commentators John Dixon Hunt argues that in terms of the gardening theory of Milton's day, and even more so of the succeeding century, "a garden's paradisaic image required the display of *all possible variety of natural forms*" (86) [emphasis in original].

Not least among the many excellencies that Milton brings to the fore in his representation of the Garden is its variety, and his handling of this characteristic is very much in tune with the views enunciated in the above-quoted passages (none of which have reference to *Paradise Lost* specifically). In his treatment of the Garden's variety, Milton lays stress, as do the commentators cited above, on the qualities of amplitude (that is, variety virtually without limit) and of choiceness. Moreover, unlike his practice relative to the delight-inspiring attributes of dynamism, productivity and fragrance, the

poet explicitly predicates 'delight' of the Garden's variety (here, as before, the signifier 'delicious' is subsumed under the head of 'delight', as being etymologically cognate with it). Let us turn to the evidence:

...he who requires
From us no other service than to keep
This one, this easy charge, of all the trees
In Paradise that bear **delicious** fruit
So **various**, not to taste that only tree
Of knowledge...
...
...Then let us not think hard
One easy prohibition, who enjoy
Free leave so large to all things else, and
choice
Unlimited of **manifold delights**... (IV 419-35)

...though in heaven the trees
Of life ambrosial fruitage bear, and vines
Yield nectar [affirms Raphael]...

...
...yet God hath here [in the Garden]
Varied his bounty so with new **delights**,
As may compare with heaven... (V 426-32)

...thus was this place [the paradisal Garden]
A happy rural seat of **various** view;
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and
balm,
Others whose fruit burnished with golden rind
Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true,
If true, here only, and of **delicious** taste:
Betwixt them lawns...

...were interposed,
Or palmy hillock, or the flowery lap
Of some irriguous valley spread her store,
Flowers of **all** hue, and without thorn the rose:
Another side, umbrageous grotts and caves
Of cool recess...

...
...mean while murmuring waters fall
Down the slope hills, dispersed, or in a
lake...¹⁶ (IV 246-61)

¹⁶ This allusion, among others, to flowing water gives rise to an interesting investigation by Koehler into "the spell of water over Milton's imagination" (16), as well as into the possible real-world originals of the Miltonic Garden's water features (16-20).

These passages (in particular the last-quoted one) emphatically bear out not only Stein's sense "of great variety fulfilling itself [in the Edenic Garden] as a greater harmony" (64), but also Duncan's conclusion that "The garden's variety is ever present in the poet's vision and in the experience of the characters. What is seen seems only a suggestion of what is not seen" (225).

In her panoramic survey of earthly paradises, Ingrid G Daemmrich notes that while "Many texts fulfill our vision of paradise as synonymous with serene motionlessness" (110), a good number do not: for example, "Dante shows his cosmic *Paradiso* in constant motion..." (ibid. 111). No less does Milton in his representation of the Edenic Garden. As Elizabeth Sauer observes: "In his description of the garden the poet-narrator rejects the conventional representation of Eden as a *hortus conclusus*, a static bower of bliss, and offers instead a portrait of a fertile, regenerative garden that embodies 'In narrow room Nature's whole wealth...'" (114). So in Milton's Garden breezes blow, waters flow and plants grow - too profusely, if anything. The creative power that brought the Garden into being continues to animate it, so that Nature there "is perpetually fresh and growing...as if always in the first hour of existence; each morning the plants 'spring' [V 21] with new life from the unbelievably fertile soil. Even the flowers seem alive, not static or decorative" (Knott 37-38). And they seem most alive when Eve is nearby, for, having named them - even as Adam did the animals - her

association with the flowers of Paradise is especially intimate, so much so that in a manifestation of "pastoral hyperbole", as J B Leishman terms it (80), they salute her approach by drawing themselves erect, standing to attention, as it were: "...they at her coming sprung/ And touched by her fair tendance gladlier grew" (VIII 46-47).¹⁷

The creative force that breathes life and motion into all things - the "divine eros", in Hardison's phrase (163) - is before the Fall benignly powerful, never violent or destructive. It turns that way only after the Fall (and as a symptom thereof), taking the form of tempests and other perturbations of Nature, the most climacteric being the violent tilting of the earth by an angle of 23½ degrees from its previously perpendicular axis (X 651-707). But

¹⁷ Coined by Leishman, the phrase 'pastoral hyperbole' encompasses an ancient topos traceable as far back as Hesiod's *Theogony* (Leishman 225). The foundational idea of 'pastoral hyperbole' is the supposed ability of a human agent to exert a vitalizing influence upon 'inanimate' Nature. As the original idea evolved, the female of the species came increasingly to fill the rôle of human agent, while to the natural features (trees, flowers, breezes, and so forth) acted on by her, poets ascribed conventional patterns of behaviour expressive of their gladness at her approach or presence, and of their dejection at her departure. Milton's depiction of the flowers springing up at Eve's approach furnishes a clear instance of the formula: "the mistress caus[es] all things where she moves to flourish or to pay her homage" (Leishman 232). Exhibiting interesting similarities to Milton's lines (perhaps an influence on them?) are these from Nicholas Hookes's *Amanda* (published 1653):

Look at yon flower yonder, how it grows
Sensibly! How it opes its leaves and blowes,
Puts its best *Easter clothes* on, neat and gay!
Amanda's presence makes it *holy-day*:
Look how on tip-toe that fair *lilie* stands
To look on thee, and court thy whiter hands
To gather it! I saw in yonder croud
That *Tulip-bed*, of which *Dame-Flora's* proud,
A short dwarfe flower did enlarge its stalk,
And shoot an inch to see *Amanda* walk... (in Leishman 242)

(For a bravura display of 'pastoral hyperbole', operatic in intention and effect, see stanzas 83-88 of Marvell's *Upon Appleton House* - the stanzas in which the teen-aged Maria Fairfax holds Nature in thrall and is even credited with rewriting its laws.)

before these cataclysmic changes occur, the cosmic *élan vital* is in its action gentle and in its mode of operation presidingly infusive and diffusive:

...these soft fires [the stars]
Not only enlighten, but with kindly heat
Of various influence foment and warm,
Temper or nourish, or in part shed down
Their stellar virtue on all kinds that grow
On earth, made hereby apter to receive
Perfection from the sun's more potent ray.¹⁸
(IV 667-73)

The principal emblem of the fundamentally benign character of the creative current flowing through the paradisaal Garden is the coming-on of evening which "is throughout the poem directly associated with the beneficent creativeness in the universe", argues Dustin H Griffin (270). Evening in Paradise is "mild (IV, 647,654)...cool (X, 95), and, especially, grateful (IV, 647,654) - that is, pleasing" (ibid. 267). It is "not so much a balancing point", continues Griffin,

¹⁸ The theory Adam expounds in these lines is traced by Kester Svendsen "to encyclopædias such as the *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomew of England" (in Fowler (ed.) 651). Fowler himself hints at a connection with Neoplatonic astrology (652). Goodman, however ("Sway and Subjection..."), links Adam's disquisition (and passages comparable with it, for example III 583-86) to the Aristotelian theory of natural causation, as modified (that is, Christianized) by St Thomas Aquinas. The theory of natural causation, widely known during the Renaissance,

depended on the proposition that parts of nature were arranged in a hierarchy of active and passive agents. For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, the main active agents in nature were the celestial bodies, whose movements around the earth he considered to prompt all earthly generation and corruption. ...

By means of the distinction between active and passive agents of causation, nature as a whole became, for Aquinas, a series of interlocking tiers through which influence descended from higher agents to their subordinates [in]...relationships of sway and subjection... (in Mulryan 74-75)

as a process, not a stasis between day and night but a "grateful vicissitude" (VI, 8)...always in movement [emphasis in original]. It does not "fall" suddenly but approaches gradually: "the sweet approach of ev'n or morn" (III, 42); "Now came still evening on" (IV, 598); "sweet the coming on/ Of grateful ev'ning mild" (IV, 646); "Ev'ning now approach'd" (V, 627); indeed, at its most sublime, evening can even "rise":

And now on earth the seventh
Ev'ning arose in Eden, for the sun
Was set, and twilight from the east came
on,
Forerunning night. (VII, 581-84; see
also, V, 376)

The movement, the gradual change from light to dark, is itself "delectable", as Raphael says of evening in heaven (V, 629). Evening in Eden then becomes a kind of foretaste of heaven... (271)

Could anything be more conducive to delight than that!¹⁹

The Garden's productivity may be viewed as a particularized expression of its dynamism: the creative energy coursing through the terrestrial paradise flows into its plant life with spendthrift vigour, making for exuberant productivity - "nature boon/ Poured forth profuse on hill and dale and plain" (IV 242-43) - which Adam reads as a sign of God's active, loving goodness - whence the connection with 'delight':

...Heavenly stranger [says Adam to Raphael],
please to taste
These bounties which our nourisher, from whom
All **perfect good unmeasured out**, descends,
To us for food and for **delight** hath caused
The earth to yield... (V 397-401)

¹⁹ Describing Milton as "the greatest English poet of the evening" (259), Griffin points out that the eighteenth-century poet, William Collins, recognized and appreciated Milton's "evening ear" (*Ode on the Poetical Character* (ca. 1746), line 64).

While Campbell is in agreement with Adam in seeing in the paradisaical profuseness evidence of God's goodness (in McColgan and Durham 243), Lewalski sees in the same phenomenon evidence of a "surprising tendency to excess and disorder" (in Kranidas 89). Accordingly, while for Campbell the Garden is a zone of delight thanks (in part) to its stupendous productivity (its "authorized excess", in Stein's phrase (63)), for Lewalski it is a zone of delight despite that. A couple of the sources of the Garden's delightfulness which we have already noticed are drawn together in Duncan's summarizing conclusion that "In none of the other literary interpretations of paradise is Nature so strongly personified, so dynamic, and so lavish as in *Paradise Lost*" (241). Nor (as he omits to mention) is it so fragrant.²⁰

It comes naturally to Francis Bacon, in his essay "Of Gardens" (1597), to link the fragrance of garden flowers to 'delight':

And because the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air (where it comes and goes, like the warbling of music) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that **delight** than to know what be the flowers and plants that do best perfume the air. ...those [flowers] which perfume the air most **delightfully**, not passed by as the rest, but being trodden upon and crushed,

²⁰ Surveying the representation of earthly paradises in early (prior to ca. 1000) Christian literature, Giamatti observes that, notwithstanding the "remarkable...assimilation of classical culture into Christian" (68), the attribute of fragrance appears to reflect a distinctively Christian emphasis: "The fragrance of the earthly paradise, not overly stressed in classical gardens, is much mentioned in Christian accounts" (70). So while, as a great Christian-Humanist work, *Paradise Lost* everywhere bears the impress of its debt to classical civilization, insofar as the stress that is placed on the Garden's fragrance is concerned, Milton appears to be guided rather by Christian than by classical tradition.

are three, that is, burnet, wild thyme, and watermints. Therefore, you are to set whole alleys of them, to have the **pleasure** when you walk or tread. (59)

As Bacon finds it natural to link the fragrances of an English garden to 'delight', so linking the fragrances of the Miltonic Garden to 'delight' appears to come naturally to Knott:

The fragrance of the Garden more than any other traditional feature communicates a sense of intense and inescapable sensuous **delight**. Milton goes far beyond the customary brief reference to rich odors. Fragrance, from the omnipresent flowers and the heavier, more exotic scent of "Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gumms and Balme" (4.248), is for him synonymous with **delight**. (38)

In calling attention in this passage to the *exotic* scents perfuming the Garden's air - approaching Adam's bower, Raphael passes through a "spicy forest" thick with "groves of myrrh,/ And flowering odours, cassia, nard, and balm" (V 298, 292-93)²¹ - Knott puts his finger on a factor that not only enlarges the delight stirred by the Garden's fragrances, but intensifies it. However, he fails to mention something else, no less important, which conduces to the same end, and that is Milton's skill in investing the Garden's perfumes with a remarkable tangibility and substantiality. Take, for example, the phrase "flowering odours" (V 293, quoted just above): the space in line 293

²¹ The echoes of the *Song of Songs* are unmistakable: v. especially 4:12-15; also 1:13-14, 2:12-13, 3:6, 4:6, 5:5, 6:2, 8:2. However, besides being exotic, the *Song of Songs* (once scraped clean of allegorical encrustation) is also decidedly erotic, whereas the prelapsarian Garden is 'unlibidinous' and must remain so. One of the ways Milton keeps on the safe side of eroticism in his handling of the Garden's fragrance is by carefully omitting from his list of exotic

which this phrase occupies could have been filled by a much more conventional one, 'odorous flowers', say; however, through his syntactic inversion, which brings into play a synæsthetic modulation that renders the 'odours' vaguely visible, Milton succeeds in imbuing them with an "unexpected substantiality" (Ricks 95). We see the same technique at work in the synæsthetically-charged lines describing Eve "strew[ing] the ground/ With rose and odours from the shrub unfumed" (V 348-49), the effect of which, says Ricks, is to make "the scents magically visible and physical" (94). Then, in the episode where all of Nature participates in our First Parents' nuptials, showering its blessings upon them, we read that the "fresh gales and gentle airs/ Whispered it [joy] to the woods, and from their wings²²/ Flung rose, flung odours from the spicy shrub..." (VIII 515-17). The verb 'flung', to quote Ricks again, "insists on the substantial" (95). Even more so does the richly synæsthetic phrase "Veiled in a cloud of fragrance" (IX 425). Referred to is the all-but-tangible perfumed mist through which Satan, on his return trip to the Garden, first gains sight of Eve gardening on her own. "Perfumed air assumes a particular tangibility in Milton", claims Thomas Corns (100), and it is a well-founded claim.

scents "the animal perfumes like musk and civet, which might suggest rutting" (Turner 241).

²² That is, the wings of the personified (angelicized?) 'gales' and 'airs'. Cf:

...now gentle **gales**
 Fanning their odoriferous **wings** dispense
 Native perfumes, and **whisper** whence they stole
 Those balmy spoils. (IV 156-59)

Finally, we may call attention to a passage that appears to blend the attributes of exoticism and tangibility: the rising sun, acting on the dew-covered flowers, causes them to release a dawn fragrance that fills the Creator's "nostrils.../ With grateful smell..." (IX 196-97). Since, however, the poet wishes to enforce the idea that the exhaled fragrance represents a kind of ceremonial thanksgiving offered up by Nature to the Creator, he refers to it as "incense" (194). Certainly a more exotic word than 'fragrance' thanks to its connotations of ceremony and ritual, 'incense' also suggests odours that are heavier and denser than ordinary fragrance, and able to linger longer in the air. So that apart from its exotic associations, 'incense' can be said also to possess greater tangibility than ordinary fragrance which, while already a source of sensory delight in the paradisaical Garden, becomes the more richly so in proportion as it becomes more exotic and more tangible.²³

²³ Various commentators have suggested a variety of models - classical, Christian, Italian (v. chapter II) - for Milton's Edenic Garden in *Paradise Lost*. In "'My Native Element': Milton's Paradise and English Gardens", Charlotte F Otten, while recognizing the possible influence exerted by prototypes of various provenance, seeks nonetheless to reclaim Milton for English gardens:

That Milton's Paradise owes something to Homer and Ovid, to Stephanus and Conti, is apparent. ...But the presence of...English horticultural elements operates as a modifying interpretive force. The construction of his Paradise is not so different from that of contemporary English gardens. (253)

Accordingly,

What may strike today's reader [of *Paradise Lost*] as "Eastern exotic" or as pastoral would have struck Milton's contemporaries as "English normal". For the Englishman did not think it presumptuous to choose as the title of his gardening manual *The Garden of Eden, or An accurate*

That the Garden's wealth is measured not by the standards of the fallen world but in terms of its inexhaustible production of fruits, flowers, and fragrances, has opened the way in recent years (particularly under the influence of cultural-historical and anti-mercantilist perspectives as applied to the literature of the early modern period) to some interesting lines of critical enquiry which discern in the 'innocent'

Description of all Flowers and Fruits now growing in England. (252)

Otten's treatment of garden fragrance follows the direction taken by her argument as a whole: defending the hypothesis that the fragrances sweetening the air of Milton's earthly paradise could (and probably would) have been found in a typical English garden of the poet's, or an earlier, age, she writes:

Though the concern for fragrance has its Eastern and Christian antecedents, it is also a vital part of the English garden scene. Eleanour Rohde observes: "the gardens of our Elizabethan ancestors were indeed scented gardens. It is perhaps not too much to say that in no other period of our history were the scents of flowers so keenly appreciated". (251-52)

"Milton's Garden", concludes Otten, "shares in this love of fragrances" (251).

From claiming that Milton's Garden and English ones shared fragrances in common to claiming that he borrowed his from theirs is a big leap which Otten wisely refrains from making as it would only enmesh her in a web of speculations, none susceptible of substantiation. So her approach is to be suggestive rather than determinative, and in keeping with that approach she invites us to consider these remarks about garden (more exactly, orchard) fragrances drawn from Ralph Austen's *A Treatise of Fruit Trees* (1657):

But chiefly the *Pleasure this sense* meets with is from the *sweet smelling blossomes* of all the fruit-trees, which from the time of their breaking forth, till their fall, breath out a most precious and pleasant odor; perfuming the ayre throughout all the Orchard. ...

And besides the *pleasure* of this perfumed ayre, it is also very profitable, and healthfull to the body. Here againe, *Profit and pleasure* meet and imbrace. *An Odores nutriunt*, is a question amongst *Philosophers*: some hold sweet perfumes nourishing, doubtlesse they give a great refreshing to the spirits, and whatsoever delights and cheers the spirits is without controversie very advantageous to the health of the body... (257)

If Austen's observations reflect perceptions and ideas that enjoyed general currency at the time (which was the time of *Paradise Lost*), then it may indeed be the case that the fragrances of Milton's

economy of the prelapsarian Garden an implied criticism of postlapsarian and, in particular, Capitalist economic ideals and practices. It is against this backdrop that we need to situate Karen L Edwards's reading of the Miltonic Garden's fragrances, symbolized, in her view, by the paradisaical balm (cf. Kermode (1960) 108). Writes Edwards:

It is by filling paradise with the fragrant balms of all the world that the poem makes one of its most penetrating criticisms of the desire for material possession fueling colonial expansion in the early modern period. (191)

Adam and Eve experience delight readily and deeply. To be sure, their Garden-sanctuary abounds in incentives to delight; in addition, they bestow delight upon each other.²⁴ But, apart from these sources of delight, which we have already analyzed in some detail, are there others we need to take into account if we would furnish a satisfactory explanation of our First Parents' ability to experience delight as readily and as richly as they do? Continuing our enquiry into causes, this is the question we now propose to address.

In his Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, Joseph Conrad writes that the artist, in contrast to "the thinker or the scientist...appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom; to that in us which

terrestrial paradise owe something (how much we cannot hope to know) to the pleasant and profitable odours of English gardens.

²⁴ Cf. Bishop Henry King:

Wee that did nothing study but the way
To love each other, with which thoughts the Day
Rose with **delight** to us, and with them sett...
("The Surrender" (published 1657), lines 5-7)

is a gift and not an acquisition... He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives..." (3-4). The words framing the phrase 'capacity for delight' allow us to gain a sense, though only a shadowy one, of its purport. Accordingly, our endeavour to account for Adam and Eve's exceptional 'capacity for delight' may be described as an endeavour to put flesh on what Conrad's phrase no more than hints at. So, then, what are the factors that conduce to the reign of delight in our First Parents' lives?

To begin with what is axiomatic, we may point to their innocence and ingenuousness which the Augustinian tradition of Adam's "superhuman intellectual powers" (Fowler (ed.) 680) in no way contradicts.²⁵ Adam's astounding intelligence is one thing, his and Eve's lack, by definition, of accumulated experience in the ways of the fallen world (what Conrad appears to be gesturing towards when he speaks of 'wisdom' as an 'acquisition') is quite another. So if, as rational and intelligent beings, our First Parents occupy a rank not much below that of the angels, experientially they are still children,²⁶ and childlikeness (though not childishness) is peculiarly the province of delight, as Traherne and Blake well perceived.

²⁵ According to St Augustine, Adam's "mental powers surpassed those of the most brilliant philosopher as much as the speed of a bird surpasses that of a tortoise" (in Lewis 117).

²⁶ "Jewish commentators stress that Adam and Eve were unashamed of their nakedness because they were like children, ignorant and innocent" (Snyder 191).

If man's "happiest life" is that of "simplicity and spotless innocence" (IV 317-18), then delight comes into its own where life is simple and innocent; conversely, where it is complicated and emulous, shadowed by calculation, soiled by compromise, snarled up by man-made law, delight withers. By this measure, the simplicity of Adam and Eve's existence²⁷ can be said to put them in delight's way perpetually - calling to mind Traherne's reflection that in the Garden of Eden "to enjoy beauties and be grateful for benefits was all the art that was required to felicity" (Meditation 21, *Fourth Century*: 280).

Subsumable under the head of 'simplicity' is the directness, the straightforwardness, of affect in Adam and Eve's emotional-psychological organization. Because the life they lead in the Garden is unshadowed by calculation or ulterior motive, because they are not shackled by self-doubt or incapacitated by "guilty shame" and "honour dishonourable" (IV 313, 314), they are able (or, more precisely, are privileged) to express their feelings simply, directly, unselfconsciously. Thus Adam falls in love with Eve at first sight, and with uninhibited

²⁷ What accounts for this simplicity is not so much the beneficent non-complexity of their habitat-sanctuary (dismissed by Waldock as "featureless blessedness" (23)) or the unvarying and uncomplicated demands of their daily routine, as the simplicity, the univocality, of their rule of life which, in requiring their abstention from one thing, makes everything else theirs to enjoy without reserve. (As Adam says: "Then let us not think hard/ One easy prohibition, who enjoy/ Free leave so large to all things else..." (IV 432-34)). The point at issue is pithily summed up by Knott thus: "...life in Eden before the arrival of Satan is remarkably uncomplicated, even for a pastoral world, because the source of all virtue is obedience" (6).

naturalness (VIII 471-90); and there is no place in their love-making for coyness, equivocation, or mincing delay:

...into their inmost bower
Handed they went; and eased the putting off
These troublesome disguises which we wear,
Straight side by side were laid...(IV 738-41)

It cannot be doubted that the delight our First Parents take in each other before the Fall largely derives from the simplicity, straightforwardness and naturalness of their emotional responses.²⁸

"Eden is so designed that all roads lead in the right direction. Adam and Eve cannot come to harm accidentally, that is, non-significantly". This observation by Christine Avery (82) points to a further source of delight in our First Parents' lives, namely, their unshadowed confidence in the radical benignity of everything around them. So much a 'given' for them as virtually to escape their

²⁸ And the simplicity of their emotional responses is in turn bound up with the narrow range within which they operate (relative to the breadth of the emotional spectrum as a whole). The psychologist Carroll E Izard has compiled a list of the "fundamental [human] emotions", as he terms them (231). He identifies ten such emotions, each configured in his scheme on a dual basis, the constituent elements "representing milder and stronger intensities" (235) of the emotion in question (e.g. "Interest-Excitement"). The 'fundamental emotions', as Izard sees them, are: (1) Interest-Excitement; (2) Enjoyment-Joy; (3) Surprise-Startle; (4) Distress-Anguish; (5) Disgust-Contempt; (6) Disgust-Revulsion; (7) Anger-Rage; (8) Shame-Humiliation; (9) Fear-Terror; (10) Contempt-Scorn (236-37).

If we superimpose on this 'grid' Adam and Eve's prelapsarian emotional responses, it becomes immediately - and strikingly - evident that they do not extend much (if at all) beyond categories 1 and 2. (By contrast, their postlapsarian emotions, like ours, range over pretty much the entire 'grid'. This is not to imply, however, that for Adam and Eve in Paradise a broader range of emotions is either desirable or necessary: for where they are, they are right as they are.) That our First Parents' emotional responses operate prior to the Fall within so narrow a range drastically reduces the scope for affective interconnections, permutations and shadings to multiply, and, in so far, unquestionably inhibits emotional complexity - that is to say, fosters simplicity. What all this points to is that Adam and Eve are children not only experientially but also emotionally - are, indeed, children experientially in part because that is what they are emotionally.

conscious notice, this confidence is there nonetheless, its presence (though barely perceptible) rendering unnecessary the attitude of suspicion and wariness so characteristic of fallen existence. Knowing nothing of evil, or of dangers and threats,²⁹ and therefore not looking to find any, Adam and Eve naïvely see in everything around them the reflection of their own goodness and innocence, for "goodness thinks no ill/ Where no ill seems..." (III 688-89).³⁰ This attitude proves costly, to be sure, as Eve, "unwary" (IX 614), takes the smooth-tongued Satan in his serpent disguise to be "Friendly to man, far from deceit or guile" (IX 772), but it is, after all, the only attitude possible under the 'rules' of prelapsarian life, and it assuredly is one that conduces to delight, albeit a dupe's delight.

Spared the perturbations of suspicion and inquietude,³¹ with no reason to worry - or even think - about the future, with no cause for complaint in the present, Adam and Eve enjoy a life of serene pastoral carefreeness in Paradise. It is this condition, presumably, that E M W Tillyard has in mind when he

²⁹ For Adam and Eve, before the Fall, the threat posed by Satan, like that posed by death - "...what e'er death is/ Some dreadful thing, no doubt" (IV 425-26) - is little more than an abstraction, not something they can visualize in concrete terms or to which they can attach sensations of genuine dread and horror.

³⁰ Cf. Dryden's Hind "Without unspotted, innocent within,/ She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin" (*The Hind and the Panther*, I 3-4).

³¹ Cf. St Augustine's view that before the Fall Adam and Eve were "agitated by no mental perturbations" (in MacCallum 110).

describes our First Parents in their unfallen state as being "on holiday" (69). For if anything is definitive of 'holiday', it is carefreeness; and if anything is generative of delight, it is holiday - even when it is a permanent condition, as it is for unfallen Adam and Eve, rather than a looked-for respite from the burdens and ills of Everyday.

If, under the 'rules' of holiday, the suspension of care, duty, others' authority and control, is productive of delight, even more so is the redefinition of work, for work under holiday rules turns into recreation (Tillyard 69). Thus redefined, it is no longer that which has to be "gotten done (implying some sort of *terminus ad quem*)" (Berry 248). By this measure, Adam and Eve's gardening work is demonstrably recreational (re-creational) in character as it is not something they are under pressure (much less under an obligation) to 'get done'. This Adam clearly discerns (even if Eve does not):

Yet not so strictly hath our Lord imposed
Labour, as to debar us when we need
Refreshment, whether food, or talk between,
Food of the mind, or this sweet intercourse
Of looks and smiles...³² (IX 235-39)

³² In the prelapsarian scheme of things smiling is expressly identified with reason ("...for smiles from reason flow,/ To brute denied..." (IX 239-40), itself the pre-eminent sign of unfallen Adam and Eve's humanity. From this it follows that their exchange of smiles is an expression at one and the same time of their rationality and their humanity. It may indeed be argued that no response is more human or more natural in the prelapsarian setting than the exchange of smiles (like the clasping of hands a token of mutual love). So when Adam speaks of exchanging *smiles* with Eve, his (meaning Milton's) choice of words is notably apposite.

But if in their paradisaal state our First Parents are given to smiling, they are never given to laughter. Even under the 'rules' of prelapsarian carefreeness and holiday there is no room for laughter in the paradisaal Garden. Laughter almost always resonates in a fallen key in the epic. It is associated with coarseness of response and

Far, then, from being perceived as a burdensome chore, geared to goals and quotas, the gardening work is portrayed by Adam as a leisured and restorative activity creating space for co-operative endeavour, "sweet converse" (IX 909), and the 'intercourse of looks and smiles', delights in themselves. To represent the gardening work thus is to represent it in manifestly recreational terms - and what could be more productive of delight than work-as-recreation performed in a paradisaal setting. So it comes as no surprise when, very shortly after speaking the lines quoted

with frivolous jollification - worse still, with the kind of jollification ensuing from the slippage, or even the collapse, of reason, as through intoxication. Thus, having just tasted of the interdicted fruit, "sate at length, / And heightened as with wine", Eve becomes "jocund and boon" (IX 792-93). The phrase 'jocund and boon', taken together with the mention of intoxication, is suggestive not only of laughter, but of laughter shameless, coarse and dissolute. Deliberately mirroring this passage is the one describing Adam's Fall: again there are references to intoxication and to unseemly mirth, with their suggestion of impudent and dissolute laughter: "As with new wine intoxicated both / They swim in mirth..." (IX 1008-9). Re-enacting Adam's uxorious surrender to Eve, the 'sons of God' allow themselves to be seduced by the "fair female troop.../...so blithe, so smooth, so gay..." (XI 614-15). Having "yield[ed] up all their virtue [to].../...these fair atheists" (623-25), they then lasciviously "swim in joy" (625) with them, imitating Adam and Eve's 'swim[ming] in mirth'. And on this occasion the slide into licentious abandon is explicitly linked to laughter: "...and now [the 'sons of God' and the 'fair atheists'] swim in joy, /...and **laugh**; for which / The world ere long a world of tears must weep" (625-27).

As a marker of fallenness, then, laughter can have no place in a prelapsarian setting; it follows, therefore, that it can have nothing to do with 'delight'. Milton's position in *Paradise Lost* (in contrast to his position in "L'Allegro") appears to be, indeed, that laughter and delight are contraries, incompatible with, and antagonistic to, each other. This is a position anticipated - and, perhaps, influenced - by Sidney's presentation of laughter and delight as opposites in a well-known passage in *The Defence of Poesy*:

But our comedians [here denoting writers of comedy] think there is no delight without laughter; which is very wrong, for though laughter may come with delight, yet cometh it not of delight, as though delight should be the cause of laughter; but well may one thing breed both together. Nay, rather in themselves they have, as it were, a kind of contrariety: for delight we scarcely do but in things that have a conveniency to ourselves or to the general nature; laughter almost ever cometh of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature. Delight hath a joy in it, either permanent or present. Laughter hath only a scornful tickling. (245)

above, Adam explicitly links his and Eve's Garden-husbandry to 'delight':

For not to irksome toil, but to **delight**
He [God] made us...³³ (IX 242-43)

In the foregoing pages we have considered a number of factors conducing to the delight of unfallen Adam and Eve. We earlier took cognizance of a different set of factors conducing to the same end. We have also enquired into the factors promoting the reign of delight in the paradisaal Garden. One way or another, delight appears to be inseparable from that choice Garden and our First Parents' lives in it. We may therefore affirm, with good cause, that even as 'bliss' serves as a virtual synonym for Heaven, so does 'delight' for the Edenic Garden and the prelapsarian condition it protects and nourishes.

* * * *

Thrice in the epic Milton uses the word 'delight' 'against the grain', in each instance for special and/or shock effect.

Taking the floor at the "great consult" (I 798), Mammon puts the case of the fallen angels' re-admittance to Heaven "on promise made/ Of new subjection" (II 238-39), a prospect involving the humiliation of singing the praises of their Vanquisher with "warbled hymns" and "[f]orced

³³ Cf. Andrew Willet's gloss on *Genesis* 2:15 (in *Hexapla...Sixfold Commentary upon Genesis* (1608)):

...[Man's] charge was...to dresse the garden...in which kind of husbandrie many even now doe take a **delight**, and hold it rather to be a **recreation**, then any wearines unto them. (in Fowler (ed.) 649)

hallelujahs" (242, 243). Having sketched this unpleasing scenario, Mammon rounds it off with a rhetorical flourish pivoting on the ironical use of 'delight': "This must be our task/ In heaven, this our **delight**..." (246-47).

Milton twice sets 'delight' on its head by enmeshing it in contexts that impart to it a malignant cast, such that it comes to signify malevolent delight, *schadenfreude*, delight in another's harm³⁴:

...but of this be sure [vows Satan to Beelzebub],
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole **delight**... (I 158-60)

Looking forward to a rich harvest, Death speaks of the "...scent.../ Of carnage, prey innumerable..." (X 267-68) - after which, the epic narrator, taking charge again, comments: "So saying, with **delight** he [Death] snuffed the smell/ Of mortal change on earth..." (272-73). Evidently, the 'delight' Death exhibits is of the malevolent variety. (One may add that the 'scent of carnage' which Death 'snuffs' with such delighted anticipation represents a grisly parodic perversion of the life-enhancing fragrances censuring the air of the terrestrial paradise (cf. Kermode (1960) 108). This parodic effect, like others examined

³⁴ Cf. Edmund Burke: "I am convinced we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others" (*A Philosophical Enquiry into...the Sublime and Beautiful* I, xiv (p.45)). Some of Burke's critics found this proposition provoking (ibid., p.xiv); Byron, however, rehearsed it:

By thy cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathom'd gulfs of guile,
...
By thy delight in others' pain,
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,
I call upon thee!
(*Manfred* I,i,242-43, 248-50)

earlier, forms part of a pervasive pattern of parodic debasement in the epic - that is to say, the process whereby the malefic powers, in imitating aspects of the celestial or paradisaal orders, pervert and degrade them.)

Far from suggesting carelessness or inconsistency on Milton's part, the three apparently 'rogue' uses of 'delight' in the epic reflect, on the contrary, the poet's conscious intention to reach for powerful special effects by using that signifier 'against the grain'.

I have in this chapter accounted for almost every occurrence of 'delight' and its variants ('delights', 'delightful', 'delighted', as well as 'delicious' and 'delectable') in *Paradise Lost*.³⁵ A considerable body of evidence has been marshalled, and it points to but one conclusion - that the epic poet selectively refers the term 'delight' (and its variants) to the organizational realm of the earthly paradise and prelapsarian existence. Milton's intentions are nowhere more strikingly in evidence than in those passages, singled out for attention in the foregoing pages, where he plays off 'delight' and 'pleasure' against each other. One could not ask for a clearer demonstration of his conscious intention to differentiate between those two signifiers. The manner in which the differentiation is executed, taken together with the contexts within which it

³⁵ It was noted in the previous chapter that the importance Milton attaches to 'bliss' as a keyword is reflected in the high frequency of its occurrence in the commanding terminal position of the poetic line: of the 38 occurrences of 'bliss' in the poem, 25 are terminal. 'Delight' runs 'bliss' a close second, testifying to its importance in Milton's conceptual-thematic scheme of things in *Paradise Lost*: of the

unfolds, can leave the reader in no doubt that 'delight' gestures towards a paradisaal order of things, 'pleasure' towards something else. Just what that is, is the subject of the next chapter.

40 occurrences of 'delight'/'delights' in the epic, 21 occupy the 'high-profile' terminal position.

IV

'PLEASURE'

The word 'pleasure', deriving ultimately from the Latin *placere*, 'to please', has a dual signification in English. In its favourable sense it connotes "enjoyment, delight, gratification" (*OED* (2nd edition), sense 1a), while in the less unfavourable of two negative senses distinguished by the *OED*, it signifies "sensuous enjoyment as a chief object of life or end in itself" (sense 1b). More unfavourable is the "strictly physical sense", encompassing the notion of the "indulgence of the appetites; sensual gratification" (sense 1c).

The fifteenth-century Florentine Neoplatonist, Marsilio Ficino, seeking in his *Apologus de voluptate* to account for the double signification of 'pleasure' (*voluptas*), invented a fable which postulated a noble *voluptas* dwelling in Heaven, while on earth her "deceptive double", an ignoble *voluptas* (meaning, 'pleasure' in the 'fallen' senses pointed to by *OED* definitions 1b and 1c), holds sway (Wind 49-50). Nearer our own day, the critic Lionel Trilling has also pondered the 'two-faced' signification of 'pleasure': noting that the unfavourable senses of the term "are dramatized by the English career of

the most usual Latin word for pleasure, *voluptas*", he proceeds to develop the point:

...the word as it was used in antiquity seems to have been on the whole morally neutral and not necessarily intense. But the English words derived from *voluptas* are charged with moral judgment and are rather excited. We understand that it is not really to the minds of men that a voluptuous woman holds out the promise of pleasure, enjoyment, or delight. We do not expect a voluptuary to seek his pleasures in domesticity... ("The Fate of Pleasure", in *Beyond Culture* 52)

But of course the English words derived from *voluptas* are not alone in being 'charged with [adverse] moral judgment'. So is 'pleasure', in its unfavourable acceptation. We begin our enquiry, however, with a consideration of 'pleasure' in its favourable sense. As thus used in *Paradise Lost*, 'pleasure' and its variants ('pleasant', 'pleasing', 'pleased', 'please') are virtual synonyms for 'delight' and, as such, have reference to the Garden and to the conditions of prelapsarian existence.

Just as 'delight' and 'pleasure' are not seldom played off against each other in order to bring out the differences between them, so, on other occasions, they are no less deliberately brought into proximity with each other, sometimes in appositive or near-appositive constructions, in order to highlight their equivalence (or near-equivalence). Here are some examples:

Yet went she [Eve] not, as not with such
discourse [between Adam and the archangel
Raphael]

Delighted, or not capable her ear
Of what was high: such **pleasure** she reserved,
Adam relating, she sole auditress;
Her husband the relater she preferred

Before the angel, and of him to ask
Chose rather; he, she knew would intermix
Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute
With conjugal caresses, from his lip
Not words alone **pleased** her. (VIII 48-57)

For wonderful indeed [declares Uriel] are all his
[God's] works,
Pleasant to know, and worthiest to be all
Had in remembrance always with **delight**...
(III 702-4)

...**pleasant** the sun [declaims Eve, in her love-
song to Adam]
When first on this **delightful** land he spreads
His orient beams... (IV 642-44)

...thence, as thou know'st [Raphael tells Adam]
He [God] brought thee into this **delicious** grove,
This garden, planted with the trees of God,
Delectable both to behold and taste;
And freely all their **pleasant** fruit for food
Gave thee, all sorts are here that all the earth
yields,
Variety without end...¹ (VII 536-42)

...[Hunting] his purposed prey
In bower and field he [Satan] sought, where any
tuft
Of grove or garden-plot more **pleasant** lay,
Their [Adam and Eve's] tendance or plantation for
delight... (IX 416-19)

As one who long in populous city pent,
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
Forth issuing on a summer's morn to breathe
Among the **pleasant** villages and farms
Adjoined, from each thing met conceives **delight**,
The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
Or dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound;
If chance with nymph-like step fair virgin pass,
What **pleasing** seemed, for her now **pleases** more,
She most, and in her look sums all **delight**.² (IX 445-54)

¹ The reference to 'variety without end' puts us in mind once again of the degree to which the Garden's 'delectableness' (= 'delight' = 'pleasantness') is bound up with the limitless *variety* of its plant-life (v. chapter III).

² The pastoral vignette developed in this extended simile, though it necessarily has a postlapsarian frame of reference (Milton would not after all have got very far trying to compare Eden with itself), clearly seeks, nonetheless, to project the pastoral scene as a similitude of the earthly Paradise (v. Fowler (ed.) 883). That being so, the deployment within the simile of the prelapsarian signifier 'delight', companioned, in an interlacing dance, with its near-

...this I my glory account [says the Son to the
Father],
My exaltation, and my whole **delight**,
That thou in me **well pleased** declar'st thy will
Fulfilled... (VI 726-29)

Cast in the same mould as the above examples, but with
the signifier 'happiness' substituting for 'delight', are
these lines in which God, jesting with Adam in a spirit of
genial condescension, punningly refers to Eden by its
meaning ('pleasure') rather than by its name:

A nice and subtle **happiness** I see
Thou to thyself proposest, in the choice
Of thy associates, Adam, and wilt taste
No **pleasure**, though in **pleasure**, solitary.
(VIII 399-402)

We recall, from the chapter on 'bliss', how that word
and 'delight' are played off against each other, in Book
VIII 521-28, in order to bring out the relative inferiority
even of paradisal 'delight' when set against the "sum
of...bliss" (522) characterizing Adam and Eve's wedded
love. In comparable fashion, earlier in Book VIII, the
relative inferiority of 'pleasantest' (equivalent in this
case to 'most delightful') is underscored when, with the
word-bundle of which it is the pivot, it is played off
against 'heaven', with its unmistakable intimations of
transcendent bliss; then, only a few lines later,
'pleasant' (here equivalent to 'delightful') is played off
against the phrase "grace divine", a phrase not without
overtones of bliss. As with 'pleasantest', the object is

equivalents 'pleasant', 'pleasing', 'pleases', does not run counter to
the thesis of this study - that 'delight' and 'pleasure' (in its
favourable sense) are referable exclusively to the prelapsarian order
of things.

to bring out the relative inferiority of the 'pleasant' (= delectable) fruits of Paradise when those are set against the sublimity of Raphael's discourse. As the foregoing outline suggests, the passage in question is a plangently orchestrated one:

For while I sit with thee, I seem in **heaven**
[confesses Adam to Raphael],
And sweeter thy discourse is to my ear
Than fruits of palm-tree **pleasantest** to thirst
And hunger both, from labour, at the hour
Of sweet repast; they satiate, and soon fill,
Though **pleasant**, but thy words with **grace divine**
Imbued, bring to their sweetness no satiety.
(VIII 210-16)

'Pleasant' (again connoting 'delightful') is explicitly played off against 'bliss' in the passage where Adam gives the account of his creation. And here too the specific function of 'pleasant' is to signal relative inferiority - in this case the 'lessness' of everything that meets his gaze before the paradisaal Garden does:

...Adam, rise [bids his Creator],
...
...called by thee I come thy guide
To the garden of **bliss**, thy seat prepared.
So saying, by the hand he took me raised,
And over fields and waters, as in air
Smooth sliding without step, last led me up
A woody mountain; whose high top was plain,
A circuit wide, enclosed, with goodliest trees
Planted, with walks, and bowers, that what I saw
Of earth before scarce **pleasant** seemed.
(VIII 296-306)

Even where 'pleasure' (or its variants) appears on its own, unescorted by 'delight', its purport as a near-synonym for 'delight' is beyond question:

(For earth hath this variety from heaven

Of **pleasure** situate in hill and dale)³
(VI 640-41)

He [God] scarce had said, when the bare earth...
...
Brought forth the tender grass whose verdure clad
Her universal face with **pleasant** green...
(VII 313-16)

...the seat of men,
Earth...
Their **pleasant** dwelling place. (VII 623-25)

The **pleasant** valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
[that is, *after* its appropriation to the worship
of Moloch]
And black Gehenna called... (I 404-5)

Sometimes towards Eden which now in his [Satan's]
view
Lay **pleasant**, his grieved look he fixes sad...⁴
(IV 27-28)

...in this **pleasant** soil
His far more **pleasant** garden God ordained...
(IV 214-15)

With first approach of light [says Adam to his
spouse], we must be risen,
And at our **pleasant** labour, to reform
Yon flowery arbours... (IV 624-26)

Adam [returns Eve, five Books later], well may we
labour still to dress
This garden, still to tend plant, herb and
flower,
Our **pleasant** task enjoined... (IX 205-7)

...Mean while at table Eve
Ministered naked, and their [Adam's and
Raphael's] flowing cups
With **pleasant** liquors crowned... (V 443-45)

...while here [in the Garden] we dwell,
What can be toilsome in these **pleasant** walks?

³ The juxtaposition of 'variety' and 'pleasure' which the poet here engineers, underscores yet again the degree to which the Garden's 'variety' and 'delight' are bound up with each other.

⁴ The concatenation of 'Eden', with 'pleasant', its predicate, bears witness (yet again) to the poet's impulse to bring out, in this case through the proximity and grammatical inter-involvement of the two words, the 'etymological' meaning of 'Eden', as denoting 'delight/pleasure'.

Here let us live, though in fallen state,
content.⁵ (XI 178-80)

And Eve within, due at her hour prepared
For dinner savoury fruits, of taste to **please**
True appetite... (V 303-5)

...these sighs
And prayers [of remorse, offered up by our First
Parents after the Fall]...
...I [the Son] thy priest before thee [the
Father] bring,
Fruits of more **pleasing** savour from thy seed
Sown with contrition in his heart, than those
Which his own hand manuring all the trees
Of Paradise could have produced... (XI 23-29)

With thee conversing [says Eve to her husband] I
forget all time,
All seasons and their change, all **please** alike.
(IV 639-40)

What next I bring shall **please** thee, be assured
[God tells Adam, foreshadowing Eve's creation],
Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,
Thy wish exactly to thy heart's desire.
(VIII 449-51)

But thy relation now [Raphael bids Adam]; for I
attend,
Pleased with thy words no less than thou with
mine. (VIII 247-48)

Now came still evening on...

...
Silence accompanied, for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was **pleased**... (IV 598-604)

Descend from heaven Urania [bids the epic poet,
invoking his Muse]...

⁵ Because on the morning after the Fall everything *looks* the same in the Garden (the dawn, after all, like every previous one, rose "smiling" (175)), Eve, in part through naïveté, in part through taking her wish for the deed, is tempted to assume that everything *is* the same. It is therefore understandable that she should characterize the Garden's walks as 'pleasant' (= 'delightful'): in appearance (and, at the precise moment of her utterance, in actuality too) all seems to be the same as the day before. But the very next instant everything begins to change, showing up Eve's words for what in fact they are - simply an exercise in wishful thinking, as the immediately following lines make clear: "So spake, so wished much-humbled Eve, but fate/ Subscribed not; nature first gave signs, impressed/ On bird, beast, air..." (181-83).

...
...for thou
Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
Of old Olympus dwell'st, but heavenly born,
...
Thou with eternal Wisdom didst converse,
Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play
In presence of the almighty Father, **pleased**
With thy celestial song. (VII 1-12)

...Thou [the Father] at the sight [of Death's
defeat]
Pleased, out of heaven shalt look down and smile
[declares the Son]...⁶ (III 256-57)

On several occasions Milton both boosts and
underscores the favourable connotations of 'pleased' by
annexing to this participle the adverb 'well':

...I [the Son] for his [man's] sake will leave
Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
Freely put off, and for him lastly die
Well pleased... (III 238-41)
...this I my glory account [declares the Son],
...
That thou in me **well pleased**, declar'st thy will
Fulfilled... (VI 726-29)

Father Eternal, thine is to decree,
Mine both in heaven and earth to do thy will
Supreme, that thou in me thy Son beloved
Mayst ever rest **well pleased**. (X 68-71)

...off at sea north-east winds blow
Sabeian odours from the spicy shore
Of Arabie the blest, with such delay
Well pleased they [the mariners] slack their
course, and many a league
Cheered with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles.
(IV 161-65)

So spake our mother Eve, and Adam heard
Well pleased...⁷ (XII 624-25)

⁶ We saw, in the previous chapter, how 'delight' is anthropomorphically predicated of God. The ascription to him, in this quotation and the preceding one, of 'pleasure' and 'smiling' forms part of the same pattern of representing the godhead anthropomorphically in *Paradise Lost*.

⁷ The words by which Adam is 'well pleased' (and no wonder) are Eve's lines affirming that in her estimation he is as good as Eden - indeed, that he *is* Eden: "...with thee to go [from the paradisaal Garden],/ Is

We may conjecture that Milton's boosting the favourable purport of 'pleased' by attaching to it the modifier 'well' stemmed from an impulse to make its positive character stand out the more sharply from 'pleasure' in its unfavourable sense. That aim necessitated tethering an intensifying term to 'pleased' to underscore its positive value and thereby underline its difference, and distance, from 'tainted' pleasure (to a consideration of which we now turn).

* * * *

The tradition of 'pleasure' (in its unfavourable sense) that Milton inherited, and that is operative in *Paradise Lost*, is thus characterized by Brian Vickers:

It is important for modern readers to realize that in the Renaissance virtue and pleasure were not just two of many goals in life that a person could choose or reject at one time or another according to inclination. Rather, they had been linked, in classical ethics, to form a binary system, representing opposed and mutually exclusive choices in life. To be for the one meant to be against the other. (276)

If Vickers here describes, in broad-category terms, the fundamental Renaissance understanding of fallen pleasure, George Herbert may be imagined as putting flesh on his characterization by adding the details:

I know the ways of Pleasure, the sweet strains,
The lullings and the relishes of it;
The propositions of hot blood and brains;
What mirth and music mean; what love and wit
Have done these twenty hundred years, and more:
I know the projects of unbridled store:
My stuff is flesh, not brass; my senses live,
And grumble oft, that they have more in me

to stay here; without thee here to stay,/ Is to go hence unwilling..." (615-17).

Than he that curbs them, being but one to five:
Yet I love thee.
(“The Pearl”, stanza 3)

Herbert’s lines clearly cover both classes of fallen pleasure recognized by the *OED*: “sensuous enjoyment as a chief object of life” (1b), and “The indulgence of the appetites; sensual gratification” (1c). In *Paradise Lost*, likewise, both these categories of fallen pleasure come into view time and again⁸:

...love refines
The thoughts [Raphael admonishes Adam], and...
...is the scale
By which to heavenly love thou mayst ascend,
Not sunk in **carnal pleasure**, for which cause
Among the beasts no mate for thee was found.⁹ (VIII 589-94)

⁸ I do not propose to include, among the examples that follow, those instances of fallen ‘pleasure’ that came under scrutiny in chapter III, in the analyses there undertaken of the playing-off of prelapsarian ‘delight’ against postlapsarian ‘pleasure’. (It is not, to be sure, postlapsarian ‘pleasure’ alone that is involved in Milton’s playing-off exercises: as is evident from the earlier pages of this chapter, the same can (and does) apply to *prelapsarian* pleasure whose function in a playing-off setting is to serve as a marker of relative inferiority, ‘lessness’ (but never of fallenness.))

⁹ Raphael’s sentiments in the last two lines of the quotation echo those of Aristotle, himself in this instance taking his cue from Plato’s polemic against pleasure, as expounded mainly in the *Republic*. Aristotle’s position, as summarized by Vickers, is that as “the pleasures of the body are shared with beasts the voluptuous life is reprehensible and ‘bestial’” (279). Cf. Ficino’s Neoplatonic condemnation of “gross and merely sensual pleasures” (Burke 24) as “bestial” (in Kermode (1961) 77-79). Cf. also *Comus*: “...To roll with **pleasure** in a sensual sty” (line 77).

Unlike Milton in *Paradise Lost*, Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* does not distinguish between (carnal) ‘pleasure’ and ‘delight’: he uses the two terms interchangeably and indifferently to signify sensual gratification. A few examples:

For she [Malecasta] was giuen all to fleshly lust,
And poured forth in **sensuall delight**,
That all regard of shame she had discust
[= shaken off]... (III, i, 48)

[Chymocles in Acrasia’s Bower of Bliss] has pourd out his
idle mind
In daintie **delices** [= sensual pleasures], and lauish
ioyes,
...
And flowes in **pleasures**, and vaine **pleasing** toyes,
Mingled emongst loose Ladies and lasciuious boyes.
(II, v, 28)

Gazing into futurity, the archangel Michael has recourse to that very antithesis between 'virtue' and 'pleasure' which Vickers singles out as so notable a feature of the Renaissance mindset: though "in acts of prowess eminent" (XI 789), the descendants of the 'sons of God' and the 'fair atheists', being "of **true virtue void**" (790), before long "change their course to **pleasure**, ease, and sloth,/ Surfeit, and lust..." (794-95).

Adding impudence to rebellion, Adam, just fallen, makes light of his transgression, jokes about it. His levity pivots on the term 'pleasure' - as emphatically a marker of his fallenness as is his disposition to turn his sin into an occasion for the exercise of wit:

Much **pleasure** have we lost, while we abstained
 From this delightful fruit, nor known till now
 True relish, tasting; if such **pleasure** be
 In things to us forbidden, it might be wished,
 For this one tree had been forbidden ten.¹⁰ (IX 1022-26)

A few stanzas later Cymochles is described as "wad[ing]" in "waues of deepe **delight**" (II, v, 35). Approaching the Bower of Bliss (in Canto xii of Book II), Guyon comes upon two "wanton Maidens" bathing in a crystalline pool, one of whom "her two lilly paps aloft displayd,/...that might his melting hart entise/ To her **delights**..." (stanza 66).

Although Spenser makes no distinction between (sensual) 'pleasure' and 'delight', and Milton does (and that scrupulously), there is yet an interesting common thread linking the two poets' representation of sensual gratification: both view the temptation of, and/or slide into, voluptuous abandon in terms of melting, deliquescence. The examples from *The Faerie Queene* could not be clearer: "**flowes** in **pleasures**"; "wad[ing]" in "waues of deepe **delight**"; "his **melting** heart entise/ To her **delights**...". (Consider also: "**liquid** ioyes" (II,xii,60); "Quite **molten** into lust and **pleasure** lewd" (II,xii,73); "And **swimming** deepe in sensuall desires" (III,i,39)). Similarly, in *Paradise Lost*, the "carnal desire" that "inflame[s]" Adam and Eve after the Fall (IX 1013) goes hand in hand with their "**swim[ming]** in mirth" (1009), a characterization echoed in the account of the "sons of God ...**swim[ming]** in **joy**" (here denoting sensual pleasure) with the "fair atheists" after having been seduced by them into "yield[ing] up all their virtue" (XI 622-25).

¹⁰ "Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure", writes Byron facetiously in *Don Juan* (I 1060). But there is nothing facetious about the pleasure Adam and Eve take in their sin at this moment, and

Later, in Book X, Eve, contrite, and horrified at the prospect of becoming the conduit for the transmission of sin and woe to the entire human race, suggests that she and Adam "abstain/ From love's due rights" (993-94) or, if that prove insupportable, that they commit suicide together, in either case cheating Sin and Death of their hoped-for harvest. Adam rejects Eve's suggestion, offering a variety of arguments; and the language he uses in responding to her mention of connubial love-making is particularly revealing: Eve speaks of "nuptial embraces sweet" (994), suggesting that she conceives of postlapsarian sexuality in prelapsarian terms - that she imagines it possible to reinstate in their very altered circumstances the pre-Fall "bliss" of their "mutual love" (IV 728). But Adam knows better; he knows what became of his and Eve's 'love unlibidinous' after the Fall ("...in lust they burn", IX 1015), and he knows that the bliss of unfallen love-making is lost beyond all hope of recovery. Necessarily influencing the terms in which he frames his rejoinder to Eve's proposal, that knowledge steers him inexorably in the direction of the fallen signifier 'pleasure':

Eve, thy contempt of life and **pleasure**
 Seems to argue in thee something more sublime
 And excellent than what thy mind contemns;
 But self-destruction therefore sought, refutes
 That excellence thought in thee, and implies,
 Not thy contempt, but anguish and regret
 For loss of life and **pleasure** overloved. (X 1013-19)

for a short time thereafter, until, "wearied with their amorous play" (IX 1045), they fall asleep. Their attitude puts us in mind of the youthful Augustine's when he stole pears from a neighbour's tree (recounted in Book II of the *Confessions*): "...my pleasure in it was not what I stole but that I stole", he recalls (31). In other words, what he derived pleasure from was the act of sinning as such (26).

The gratifications of postlapsarian existence will at best yield nothing better than pleasure, and in the end even that is forfeit to old age which, changing "youth...strength...beauty.../ To withered weak and gray", renders the "senses.../ Obtuse", causing them "all taste of **pleasure** [to] forgo..." (XI 539-41).

When the word 'pleasure' is used by Satan and his confederates it functions as a marker of fallenness, and/or reflects a will to view everything, unfallen phenomena included, through the lens of fallenness, and/or betrays a rancorous inclination to denigrate and besmirch. Some examples:

...Sense of **pleasure** we [the disloyal angels] may well
Spare out of life perhaps, and not repine,
...
But pain is perfect misery... [argues Nisroc at the Council of War summoned by Satan after the first day's fighting of the War in Heaven].
(VI 459-62)

...Live while ye may,
Yet happy pair; enjoy, till I return,
Short **pleasures**, for long woes are to succeed
[gloats Satan, foreseeing our First Parents' undoing]. (IV 533-35)

Thoughts, whither have ye led me [asks Satan, recalled to his fell purpose after being briefly abstracted from himself by the sight of Eve's beauty], with what sweet
Compulsion thus transported to forget
What hither brought us, hate, not love, nor hope
Of Paradise for hell, hope here to taste
Of **pleasure**, but all **pleasure** to destroy...(IX 473-77)

Amid the tree now got [the "guileful tempter" (IX 567) confides to Eve, baiting his hook with consummate address], where plenty hung
Tempting so nigh, to pluck and eat my fill
I spared not, for such **pleasure** till that hour

At feed or fountain never had I found.¹¹
(IX 594-97)

While 'pleasure' enjoys (or endures), in addition to its favourable sense, an official, Dictionary-certified unfavourable acceptance, its variants ('pleasant', 'please', 'pleased', 'pleasing') do not; their intrinsic signification is uniformly favourable. Accordingly, if any of them, as used in *Paradise Lost*, appear to carry a negative 'charge', they do so for contextual reasons, rather than in consequence of their intrinsic meaning (or 'intrinsic meaning' - to give the Deconstructive Angel his due). Denoted by the phrase 'contextual reasons' are considerations such as the circumstances and setting of the utterance containing the variant form of 'pleasure', whose utterance it is, and the intention with which the variant in question is used. One or more of these factors comes into play in the following instances:

Till on a day roving the field, I [Satan] chanced
A goodly tree far distant to behold
...
...I nearer drew to gaze;
When from the boughs a savoury odour blown,
Grateful to appetite, more **pleased** my sense
Than smell of sweetest fennel...¹² (IX 575-81)

¹¹ 'Pleasure' is here deployed in the service of a particularly subtle deception: as used by Satan the word has a fallen signification, but he would expect Eve to place an unfallen construction upon it, as her prelapsarian frame of reference admits of no other.

¹² Forming part of the same Satanic speech as the last-quoted passage (IX 594-97), this one parallels it in its recourse to equivocation as a vehicle of deception: although, as used by Satan, 'pleased' acquires a fallen colouring (because it is he who uses it, and because of the setting of, and intention behind, its use), Eve would be expected (indeed, intended) to take up the word in its unfallen sense because, as stated above, her prelapsarian frame of reference admits of no other.

An additional factor contributing to the fallen resonance of 'pleased' in this passage is the fact that it is linked, through both typographical and ideational proximity, to the signifier 'appetite',

...yet he [Belial, having his say at the 'great consult'] **pleased** the ear... (II 117)

...and his [Mammon's] sentence [voiced, like Belial's, at the 'great consult'] **pleased**,
Advising peace... (II 291-92)

...The bold design [of spiting God by ruining man]
Pleased highly those infernal states, and joy
Sparkled in all their eyes...¹³ (II 386-88)

...back they [the host of Heaven] recoiled afraid
At first, and called me Sin...
...but familiar grown,
I **pleased**... (II 759-62)

...there [on earth, after the Fall] ye shall be
fed and filled
Immeasurably [Satan promises Sin and Death]...
He ceased, for both seemed highly **pleased**, and
Death
Grinned horrible a ghastly smile, to hear
His famine should be filled... (II 843-47)

...league with you I seek [jibes Satan in this
half-soliloquy, half-aside, speaking at (not to)
our First Parents from his hiding-place],
And mutual amity so strait, so close,
That I with you must dwell, or you with me
Henceforth; my dwelling haply may not **please**
Like this fair Paradise, your sense, yet such
Accept your maker's work; he gave it me,
Which I as freely give; hell shall unfold,
To entertain you two, her widest gates...
(IV 375-82)

The last-quoted passage illustrates with particular clarity how context is able to lend a wholly different colouring to linguistic purport - in this case, the 'intrinsically' favourable purport of the signifier 'please'. What Satan's villainous utterance, with its

always a suspect term in the epic, and usually a marker of fallenness. (When he wishes to over-ride its suggestions of fallenness, Milton tethers a qualifying term to 'appetite', as he does in the reference to Eve's preparing "savoury fruits, of taste to please/ **True** [= unfallen] appetite" (V 304-5))

¹³ Worthy of note is the intimate connection set up in line 387 between 'pleased' and 'joy' (here denoting *schadenfreude*).

mocking doubletalk, does, is to impart to 'please' a sardonic and sinister resonance. In like manner, though at a less intense level, 'please' is again invested with a sardonic edge when Adam, appropriating the Evil One's specious mode of reasoning as he casts about for arguments to justify his imminent apostasy, fancies that God

...would be loth
Us to abolish, lest the adversary
Triumph and say; Fickle their state whom God
Most favours, who can **please** him long; me first
He ruined, now mankind; whom will he next?
(IX 946-50)

Even a word with such unambiguously positive connotations as 'pleasant', which so often in *Paradise Lost* serves as a virtual synonym for 'delightful',¹⁴ can be given a quite altered colouring by its context. Consider, for example, these lines from near the end of Eve's account of her troubling dream, as related to her husband the next morning:

So saying, he [the comely Tempter of the dream]
drew nigh, and to me held,
Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part
Which he had plucked; the **pleasant** savoury smell
So quickened appetite, that I, methought,
Could not but taste. (V 82-86)

The signifier 'pleasant' is here under pressure from three directions: first, Eve's dream is a prognostic of the real Fall; consequently, the proleptic shadow of primal sin and its effects hangs over 'pleasant'. Second, the dream-

¹⁴ That such is the case is certainly due in part to the normal signification of 'pleasant' in the English language. But a more important reason, it seems to me, is the synonymy (or near-synonymy) subsisting between 'pleasant' and 'delightful' in Biblical, and

temptation, which reaches its climax in the passage quoted, is represented in extraordinarily physical terms ("...and to me held,/ Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part") involving a modulation from smell to touch, the lowest of the senses, and the one well understood to precede coitus, in accordance with the *quinque lineæ amoris* scheme (Kermode (1961) 87-99); as a result, a disquietingly sensual note is introduced into the text in the immediate vicinity of 'pleasant'. Third, intensifying the suggestions of sensuality is the close connection (in fact, a cause-effect connection) between 'pleasant' and the suspect signifier 'appetite' (v. supra) in the next line. Under these circumstances it is impossible for 'pleasant' to escape taint: assailed from three sides by contaminating influences, it is seeded with intimations of pleasure not only undutiful but corrupt.

A rather similar picture emerges when another reference to 'pleasant', occurring earlier in Eve's account of her dream, is analyzed (in this case, the signifier 'pleasing', only a few lines away, also contributes to the total effect):

...methought
 Close at mine ear one called me forth to walk
 With gentle voice, I thought it thine; it said,
 Why sleep'st thou Eve? Now is the **pleasant** time,
 The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
 To the night-warbling bird, that now awake
 Tunes sweetest his love-laboured song; now reigns
 Full-orbed the moon, and with more **pleasing** light
 Shadowy sets off the face of things... (V 35-43)

particularly in Old Testament, usage. This is something that perusal of the entries under 'pleasant' in any Bible Concordance will confirm.

When first encountered, 'pleasant' and 'pleasing' look innocent enough, and seem to be generally positive in their bearings; but as one reads further they begin retrospectively to acquire a quite changed complexion as one comes to realize that they form part of a Satanic exercise in cajolery intended to soften Eve up, to lull her into a condition of receptivity to sin. In retrospect, therefore, '**pleasant** time' and '**pleasing** light' come to signify something like 'a time and a light propitious to deception, sin, ill-doing'. In a word, 'pleasant' and 'pleasing' receive from their context a disquieting, even a sinister, colouring.

On only one more occasion in the epic does 'pleasant' carry a negative 'charge':

So they [the disloyal angels] among themselves in
pleasant vein
Stood scoffing [at the army of loyal angels for
the moment discomfited], highthened in their
thoughts beyond
All doubt of victory... (VI 628-30)

In this instance, 'pleasant' acquires its negative cast from the joint operation of contextual and etymological factors. From the contextual standpoint, the fact that the source of the scoffing is the renegade angels naturally undercuts any *prima facie* inclination to ascribe a positive value to 'pleasant'. But of greater importance is the etymological factor: Milton uses 'pleasant' in the only sense of that word that contains unfavourable overtones, faint though they be. This is *OED* sense 3a (now obsolete) where 'pleasant' denotes 'jocular', 'facetious'

(cf. French *plaisanter*, to jest). So 'pleasant' in this case amounts to something like 'scoffing' - which in imparting a negative colouring to the term also renders Milton's line tautological.

In a final demonstration of the power of context to influence 'intrinsic' meaning, we bring forward a trio of examples which illustrate the effect of a postlapsarian environment (linguistically speaking) on words (in this case a couple of variants of 'pleasure') that ordinarily carry a prelapsarian 'charge' within the signifying universe of *Paradise Lost*:

[The fallen angels' diffusive circlings around
the topics of] Fixed fate, free will,
foreknowledge absolute,

...

[though] Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy
Yet with a **pleasing** sorcery could charm
Pain for a while or anguish, and excite
Fallacious hope... (II 560-68)

...**pleasing** was his shape,¹⁵
And lovely, never since of serpent kind
Lovelier... (IX 503-5)

Greedily she [Eve] engorged without restraint,
And knew not eating death: satiate at length,
And heightened as with wine, jocund and boon,
Thus to her self she **pleasingly** began.¹⁶ (IX 791-94)

¹⁵ But Satan's 'pleasing' serpent shape is assumed for deceitful and destructive purposes.

¹⁶ 'Pleasingly', because Eve is pleased with the sound of her own voice, and, beyond that, because she is pleased with herself - meaning, in this context, that she is pleased with her sin, and pleased with herself for sinning.

A few pages back, in a footnote, we called attention to the way in which, in the lines "...a savoury odour blown,/ Grateful to appetite, more pleased my sense..." (IX 579-80), the suspect signifier 'appetite', from its position almost adjacent to 'pleased', infects it with intimations of fallenness. Elsewhere, Milton gains much the same effect through the use of carefully-chosen and carefully-positioned verbs (or participles). Confining ourselves to examples already brought forward earlier in this chapter, we notice how in the locution "...sunk in carnal pleasure" (VIII 593), the participle 'sunk' adds its quantum of contagion to the already tainted phrase 'carnal

* * * *

Whether some of the variant forms of 'pleasure', having regard to the ways and contexts in which they are used, are of mostly favourable (= unfallen) or mostly unfavourable (= fallen) complexion, has proved in a handful of cases to be undecidable. The signals emitted are too mixed. Of such truly ambiguous occurrences there are four.

Recounting the narrative of her creation, Eve tells Adam that just after waking to consciousness she came upon a still pool in which, "with inexperienced thought" (IV 457), she saw her own reflection:

As I bent down to look, just opposite,
A shape within the watery gleam appeared
Bending to look on me, I started back,
It started back, but **pleased** I soon returned,
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love... (IV 460-65)

There can be no doubt that the pleasure Eve takes at the sight of surpassing physical beauty (unaware that it is her own) is both innocent and unalloyed: in so far, 'pleased' (line 463) is certainly equivalent to 'delighted'. On the other hand, what appears to be a preoccupation with physical beauty (Eve, after all, confesses to Adam that when she first set eyes on him, she was disappointed with what she saw; she thought him "less fair,/ Less winning soft, less amiably mild,/ Than that smooth watery image" (478-80)) cannot bode well. It proves

pleasure'. Similarly, in "among themselves in pleasant vein/ [the disloyal angels] Stood scoffing..." (VI 628-29), the forceful signifier 'scoffing' intensifies the negative colouring of 'pleasant vein'; even as, in the passage quoted immediately above, the strikingly resonant verb 'engorged' combines with other telling

in fact to be Eve's vulnerable point, and the key to Satan's success in seducing her into sin: in both the dream-temptation and the real one (V 43-47, IX 532-48), the Adversary counts on making the first breach in her defences by praising - by overpraising - her beauty in what amounts to a "grotesque parody of Renaissance love-poetry" (Turner 262). His strategy works: the epic narrator attests that "Into the heart of Eve his [Satan's] words made way" (IX 550).

That the reader is aware, as Eve herself cannot be, of the fateful consequences of her overconcern with physical beauty has the effect of suspending a question mark retrospectively over the pleased delight she takes in her own beauty as mirrored in the waters of the glassy pool. For, viewing earlier events in the light of later ones, the reader can no longer evaluate Eve's reaction to her reflection as he did at first; it comes now to be seen in a double perspective: on the one hand, certainly, as pleased delight, innocent and unalloyed; on the other, as delight fraught with, and shadowed by, impending danger, approaching disaster. In other words, because of the superimposition of one perspective on another, Eve's 'pleased' response to her reflection in the pool acquires a genuinely ambiguous cast.

The operation of a double perspective, where the one optic challenges, calls in question, undercuts the other,

details to flood the adverb 'pleasingly' with intimations of fallenness and self-satisfied sin.

is in fact the mechanism at the heart of the ambiguities clouding some of the variant forms of 'pleasure' in the poem (as it is probably the mechanism at the heart of all ambiguity). The perspective that suffers challenge and undercutting is characterized by limited knowledge, the one that does the undercutting by superior knowledge, even omniscience. We see this pattern at work in the following instance:

So spake the omnipotent [after the Son's
Exaltation], and with his words
All seemed **well pleased**, all seemed, but were not
all. (V 616-17)

If the assembled angels (the good ones, anyhow) believe that the universal display of 'well-pleaseness' greeting God's decree reflects the genuine sentiments of all who heard it, they are deceived (as Uriel is to be deceived by the pleasing words and appearance of Satan in his cherub's disguise (III 654-735)). Surveying the heavenly business from the vantage-point of omniscience, the epic narrator knows better (better than God himself, at this precise moment?). He knows that the well-pleaseness displayed by some of the angels is simply a false front concealing rancorous envy and thoughts of rebellion, and he explicitly signals that knowledge by twice introducing into the text, immediately before and immediately after 'well pleased', the undercutting verb 'seemed', itself linked, in an interlacing dance, with the play on 'all'/'not all'. Thus environed, 'well pleased' acquires an ambiguous colouring, alluding at one and the same time to the

unfallen well-pleasedness of the loyal angels and the fallen ill-pleasedness (masquerading as well-pleasedness) of the disloyal ones.

In the closing Books of the epic, our First Father receives from the archangel Michael an extended lesson in right-seeing and right-judging, in the course of which there is offered to his gaze a tableau of matrimonial rejoicing. Interpreting it in terms of his prelapsarian frame of reference (the only one he has), he judges it to be a spectacle of "delight" (XI 596). Michael corrects him: "Judge not what is best/ By **pleasure**, though to nature seeming meet..." (603-4). Then, a few lines later, the archangel adds: "Those tents thou saw'st so **pleasant**, were the tents/ Of wickedness..." (607-8). As used here by Michael, 'pleasant' is ambiguous in its purport. That is so because there is no way of deciding whether he uses the word imagining how *Adam* (denied wide views by reason both of his limited knowledge and of his prelapsarian frame of reference) would construe the wedding-tents, or whether he uses it in accordance with his own agenda and outlook, meaning to portray the 'tents' for what they really are when viewed objectively from the vantage-point of superior knowledge. Under the first possibility (Michael's seeing the tents as if through Adam's eyes), 'pleasant' carries a favourable, prelapsarian 'charge', in line with its 'intrinsic' meaning. Under the second, its use is ironic, even sardonic, and its purport, accordingly, anything but favourable. As it does not admit of a choice between the

possibilities, instead suggesting both, 'pleasant' in this instance is genuinely ambiguous in its signification.

Finally, let us bring under scrutiny the concluding section of the epic poet's third invocation of his Muse, the one that opens Book VII:

Say goddess, what ensued when Raphael,
The affable archangel, had forewarned
Adam by dire example to beware
Apostasy, by what befell in heaven
To those apostates, lest the like befall
In Paradise to Adam or his race,
Charged not to touch the interdicted tree,
If they transgress, and slight that sole command,
So easily obeyed amid the choice
Of all tastes else to **please** their appetite,
Though wandering. (40-50)

The immediate context of the epic poet's utterance, as it applies to Adam and Eve, is the Paradisal state and the conditions of prelapsarian existence. On that basis, the signifier 'please' has an unfallen reference: even as Adam and Eve are "yet sinless" (VII 61), so is the purport of 'please'. And if the immediate context were the only one to reckon with, there the matter would end. But it is not: conspicuously cutting across the inner frame of the immediate context is an outer frame containing within its compass an allusion to one Fall, that of the renegade angels, and, "by [that] dire example", forewarning of a second, Adam and Eve's, "If they transgress". So our First Parents' current happy state is situated by the poet within the perspective of its undoing should they transgress. The intimations of undoing are abetted by the entanglement of 'please' with the suspect signifier 'appetite' (v. supra) in the same line, and with

'wandering', a marker of fallenness (v. chapter I), in the next. As a result, the favourable suggestions with which the two or so lines preceding 'please' imbue it are called in question by the remainder of the sentence which, in hinting at the possibility of pleasing 'wandering appetite', hints at the possibility of transgression and sin. Another way of putting this is to say that when 'please' is viewed in relation to the words that immediately precede it, it wears a sunny expression, and when viewed in relation to those that immediately follow, a deeply shadowed one. And whether it is more susceptible to the influence of the preceding words or of the following ones proves in the end to be undecidable. We have to do, therefore, with a truly ambiguous, a Janus-faced, signifier that at one and the same time sends out different - indeed, opposed - signals.

The four instances of ambiguous usage aside, there is nothing ambiguous about the rest of the evidence (and it is voluminous) marshalled in this chapter.¹⁷ That evidence unquestionably points to the conclusion that in its favourable sense, which barely differs from 'delight', 'pleasure' (or its variants) has reference to the Garden, to prelapsarian existence, and to unfallen sensations and

¹⁷ Not forming part of the evidence assembled in this chapter are variant forms of 'pleasure' of so formulaic and/or phatic a character as to be incapable of signalling much more about themselves than that fact alone. With such items I could do nothing, one way or the other. Referred to are locutions such as "Heavenly stranger, **please** to taste/ These bounties..." (V 397-98); "...and as they **please**,/ They [the angels] limb themselves..." (VI 351-52); "Thus far to try thee, Adam, I [God] was **pleased**..." (VIII 437); and so forth.

emotions, while in its unfavourable sense it (or its variants) functions as a postlapsarian marker bearing exclusively upon the epic's fallen characters, their emotions and sensations, their attitudes, actions and aspirations.

CONCLUSION

Surveying with an inclusive eye the body of Milton criticism produced over the last fifty or so years, Richard Bradford concludes that it is

governed by two overarching categories, which can be designated as Intentionalist and Theoretical. The Intentionalists are not so naively self-assured as to claim that Milton's writing transmits an exact version of his state of mind as he wrote or uttered the words we have on paper. Lewis and Empson differ radically, antithetically on this, but despite their differences they share the assumption that they are reading, listening to Milton. The theoreticians, however, desubstantiate the Intentionalist image of Milton as an individual human presence; they treat him as one element of a broader interpretative fabric in which matters of gender, politics, philosophy, linguistics, psychology are mapped out. The borderlines between these two critical categories are sometimes blurred... Nonetheless it is evident that there is an intrinsic difference between critics who debate the true nature of the effects that Milton intended to create and those who treat him as a subject, whose words are symptomatic of something they understand better than he did. (194-95)

Adopting Bradford's distinction, together with the terminology he enlists in framing it, we may say that the present enquiry is without question representative of the Intentionalist orientation. Far from being viewed, reductively, as a manifestation of merely symptomatic or diagnostic interest within the context of a broader

ideological-philosophical agenda brought to bear from outside the poem, Milton's performance in *Paradise Lost* is in this study the focus of attention in and for itself. To be more specific: what has throughout our enquiry occupied centre-stage is the epic poet's self-conscious intention,¹ consistently implemented in practice, of distinguishing scrupulously among the signifiers 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure', while at the same time referring each of them to a structural-thematic realm - Heaven, Paradise, Fallen Existence, as the case may be - particular to itself.

As this dissertation's 'brief' is to demonstrate that the differentiation of the keywords in question and their systematic referral to particular destinations truly reflects Milton's purposes and praxis in *Paradise Lost*, and as the persuasiveness of any such demonstration crucially depends on the weight of evidence brought to bear, it has proved necessary to bring forward a considerable quantity of it. However, a demonstration that failed to take account of all (or almost all) textual occurrences of the keywords in question, or that failed to account for apparent anomalies (by, say, calling attention to the epic poet's pursuit of special/shock effects), would be no demonstration: at best it would fail to convince; at worst, with its evidential base inadequate to its asseverations, it would run the risk of self-invalidation. In this case,

¹ And it is a literary-artistic intention, not a political, gendered, or proleptically Marxist one.

therefore, copiousness of exemplification is not only a necessity but a virtue.

It is a virtue for another reason too. As a result of copious exemplification, a dense accumulation of items stacks up under the heads of 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' respectively. When the reader encounters these items in massed form under one roof, so to speak, his response to them cannot but be different from what it is when he chances upon the same signifiers piecemeal and discretely in the course of a linear traverse of the poem's text. That the many, but scattered, references in the epic to 'bliss', 'delight', and 'pleasure' actually form a purposeful pattern of differentiation and selective allocation is something that easily escapes the reader's conscious notice when he comes upon them piecemeal. But the moment they are summoned from their far-flung outposts all over the text and are arrayed in three distinct musters, the picture changes dramatically: pattern and design now leap to the beholder's eye - the pattern of careful discrimination among the three keywords, the grand design of their selective routing to unique habitations. Here, if anywhere, the attentive reader can say, with Thomas Corns, "I have persistently felt the intelligence, precision and control of Milton's creative genius" (119).

In his book-length analysis of keywords in *Paradise Lost*, (none of which coincide with the three brought under scrutiny in this enquiry), Edward Le Comte poses a question (and gives an answer) which, though pertaining in a formal

sense to Milton's epic alone, has relevance in fact to any literary work where the normal reading process of linear progression through the text results in the reader's encountering keywords in a piecemeal fashion. Writes Le Comte:

There are those who will argue that what a reader is not fully conscious of in a poem can be of no importance. If most of the recurrences [of keywords] are...so scattered and small that an expert reader...does not divine their presence, in what way do they matter? The answer is that they work, however inconspicuously, for the unity and solidity of the poem. There is bound to grow in us, as we read, the feeling (however little we seek to verify it) that we have been here and here before. In this quite simple way Milton makes the world...and the style of his poem familiar. (1953:46-47)

Le Comte's point about the subliminal influence exerted by keyword recurrence applies as much to the ones investigated in this study as to those he investigates in his own.

For the reader to become aware of the premeditatedness underlying Milton's handling of keywords (whether imperceptibly, through a process of mental osmosis, as adumbrated by Le Comte, or, more dramatically, through his being confronted by an array of keyword-musters) is for him to become aware of the epic poet's extraordinary deliberateness and self-consciousness as wordsmith and as literary artist more generally. Anne Ferry's words are much to the purpose in this connection:

Paradise Lost is a remarkable achievement of self-conscious artistry. The more closely we study it, the more evidence we find of Milton's sophisticated mastery of style, his poetic control not only over sustained large effects, but over the minutest details of language. (xiv-xv)

In the fourth and last of his invocations (actually, a quasi-invocation as it "avoids direct address to the...Muse" (Fowler (ed.) 851)) at the beginning of Book IX, the epic poet speaks of his

...celestial patroness, who deigns
Her nightly visitation unimplored,
And dictates to me slumbering, or inspires
Easy my unpremeditated verse... (21-24)

Milton's claim that his verse is 'unpremeditated', as being the product not of his own efforts but solely of the inspiration vouchsafed him by his Muse, is a formulaic and conventional pose reflecting his compliance with epic poetry's 'code of practice', and specifically with the well-understood 'rule' requiring the epic poet to adopt "the *persona* of the inspired bard and the formulas of celestial inspiration" (Steadman 83). In reality no poet in the English language has been more premeditated than Milton. We may therefore affirm, adapting the first stanza coda of Shelley's Skylark poem, that in *Paradise Lost* John Milton pours out his "full heart/ In profuse strains of *premeditated* art".

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