

A Study on "Paradise Lost"

E. JANET RUGG

Presented in prose form, *Paradise Lost* would still be recognized by the most casual reader as poetry. It has a cadence independent of strophe or metre, a certain motility produced by devices of resonance and syllable grouping, which combines satisfying euphony with perfection of diction and achieves an exalted poetic tone that is enhanced further by the mystical subject.

In such lines as

The infernal Serpent; he it was
whose guile,

Stirred up with envy and
revenge, deceived

The mother of mankind,

There is an alliterative resonance which sweeps us into a chill dread and dislike of the Deceiver, who

- - - with ambition's aim

Against the throne and monarchy
of God

Raised impious war in Heaven - - -.

We are gratified at the thought of his confinement,

In adamant chains and penal fire.

A remarkable use of two-syllable emphases attains upon occasion a sinister rhythm like the beat of jungle war drums, in which an occasional break of emphasis (although not of rhythm) serves but to intensify the effect, and seems rather to be a part of the intricate pattern than a departure from it. In the following, the breaks in emphasis are italicized, as,

Against the throne and monarchy
of God

Raised impious war in Heaven
and battle proud,

With vain attempt. Him the

Almighty Power

Hurled headlong flaming from the
ethereal sky

Reserved him to more wrath; for
now the thought

Both of lost happiness and last-
ing pain

Torments him; round he throws
his baleful eyes

That witnessed huge affliction and
dismay,

Mixed with obdurate pride and
steadfast hate.

At the same time, each of these variations seems to increase the tempo of the narrative.

If the poem is to be considered an allegory, it is, of course, a continuous figure of speech. However, the author is relatively sparing in his use of particular metaphor and simile, depending rather upon direct, vigorous, descriptive words to limn the images and action. Such words as *seduced*, *foul*, *infernal*, *envy*, *revenge*, *ambitious aim*, *baleful*, *fierce contention*, do not place any strain on the imagination but create a forceful picture. Wherever simile is used, it is largely the Homeric or epic simile which is employed.

Ornamentation in Book I of the *Paradise Lost* consists in a profusion of pictorial and musical words rather than in more intricate devices. So carefully, so precisely is each word chosen both for connotative and for phonetic values, that the effect of ceaseless struggle and on-rushing evil never falters; and if one attempts to isolate the words which are indispensable to the design, even the articles and prepositions seem to demand special consideration.

If there is any intricacy of stylistic construction, it is in the phrasing, which is often complex and involuted to meet poetic requirements; but even this factor is turned to good account in furthering the sense of relentless power and determination with which evil presses on to doom.

It has been said that poetry is the mother tongue of man, and surely this is

confirmed in Milton's great work. Through poetry he unfolds the emotional sublimity of elemental passions,—

- - - the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal
hate,

And courage - - -;
and gives full expression to the concept
of "utmost power."

On "Le Petit Prince"

EULAH DAVIS

Le Petit Prince by Antoine de Saint Exupery, although presumably written as a child's book, reveals such a skillful use of French and sets forth such an estimation of the world and appreciation of mysticism that it is worthy of examination if for no other reason than a consideration of the symbols used.

The dexterity with which these symbols are formed is enough to cause speculation about the writer who, in one instance, makes a single rose different from all other roses by having it symbolize love, and in another, makes a king and a businessman representatives of power. Power is but one of the vices of the world that he attacks through symbolism, and love but one of the virtues, but they show his romantic nature and his sensitivity to beauty.

Antoine de St. Exupery was sensitive to beauty from his earliest years and had a love of music that later formed his rhythmic style and influenced his play on words. Essentially a philosopher, he lived in the two worlds of earth and sky, and might never have done so had he

not been a failure first. From his birth in 1900, the one thought that was developed by his family was his service in the merchant marine. He was well on his way to fulfilling their desires when he failed an examination that would have made him an officer. His family was greatly disappointed, but he was happy, for he was free to study flying.

He learned to fly, and by describing some of his experiences he became Antoine de St. Exupery, writer. In *Le Petit Prince* a flyer is forced down in the desert, and while repairing his plane, he meets The Little Prince; in reality St. Exupery himself made a forced landing in the desert while on a long distance flight from Paris to Saignon, Africa. In reality also, St. Exupery always wore a scarf with the ends streaming over his shoulders. In the book, every picture of The Little Prince shows him with a scarf that streams over his shoulders. These two characters are used as symbols of the spirit of Man that seeks illumination in time of adversity and stress; and of the wisdom, understanding, and sym-