



EDITED BY

NICHOLAS
McDOWELL

NIGEL
SMITH

≡ The Oxford Handbook of
MILTON

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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Edited by

NICHOLAS McDOWELL

and

NIGEL SMITH

OXFORD
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PREFACE

9 December 2008 saw the 400th anniversary of John Milton's birth. It also saw the publication of the first instalment of Oxford's *Complete Works of John Milton*—the 1671 Poems, edited by Laura Lunger Knoppers. A further ten volumes will appear over the next few years. The Oxford *Works* will be the first complete works since the Columbia edition of the 1930s. While the project is still very much ongoing, the editors of these volumes are already excavating new contexts for Milton's life and work and proposing new interpretations of both the poetry and prose. As well as throwing fresh light on all aspects of Milton's writing, the Oxford *Works* will have to take account of the huge increase in Milton scholarship over the last fifty years. The rise of critical interest in Milton's political and religious prose is perhaps the most striking aspect of Milton studies in recent times, a consequence in great part of the increasingly fluid relations between literary and historical disciplines. The Oxford *Works* looks set both to embody the interest in Milton's political and religious contexts in the last generation and to inaugurate a new phase in Milton studies through closer integration of the poetry and prose, in particular some of the prose that has been neglected due to the relative rarity, inaccessibility, and age of edited texts.

The Oxford Handbook of Milton similarly seeks to incorporate developments in what can broadly be termed historical criticism over the last twenty years and to place both the poetry and the prose in a more continuous, unfolding biographical and historical context. Consequently this volume is unusual in the amount of space it gives to discussions of the prose while still aiming to offer wide-ranging, diverse interpretations of the poetry, open to the full range of Milton's aesthetic accomplishment in verse. It is divided into eight sections—three on the poetry, three on the prose, arranged in broadly chronological sequence, while the opening essays explore what we know about Milton's biography and what it tells us, and the concluding essays offer perspectives on Milton's massive influence on eighteenth-century and Romantic writers. Several of the volume editors of the *Works* have also contributed essays to the *Handbook*, and they have been encouraged to elaborate on their current research in ways that may not be suitable to the formal strictures of an edition. Topics which are currently attracting the most interest in Milton scholarship are thus to the fore in the essays collected here: liberty, encompassing republicanism, national identity, and gender relations; theology, encompassing heresy, toleration, and biblical interpretation; and the history of the book, encompassing issues of editing, publishing, and readership.

But while the space given to discussion of the prose in what follows tends to necessitate engagement with historical context, the contributors, who are based in seven countries and range from veteran Miltonists to relatively new names, were invited with the intention of capturing something of the diversity of critical approaches to the Miltonic canon. Some of the essays on the poetry display the unparalleled virtues of close reading, of exhaustive attention to minute matters of language, form, and rhythm. Yet the rewards of close reading need not be derived only from the verse: essays here illuminate the literary power and intricacy of the prose, in Latin as well as English. Few, however, would deny that the reason why Milton still matters four hundred years on is above all *Paradise Lost*, and that fact is registered in the eight essays devoted to the epic here. *Samson Agonistes* has become the most controversial of Milton's works in the light of world events in the last decade and so is given more room in this *Handbook* than it has found in earlier, less capacious collections.

Of course even thirty-eight essays cannot do justice to the variety and richness of Milton's life, mind, and art. If all thirty-eight essays had been devoted to *Paradise Lost*, we could still not hope to claim anything like 'comprehensive' coverage of the poem; and while we have essays on topics stretching from the Latin verse to the Commonplace Book to the use of *Paradise Lost* in eighteenth-century gardening manuals, we would like to have found space for greater consideration of, say, Milton's Italian verse, or of the influence of the polemical prose on leading figures of the American and French Revolutions. While we hope that readers find much in the essays below with which they can consent, some will probably discover an approach with which they disagree. It will quickly become evident that the contributors disagree among themselves about how we should read and regard Milton. But that is the point of offering, for instance, four different critical perspectives on *Samson Agonistes*. The *Handbook* has been assembled in the spirit of the Miltonic vision of heretical reading in *Areopagitica*: 'perfection consists in this, that out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportional arises the goodly and graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure'.

Chapter 4 first appeared in *Metaphrastes. Or Gained in Translation: Essays and Translations in Honour of Robert H. Jordan* (Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 9; Belfast, 2004); we are grateful to the publisher for permission to reproduce it here. Chapter 26 appeared in *Review of English Studies*, 59 (2008); we are grateful to the editors for permission to reproduce this article.

The editors are indebted to Andrew McNeillie for commissioning us to edit this collection and more generally for his commitment to publishing on Milton, and to Jacqueline Baker for her patience and support during the lengthy process of compiling such a large book. Nicholas McDowell would also especially like to thank the Leverhulme Trust for the award of a 2007 Philip Leverhulme Prize, which granted precious time to work on the volume.

N. McD. and N. S.

December 2008

CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xi
<i>Note on the Text and List of Abbreviations</i>	xii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xiii
<i>Milton's Life: Some Significant Dates</i>	xviii

PART I: LIVES

1. 'Ere half my days': Milton's Life, 1608–1640	3
EDWARD JONES	
2. John Milton: The Later Life (1641–1674)	26
NICHOLAS VON MALTZAHN	

PART II: SHORTER POEMS

3. The 'adorning of my native tongue': Latin Poetry and Linguistic Metamorphosis	51
ESTELLE HAAN	
4. Milton's Early English Poems: The Nativity Ode, 'L'Allegro', 'Il Penseroso'	66
GORDON TESKEY	
5. 'A thousand fantasies': The Lady and the <i>Maske</i>	89
ANN BAYNES COIRO	
6. 'Lycidas' and the Influence of Anxiety	112
NICHOLAS McDOWELL	
7. The Troubled, Quiet Endings of Milton's English Sonnets	136
JOHN LEONARD	

PART III: CIVIL WAR PROSE, 1641–1645

8. The Anti-Episcopal Tracts: Republican Puritanism and the Truth in Poetry 155
NIGEL SMITH
9. 'A Law in this matter to himself': Contextualizing Milton's Divorce Tracts 174
SHARON ACHINSTEIN
10. Whose Liberty? The Rhetoric of Milton's Divorce Tracts 186
DIANE PURKISS
11. Milton, *Areopagitica*, and the Parliamentary Cause 200
ANN HUGHES
12. *Areopagitica* and Liberty 218
BLAIR HOBY

PART IV: REGICIDE, REPUBLICAN, AND
RESTORATION PROSE, 1649–1673

13. 'The strangest piece of reason': Milton's *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* 241
STEPHEN M. FALLON
14. Milton's Regicide Tracts and the Uses of Shakespeare 252
NICHOLAS McDOWELL
15. John Milton, European: The Rhetoric of Milton's Defences 272
JODI RAYMOND
16. *Defensio Prima* and the Latin Poets 291
ESTELLE HAAN
17. 'Nothing nobler then a free Commonwealth': Milton's Later Vernacular Republican Tracts 305
N. H. KEEBLE
18. Disestablishment, Toleration, the New Testament Nation: Milton's Late Religious Tracts 325
ELIZABETH SAUER
19. Milton and National Identity 342
PAUL STEVENS

PART V: WRITINGS ON EDUCATION, HISTORY, THEOLOGY

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 20. The Genres of Milton's Commonplace Book | 367 |
| WILLIAM POOLE | |
| 21. Milton, the Hartlib Circle, and the Education of the Aristocracy | 382 |
| TIMOTHY RAYLOR | |
| 22. Conquest and Slavery in Milton's <i>History of Britain</i> | 407 |
| MARTIN DZELZAINIS | |
| 23. <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> : An England that Might Have Been | 424 |
| GORDON CAMPBELL and THOMAS N. CORNS | |

PART VI: *PARADISE LOST*

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 24. Writing Epic: <i>Paradise Lost</i> | 439 |
| CHARLES MARTINDALE | |
| 25. 'A mind of most exceptional energy': Verse Rhythm in <i>Paradise Lost</i> | 462 |
| JOHN CREASER | |
| 26. Editing Milton: The Case against Modernization | 480 |
| STEPHEN B. DOBRANSKI | |
| 27. The 'World' of <i>Paradise Lost</i> | 496 |
| KAREN L. EDWARDS | |
| 28. <i>Paradise Lost</i> and Heresy | 510 |
| NIGEL SMITH | |
| 29. God | 525 |
| STUART CURRAN | |
| 30. Eve, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , and Female Interpretation | 534 |
| SUSAN WISEMAN | |
| 31. The Politics of <i>Paradise Lost</i> | 547 |
| MARTIN DZELZAINIS | |

PART VII: 1671 POEMS: *PARADISE REGAINED* AND *SAMSON AGONISTES*

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 32. 'Englands Case': Contexts of the 1671 Poems
LAURA LUNGER KNOPPERS | 571 |
| 33. <i>Paradise Regained</i> and the Memory of <i>Paradise Lost</i>
JOHN ROGERS | 589 |
| 34. <i>Samson Agonistes</i> and 'Single Rebellion'
R. W. SERJEANTSON | 613 |
| 35. <i>Samson Agonistes</i> : The Force of Justice and the Violence of Idolatry
REGINA M. SCHWARTZ | 632 |
| 36. <i>Samson Agonistes</i> and Milton's Sensible Ethics
ELIZABETH D. HARVEY | 649 |

PART VIII: ASPECTS OF INFLUENCE

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 37. Milton Epic and Bucolic: Empire and Readings of
<i>Paradise Lost</i> , 1667–1837
ANNE-JULIA ZWIERLEIN | 669 |
| 38. Miltonic Romanticism
JOSEPH WITTREICH | 687 |
| <i>Index</i> | 705 |

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Early reader's index for *Paradise Regain'd* (1671). Courtesy of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 573
2. Early reader's index for *Samson Agonistes* (1671). Courtesy of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 574

NOTE ON THE TEXT AND LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The place of publication is London unless otherwise stated. All biblical references are to the Authorized Version (AV) unless otherwise stated. All references to Milton's poetry are to *Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, 2nd edn. (Harlow, 1997) (CSP) and *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd edn. (Harlow, 1998) (FPL), unless otherwise stated. All references to Milton's vernacular prose are to the *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. D. M. Wolfe et al., 8 vols. (New Haven, 1953–82) (CPW), unless otherwise stated. Milton's Latin prose is sometimes cited from *The Works of John Milton*, ed. Frank Allen Patterson et al. (New York, 1931–8) (CW). Full references are always given within each individual essay other than for the texts whose abbreviations are listed here.

BL	British Library
Campbell, <i>Chronology</i>	Gordon Campbell, <i>A Milton Chronology</i> (Harlow, 1997)
CPB	Commonplace Book
Darbishire	<i>The Early Lives of Milton</i> , ed. Helen Darbishire (1932)
French, <i>Records</i>	<i>Life Records of John Milton</i> , ed. J. M. French, 5 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J., 1949–58)
Lewalski, <i>Life</i>	Barbara Lewalski, <i>The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography</i> (Oxford, 2000)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
Parker	William R. Parker, <i>Milton: A Biography</i> , 2nd edn., rev. Gordon Campbell, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1996)
PL	<i>Paradise Lost</i>
PR	<i>Paradise Regained</i>
SA	<i>Samson Agonistes</i>

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MILTON'S LIFE: SOME SIGNIFICANT DATES

- 1608 9 December. Born to John Milton and his wife Sara, at The Spread eagle, Bread St., London.
- 1615 24 November. Brother Christopher born.
- 1620 Enters St Paul's School, under Alexander Gill. Also tutored at home, possibly earlier, by Thomas Young.
- 1625 12 February. Admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge, under William Chappell.
27 March James VI and I dies; Charles I accedes to the English throne.
- 1626 Possibly rusticated temporarily. Returns to Cambridge under Nathaniel Tovey.
?November. Writes epigrams on Gunpowder Plot.
- 1627 June 11. Lends his future father-in-law, Richard Powell, £500.
- 1629 16 March. Takes BA.
- 1632 'On Shakespeare' published, anonymously.
3 July. Takes MA.
Retires to family home at Hammersmith to study.
- 1634 29 September. *A Maske* ('Comus') performed during the installation of Thomas Egerton, the Lord President of Wales, at Ludlow Castle.
- 1637 Moves with parents to Horton, Buckinghamshire.
A Maske published, anonymously.
3 April. Mother Sara dies.
10 August. Edward King is drowned.
September. Considers entering Inns of Court.
- 1638 'Lycidas' is published in the memorial volume for Edward King, *Iusta Edouardo King Naufrago*.

May. Begins tour of western Europe, passing through France, then Florence, Siena, Lucca, Rome, Bologna, Ferrara, Verona, Venice, Milan, and Naples, and returning by way of Geneva.

27 August. Charles Diodati buried.

1639 Charles I invades Scotland.

July. Returns home.

1640 Moves to St Bride's Churchyard. Begins to teach nephews Edward and John Phillips, and some aristocratic children. The Long Parliament convened.

? *Epitaphium Damonis* published.

June 30. Takes Richard Powell's lands in Wheatley for nonpayment of debt.

1641 May. *Of Reformation* published.

?June. *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* published.

July. *Animadversions* published.

1642 February. *The Reason for Church Government* published.

May. *Apology against a Pamphlet* ['for Smectymnuus'] published. Marries Mary Powell.

?July. Mary Powell returns to her family home near Oxford.

August. The Civil War begins.

October. Christopher Milton enlists with Royalists at Reading.

23 October. Battle of Edgehill.

1643 1 August. *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* published.

1644 2 February. Second edition of *Doctrine and Discipline* published.

5 June. *Of Education* published.

2 July. Battle of Marston Moor.

6 August. *The Judgement of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce* published.

23 November. *Areopagitica* published.

28 December. Summoned before House of Lords.

1645 4 March. *Tetrachordon* and *Colasterion* published.

?September. Moves to larger house at Barbican.

6 October. *Poems of Mr. John Milton, Both English and Latin . . . 1645* registered for publication.

Makes plans to marry the daughter of a Dr Davis. Mary Powell returns.

14 June. Battle of Naseby.

1646 2 January. *Poems . . . 1645* published.

29 July. Daughter Anne born.

- 1647 March. Father John dies.
21 April. Moves to a smaller house in High Holborn, near Lincoln's Inn Fields.
- 1648 25 October. Daughter Mary born.
- 1649 30 January. Execution of King Charles I.
13 February. *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* published.
March. Invited to become Secretary for the Foreign Tongues by Council of State.
15 March. Appointed Secretary at £288 per year; ordered to answer *Eikon Basilike*.
11 May. Salmasius's *Defensio Regia* appears.
16 May. *Observations* upon the *Articles of Peace* published.
6 October. *Eikonoklastes* published.
19 November. Given lodgings for official work in Scotland Yard.
- 1650 Ordered by Council of State to answer Salmasius.
- 1651 24 February. *Defensio pro populo Anglicano* published.
16 March. Son John born.
Milton family moves to a house in Petty France, Westminster.
- 1652 February. Becomes totally blind towards the end of the month.
2 May. Daughter Deborah born.
5 May. Wife Mary dies, probably from complications following childbirth.
?16 June. Son John dies.
August. Following several earlier attacks on the *Defensio*, including Filmer's, Pierre du Moulin's *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* published, in reply to Milton's *Defensio*; Milton ordered to reply by the Council of State.
- 1653 20 February. Writes a letter recommending that Andrew Marvell become his assistant.
3 September. Salmasius dies.
- 1654 30 May. *Defensio Secunda* published.
- 1655 Allowed to use amanuensis to take dictation for him in Secretaryship. Resumes private scholarship, prepares Latin dictionary and Greek lexicon; possibly works on *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost*. Salary reduced from £288 to £150, but made pension for life.
8 August. *Defensio Pro Se* published.
- 1656 12 November. Marries Katherine Woodcock.

- 1657 19 October. Daughter Katherine born.
- 1658 3 February. Katherine Woodcock dies.
17 March. Daughter Katherine dies.
?May. Edits and publishes manuscript of Sir Walter Raleigh's *Cabinet Council*.
3 September. Oliver Cromwell dies.
- 1659 ?16 February. *A Treatise of Civil Power* published.
22 April. Richard Cromwell dissolves Parliament.
7 May. Republic restored.
August. *The Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church* published.
20 October. Writes *Letter to a Friend, Concerning the Ruptures of the Commonwealth* (not published until 1659).
- 1660 3 March. *Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* published in its first edition.
April. *Brief Notes upon a Sermon* published.
May. Goes into hiding to avoid retaliation for supporting regicide.
29 May. Accession of Charles II.
16 June. Parliament looks into the possibility of having Milton arrested.
27 August. *Defensio pro populo Anglicano* and *Eikonoklastes* publicly burned.
29 August. Not excluded from Act of Indemnity.
?September. Takes a house in Holborn, near Red Lion Fields; soon moves again to Jewin St.
?October. Arrested and imprisoned.
15 December. Released by order of Parliament. On 17 December Marvell protests in Parliament about the exorbitance of Milton's jail fees (£150).
- 1662 Begins tutoring Thomas Ellwood.
19 May. Act of Uniformity.
?June. Sonnet to Sir Henry Vane published. Vane executed 14 June.
- 1663 24 February. Marries Elizabeth Minshull. Moves from Jewin Street to 'a House in the *artillery*-walk leading to *Bunhill Fields*'. On bad terms with his daughters; new wife allegedly had the two eldest daughters apprenticed as lacemakers.
- 1665 Ellwood secures a house for Milton in Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire, to escape from the plague in London.
- 1667 ?August. *Paradise Lost* published in ten books.
- 1668 *Paradise Lost* reissued with a new title page, the arguments, and other preliminary matter.

- 1669 June. *Accidence Commenced Grammar* published.
- 1670 *History of Britain* published.
- 1671 *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* published together.
- 1672 ?May. *Art of Logic* published.
- 1673 ?May. *Of True Religion* published.
 ?November. *Poems, &c. upon Several Occasions . . . 1673* published.
- 1674 L'Estrange refuses licence for Milton's Letters of State.
 May. *Epistolae Familiares* and *Prolusiones* published.
 ?2 July. Second edition of *Paradise Lost* in twelve books published.
 Between 8 and 10 November. Dies in Bunhill house.

PART I

LIVES

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CHAPTER 1

‘ERE HALF MY DAYS’: MILTON’S LIFE, 1608–1640

EDWARD JONES

THE life story of John Milton, recounted five times within thirty years of his death and over a hundred times since 1700, is remarkable both for the interest it has elicited and the relatively small amount of corroborated evidence upon which it is based.¹ That it is exceptionally well documented for its time (which it is) does not ensure the accuracy of its details, many of which rest upon the porous foundation of recollections from friends, relatives, acquaintances, and enemies. Milton’s earliest biographers left to their successors the formidable tasks of verifying contemporary memory and local legends through means other than personal testimony. The pioneering effort of David Masson in the nineteenth century set a high standard. His multi-volume account of Milton and his times and its attention to documentary evidence were emulated in the twentieth century by J. Milton French, who produced a five-volume set of life records, and William Riley Parker, whose two-volume biography

¹ The phrase ‘early biographers’ traditionally refers to five 17th-c. sources: John Aubrey, *Minutes of the Life of Mr. John Milton* (c.1681–2), Bodleian MS Aubrey 8; Cyriack Skinner, *The Life of Mr. John Milton*, MS Wood D4, fos. 140–4; Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses, Fasti*, 1, cols. 880–4 (1691–2); Edward Phillips, *The Life of Mr. John Milton*, in *Letters of State, Written by Mr. John Milton* (1694); and John Toland, *The Life of John Milton*, in *A Complete Collection of the Historical, Political, and Miscellaneous Works of John Milton*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam and London, 1698), but it has also been used to include 18th-c. commentaries by the Richardsons, Fenton, Johnson, and Warton. Modern biography typically dates from Masson.

includes an archival-based biographical commentary of almost 600 pages.² The accomplishments of these works combined with their attention to seventeenth-century sources have given Milton biography its day in the sun. Since the publication of Parker's volumes in 1968, scholars have habitually turned to his findings and/or consulted Masson and French to solve biographical puzzles that have periodically surfaced. This trend continued through the mid-1990s when Gordon Campbell's updating of Parker's research revealed the need to search more thoroughly the documentary canvas. The ultimate result of that revision, *A Milton Chronology*, not only uncovered new material and corrected previous findings, but issued an important caution—that French and Parker conducted much of their work through correspondence and thus reported some of it without looking at original documents.³

The ensuing account of Milton's first thirty-two years underscores the need to be aware of the current state of Milton biography by discussing material which, in some instances, has received no attention from previous commentators. At the same time, this half-life will not be entirely new, as it should not be, although it will juxtapose well-known with little-known facts outside the well-trodden biographical path in order to point to unexplored areas of inquiry. Since the evidence for Milton's early life, particularly his childhood and adolescence, will virtually be non-existent (other than christenings and burials found in parish registers and overseer accounts recording apprenticeships and indentures, records for pre-adults were not typically kept), other ways of contextualizing this period, most notably through the professional career of his father, will be central. The belief that evidence remains to be found, a sentiment shared by all who have conducted first-hand study of Milton documents, will also inform this narrative, at once indebted to previous efforts and mindful of its own vulnerability to error in offering corrections to past work. The most memorable parts of Milton's life story often lack verification other than hearsay testimony, and biographers, scrupulous and otherwise, tend to focus upon events which depict him as an individual of talent and shortcomings. The following account will not gain much advantage in this regard. None of the contexts explored in Milton's first three decades conjures up the image of a blind poet composing aloud his distinctive epic to amanuenses. Nor do they offer the chance to discuss his three marriages, a colourful first to a woman half his age who leaves him after a month, reconciles with him three years later, and eventually bears him four children; and two subsequent marriages to women he never sees. In their place unarresting but not uninteresting records from the church, the English legal system, and the state will be brought forward to

² David Masson, *The Life of John Milton: Narrated in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of his Time* (1859–80; repr. New York, 1946), 6 vols. plus Index (1894); rev. edn. of vol. i (1881); vol. ii (1894); French, *Records*; Parker.

³ Campbell, *Chronology*, p. ix. For an overview of how documentary material can shape Milton's biography, see Campbell's 'The Life Records', in Thomas N. Corns (ed.), *A Companion to Milton* (Oxford, 2001), 483–98. An update of some of Campbell's findings appears in Edward Jones, 'Select Chronology: "Speak of things at hand/Useful"', in Angelica Duran (ed.), *A Concise Companion to Milton* (Oxford, 2007), 217–34.

complement, correct, or, at the very least, gauge the viability of testimonial evidence that has held sway since the seventeenth century. The ultimate focus will rest on Milton in context, directly or obliquely linked to a location, either performing a particular action or being exposed to a set of events. Sustained contextualization of this kind has arguably not been accorded a sufficient place in Milton's biographical history; if applied, biographical details long considered lost can be recovered or discovered. For the purposes of this Handbook, Milton's early life has been divided into three parts: his years prior to entering the University of Cambridge (1608–24), his seven years of formal education (1625–32), and the post-university period of 'studious retirement' (1632–40) which encompasses his years at Hammersmith and Horton, his Continental tour, and the initial eighteen months of living on his own in London.

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND EARLY EDUCATION (1608–1624)

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The undeniable fact regarding Milton's youth is that there is no documentary evidence directly concerned with him apart from the entry in the All Hallows, Bread Street, baptism register establishing his christening on 20 December 1608. Biographers rely on Milton himself for the day and time of his birth (6.30 on the morning of 9 December 1608), information he recorded in his family Bible over three decades later.⁴ Comments made to John Aubrey by Milton's widow Elizabeth Minshull and his nephew Edward Phillips do not inspire confidence. She could not remember the date of her husband's birth; he assigned it to 1606. Aubrey made a note to ask Milton's brother Christopher for verification, but it is not clear that he ever obtained it.⁵ Dates Milton supplies for other members of his family have also withstood scrutiny, though in some instances (the birth dates of his two nephews) he approximates months instead of specific days. The inconsistency that marks testimony from his widow, brother, and nephew, however, speaks to how the power of contemporary recall can overshadow the void of evidence that often underlies Milton's life story. The void is sometimes considerable: aside from Milton's christening in the year of his birth only one other piece of evidence bearing his name is extant prior to his entrance into Cambridge University in 1625. The occasion—the marriage settlement between his sister Anne and Edward Phillips on 27 November 1623—provides his earliest and his mother's only extant signature.⁶ Both serve as

⁴ The surviving Bible is in the British Library (Add. MS 32310); the parish registers for All Hallows, Bread Street are in the Guildhall Library (GLMS 5031).

⁵ Bodleian MS Aubrey 8.

⁶ The document can be found in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (MS MA 953).

witnesses. In all likelihood, some records of Milton's early education at St Paul's probably were created and would have been available if not for the Great Fire of 1666. Such an absence, given Milton's reputation as one of the most learned men of his age, amounts to a considerable and frustrating loss. The speculative industry of later biographers in an effort to fill that gap, albeit often admirable, cannot compensate.⁷

The two records we do have for Milton's first fifteen years, if understood in their respective contexts, nonetheless shed considerable light on his early life. Additional entries from the All Hallows parish registers reveal a starting point from which to date and keep in view the family's Bread Street residency (an infant child was buried on 12 May 1601), the number of children from the marriage of John Milton and Sara Jeffrey (six, though their daughter Anne's existence is determined through other records), how many survive infancy (three), and the presence of Milton's maternal grandmother as a member of the family until her death in 1611.⁸ The second record—Milton's signature on his sister's marriage settlement—also turns out to be more revealing than it seems at first glance. For the marriage marks the beginning of the family's expansion and furnishes additional ways for scholars to monitor the lives of its members. Anne Milton's marriage to Edward Phillips establishes the family's first presence in Westminster in the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Over the next decade upwards of fifty records will be created regarding her family, some of which provide significant insight into the activities of her parents and brothers in Bread Street.⁹ Only in the last few years have Milton biographers such as John Shawcross begun to consider how the orbit of the Milton extended family impacts our understanding of his life, not just his early childhood and pre-university years but its entirety.¹⁰ Milton's signature on a contract is befitting in another way because a significant number of his extant life records survive in the English legal system, most in the equity court of Chancery. In fact, while literary scholars have expended great effort to establish dates for Milton's juvenilia, the likelihood of discovering unassailable proof of Milton writing is far less than finding the young Milton taking part (as he does with his sister's marriage contract) in a business-related affair in the interests of his family.

It was J. Milton French who paved the road to such an approach in the first half of the twentieth century, and besides Gordon Campbell, few have travelled down it.¹¹

⁷ The two most often cited efforts are those by Donald Lemen Clark, *John Milton at St. Paul's School* (New York, 1948), and Harris F. Fletcher's *The Intellectual Development of John Milton* (Urbana, Ill., 1956), 2 vols. See also ch. 1 in James Holly Hanford, *John Milton, Englishman* (New York, 1949).

⁸ The parish registers of All Hallows, Bread Street were published by the Harleian Society, 43 (1913). The Milton family entries appear on pp. 17, 18, 169, 174, and 175.

⁹ Housed in the City of Westminster Archives, the parish chest records for St Martin's include the baptism and burial registers, churchwarden accounts (F3), overseer accounts (F350–8), miscellaneous collections for plague assistance (F3355) and bridge repairs (F3346), and a poor rate ledger (F1011). The Phillips family appears in all of them. Records resulting from Anne Milton Phillips's second marriage to Thomas Agar appear in a few.

¹⁰ See *The Arms of the Family: The Significance of John Milton's Relatives and Associates* (Lexington, Ky., 2004).

¹¹ *Milton in Chancery: New Chapters in the Lives of the Poet and his Father* (New York, 1939); Campbell, *Chronology*.

French uncovered a substantial cache of evidence regarding the environment in which Milton resided for the first sixteen years of his life. As a scrivener, John Milton senior's livelihood required extensive documentation, and it is that documentation which records his growing prosperity during the first decades of the seventeenth century. Conducting his business out of the family home, Milton senior eventually brought both of his sons into direct contact with it: Christopher will provide legal service for his father in the 1630s, while his elder brother will co-sign a document to purchase property with his father on 25 May 1627, in the same parish in which his sister resided. A little more than two weeks later, as a result of a business arrangement between his father and Richard Powell, Milton begins a seventeen-year financial relationship with his future father-in-law. There may be an element of coincidence in all of this, but it does appear that by following the Milton family money, one has an opportunity to keep the members of the family in clearer view.¹² As these contexts pertain to Milton's early biography, unexamined paths emerge: John Milton senior's professional career furnishes a steady supply of evidence which originated in the family home to which his eldest son was exposed. These records, considered with a knowledge of Milton's shrewd engagement with legal and financial affairs in his adult years, had an impact, arguably a lasting and positive one. The business dealings of the father, however, also provide a key to the family whereabouts in the 1620s; the nominal home remains at Bread Street, but property purchases suggest alternative locations for the family during the periodic outbreaks of the plague during the 1620s and 1630s. A defining element is the coordination between the financial affairs of the father and the widening family sphere. Rather than consider Anne Milton's marriage to Edward Phillips as a departure from the family home, biographers gain advantage by seeing the event as an expansion of the family's financial options. The increased links between Bread Street and Westminster keep both families in clearer view and account for later events in this early period of Milton's own life.

Prior to beginning his university studies at Cambridge, Milton's life has rarely been cast in a financial light. Standard assessments have been more concerned with establishing the future writer of *Paradise Lost* and defender of the Commonwealth in the context of the aspiring artist and child prodigy. There is no harm, of course, in following such paths, but one must grant that little uncontested evidence exists upon which to build such a case. A few matters have undoubtedly helped such a cause, and since they have rarely been overlooked in accounts of Milton's early years, they deserve notice. The first is the portrait of Milton as a 10-year-old boy discovered in the possession of his widow when John Aubrey interviewed her. While neither the circumstances for its creation nor the artist responsible has been definitively settled, the portrait provides for those so inclined an opportunity to begin the profile of Milton as a studious, sober, Protestant youth, often ambiguously labelled Puritan, a writer in formation. Aubrey's comment that Milton's 'schoolmaster was a puritan in Essex, who cut his hair short' has led to an identification of Thomas Young, a Scots

¹² All of these matters are conveniently listed in Campbell, *Chronology*.

clergyman, as one of Milton's early tutors, though later letters Milton writes to Young put that identification on more solid ground. There is evidence of Young's being beneficed near Ware before assuming the post of chaplain to the Merchant Adventurers in Hamburg in 1620, and thus the schoolmaster in Essex could be him.¹³ The portrayal of Milton as a studious youth has been bolstered by his widow's claim to Aubrey that at ten years of age her husband 'was then a poet' and enhanced by recourse to Milton's comments in *The Reason of Church-Government* (1642) that from his first years he received instruction by 'sundry masters and teachers both at home and at the schools', and in the *Second Defence* that he was in the habit of studying till midnight 'from the age of twelve'. Extant evidence rarely noted but that coheres with such a picture includes a set of floor plans of the Milton Bread Street home created as a result of a survey taken in October 1617.¹⁴ The living quarters of the family were ample enough to accommodate a private study area, though designations of the family living space are general rather than specific. The plans do not allow one to assign a particular room to the boy Milton with any confidence. That has not precluded colourful biographical accounts, one of the more entertaining depicting the youthful Milton loitering in front of his Bread Street chamber while Ben Jonson and Shakespeare passed by on their way to the nearby Mermaid tavern.¹⁵

Undoubtedly the greatest losses from the earliest period of Milton's life are his school records. Only through the Cambridge admissions register do we know he attended St Paul's School and studied under its high master Alexander Gil the elder.¹⁶ The evidence for when he began and ended his studies is mixed and conflicted. The earliest date is 1615, but any time during the next six years is possible. Similarly, since he begins his university training in Cambridge in the early part of 1625, his attendance at St Paul's most likely concluded by the end of 1624, though it could have ceased even earlier in the year. A far greater source of frustration is the absence of any records regarding his curriculum. While scholarly reconstructions of what he was taught have attempted to be faithful to contemporary educational plans, in the end the particulars of Milton's early education remain a subject of guesswork. As for his writing from this period, there is an epigram ('Philosophus ad Regem'), a fable in imitation of Mantuan ('Apologus de Rustico et Hero'), and a prose theme on early rising. Perhaps fittingly, they all appear in a manuscript in a handwriting that does

¹³ Few modern biographers, including Masson, fail to discuss the portrait. Its attribution to Cornelius Janssen relies upon highly questionable evidence. For an authoritative account of Milton portraiture, see Leo Miller, *Milton's Portraits: An Impartial Inquiry into their Authentication*, a special issue of *Milton Quarterly*, 10 (1976), 1–43. For a recent overview of Thomas Young, see the entry by Edward Jones in ODNB. For evidence of Young's connection to Essex see *The Court and Times of James I*, ed. Thomas Birch, 2 vols. (London, 1849), ii. 240–1.

¹⁴ Eton College Library, MS Records 16. Eton College acquired the Bread Street property in 1449 from the Hospital of St James. Sir Baptist Hicks was the Miltons' landlord. See Noel Blakiston, 'Milton's Birthplace', *London Topographical Record*, 9, no. 80 (1947), 6–12.

¹⁵ Masson's fanciful reconstruction (i. 46) is one of the more memorable.

¹⁶ Christ's College Admissions Book, Cambridge University.

not altogether resemble that found in his supplication for his BA and his signature in the University Subscription Book, both from 1629.¹⁷

MILTON AND CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY (1625–1632)

The minor pensioner who appears with six other undergraduates in front of the Cambridge University Registrar, James Tabor, and formally matriculates on 9 April 1625, performs his first act of conformity to the University regulations.¹⁸ Several more will take place during the course of the next seven years that leave a trail of evidence somewhat at odds with a long-held view of Milton as an outsider, malcontent, and non-participant in university life. Indeed John Hale's recent study of Milton's Latin 'Exercises' and 'Voluntaries' in prose and verse offers an extended account of just the opposite.¹⁹ Milton not only fulfils university requirements but takes prominent roles in some of them. Participation, of course, is not the same thing as approval or endorsement and because most assignments were degree requirements, one can retain Milton's retrospective disapproval of the Cambridge curriculum. Yet the conflict between conformity and disapproval suggests that the matter requires more deliberation than past biographers have accorded it. A way of negotiating the mixed evidence for Milton's disenchantment with his university training and at the same time his conformity to its regulations, however, is available. It entails new evidence Milton creates during his university years, records that continue to emerge from his father's professional affairs as well as others that result from his sister's marriage to Edward Phillips. Keeping three locations in view—Cambridge, Bread Street, and Westminster—allows a different accounting of Milton's university years.

To cover the most familiar ground first—evidence of Milton's presence in Cambridge—there are, in addition to the 1625 admissions and matriculations records already mentioned, but a handful of records attesting to his presence over the next several years. While there are no grounds for questioning Milton's attendance at the university, there is considerable room for exaggerating his presence given the few records that undeniably locate him there. For example, no incontrovertible records for 1626 exist, but evidence of Milton not being in Cambridge during parts of this year does. On 26 March 1627, he writes the first of his two extant letters to Thomas Young, though the date contains conflicting information from Milton himself. Similarly, there is mixed dating for Milton's letters to Alexander Gil the younger

¹⁷ The manuscript is now housed in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center in Austin, Texas. It is designated as Pre-1700 Manuscript 127.

¹⁸ Cambridge University Matriculation Book, unnumbered pages.

¹⁹ *Milton's Cambridge Latin: Performing in the Genres, 1625–1632* (Tempe, Ariz., 2005).

from Cambridge (20 May 1628 or 20 May 1630 for one and either 2 July 1628 or 2 July 1631 for a second),²⁰ and the most recent commentary on an 'Oration, Prolusion 6', and the English poem 'At a Vacation Exercise' assigns Milton's reading of them to members of Christ's College to July 1631, three years later than the widely accepted date of July 1628.²¹ On 21 July 1628 Milton writes his second letter to Thomas Young (*Epistolarum Familiarum*, 4), and in 1629, sometime between 13 January and 27 March, Milton supplicates for his BA. Later in the year, he signs the three articles of religion required for him to receive his degree in the University Subscription Book. On 20 April 1631, Milton notes that his 'Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester' was sent 'from the banks of the Came', and during the Lent term beginning on 13 January 1632, and ending on 23 March 1632, he once again supplicates and signs the Subscription Book in order to graduate MA on 3 July 1632. This handful of records leaves a patchy account of a seven-year period that also includes vacations between terms. During some, Milton may have elected to stay in Cambridge (not at all uncommon); during others, he may have returned to his parents' home in London; still others may have involved an alternative residence, perhaps in Westminster, perhaps in Hammersmith. Finally, there were periods during these years when the university was closed because of the plague. The ability to establish Milton's whereabouts during his university years is neither easy nor unimportant.

If Milton's whereabouts are not always clear, neither are many of the composition dates for poems he writes while a university student. Fortunately, there are some, primarily those commemorating the deaths of figures associated with the university in one capacity or another, which pose little difficulty. Poems in memory of Lancelot Andrewes (Elegy III), Richard Ridding (Elegy II), Nicholas Felton ('In Obitum Praesulis Eliensis'), and John Gostlin ('In Obitum Procancellarii Medici'), and a series of poems on the Gunpowder Plot can all be assigned with some confidence to the later part of 1626 (September to November) if they are viewed as commemorative responses to occasional events. Lacking controversy but by no means definitively settled is Milton's composition of his 'Nativity Ode', frequently assigned to 25 December 1629. Neither the date nor the place where Milton wrote the poem is as clear as some critics believe. Some of the remaining work is easier to approximate than fix: Sonnet 1, 'Song: On May Morning', and Elegy V, on the grounds of similarity, to either May 1629 or May 1630; 'Naturam non Pati Senium' and 'De Idea Platonica' to June 1631; 'On Shakespeare' to 1630 on the basis of Milton's date inserted in the 1645 *Poems* but in old-style dating this could mean any time before 25

²⁰ William Riley Parker addresses the problem with the date of this letter in 'Milton and Thomas Young, 1620–28', *Modern Language Notes*, 53 (1938), 399–407. For Gill's first letter see Eugenia Chifas, 'Milton's Letter to Gill, May 20, 1628', *Modern Language Notes*, 62 (1947), 37–9. For the second, see John T. Shawcross, 'The Dating of Certain Poems, Letters, and Prolusions Written by Milton', *English Language Notes*, 2 (1965), 261–6.

²¹ For convincing arguments for the later date, see Gordon Campbell, 'Milton and the Water Supply of Cambridge', in B. Sokolova and E. Pancheva (eds.), *Essays for Alexander Shurbanov* (Sofia, 2001), 38–43; repr. in revised form in *South African Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 15 (2006 for 2005), 121–6, and John T. Shawcross, *Rethinking Milton Studies* (Newark, Del., 2005), 182 n. 1.

March 1631. There are others that continue to elude. Notwithstanding metrical arguments in support of a view that they were written in the summer of 1631, 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' could be assigned to any period in the 1630s, and 'The Passion', while possibly a follow-up effort to the Nativity Ode, cannot with certainty be assigned to the Good Friday of 1630 or 1631. Whatever motives Milton may have had in mind when retrospectively dating his poems for the 1645 volume, they are not always helpful. His chosen Latin phrase *anno aetatis* is undoubtedly persuasive in some instances, but it sets approximations rather than specific dates, and in one instance (the Gostlin poem) is incorrect.²²

To the mixed evidence for establishing Milton's presence in Cambridge and the dating of his writing during these years can be added an account of what is simultaneously taking place in the larger Milton household. The events are not free of ambiguity, but they provide a sense of matters Milton was mindful of and sometimes contended with during his student years. A look at his sister's family proves instructive. The parish chest documents from St Martin-in-the-Fields for the years 1622–31 report Anne Milton Phillips and Edward Phillips the parents of three children. They initially reside in the Waterside ward, relocate to Greene's Lane in 1626, and move again in the following year to the Landside area (locations which turn out to be notable in regard to the Miltons' suburban residence). While the records show the couple's financial standing steadily improving, they also report hardship. Among these, Milton commentators have most often noted the death of the Phillips's second child Anne, whom most assume to be the subject of her uncle's 'On the Death of a Fair Infant', one of the few early compositions which does not appear in the 1645 *Poems*. Was the omission a matter of family propriety or its author's unease with its accomplishment? Its inclusion in the 1673 *Poems* appears to suggest the former, and evidence in the St Martin's records can support such reasoning.

By 1645, the St Martin-in-the-Fields parish records have reported that the first three children of Edward and Anne Phillips have died, John on 15 March 1629, Anne on 22 January 1628, and Elizabeth on 19 February 1631. As he collects his poetry for the volume, does Milton deem the Fair Infant poem inappropriate for singling out one of his sister's children rather than all three? Does the poem's consolation have a hollow ring to it because of the deaths of at least four children by 1645 (a child from Anne's second marriage to Thomas Agar dies in 1641)? This line of reasoning gains greater force if Milton's sister Anne is still alive in 1645 (although most believe she is not).²³ In 1645 Anne would have three surviving children, two sons, Edward and John Phillips from her first marriage, and a daughter Anne from her second marriage to Thomas Agar. It is this second marriage which may be the sticking point for Milton. It takes place within five months of Edward Phillips's death in August 1631, and it involves a second husband and close friend taking on responsibilities of the deceased

²² Gostlin's death in Oct. 1626 conflicts with Milton's *anno aetatis* 16 (a designation he adds to the poem for the 1645 volume). Milton in Oct. 1626 was in his seventeenth year.

²³ An exception may be Ralph Hone, 'New Light on the Milton-Phillips Family Relationship', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 22 (1958), 63–75.

husband before marrying the widow. Milton's silence regarding his sister (he never mentions her existence in any of his writing) is notable not only because he has an opportunity to put himself in a good light (he raises her two sons even though their stepfather is still alive), but also because he routinely promotes admirable conduct of this kind throughout his prose writings. Something lingers in this matter which does not sound altogether right, and while the parish chest records do not reveal its exact nature, they point towards an irregularity that the family would most likely rather leave unsaid. Interweaving one set of family records with another does not necessarily furnish answers in this instance, but it exposes matters very plausibly at stake—here the matter of Milton's relationship with his sister and a decision involving one of his poems.

A final set of documents for this period, those created through the ongoing business affairs of Milton's father, can further clarify some of the issues involving Milton's time at Cambridge, in particular his absence or presence there. Among his university experiences, one of the most notable concerns his clash with his initial tutor William Chappell, a clash which resulted in Milton being suspended for a term. For some commentators, this event furnishes unquestionable proof of Milton's overall disaffection with Cambridge.²⁴ The timing of the event—that is, its place in the larger context of Milton's undergraduate programme—is important because of its potential to determine whether Milton elected to complete the degree (if he was already far enough along) or abandon it (because he was at a relatively early stage). Most likely, the incident took place around the midpoint of Milton's programme in April 1627. Support for this date comes from two business transactions Milton conducts with his father in London on 25 May and 11 June 1627, dates which fall during Easter term, when Milton would be expected to be in residence.²⁵ The nature of the falling out and the allegations that ensued have been equally exploited by admirers and naysayers. Dr Johnson, for one, believed Milton unpopular in his College and 'the last student in either university that suffered the public indignity of corporal correction', while Bishop John Bramhall informed his son in 1654 that Milton deserved not only to be expelled from the University but banished from the society of men.²⁶ Leo Miller, on the other hand, does not minimize the seriousness of Milton's quarrel with Chappell, but he also does not exaggerate the aftermath, when Milton is assigned to another tutor and carries on, seemingly without further incident.²⁷ Should the source of Milton's unflattering remarks about the university in his later writing be attributed to his quarrel with Chappell? Before doing so, one should keep in mind that if his rustication is assigned to the spring of 1627, the description of him on an indenture he signs on 25 May in London reads 'John Milton the younger of the University of Cambridge'. Such a description, if composed while

²⁴ Masson and Parker are part of a long list. See also Hanford, *John Milton*, ch. 2.

²⁵ Housed in the National Archives, the documents are respectively C54/2715/20 and C152/61. The statue staple for the second document recorded the same day (LC 4/56) mentions Milton.

²⁶ Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1905), i. 140; French, *Records*, iii. 374–5.

²⁷ 'Milton's Clash with Chappell: A Suggested Reconstruction', *Milton Quarterly*, 14 (1980), 77–87.

he is under suspension, does not indicate nor imply that his status is about to change. As for remarks Milton makes in other correspondence composed while a university student (to Diodati and Gil), is it at all unusual for a degree candidate to express discontent or frustration while completing an academic programme? Milton's disaffection for Cambridge may in the end be genuine, but an assessment must acknowledge that during his university years very little shows up on the protest side of the evidentiary ledger.

Documentary evidence attesting to the improving fortunes and growing status of Milton's father while his son attended university offers another vantage point from which to consider Milton's Cambridge years, particularly how the father in London is preparing the soil that his son will cultivate upon graduation. The senior Milton's standing and wealth were improving as far back as 1615, when he was first appointed to the Stationers' Company, and in the next year, when his musical contributions were included as part of the *Tristitiae Remedium*. These events were followed by appointments in 1620 as a trustee to the Blackfriars Playhouse (not to be understood as an honour but as part of a business transaction), in 1625 as a Steward in the Stationers' Company, and in 1627 as a Warden to the Scriveners' Company.²⁸ His business transactions during the 1620s, which involve Sir Richard Molyneux (later Viscount Maryborough), Sir Peter Temple, Sir John Lenthall, Sir George Peckham, Sir Francis Leigh, the nephew of John Egerton, Earl of Bridgewater, Sir Fulke Greville, Sir Kenelm Digby, Lord Strange, and Sir John Suckling, make clear his access to the aristocratic, political, and artistic worlds of seventeenth-century London. While these associations have not gone unnoticed, they have yet to receive a full accounting in relation to the advantages accorded the scrivener's unknown son in the early 1630s—a place in Shakespeare's Second Folio and invitations to write court entertainments for the Countess of Derby and the Earl of Bridgewater. Nor will the answers that could result from such a study be unproblematic. Few scholars have ventured in this direction because to do so will require letting go of the label of the young Milton as a radical in waiting.²⁹ As this account suggests, if there is a characteristic that marks the family profile throughout the first three decades of the seventeenth century, it is largely of a conformist nature. Such a description is buoyed not only by a son who abides by university regulations and graduates by declaring allegiance to the Crown and church, but also by extended family members employed by the Crown (a son-in-law Edward Phillips, to be followed by a second son-in-law Thomas Agar). By the early 1630s, it appears that this pattern has not changed, and that the senior Milton's associations have in due course extended to members of the aristocracy, the Bridgewater and Derby families, from whom his son will most benefit.

²⁸ Most of these events and the business transactions listed in the following sentence appear in French's *Records* but have been verified and corrected in some instances by Campbell, *Chronology*.

²⁹ A discussion of the radical-in-waiting view appears in Barbara Lewalski, 'How Radical was the Young Milton?', in Stephen B. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich (eds.), *Milton and Heresy* (Cambridge, 1999), 49–72. Less confident is Thomas Corns, 'Milton before "Lycidas"', in Graham Parry and Joad Raymond (eds.), *Milton and the Terms of Liberty* (Cambridge, 2002), 23–36.

HAMMERSMITH, HORTON, AND THE ALLURE OF CONTROVERSY (1632–1640)

Outside the City (1630–1635)

It took over 250 years for biographers to discover that upon completing his MA, Milton did not relocate from Cambridge to a family home in Horton. It took an additional forty years to find out why the Milton family took up residence eight miles outside the City of London in Hammersmith during the latter part of 1630 or the first months of 1631.³⁰ The most compelling reasons appear practical. By 1630, two of the youngest members of Milton's extended family had died in the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields; their father Edward Phillips and a third child would die in the following year. The very parish in which Milton senior had purchased property to which his family could retreat during outbreaks of the plague was turning out to be more perilous than safe. In the wake of another outbreak in 1630, the search for another location became imperative. Jeremy Maule's discovery in 1996 of poor rate documents for the parish of All Saints, Fulham, Hammersmith side, covering the years 1631, 1632, and 1633, supplements Chancery depositions locating John Milton senior in this parish by September 1632 and extending through January 1635. The poor rate documents date the Miltons' residence back to early 1631 and raise the possibility that the scrivener served as a churchwarden.³¹ A further look into the Hammersmith period uncovers details that buttress suggestions already made regarding the conservative nature of the Milton family in the early years of Milton's life. In 1629, William Laud as Bishop of London had consecrated a chapel of ease in Hammersmith, and in negotiations with the parishioners who petitioned for this chapel (named St Paul) on the basis of its inconvenient distance from the mother church in Fulham, Laud disallowed their request to appoint a minister. Extant documents reveal Laud's concern to prevent disruptive preachers and lecturers from securing the living.³² Attending a Laudian chapel of ease in the early 1630s does not suggest religious subversion was a decisive factor governing the family move.

While Milton's time in Hammersmith was most likely limited prior to his permanent departure from Cambridge in July 1632, thereafter it appears that his residency was continuous and what has long been considered the conducive rural environment of Horton may in fact have more likely been the suburban outpost of Hammersmith,

³⁰ In 1949 Charles Bernau found chancery depositions by Milton's father in which he listed Hammersmith as his address.

³¹ By signing the audit of the parish account books for 1632 (Hammersmith and Fulham Record Office, PAF/1/21/fo. 92^v), Milton's father had to be either a justice of the peace or a churchwarden. Evidence favours the latter, but it has yet to surface.

³² A transcript of the correspondence between Laud and the parishioners appears in MS DD/818/56 in the Hammersmith and Fulham Record Office.

where the family associations with the aristocracy become overt. Milton writes *Arcades*, which is performed in honour of the Dowager Countess of Derby at Harefield, and he collaborates with Henry Lawes to produce *A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle* in 1634 for the family of the Earl of Bridgewater. To these years can also be assigned with varying degrees of certainty 'At a Solemn Music', 'Upon the Circumcision', 'On Time', and Sonnet 7, a poem which expresses the first signs of Milton's anxiety over poetic productivity and accomplishment, and the companion poems 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso'. The frequent visits to London remarked upon in the *Second Defence* were more likely negotiated from the closer suburb of Hammersmith than Horton, where potential bans on travel due to plague would impede frequency and access (see below). The Milton of Hammersmith, if judged by his writing output, may be characterized as invigorated, even energetic, qualities not so easily attributed to his time at Horton.

What is known about the Hammersmith period, and there remains more to know, verifies its importance in the family's history. In the early 1630s, Milton's father begins his gradual withdrawal from business and his preparation for retirement, signalled initially in 1634 by his decision to pay a fine to the Scriveners' Company in lieu of serving as Company Master. His decision to allow his partner Thomas Bower to conduct business in Bread Street while he resided elsewhere appears calculated to reduce personal court appearances and be sufficiently distanced from creditors. Indeed the most logical explanation for the further remove to Horton appears to be these same reasons, and supporting evidence for such a view may be found in the handling of the Cotton–Milton suit, which begins in 1636 and is not resolved until 1638.³³ An event that impacts the family's residence in Hammersmith early on and which has not been given a full hearing is the death in August 1631 of Edward Phillips. The ramifications of this death affect several members of the family and afford a look into decisions made in its aftermath. John Milton senior, first of all, witnessed Phillips's will three weeks before his demise, and therefore would be aware that his daughter, who was once again pregnant, would most likely relocate to her parents' home in Hammersmith with her year-old son Edward upon the death of her husband.³⁴ Anne's brothers, John and Christopher, were probably already residing in Hammersmith and in late August would return to Westminster for Phillips's burial. After the burial, the entire family, including Anne and her young son, more than likely returned to Hammersmith and resided there through September and the first week of October, when John and Christopher would return to Cambridge for the beginning of Michaelmas term (10 October). Milton's entry in his Bible for the birth of John Phillips 'about October' could reflect his approximate recall of the time of year in terms of the university calendar around which his current life was organized. Anne Milton Phillips's time in Hammersmith in any event would be brief; the parish records from St Martin speak to the presence of her new family by 1632, her marriage

³³ A convincing account of this matter is now to be found in Gordon Campbell and Thomas Corns, *John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought* (Oxford, 2008).

³⁴ The scrivener with his apprentice Henry Rothwell witnessed the will on 1 Aug. (PROB 11/160/99).

to Thomas Agar taking place in the parish of St Dunstan in the East on 5 January 1632.³⁵ Unfortunately, the missing link in these matters is the Hammersmith registers, which do not survive; if they had, they would in all likelihood establish the birthplaces and christenings of John and Edward Phillips. For Edward to be born in Hammersmith his grandparents would have had to take up residence by August 1630, a date well within the realm of possibility. While admittedly juxtaposing records from different locations cannot furnish definitive answers in this case, the process does allow plausible solutions to emerge.

A Further Remove (1636–1638)

If some light can shine on Milton's Hammersmith years through the shuffling of parish chest records, there will need to be a greater number of them to illuminate the Horton period, a stretch of time in Milton's life which seems to resist attempts to understand it. The shred of evidence indicating the family relocation in May 1636 disappeared in the twentieth century, and nothing has been found to collaborate or validate the date the family changed residences.³⁶ Initially, the reason for the change was most plausibly to ease Milton's father into full retirement and disentangle him from the messy business of court appearances, law suits, and legal proceedings. To the Horton years, David Masson devoted a hundred pages, not aware that some of his material actually applied to Hammersmith.³⁷ Masson's sustained effort to collect all he could about this village, its layout, and its inhabitants has not removed the shroud of mystery that hovers over the family's time there, but it did provide suggestions which have led to a few recent discoveries. For the most part, Horton remains the place where Milton's mother died and her son wrote 'Lycidas'. Attempts to grant it more importance beyond these two events have usually failed because of an emphasis upon local testimony and legend rather than documentary evidence.³⁸ There are opportunities for such a view to change, but such change will depend in part upon the two biographical events which have generated the most interest in the village.

For the first six days of April 1637, three documents attest to the Milton family's presence in Horton, what must be considered an abundance of riches in comparison to what is available for the rest of the time the family lives in the village. On 1 April

³⁵ For an account of the marriage and circumstances pertaining to it, see Rose Clavering and John Shawcross, 'Anne Milton and the Milton Residences', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 59 (1960), 680–90. A parish record for St Martin-in-the-Fields (F3346) displays Phillips's name crossed out and Agar's inserted above it.

³⁶ In the late 19th c. Hyde Clarke apparently saw a notation that Milton's father was discharged at his own request as Assistant to the Company of Scriveners because of his 'removal to inhabit in the country' (*Athenaeum*, 2746 (12 June 1880), 760–1).

³⁷ Masson, i. 552–663.

³⁸ Masson indulges to a degree in 'Local Memories of Milton', *Good Words*, 34 (1893), 41–4; so does G. W. J. Gyll, a 19th-c. family historian, whose chapter on Horton in his *History of the Parish of Wraysbury, Ankerwycke Priory, and Magna Carta Island; with the History of Horton, and the Town of Colnbrook, Bucks* (1862) runs to seventy-three pages.

Christopher Milton submits an affidavit on his father's behalf claiming Milton senior to be too infirm to attend court in Westminster. Two days later his wife Sara dies, and Edward Goodall, the rector of the parish, enters the date of her death into the parish register, a date which will appear as well on her gravestone, which can still be read on a blue marble slab found in the chancel of the parish church. On 6 April Goodall conducts the burial service and records the burial date in the parish register. Commentators have attributed various degrees of significance to this event in Milton's life, but none believes the cause of death to be anything but old age, a view corroborated by the absence of a designation of the plague next to her entry in the parish burial register. Such an indicator is given to others who succumbed to it in Horton during 1636 and 1637.³⁹ These facts have been long known (although not reported in this sequence), but they have not been evaluated in relation to a writ issued for Milton's father and witnessed by Thomas Agar concerning an ongoing court case with Sir Thomas Cotton about three weeks before Sara Milton's death (10 March). The presence of Agar in this document links the extended family in London and Westminster to Horton and suggests that Anne Agar (if she is in fact still alive), the surviving children from her first marriage (Edward and John Phillips), and two daughters from her second marriage (Mary and Anne Agar) may have already started to gather in anticipation of Sara Milton's death. By the beginning of April, we have proof of the presence of Christopher Milton through the affidavit, and a week after Sara Milton is buried, John Agar, Thomas's brother, who witnesses the scrivener's answer to the writ of 10 March.⁴⁰ The family assembly thus appears still in place by mid-April and supports the view that the extended family functions as a viable and valuable source of information concerning events taking place within it. Furthermore, the presence of Agar and his two stepsons may explain how we first found out that Milton lived in this out-of-the-way village. Edward Phillips is the lone early biographer to mention Milton's time there, and he does so with precision: 'at Horton near Colebrook in Barkshire'.⁴¹ Was it the family gathering that the 7-year-old recalled? It is the only piece of evidence linking Phillips to the village.

The other well-reported event from the Horton years is the composition of 'Lycidas', for some, Milton's greatest poetic achievement excepting *Paradise Lost* and one that most believe secures his literary accomplishment on its own. Of its many heralded passages, those expressing its author's denunciation of English church practices in the 1630s have been often cited as proof of Milton's radical leanings. Whether the poem reveals a reformist sensibility, marks a vocational shift away from the church and towards a calling as a poet-prophet, or registers a culminating

³⁹ The 1 Apr. affidavit can be found in the National Archives (Req 1/141, fo. 218). The death and burial notices of Sara Milton are in the parish registers of St Michael, Horton (PR 107/1/1) as are indications by Edward Goodall concerning those parishioners who died of the plague in Horton and Colnbrook in 1636 and 1637. The registers are housed in the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies in Aylesbury.

⁴⁰ The document appears in the British Library (Cottonian Charters 1/5/1) and in the National Archives in the records of the Court of Requests (Reg 2/260).

⁴¹ Horton and Colnbrook are located in southern Buckinghamshire very close to but not in Berkshire or Middlesex. Phillips's error is understandable considering the small distance separating the counties.

expression of protest against a church which has disappointed the poet for over a decade, hard evidence in support of any of these claims has been hard to come by.⁴² One document recently uncovered from August 1637 provides a possibility for Miltonic dissent. As a consequence of a jurisdictional dispute between Archbishop Laud and Bishop John Williams of Lincoln, Williams ordered an inspection of the parish churches of Buckinghamshire and in the report for the Horton church of St Michael, John Milton senior is cited for a violation of policy regarding his church seat.⁴³ Not surprisingly, the scrivener answers the charge and conforms to the church court request by February 1638, but can we conclude that his son agreed with such a decision? Have events in recent months, the second mutilation of William Prynne in June, and the introduction of the Laudian prayer book in Edinburgh in July, prompted Milton to question compliance? The answer is of less importance to the father's situation than it is to the matter of Milton's church career. Does this incident resolve the matter in August rather than in November, when the manuscript of 'Lycidas' appears to settle it definitively? The headnote which Milton adds in 1645, however interesting, does not really help.

If the disaffection with the church voiced in 'Lycidas' indeed captures part of Milton's frame of mind during the Horton period, evidence from local records offers a picture somewhat at odds with the bucolic accounts of the Bucks countryside and its ability to inspire the emerging poet. There are problems in Horton during the years of the Milton family residence and of a sufficient number to offset what has long been assumed to be an environment of advantage. It is best to start with the well known. The knowledge that Milton's time at Horton was less than half of what was once assumed (a little more than two years as opposed to almost six) raises questions about its designation as an impressive period of self-education. In Parker's view Horton should be understood 'as a place of tireless and purposeful study'.⁴⁴ James Holly Hanford's account of Milton's reading dates the earliest entries in Milton's Commonplace Book to the Horton residence and contends Milton's plan was systematic and extensive.⁴⁵ The changed dates for the Horton period pose no problems for maintaining Hanford's view since by May 1636, the most likely time the Miltons relocate from Hammersmith, Milton's self-education programme was a few months shy of its fourth year (if it is dated from his departure from Cambridge in July 1632). And in Horton, it turns out, the Cambridge-educated parish rector Edward Goodall has access to a theological library located inside a nearby parish

⁴² Commentary on 'Lycidas' has generated scores of articles addressing such concerns and more. For a representative list, see P. J. Klemp, *The Essential Milton: An Annotated Bibliography of Major Modern Studies* (Boston, 1989), 156–71. C. A. Patrides (ed.), *Milton's 'Lycidas': The Tradition and the Poem*, 2nd edn. (1961; Columbia, Mo., 1983); Scott Elledge, *Milton's 'Lycidas': Edited to Serve as an Introduction to Criticism* (New York, 1966); Clay Hunt, *'Lycidas' and the Italian Critics* (New Haven, 1979); J. Martin Evans, *The Road from Horton: Looking Backwards in 'Lycidas'* (Victoria, B.C., 1983); and David S. Berkeley, *Inwrought with Figures Dim: A Reading of Milton's 'Lycidas'* (The Hague, 1974) attest to the poem's coverage in 20th-c. criticism.

⁴³ For an account of this event see Edward Jones, "'Church-outed by the Prelats": Milton and the 1637 Inspection of the Horton Parish Church', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 102 (2003), 42–58.

⁴⁴ Parker, ii. 798.

⁴⁵ 'The Chronology of Milton's Private Studies', *PMLA* 36 (1921), 251–314.

church two miles from the Milton home. Volumes in the Kedermister library in Langley Marish (which still exists) address several of the subjects we know Milton was investigating during this period, and entries he makes in his Commonplace Book help identify some subjects.⁴⁶ Thus access to materials, the matter which will prove of greatest importance to the Horton residency, does not appear at first to be an issue. Did Milton use the collection? While unassailable evidence linking Milton with the library remains to be found, collateral evidence, including local travel restrictions because of the plague and the declining health of at least one and possibly both parents in 1636 and 1637, creates circumstances which would make Milton's use of it plausible and convenient. Equally compelling and still unexamined is the possibility that Milton may have used this collection in 1639 and 1640 as well to prepare a response to Cardinal Bellarmine's *Disputationes De Controversiis Christianae Fidei Adversus Huius Temporis Haereticos*, which he eventually abandoned in favour of writing the anti-episcopal tracts in 1641–2.⁴⁷ Cast in the most positive light, as the Horton period has traditionally been, a rural environment of few distractions with a local theological library within easy reach would almost seem to guarantee nothing but success for Milton's plans.

In making his case that the Horton period of studious retirement was an important, successful phase of Milton's life, David Masson unknowingly noted some of the specific problems that pertain more tellingly to the second (Horton) as opposed to the first (Hammersmith) rural residence the family inhabits in the 1630s. Foremost is the plague, to which Masson draws attention. He also notes that in the first two and a half years (i.e. the Hammersmith residency) there is more evidence and productivity than can be found for the remaining years (i.e. Horton).⁴⁸ Productivity in this case refers to writing as opposed to reading, and records support Masson's conclusions. Aside from Milton's revision of the *Maske* and 'Lycidas' (no slight accomplishments no matter how one understands productivity), there is no poetry that can be confidently assigned to the Horton years ('Ad Patrem' is a possibility, but its composition date can be assigned to a number of months extending over several years beyond the Horton residence).

Was the threat of plague an ongoing distraction from 1635 to 1638, and was Milton's need to care for his parents another? Neither can easily be removed from consideration. In 1636 there was a serious enough outbreak of plague in London for Charles to agree to a petition from debtors in the Fleet Street prison to be set free.⁴⁹ Such

⁴⁶ An account of the library, its relationship to Milton's Commonplace Book, and Milton's possible use of it appears in Edward Jones, "Filling in a Blank in the Canvas": Milton, Horton, and the Kedermister Library', *Review of English Studies*, 53 (2002), 31–60.

⁴⁷ The possibility that Milton may have been preparing a response to Bellarmine upon his return from his tour of the Continent was first raised by Gordon Campbell in 'Milton's *Index Theologicus* and Bellarmine's *Disputationes De Controversiis Christianae Fidei Adversus Huius Temporis Haereticos*', *Milton Quarterly*, 11 (1977), 12–16. The connection to the Kedermister library has not been explored.

⁴⁸ Masson, *Life*, i. 562.

⁴⁹ See J. G. Jenkins, 'Paper and Plague', *The Paper Maker and the British Paper Trade Journal* (June 1964), 60.

outbreaks encouraged all who were able to retreat to rural locations, but special concerns were raised over the king, his court, and the residences of Theobalds and Windsor. The proximity of Windsor Castle to Horton (approximately five miles) subjected the village to government measures enacted by the Privy Council to ensure the safety of the royal family. Restrictions for the area within ten miles of Windsor, put into place in June 1636, included the closing of the paper mills in Horton and Wraybury by September because of the fear that rags from London used in the paper-producing process were a main source of infection. The paper mill at Horton had already been suspected as the cause for an outbreak in the parish: victims are recorded in the burial registers for 1636 and 1637.⁵⁰ These circumstances in a village as small as Horton would appear unavoidable for not just the members of the Milton household but for all inhabitants. They pose an undeniable challenge to descriptions and depictions of Milton walking through fields, sitting on the banks of the Colne, and writing poetry under trees. In the ensuing squabble that resulted from the refusal of local inhabitants to contribute to the support of unemployed mill workers, hostility was expressed through a petition to the Privy Council which cited not just the incessant noise from the mills to which the inhabitants were subjected day and night, but ‘the noisome smells of infected rags’, the destruction of arable land, and the damming up of rivers.⁵¹ Conditions in Horton were obviously not as Edenic as some have reported them.

Faced with the challenges of his physical environment, Milton may have retreated more readily into his academic pursuits, but to do so he would need access to books. Assuming he used the Kedermister library, that collection could have supplied at least temporary help. Greater resources were clearly elsewhere, and unlimited access to London looks questionable because of the restrictions in place during 1636 and 1637. With his mother’s health seemingly an issue in 1637, the opportunities for uninterrupted study also appear compromised, at least in part. Rather than declaring Milton’s Horton period unproductive, it may be more accurate to acknowledge the salutary achievements of his revision of the *Maske* and the composition of ‘*Lycidas*’, given the circumstances under which they were completed. As for the description of Horton as ‘a tireless and purposeful place of study’, there would appear to be sufficient justification to substitute frustrating and fatiguing for tireless and purposeful.

There is an additional document produced during the Horton period which furnishes a final perspective on events in Horton and a transition to an account of Milton’s fifteen-month Continental tour, which began in May 1638. On 23 November 1637 Milton writes a letter to Charles Diodati while in London (*Epistolarum Familiarum* 7). Earlier in the day he more than likely attended the funeral of his brother-in-law’s father Thomas Agar, who was buried in the chancel of the Milton family’s

⁵⁰ See *Privy Council Order Books* (PC 46 and 47); *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 331, no. 126, and the Horton Parish Registers (above, n. 39).

⁵¹ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 344: 373 and 396: 347.

former church of All Hallows on Bread Street.⁵² The letter affords another opportunity to link documents which appear at first glance to be unconnected. The Miltons should, by all accounts, be in Horton not London. But the parish chest record reveals a reason for the extended family to gather, and the bringing together of Thomas Agar, Christopher Milton, and John Milton may very well account for why Milton speaks to Diodati of his plans of relocating to the Inns of Court: 'there is a pleasant and shady walk; for that dwelling will be more satisfactory, both for companionship, if I wish to remain at home, and as a more suitable headquarters, if I choose to venture forth. Where I am now, as you know, I live in obscurity and cramped quarters.'⁵³ Leaving aside for the moment Milton's unfavourable description of his situation in Horton, the desire to leave the family home where he is presumably living alone with his father and move to the very location where his brother resides raises many possibilities—a desire for the freedom his brother enjoys, a desire to be free of the responsibility of caring for his father, a desire for the companionship a city life could bring as opposed to the isolation of a rural village. These all speak to Milton's state of mind in late 1637. But is the actual plan of moving to the Inns of Court nothing more than an idea put into his head because of possible interactions with his brother and brother-in-law earlier in the day? Why would the 29-year-old Milton, who had never lived away from his family except during university terms, suddenly see the Inns of Court as an opportunity for freedom? Christopher entered the Inner Temple in 1632. If Milton's negative comments regarding his situation in Horton are considered along with Christopher Milton's living arrangements in London, there are grounds for recognizing the larger issue of change that will be underscored by the decision to leave England for the Continent. The seed for such an idea is present in the letter.

By implication, Milton's letter to Diodati also addresses a significant, long-held assumption that he would never leave for the Continent without arranging for the care of his father. In the months ahead, it will turn out, Milton will leave his father, and he will leave him without arranging for the care most have assumed was in place through his brother's marriage to Thomasine Webber sometime before Milton's departure in May 1638. By virtue of that marriage, the care of Milton senior would be primarily in the hands of Thomasine while her husband lived in London during term. Thus Milton would be free to go. However, the recent discovery of Christopher's marriage to Thomasine on 13 September 1638, months after his brother's departure, makes clear that some other arrangement must have been in place in Horton.⁵⁴ Perhaps befitting this obscure period of Milton's life, finding an answer produces yet another question.

⁵² GLMS 5031 (the parish registers of All Hallows, Bread Street). The entry appears on p. 188 in the published registers by the Harleian Society.

⁵³ CPW, i. 327. The Yale editors number this letter 8 as opposed to 7, the number it is assigned in the 1674 edition and the *Columbia Works*.

⁵⁴ The entry appears in the marriage register (1559–1698) for the parish of St Andrew Holborn (GLMS 6668/1).

Departure and Return (1638–1640)

Milton's preparations for his tour of the Continent are handled through channels he and his family have used before: aristocrats in royal favour. Milton's brief encounter with the Provost of Eton, Sir Henry Wotton, provides advice and contacts. Some will be used, others ignored. Wotton's letter, which speaks well of Milton's masque, will be saved and published in the 1645 *Poems*.⁵⁵ The letter also reveals that Milton's work was not immune to coterie manuscript culture: Wotton has read a scribal copy before receiving Milton's presentation copy enclosed with his letter. Even with the evidence of Milton's potentially radical leaning found in 'Lycidas', this point is worth remembering. Most likely through Henry Lawes, Milton's masque is circulating among at least some associated with the Caroline court in the late 1630s. It is Lawes as well who secures Milton the necessary documents so that he can leave the country.⁵⁶

How one understands Milton's experiences abroad depends in part on how one accounts for his post-Cambridge experiences and decisions leading up to it. Has Milton by 1638 completed those parts of a self-designed plan that is now to proceed logically to the tour? In other words, is the tour the conclusion to a finishing procedure through which an educated man reared in one culture relocates for a set period of time into cosmopolitan settings in order to refine skills and reveal talent? Comments in the *Second Defence* concerning Milton's meeting the 'learned Hugo Grotius' and enjoying 'the accomplished society of Lucas Holstenius and many other learned and superior men' support the view that the tour involved more than a 'curiosity . . . to see foreign countries, and above all, Italy'.⁵⁷ While there has been some success charting Milton's journey, in part because he supplies an account in the *Second Defence*, a daily, even weekly, itinerary cannot be sustained. Moreover, the unwary have too quickly given authoritative weight to Milton's account, one which approximates dates and times, sometimes confuses names of people, and leaves off (as it should) material that will not serve the greater purposes of the prose tract since those purposes are only partially autobiographical. The centrepiece of the tour for Milton was Italy, and an accounting of his experiences there can give the best sense of what it meant to him and correspondingly what it may signify for us.

Of the approximately fifteen months that Milton was abroad, six were spent in Italy. Some of that time presumably involved exposure to the sculpture, painting, and architecture of Italian masters (Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, et al.) though Milton's personal letters, poetry, or prose tracts never directly mention anything he may have seen. In the *Second Defence*, he appears intent upon underscoring the positive reception he received from European intellectuals and men of international

⁵⁵ The original is lost. The manuscript in the British Library (Add. MS 28637) is an 18th-c. copy derived from the original.

⁵⁶ Lawes sends a letter (BL Add. MS 36354) and a passport, which in Milton's time functioned as an exit visa (i.e. giving one permission to leave the country). How Milton financed his fifteen months abroad is not certain, but his sale of land in St Martin-in-the-Fields to Sir Matthew Lyster within a month of his departure (15 Apr. 1638) would appear to be one resource.

⁵⁷ John Milton, *Defensio Secunda*, as translated in *CW*, viii. 121.

renown such as Hugo Grotius, Lukas Holste, Giovanni Battista Manso, and Cardinal Francesco Barberini. He also gives recognition to a number of young Italian intellectuals: Jacopo Gaddi, Carlo Dati, Valerio Chimentelli, Agostino Coltellini, Pietro Frescobaldi, Giovanni Salzilli, Benedetto Buonmattei, and Antonio Francini. To some (Dati and Buonmattei) he writes personal letters; to others (Frescobaldi, Francini, and Chimentelli) he makes reference in the *Second Defence*. To still others (Coltellini and Dati), Milton notes that he met them on each of his two visits to Florence. A significant amount of surviving evidence from the tour uncovers Milton's participation in the activities of two Italian academies, the Apatisti and the Svogliati. Not only did he attend meetings but more than likely applied for membership.⁵⁸ The finishing-school dimension of the tour can be glimpsed through the acclaim Milton receives for his skill in composing Italian verse and his facility with Spanish (acknowledged in poetical tributes by Francini and Dati). The camaraderie Milton enjoyed with Italian intellectuals can be compared to his later relationships with former students and like-minded acquaintances, but there does appear to be a difference. The formidable great man who interacted with men of learning throughout his life has not left the generous sentiments expressed to the young Italians anywhere else.

Milton's account of his tour has allowed scholars to establish his general whereabouts and on occasion confirm a daily activity. He has dinner at the English College in Rome, attends the premiere of an Italian comic opera featuring a libretto written by Cardinal Giulio Rospigliosi (the future Pope Clement IX), and has a private audience with Cardinal Francesco Barberini, at the time a prominent clergyman in Rome and chief adviser to Pope Urban VIII.⁵⁹ Given Milton's distrust of and animosity towards Catholics, his obvious enjoyment of other features of life in Italy speaks to the difficulty of establishing an all-encompassing notion of his religious views. Part of Milton's time was no doubt spent disputing with Catholics (as he makes sure to note in the *Second Defence*); part was spent attending the academies; part was spent writing verse for presentation to those academies, and part was spent buying books. Much time as well was taken up travelling from one location to the other, the difficulty of such travel no doubt fraught with expected and unexpected delay. The tour, based upon Milton's account, was clearly positive, and if the moral imperative he cites for cutting it short sounds convincing only in part (he turns back but does not exactly rush back to England), that explanation gives a verifiable ring to the subject of reform, an idea by 1654 and the publication of the *Second Defence* with which he is firmly associated.

While the England to which Milton returned in July 1639 was far more politically unstable than it was when he left, so too had his family undergone change. The death of an infant son of Christopher Milton and Thomasine Webber in Horton in March

⁵⁸ Milton's visits to the Svogliati Academy are recorded in the minutes of their meetings. See Campbell, *Chronology*, 61–6. See also A. M. Cinquemani, *Glad to Go for a Feast: Milton, Buonmattei, and the Florentine Academici* (New York, 1998).

⁵⁹ For documentary evidence concerning the tour see Campbell, *Chronology*, 59–67.

1639 reveals that Thomasine was already with child by the time she married Christopher in September 1638. How much of an impact this event had on the family harmony is hard to determine because it involved not just the care of the senior Milton but the issue of pre-marital relations. Presumably Thomasine would not relocate to Horton until her condition would draw the notice of others. Milton may have heard of this event for the first time when he took up residence with the family in Horton upon his immediate return.⁶⁰ How long he stayed is not easy to determine, but his nephew believes it was not long before he removed to St Bride's Churchyard in London for a brief period before finally relocating to Aldersgate Street in 1641. The eighteen-month period of Milton's life from July 1639 to December 1640 has not received the attention it deserves, especially when one considers two important events that take place during this time. The first involves the care of Milton's two nephews Edward and John Phillips, the latter becoming his sole responsibility by 1640 with Edward coming for day instruction. This development still awaits a satisfactory account, which will no doubt be based upon the discovery and understanding of the fate of Milton's sister Anne. There is an assumption that something must have happened to her, and that she died either while Milton was abroad or after his return.⁶¹ This account has suggested the mystery started earlier. If we combine her mysterious disappearance with the potential problems resulting from Christopher's marriage, the family picture appears murky and Edward Phillips, the lone authority for this time period, would be too young to figure it out. Even writing later, if he happened to have the full story, he understandably will not relate it. But the silence about Anne Milton stands out as odd—perhaps only less so from her brother than her son.

What has been discovered recently is that Anne's second husband Thomas Agar lived in Shoe Lane from 1638 to 1641 and possibly longer, either before 1638 or after 1641.⁶² In any event in 1639 and 1640, the distance from his home to Milton's Fleet Street residence in the parish of St Bride's, in the lodging of a tailor named Robert Russell, was not far. The day visits of Edward could be managed easily and allow Agar to maintain his position in Chancery. Indeed this appears to be the most plausible reason for such an arrangement. That Christopher married in Agar's parish of St Andrew Holborn further suggests that communication and interaction among the siblings and their families were of a greater extent than commentators have assumed. The recent discovery of the death of Agar's daughter Mary in Shoe Lane in May 1641 only adds to the uncertainty.⁶³ If, with her death, Agar had only a daughter Anne

⁶⁰ The Miltons would reside in Horton until at least the end of 1640. Christopher Milton and his father appear in the 1641 churchwarden accounts for the parish of St Laurence in Reading (D/P 97/5/3, p. 131) and relocation in Mar. 1641 is plausible.

⁶¹ The lack of information regarding Anne Milton has limited the ability of scholars to gauge the nature of her brother's relationships with his two nephews throughout the 1640s, 1650s, and 1660s.

⁶² The 1638 Settlement of Tithes locates Agar in the parish of St Andrew, Holborn. See *The Inhabitants of London in 1638*, ed. T. C. Dale (London, 1931). The death of his daughter in Apr. 1641 establishes that his residency was at least in its fourth year if he moved to the parish at the beginning of 1638.

⁶³ Burial Register 1623–1642, St Andrew Holborn (GLMS 6673/2).

living with him, why is his unmarried brother-in-law raising his two stepsons? The family developments in the 1639–40 period may have altered some of Milton's activities in ways we have yet to discover.

The second item of concern related to 1639–40 has to do with the ongoing progress of Milton's self-education programme. Commentators have been unable to determine the vexed matter of Milton's Commonplace Book—did he take it with him and use it while abroad or is it a record solely of reading and note-taking while in the familiar locales of London and surrounding areas? Evidence that the plan continued appears in the Trinity Manuscript, which has sections devoted to several outlines for compositions dated around 1640. There is also Edward Phillips's remark that around this time he had already read Satan's address to the sun, evidence that his uncle had already begun writing what would eventually become *Paradise Lost*. A less noted example of Milton's ongoing study plan could have involved volumes in the Kermister library, which, as we have seen, Milton may have used in preparing a response to Cardinal Bellarmine in 1639 and 1640. Although that response was eventually put aside in favour of Milton's anti-episcopal tracts, the location of the family home and resources in the vicinity of Horton make such a possibility plausible. Even with the less than ideal physical conditions in Horton already described, one can also see coherence between the rural village environment and the pastoral setting of Milton's major poem of this period, *Epitaphium Damonis*. The poem's overall mood of loss explicitly addresses a central event in this part of Milton's life—the death of his friend Charles Diodati—but could the occasion also allow for ruminations concerning losses in the immediate family, his sister Anne, nephews, and possibly his mother? Milton's poetic reaction to death, no doubt more personal here than in 'Lycidas', gives another vantage point from which to gauge a host of experiences he is encountering at this time, some addressed overtly in the poem, others potentially hidden behind the scenes, tucked away in the layers of the ode. As a time period when Milton is establishing his own life outside the family home, the years 1639–40 do not allow the family to go away. Indeed the responsibilities of the nephews are clear evidence that independence will only come within rather than apart from the family orbit.

CHAPTER 2

JOHN MILTON: THE LATER LIFE (1641–1674)

NICHOLAS VON MALTZAHN

MILTON is the first English author for whom we have so much in the way of biography. He himself emphasizes his identity in his writings, whether in the *ethos* arguments elaborating his virtue in his prose tracts, or in the self-descriptive invocations that punctuate *Paradise Lost*. To those works' claims his contemporaries responded, so that in addition to the rich and varied writings from Milton's hand and the unusual wealth of his life-records, we have much contemporary report as well as a number of early 'lives' with which to enlarge our sense of the man and his achievement.¹ Moreover, disputes have long raged over the course and very meaning of the English Revolution in which Milton played a part. The resulting historical research has in its volume and detail much helped Miltonists in their scrutiny of his life and times. This broader perspective applies because early in 1641, soon after the calling of what would prove the revolutionary Long Parliament, the 32-year-old Milton embarked on a career in public controversy. That became a lasting engagement whether in his writing as a citizen in the 1640s; as a public servant under the Rump Parliament (1649–53) and Cromwellian Protectorate (1653–8); as a more independent pamphleteer again in the fresh season of political opportunity Milton discovered in the turmoil of 1659–60; or as a subject under the restored monarchy after 1660, when he completed *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, and *Paradise Regained*, and published

¹ See Darbishire; French, *Records*; John T. Shawcross, *Milton: A Bibliography, 1624–1700* (1984).

further of his works including a fresh tract *Of True Religion* (1673), before his death in November 1674. Astonishing as Milton's major poems are, they have fostered a curiosity about the life of the author who could so transform English poetry.

For posterity, the composition and publication of *Paradise Lost* (1667, 2nd edn., 1674) is the defining event of Milton's life. For his contemporaries, more notable was Milton's publication of the *Defensio* (1651) and related justifications of the execution of Charles I, which contentious achievement was such that 'He was much more admired abroad than at home'.² In his lifetime, his epic and his political interventions were seen as closely related. 'Milton holds to his old Principle', grouched one early reader of *Paradise Lost*, who had long suspected Milton of being 'too full of the Devil'.³ But those who esteemed the epic soon found ways to separate it from Milton's controversial prose, and in two generations the distinction contributed to the success of Joseph Addison's influential *Spectator* essays (1712), which aestheticized *Paradise Lost* in terms that lastingly elevated the sublime epic above the seventeenth-century religious and political convulsions that had so involved Milton. Later writers hostile to Milton's politics might allow their resentment to inform their critical evaluations of his poetry, notably Samuel Johnson in his 'Life of Milton' and T. S. Eliot in his essays on the poet. Others, especially the Romantics, their heirs, and late twentieth-century scholarship, were kinder to Milton's free-thinking in religion and politics alike, and readier to relate his controversial writing to *Paradise Lost*.

Does Milton's biography yield a more coherent understanding of his works, even as it may emphasize their complexity? Early in the twenty-first century, the critical debate remains poised between those who integrate Milton's arguments early and late across the broad range of genres in which he wrote and those who disintegrate his works, emphasizing the inconsistencies and discontinuities in his varied productions. The 'lumpers' have learned to concede how Milton might, in saying the same thing in different circumstances, mean different things at different times. The 'splitters' have learned with postmodernism to emphasize that Milton's inconsistencies may be born of his participation in different debates, genres, or discourses rather than just from his own confusions. Milton's often polemical writing invites re-situation in the controversies in which he was engaged. Moreover, circumstance might invite his economizing with the truth, conspicuously so in his tactic of proposing Alexander More the author of *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* (1652), which occasioned his elaborate attack on that luckless factotum in *Defensio Secunda* (1654).⁴ Such were the cross-currents of the English Revolution that the rapidly shifting contexts often inflect the meaning of Milton's claims. Biography may help explain even works long canonized as monuments of English literature.

² John Aubrey, further inflected by Anthony Wood, in Darbishire, 7, 48.

³ Nicholas von Maltzahn, 'Laureate, Republican, Calvinist: An Early Response to Milton and *Paradise Lost* (1667)', *Milton Studies*, 29 (1992), 181–98 at 183, 189–90.

⁴ For Milton's likely hand in the 'Leiden' letter identifying More as the author of the *Clamor*, to which letter Milton then referred as if sounder evidence, see Blair Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England: John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Marchamont Nedham* (Oxford, 2007), 39–42, 208–13.

I

Who was the poet Milton who in 1641 enlisted in what proved the English Revolution? A Londoner through and through, his learning and religion made him a European too, if more especially a citizen of that Protestant Europe now in retreat before the Roman Catholic Continental powers. Greater London was already a metropolis of some 400,000 people, a rapidly growing political and commercial centre that had long sprawled beyond the old city walls, and that dwarfed other towns in England.⁵ A member of the emerging urban elite, Milton after his years of education at home, at St Paul's School, at Christ's College, Cambridge, and abroad, was now a bachelor schoolmaster, newly established in a large and quiet house off affluent Aldersgate Street—'a pretty Garden-House . . . at the end of an Entry'—with his 10- and 9-year-old nephews Edward and John Phillips, the first of the small number of pupils he taught in the 1640s (Darbishire, 62; French, *Records*, ii. 29–30). North of St Paul's and just outside the city walls, the Aldersgate Street lodgings suggest Milton's commitment to a life of teaching in London even as he completed to his own satisfaction 'the full circle of my private studies' (CPW, i. 807). There he remained for almost five years, when he moved into a house in the nearby Barbican, after which, with his father's death in 1647, he moved into smaller quarters in High Holborn (backing onto Lincoln's Inn Fields), some distance west. The latter seems to mark Milton's fresh ambitions after his inheritance, moving from teaching back to study and then into public life (CPW, ii. 762). Later in his life, after his years living in Westminster as a state servant, and some time in hiding and in gaol at the Restoration, he returned to live north of Aldersgate, now a little east in Jewin Street in the parish of St Giles Cripplegate, in which church his father had been buried from their Barbican house in 1647, with Milton buried there too in 1674. As one of his first biographers noted, all his houses backed onto gardens: the pleasure in green spaces evident in Milton's early Ovidian poetry, in his delight in 'retired Leisure, / That in trim gardens takes his pleasure' (*Il Penseroso*, ll. 49–50) and in his garden metaphors elsewhere (the parable of the gardeners, for example, in *Animadversions* (i. 717)), seems connected to his revelling in the fecund Garden of *Paradise Lost*. Milton was not the first or last city-dweller who 'lov'd the Country, but was little There' (Darbishire, 204). During the months of the Great Plague (1665) he retreated from the infected city to rural Buckinghamshire. But he remained a Londoner to the end, despite offers from abroad of 'great preferments', and in his last years moved only to a smaller 'House in the Artillery-walk leading to Bunhill Fields', not far from these former dwellings (Darbishire, 7, 75).

The business of Milton's later life also kept him in London. Whatever the remuneration of taking in pupils, some of whom were well-to-do, Milton's main source of income originated in investments his father had made. 'Ease and leasure', he

⁵ For its peculiarly rapid growth during Milton's early life see Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580–1750* (Cambridge, 1981), 51 and *passim*.

acknowledged, had been given him for his 'retired thoughts out of the sweat of other men' (CPW, i. 804). But his father's success as a businessman was one in which Milton increasingly participated, with mortgages, rentals, and the like yielding an income that in some part survived even the terrifying change in his fortunes at the Restoration. His 'disciple' Cyriack Skinner, in stressing Milton's virtue, perhaps misleadingly followed Milton when he emphasized that it was his frugality or 'Oeconomy' which allowed him to live on his inheritance (Darbishire, 32). Later biographers too have sometimes proven unwilling to emphasize Milton's business life.⁶ It was active investments as much as thrift that allowed Milton in the 1650s to save £2,000 out of his public service salary of almost £300 a year, 'which being lodg'd in the Excise, and that Bank failing upon the Restoration, he utterly lost' (Darbishire, 32). His only real estate in the Restoration was the family house leased in Bread Street, which was lost in the Fire of 1666, but evidence of other investments continues to surface.⁷ Like his father, Milton preferred lending money on land rather than himself having real estate, which was much more vulnerable to taxation than other forms of wealth. In his pamphlets, Milton laments the burdensome cost as much as the power of the late Renaissance state. The expense of centralized power he identified perhaps too closely with kingship itself and with the subjects' loss of liberty (Darbishire, 186; CPW, vii. 446, 450). But he disliked taxation from any quarter, a resentment against state impositions that he memorably expresses as late as *Samson Agonistes* (CPW, iv. 627).⁸ Milton's lifelong familiarity with business shows in his frequent use of commercial metaphors, even in expressing his ambitions as a religious writer (i. 810).

In London too Milton found conversations and friendships second only to his delight in his Florentine encounters of 1638. Milton had a lasting talent for friendship, not least with women and younger men. Conversation animated these relationships; he was horrified to miss it in his first marriage, which failed almost before it began. He made dialogue central to his anthropology, as when his solitary Adam, conversing with God, makes his heartfelt plea for a better partner than the animals of Eden: 'I by conversing cannot these erect / From prone, nor in their ways complacence find' (8. 432–3). Such exchange shapes Milton's ideal of companionate marriage, his conception of liberty civil and religious, the very plot and conduct of *Paradise Lost*. Conversation plainly met his own emotional needs, early and late, as well as answering a long-standing humanist expectation that conversation might offer a privileged space of intellectual and personal liberty in a world too full of religious and political constraints. His friends plainly enjoyed his flair as a learned freethinker in a period of polarizing debate, when extremes, however much they stimulated different views, might also inhibit them. 'Of a very cheerful humour', reported one of Milton's

⁶ But compare J. Milton French, *Milton in Chancery* (New York, 1939).

⁷ Most recently of a loan outstanding in the 1660s to one 'Gr.' (Bodleian, MS Aubrey 13, fos. 89^r, 92); see Nicholas von Maltzahn, 'Making Use of the Jews: Milton and Philosemitism', in Douglas A. Brooks (ed.), *Milton and the Jews* (Cambridge, 2008), 57–82 (72).

⁸ Blair Hoxby, *Mammon's Music: Literature and Economics in the Age of Milton* (New Haven, 2002), 207–16.

contemporaries, the poet was 'Extreme pleasant in his conversation, & at dinner, supper &c: But Satyricall' (Darbishire, 6). Glimpses of this conviviality emerge, whether early in the 1640s when he enjoyed a party every 'three Weeks or a Month' with some fashionable young lawyers in the neighbourhood, or later when he speaks of the social pleasure of wine by a winter fireside and in Horatian fashion asks a sometime pupil 'what neat repast shall feast us, light and choice' (Darbishire, 62; Sonnet XVII, 'Lawrence, of virtuous father virtuous son'). Milton's severity with his own students, as they themselves attested, was matched by the familiarity and freedom of his talk with them (Darbishire, 12). The 'honest liberty of free speech' he valued early and late (*CPW*, i. 804). But this conversation was a stricter pleasure than that 'company dancing and merriment' for which his first wife hankered, cut off by the times from her large royalist family in Oxfordshire, to which she soon fled home (Darbishire, 14). Milton was no friend to the recreations including 'mixt dancing' (*CPW*, i. 589) fostered by the royal 'Book of Sports', reissued in 1633. A different culture prevailed in London where, the musical son of a very musical father, Milton skilfully played organ and also bass viol, sang well, and instructed his nephews as singers.

Citizen and gentleman? Milton wore a sword 'and was skill'd in using it' (Darbishire, 32). But this betokened civic virtue, that of the militia man rather than any feudal subject. Military exercise invigorated Milton's programme of education, which with humanist pedagogy much disciplined young citizens in body and mind:

The exercise which I commend first, is the exact use of their weapon; to guard and to strike safely with edge, or point; this will keep them healthy, nimble, strong, and well in breath, is also the likeliest meanes to make them grow large, and tall, and to inspire them with a gallant and fearless courage, which being temper'd with seasonable lectures and precepts to them of true fortitude, and patience, will turn into a native and heroick valour, and make them hate the cowardise of doing wrong. (*CPW*, ii. 409)

The severities then normal to grammar learning seem to have been borne by his pupils without rancour, even when one nephew later recalled how he and his brother were 'often-times' beaten and cried (Darbishire, 14). Milton's embittered mother-in-law attributed all to his 'harsh and choleric' character (Parker, 398). But at that date learning was in many ways written on the body. Milton himself seems to have been whipped by one of his university tutors (Darbishire, 10). Discipline he often extols, since 'God even to a strictnesse requires the improvement of these his intrusted gifts' (*CPW*, i. 801). Hence Milton set a formidable example of 'hard Study and a spare diet' (Darbishire, 62). Another biographer styles him 'a Spare man', meaning that he was either thin or frugal, with other reports confirming both attributes. 'His harmonically and ingeniose soule dwelt in beautifull & well proportioned body', we are also told; 'His deportment was sweet and affable; and his Gate erect & Manly, bespeaking Courage and undauntedness' (Darbishire, 3, 4, 32).

Milton was 'very healthy' until late in life when he suffered from gout. His blindness was a long time coming, perhaps owing to glaucoma, and complete by 1652 (Parker, 988, 1238). He was proud that it did not change the look of his eyes.

There are no great portraits of Milton as an adult, but his distinctive oval face, thickening in later life, with long brown hair and blue or 'gray' eyes is further attested by his early biographers. Even in his blindness he seems to have worn some sword, 'with a small Silver-Hilt', if not in the last years of his life. By then he was reduced to using 'a Swing for Exercise' (Darbishire, 203–4).

II

Milton's pen was of course mightier than his sword. His later literary career features a succession of great pulses of activity: two in close succession in 1641–2 and 1643–5; another in 1649–51, when he was finally slowed by his going entirely blind; and then more sporadic work before a fresh burst in 1658–63, which saw the composition of *Paradise Lost* as well as a number of tracts on religious liberty and constitutional reform (1659–60), and likely *Samson Agonistes* too (perhaps 1663–5).⁹ A final flurry of publication in 1670 and after seems to reflect his finding a market now for works of yesteryear (the *History of Britain*, for example), but *Paradise Regained* and *Of True Religion* are obviously late and self-conscious reflections on matters of lasting concern to Milton. He himself, early and late, comments on his seasons of delaying preparation and the extraordinary force of his powers as a writer when at last engaged. 'They also serve who only stand and wait', he consoled himself after his blindness in Sonnet XVI; with his epic, he saw himself as 'long choosing, and beginning late'; his *Samson* too has been read biographically as describing his propensity for belated but then supreme effort. His vocational uncertainty had found intermittent reassurance from his evident skill as a poet. But Milton clearly saw his chiefly literary achievements to the age of 32 as lagging behind expectations, his own and others'.

Whatever his professions of modesty, Milton plainly thrilled to the opportunity that came his way in 1641 now to put the 'wearisome labours and studious watchings' (CPW, i. 869) of his youth to work in the public sphere. To defend his life and property ('vitam & fortunas') as he puts it in a later report to a Florentine friend, he had to leave his study and to use his 'left hand . . . in the cool element of prose' (ii. 764; i. 808). When enlisted by a group of English Presbyterians, one of whom, Thomas Young, had once been the favourite of his private tutors (see Parker, 707–8, and the essay by Edward Jones above), he gladly followed their lead in supporting the Root and Branch Petition for reforms of the national church. Those reforms had been presented to parliament in December 1640 and became an important part of parliamentary pressure on the crown in 1641. Milton's own 'lively zeale'

⁹ Dating *Samson Agonistes* is no certain matter: lacking external evidence, I incline to the date after *Paradise Lost* suggested by the strongest contextual reading, that offered by Worden, *Literature and Politics*, 358–83.

was to animate his eloquence, in part to show that literary sophistication was not the preserve of episcopacy (CPW, i. 869, 873–4).

At issue was the radical reorientation of the church owing to ‘the elect people of God’ (CPW, i. 861). Might an end be brought to its government by bishops? Their hierarchy and excessive ceremony seemed too great a compromise with the Roman Catholic past and thus an impediment to true religion. Against them Milton directed a barrage of complaints and mockery. But he may have had in view also some other radical changes in government that the twenty-six bishops’ membership of the House of Lords forestalled (i. 860–1). They had been appointed by the Crown and were not soon to be found voting against it (i. 852). The question remains how far Milton saw that the transformation he sought of the church—in particular, the selection of bishops not by the Crown but by the laity according to the example of the primitive church, and the ordination of ministers not by bishops (also i. 544, 600, 873)—might well prove a transformation of the state.

Here again Milton seems less unworldly than has sometimes been assumed. His animus was sharpened by his perception that he had been ‘Church-outed by the Prelats’ (i. 823). For Milton meant from the outset to separate church and state, certainly for the well-being of the church but also of the state. Not for him the more moderate reforms, the ‘modified episcopacy’ promoted by the widely admired Bishop Ussher, though Milton had to concede the ‘learning’ of such ‘profound Clerks’ even as he questioned the uses to which it was put (i. 763, 748). That compromise with the Crown, meant to consolidate constitutional gains in the preceding months, was not Milton’s objective, as is reflected in his own preliminary effort in controversy.¹⁰ He seems to have written an anonymous historical appendix to one such Presbyterian tract in February or March 1641, which supplies a hostile summary of the history of English bishops (i. 961–75) and this just as the sequestered Archbishop Laud’s fortunes took a turn for the worse.¹¹ But Milton soon followed this with a more major restatement of the Presbyterians’ claims in *Of Reformation* (May 1641), which were made more nearly his own in the four further anti-prelatical pamphlets he wrote in the next year. Not until the fourth of these anti-prelatical pamphlets, *The Reason of Church-Government* (written late in 1641) does Milton climactically declare himself more fully as its author and thus announces ownership of his positions, which by then prove to be moving rather beyond those of the Presbyterians of the day. With them he had made common cause, joining them in forcing reform. Whether he had in view quite their reforms is less certain, and soon his path would diverge from theirs.

The law of unforeseen consequences governs much of Milton’s maturity, with many of his victories proving pyrrhic. When he himself sought in his *Defensio*

¹⁰ Aristocratic leaders found the compromise advantageous as they promoted their own objectives in transforming the court at Whitehall; see John Adamson, *The Noble Revolt: The Overthrow of Charles I* (2007), 170 and *passim*; Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: 17th-Century Essays* (Chicago, 1988), 149 ff.

¹¹ David Hoover and Thomas N. Corns, ‘The Authorship of the Postscript’, *Milton Quarterly*, 38 (2004), 59–75.

Secunda to provide a well-shaped autobiographical narrative, its elisions and uncertainties mark the strain of determining just what providential logic informed his life and times. And worse was to follow. But 1641 offered a bright moment of ecclesiastical and political possibility; the world might seem all before him and where to choose his place as national poet and reformer. He knew himself committed to godly reform, rather than the machinations of any ‘modern politician’, designed as those were ‘to keep up the floting carcas of a crazie, and diseased Monarchy’ (CPW, i. 571, 572). So his Puritan resentment of ‘the many benefice-gaping mouth of a . . . canary-sucking, and swan-eating Prelate’ was not just a plea for spiritual discipline in the church. Nor was his resentment of the Church Fathers’ writings as ‘hard’, ‘crabbed’, and ‘abstruse’ (i. 568, 626) simply part of his dislike for ‘all the heaped names of Angells, and Martyrs, Councells, and Fathers’, the ‘pride of flesh’ yielding those ‘jangling opinions’ that episcopal writers proposed (i. 652, 704, 684), or ‘the unweildy volumes of tradition’ (i. 827), ‘the scragged and thorny lectures of monkish and miserable sophistry’ (i. 854) with which they bedevilled the universities. Attacking the bishops’ ‘secular high Office’, his opposition to them on religious grounds extends beyond Root and Branch reform towards no very monarchical Christian ‘commonwealth’, Milton’s daring impulse perhaps inviting the warning ‘No Bishop, No King’ (i. 538, 554–7, 582, 640).

The parliament that had met in November 1640 animated ‘the people with great courage & expectation’ of reform, as Milton later recalled (CPW, v. 443). The long period of Charles I’s personal rule had now truly ended. Having perhaps overstepped the mark in *Of Reformation*, Milton might then retreat to a more modest insistence on church discipline as separate from the state (i. 575–6), training his attack on bishops once more, while leaving the Crown be, in order better to set them at odds (i. 576–7, 770–1). Thus he could emphasize the threat the priest presented to the king, not least through popular unrest against what might be styled clerical exactions and pretensions (especially i. 593–5, 638, 793, 850–60). But the insistence that kingship had its foundation in justice might be at once a commonplace and also a demanding claim for a different standard of royal conduct (i. 584), as was Milton’s insistence that monarchy ‘is made up of two parts, the Liberty of the subject, and the supremacie of the King’ (i. 592) and his renewed claim that a king (or the King?) might be a Samson, who ‘laid down his head among the strumpet flatteries of Prelats’ and thus lost his strength (i. 858–60, 859). It remains unclear just how soon the anticlerical Milton determined that ‘new Presbyter is but old Priest writ large’, as he observed c.1646 (*On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament*). 1641 was no time for Milton to dwell on differences between Presbyterians Scottish and English, for which nations’ unity he can pray, nor to linger over his own differences with either (i. 596–7, 798–800). But his emphasis on toleration presages the independent direction of his career as a controversialist (i. 787–8).

Reformation demanded ‘the struggl of contrarieties’, those ‘wars of Truth’ that Milton believed fundamental to our discovery of God’s purpose (CPW, i. 795; ii. 562). He might express dislike for the ‘troubl’d sea of noises and hoars dispute’ (i. 821). But the loss of government controls on the press, even as the volume of printing

remained limited owing to the monopoly of the Stationers' Company, had led to the dominion in the print marketplace of pamphlet controversies. In this great proliferation of titles, the combination of press freedom and constraint shortened the average publication and anything over a sheet or two (eight or sixteen pages in quarto format) became harder to place. So there were few substantial publications that in thoroughness, system, and elaboration resembled the works Milton had spent the previous decade and more studying. But what style to adventure in this market? Here Milton was far from the Florentine literary societies where he had flourished a few years before. Even so he persisted in demonstrating his authority through an elaborate rhetoric and wide-ranging cultural reference. Moreover, when he himself then came under attack, he resorted to an ever more exalted ethos argument, making great claims for his education and probity. His shifting strategies show as the rich idiom in *Of Reformation* yields to the pared-down discipline in *Of Prelaticall Episcopacy*; with the more laborious *Animadversions*, generically restricted to shorter answers until some longer flights near the end, then leading to the much more fully reasoned *Reason of Church-Government*; with a fuller self-defence in his final *Apology* (i. 884–93). But Milton's self-conception here does not soon change. It seems to be his own voice that he imagines amid the hymns of saints and angels in the apocalyptic peroration to *Of Reformation*, with more of the same in *Animadversions* (i. 616, 706); his 'singing robes' are still to hand in *Reason of Church-Government*, where he contrasts his own writing with that of 'libidinous and ignorant poetasters' (i. 808, 818). Against the less worthy 'projectors' who 'bescraull their Pamflets every day', Milton maintains his sense that his eloquence is evidence of his spiritual election (i. 753, 821–2).

III

But it was not just the times that were turning to increasing gall, when worsening confrontation after the season of hope in 1641 led to war between royal and parliamentary armies in the summer of 1642. Even as Milton had decried those whose public professions were betrayed by their own deficiency 'in the regulating of their own family' (CPW, i. 754), his own virginity cult ended in a sudden and disastrous marriage that summer. What began as a business trip to some Oxfordshire gentry to collect on a mortgage, ended in his marriage to the Powells' eldest daughter, Mary. He was 32, she 17. The extended wedding party continued in London for some days before her family left Mary to her marriage. A month or so later Mary's friends, 'possibly incited by her own desire' as Milton's knowing nephew suggests, successfully imposed on him to yield her back to Oxfordshire for the rest of the summer. Meant to return at the end of September, she did not come back for almost four years, with Milton's pleas in the interim said to have met with a brusque response

(Darbishire, 63–5). ‘In the full vigor of his Manhood’, as one of Milton’s pupils recalled, Milton ‘could ill bear the disappointment hee mett with by her obstinate absenting’ (Darbishire, 23; Parker, 881–2).

Even as Milton endured this domestic crisis, the king had raised his standard in the north in August; the great Battle of Edgehill between royal and parliamentary forces followed in October; the royal army threatened London in November, when Milton in a sonnet pleaded the respect owed poets by men of war (‘Captain or colonel’). In Oxfordshire the royalist Powells were now divided from Milton by the opposed lines of the rival armies—he himself seems later to allude to the problem (compare *CPW*, iv. 625)—and it was not until well after the victory of the parliamentary side, with these in-laws’ affairs in disarray, and Milton rumoured to be planning a new marriage to a Miss Davis, ‘a very Handsome and Witty Gentlewoman’, that the Powells changed tack. Was Milton gratified or dismayed by Mary’s coming back to London and ‘making submission and begging pardon on her knees before him’? He had been ‘as it were a single man again’ and had developed a taste for women ‘of great Wit and Ingenuity’. Most of Milton’s biographers have taken a kind view of the excitement of reunion that issued in their first child within the year after. But even now it was only ‘at length concluded’ that Mary, ‘one whom he thought to have never seen more’, would first stay with Milton’s brother’s widowed mother-in-law—this in no very adjacent dwelling over by The Strand—before moving in once more with Milton (Darbishire, 64–67). Even after reconciling with Mary and the birth of their first child, Milton still characterized his marriage as an unprofitable tie, in terms that elicited from his correspondent some learned and sympathetic comment on Venus forcing ‘beneath her brazen yoke bodies and hearts ill-mated’ (*CPW*, ii. 762, 766, 768).

More recent studies have done much to explain how Milton’s ardent ideal of friendship, especially as embodied in his earlier relation with Charles Diodati, informed his high expectations of companionate marriage.¹² He sought no ‘mute and spiritless mate’ (*CPW*, ii. 251). At the same time, Milton extols his own mother’s example of charity (iv. 612) and also the unnamed, virtuous virgin—at once like the biblical Mary (Martha’s sister) and like Ruth, whom he celebrates in Sonnet IX (‘Lady that in the prime’). Mary Powell may well have balked at the challenge before her. Reading between the lines in the divorce tracts, Annabel Patterson describes some revulsion on Milton’s part at sexual experience, a wounded reaction to frustrated physicality consistent with his dark expectations elsewhere of heresy begetting ‘heresie with a certain monstrous haste of pregnancy in her birth, at once borne and giving birth’ (i. 781) or his gruesome allegory of Satan, Sin, and Death late in *Paradise Lost*, Book 2.¹³ Failing divorce, mortality in London was high and one way to lose a wife

¹² Gregory Chaplin, ‘“One Flesh, One Heart, One Soul”: Renaissance Friendship and Miltonic Marriage’, *Modern Philology*, 99 (2001), 266–92; Thomas H. Luxon, *Single Imperfection: Milton, Marriage and Friendship* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 2005). Compare William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1955), 78–99.

¹³ Annabel Patterson, ‘Milton, Marriage and Divorce’, in Thomas N. Corns (ed.), *A Companion to Milton* (Oxford, 2001), 279–93.

was to 'be fruitful and multiply', to risk her in childbirth. With a maternal death rate well over one in fifty births, it was in 'travaile' especially that the loss of a wife might be feared.¹⁴ Milton's children followed in 1646 (Anne), 1648 (Mary), 1651 (John), and 1652 (Deborah). The mother Mary died a few days after the last birth. Six weeks later Milton's baby son also died owing to 'the ill usage or bad constitution of an ill-chosen nurse' (Darbishire, 71).

Milton did not remarry until 1656, when he enjoyed what seems to have been a happy union with Katherine Woodcock, twenty years his junior. Eleven months later a daughter Katherine was born (19 October 1657). The mother died early in 1658, their infant daughter a month after. Katherine Woodcock is surely the wife of Sonnet XIX, insofar as that projection refers to a person, whom the blind poet dreams of seeing now after her death, free 'from spot of childbed taint' and 'vested all in white, pure as her mind' ('pure' too as in her name, from the Greek *katharos*), only to awaken into a day that her absence renders doubly night. In 1663 Milton married his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, thirty years his junior, who long survived him (d. 1727). A shrewd eighteenth-century biographer, Jonathan Richardson, observes that Milton would never marry a widow, which emotional preference denied him access to what was a profitable marriage market and to any more seasoned sexuality (Darbishire, 205). *Paradise Lost* shows an eventual delight in the happier carnality he may himself have experienced in later marriage(s). But the rancor of Adam and Eve's arguments after the Fall, and the harrowing exchange between Samson and Dalila in *Samson Agonistes*, argue Milton's bitter experience of marital dissatisfactions, in the former case issuing in reconciliation, in the latter in renewed separation. Milton's poetry, which Samuel Johnson accuses of a 'want of human interest', is in this regard at least arresting (Johnson himself had reason to repress thoughts of marital failure).¹⁵

As Johnson also observed, Milton 'was naturally a thinker for himself' (i. 294–5). His education in controversy combined now with his profound reappraisal of marriage to lead Milton towards an extraordinary reinvention of himself as a public intellectual. (We might look to Wallace Stevens as a comparable instance of marital failure without divorce issuing in a radical reconception of self.) Milton had learned much from a year of writing and controversial engagements. He also gained now from reflection on his own situation. He was soon to complete the journey from being an orator on behalf of others to becoming an orator for himself.

¹⁴ R. Schofield, 'Did Mothers Really Die?', in L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith, and K. Wrightson (eds.), *The World We Have Gained* (Oxford, 1986), 233, 248, 251–2, 254 (in addition to the special danger of the first birth, the rate of maternity deaths from infectious disease was peculiarly high in London); William Whately, *A Care-cloth: Or a Treatise of the Cumbers and Troubles of Marriage* (1624), 50.

¹⁵ Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, ed. Roger Lonsdale, 4 vols. (Oxford, 2006), i. 290.

IV

The second phase of Milton's career in controversy features a rhetoric no less majestic than the first. But the independence and reach of his arguments become much greater. For now he was no longer speaking the language of the times, as he had done in his pamphlets for Root and Branch reforms of the church or even state. His next contributions, favouring divorce and pre-press licensing, display an intellectual inventiveness new to his prose. The effect is startling.

Especially in the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and *Areopagitica*, Milton articulated positions new to what was no very extensive contemporary debate. In the course of doing so, he pressed the logic of others' arguments and his own to the point of no return. Did others cite natural law in arguing the parliamentary cause? Milton could do so in seeking to legalize divorce and advocating the freedom of the press. If those others, Presbyterians mostly, refused to follow Milton so far, he might round on them: 'I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs' (Sonnet XII, 'On the Detraction which followed upon my Writing Certain Treatises'). If they wished an argument from authority, he might turn to that great reformer Martin Bucer, who had held a like position permitting divorce (*The Judgement of Martin Bucer, Concerning Divorce*, 1644). Did Trinitarian writers quote anti-Trinitarian writings at length in order to refute such heresies? Milton in poring through the heavy tomes of Johann Gerhard discovered the heretics had the better case.¹⁶ Likewise, the customary opprobrium for the ancient bishop Dionysius Alexandrinus owing to his innovative theological opinions might strike Milton as quite unwarranted (*CPW*, ii. 511–12). Clerical arrogations of power had not just afflicted the church itself, of course. One area after another of human endeavour seemed to cry out for emancipation from the dead hand of Custom, which Milton had long discerned as 'but agednesse of Error' (i. 561).

Notable in the divorce tracts, moreover, is Milton's readiness to reconceive his relation to the Bible.¹⁷ Now he was telling no twice-told tale in which the proof-texts might be flopped out, one after another. Instead he engages in a much more inquiring reading of passages from the Old Testament and New. He finds such welcome liberty on this point in the older law that he presses to discover the same in the new. Aggressively contextualizing Jesus' apparent injunctions against divorce, he promotes a Mosaic rather than Pauline perspective on the reason essential to God's laws and to be sought in human ones. Adventurous as his arguments are, Milton's rhetorical flair also shows in this impassioned address to the Long Parliament. Reaction in that quarter against his views induced from Milton no retreat. Instead he republished the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* in a 'much augmented' second edition (1643, 1644 title page), with *The Judgement of Martin Bucer*,

¹⁶ Martin Dzelzainis, 'Milton and Antitrinitarianism', in Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (eds.), *Milton and Toleration* (Oxford, 2007), 171–85 at 184–5.

¹⁷ See Jason Rosenblatt, *Torah and Law in Paradise Lost* (Princeton, 1994).

Tetrachordon, and *Colasterion* supporting its positions and defying his detractors. Of those there were a number; he had put his name to work written in English on 'a Subject so new to this age' (CPW, ii. 724) and those times rent by political and religious divisions. This was Milton's first fuller experience of fame or infamy. In the main, his chiefly Presbyterian critics lamented Milton as but an instance of sectarian excess; they could lump him with other exponents of free love since antinomians had long been associated, sometimes with cause, with sexual licence. These charges Milton might brush aside, even as he responded at length to the more substantial counter-arguments of a 'nameless' 'Confuter', whose longer *Answer to . . . the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (licensed in November 1644) was not so easily dismissed. Milton's harsh reply in *Colasterion* mocked his antagonist, bringing that menial 'mechanic' or 'Serving-man' under his punitive correction. Milton pleaded again for divorce as the only answer to the 'perpetual defraudments of truest conjugal society . . . injuries and vexations as importunate as fire'. Those afflictions were a far cry from the 'rationall burning' of the soul's 'inbred desire of joyning to it self in conjugal fellowship a fit conversing soul' (ii. 724, 726, 731, 251).

Milton's Presbyterian critics were in the ascendant because the fortunes of war had forced parliament to seek the Scots' support in 1643. By 1644, Milton's earlier sense of a common cause with English Presbyterians had given way to a deep resentment of their effort, in conjunction with Scots Presbyterians, to enforce their system of church government in an English national church. Just as bad were the compromises with the Crown this seemed to invite. Now it became clear to Milton that there were 'new forcers of conscience' afoot. How bitter a fate to escape bishops only now to succumb to their Presbyterian counterparts! They were gathered at Westminster in an assembly that threatened to confuse church and state in a lasting settlement of a Presbyterian national church. Thus to promote religion by 'bodilie compulsion' rather than 'evangelic perswasion' much offended Milton. Vital to true Christianity was the freedom of believers to engage in conscientious discussion, unconstrained by the dead hand of authority.

Vital to true citizenship was the freedom to advise parliament. That freedom too, Milton feared, was now again to be abrogated. In 1641 the pre-publication licensing of books had lapsed with abolition of Star Chamber, that momentous loss of royal prerogative. The pressure of events in 1643—chiefly successive royalist victories, not finally checked until Cromwell's decisive victory at Marston Moor in July 1644—led parliament to revive such licensing in June 1643 with a view to gaining control over the unruly London press. Milton viewed this as a disastrous mistake. His chosen career in education had already brought him into a circle of reformers, many of them Continental refugees from the Thirty Years War and Counter-Reformation constraints on the freedom of religious and scientific inquiry. With these reformers, Milton foresaw a brave new world of intellectual exchange. His treatise *Of Education* (June 1644), addressed to one of their leading figures, Samuel Hartlib, is much more than a reading list, however impressive the great series of classical authors whom pupils are to read in Latin and Greek. Milton here offers the Hartlib circle and parliament his humanist blueprint for national revival at a time when the outcome of

the Civil War still hung in the balance. Critics have noted his freedom in imagining educational, social, and even constitutional change in its pages, if sometimes between the lines, and also his emphasis on military training.¹⁸

If the education of youth demanded bold reform, the ongoing education of citizens demanded Milton's still more ardent rejection now of pre-publication licensing of the press. By the time he wrote *Areopagitica* (1644), the military successes of parliament invited a more expansive consideration of the national interest. Again styling the tract a speech, Milton Athenianizes the Long Parliament, as if to wrench it away from the baleful influence of the Presbyterians in the House and in the Westminster Assembly now meeting. Their arrogations of power Milton later excoriated in the Digression to his *History of Britain*, in some topical sonnets, and in his anti-monarchical tracts. More generally, he had long lamented the English 'weaknesse and want of better instruction' in religion and politics (*CPW*, i. 796–7), a lasting concern that he continued to voice (see especially v. 451). Constraints internal to the London-centred book trade, governed as it was by the monopolistic Stationers' Company, did bother Milton (ii. 570). But the interference of church or state in selecting what might be printed enraged him. Satirizing pre-publication licensing as a relic of Roman Catholic abuses, Milton instead affirms English national liberty. However quiet the reception of the work in his own day—there are a few allusions to it and even those not uniformly admiring—its exalted description of press freedom in the next centuries gained for *Areopagitica* the most lasting renown of any of Milton's prose.

But what had become of Milton the poet, who already as a youth had agreed with the assurance of his mentors that his work was such as 'aftertimes . . . should not willingly let it die' (*CPW*, i. 810)? Even as he entered the lists as a public intellectual, his poetic production seems to have sunk from the achievement of *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* (performed in 1634, published in 1637) and 'Lycidas' (November 1637) to his superb and varied but more incidental sonnets of the early 1640s. There is ample evidence, however, that his ambitions for his poetry were undiminished all the while. His rough book, now at Trinity College, Cambridge, includes after its draft of 'Lycidas' an extensive list of biblical and British historical subjects for poetic dramas, with some of them, notably an 'Adam unparadiz'd', being sketched more fully. Conspicuous here is the pressure towards narration that leads to ever fuller prologues, prelude to the larger narration when Milton returned to this subject in his epic. Milton's commonplace book, now at the British Library, also shows him alert to how his wide readings might lend themselves to a poet's hand; in his *History of Britain* he would a few years later relate the legendary British prehistory 'be it for nothing else but in favour of our English Poets, and Rhetoricians, who by thir Art will know, how to use them judiciously' (v. 3). Years later he reflected on his having been 'long choosing' his epic 'and beginning late' (*Paradise Lost*, 9. 26). The

¹⁸ Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640–1660* (New Haven and London, 1994), 155–6; David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge, 1999) 131; Martin Dzelzainis, 'Republicanism', in Corns (ed.), *A Companion to Milton*, 294–308 at 300–4.

promises to perform as a national poet that he made in *The Reason of Church-Government* were not soon fulfilled, at least not in verse.

Perhaps conscious of the delay, in 1645 Milton published a book of English and Latin poems with a strongly retrospective cast. Pride and modesty vie in its presentation. The octavo volume includes commendatory notices and poems from distinguished admirers at home and abroad. But both within the book and in comment on it, Milton resorts to modesty topoi, not least in the presentation of some of the Latin works, and by extension the collection as a whole, as something of a miscellany, belonging to the genre of *silva*. Where Statius in his preface to *Silvae* had vaunted his rapid improvisation in such poems ('subito calore'), Milton too can emphasize the impromptu flair of many of his compositions. Here it is the rapidity as much as the 'earliness of his own proficiency' that Milton commends 'to the notice of posterity' (to borrow Samuel Johnson's phrase). For whatever the Horatian persuasion that we should write and rewrite patiently, poets might also delight in displaying their sudden fecundity, whether as personal achievement, or as the working of a Muse that could be associated with the Holy Spirit and hence salvation, in a Christianizing of *furor poeticus*. Hence *silva* could help translate works from a literary system dominated by occasion and patronage to one in which the aesthetic is a more autonomous category.

The generic expectations of *silva* also accorded with poets' self-deprecation about the youthful endeavours they were nonetheless publishing. There was a long tradition of excusing less finished work as an acceptable part of a sylvan woodpile. Milton himself makes this self-deprecatory move repeatedly. He insistently dates his youthful productions, and indicates their origins in school and college. His early poem 'The Passion' is presented still incomplete with a note claiming that 'This Subject the Author finding to be above the yeers he had, when he wrote it, and nothing satisfi'd with what was begun, left it unfinish't'. The poem remains incomplete; the apologetic note remains the same as late as the second edition of 1673. There too, Milton in its last lines attributes most of 'Lycidas' to an uncouth swain. In his 1645 *Poems* and again in 1673 he disavows the Ovidian elegies of his youth, even as he publishes them ('Haec ego mente olim laeva'). And in sending *Poems* 1645 to the Bodleian Library he deprecates the whole volume as if poetry 'juvenilis olim'—boyish and of yesteryear—despite so much of it being the work of his adulthood ('Ad Joannem Rousium', line 5). The bookseller for *Poems* (1645) was Humphrey Moseley, who was now busy purveying the poetry of the 1630s to a nostalgic readership. Almost all of Milton's poetry in the volume pre-dates 1641. Modern criticism has been swift to discover harbingers of Milton the revolutionary in this work. He himself seems to have viewed this work as something of a throwback to a culture now superseded by more turbulent times. His 'left hand' had adjusted to the new possibilities in prose controversy. But reinventing his poetics in response to the new realities was no easy matter, even for Milton. Writing his Florentine friend Carlo Dati in April 1647, he laments the 'lack of any safe retreat for literary leisure among so many civil battles, so much slaughter, flight, and pillaging of goods' (*CPW*, ii. 764).

V

Milton's letter to Dati reveals a dark view of his circumstances as a writer in a nation torn by unrest. That view shapes much of his work in the crisis of the English Revolution that followed in 1648 and 1649, as the king sought compromise with what Milton viewed as the backsliding Presbyterians, only for Army radicalism then to purge parliament further to force the trial that led to the king's execution at Whitehall, on that memorable day 30 January 1648/9. In April 1648 Milton translates the penitential Psalms and that summer, when another civil war broke out, he responds in a sonnet addressed to Lord Fairfax, general of the parliamentary army, with pleas for peace and better fiscal management. Now too he began writing histories to instruct his countrymen in their failings. He seems first to have tried his hand at an 'epitome' of what was to be known about Russia, *The Brief History of Moscovia* (published only posthumously), perhaps in part owing to his interest in the climatic explanation for the difficulty of governing northern nations. This looks like a run-up to his much larger *History of Britain*, which he says he began writing at the king's death (CPW, iv. 627–8). Rapidly surveying the early history of England, he seems to have advanced his narrative to Saxon times before taking up employment as Latin secretary to the revolutionary Council of State (20 March 1648/9). Especially in the Digression later omitted from the published *History*, where Milton compares the faltering English in the 1640s with their faltering ancient counterparts after the Roman departure from Britain, his jeremiad denounces the compromising Presbyterians and more generally a nation that might fail its leaders' 'fortitude and Heroick vertue' in service to liberty, whether of church or state. Like misgivings animate his other tracts of 1649, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and *Eikonoklastes*, where the evils of Charles's reign are found to be perpetuated by Presbyterians in the 1640s (iii. 191–7, 221–2, 251–2, 437–8, 490).

After the Army's purge of the Presbyterians in parliament and then the execution of Charles I, Milton's scorn could be directed against the failed government of the 1640s, with the bold endorsement by contrast of the revolutionary parliamentary government that now sought to legitimize itself, eventually as a republic. Begun during the trial of the king in January and published soon after, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* justifies the individual right of resistance to tyranny, arguing that rebellion against tyrants is due obedience to God. Here Milton's radical position recalls that of his friends and fellow-revolutionaries John Bradshaw (the judge in the king's trial), John Sadler, and perhaps Luke Robinson, who had been Milton's contemporary at Christ's College.¹⁹ The *Tenure* and such acquaintance recommended him to the new government. His role as Latin secretary required his translation of Continental correspondence and diplomatic documents for much of the next decade, in which secretarial service he was bound in close service first of all

¹⁹ Parker, 353; Campbell, *Chronology*, 96, 105; Sheffield University, Hartlib Papers, 49/9/5B and 17B; Worden, *Literature and Politics*, 45–7.

to the Council of State.²⁰ His duties also soon included defending the new government retreat from its many critics. Ordered to help proceedings against the royalist journalist Marchamont Nedham, Milton in time became the versatile Nedham's friend. Ordered to help proceedings against the Presbyterian pamphleteer Clement Walker, harsh critic of Milton and his *Tenure*, Milton could contribute to the case against Walker, who died in the Tower two years later (Campbell, *Chronology*, 103). Milton soon moved into government lodgings at Whitehall, which allowed his close attendance to the Council of State's needs, and entered upon the state service that occupied him for the next decade. Late in 1651, he moved to other lodgings in Westminster, backing onto St James Park, where he lived until the Restoration. He remained close to the workings of government even after his final blindness in 1652 and it is often Continental diplomats whose reports and diaries reveal most about Milton's day-to-day life in this period—most of all in the writings of the Oldenburg emissary Hermann Mylius.

A common theme in his writings of 1649–51 is Milton's anger that the Presbyterians, who had once been such valuable allies against the state church, had now long shown themselves intent on arrogating power in a fresh confusion of church and state (CPW, iii. 490). Milton's government service soon invited his harsh *Observations* on the Irish Presbyterians' refusal to accede to the new regime. Next came his extended rebuttal of the *Eikon Basilike*, which purported to be the king's own meditations on his situation on the eve of his trial and execution. To this 'image of the king', a runaway success that drew on wide revulsion at the regicide, Milton responded with his image-breaker *Eikonoklastes*, impugning royal claims at every turn and any pretensions to sacerdotal kingship. But as a state servant he now in a second edition of his *Tenure* muted its radicalism: where the first edition had quoted more radical Presbyterian authorities of yesteryear against the backsliding Presbyterians of the 1640s, the second edition adds further Protestant authorities who insisted on the 'inferior' magistrate's mediating role in executing justice on a ruler.²¹ He was shifting to the less radical, constitutionalist arguments that would expand the pages of his Latin *Defensio* of the English people against a French polemicist, Claude Saumaise or 'Salmasius', himself something of a Presbyterian. Salmasius's royalist *Defensio regia* appeared from Continental and English presses in 1650; it was dedicated to the would-be Charles II, who rewarded the author with £100. Milton accused Salmasius of basely writing for hire, but he himself on his yearly salary of £288 was not disinterested in performing the Council's order of 8 January 1650 to answer the attack. He published his *Defensio pro populo Anglicano* a year later; it was much republished thereafter in London and on the Continent.

The *Defensio* contributed most to Milton's fame in his lifetime. Here he returned to something like his role as an orator in the anti-prelatical tracts, assembling a range of arguments, some of them rather jostling with each other, in favour of his brief. It won a wide readership at home and especially abroad. Even the many who

²⁰ Leo Miller, *Milton and the Oldenburg Safeguard* (New York, 1985); Robert Thomas Fallon, *Milton in Government* (University Park, Pa., 1993).

²¹ Milton, *Political Writings*, ed. Martin Dzelzainis (Cambridge, 1991), pp. xi–xiv.

disparaged Milton's politics, early and late, often enough conceded the majesty of his Latin prose. He himself set great store by his humanist accomplishment in this work, which he contrasted with Salmasius's barbarities, the more laughable in such a 'grammarian'. Counter-attacks soon followed, book-burnings too, and further defences, including Milton's of his nation and of himself (*Defensio secunda*, published in 1654; *Pro se defensio*, 1655; with a significantly revised edition of the *Defensio* itself in 1658). Milton's lack of scruple has been observed in this polemical land of no holds barred. The skilful Latinity of the *Defensio* is trained on the violent destruction of Salmasius's credibility as much as on any affirmation of the varied arguments Milton presents on behalf of the regicide and the revolutionary government. *Ad hominem* attacks were the stock-in-trade of such controversialists. Especially in his *Defensio secunda*, Milton was swift to make the most of the sexual misdeeds of his presumed antagonist (another Continental Calvinist minister, Alexander More), even though he soon had assurances of what he already knew, that More had not written the offending *Regii sanguinis clamor* ('The Cry of the Royal Blood', 1652) which had so impugned Milton.

After going entirely blind in 1652, Milton worked more slowly and seems at first to have depended heavily on materials from 1650–1 he had already assembled in the course of composing the *Defensio* and in the aftermath of its publication. He benefited from the arrival in London of a younger man with whom he developed a lasting friendship, Andrew Marvell, an accomplished linguist whom even Milton might admire and for whom he soon wrote an impressive letter of reference.²² The *Defensio secunda* revealingly responds to the political cross-currents that troubled the Rump Parliament well before Cromwell's dissolution of that assembly in April 1653, even as it also eventually reacts to that event and to the Lord General's fuller usurpation of power in December 1653. Milton has justly been characterized as hopeful here, but not an optimist: 'Whatever arguments Milton might find for or against the rule of Cromwell, he had always to remember the alternatives: the rule of the Stuarts, the dominance of the Presbyterians, the joint sway of those forces.'²³ Moreover, these elaborate defences of the English people's actions in sentencing the king to death might in time prove a comment on any less revolutionary commitments in the successive regimes of Oliver Cromwell.²⁴

At issue for Milton were the lasting concerns he voiced in his sonnets to Sir Henry Vane and to Cromwell himself, these in 1652 when a fresh settlement of religion was sought. The sonnet to Vane made it into that statesman's papers, from which, after the Restoration, it was published when Vane was judicially murdered. How to separate 'spiritual power and civil'? Milton's long hopes for a Protestant toleration seemed in the 1650s still to be clouded by the Presbyterians 'Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains'. Like other independently minded Protestants, he had once

²² Nicholas von Maltzahn, *An Andrew Marvell Chronology* (Basingstoke, 2005), 37–8, 41.

²³ Worden, *Literature and Politics*, 293; see also 262–88.

²⁴ Martin Dzelzainis, 'Milton and the Protectorate in 1658', in David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (eds.), *Milton and Republicanism* (Cambridge, 1995), 181–205; Worden, *Literature and Politics*, 294–7, 308–9, 323–5, 335–7.

allied himself with Presbyterians only to find the cost unexpectedly high.²⁵ Resuming his *History* in the mid-1650s, Milton found in Saxon chronicles occasion for dark reflections on modern English rulers.²⁶ Later in the Protectorate, his misgivings about the government he served seem only to have intensified: 'I stay nearly always at home—and willingly', he writes to one petitioner late in 1657, and his claim now that he has no friends in high places may not just be tactical (CPW, vii. 507). After Cromwell's death in 1658, moreover, Milton renewed his service as a pamphleteer, styling the Protectorate a 'scandalous night of interruption' and venturing fresh prescriptions for the better division of church and state in a *Treatise of Civil power* and *Considerations Touching The likeliest means to remove Hirelings out of the Church* (CPW, vii. 274).²⁷ His publications of 1659–60, when he comes to work with Vane's publisher Livewell Chapman, show his deep commitment to the terms of his earlier sonnet to Vane. He now also penned fresh political proposals and privately declared the need not for a historian of England's troubles but for 'one who can happily end them' (20 December 1659: CPW, vii. 515).

VI

Milton's compositions from 1658 to 1665 often suggest some grand simplification of his purpose as an author. In this last great spate, he composed long-planned *Paradise Lost*, and also the twin tracts of 1659, the two editions of *The Readie and Easie Way* (1660), some more polemic (*Brief Notes* and another unpublished tract in 1660), and likely *Samson Agonistes* (c.1663–5?). These were dictated amidst huge political upheavals, in which Milton's life was threatened. The Restoration left this apologist for the execution of Charles I now a subject of Charles II. In 1660, Milton's regicide tracts were banned by public decree and burnt by the hangman. Milton was ordered arrested but escaped the death penalty. He was imprisoned that autumn, released in December, then went into a hiding complete enough that as late as June 1666 a Continental correspondent presumed him dead (CPW, viii. 1–4). Only in 1667 did he belatedly resurface with the publication of his epic. Then ensued a not unprolific 'retired silence'—the term is his friend Marvell's, defending Milton from fresh attack in 1673—in the succession of his publications until his death late in 1674.²⁸ But after

²⁵ Nicholas von Maltzahn, 'Milton, Marvell and Toleration', in Achinstein and Sauer (eds.), *Milton and Toleration*, 86–104 at 99–103; Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Religious Origins of the Enlightenment', in *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, 2nd edn. (London, 1972), 193–236.

²⁶ Nicholas von Maltzahn, *Milton's History of Britain: Republican Historiography in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1991), 169–74.

²⁷ See also Worden, *Literature and Politics*, 41–3, 341–3.

²⁸ *Prose Works of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Annabel Patterson, Martin Dzelzainis, Nicholas von Maltzahn, and Neil Keeble, 2 vols. (New Haven, 2003), i. 418.

1665 his fresh compositions seem much more sporadic, with most of what he brought to press being the work of yesteryear: a Latin primer, *Accedence Commenc't Grammar*, brought to the press at the same time as *Paradise Lost* and appearing from the same bookseller in 1669; his *History of Britain*, ending at the Norman Conquest (1670); and a Latin *Artis Logicae* (1672).²⁹ Only *Paradise Regained*, the tract *Of True Religion* (1673), and his translation of a Latin *Declaration, or Letters Patents of the Election of this present King of Poland* (1674, a pointed endorsement of elective kingship) are certainly of a late date.

Paradise Lost is of course the grandest expression of Milton's renewed pleasure in his own powers, or of the direct involvement of something like the Holy Spirit, as he understood his success. That epic at last met his self-expectations, having been long meditated if now begun late. Edward Phillips discloses that Milton had already in the 1640s written at least some of Satan's Mount Niphates speech in Book 4, and the expanding outlines of 'Adam unparadiz'd' in the Trinity Manuscript suggest an early attempt at such a drama. But Phillips's biography implies that his uncle composed the epic itself between 1658 and 1663. A return to the work in 1658 may be detected in some perhaps topical details in Book 1: the Satan–Leviathan simile (ll. 200–8) may play on the 58-foot London whale that June; the comparison of Satan's spear to a Norwegian mast (ll. 292–4) may recall parliamentary debate over strategic supplies from the Baltic that winter 1658–9; the reference to a royal setback at 'Fontarabbia' (ll. 586–7) may speak to Charles II's visit to the north of Spain after the failed royalist uprising of August 1659 (Campbell, *Chronology*, 185). The epic, especially in its characterization of Satan and the fallen angels, reflects Milton's familiarity with interregal politics and political oratory, not least in that early *pièce de résistance*, the Consult in Hell in Book 2. That Milton delayed until 1667 the publication of an epic perhaps already complete in 1663 probably followed from his greater confidence at the later date about his own safety and the reception of his work, not least after the national calamities of the Great Plague (1665), the Fire of London (1666), and the dismaying success of the Dutch late in the Second Anglo–Dutch War (1667). These events issued in a significant change in national mood, resulting in political compromises favourable to Milton's re-emergence and also to his hopes for toleration.³⁰

That Milton turned to *Paradise Lost* late in the 1650s is also suggested by evidence from the incompletely revised manuscript of his *De Doctrina Christiana*. That he shifted from a systematic to narrative theology marked his deepening commitment to a biblical reasoning intent on not overdetermining the meaning of Scripture.³¹ The simpler idiom of his tracts in this period also bears emphasis. Though still capable of conspicuous rhetorical tours de force, Milton now comes to venture a less spectacular idiom in these exercises in persuasion. His oratorical commissions had

²⁹ London, Stationers' Company, Court Book D, fo. 127^v.

³⁰ Nicholas von Maltzahn, 'The First Reception of *Paradise Lost* (1667)', *Review of English Studies*, 47 (1996), 479–99.

³¹ Gordon Campbell et al., 'The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*', *Milton Quarterly*, 31 (1997), 67–117; Phillip J. Donnelly, *Milton's Biblical Reasoning: Narrative and Protestant Toleration* (Cambridge, 2009).

perhaps become less fulfilling with the passage of the years, however exalted his Ciceronian description of his earlier defence of the English people (*CPW*, iv. 684–6). Would that people ever live up to his service to them? His political hopes may have been raised after Cromwell's death (3 September 1658), when Richard Cromwell's succession did not long delay the revival of republican expectations and the desire for some better religious settlement. Milton continued his political engagements: several sketches for constitutional reform in 1659 prepare for the fuller published prescriptions of *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (2 edns., 1660). That republican advice emphasizes the role of the worthy few in a distribution of power that secures their good government from a retrograde populace too slow to become citizens, too eager again to abject themselves to a monarchy.

Milton had long pondered 'how my light is spent' (Sonnet XVI, 'When I consider') and when his beloved second wife Katherine died (3 February 1658), followed soon by their infant daughter, also Katherine (19 October 1657–17 March 1658), he had fresh cause to contemplate his condition and commitments. His relation to his daughters from his first marriage became a vexed one, with eventual expressions of unkindness reported from both sides (Campbell, *Chronology*, 199). His financial affairs were further complicated by the Restoration and the prudent retreat from public life that required, the blind man enjoying no very settled arrangements in the last fifteen years of his life in London. We may seek to read his political and domestic woes into *Paradise Lost*, but those also energized Milton's insistence on an 'answerable style' (9. 20) raising his epic beyond the encumbrance of any particular failures personal or national.

The intensity of enlightenment that *Paradise Lost* conveys at every turn—in its sudden foregrounding of the fallen Satan, and also its fascinated imagining of the days of Creation; in its bold evocations of God the Father and his Son, and also its lively assertion of paradisaical sexuality; in its tender sense of evolving marital relations before the Fall, and its rebuke of tyranny in the age of Nimrod—is not soon explained by biography or anything else. Milton now somehow came to write more freely within his biblicist discipline than ever before. That biblicism he had long tested with his habits of free-thinking—we learn in the 1650s of his having to hand a manuscript of the scandalous 'Heptaplomeres', for example, where seven wise men converse peaceably about their faiths only to arrive at natural religion—and shared with the friends, pupils, and visitors who persisted in associating with him even when the Restoration left him infamous. His often demanding reconception of religion, of politics, of social relations, of genre, eventually extended to his review of his own achievements. Modern students of Milton's last works have discovered in him some abatement of his lordliness. Did readers of *Paradise Lost* too much seize on the virtuosity of its imitations of classical epic? Or did the regeneration of Milton's Samson stagger too uncertainly through the violent night of Old Testament law?³²

³² See respectively Nicholas von Maltzahn, 'Milton: Nation and Reception', in Paul Stevens and David Loewenstein (eds.), *Early Modern Nationalism and Milton's England* (Toronto, 2008); Feisal G. Mohamed, 'Confronting Religious Violence: Milton's *Samson Agonistes*', *PMLA* 120 (2005), 327–40.

Milton in his briefer epic *Paradise Regained* offers a corrective in biblical poetics and New Testament charity.³³ Had Milton's sacred vehemence too much unsettled the basis for Christian fellowship even in affirming it? Milton in *Of True Religion* at last ventures a defence of Protestant toleration written not in blood but in milk.³⁴

The second edition of *Paradise Lost* appeared in 1674. How much was required to bridge between literary fashions of the day and this intransigent prophetic masterpiece appears from the bravura commendatory poem Andrew Marvell supplied for this fresh publication. The effect is most dramatic in the conclusion of the poem, where it proposes that 'Thy verse created like thy theme sublime, / In number, weight, and measure, needs not rhyme'. This comments not only on style, however. The trope has been understood as a recollection of Wisdom 11: 20, but the other biblical text behind it is the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast, interpreted by the prophet Daniel:

MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. (Daniel 5: 25–8)

This might be a restorative text for a revolutionary of Milton's stamp: the idolatrous king and his profligate court denounced by Daniel on the eve of their destruction. But it was Milton who fell sick that summer. He was 'cheerfull even in his Gowte-fitts', when he sang, though he is also reported to have thought his blindness tolerable compared to that painful disease. Complications of that illness killed him 'in the 9th or 10th of Novemb. 1674', when he died 'with so little pain or Emotion, that the time of his expiring was not perceiv'd by those in the room'. He 'had a very decent interment, according to his Quality, in the Church of St. Giles Cripplegate, being attended from His house [in Bunhill] to the Church by several Gentlemen then in Town, his principal well-wishers and admirers', and 'not without a friendly concourse of the Vulgar' (Darbishire, 5, 33, 76, 193). His death found wide notice at the time, at home and abroad, with his notoriety as a controversialist as first outweighing his fame as a poet.

³³ Phillip Donnelly, 'Paradise Regained as Rule of Charity: Religious Toleration and the End of Typology', *Milton Studies*, 43 (2004), 171–97.

³⁴ Paul Stevens, 'Intolerance and the Virtues of Sacred Vehemence', in Achinstein and Sauer (eds.), *Milton and Toleration*, 243–67.

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PART II

SHORTER POEMS

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CHAPTER 3

THE 'ADORNING OF MY NATIVE TONGUE': LATIN POETRY AND LINGUISTIC METAMORPHOSIS

ESTELLE HAAN

It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet.

Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*

Thus proclaimed Shelley in a famous caveat about the perils of translation.¹ A whole host of literary examples spanning several centuries and as many languages could be cited as a means of determining the truth or otherwise of this statement. But something of its rather blinkered nature emerges once it is acknowledged that translation in itself may possess an ability to recreate. It is an ability, it will be argued, that manifests itself on several levels, whereby the very nature and process of

¹ Percy Bysshe Shelley: *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Alasdair D. F. Macrae (London and New York, 1991), 209.