



# The Legacy of T.S.Eliot to Milton Studies

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CONSIDERING that T.S. Eliot made more negative pronouncements on Milton than on any other individual writer, it is ironic that he provoked a valuable legacy to Milton studies. This chapter propounds and explores that legacy as twofold: the significance of Eliot's criticism to Milton studies in the twentieth century and the timely challenge his criticism offers to Milton studies today.

Eliot's earliest comments on Milton are in his essays on Marlowe (1919) and on the Metaphysical poets, Marvell, and Dryden (all 1921).<sup>1</sup> The essay on Marlowe applies the notorious appellation of a "Chinese Wall" to Milton's verse, a wall from which "blank verse has suffered not only arrest but retrogression."<sup>2</sup> "The Metaphysical Poets" was a widely influential essay, the most important single piece of criticism in creating the eminence which these poets enjoyed for the next forty years. Eliot defined their characteristic strength as a unified sensibility, which was manifested in "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought"; Donne was the exemplar, for he felt his thought "as immediately as the odour of a rose." Claiming that these strengths disappeared from English poetry after the Metaphysical poets, Eliot announces his theory of the "dissociation of sensibility," the idea that a dislocation of thought and feeling occurred in "the mind of England" in the seventeenth century, for which he held Milton and Dryden mainly responsible.<sup>3</sup> The Cambridge scholar E.M.W. Tillyard responded in what was the first of recurring rebuttals by scholar-critics of Eliot the poet-critic. In his book, *Milton* (1930), Tillyard acknowledges Eliot's questioning of Milton's eminence as "extremely salutary," and in the book's "Epilogue: Milton Today," evaluates Eliot's theory of the



dissociation of sensibility, finds it lacking in credibility in relation to Milton, and explains the fundamental difference in temperament between Milton and Donne.<sup>4</sup>

Eliot's most substantial Milton criticism, however, was after this: his 1936 essay, "A Note on Milton's Verse," published in *Essays and Studies*, and his 1947 lecture on Milton to the British Academy, the Annual Lecture on a Master Mind, which was delivered also at the Frick Museum in New York two months later. The essay and the lecture were titled respectively "Milton I" and "Milton II" when published in Eliot's collection, *On Poetry and Poets* (1957), "Milton II" a somewhat shortened version of the lecture.<sup>5</sup>

The 1936 essay is succinct and trenchant. Eliot begins by acknowledging that "Milton is a very great poet indeed" and that "what he could do well he did better than anyone else," but follows immediately with: "the marks against him appear as both more numerous and more significant than the marks to his credit." Apart from being a thoroughly unlikeable person, he was not a man of keen senses, a result of his blindness, and his auditory imagination was over-exercised "at the expense of the visual and tactile." Eliot admits that his own literary criticism is that of a practising poet interested to learn from poets of the past, and he considers Milton an exceptionally bad influence. Dryden is a healthier influence because he preserved "the tradition of conversational language in poetry."<sup>6</sup> This was Eliot's view of Milton in 1936. His British Academy lecture of 1947 is longer, more considered, and more knowledgeable. Eliot now has fundamental reservations about his theory of the dissociation of sensibility. He also has some positive things to say about Milton's visual imagination, specifically the images of light and darkness and of vast space in *Paradise Lost*. Further, he makes an about-turn on the question of Milton's influence. (And "no one," he declares, "can correct an error with better authority than the person who has been held responsible for it.") The gist of the lecture is that Milton is no longer a bad influence, and while his poetry is still considered "at the farthest possible remove from prose," this is now a mark of his peculiar greatness. Practising poets might, in 1947, actually profit from the study of Milton.<sup>7</sup> Despite this recantation, "Milton I" and

"Milton II" are essentially similar in their formalist approach, focusing upon Milton's style, and in their emphasis on Milton's blindness and his auditory imagination.

Of the two pieces, the 1936 essay is clearly the more strenuous denunciation. In 1938 Tillyard, adding his protest to Sir Herbert Grierson's, was provoked to respond again to Eliot because of "Mr Eliot's great influence as a critic," and in *The Miltonic Setting* dealt cogently with Milton's style, particularly in relation to Eliot's comments on Milton's visual imagination.<sup>8</sup> Then, in 1940, the poet, novelist, and critic Charles Williams opened the Introduction to the World Classics edition of *The English Poems of John Milton* with the observation: "We have been fortunate enough to live at a time when the reputation of John Milton has been seriously attacked." He expressed a debt of gratitude to Eliot, and suggested that the effect of his attack was "to compel the reconsideration everywhere of [Milton's] power as a poet." Williams proceeded to do that in his Introduction and, even if briefly, refuted Eliot's imputation that thought and feeling are severed in Milton's poetry.<sup>9</sup>

The twentieth-century attack upon and defence of Milton became known as "the Milton controversy" and has been called "a unique phenomenon in the history of literary criticism."<sup>10</sup> Initiated by Eliot, the attack was aided and abetted by Ezra Pound and Sir Herbert Read, encouraged somewhat by Lord David Cecil, influenced strongly by John Middleton Murry, and lent academic force by the University of Sydney scholar A.J.A. Waldock and especially by the deeply influential Cambridge critic F.R. Leavis, who claimed not to be a scholar and, like Eliot and also many New Critics, insisted on a division between scholarship and criticism.<sup>11</sup> In his essay, "Milton's Verse," published in *Scrutiny* in 1933 and reprinted in his book *Revaluation* in 1936, Leavis announces: "Milton's dislodgement, in the past decade, after his two centuries of predominance, was effected with remarkably little fuss." He then acknowledges this as "Mr Eliot's creative achievement."<sup>12</sup>

There was undoubtedly an eclipsing of Milton. From the 1920s to the 1960s, the popularity of the Metaphysical poets in university teaching and research, "the cult of Donne," as Douglas Bush put it, went hand-in-

hand with Eliot's and Leavis's promotion of the Metaphysical poets and demotion of Milton; the "dethronement of Milton was necessary to the enthronement of Donne."<sup>13</sup> This was also the period of the New Criticism, to which Milton's poetry was generally thought not to be amenable. In 1942 abuse of Milton even reached the depths of Robert Graves's novel *Wife to Mr Milton*, presented as the diary of Milton's first wife, Mary Powell, who portrays her husband as thoroughly odious. To some extent, and depending on the institution, the history of English poetry was skewed during these years. My experience as an undergraduate in Australia in the 1950s is paralleled by that of C.K. Stead in New Zealand, who recalls that the English literary history he learned at university was Eliot's version.<sup>14</sup> In 1962 B.A.Wright, Professor of English at the University of Southampton, deplored the effect that Milton's "exploded reputation" had had in universities in Britain for more than forty years, the result of the "revolt against Milton by T.S.Eliot and his school."<sup>15</sup> In America, Stanley Fish surveyed the fortunes of *Paradise Lost* from 1942 to 1979, noted a generation which suffered from the eclipsing of Milton, and connected Milton's decline with Eliot, the ascendancy of Donne and the Metaphysicals, and the New Criticism.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Eliot's own poetry, which was sometimes written with the Metaphysical poets in his bones, commanded great respect from the 1920s to the 1970s.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the revolt against Milton by Eliot and his cohorts, Milton was not "dislodged." In 1967, the tercentenary of the publication of *Paradise Lost*, C.A. Patrides, referring to Leavis's notorious "dislodgement" statement, observed that "Milton's consignment to oblivion has not, after all, been accomplished."<sup>18</sup> The reassessment of his power as a poet, begun by Tillyard and Charles Williams, expanded exponentially from 1940 to 1970. Eliot's attack on Milton goaded B.A.Wright, for example, not just to lament Milton's "exploded reputation" but to produce the Everyman edition of *Milton's Poems* in 1956 and a book on *Paradise Lost* in 1962.<sup>19</sup> Even while the eclipsing was occurring, partly because it was occurring, a rich burgeoning of Milton scholarship was under way, especially in North America. This was manifested in monumental editorial work, biographical and historical research, the establishment of *Milton Quarterly* (originally

*Milton Newsletter*) in 1967 and the annual *Milton Studies* in 1969, and the publication of major books by, among others, C.S. Lewis, Rosemond Tuve, Isabel MacCaffrey, J.B. Broadbent, Frank Kermode, Joseph Summers, Northrop Frye, Helen Gardner, and—most pertinent to the attack on Milton—Arnold Stein, Balachandra Rajan, Stanley Fish, and Christopher Ricks.<sup>20</sup> In *Milton's Grand Style* (1963), Ricks aimed to deal once and for all with the Milton controversy and with Eliot and Leavis as “the foremost . . . anti-Miltonists”; his book-length study of *Paradise Lost* demonstrated, by close analysis, that Milton’s poetry is a remarkably flexible medium which does respond to the New Criticism.<sup>21</sup>

Since the 1970s, the New Criticism has declined, and with it the subject of Milton’s style and the Milton controversy. By 2001 Richard Bradford could reasonably ask whether Eliot’s criticism of Milton “would have been taken seriously had it not been promoted by a man who, in 1936 and thereafter, was the dominant presence in contemporary English verse.”<sup>22</sup> However that may be, Charles Williams’s observation that “no critic of Milton ought to be uninformed” of Eliot’s criticism remains valid.<sup>23</sup> Milton scholars continue to refer to him with respect, and in 2003 Neil Forsyth bracketed him as a “great critic” with Samuel Johnson and Stanley Fish.<sup>24</sup> In 2005 Christopher Ricks, then Professor of Poetry at Oxford, spoke of Eliot as “an astonishing poet and critic and phenomenon.”<sup>25</sup>

The fruitful and prolific reassessment of Milton from 1940 to 1970 was the positive legacy of the Milton controversy ignited by Eliot. But there is another legacy, I want to suggest, for Milton studies today. It lies in Eliot’s emphasis on the sound of Milton’s poetry. For a variety of reasons, formal elements of Milton’s poetry, including its oral and aural properties, have been neglected since the 1970s; there is not even an entry on “style” planned for the gargantuan *Milton Encyclopedia* forthcoming from Yale University Press. Over the past forty years Milton studies have focused more and more upon Milton’s thought and politics, with massive research on his prose writings, and an imbalance has developed, noted in 2005 by Stanley Fish.<sup>26</sup> As for the oral and aural elements of Milton’s poetry, while the practice of “Milton marathons”—the public reading aloud of *Paradise Lost*—continues to be widespread, the purpose of these

events has been avowedly heuristic and they have tended to remain in the popular culture of academic communities; the knowledge gained from them has scarcely been channelled into Milton scholarship.<sup>27</sup> Generally speaking, in the last forty years Milton scholars have neglected the central importance of sound in Milton's poetry, the importance, that is, of sound to meaning.<sup>28</sup> Eliot's repeated emphasis on Milton's auditory imagination might provide a challenge and a wake-up call to Miltonists, especially to their understanding of *Paradise Lost*.

In the long reception history of *Paradise Lost*, the sound of the poem was admired, particularly in the nineteenth century, and Eliot's response falls within this tradition and links him with other poets. Francis Berry (himself a poet), in his book, *Poetry and the Physical Voice*, claims that poets have "a peculiarly physical . . . awareness of vocal sound."<sup>29</sup> The responses of Wordsworth and Tennyson to Milton's poetry—"a voice whose sound was like the sea," "organ-voice of England"—bear this out.<sup>30</sup> Eliot likewise responds to the auditory power of Milton's poetry. In "Milton I," he writes that Milton's "gifts were naturally aural," the sensuous effect of his verse "is entirely on the ear," his verse "is dictated by a demand of verbal music." Eliot is overwhelmed by the "mazes of sound" and concludes that Milton's work "realizes superbly" the auditory element.<sup>31</sup> In 1942, between "Milton I" and "Milton II," Eliot gave two lectures—"The Music of Poetry" at Glasgow University and "The Classics and the Man of Letters" at the Classical Association in Cambridge—in which he commends Milton's exploration of "the orchestral music of language," considers his poetry "among the great triumphs of English versification," and emphasizes how Latin entered into the "complete music of his verse."<sup>32</sup> Also between "Milton I" and "Milton II" came the later *Quartets*, by which time the music of Milton has entered Eliot's own verse, the powerful opening of *East Coker* III, "O dark dark dark . . .," echoing Milton's Samson.<sup>33</sup> Then in "Milton II," Eliot states emphatically that, in reading *Paradise Lost*, "our sense of sight must be blurred, so that our *hearing* may become more acute." Especially interesting are his observations on Milton's handling of verse paragraphs. Declaring Milton "the greatest master of free verse in our language," "of freedom

within form," Eliot offers the insight that Milton works in "larger musical units" than any other poet, that his verse paragraphs have their own "wave-length" and communicate a "peculiar feeling, almost a physical sensation of a breathless leap."<sup>34</sup> This is possibly the most revealing brief comment ever made on the way *Paradise Lost* moves. Its verse paragraphs are athletic, whether in narration, description, or speeches, varying in manner—at times stately, flowing, twisting, surging—but never inhibited by the unit of the line.<sup>35</sup>

Eliot's response to the physicality of Milton's verse connects interestingly with the mode of composition of *Paradise Lost*. Milton had to *speak* every word of the poem. His early biographers record that he dictated the poem on waking in the morning and that, if a scribe was late, would complain that "*hee wanted to bee milkd.*"<sup>36</sup> We would literally not have *Paradise Lost* but for its being physically "milked" out of him via his voice, a voice that, he reminds us, was not "hoarse or mute" even by Book 7 (7.24-25).<sup>37</sup> He would dictate "a Parcel of Ten, Twenty, or Thirty Verses at a Time" or deliver "perhaps 40 Lines as it were in a Breath," significant details in relation both to Milton's prefatory note on "The Verse" and to Eliot's insight into the "breathless leap" of the verse paragraphs.<sup>38</sup>

Eliot had especially keen instincts, then, for Milton's auditory imagination. But there is a sting-in-the-tail, which nevertheless might serve a purpose of goading Miltonists to further reassess Milton's powers. The sting is Eliot's damning criticism of a gulf between sound and sense. This censure is pronounced in "Milton I" and is not really retracted in "Milton II."<sup>39</sup> Because of "the hypertrophy of the auditory imagination the inner meaning is separated from the surface," so that, "[t]o extract everything possible from *Paradise Lost*, it would seem necessary to read it in two different ways, first solely for the sound, and second for the sense."<sup>40</sup> With all poetry of any difficulty this is necessary to some extent, but Eliot's statement, in its context, comes out as an accusation of a division between sound and sense in Milton, and is a bludgeoning which cries out to be rebuffed. In fact, when it comes to exploring the interface of sound and sense, commentary has been relatively sparse. The New Criticism of the 1950s and '60s did produce some good work which specifically responded

to Eliot's attack. The most concerted effort was that of Arnold Stein in his book *Answerable Style* (1953). He confronted Eliot's complaint, made in "Milton II," that in *Paradise Lost* "[t]he emphasis is on the sound, not the vision, upon the word, not the idea," and argued, through textual analysis, that patterns of sound in *Paradise Lost* help shape and modulate meaning.<sup>41</sup> In 1964 Balachandra Rajan also analysed passages of *Paradise Lost* in order to refute Eliot's accusation, in "Milton I," that Milton's syntax is for musical significance rather than the development of thought.<sup>42</sup> In 1963, however, the doyen of critics of Milton's style, Christopher Ricks, while acknowledging that auditory effects are "indisputably important" to Milton's grand style, did not attempt to deal with them because of the danger of merely imagining that sound was echoing sense, a danger pointed out by Dr Johnson and known today as the "the enactment fallacy."<sup>43</sup> Ricks considered that skilled critics, including Stein, fell into this fallacy, and "[i]f critics as intelligent as these can sink, it may be best to conclude that the close analysis of Milton's rhythms and music is 'a gulf profound as that Serbonian Bog . . . Where Armies whole have sunk.'"<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, in attempting to refute Eliot's damning indictment of a breach between sound and sense, I must venture into the "Bog." In doing so, I will draw upon an analogy to aid my argument. There is an analogy, I believe, between the philosophy of materialist monism that pervades *Paradise Lost* and the poem itself considered as a created thing. In the Milton industry today, a great deal of research has been expended on the materialist monism of *Paradise Lost*, but the phenomenon of the poem itself has not been related to this ontology.<sup>45</sup> In the cosmos of the poem, all things—from the lowest stone up through plants, perfumes, sounds, mind (of human beings and angels) to God—are both spiritual and material. Meanwhile the poem itself is, analogously, a thing at once spiritual and physical: the thoughts, feelings, elaborate structure of ideas, characters, shaping of the plot, images (mental sense impressions), allusions, down to the minutest associations of words—all these are abstract, existing in the mind of the author and the reader. But they only exist, are only brought into being, by the physical properties of the poem, that is, the visual appearance of the words on the page (lexical, syntactic, linear)

and the auditory effects. In *Paradise Lost*, these auditory effects, the materiality of sound, is of central importance, as Eliot's instincts so strongly registered and as eighteenth- and especially nineteenth-century critics also recognized. Milton's materialist monism is best demonstrated, I want to suggest, in the living poem itself as it was "milked" out of his body in his voice and continues to be read aloud by those who "[will] not willingly let it die."<sup>46</sup>

This requires explanation by textual analysis, and I take a passage from Book 1. Satan, having heaved himself off the lake of fire and conferred with Beelzebub, moves towards his followers in order to rouse them:

He scarce had ceas't when the superior Fiend  
 Was moving toward the shoar; his ponderous shield  
 Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round, 285  
 Behind him cast; the broad circumference  
 Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb  
 Through Optic Glass the *Tuscan* Artist views  
 At Ev'ning from the top of *Fesole*,  
 Or in *Valdarno*, to descry new Lands, 290  
 Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.  
 His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine  
 Hewn on *Norwegian* hills, to be the Mast  
 Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,  
 He walkd with to support uneasy steps 295  
 Over the burning Marle, not like those steps  
 On Heavns Azure, and the torrid Clime  
 Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with Fire;  
 Nathless he so endur'd, till on the Beach  
 Of that inflamed Sea, he stood and call'd 300  
 His Legions, angel Forms, who lay intrans't  
 Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks  
 In *Vallombrosa*, where th'*Etrurian* shades  
 High overarcht imbower; . . . (1. 283-304)

This passage exemplifies some of the positive things Eliot observed about Milton's handling of blank verse. The peculiar wave-length is heard, especially in the way the similes advance confidently, disdaining the line endings: "in comparison with Milton," Eliot declares, "hardly any subsequent writer of blank verse appears to exercise any freedom at all."<sup>47</sup> In addition, Eliot quoted these particular similes and commented favourably upon them in his 1947 British Academy lecture; unfortunately that part of the lecture was deleted for "Milton II." He regarded them, as also the Leviathan simile (1.200-07), as evidence of "a mark of the first rank of genius" and related them to "the absorbed attention which . . . any poetry lover today ought to be able to give the poem from end to end" because of the "perpetual variety" of its "extraordinary style."<sup>48</sup> However, Eliot's heresy of a gulf between sound and sense still demands to be confronted and refuted. For this, I want to look particularly at the last five lines of the passage, mentioned by Leigh Hunt in 1825 as exemplifying Milton's "harmonious" sound effects,<sup>49</sup> although Hunt made no attempt to explain how these effects work:

. . . he stood and call'd  
His Legions, angel Forms, who lay intrans't  
Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks  
In *Vallombrosa*, where th'*Etrurian* shades  
High overarcht imbowr; . . .

(1. 300-304)

A recent interpretation of these lines struck me as a blatant example of how ignoring the aural properties of Milton's poetry can result in totally inept interpretations. In his book *Destabilizing Milton: "Paradise Lost" and the Poetics of Incertitude* (2005), Peter Herman argues, by a long and circuitous route, that these lines are about both republicanism and monarchy and therefore betray Milton's incertitude about the seventeenth-century Revolution; Herman's book focuses on Milton's politics and completely ignores the sound of *Paradise Lost*.<sup>50</sup> If he had listened to the lines, he might have offered a more credible interpretation.

How, then, do they sound and how does the sound relate to sense?

First, the angels are stunned, “intrans’t,” and there is an appropriate sense of stillness in the lines. They move fairly slowly because of a predominance of long vowels and a number of pauses, two in line 301, one each in lines 303 and 304. And there is an extra pause at the end of line 301, on “intrans’t.” This is because of the long vowel of “intrans’t,” but also because the cluster of unvoiced consonants at the end of line 301 and the beginning of line 302—“intrans’t,” “Thick”—together with the plosive “t”s, requires meticulous articulation, making it impossible to slide over easily from “intrans’t” to “Thick.” The pause on “intrans’t” is the only end-line pause in these five lines and helps to evoke the sense of the word. In addition to slowing the pace, the long vowels of the lines produce that fullness of sound or sonority for which Milton is famous. This is increased by the harmony of consonance (“Legions / Angels”), by liquid and voiced consonants, and especially by assonance, that is, the repetition of like vowels and diphthongs (“sore . . . vaulted . . . stood . . . call’d . . . Forms . . . Autumnal . . . Brooks” and “strow . . . brosa . . . over”). Milton scorned the use of rhyme but, by these means, he creates more subtle interlinking of sounds. What is happening is not onomatopoeia but a mutual reverberation of sounds which has an expressive effect: as one word resonates with another, the sense of each is intensified. The sonorousness is epitomized in the word “*Vallombrosa*” with its open vowels and liquid and voiced consonants. It is an Italian word and the double “l” is sounded. Milton loved the Italian language, its musicality and open vowels, which result in sonorousness; he composed sonnets in Italian and, a few lines earlier in this passage, uses other Tuscan place names, “*Fesole*” and “*Valdarno*” (1.289-90). *Vallombrosa* is a place outside Florence. It means “shaded valley,” in this context with a hint of “the valley of the shadow of death.” But Milton does not say “shaded valley,” although that would fit metrically—he says “*Vallombrosa*.” What I suggest is: the aural effects of these lines combined with the associations of words and images, and especially the union of the semantic and phonetic properties of the word “*Vallombrosa*,” evoke a melancholy sonority which is inescapably part of the meaning of the passage, part of the sense of loss and devastation. There is no gulf, that is, between sound and sense.

The modern critic and theorist Derek Attridge, writing of aural effects in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, speaks of "a reciprocal relationship . . . between phonetic and semantic properties" and of "the materiality of language as it does its work of bringing meaning into being."<sup>51</sup> This is what is happening in the Vallombrosa passage through the materiality of sound. And it is happening everywhere in *Paradise Lost* in countless ways, but always according to Milton's deeply imaginative, elastic, even imperious handling of decorum, which he considered "the grand master peece to observe."<sup>52</sup> The very opening lines of the epic would have thrown his contemporary readers: not only are they unrhymed but they surge forward in a long suspended sentence—a "breathless leap"—and the first line is quite out of kilter metrically, with full stresses on the second, third, and fourth syllables: "Of MANS FIRST DIS-o-BED-iENCE AND the FRUIT."<sup>53</sup> Yet this strange rhythm, in its sublime weightiness, is right for the astonishing announcement the bard is making. It is *appropriate* rhythm, or what Milton calls "apt numbers," which, through their aptness, help bring meaning into being.<sup>54</sup> Rhythm varies continually in *Paradise Lost* for expressive purposes. It works quite differently, for example, where Milton narrates how the fallen angels spread among the sons of Eve: a long sentence (1. 364-73)—another "breathless leap"—resolves in the line, "And DE-vils TO a-DORE for DE-i-TIES." The rhythm is bizarre. Dr Johnson would have considered this a "vicious" line, hopelessly impure.<sup>55</sup> It has only three full stresses, and alliteration falls on all three. The result is a jolting effect, especially after the metrically regular preceding line ("With gay Religions full of Pomp and Gold"), and these aural effects, reciprocating the startling effect of the semantic content ("Devils to adore for Deities"), help bring meaning into being, specifically, the narrator's concentrated outburst of incredulity and disgust as he concludes his long sentence. A different meaning again is created in the rhythm of the last two lines of *Paradise Lost* (12.648-49): "They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow, / Through *Eden* took thir solitarie way." (12.648-49). The lines move with an even iambic pulse which contributes to the subdued and chastened feeling of the departure from paradise, and the two beats on "SO-li-TAR-rie" slow down the closing line appropriately and emphasize

the sense of "solitarie."

Returning, then, to my analogy drawn from Milton's metaphysics, I would claim, strongly against Eliot, that *Paradise Lost* is "monist" poetry: just as there is no duality of body and spirit in the cosmos of *Paradise Lost*, so there is no gulf between sound and sense in this supremely oral and aural epic. This view has been provoked by Eliot's complaint that, because of "the hypertrophy of the auditory imagination the inner meaning is separated from the surface," so that one must read *Paradise Lost* once for the sound and once for the sense. It has been provoked also by Eliot's accusation of a "dissociation of sensibility" in Milton: the "fidelity to thought and feeling" which he so admired in the Metaphysical poets' handling of syntax is matched and surpassed by the fidelity of Milton's (very different) music to the thought and feeling he expresses in *Paradise Lost*.<sup>56</sup>

To conclude then, it seems to me that Eliot has left a mixed but rich legacy to Milton studies. In the twentieth century, he stirred up a unique storm which shook Milton's eminence for approximately forty years but also provoked a reassessment of his power as a poet, which flowed into a resurgence of Milton studies from 1940 to 1970. During those years, the peculiar value of a poet-critic is manifest in the repeated argued reactions of scholar-critics to Eliot's criticism of Milton. For the twenty-first century, we need a great poet-critic and quite possibly Eliot will be the last. For Milton scholarship such as it is today, largely neglectful of Milton's auditory imagination, Eliot's value is as a poet-critic who *heard* Milton's poetry, placed the highest priority on the sound of *Paradise Lost*, and challenges us to explore the interconnection of sound and sense.

## Notes

- 1 "Christoph Marlowe," "The Metaphysical Poets," "Andrew Marvell," "John Dryden," in T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932).
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 286-88.
- 4 E.M.W. Tillyard, *Milton* (1930; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 302, 302-12.
- 5 T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957). The complete version of the 1947 lecture, delivered before the British Academy on 26 March and 3 May at the Frick Museum, is printed in James Thorpe, ed. *Milton Criticism: Selections from Four Centuries* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), pp. 310-32. In the sections of the lecture deleted for "Milton II," Eliot quotes these lines from *Paradise Lost* and comments approvingly upon them: 3.1-12; 1.192-210, 286-94;

- 2.51-57; 5.781-84, 778 (Thorpe, *Milton Criticism*, pp. 326-29).
- 6 *On Poetry and Poets*, pp. 138-45; 138, 143, 142. Eliot considered Dante a particularly beneficial influence because his language was "the perfection of a common language" ("Dante" [1929], *Selected Essays*, p. 252) and "Dante" (1950), T.S.Eliot, *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), pp. 99-101.
  - 7 *On Poetry and Poets*, 146-61; 146, 154.
  - 8 E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Miltonic Setting: Past and Present* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1938; repr. 1961), pp. 90; 90-104. Grierson's protest is a lengthy Note in his book, *Milton and Wordsworth: Poets and Prophets* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1937), p. 125 n.1.
  - 9 Charles Williams, "An Introduction to Milton's Poems (1940)," Thorpe, *Milton Criticism*, pp. 252; 252-66.
  - 10 Thorpe, "Introduction," *Milton Criticism*, p. 19.
  - 11 See Todd H. Sammons, "A Periplus of Pound's Pronouncements on John Milton," *Paedeuma* 19-20 (1990-1991): 147-61; Herbert Read, *Phases of English Poetry* (1928; repr. Norfolk [Conn]: New Directions Books, 1951), pp. 122-24; David Cecil, ed. *Oxford Book of Christian Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), pp. xxi-xxii; John Middleton Murry, *The Problem of Style* (London: Oxford University Press, 1922) and *Heaven—and Earth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), pp. 150, 158, 165; A.J.A.Waldock, *Paradise Lost and Its Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); F.R.Leavis, *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (1936; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964) and *The Common Pursuit* (1952; rpr. London: Chatto & Windus, 1962). On Leavis's and Eliot's separation of scholar and critic, see Leavis, *The Common Pursuit*, p. 10 and Eliot, "Milton II," *On Poetry and Poets*, pp. 146-47.
  - 12 Leavis, *Revaluation*, p. 42.
  - 13 Douglas Bush, *Paradise Lost in Our Time: Some Comments* (Ithaca [NY]: Cornell University Press, 1945), pp. 5, 3. The first chapter of this book, "The Modern Reaction Against Milton," consists mainly of an impassioned and systematic refutation of Eliot's 1936 essay.
  - 14 C.K.Stead, "Eliot, Arnold, and the English Poetic Tradition," *The Literary Criticism of T.S.Eliot*, ed. David Newton-De Molina (London: Athlone Press, 1977), p. 185.
  - 15 B.A.Wright, *Milton's 'Paradise Lost'* (London: Methuen, 1962) pp. 9, 63. Wright's book opens with this statement: "Since the first war Milton has indeed 'fall'n on evil days, and evil tongues' in his own country. Young men and women go up to the universities to read Honours English without having read a line of him, for their teachers have told them that they need not bother with a poet of exploded reputation. *Paradise Lost* accordingly is not nowadays widely read or highly regarded" (p. 9).
  - 16 Stanley Fish, "Transmuting the Lump: *Paradise Lost*, 1942-1979," *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), pp. 247-93.
  - 17 At the University of Queensland in the 1950s, Milton was taught briefly in second year, my fourth-year English Honours class made a special study of the Metaphysical poets and of Leavis's *Revaluation*, and I wrote my fourth-year thesis on Eliot's *Four Quartets*. In 1960, as a Junior Lecturer, I tutored second-year students mainly on the Metaphysical poets and applied the New Criticism rigorously in first-year tutorials. To prepare for the latter, staff members met in the lunch hour and together dissected an "unseen" poem in preparation for the tutorial. One of my first publications, signed under my maiden name, "B[everley] C[hadwick]," was "T.S.Eliot: His Poetry and Theories," *The Makar* (University of Queensland) 2.1 (1962): 21-23.
  - 18 C.A. Patrides, "Paradise Lost and the Language of Theology," *Language and Style in Milton: A Symposium in Honor of the Tercentenary of Paradise Lost*, ed. Ronald David Emma and John T. Shawcross (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1967), p. 102. The same year saw the publication of Patrick Murray's *Milton: The Modern Phase: A Study of Twentieth-century Criticism* (London:

- Longman, 1967), which included a survey of the attack on Milton.
- 19 *Milton's Poems*, ed. B.A. Wright (London: Everyman, 1956; revised 1962, reprinted 1969) and *Milton's 'Paradise Lost'*.
  - 20 C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942); Rosemond Tuve, *Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 1957); Isabel Gamble MacCaffrey, *Paradise Lost as "Myth"* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 1959); J.B. Broadbent, *Some Graver Subject: An Essay on Paradise Lost* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960); Frank Kermode, ed. *The Living Milton: Essays by Various Hands* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960); Joseph Summers, *The Muse's Method: an Introduction to Paradise Lost* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962); Northrop Frye, *The Return of Eden: Five Essays on Milton's Epics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965); Helen Gardner, *A Reading of Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Arnold Stein, *Answerable Style: Essays on Paradise Lost* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1953); Balachandra Rajan, *The Lofty Rhyme: A study of Milton's major poetry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: the Reader in Paradise Lost* (London: Macmillan, 1967); Christopher Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).
  - 21 Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style*, p. 2. Ricks's opening chapter is "The Milton Controversy." Cleanth Brooks had earlier argued that Milton's poetry is amenable to New Critical methods—"Milton and the New Criticism," *Sewanee Review* 59 (1951): 1-22.
  - 22 Richard Bradford, *The Complete Critical Guide to John Milton* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 155.
  - 23 Thorpe, *Milton Criticism*, p. 254.
  - 24 Neil Forsyth, *The Satanic Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 115. See also Roy Flanagan, "The world all before [us]': More than Three Hundred Years of Criticism," *A Concise Companion to Milton*, ed. Angelica Duran (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 52-53.
  - 25 Report by Nicholas Wroe, Saturday 29 January 2005, *The Guardian*.
  - 26 Stanley Fish, "Why Milton Matters; or, Against Historicism," *Milton Studies* 44, ed. Albert C. Labriola (Pittsburgh University Press: Pittsburgh, 2005): 1-12.
  - 27 John Hale at the University of Otago is probably the most experienced in organizing Milton marathons. For an account of his work, see Beverley Sherry, "Paradise Lost 'Made vocal,'" *Milton Quarterly* 34 (2000): 128-29 and Beverley Sherry, "Introduction" to John K. Hale, *Milton as Multilingual: Selected Essays* (Dunedin: Department of English, University of Otago, 2005), pp. xv-xvii. My entry on "Marathon Readings of Miltonic Works" is forthcoming in the *Milton Encyclopedia* from Yale University Press.
  - 28 The notable exception is John Creaser, who has written variously on rhythm and in 2007 published a ground-breaking and persuasive study, "'Service is Perfect Freedom': Paradox and Prosodic Style in *Paradise Lost*," *RES* 58 (2007): 268-315. Other exceptions are Diane McColley, "'The Copious Matter of My Song,'" *Literary Milton: Text, Pretext, Context*, ed. Diana Trevino Benet and Michael Lieb (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1994), pp. 67-90 and *Poetry and Music in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chapter 5; Archie Burnett, "'Sense Variously Drawn Out': The Line in *Paradise Lost*," *Literary Imagination* 5 (2003): 69-92; and William Walker, "Sounds of Elevation: God's Commendation of Abdiel (*Paradise Lost* VI, 29-37)," forthcoming.
  - 29 Francis Berry, *Poetry and the Physical Voice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 5; the book includes an interesting chapter on "The Voice of Milton" (pp. 83-113).
  - 30 See Wordsworth's sonnet, "Milton! Thou shouldst be living at this hour" ("Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea: / Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,") and Tennyson's "Milton" ("O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies, / O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity, / God-gifted organ-voice of England").

- 31 *On Poetry and Poets*, pp. 139, 140, 141, 144, 145.
- 32 *Ibid*, pp. 36, 29 and T.S.Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic and other writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 149.
- 33 *Samson Agonistes* 80 ff.. *Little Gidding* III presumably acknowledges Milton as "one who died blind and quiet." On Milton's influence upon Eliot, see Mother M. Christopher Pecheux, "Milton and Eliot: Touched by a Common Genius," *Greyfriar: Siena Studies in Literature* 18 (1977): 29-44; B. Rajan, 'Milton and Eliot: A Twentieth-Century Acknowledgment', *Milton Studies 11: The Presence of Milton*, ed. B. Rajan (Pittsburgh University Press: Pittsburgh, 1978): 115-29; and Harry Blamires, "Influence on Twentieth-Century Literature, Milton's, *A Milton Encyclopedia*, gen. Ed. William B. Hunter (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1978), vol. 4: 145-46.
- 34 *On Poetry and Poets*, pp. 157, 158, 160, 157-58.
- 35 For statistics on the unprecedented freedom of Milton's use of enjambment, see Creaser, "'Service is Perfect Freedom,'" 308-11.
- 36 "The Life of Mr John Milton" (attributed to Milton's friend and amanuensis Cyriack Skinner), *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 12.
- 37 Citations of Milton are from *The Riverside Milton*.
- 38 Edward Phillips, *The Life of Mr. John Milton* (1694), *The Riverside Milton*, p. 26; Jonathan Richardson, *The Life of Milton and a Discourse on Paradise Lost* (1734), *The Early Lives of Milton*, ed. Helen Darbishire (London: Constable, 1932), p. 291. In his prefatory note on "The Verse" of *Paradise Lost*, Milton defines "true musical delight" as consisting of "apt Numbers, fit quantity of Syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings."
- 39 There is a suggestion of a retraction in "Milton II" in Eliot's consideration that one of the positive lessons that might be learnt from Milton is "that the music of verse is strongest in poetry which has a definite meaning expressed in the properest words" (*On Poetry and Poets*, p. 160).
- 40 "Milton I," *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 143.
- 41 "Milton II," *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 157 and Stein, *Answerable Style*, pp. 139-53.
- 42 B. Rajan, "The Style of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton's epic Poetry: Essays on Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained*, ed. C.A.Patrides (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp. 287-97. Rajan's essay is taken from his "Introduction to *Paradise Lost, Books I and II* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1964). Another (not highly successful) attempt from the period of the New Criticism to deal with the interconnection of sound and sense is Wayne Shumaker, *Unpremeditated Verse: Feeling and Perception in Paradise Lost* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), chapter 7 ("Auditory Perception").
- 43 Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style*, p. 23; Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler* 86, 88, 89, 90, 94 and his *Life of Pope*; Peter Barry, "The Enactment Fallacy," *Essays in Criticism* 30 (1980): 95-104. Terry Eagleton terms it the "Incarnational Fallacy" in *How To Read a Poem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 59-64. In a later lecture on "Sound and Sense in *Paradise Lost*," Ricks persuasively shows Milton's use of interlacing sounds, and occasional rhymes, to reinforce sense; the lecture is printed in Christopher Ricks, *The Force of Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 60-79.
- 44 Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style*, p. 26. The quote is from *Paradise Lost* 2. 592-94.
- 45 On the materialist monism of *Paradise Lost*, see William Kerrigan, *The Sacred Complex: On the Psychogenesis of Paradise Lost* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 193-262; Stephen M. Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); John Rumrich, "Milton's God and the Matter of Chaos," *PMLA* 110 (1995): 1035-46; D.Bentley Hart, "Matter, Monism, and Narrative: an Essay on the Metaphysics of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 30 (1996): 16-27; Phillip J. Donnelly, "'Matter' versus Body: The Character of Milton's Monism," *Milton Quarterly* 33 (1999): 79-85; and Juliet Cummins, "Milton's Gods and the Matter of Creation," *Milton Studies* 40, ed.

- Albert C. Labriola (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), pp. 81-105.
- 46 Describing his literary aspirations in an autobiographical passage of *The Reason of Church Government* (1642), Milton expresses a hope that he "might leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die"—*Riverside Milton*, p. 922.
- 47 "Milton II," *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 161.
- 48 Thorpe, *Milton Criticism*, p. 328.
- 49 Leigh Hunt, "Originality of Milton's Harmonious Use of Proper Names," *The Romanitics on Milton: Formal Essays and Critical Asides*, ed. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Cleveland / London: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970), p. 438.
- 50 Peter C. Herman, *Destabilizing Milton: "Paradise Lost" and the Poetics of Incertitude* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 31-32. I have reviewed this book in *Milton Quarterly* 41 (2007): 43-46.
- 51 Derek Attridge, *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce* (London: Methuen, 1988), pp. 151, 154.
- 52 *Of Education*, *Riverside Milton*, p. 984. See my entry on "decorum" in the *Milton Encyclopedia* forthcoming from Yale University Press.
- 53 I follow John Creaser's method of scansion in "'Service is Perfect Freedom.'" Capitals indicate stresses; small capitals are used for a "promoted" syllable, that is, a syllable such as a pronoun or preposition naturally given light emphasis but which, because of its place in the line, is felt as a metrical beat. See Creaser, "'Service is Perfect Freedom,'" 275.
- 54 See Milton's note on "The Verse"; also, on this line, Creaser, "'Service is Perfect Freedom,'" 300.
- 55 Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler* No.86 (1751), *Milton 1732-1801: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John T. Shawcross (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 203, 202.
- 56 "The Metaphysical Poets," *Selected Essays*, pp. 287-88, 285.