

Paradise Lost
and Other Poems

John Milton

With an Introduction by
Edward M. Cifelli, PhD,
and a New Afterword by
Regina Marler

Annotated by Edward Le Comte



SIGNET CLASSICS

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Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Introduction](#)

[PARADISE LOST](#)

[BOOK I - THE ARGUMENT°](#)

[BOOK II - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK III - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK IV - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK V - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK VI - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK VII - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK VIII - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK IX - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK X - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK XI - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[BOOK XII - THE ARGUMENT](#)

[SAMSON AGONISTES](#)

[SAMSON AGONISTES](#)

[THE PERSONS](#)

[LYCIDAS](#)

[AFTERWORD](#)

[SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY](#)

[NOTE ON THIS EDITION](#)

John Milton (1608-74) was the son of a successful scrivener, who supported his extensive education. After receiving his BA and MA from Cambridge University, Milton spent a number of years on the Continent to round out his education. By 1644, Milton was a renowned poet but he spent more and more of his time on political questions. His pamphlets on the Reformation and republicanism brought him to the attention of Oliver Cromwell, who appointed him to his government. After the restoration of Charles II in 1659, Milton narrowly escaped execution. He spent his remaining years working on such works as *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*.

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Edward Le Comte, professor emeritus of English at the State University of New York at Albany, also taught at Columbia, his alma mater, and the University of California at Berkeley. He has published twenty-two books, including novels and biographies, but his specialty, both in teaching and in numerous influential articles and books, is Milton.

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INTRODUCTION

Milton for Our Times

1. Duty v. Enjoyment

Modern-day readers of *Paradise Lost* may feel something like a dreary sense of duty at the prospect of having to spend several hours, days, or weeks with John Milton, the premier spokesman of seventeenth-century English Puritanism. The feeling is complicated for American readers by the connection (real or imagined) of Puritanism to whatever sexual hang-ups have mysteriously managed to persist into the new millennium. What good, new readers may think, can come of getting to know John Milton? What can his version of the Garden of Eden story possibly say to twenty-first-century readers? Is it really worth the bother?

The answer to the last question is yes, of course, but the possibly surprising chief reason is because *Paradise Lost* is enjoyable, not because it is uplifting, if in fact it is, or because it is nearly 350 years old—a detail that engages antiquarians and academics more than general readers. Nor are these readers likely to enjoy the book primarily for its richly imagined version of the Judeo-Christian creation myth. And no amount of professorial assertion about the baroque beauties of Milton's grand style is likely to persuade readers to pick up this formidable English classic. *Paradise Lost* does compel the attention of some readers for all these reasons—and no doubt many others—but the too often ignored simple truth about the book is that it is a great read, with a wonderful, sometimes lusty cast of characters, a carefully arranged plot, and here and there even a hint of humor—the surefire ingredients of bestsellers even today. *Paradise Lost* is certainly worth the bother.

But is it really enjoyable? Isn't it like all the other "classics" Mark Twain once quipped about as works "everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read"? Perhaps, but not all classics have such an interest as *Paradise Lost* does, for example, in romantic love and sex—not only on Earth, but also in Heaven. (See Books VIII and IX.) And even among epic poems, this one is notable for its violent and high-stakes scenes of war. (See especially Book VI.) Readers have always thrilled to Milton's heroic superheroes and indestructible archvillains, characters who may remind younger readers of similarly immune-to-harm figures in twenty-first-century comic books, movies, television shows, and computer games. (See, for example, how the Archangel Michael swings his mighty sword at Satan, slashing through "All his right side" [VI, 327], and how his wounds then magically heal themselves.) In another vein, it's one kind of slightly off-center enjoyment to stare openmouthed at the page over Milton's infuriating habit of claiming biblical authority for his personal brand of male superiority. It's so blatant and unapologetic as to leave modern-day readers stunned—and yet it is magnificently balanced by one of the great moments in *Paradise Lost*, when Adam loses his priggish ego, becomes fully humanized (at least for a moment), and deliberately chooses Eve over Heaven: "I death/Consort with thee, death is to me as life . . ." (IX, 953-54).

Still another aspect of *Paradise Lost* new readers will enjoy is the sheer audacity of the thing—not only its size (twelve books and 10,565 lines in the 1674 edition) but also its scope. Milton set out to

write, as he put it, “things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme” (I, 16), which, it turns out, is nothing less than to “justify the ways of God to men” (I, 26). In an age like the current one, when poetic ambition is generally satisfied with a one-page lyric, here is a monumental narrative poem complete with a full cast of characters and a sustained drama. How can readers not bow in admiration of a mind that could imagine the architecture of Heaven, Hell, and Paradise—not to mention the geography of the intellectual and spiritual landscapes in and between each? There is Milton standing proud, tall, and stern, with a bold self-assurance born of theological and intellectual certitudes, announcing his grand goal. It doesn’t matter that he may in the end fall short, or that modern readers (children of Chaos Theory, moral relativism, and the Computer Age) may not share his worldview. It doesn’t even matter that Milton was stubbornly, Puritanically, doctrinaire about his story—wasn’t Dante guilty of a similar narrowness in *The Divine Comedy*? No, what strikes new and old readers alike when they come to Milton’s announced purpose is his breathtaking, irresistible audacity. Wouldn’t it be a great thing, readers catch themselves thinking, if he could actually do it?

The grandeur of Milton’s language in *Paradise Lost* is often praised, and rightly so, despite some difficulties that need mentioning, but for now, however, note that it is impossible not to be impressed by the stateliness, the formality, and the dignity of Milton’s poetry in *Paradise Lost*—all the more striking to contemporary readers when set against the casual informality of the early twenty-first century. For the versification, Milton chose blank verse, the form popularized by Elizabethan dramatists earlier in the seventeenth century, even though the lack of rhyme in an epic poem drew attention to itself. (The point was sticky enough for the publisher, in subsequent printings, to explain that Homer and Virgil hadn’t written in rhymes; that rhyme had been added by later poets just to distract readers from “wretched matter and lame metre”; and that anyway all readers with “judicious ears” would agree that rhyme was “trivial” and added “no true musical delight.” See “The Verse” preceding Book I.) The blank verse is, in fact, so successful in *Paradise Lost* that there are long portions in which the dramatic action simply takes over, and one of the usual topics of classroom discussion is whether it is indeed an epic or a drama. The debate is no doubt more important to literary critics and historians than to readers, who are, after all, at liberty to enjoy what they please—and the drama seems to please them most. It is in the dramatic sequences that Milton seems most sure-handed as he navigates one ten-syllable line after another, managing in the process to make them (and the characters who speak them) different from one another at the same time that they are similar. Perhaps most amazing is that, despite a distance of three and a half centuries, an overfondness for the baroque and an American readership that has a slightly different voice box from the British, Milton manages very often to write lines that sound something like the way modern-day English is spoken. No small trick.

But like most language three and a half centuries old, it also presents difficulties to readers coming to it for the first time. The inversions, allusions, and Latinate diction cause most of the problems, but even pronunciation stands occasionally in the way of grasping the sense and the movement of the words. The solution to these problems is to read slowly, work carefully through complicated syntax, reread particularly obscure constructions, check the footnotes, and even read the words aloud if it seems the ear might help when the eye alone can’t get the job done. And don’t be afraid to abandon some passages as simply too dense or knotty to follow. This is a long poem, and a few lost passages aren’t going to matter in the long run.

Another problem is that many of the more difficult passages in *Paradise Lost* arise from Milton’s vast classical erudition, his seemingly endless knowledge of biblical lore, and his use of epic conventions familiar to more of the literary community then than now. Today “epic” is much more

loosely used to describe anything that is above the norm in size and scope. It is therefore not surprising that the hardest going in *Paradise Lost* comes when Milton resorts to formula-driven epic conventions and seems to get temporarily lost amid roll calls, catalogues, extended similes, biblical geography lessons, detailed vistas, psychologically telling dreams, and so on. Many will learn to enjoy these sequences in their own right, but at worst they can be silently borne as necessary interludes, temporary interruptions of the narrative and dramatic action. Certainly the ample glories of *Paradise Lost*, like those in the finest grand opera, are worth waiting for.

2. The Glories

The first of these glories, as readers have commented on from the beginning, is the peculiarly human archvillain himself, Satan. When Milton, blind apologist of the Puritan Commonwealth in the 1650s, sat down to write his epic poem on the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he not only had the unfortunate pair themselves for his story; he also had God, the Son of God, a host of archangels and rebel angels, plus Satan for his *dramatis personae*. Furthermore, Milton understood the importance of creating a worthy chief antagonist, not just a villain who was larger than life, but one who was complex in his intellectual and psychological makeup. Of course, Milton is consistent in his vilification of Satan—witness, for example, some of the ways he labels him, as the “hellish Pest” (II, 735), the “fraudulent impostor foul” (III, 692), the “wily Adder” (IX, 625), the “Prince of Darkness” (X, 383), and many more. In this sense, Milton never wavers in his indictment of the “Author of Evil” (VI, 262), and yet the character he created is so brilliant, especially in the early going, so articulate, so driven, so almost-human in his frailties that he cannot fail to resonate with modern readers. In some of the most celebrated lines in *Paradise Lost*, Satan, expelled from Heaven and “Chained on the burning lake” (I, 210), with head held high and eyes still blazing, ponders his situation and declares, “The mind is its own place, and in itself/Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven” (I, 254—55). And then, overfilled with a burning, unrepentant bitterness, he determines that for him at least it is “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven” (I, 263). Satan’s passionate misery is deeply felt by readers who either have themselves been defeated and then angrily turned inward for a new and perhaps painful resolve—or can readily imagine doing so. It is after all the human way.

In the early going, before he is shown in all his incestuous ugliness at the end of Book II as the father of the hideous monsters Sin and Death, Satan seems almost the perfect epic hero: imposing, capable of superhuman courage, even in one sense elevated, both in language and sentiments. Milton was clearly walking a dangerous line here, for Satan had to be the ultimate villain, not a sympathetic victim, and although Milton did manage to regain his moral footing and return to condemning Satan, readers will always be struck by Satan’s human qualities—his anger and resentment over his defeat, his pride and continuing determination, and his undaunted courage. Is this attractiveness of Satan’s adequately explained by Milton’s need to create a worthy antagonist for his story? Did he inadvertently raise his archvillain too high and make him too humanly appealing? Or is it perhaps that readers identify more often with rebel angels than with archangels? Perhaps the biggest question is why Milton never revised the early Satan to make him less attractive. Of course that would have required him to tamper with some of his best writing, so perhaps it was that, in the contest between good Puritanism and good writing, Milton showed his own humanity and chose the writing.

Another of the glories of *Paradise Lost* that readers have commented on from the outset is the

complicated relationship between Adam and Eve, with Milton caught between black-and-white biblical authority, as he understood it, and the actual complexities of male-female relationships, perhaps as he had experienced them in his three marriages. As is the case with Satan, Adam is hardly uniformly attractive dramatic figure, and yet he does have a couple of moments onstage that are very nearly perfect. The first has to do with sex, the second with love. In the first, in Book VIII, Adam tells Raphael with deadpan humor about how he came in a dream to notice that he alone among all God's creatures had no female companion: "I found not what methought I wanted still" (355). So Adam complains to the "Author of this Universe" (360) about his lack of a "human consort" (392), but God, having fun with the pushy young Adam, asks what this business about a consort is all about—after all He doesn't have one either:

Seem I to thee sufficiently possessed
Of happiness, or not, who am alone
From all eternity? for none I know
Second to me or like, equal much less.
How have I, then, with whom to hold converse
Save with the creatures which I made, and those
To me inferior . . . ?

(404-1

A tough question, to be sure. But Adam reminds his Maker that he has a job to do, to "beget/Like of his like" (423-24), and how is he going to do that all by himself? For such work, he says, he is "defective" and requires "Collateral love and dearest amity" (425-26). So it is sex, at last, that he is after, though he doesn't quite have the language to say so. But God, turning convivial and jovially paternal for this father-son moment, replies in good spirits that He has only been teasing Adam, that He's had in mind a partner for him all along, a special gift to enjoy: "Thy wish exactly to thy heart's desire" (451). And He is as good as His word, for after Eve is created from a rib on Adam's left side, Adam finally has true happiness: "The spirit of love and amorous delight" (477). Eve ("Grace was in all her steps, Heaven in her eye" [488]) then gives Adam "nuptial sanctity and marriage rites" (487).

But Milton wasn't finished quite yet with the subject of sex. Adam, finally mated "exactly to [his] heart's desire," confesses to Raphael that this particular pleasure ("Commotion strange" [531]) had been special ("in all enjoyments else/Superior . . ." [531-32])—even for Paradise. Liking it as much he does, he can't help wondering if there is sex in Heaven: "Bear with me, then, if lawful what I ask./Love not the Heavenly Spirits, and how their love/ Express they, by looks only, or do they mix/Irradiance, virtual or immediate touch?" (614-17). It's a safe bet he is hoping for "immediate touch" over "looks only." Raphael, however, like a father explaining the birds and bees to his son, blushes "a smile that glowed/Celestial rosy-red" (618-19), clears his throat, and starts off, but soon he gets tangled up in limbs, joints, and spirits—and decides to quit with as much of his dignity intact as he can salvage. Before leaving Adam and Eve to their own devices, though, Raphael adds one cautionary note: "take heed lest passion sway/Thy judgement to do aught, which else free-will/ Would not admit" (635-37). Good advice from angels, but always difficult for young men to follow.

3. Fallen or Risen?

Nothing in *Paradise Lost* is further from humor, more solemnly noble in its way, than Adam's decision to join Eve in sin, that is, to turn his back on Paradise—even to accept death and the loss of Heaven as a consequence. Milton opens Book IX, the story of the Fall and the very heart of *Paradise Lost*, with Adam's too-usual smugness toward Eve. He condescendingly comments, "nothing lovelier can be found/In woman, than to study household good,/And good works in her husband to promote" (232—34). After the lovers have their first quarrel in Paradise (not over his remark, but over Eve wanting to work a different part of the Garden from Adam), Satan arrives as a serpent, tempts Eve, and seduces her into eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. God has warned that death would follow from eating that particular fruit, but after she eats, not only does Eve find herself quite alive, but she also feels surprisingly good about herself, not just "more equal," she thinks, but "perhaps,/A thing not undesirable, sometime/Superior. . ." (see 816—25). She likes this feeling so much, in fact, that she is tempted not to share it with Adam at all. But after she reexamines the situation and realizes she might yet die, that a new Eve might be created in her place, and that Adam might then enjoy Eden with someone else, she thinks it might be best after all to share. However, when she approaches with her new knowledge and fruit, Adam recognizes instantly that she is lost, that Satan has "Defaced, deflowered" her (901).

But Adam, instead of picking up his earlier theme by bitterly reminding Eve about the purpose of a woman's life being to promote good works in her husband, is suddenly transformed, fully aware, perhaps for the first time, of the depths of love in his own heart:

How can I live without thee? how forgo
Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined,
To live again in these wild woods forlorn?
Should God create another Eve. and I
Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
Would never from my heart. No, no! I feel
The link of nature draw me: flesh of flesh,
Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state
Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe.

(908—1

Still, he does not eat the fruit quite yet. First he ponders his choices, just as Eve did before him, the human thing after all. The arguments he comes up with, of course, amount to little more than rationalizations, mere intellectual exercises, and they are totally beside the only point that matters—the flesh-and-bone Eve standing before him. Turning to her, he says:

I with thee have fixed my lot,
Certain to undergo like doom; if death
Consort with thee, death is to me as life,
So forcible within my heart I feel
The bond of Nature draw me to my own;
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
Our state cannot be severed, we are one,
One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself.

(952—5

It's hard not to be proud of Adam here, as he looks squarely at all he stands to lose, yet steadfastly loyally, devotedly chooses to stay with the woman he loves. It's a human choice, of course, not a heavenly one, yet Adam, in his moment of courage, shines. From Milton's standpoint, he was once again on shaky ground, wavering between his dogma and his art. He could certainly have gone back to temper the nobility in Adam that he had written into the scene, but he let it stand—just as he had let stand the wonderful lines he had written for Satan earlier. He must have liked as much as subsequent generations have this exhilarating expression of the romantic love of Adam for Eve, and one imagines that only later, under the requirement of the story he had set out to write, did he force himself back to condemning them. But regardless of how the preordained story had to resolve itself, there's a strong temptation to think Adam's heart may have been right at his moment of decision—one of the truest and most moving moments in all English literature.

Oh, yes—it's worth every bit of the bother.

“Lycidas” and *Samson Agonistes*

Modern readers may have more trouble with “Lycidas” than with *Samson Agonistes* and prefer *Paradise Lost* to either—and for some obvious reasons. *Paradise Lost* is a literary epic, a form that is no longer written, but which in terms of characterization and plot does not (always) seem so very different from novels and screenplays. “Lycidas,” however, is a pastoral elegy (also sometimes called a pastoral allegory), a form rooted in ancient Greek idylls and classical Roman eclogues; it is a form that has shepherd-poets, invectives against death, flower symbolism, and other similarly remote features—and therefore it is today a largely forgotten ancient form that has no modern counterpart it might sound familiar to. It would be more remarkable if modern readers did not have trouble with it.

Written when Milton was not yet twenty-nine, and called by him a “Monody” (itself a dated term meaning “dirge” or “lament”), “Lycidas” commemorates the life of his friend Edward King, who had drowned earlier that same year. And even though it is generally acknowledged to be the finest example of its form in English, readers, like the famously sharp-tongued Samuel Johnson in the eighteenth century, are often impatient with its old-fashioned formulas. “Nothing,” Johnson wrote, “can less display knowledge, or less exercise invention, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone. . . .” But as dismayingly remote as its form may be, “Lycidas” can still be enjoyed if one accepts it on its own terms and determines on going in to learn about rather than struggle against the form. Learning to love a piece of literature for its odd shape and peculiar mannerisms is at least half the joy of being literate. Of course, one is free as well to be happy if the piece happens also to be short.

Samson Agonistes, however, is another story, for there are moments in this play that are as engaging as any in *Paradise Lost*. Based on the Aristotelian theory of tragedy and modeled on Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* and Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Samson Agonistes* was written as a closet drama, a work intended to be read rather than acted. The story of Samson is from the Bible, of course Judges to be exact, and it tells the story of an Israelite who is born to a barren woman and pledged to God. Under the terms of the pledge, Samson is not allowed to have his hair cut, but is, however, free to marry a Philistine girl, who tricks him into killing thirty men, which soon escalates into a thousand as he fights with superhuman strength—and the jawbone of an ass. It's at this point that Samson falls for the temptress Dalila, who, on behalf of the Philistine leaders in Gaza, worms the secret of his strength out of him: Samson is then subdued, taken into slavery, and blinded. Unfortunately, all this happens before the play opens. Milton's Samson furiously rages, when it does start, against Dalila's “foul

effeminacy” (410) and manages by the play’s end to have his mortal revenge against the Philistines on their high holy day, but despite the dignity and disciplined orderliness of Samson’s biblically scripted vengeance, it is in the key scene with Dalila (who is onstage for a very brief time) that *Samson Agonistes* comes alive. Sparks always light up Milton’s scenes with women.

Samson calls Dalila “My wife, my traitress” (725) and will have nothing to do with her, yet she makes an appeal to him, claiming she is sorry for what she did, frightened too, but most of all, she is moved by “conjugal affection” (739) to see his face one last time. Samson, however, won’t be sweettalked anymore by her “wonted arts,” what he calls the “arts of every woman false like thee” (748—49). Dalila defends herself by saying she was weak and suffered from “curiosity.” Then, once she knew some secrets, she couldn’t help but “publish them”—all, she says, “common female faults” (773—77). He should have known better than to “have trusted that [secret] to a woman’s frailty. . .” (783). Samson doesn’t give an inch, replying that she was indeed weak—for Philistine gold and lust. But Dalila continues to defend herself well, saying it wasn’t gold at all that swayed her, but the appeals of the magistrates, princes, and priests of her country that she steal the secret of Samson’s strength—both to protect the Philistines from him in the future as well as to punish him for his past actions against them. Now, she says, she wants to make it up to Samson by seeking his release, but he turns her away one final time and says to the Chorus:

So let her go; God sent her to debase me,
And aggravate my folly, who committed
To such a viper his most sacred trust
Of secrecy, my safety, and my life.

(999—1000)

It remains a curious truth that despite Milton’s ambitious high-mindedness, his frontal attack on the literary, political, and religious problems of his own and perhaps all time, he also had an unerring ear for the sort of dialogue that rings true between men and women, whether they be loving partners, bitter antagonists, or both at the same time. His forms may be dated, but when Milton’s men and women talk to (or about) each other, they sound hauntingly modern.

—Edward M. Cifelli, Ph.D.

THE LIFE OF MILTON

The life of Milton is much more fully and intimately known than the lives of his great predecessors—and favorites—among the English poets: Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare. The reasons are three. First, the latter part of the seventeenth century saw the dawning of modern interest in the biography of authors, which was to lead to such spectacular products a century later as Boswell's *Johnson* and Johnson's own *Lives of the English Poets*. No less than five sketches of Milton's life were written between his death in 1674 and the end of the century. Second, he was more than an author: he became a public figure, known for his controversial prose and his service to the Cromwellian regime before he was known as a poet. Third, Milton, above and beyond his thirty-one Familiar Letters in Latin, did not hesitate on occasion to bring himself into his own writings. He did this to an extent that may be measured by the fact that the compilation *Milton on Himself* has two hundred seventy pages of direct quotation.

The poet was a Londoner most of his life. The house he lived in longest was the house in which he was born, at the corner of Cheap and Bread streets, December 9, 1608. His father, also named John, maintained a scrivener's shop there under the sign of the Spread Eagle. Scriveners served as notaries and preparers of legal papers, and could prosper because of their advance knowledge of property transfers. John Milton the elder did prosper, to such a degree that he could retire, first, in 1632, to the suburb of Hammersmith, then, in 1635, to a country estate in Horton—a far cry from his struggling youth. He had come to London from Oxfordshire about the age of twenty-one upon being disinherited by his father, a recusant, “because he kept not the Catholic religion” and was caught reading the Bible.

Somehow, perhaps as a boy chorister at Christ Church, Oxford, the poet's father early acquired training in his lifelong avocation of music. He composed at twenty “an *In Nomine* of forty parts, for which he was rewarded with a gold medal and chain by a Polish prince, to whom he presented it” and went on to gain, as a musician of the school of Byrd, “the reputation of a considerable master in this most charming of all the liberal sciences.” He was invited by the great madrigalist Thomas Morley—who composed for *As You Like It*—to contribute to *The Triumphs of Oriana*, a cantus book honouring Queen Elizabeth in one of the last years of her reign.

About the poet's mother, Sarah, less is known, the very form of her last name being uncertain. It is not known when she was married, or how often. Milton's only reference states that she had a reputation in the neighborhood for her alms-giving. In two letters to his friend Diodati written not long after Mrs. Milton's death on April 3, 1637, Milton makes no mention of the event, and when he turned to poetry in the fall of that year it was to memorialize another friend—in “*Lycidas*.” (Similarly, in the month that Milton's first wife died he wrote a sonnet to Cromwell. In both cases the conclusion could be that the poet was turning away from an event too deep for tears, melodious or otherwise.) The antiquarian Aubrey reported that Milton's mother “had very weak eyes, and used spectacles presently after she was thirty years old.”

With his sister and, after 1615, younger brother, the future poet moved about as a boy in an apartment often resonant with the sound of the “pealing organ,” which he himself learned to play, with viols and virginals, with “lute well touched, or artful voice.” After going to petty school, he received private tutoring from a Scotch Presbyterian, Thomas Young, whose ally in ecclesiastical controversy he was to be more than a score of years later. A canvas now in the Morgan Library in New York and

reproduced as the frontispiece of the Columbia Edition of Milton's works is the most striking as well as the first of all the portraits, showing an earnest and winsome boy of ten who was already, according to Aubrey, a poet: the brocaded doublet and delicate lace collar seem to symbolize the not yet past glories of the Renaissance, while the intent eyes and the auburn hair cropped closely according to the Puritan prescription are mediated by the sensitive chin and lips.

Milton was fifteen when he produced his earliest surviving lines, paraphrases of Psalms cxiv and cxxxvi. By then he was attending that by no means average school a few blocks away, St. Paul's (organized by John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, early in Henry VIII's reign), and brought to this or any poetic task already an abundance of Latin and Greek (he was subsequently to put Psalm cxiv into Greek dactylic hexameters) and at least the beginnings of Hebrew. A fellow pupil was the closest friend of his youth, Charles Diodati, and he seems to have had a fruitful relationship with a teacher there, Alexander Gill the younger, the headmaster's son and eventual successor.

It is important to note the many cordial relations Milton enjoyed (with both sexes) in the course of life marked by heated controversies. The first of the latter on record developed during his first year at Christ's College, Cambridge, 1625—26—a quarrel with his tutor William Chappell. The result was the student's "rustication" or suspension. He went to London and addressed Diodati a Latin poem, "Elegia I," on the subject, line 16 of which may refer to unspeakable corporal punishment—"whipped him," said Aubrey. Most modern readers are reluctant to believe that Milton underwent this particular humiliation, but there is nothing historically improbable about it. The master of Cromwell's college, Samuel Ward of Sidney Sussex (Cambridge), had the scholars (many of whom, it must be remembered, were just entering upon their teens) whipped in hall when they offended, and as Dr. Johnson (who had his own reasons for believing the story) might have opined, "If Cromwell received the cane, who will deny the same to Milton?" In any case Milton was soon back under a more agreeable tutor, without having missed a term.

He was turning into a proud, serious, reserved young man, whose nickname was "The Lady of Christ's." (Virgil had borne, as Milton would have been glad to remember, a similar sobriquet: Parthenias—"Miss Virginité.") When he gave in assembly the first of a series of required Latin orations (*prolusiones*), on looking around he saw mostly unfriendly countenances, perhaps, he conjectured, because his intellectual interests were different, as he was proudly sure his style was. By the time of the sixth of these prolusiones (July 1628), titled "Sportive Exercises do not stand in the way of Philosophic Studies," his popularity has risen, and playful as the elephant's "lithe proboscis" in *Paradise Lost*, he gratefully begs pardon in advance for any comic license contrary to his usual modesty and labours to be a jolly good vulgar fellow. Of more lasting significance is that he overleaps the University statutes ordaining that all the academic discourses should be in one of the learned tongues and broke out into fifty heroic couplets, "At a Vacation Exercise," that ranks with "On the Death of a Fair Infant" as his earliest original English poem. Before going on to scholastic puns, the author soars to "Heaven's door" and grandly declares his ambition to compose epic poems "Such as the wise Demodocus once told/ In solemn songs at King Alcinous' feast." The miniature epic "In Quintum Novembris" (On the Fifth of November—the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot), was even then one year behind him.

The "Fair Infant Dying of a Cough" was Milton's niece. "O fairest flower no sooner blown but blasted," he begins, and launches into a flurry of conceits, ending with the sage advice that the mother Anne, should "wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild" in expectation of an offspring that "shall make thy name to live." Alas, neither of the later children of Milton's sister, Edward and John Phillips, amounted to anything, in spite of having their uncle for a tutor in the 1640s.

The Cambridge student had already mourned in Latin verses the University beadle, the vice chancellor, and two bishops. It goes against the popular notion of inspiration that most of the poetry of Milton's youth, right up to and including "Lycidas," was occasional. On his twenty-third birthday he wrote a sonnet; on the death of old Hobson, the University carrier, he composed two sets of relentlessly punning heroic couplets; he put forth octosyllabics when the Marchioness of Winchester (a Catholic, but the saving grace was that she was said to be leaning to Protestantism) died in childbirth (Ben Jonson also commemorated her); and made his English debut in print, anonymously, with "An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet W. Shakespeare" in the 1632 Second Folio.

But the greatest poem before "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" was the "Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," composed in December 1629. Had the author died then, the thin-spun life cut by the blind Fury just after his twenty-first birthday, he would still have held a secure place in English poetry, ranking with Crashaw. The essence of what Hallam called "perhaps the most beautiful ode in the language" Tillyard found to be "not stateliness excusing conceit, but homeliness, quaintness, tenderness, extravagance, and sublimity, harmonised by a pervading youthful candour and ordered by a commanding architectonic grasp." Much in this baroque or "mannerist" masterpiece looks forward to *Paradise Lost*, most obviously the fiends and false deities, "Peor and Baalim" and "sullen Moloch" and the "old Dragon under ground" that "swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail." Christ in his cradle can, like the infant Hercules, strangle this serpent. As will prove so characteristic of Milton's art, classical and Christian elements are held in brilliant tension, as surely as Christmas coincides with the winter solstice or Easter is the name of a pagan goddess.

The young poet was moved by his success to celebrate more feasts, in "The Passion" and "Upon the Circumcision," but these fail, the former being left unfinished. Better are "On Time" and "At a Solemn Music" and even some autobiographical sonnets (along with a canzone) in Italian. Milton had proclaimed in his first English sonnet, "O nightingale that on yon bloomy spray," his willingness to fall in love, and now a black-eyed, dark-tressed, polyglot foreigner named Emilia had inspired him to write in her native tongue. This was evidently an encounter lasting not much longer than glimpses of British beauties commemorated in Milton's Ovidian Latin elegies that also—I, V, and VII—celebrate the rites of spring, what the "Song on May Morning" catalogues as "Mirth and youth and warm desire!" In contrast Elegia VI lays down an ascetic regimen for the epic poet, and Edward Phillips reported that the vein of the author of *Paradise Lost* "never flowed freely but from the autumnal equinox to the vernal."

Before this winter seriousness descended, however, came the twin poems known to every schoolchild (of how little can this be said anymore!). Of uncertain date, with scenery that cannot be pinned down, these belong immemorially to a time when the world was younger; where the eighteenth century went wooden in its imitations perhaps because it was already too old, Milton achieved the perfect matching of art and vitality. L'Allegro means, of course, the Cheerful Man, but he proves to be as far from wanton gaiety, whatever the reel of abstractions at the beginning, as Il Penseroso, the Pensive or Contemplative Man, is far from melancholia. Critics have not agreed whether the poems balance day versus night as in Prologue I, or two different persons (such as Diodati and Milton), or two moods in one person, or offer a debate between two ways of life, with Milton preferring the latter (as length, at least, would indicate). The best illustration to accompany the poems, both of which "unsphere/ The spirit of Plato," whose idealizing influence lasts until Milton's marriage, is the "Onslow" portrait, in the National Portrait Gallery, of the ruffed author at twenty-one: the delicate aristocratic face comes to us in a believable way for the last time without suffering or distortion.

After receiving his M.A., July 3, 1632 (his B.A. had been won March 26, 1629), Milton left

Cambridge to go into rural retreat with his father at Hammersmith-Horton for a period of private study and preparation for his calling that was to last six years and be succeeded by the grand tour of the Continent. It was fortunate that the poet had for a father a man of means and culture (one sonnet of his survives) and understanding, whose qualms about the apparent idleness of his elder son (while the younger was diligently pursuing the law) could be smoothed by addressing him one hundred twenty hexameters, "Ad Patrem" (To his Father), that pointed out that the musician and the poet shared Phoebus between them. Milton did not earn a penny until he was thirty-one, but in the country he followed "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" with "Arcades" and "Comus" and "Lycidas." He kept notes on a vast and systematic program of reading that helped to make him the most erudite of the English poets, rivaled perhaps only by Southey. In the Renaissance the poet was one who knew: there was not the modern invariable dichotomy between "knowing" and "making," between the scholar and the creative writer. Milton had grandly proclaimed in his Seventh Prologue his Baconian intention of taking all knowledge for his province. However, for his "tardy moving" he was put on the defensive, as by a friend who inquired why he did not join the ministry and charged him with "too much love of learning."

"Arcades" and "Comus" belong to the genre of masques, mythological court entertainments involving song and dance and costumes, of which Ben Jonson wrote thirty-six. "Arcades" (which means Dwellers in Arcadia, the district in central Peloponnesus associated with pastoral, as in Sir Philip Sidney's romance, *Arcadia*) consists of three songs and a recitative in twenty-nine heroic couplets in honor of the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield, ten miles from Horton. This lady, whom Spenser had also praised, was the stepmother and mother-in-law of John Egerton, Viscount Brackley, who became Earl of Bridgewater in 1617 and commissioned "Comus" in 1634 for Michaelmas night, September 29, in honor of his installation as Lord President of Wales. The future Puritan was moving in high circles, although it is not known whether he was present for that first performance, at Ludlow Castle in Shropshire, of a piece the fame of which redounded so that Henry Lawes (who composed the music for its songs) had to have it printed (1637): "although not openly acknowledged by the author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view." Adapting from the Circe myth, *A Mask* (it was named for its villain, whose Greek name means revelry, only after Milton's death) is a paean to chastity, a topic with which its author was restively and increasingly concerned up to 1642. Where the typical masque was light and short, this one unwinds for a thousand lines, mostly of blank verse (Milton's first, and, except for translations, his last before *Paradise Lost*), with arguments so serious that they were cut for the actual performance. Sir Henry Wotton, who was Provost of Eton, wrote handsomely: "I should much commend the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Doric delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language."

"Lycidas," dated in manuscript November 1637, was another commissioned poem. It commemorates, as everyone knows, "a learned friend, unfortunately drowned," Edward King (1612–37), the son of a civil officer in Dublin, Sir John King, of an English family. With his older brother, Roger, Edward King had entered Christ's College sixteen months after Milton, after tuition by the famous schoolmaster Thomas Farnaby. On June 10, 1630, King was awarded by royal mandate a fellowship to which Milton, three years his senior, had a superior claim. Milton was at Hammersmith before King took his M.A., July 1633. Besides being a Tutor and Fellow in Christ's, King served as prelector, 1634–35, while qualifying for the Church. During the long vacation of 1637 he arranged to visit his friends and relatives in Dublin, including his and Milton's first tutor, Chappell (of unpleasant

memory), who was serving there as provost of Trinity College. He made his will nine days before setting sail. The ship had not been long out of Chester when, as the memorial volume's Latin prose preface says, it "struck on a rock, was stove in by the shock; he, while the other passengers were busy in vain about their mortal lives, having fallen on his knees, and breathing a life which was immortal, in the act of prayer going down with the vessel, rendered up his soul to God August 10, 1637, aged twenty-five." King's alma mater decided on a collection of elegies, perhaps in rivalry to Oxford's *Jonsonus Virbius: or the Memory of Ben Jonson Revived*, 1638, and of course Milton was applied to and in fact given the place of honor, for "Lycidas," signed just with his initials, closes the volume, as if it were well understood that the final and definitive word had been said. Preceding were twelve other pieces in English, of no merit, and twenty-three in Latin and Greek, and the whole was issued from the press in 1638 under the title *Iusta Edouardo King naufrago, ab Amicis maerentibus* (Rites to Edward King, drowned by shipwreck, from his grieving friends). King and Milton must have been well acquainted while at college together, although the friendship was not the same as with Diodati. King's surviving Latin ventures into verse, most of them obstetric pieces on royal births, showed little promise that he would ever "build the lofty rhyme." However, Milton's possible lack of deep personal grief on this occasion and King's demonstrable lack of poetic ability did nothing to spoil Milton's primary inspiration that a poet (and a priest, a good shepherd) had died an untimely death and must be greatly mourned.

By the time this volume was published Milton had left Horton for "fresh woods and pastures new"—a fifteen-month Continental tour that took him to France, Italy, and Geneva, and was the crown of his long and elaborate education. Accompanied by a manservant, and aided by references and linguistic facility, he again moved in high circles, starting with Lord Scudamore, Charles I's ambassador to Paris, who "gave me a card of introduction to the learned Hugo Grotius, at that time ambassador from the queen of Sweden [Christina] to the French court." In Italy, where he spent the greater part of his time, the gifted young man was received by a cardinal, Galileo, the librarian at the Vatican, a Neapolitan nobleman who had befriended Tasso and Marini, and sundry belle-lettrists who invited him to read his Latin poetry at their literary clubs and praised it extravagantly. A little talent went a long way in that twilight time of the Italian Renaissance, and there was no end of mutual backslapping among hopelessly minor talents; still, Milton was glad enough to print as preface to the Latin section of his 1645 poems the versified "testimonia" of Salsilli, Selvaggi, Francini, Dati, and Manso. Two of these were addressed poems by the visitor, Salsilli in sickness, and Manso, Marquis of Villa, in return for hospitality, and other literati figured in surviving correspondence.

After journeying from Rome to Naples in January 1639 in the company of an eremite friar who introduced him to Manso, Milton recalled (in his *Defensio Secunda*) that the latter proved "most friendly: for he guided me himself through the different parts of the city and the palace of the viceroy and came more than once to visit me at my inn. On my leaving Naples he gravely apologized for not showing me still more attention, alleging that although it was what he wished above all things, it was not in his power in that city, because I had not thought proper to be more close in the matter of religion." Milton's stout Protestantism is also the only regret in Manso's two-line epigram, repeating the old Anglus (Englishman)—Angelus (angel) pun of Gregory the Great. Close thoughts, "i pensieri stretti," were exactly what the diplomat Wotton had advised, but one of Milton's character and upbringing had to draw a line between courtesy and hypocrisy, just as he could not but entertain mixed feelings on contemplating Rome itself—the seat of civilization *and* the residence of the whore of Babylon. About his second visit to Rome he had a melodramatic tale to tell. "While I was on my way back to Rome, some merchants informed me that the English Jesuits had formed a plot against me if

returned to Rome, because I had spoken too freely about religion; for it was a rule which I laid down to myself in those places never to be the first to begin any conversation on religion, but if any questions were put to me concerning my faith, to declare it without any reserve or fear. I nevertheless returned to Rome. I took no steps to conceal either my person or my character, and for about the space of two months I again openly defended, as I had done before, the reformed religion in the very metropolis of popery. By the favour of God, I got safe back to Florence, where I was received with as much affection as if I had returned to my native country." *Areopagitica* scores a point apropos of the Florentine interview with the latest person to be referred to in *Paradise Lost*. "I found and visited the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition, for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought." But Catholicism did not interfere with the poet's obeisance to beauty wherever he found it. Thus he addressed the diva Leonora Baroni three Latin epigrams of almost impious praise: the first declares that God or the Holy Spirit speaks in her voice.

While planning to journey on to Sicily and Greece, Milton was led to turn homeward by "the melancholy tidings" of pending civil war. He made his way back in leisurely enough fashion in the spring of 1639, stopping at Lucca, Venice, Lake Lemano, Geneva. Lucca in Tuscany would have been of special interest as the ancestral home of his best friend, Charles Diodati. That friend, alas, after entering his father's profession of physician, had died in August 1638 at the same age as Milton was when he wrote "Lycidas." Life had but too well imitated literature. The poet probably first got the news at Geneva, from the uncle Giovanni Diodati, a theologian and translator of the Bible into Italian and French.

This loss hit home so hard that the guise of a Latin pastoral was what the surviving friend, on his return, chose for its expression: he put it at a distance in the most formal way, including a reiterated choral line in which the sheep seventeen times are bid to go home unfed. Significant is the ending of "Epitaphium Damonis," in which Diodati (Damon) is translated to the pure ether that, dying unmarried, he deserves. By his youth without stain he has earned the heavenly rewards of those "which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins" (Rev. xiv, 4).

With this poem of 1640 the first period of Milton's life came to a close, a period of preparation and innocence and perfection in little. Twenty years in the public arena now ensued. From 1641 to 1660, from *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England* to *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*, he exchanged (in the words of his fourth pamphlet) "a calm and pleasing solitariness fed with cheerful and confident thoughts" for "a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes." Several of the early pamphlets make promise of poetry: "Readers, as I may one day hope to have ye in a still time, when there shall be no chiding." But it looked as if utopia had to come first. And utopia was dilatory.

Settling down in a "pretty garden house" in Aldersgate Street, Milton, commencing with his two nephews, took up as a private occupation tutoring. As the clouds of civil war gathered, the first of the troubles on which, as a private citizen, he decided to let himself be heard was the need for ecclesiastical reform. The hungry sheep looked up and were not fed: so he had already concluded in "Lycidas," at a time when Scotland rose against the attempted imposition by Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, of the Anglican Prayer Book on a kirk that had long been satisfied with Knox's Book of Common Order. Laud took note in his Diary of a charge "pasted on the Cross in Cheapside, that the arch-wolf of Canterbury had his hand in persecuting the saints." The saints were Puritans and Presbyterians, the former named for their desire to purge the English church of corrupt and Romish practices, which appeared to be on the increase under the Stuarts: the clergy were "wooden, illiterate, or contemptible," lazy and "tavern-haunting," the communion table was railed in and icons and

kissing of the cross abounded, and confession was allowed, and violation of the sanctity of the Lord's Day encouraged. The archbishop had been offered a cardinal's hat. True Protestants were being harried out of the land—to Holland and America. A proud and tyrannous hierarchy put down individual opposition through the Court of High Commission, the ecclesiastical equivalent of the dreaded Star Chamber that pilloried and trimmed the ears of such doughty antiprelatical martyrs as Prynne, a lawyer, Burton, a clergyman, and Bastwick, a doctor.

The Long Parliament, which had been meeting since November 1640, was turning to questions of church government, and a Root and Branch Bill abolishing archbishops and bishops was up for consideration when Milton made his debut, anonymously, "amidst. . . deep and retired thoughts," as a pamphleteer in May 1641, with *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England, and the Causes that hitherto have hindered it: two books written to a friend*. The "friend" may be taken as Thomas Young, the author's former tutor, who in collaboration with four other Puritan divines was arguing in print with Bishop Joseph Hall and now welcomed a vigorous and scholarly ally, who followed this reasoned historical review with *Of Prelatical Episcopacy, Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence against Smectymnuus* (a pseudonym formed by the initials of the five collaborators), *The Reason of Church Government Urged against Prelaty*, and *An Apology for Smectymnuus*.

What did the world of literature lose by a great poet's grimy descent into that arena where victory was not to be had over the adversary without much "dust and heat," if indeed victory was ever to be had, as obscure citations were answered by countercitations, dubious texts were endlessly wrangled over, and history was written to order? The argument, short on light but not on heat, waxed personal, with the Hall party claiming that their opponent, having been "vomited out" of the University, was looking for a "rich widow" to mend his fortunes. To these charges there was no reply but passionate autobiography and ever rougher language, lightened by jests about chamber pots and the stench of the episcopal foot.

Milton knew he was demeaning his genius. "I should not choose this manner of writing, wherein, knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, and I may account it, but of my left hand."

But the poetic vein, the right hand, was evidently not ready, anyway, to flow freely to produce a large work. Milton did try, and he had more leisure in this twenty-year period than is generally realized. Between 1639 and 1641, and from 1645 to 1648, for instance, he entered no public frays and so, presumably, could have written poetry, if other conditions had been right. He kept a notebook in which he jotted down ninety-nine subjects for tragedies. The theme of *Paradise Lost* heads the list, since the Old Testament is raked through in order, but the brevity and miscellaneousness of most of the entries betray desperation or mere diligence. What could ever have been made (or so we ask, knowing that nothing ever was made) of "The Quails" (Num. xi) or "The Murmurers" (Num. xiv)? A number of topics are brutal or obscene: "Comazontes or the Benjaminites or the Rioters" (Judg. xix), "David Adulterous," "Moabitides or Phineas," "Tamar" (2 Sam. xiii), "Solomon Gynaecocratomenus (woman-governed).

What Milton had to go through in order to write *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* can only be conjectured, but it is superficial to follow the well-known nineteenth-century biographer Mark Pattison in treating the period 1641—60 as years of deplorable waste, when Milton gave to party what was meant for mankind. "Our wish for Milton is that he should have placed himself from the beginning above party." To which Richard Garnett properly retorted, "We think, on the contrary, that such a mere man of letters as Pattison wishes that Milton had been could never have produced a

Paradise Lost.” Whether in prose or in verse, in *Paradise Lost* or the *History of Britain* or the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton thought of himself as the counselor and teacher of his countrymen. He told a well-wisher in 1654: “I am far from thinking that I have spent my toil, as you seem to hint, on matters of inferior consequence.” He included *Of Education* in the 1673 edition of his shorter poems. There are many connections between his prose and his verse, and Poe, for one, dramatically drew attention to the considerable stylistic merits of the former by preferring it to the latter. The life Milton led, political and domestic, the suffering and turmoil he underwent, the causes he won and lost, entered the long poems of his last period. Nor did he leave behind the equipment he had sharpened in the arena—his scholarship, his gift for satire, his passion.

Meanwhile this good citizen and schoolmaster, having issued the fifth and last of his antiprelatical tracts, having as he there wistfully says “spent and tired out almost a whole youth” in “wearisome labours and studious watchings,” deemed it high time to get married, that spring of 1642. Edward Phillips, the elder nephew, tells the scant story of the sudden union of the thirty-three-year-old poet with a girl half his age who belonged to Royalist gentry and whose father owed his father five hundred pounds that had gone unpaid for fifteen years (a far cry from a “rich widow” she!). “About Whitsuntide it was, or a little after, that he took a journey into the country, nobody about him certainly knowing the reason, or that it was any more than a journey of recreation; after a month’s stay, home he returns a married man, that went out a bachelor, his wife being Mary, the eldest daughter of Mr. Richard Powell, then a justice of peace, of Forresthill, near Shotover in Oxfordshire, some few of her nearest relations accompanying the bride to her new habitation; which, by reason the father nor anybody else were yet come, was able to receive them; where the feasting held for some days in celebration of the nuptials, and for entertainment of the bride’s friends. At length they took their leave, and, returning to Forresthill, left the sister behind, probably not much to her satisfaction, as appeared by the sequel. By that time she had for a month or thereabout led a philosophical life (after having been used to a great house, and much company and joviality); her friends, possibly incited by her own desire, made earnest suit by letter to have her company the remaining part of the summer, which was granted, on condition of her return at the time appointed, Michaelmas, or thereabout.”

Whitsuntide had been May 29. But Mary Powell Milton did not come back at Michaelmas, September 29. Another early biographer rounds out the tale. “Nor though he sent several pressing invitations could he prevail with her to return, till about [three] years after, when Oxford was surrendered (the nighness of her father’s house to that garrison having for the most part of the meantime hindered any communication between them), she of her own accord came, and submitted to him, pleading that her mother had been the inciter of her to that frowardness.”

This authority, the Anonymous Biographer, makes a connection with Milton’s thinking about divorce, “the lawfulness and expedience of” which “had upon full consideration and reading good authors been formerly his opinion, and the necessity of justifying himself now concurring with the opportunity, acceptable to him, of instructing others in a point of so great concern.” That deserted husband, having no assurance that his disaffected wife was ever coming back, published no less than four tracts on the new center of his interest: *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; *The Judgment of Martin Bucer, Concerning Divorce*; *Tetrachordon: Expositions upon the four chief places in Scripture which treat of marriage, or Nullities in Marriage*; *Colasterion: A Reply to a Nameless Answer against “The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.”*

This ever bolder thinker argued for divorce for incompatibility, grounds then utterly unknown. He achieved a succès de scandale, even being attacked by a preacher before Parliament. Mrs. Sadleir reproved Roger Williams for daring to recommend such an author: “For Milton’s book that you desire

I should read, if I be not mistaken, that is he that has wrote a book of the lawfulness of divorce, and, as the report says true, he had, at that time, two or three wives living. This, perhaps, were good doctrine in New England, but it is most abominable in Old England.” This may be a reflection of the rumor that Milton was at one time thinking of taking the backward law into his own hands by marrying a Miss Davis and thus presenting his first wife—and an unsympathetic Parliament—with a *fait accompli*. Such a rumor, true or not, may have hastened Mary Milton’s return.

Also by then she had had an opportunity to see which side was winning the Civil War. The years of the publication of the divorce tracts, 1643—45, were the years of the military conflict between King and Parliament. At first the Royalists had the edge, but the organization and superb generalship and cavalry maneuvers of Cromwell’s New Model Army enabled the Roundheads to win decisive victories at Marston Moor (1644) and Naseby (1645). Charles was forced to surrender at Newark in May 1646.

Meanwhile Milton, having begun with championing ecclesiastical liberty, was led to consider other branches of domestic liberty besides marriage—namely education and freedom of the press. On the invitation of a philanthropist and reformer named Samuel Hartlib he gave his rather formidable view of *Of Education* (published June 1644). Two quotations are outstanding. “The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by gaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection.” “I call therefore a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war.” But the program of learning at the proposed academy—which was to be a combination of school and college—was such as only young Miltons could have been expected to encompass. This pamphlet was followed in November by the now famous but then ignored *Areopagitica: A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicenced Printing*, objecting to the new censorship that Parliament had instituted after abolishing the Star Chamber, a censorship prior to publication that had made it necessary for the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* to be issued unlicensed and unregistered.

During his prose period the poet kept his hand in with occasional sonnets, including a disillusioned “tailed” sonnet “On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament.” He began with one that bore the deleted title “On his Door when the City expected an Assault” (November 1642), and by the time he had completed fifteen others he had exhibited a considerable range—complimentary, admonitory, satirical, memorial, pleasantly social, deeply personal. At the end of 1645, after, with his wife’s return, taking up residence in a larger house in the Barbican, he saw through the press a collected edition of his English and Latin poems. The publisher was Humphrey Moseley, who persisted in specializing in poetry and pure literature in a time of troubles when political pamphlets and sermons were “more vendible.” He now called the attention of the discriminating reader to “as true a birth as the Muses have brought forth since our famous Spenser wrote.” The little volume has long been rarer than the first editions of *Paradise Lost*. The diarists Pepys and Evelyn were among the early purchasers, and a presentation copy to Oxford got lost; the poet sent another, and with it an eighty-seven-line ode to Rous, the Bodleian librarian, that was destined (except for a couple of epigrams) to be the last of his Latin poems. The portrait of the author that served as the frontispiece of this small octavo was so badly done that Milton took advantage of the bungling engraver’s barbarous ignorance by having him inscribe underneath four lines of Greek iambics that made fun of his ineptness.

Nothing is known about Milton’s first marriage after his wife lived with him again except that she bore him three daughters (and a son John that died in infancy) and died in childbirth of Deborah, May

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